

**Breaking Bad:  
U.S.-Mexican Counterdrug Offensive, the Mérida  
Initiative and Beyond**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

In the study of U.S.-Mexico security cooperation, there exists a fundamental challenge to counterdrug operations; the underlying socioeconomic foundation of narco-trafficking. I argue that the historical and current practice of merely relying on military and law enforcement aid is not sufficient when it comes to addressing this socioeconomic foundation of narco-trafficking and transnational crime organizations (TCOs). Using a rational policy model, the analysis evaluates the Mérida Initiative's effectiveness at inhibiting drug trafficking operations and decreasing drug-related violence. After demonstrating the ineffectiveness of current counterdrugs policies, this project evaluates three options for future U.S.-Mexico security cooperation utilizing the same criteria used to evaluate the Mérida Initiative. The prerogative of this project is to demonstrate the need for a comprehensive plan that both addresses bilateral security needs as well as the underlying social foundation of narco-trafficking in order to be successful in the ongoing Mexican Narco-War.

**Keywords:** Social Foundations of Drug Trafficking; Mérida Initiative; Rational Policy Model; U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation; Transnational Crime Organizations; Narco-War

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to the people of Mexico who have been dealing with Drug Cartels and their associated violence. May this work stand as a testimony to the hope that remains despite the immense challenge ahead.

This project is also dedicated to the people in America that stand with Mexico in this fight. May your resolve stand firm.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## List of Acronyms

ATF	United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
CISEN	Mexican Center for Research and National Security
DEA	United States Drug Enforcement Agency
DOJ	United States Department of Justice
ESF	Economic Support Fund
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMCO	Mexican Institute for Competitiveness
INCLE	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODCCP	United Nations Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAN	National Action Party of Mexico
PGR	Attorney General of Mexico
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
TCO	Transnational Crime Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## Glossary

Capo	A lieutenant of a branch of a crime syndicate. Literally, Italian slang for head.
Cartel	A transnational criminal organization developed with the primary purpose of establishing a monopoly over an illicit market.
Don	A crime boss.
Harrison's Narcotic Tax Act	U.S. federal legislation enacted on December 14, 1914, to regulate and tax the production, importation, and distribution of opiates.
Narcocorridos	Literally translated as "Drug Ballad" is a type of Mexican music using polka rhythm that developed out of the song tradition of the norteño folk corrido which idealizes the "Robin Hood" nature of drug smugglers.
Narco-War	Otherwise known as a Drug War, is an armed conflict between criminal organizations fighting each other for regional control and against state government forces.
Pact of Mexico	A political compact negotiated and signed by representatives of the three primary political parties in Mexico on December 2, 2012, with the primary purpose to create a consensus that transcends political differences to enable Congress to pass the reforms necessary to promote democracy and economic growth, as well as lower poverty and social inequality.
Plata o Plomo	Literally translated as "silver or lead," meaning "accept a bribe or face assassination."
Project Gunrunner	A project of the ATF intended to stem the flow of firearms into Mexico, in an attempt to deprive the Mexican drug cartels of weapons
Valientes	Literally translated as "brave ones" used to express the Robin Hood nature of criminals in local communities.

## **Preface**

They are terrorists, criminals, drug dealers, traffickers in people and others who undo the good works of civil society. They take advantage of the open borders, free markets and technological advances that bring so many benefits to the world's people. They thrive in countries with weak institutions, and they show no scruple about resorting to intimidation or violence. Their ruthlessness is the very antithesis of all we regard as civil. They are powerful, representing entrenched interests and the clout of a global enterprise worth billions of dollars . . . [and] have wasted no time in embracing today's globalized economy and the sophisticated technology that goes with it. But our efforts to combat them have remained up to now very fragmented and our weapons almost obsolete. (UNODC, 2004, p. iii-iv)

Kofi Anan,

Former U.N. Secretary-General

# 1. Introduction

Transnational crime organizations (TCOs) have fascinated people for decades. Gaining popularity after the release of *The Godfather* in 1972, Hollywood capitalized on this intrigue and, through production of their artistic medium, continued to glamorize the concept of TCOs. In 1983, with a remake of the 1932 classic, the film *Scarface* captured the audience's attention as a poor boy was able to become the most deadly mobster in Miami and again with the release of *Goodfellas* (1990) and *The Departed* (2004). This enthusiasm to portray TCOs and their actions as entertainment ultimately culminated in the hit AMC television series *Breaking Bad* (2008). On and off the screen TCOs are finding financial success (Hibberd, 2012). In this new global age, borders have opened up, trade barriers have fallen, and media entertainment circulates around the world with a single touch of a button. Business is booming – and so is transnational organized crime.

Fortunes are being made through both legal and illegal cross-border means. “Never before has there been so much economic opportunity for so many people. And never before has there been so much opportunity for criminal organizations to exploit the system,” said Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2000). Once viewed as a local or at most a regional threat, organized crime has become a highly sophisticated transnational operation. As the United Nations 1999 Global Report on Crime and Justice notes: “From the perspective of organized crime in the 1990s, Al Capone was a small-time hoodlum with restricted horizons, limited ambitions and merely a local fiefdom” (Newman, 1990, p. 3). This traditional view of organized crime has become obsolete in the changing nature of 21st century conflict. No longer are its battles between adversaries with limited ambitions, nor are its weapons large, expensive tanks, destroyers, jets, and companies of regular infantry. Rather, new, often non-state, entities are emerging to fight in a new model of irregular conflict that blends war, terrorism, and crime. As a result, non-state actors are testing the limits of

their ability to assert influence over the global civil society, at times, even challenging states and state institutions to obtain greater social, political, or economic clout.

Modern cartels have morphed into what former National Police Chief General Oscar Naranjo has called “baby cartels” or, more recently “micro-organizations.” This notion is supported by RAND researchers John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (2001) who witnessed this transformation saying, “Power is migrating to small, non-state actors who can organize into sprawling networks more readily than can traditionally hierarchical nation-state actors” (p. 2). These organizations are known to partner in one way or another with collaborator crime syndicates that operate with certain economic independence and in turn are mutually beneficial to one another (Garzón, 2008; Grant, 2012; Grillo, 2011). Different criminal factions cooperate and compete for the control of illicit markets and by doing so “impact democratic environments and transforming themselves into a real force that could end up determining the destiny of institutions and communities” (Garzón, 2008, p. 9, 22). It is this collaboration that leads some scholars to refer to this age of criminal networking as “deviant globalization” (Gilman, Goldhammer, & Weber, 2011). While deviant globalization can be found around the world, Mexico is at the forefront of this contemporary issue.

Not only is organized crime – in the form of networked mafias, cartels, and gangs – a global phenomenon, it is now also considered a security threat to political, economic, environmental, and social systems worldwide (i.e., Garzón, 2008; Gilman, Goldhammer, & Weber, 2011; UNODC, 2010). This threat eclipses the substantial transnational illicit drug trade and its attendant violence to include major fraud, corruption, and manipulation of both political and financial systems. Gaining more international attention, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released a report on global/transnational organized crime on the 17th of June, 2010. In the report, Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the UNODC, said that “[t]ransnational crime has become a threat to peace and development, even to the sovereignty of nations” as these criminal networks have globalized faster than the international law and enforcement that combats them (UNODC, 2010, p. ii).

## 1.1. My Argument

Perhaps no other country is intertwined with Mexico more than the United States. Mexico is the third largest foreign oil supplier to the U.S., and Mexico is the United States' second largest export market (O'Neil, 2010, p. 2). Mexican migration makes up for the largest source of U.S.-bound migration, the homeland of nearly 12 million U.S. residents – nearly one third of the total foreign-born population (O'Neil, 2010, p. 2). The United States and Mexico also share a 2,000 mile (3219 km) border that is traversed by the same transnational organized crime groups, making their security of significant importance to one another. It is the last issue that dominates headlines and U.S.-Mexican relations, today.

For this reason, in this essay I examine U.S.-Mexican security relations relating to organized crime, more specifically drug cartels. Organized crime is a structured organization with three or more people that perform or engage in criminal activities (Garzón, 2008). Unlike mere organized crime, however, TCOs are complex networks of criminals whose “business” crosses the borders of two or more sovereign states. As a result, TCOs are becoming an increasing threat to the stability of sovereign states and need to be combated in a systematic way.

This project will address the viability of the Mérida Initiative as an effective policy for reducing continued drug trafficking and drug-related violence in Mexico. I argue that the current counterdrug policies are failing and to improve the situation a comprehensive policy model is necessary. The ability for a TCO to function depends on the national and international legal policies that both strengthen state institutions and weaken organized crime structures (Garzón, 2008). Therefore, the flourishing of cartels in Mexico represents widespread policy failure. While there are a variety of options in combating cartels, programs specific to addressing the social situation that allows these cartels to flourish are the most adept to handle the current situation. This stands in stark contrast to how TCOs were combatted traditionally. The traditional model, exemplified by the Mérida Initiative, focused on military and law enforcement interventions to battle cartels much like an enemy combatant, instead of like a business which most cartels are. That being said, certain critiques of the methods used in the past can still provide vital information on how to systematically disassemble cartels.

This argument begins with an examination of the historical context of the Mexican Narco-War to provide a framework for analysis. This is then followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical scope of drug cartels and the threat they now pose to Mexico and the United States. Utilizing recent parameters to define TCOs, this argument defines four factors that have serious policy implications. I will then use the current Mérida Initiative to complete an in-depth rational policy analysis. The analysis will first document Mérida's failures as a traditional anti-cartel measure before discussing the future options that are available for policy makers. From this analysis comprehensive anti-cartel policies will emerge as the best option for long term success. As suggested by Phil Williams (2012), the threat modern TCOs present can only be contained with significant social reform. This argument will conclude with an outline of stated security policies of the current Mexican President Peña Nieto's government and what they might portend for future bilateral anti-cartel cooperation.



## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Historical: From Medellín to Michoacán**

Drug trafficking organizations have operated in Mexico for over a century. While drug trafficking is clearly in the scope of law enforcement, cartel culture is more an aberration of society. Brought on by the harsh economic climate, TCOs have taken refuge deep in Mexican society. The Humaya cemetery in the northwestern Mexican city of Culiacán stands as the ultimate testament to the power and *mélange* of cartel culture in Mexican society. The Humaya houses some of the most glamorous, expensive tombs in the world – dedicated to members of the cartels – as well as some of the simplest grave markers, side by side. Among the dead lie notorious drug kingpins, such as Arturo Beltrán-Leyva (aka “The Beard”) and Ignacio “Nacho” Coronel, and peasants alike (BBC News, 2009; BBC News, 2010). Ironically, many of the dead fought vicious turf wars against each other while alive, but, in death, they are buried only meters apart, sharing the same ground. The majesty of the Humaya cemetery is that it reflects nearly a century of Mexican cartel culture. Culiacán is the capital of Sinaloa, a state in northwestern Mexico situated between the Pacific Ocean and the Sierra Madre mountains, which in all respects is analogous to cartels as Chicago is to the mob or Sicily is to the mafia.

Despite the outward appearance of differentiation between the individual organizations, all the major groups have their roots in the narcotics trade (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2013, p. 5). In order to truly have an understanding of just how deeply entrenched criminality is in certain communities within Mexico, it is important to recognize the long history of drug trafficking that has occurred. Residents of some of the mountainous villages in Sinaloa can trace their lineage back through several generations of individuals somehow involved in the narcotics trade. Criminality is so influential in the local society that Sinaloa cartel members themselves have taken on the persona of “Robin Hood” as Sinaloans refer to traffickers as “*valientes*” (“brave ones”) and often find

solace in listening to “narcocorridos” (“drug ballads”), music that celebrates the exploits of traffickers (Wald, 2002). Using the example of Sinaloa, it is clear to see that there is no longer a distinction between cartel and Mexican culture; in many respects they have merged.

Given its geographical location, Mexico has had a longstanding tradition of staging and transporting a variety of contraband destined for U.S. markets; no area more significant than Sinaloa. As the list of prohibited substances grew in the U.S., so too did the roots of criminality in Mexican society. First entering the opium trade after the Harrison Narcotic Tax Act was passed in 1914, this early form of trafficking was dominated by the poor descendants of Chinese immigrants (as cited in Astorga, 2003). As U.S. appetite for illicit substances exploded, thousands of these peasant farmers began cultivating poppies from the shores of Sinaloa to the mountains of Chihuahua and Durango (ICG, 2013, p. 6). However, by the 1930s, Mexican bandits and bootleggers took control over trafficking operations in Mexico after recognizing their profitability. Seeking to make a decent living, these criminals supplied everything from pure heroin – “Black Tar” or “Mexican Mud” – to alcohol (Vulliamy, 2010). The dawn of narcotic smuggling brought about prosperity for many Mexicans.

While Sinaloans dominated the early drug trade, drug cartel traditions began to diffuse throughout Mexico. After each new acquisition of an illicit drug, more and more communities were pulled into the trade, spreading the influence of these organizations to the far corners of Mexico (Grillo, 2011; ICG, 2013, p. 5-6). What started with peasant farmers soon grew to employ professional businessmen, who managed the pipeline of illicit drugs from as far away as Medellín, Colombia. As these operations expanded, so too did their need for support. Besides employing farmers, the drug business requires professionals as well, offering chemists, lawyers, merchants, and transporters employment in high-paying drug related occupations (Rios, 2008, p. 8; Grillo, 2011). Despite being the thirteenth largest economy in the world, Mexico is still described as a country of the “haves and have nots” enticing individuals with “little” to work for the cartels (Campbell, 2006). Furthermore, with little hope of a prosperous economic future, urban youth seek employment in street gang ranks, which are in turn employed by the cartels. Cartels hire small armies of youth and underpaid policemen to provide private

security and enforcement, meaning they act as agents hired by the drug industry in order to guarantee protection of their operations (Resa, 2006, p. 6; Rios, 2008).

Despite there being conflicting estimates of cartel profitability, one thing is clear, crime pays. The UN estimates that annual cartel revenues exceed US\$ 60 billion, while national estimates from the U.S. and Mexico are much lower at US\$ 39 billion and US\$ 6 billion, respectfully (UNODC, 2012a, p. 96; U.S. Department of Justice, 2011, p. 7, 13; Hope & Clark, 2012, p. 45). Whatever the exact figure, drug trafficking is a billion dollar industry in a country where the minimum wage is \$5 a day. Being able to make double or triple what they would make elsewhere, struggling Mexicans often seek out cartel employment (Resa, 2006, p. 6-7).

Even for those not employed by the cartels, these Mexican crime syndicates still have far reaching affects. Alejandro Hope, an analyst at Mexico's Competitiveness Institute (IMCO) and a former member of the intelligence agency (CISEN), estimates that around 15 percent of total cartel profits come from criminal operations other than narcotic trafficking (ICG, 2013, p. 9). For instance, in 2011, Mexican officials reported that the number of illegal taps into national oil pipelines nearly doubled, costing the economy anywhere between US\$ 500 million to US\$ 4 billion per year (ICG, 2013, p. 9; Malkin, 2012). Furthermore, organized crime shakes down many types of local businesses, including grocers, restaurants, bars, taxis, and buses, among others. They also get protection money from large corporations, including the mining industry, logging companies, and major agricultural producers. The actual complaints vary across Mexico, with some states registering none, while in others, such as Michoacán, business owners report firm cartel control over the business sector. Exemplified by a business leader in the Michoacán state capital, Morelia, saying, "Almost everybody pays. They are all too scared to say no. Avocado growers have to pay a quota to the cartel for every kilo they produce. Taxis pay a daily rate. Shops pay according to how much money they make" (as cited in ICG, 2013, p. 10). Cartel gunmen have defaced or, in some cases, totally destroyed countless businesses for nonpayment or evasion (Associated Press, 2013; Procuraduría General de la República, 2012). Either way, whether you work for the cartels or not, Mexican cartels own the economy.

This economic strangle hold leads to a different variety of social effects altogether. The cash pouring into the Mexican narcotics business has created a much bigger pie over which rival cartels are fighting, enabling them to buy more powerful weapons, employ assassins, and bribe officials – a process commonly known as *plata o plomo* (“money or lead”). While not distinctive to cartels, this process enables organized crime to use intimidation to keep both internal and external threats from interfering with its criminal activities, in addition to being able to back up their threats with violence if the occasion calls for it (Finckenauer, 2005, p. 81-82). This in turn creates another societal linchpin in Mexico where those not implicitly employed by the cartels are deterred from impeding cartel operations. In addition, this capital is further invested in distribution networks, exacerbating the prevalence of drug use. For years drug use was considered a U.S. problem, but Mexican officials are now realizing that their own country is facing a drug problem of their own – a 2011 report documented around 550,000 hard-drug addicts (Ministerio de Salud, 2012, p. 26). In most cases, the cartels are directly linked to street distribution in Mexico. This, in turn, adds a new dimension to the existing turf wars in which cartels are not just fighting over tons of illicit drug crossing the Rio Grande, but also grams of the illicit substances sold on corners and bars right in Mexico. In June 2012, then Mexican President Felipe Calderón said:

Crime groups started looking to sell drugs and generate an increase of addiction and consumption in our country, particularly among our youths. This was a change with serious consequences. There came a new operative strategy of the criminals. It changed from just control of smuggling routes and border agents to geographical expansion and control of territory and consequently fighting for territory. (as cited in ICG, 2013, p. 7)

In other words, when cartels fight over territory, it fundamentally challenges the state’s authority, territorial control, and monopoly of the use of force within it.

Since Mexican President Felipe Calderón declared war on the drug traffickers in 2007, the majority of resources dedicated to this Narco-War have been spent in accordance with law enforcement and military objectives. Still the death toll has soared to nearly 55,000 – double the total Coalition casualties in the Afghanistan War – with a record breaking 16,466 in 2011 alone despite many primary enforcement objectives being met (Booth, 2012, p. 12; iCasualties, 2013). With more than 50,000 troops and

federal police deployed throughout Mexico, the government has yet to come to the realization that this war will take more than simply stepping up enforcement measures to be successful. The roots of criminality and drug trafficking run deep in Mexico and in order to uproot these traditions resources have to be dedicated to improving the socioeconomic situation that many Mexicans find themselves in.

## **2.2. Theoretical: Defining Mexico's Crime Groups**

What do a terrorist, a weapons trafficker, drug smuggler, an organ trafficker, a human trafficker, a child pornography distributor, and a money launderer all have in common? They are all part of a network of organized crime associated with Latin American cartels. According to the anti-organized crime federal law in Mexico, "when three or more people make an agreement to organize or form an organization to engage, in an ongoing or reiterated fashion, in activities that by themselves or together with other activities have as a goal or a result the commission of any or several ..." of the previously listed crimes "... they will be legally classified and penalized because of these actions as members of organized crime" (Cámara de Diputados Del H. Congreso de la Unión, 2012, Article 2). This text, like its counterparts in other Latin American countries, contains a long list of crimes from terrorism to money laundering, from international trafficking to child pornography networks (Garzón, 2008). How can such different criminal phenomena fall into the same legal category?

For the rest of the hemisphere, the situation is not that much different. In 2003, the Special Conference on the Security of the Americas held in Mexico defined seven new threats to the region: terrorism, transnational organized crime, global illicit drug trafficking, corruption, assets laundering, illegal weapons trafficking, and the networking between them (The U.S. Department of State, 2008). Yet again, very distinctive criminal activities have been grouped together in an all-encompassing category. Furthermore, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, signed by both Mexico and Colombia, defines the term "organized criminal group" as:

A group made up of three or more persons that exists during a certain period of time and acts in a coordinated fashion in order to commit one or more serious crimes, or crimes, defined according to this Convention, for

the purposes of obtaining, directly or indirectly, an economic benefit or some other material benefit. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004, Article 2a)

Under this doctrine, serious crimes are understood to be “behavior that constitutes a crime punishable by at least four years in prison or by a more serious sentence” (UNODC, 2004, Article 2b).

The conclusion is that state legislation and multilateral agreements define organized crime in the basic tautology as an organization formed for the purpose of committing crimes and behaving in a way that is deviant from standardized law. While these current definitions in legal circulation can be advantageous in sentencing or acquitting particular criminal cases, they can be extremely difficult to apply to an academic study of organized crime (Resa, 2005). Ironically, Michael Levi says that, according to these ambiguous definitions, “Organized crime can be anything from a large group of Italian mafia to three thieves with a window-wiping business; where one chooses possible targets, the other threatens and robs people in their homes, and a third acts as a money launderer” (Levi, 1998, p. 346-347).

### **2.2.1. *Characteristics of TCOs***

In academia, scholars use over 100 definitions from a variety of perspectives to explain organized crime (von Lampe, 2013). As such, we found ourselves in a predicament similar to that of the British National Criminal Intelligence System, which stated that “[i]t is easier to talk about organized crime than to define it ... We know what it is, but it is complicated to describe it” (as cited in Garzón, 2008, p. 23). While this neutral stance might be a comfortable one, it establishes a description that is excessively broad and makes it difficult to categorize the dynamics and structures these organizations might possess. It is necessary, therefore, to create a coherent operational definition in order to catalog and define organized crime, keeping in mind that the included categories might alter the dynamics of these organizations, in order to create a policy in order to overcome them.

There are four distinctive characteristics of TCOs that can be found in academia that have practical implications in defeating the cartels. These characteristics are used

to narrow the study of organized crime into a precise definition. First, organized crime can be defined as a system of clientelistic relationships in which roles, expectations, and benefits are based upon temporary agreements and obligations (Albini, 1997). Although, one could think of heads of criminal organizations in the frame of Vito Corleone, most take on the persona of business managers in today's illegal economy. Imagine any business, while it is possible that the boss acts like the Godfather, in that he/she maintains a hierarchical structure and makes unilateral vertical decisions, it is more likely that the business functions more like a dynamic network with decisions made more horizontally, like in social media. Crime organizations combine characteristics of the Godfather and social media models, creating a strange mix of clientelism with an orderly network of temporary hierarchies and partnerships. Hence, while they may seem like primitive groups that use violence to maintain authority, TCOs are actually complex corporate organizations with revolutionary dynamics.

Second, organized crime does more than prey on others, it supplies illegal goods and services. Organized crime produces and distributes new goods and services, whereas petty crime simply redistributes previously existing goods (Naylor, 1997, p. 4). This is precisely what distinguishes a band of bank robbers from networks of business like organized crime such as drug trafficking. While the former is simply predatory in nature, the latter creates an entirely new economic activity (Garzón, 2008). In addition, this complexity implies a type of societal connection associated with organized criminal services. Returning to the previous analogy: when a robbery occurs, victims have an incentive to make a police report; but in the case of trafficking and illegal trade, there is a relationship established between the buyer and the seller, the producer and the distributor in which information with mutual destructive properties is exchanged.

Third, organizational crime maintains coercive capacity and the use of violence against all those who challenge it – namely, rival crime groups or the State. A distinctive characteristic of organized crime is its ability to use intimidation to keep both internal and external threats from interfering with its criminal activities, in addition to being able to back up their threats with violence if the occasion calls for it (Finckenauer, 2005, p. 81-82). Through the implementation of *plata o plomo*, TCOs maintain authority throughout their territory. TCOs usually prefer to make threats before murdering someone; but the credibility of the organization depends on its reputation for being capable and willing to

use violence as part of its activities (Garzón, 2008). Primarily, organized crime functions through corruption, in which these organizations bribe and intimidate government officials in order to ensure impunity and protect their operations. Nevertheless, when extortion and fear fail to maintain the criminal atmosphere, organized crime syndicates will proceed to decapitate, assassinate, repeatedly shoot, or come up with newfangled ways to inflict pain on those who oppose them (Grillo, 2011). In this context, violence is systematically utilized against those who attempt to challenge organized crime's authority. Systematic violence is also used against those who attempt to disrupt the crime organization's flow of goods and services in direct competition with public institutions (Anderson, 1980). In addition, taking upon the roles of state institutions, TCOs can set up quasi-justice systems where conflicts between parties are frequently resolved through the use of violence. In some neighborhoods of Senora, for instance, parents ask criminal groups to reprimand their children when they use drugs, ironically the source of many of these organizations' income, or get unsatisfactory marks in academics (Garzón, 2008).

Fourth, organized crime seeks to maintain organizational longevity; that is, the continuation of operations over time. In large part, this is done through its ability to establish certain rules and regulations to maintain relationships and structures (Grennan & Britz, 2006). Rules and regulations in this context refer to a system of rewards and punishments that govern the behavior of the organization's members and is enforced collectively (Resa, 2005). Most criminal organizations do not have rigid sets of rules that are written down; rather, rules that prescribe the behavior of members tend to circulate orally and are socially exchanged through the group's customs. The unofficial rules are often simple, majority-dominated prescriptions with things such as betrayal being worthy of death and, on occasion, the rules make reference to the organization's functions (i.e., territorial limits, hierarchy structure, and relationship to the community) (Garzón, 2008). TCOs can also come to have a determinant effect on the social and physical structure of democracy, producing a distorted conception of the lines that separate legal from illegal, generating loyalties apart from nationalism, and preventing changes in public opinion that could negatively affect the criminal network's ability to function (Resa, 2005).



### **2.2.2. Defining Cartels**

Within this overarching categorization of organized crime there are a variety of structures with different characteristics and operations. News reports, books, political platforms, and national policy in much of Latin America, especially Mexico, contain many references to what are called cartels. The word cartel is an economic term that refers to an agreement made between businesses with similar operations in order to avoid competition in a certain market (Garzón, 2008, p. 30). Usually it is their focus to control production, distribution, sales, and price of both goods and services by forming monopolistic market structures. Take for example the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). OPEC was founded in 1960 with the sole purpose to obtain a monopoly on the supply of petroleum, effectively gaining exclusive capacity to influence pricing on said products.

Like any business, the term cartel began to be applied to criminal organizations who have gained a monopolistic domination over a particular illegal market. According to Juan Carlos Garzón (2008), the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy included a new definition to the existing word cartel: “illegal organization linked to the trafficking of drugs and weapons” (p. 30). Unlike the OPEC’s legal monopoly, however, it is difficult for any organization to maintain sole control over the production, transportation, and distribution of illicit drugs. In this illegal drug market, production and processing occurs in a different location than the distribution and sale which usually happens nearly half a world away. In the case of cocaine, for instance, the coca plant is grown in remote areas of Colombia with the processing of the leaves taking place in the near vicinity. The processed cocaine is then trafficked through countries like Mexico and Venezuela to the United States or Europe, where it is then distributed on the streets of their cities. As in traditional capitalist economics, the price is regulated by availability of the drug in the market. Unlike capitalistic economies though, availability is not dependent on the control of the production, but rather the possibilities for export. Likewise, it is in a drug trafficker’s best interest to circulate as many kilos of the illicit drugs as possible, even in the face of market saturation which would conceptually lower the price of the product.

Used by both sides, the term cartel has become synonymous with organized crime; law enforcement agents and journalists release daily memos using the term and

criminals use the name of cartels to demarcating territory and instill fear in propaganda (Garzón, 2008). This essay uses the term to refer to major decentralized Mexican criminal groups with an international reach. While the structures of organized crime can be differentiated conceptually (cartels, gangs, and mafias), the lines between dealers and executors, chemists and gangsters, the hunter and the hunted to become more blurry than clear. Everything is a commodity in this world; dealers sell drugs and gangsters sell protection; it is not even uncommon to see gangsters selling drugs and dealers selling protection. In reality, this world is a complex network of hierarchies and relationships. Criminal factions in this network will either choose to cooperate or choose to compete for the control of illegality. Either way it impacts democracy, it alters social dynamics, it changes the very world we live in. The cartels have transformed themselves into a real force that could end up determining the destiny of institutions and the structure of communities around the world. Like most things in life, the only way to overcome them is to know how they work and what their weaknesses are; the cartels in Latin America are no different.

### **2.3. Revisiting My Argument**

Today it is not uncommon to hear of cartel violence in Mexico. Think for a second, what are common headlines out of Mexico? Recent headlines from Mexico: U.S. consular official gunned down in broad daylight; More decapitated police officers found near Juárez; Rancher murdered by Mexican drug smuggler; Bomb tossed at U.S. consulate in Nuevo Laredo (retrieved from a variety of news sources, most significant being *BBC World News* and the *New York Times*, over a period of time). While these headlines might seem random, they are actually quite predictable.

Take for instance a hypothetical massacre; the following headline would likely appear in a newspaper: “Massacre by Cartel in X.” At random, pick any place in Mexico for ‘X’, then substitute ‘massacre’ with any sensational synonym that is likely to catch a reader’s eye. With that simple equation you can easily formulate a headline that one is likely to come across when reading the news out of Mexico. Furthermore, the number of columns dedicated to the story is proportional to the number of deaths and the caliber of violence used in the attack. Later, in a response to the article – be it a press conference

or a follow-up article – some high level political or law enforcement official would be quoted saying something to the effect of, “Yes, we have a well-founded suspicion that this horrendous crime was related to cartel drug trafficking. In fact, this happened because cartel ‘A’ and cartel ‘B’ are fighting for control of the illegal economy in ‘X’ place.” For the cartels ‘A’ and ‘B’ you can substitute any name of the most well-known cartels of a given moment. After which, the article would recite some venial comment about the terrible effects of the drug industry on society. The article would then culminate in either conjecture or yet another new crusade against the evils of the drug business. (This exercise as alluded to by Garzón, 2008, p. 160)

Does this sound familiar? Almost anyone familiar with the situation in Mexico immediately understands the case; it is the cartels. And since criminal organizations rarely tend to sue for slander, news organizations have the unlimited freedom to write and report whatever they can, be it fact or execration. This indifferent writing is what gives most of the public the notion that this conflict is unwinnable, but that is far from the truth.

In his book *Mexico: Narco-violence and a failed state?*, George Grayson discusses mounting drug violence, cartel power, and recent policy attempts (including the Mérida Initiative) as major obstacles for the Mexican government to overcome in the battle against the seemingly unstoppable drug cartels. He questions if Mexico can overcome such obstacles, and suggests that in order for Mexico to avoid becoming a “failed state”, a possibility Grayson alludes to, the government must take back control of Mexico from the TCOs through several strategies implemented concurrently. While continuing the War on Drugs, he advocates the establishment of a *modus vivendi* with other alternatives, such as legalization of certain drugs (Grayson, 2010, p. 116-118). At the same time, Grayson asserts that current counterdrug policy needs to be refocused on demand reduction, through education and treatment in the United States and Mexico. Saying “the least bad policy is to legalize drugs,” Grayson suggests that the possibility of decriminalizing certain illicit drugs – such as marijuana – in the U.S. could help lessen the demand from Mexico and strengthen the focus on more dangerous drugs such as “Black Tar” heroin (Grayson, 2009).

The constant stream of bad news overshadows one positive aspect of the last five years: unprecedented U.S.-Mexico security cooperation. The United States and Mexico have taken advantage of the best framework for security cooperation in decades. Policy shifts in both nations have propelled cooperative security advancement but the predicament in Mexico is more than merely a result of cartel violence. This unprecedented cooperation of late gave rise to the Mérida Initiative which was crowned the answer to the drug problem. Despite its praise, the policy has done little to improve the situation; emphasizing security while discounting other significant facets is not the way to win a Narco-War (Villiers Negroponete, 2013). Under immense military pressure from Mexico and the United States, cartels are fragmenting and illicit drugs continue to be seized in record amounts but drugs still manage to make their way through these criminal networks. As a byproduct, violence is also expanding, exacerbating the already dire situation with no end in sight. In other words, counterdrug policy is failing. So what should be done? Give up? Press on? Or try something new?

### **3. Methodology**

As emphasized by Robert Boner (2010, 2012), counterdrug enforcement policy success is measured through a quantitative approach. For instance, researchers use record amounts of drug seizures and number/rank of cartel members to chart success. Thereby, saying something like 200 metric tons of illicit drugs have been seized since Calderón declared a War on Drugs gives the illusion of success while the cartels remain intact (Bonner, 2010, p. 40). Therefore, I am not convinced if the focus on merely quantitative data is efficient enough to measure success on something as complex as the War on Drugs. The War on Drugs not only covers a vast territory, but it is also diffuse with diversity, be it a heterogeneous population or distinct socio-economic situations. Instead, I intend to conduct a comprehensive qualitative case study to analyze the current status and future prospects for U.S.-Mexican security cooperation.

The qualitative case study includes the method of rational policy analysis, whereby displaying the expected impacts of policy alternatives to produce an inference. As described by Herbert A. Simon (1997), the rational model of policy analysis evaluates the consequence of rational (i.e., value-maximizing) decisions (p.12). In other words, the central point of the rational policy model is the assumption that nation-states choose a policy from among alternative actions in order to maximize strategic objectives. Therefore, rational policy models are intended to evaluate and, consequently, achieve the maximum desired potential of policies. For that reason, qualitative case studies are useful in assessing the consequences of policy implementation (Bakke, 2010, p. 98-99). Utilization of a qualitative case study, subsequently, provides researchers with the ability to conduct an in-depth analysis of a distinct situation or policy (King, Koehane, & Verba, 1994, p. 105-106). That single case, however, is not generalizable. Therefore, it is essential to this project that its findings must not habitually be transferred to other situations, instead focusing solely on the Mexican Drug War. That being said, the conclusions of this project can still aid future research as it has the potential to provide new and distinct policy alternatives not yet to be taken into account by other inquiries.

### **3.1. A Description of the Analysis**

The analysis of this paper will focus on U.S.-Mexican counterdrug policy, more specifically the Mérida Initiative. While this policy was designed to combat cartels on a comprehensive level, most of the policy's focus has been on supplying the Mexican government with military and law enforcement aid, leaving out the socio-economic dimensions of this quandary. The scope will be limited to the years succeeding the implementation of the Mérida Initiative in 2008 until Calderón vacated the Mexican presidency in 2012. I chose this scope because Enrique Peña Nieto became the 57th president of Mexico in December 2012. President Nieto has promised to bring new policy directives that could seemingly alter the foundation of the Mérida Initiative. As such, the main analysis will come to an end as it is still too early to determine the consequences of President Nieto's policies and their effect on the Mérida Initiative.

It is the prerogative of this project to illustrate that the mono-dimensional War on Drugs is not achieving comprehensive success. The Mérida Initiative has both aspects of a counterdrug and a security policy. Therefore, for a policy of this magnitude to be a success, I would expect to see a decrease in drug operations and an increase in security. A decrease in drug operations would be signified by a reduction in drug cultivation, production, and distribution. Moreover, since success of counterdrug operations is often evaluated through the economic measure of supply and demand, success would also mean a decrease in not only supply but also demand as well. An increase in security, on the other hand, would mean a significant drop in both violence and crime rates. Furthermore, the culture of impunity which produces criminality would also have to be significantly reduced; meaning less corruption. In short, a successful policy would continue to strengthen security while also reinforcing Mexico's domestic rule of law and addressing deep seated socioeconomic inequalities that leave many people susceptible to criminal pursuits.

The following analysis is divided into three sections. The analysis begins with a brief discussion of the Mérida Initiative, outlining the basics of the policy. In the second section I summarize the policy's decision criteria – metrics to evaluate the success of the objectives of the policy – and their shortcomings. Specifically, I discuss how traditional evaluations only measure one facet of the policy, which is insufficient when studying a

comprehensive policy. The third section addresses the three most plausible alternative options to the Mérida Initiative and reviews the effectiveness of each policy. The criteria used to evaluate Mérida and its alternatives incorporates the feasibility of success in relation to current objects set by U.S.-Mexican cooperation and socio-economic principles designed to address the underlying foundation of criminality. As stated before, a successful policy would decrease drug operations and increase security. The analysis will rely on both primary and secondary resources collected by state agencies, news organizations, multilateral reports, and NGOs. The data will include significant repercussions since the initial implementation of the Mérida Initiative. The data will come from a variety of social and economic levels as to provide an ample assessment of the situation in order to assure that the most comprehensive, accurate, and therefore useable conclusions can be drawn.

I specifically chose the Mérida Initiative because of its involvement with the Mexican Narco-War. The ongoing conflict in Mexico is one of the largest drug related conflicts in history and carries with it significant consequences for the entire Western Hemisphere (Grillo, 2011). These Mexican Cartels are without doubt some of the largest and most complex TCOs in existence. Through assessing the Mérida Initiative through the lens of policy analysis and program evaluation, more can be learned about the ways in which government policy affects these criminal organizations. Furthermore, Mexico is at a crossroads where its future will be decided. Internal changes are necessary to facilitate change but that alone will not be enough to compete with the entrenched criminal organizations (Allum & Siebert, 2003). While the brunt of the battle has been paid in Mexican blood, the government must realize it is not alone. Relying on the help of partner nations, the cartels can be stopped. Due to its proximity to Mexico, the United States has the opportunity to help the Mexican government cripple the cartels. For its part, the United States must do more to rally around a common strategy with Mexico rather than just exporting their own drug enforcement policy. Therefore, the process of mutual bilateral security cooperation can also be researched.

## **4. Analysis**

### **4.1. The Case of the Mérida Initiative**

The United States began providing Mexico with training and equipment to eradicate marijuana and poppy fields in the 1970s after Nixon declared the War on Drugs, part of his Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act. In 1985, however, bilateral cooperation drastically declined after the assassination of Enrique Camarena, a U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, while in Mexico. Distrust between the two nations and U.S. concern about the single-party Mexican government's tendency to turn a blind eye towards drug traffickers stalled bilateral cooperation from the mid-1980s through the end of the 1990s (González, 2009, p. 73). At the same time, the Mexican government's reluctance to accept large amounts of U.S. assistance due to attached provisions that were deemed unsuitable for domestic policy further hindered cooperation (Seelke & Finklea, 2013). Sovereignty also remained an issue as Mexican officials opposed DEA and other U.S. agencies carrying out operations within Mexican territory without authorization. Certainly not least, a large hurdle was overcoming Mexican military official's deeply held concerns about past U.S. interventions into Mexico, who proved particularly reticent to cooperate with their U.S. counterparts (Deare, 2009).

Fortunes began to change in 1998 after the signing of a Bi-national Drug Control Strategy. This simple policy change both gradually began to improve U.S.-Mexican cooperation as well as substantially increasing U.S. assistance to Mexico. This assistance, which totaled some US\$ 397 million over six years, supported programs aimed to stop the production of drugs in Mexico, interdicting narcotics, strengthening the rule of law, and countering money-laundering operations (The Senate of the United States, 2008, p. 15). Nevertheless, in 2007, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that, despite the aid to improve counterdrug efforts, illicit drug seizures



remained relatively low and corruption continued to hinder bilateral efforts with Mexico (2007b, p. 6b).

As previously stated, upon taking office in December 2006, Mexican President Calderón made security, specifically combating drug trafficking and organized crime, his signature policy issue. Calderón reached out to his northern neighbor, asking for greater assistance. In response, in October 2007, the United States and Mexico announced the Mérida Initiative, a new package of assistance for Mexico and Central America after years of assistance bypassing Mexico on its way to Colombia. The following year, this three year program went into effect, providing some US\$ 1.3 billion in security aid to Mexico (see Table 1) (For overall U.S. assistance to Mexico, see Table A-1 in Appendix A). The Mérida Initiative, as it was originally conceived, sought to: (1) break the culture of impunity surrounding criminal organizations; (2) strengthen governmental control of land, air, and maritime territory; (3) strengthen Mexican state institutions; and (4) building strong resilient communities (Senate of the United States, 2008). In addition to the outlay of financial resources, this initiative supported a framework to build mutual trust through greater interagency transparency and cooperation, in addition to structured, periodic training interactions to combat organized criminal networks.

**Table 1. 2008-2013 the Mérida Funding for Mexico by Aid Account**

*(Figures in Millions)*

<b>Account</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012 (Estimate)</b>	<b>Account Totals</b>	<b>2013 (Request)</b>
ESF	20.0	15.0	15.0	18.0	33.3	101.3	35.0
INCLE	263.5	406.0	365.0	117.0	248.5	1,400.0	199.0
FMF	116.5	299.0	5.3	8.0	Not Applicable <sup>a</sup>	428.8	Not Applicable
<b>Total</b>	<b>400.0</b>	<b>720.0</b>	<b>385.3</b>	<b>143.0</b>	<b>281.8</b>	<b>1,930.1</b>	<b>234.0</b>

**Sources:** U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY2008-FY2012, FY2013 Executive Budget Summary*.

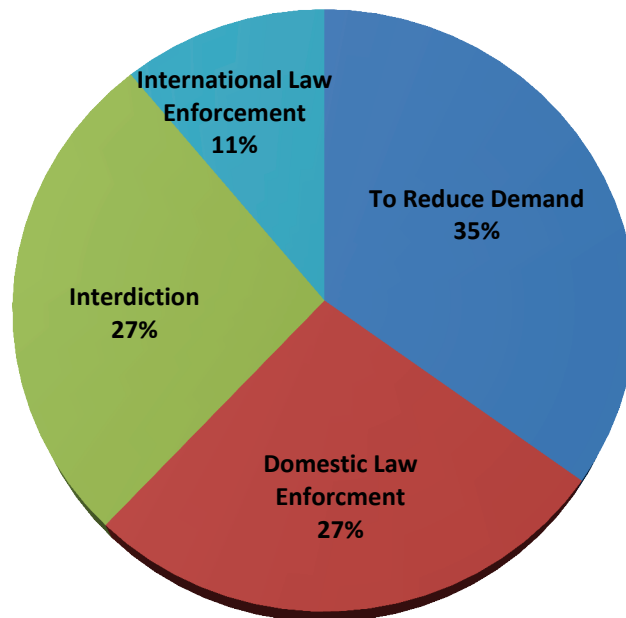
**Notes:** ESF=Economic Support Fund; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; INCLE=International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement.

a. Beginning in 2012, FMF assistance is not included as part of the Mérida Initiative.

Although the Mérida Initiative was thought to be a “new paradigm” for bilateral security cooperation, some observers have challenged that description, preferring to refer to the Mérida Initiative as a mere extension of previous bilateral efforts (as alluded to in Stephens & de Arimateia da Cruz, 2008). The Mérida Initiative has increased

bilateral, interagency cooperation between the two states to a level previously unheard of. Increased communication and cooperation from law enforcement officials engaging in joint operations has resulted in a stronger deterrent to cartels that have otherwise been unwavering in their activities (Bonner, 2012; Masci, 2001). However, like prior assistance, the Mérida Initiative focused mainly on training and equipping military and law enforcement officials engaged in the counterdrug offensive. Skepticism of this “new paradigm” continued to be compounded as the counterdrug budget continued to spend the majority of funds on supply reduction, including drug crop eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement efforts, while leaving social demand reduction programs’ funding dwarfed as a result (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2012) (see Figure 2). This is in part a product of ‘unequal’ shared responsibility. While the Mérida Initiative emphasizes the importance of shared responsibility in combating transnational crime, the United States continues to dictate the majority of this bilateral agenda (see chapters by Jorge Rebolledo and Alberto Lozano in Flores & Lallande, 2009).

**Figure 1. The U.S. 2009 Budget Request for Drug Control:  
US\$ 14.1 billion**



**Sources:** U.S. Embassy of Mexico, *U.S. - Mexico At a Glance: Reducing U.S. Drug Consumption*.

## 4.2. Assessing the Mérida Initiative

The Mérida Initiative came as a welcome remedy to U.S.-Mexico security cooperation, which has historically lagged behind economic, political, and even social ties. This bilateral strategy was envisioned to be a strong foundation on which long-term cooperation and trust between the United States and Mexico could be built. It also would produce concrete outcomes and benefits. Still, the primary documents of the Mérida Initiative do not set exact parameters to measure the impact of the policy. It is this inconsistency that has led analysts to debate over how bilateral efforts should be evaluated (Selee, 2010). The GAO found that Mérida's strategic documents were missing important elements necessary for accountability and, in many cases, for the success of the program. The general findings of the GAO indicated that progressive performance measures had not been built into the program's charter. No timelines were set as gauges of success, and equipment and training were provided without measures of accountability in place (GAO, 2007a, p 22-27).

One historical measure of success has been the ratio between the volume of funds dispersed and the amount of drugs seized (Bonner, 2010). The measure suggests that, in order to be successful, the volume of funds is positively correlated with the amounts of drugs seized. In simple terms, as more money is pumped into the program, more drugs are expected to be seized. The U.S. State Department actively attributes increased drug seizures to the success of the Mérida Initiative (White House, 2011, p. 75-77). Similarly, U.S. officials have also highlighted the downward trend (since 2006) of cocaine availability and purity in the United States as evidence of successful Mérida and other U.S.-funded antidrug efforts (White House, 2011, p. 78). The problem with this measure is that it puts an emphasis on economic standards (price and purity) while leaving out social patterns. Supposedly, this measure was used to illustrate greater capacity of the Mexican state but what it really does is measure the supply of illegal drugs coming from Mexico. While it is true that drug seizures hurt the bottom-line of these illicit companies, this billion dollar industry can simply attribute this to business costs as they seek to expand their empires.

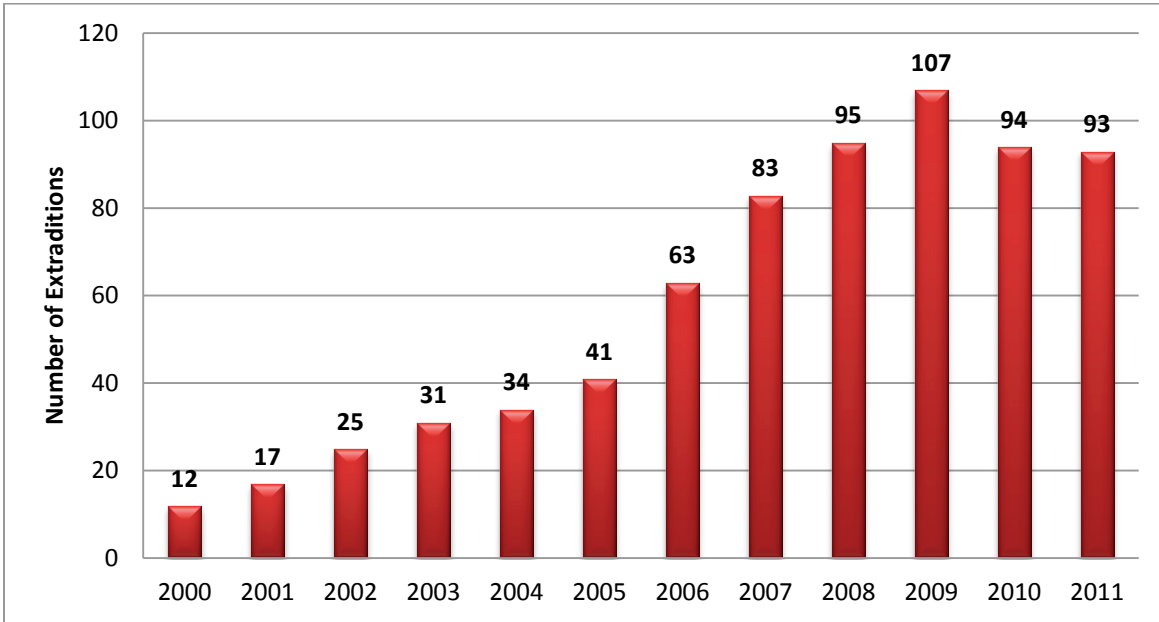
Other problems in using economic standards in assessing the Mérida Initiative are also apparent. First, separating the results of efforts funded via Mérida from those of

other bilateral cooperation policies is nearly impossible. The data available does not allow U.S. officials or analysts to determine the success that can be directly attributed to Mérida (Seelke & Finklea, 2013, p. 24). In addition, increased seizure data and drug prices may not be directly related to U.S.-Mexican efforts to combat TCOs. In fact, it could be a result of pure greed which is immeasurable. Finally, it is equally difficult to determine the reasons for periodic fluctuations in drug purity. This could be attributed to decreased supply so cartels are “cutting” (diluting) their products to increase profitability or simple greed once again.

Other analysts have maintained that the success of Mérida is dependent on a broad range of bilateral cooperation indicators (O’Neil, 2010). In other words, the increased ability of U.S. and Mexican law enforcement to share information and work together to prosecute transnational crime may be a byproduct of Mérida. For instance, the arrests and killings of high-profile TCO leaders since 2009 have been cited as examples of increased bilateral law enforcement cooperation by the U.S. State Department (2012c). Operations funded through the Mérida Initiative are responsible for taking down notorious drug kingpin Arturo Beltrán Leyva, crippling the Tijuana cartel by capturing the Arellano Félix brothers and their replacement Teodoro García Siemental, dethroning the “King of Heroin” himself, José Antonio “Don Pepe” Medina Arreguin, and eliminating Zetas cartel boss Heriberto Lazcano (Bonner, 2010; Bonner, 2012; Grant, 2012; Grillo, 2011; O’Neil, 2010). The problem here is it neglects the horizontal integration of many of these organizations. As previously discussed, the cartels are more like social media than a hierarchical mafia. When one leader is eliminated, another one takes his place; leading to the constant vicious cycle that Mexico finds itself in.

Another suggested example of Mérida success – in the form of bilateral cooperation – is the high number of extraditions, as cited by U.S. officials. Since 2000, over 389 suspected cartel members have been extradited to the U.S. to stand trial (see Figure 3). The general upward trend of these statistics, however, may be more a reflection of the Mexican government’s commitment to combating TCOs rather than simply Mérida success. Furthermore, this statistic too also neglects the horizontal integration of TCOs. When a capo of the cartel is transported to the U.S. someone else takes his place.

**Figure 2. Individuals Extradited from Mexico to the United States 2000–2011**



**Sources:** 2000 – 2008 data from U.S. Embassy of Mexico, *México – Estados Unidos de un Vistazo: Extradiciones*. 2009 data from U.S. Department of State, *United States - Mexico Security Partnership: Progress and Impact*, fact sheet. 2010 – 2011 data from Seelke & Finklea, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: the Mérida Initiative and Beyond*.

The situation in Mexico is extremely complex. It is this complexity that makes establishing benchmarks for Mérida’s success nearly impossible. Nevertheless, the primary documents clearly define the objectives of the Mérida Initiative as working to decrease drug supply and increase security efforts (GAO, 2007a, p. 7; Clinton, 2010; Embassy of Mexico, 2011). In that respect, Mérida can be seen as both a counterdrug and a security policy, all-in-one. This complex solution for a complex problem has emphasized military and law enforcement efforts, leaving out many social concerns. This has resulted in one of the most prominent criticisms of the Mérida Initiative. Some believe that this strategic focus on security cooperation has thus far neglected to provide adequate attention to institutional and social reform in Mexico (Grillo, 2011; O’Neil, 2010). And it is this lack of social ascendancy that has left Mérida susceptible to failure as both a counterdrug policy and a security policy.

#### **4.2.1. *Dealing with Drug Production in Mexico***

Beyond issues of policy implementation, there remains the question of the Mérida Initiative's effectiveness as a drug control policy. Modeled in part after Plan Colombia, Mérida was touted as the answer to the escalating international drug problem that had seemingly been reduced merely a decade before in Colombia by the Plan. Unfortunately, the success of Plan Colombia was not as clear cut as it seemed. The goal of Plan Colombia was to reduce drug cultivation, processing and distribution by fifty percent between 2002 and 2006. By 2006, however, heroine production had only been reduced a mere 15 percent, while coca cultivation had increased by the same 15 percent (GAO, 2007a, p. 3-4). Like Colombia, Mexico is a major producer of illicit drugs, such as cannabis (marijuana), poppies (opium), and methamphetamine. Moreover, similar to the situation in Colombia, the U.S. government estimates marijuana and opium cultivation expanded significantly between 2009 and 2010 in rural Mexico despite Mérida operations (U.S. Department of State, 2012b). At the same time, despite stricter import restriction on precursor chemicals used in methamphetamine production, including pseudoephedrine and ephedrine, the Mexican government has been unable to quell the production of meth and adequately dismantle clandestine labs (U.S. Department of State, 2012b; Bonner, 2010, p. 40).

Since the 1930s, the Mexican military has been involved in drug crop eradication. Personnel constraints, however, have been major factors inhibiting recent eradication efforts. Indeed, drug production has increased since the government has emphasized public security functions, including anti-TCO operations, over that of historical drug eradication efforts. Still, government spokesmen praise the fact that record amounts of narcotics continued to be seized through tightening security at Mexican ports and across the country's southern borders. As a matter of fact, Mexican authorities have seized an astounding 200 metric tons of illicit drugs and at least 5 metric tons of pseudoephedrine since Calderón declared a War on Drugs (Bonner, 2010, p. 40). The governments of the United States and Mexico continue to use this evidence to further their debate that Mexico's Narco-War is succeeding.

As interactions between Mexican officials and TCOs have become more complex and frequent, the conceptualization of cartels as for-profit corporations has taken root.

For that reason, the governments insist the criteria used to determine the best policy when combating cartels incorporates the basic economic principles of supply and demand (Embassy of Mexico, 2011). As a business, the governments assume that this basic principle applies to cartel operations. In attempting to disrupt their flow of product, the Mexican government is attempting to attack the bottom-line of these “companies.” The problem with this assumption is that it does not correlate with increases in drug-related violence. Drug violence in Mexico has been attributed to heightened demand fueling larger supplies (Abu-Hamdeh, 2011, p.43-44; Baird, 2012; Camín & Castañeda, 2010). To put this into simpler terms, larger seizures does not necessarily mean that the supply is becoming significantly reduced; it could be indicative of larger amounts of illicit drugs in circulation.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2012), around 22.5 million individuals in the U.S. were current (past month) illegal drug users in 2011, representing 8.7% of the total population aged 12 and older (p. 14). This represented a slight rise from the steady eight percent of the years 2000 to 2008 (Carnevale Associates, 2011). While this was less than a percent rise in consumption use, in reality it signified that more than 2 million more people became drug consumers in the United States. It also showed that, although Mérida spending rose by sixty-four percent, consumption continues to rise (Abu-Hamdeh, 2011, p. 43).

#### **4.2.2. *Establishing Security and the Rule of Law***

Similar to questions about its effectiveness as a drug control policy, serious concerns about the Mérida Initiative’s effectiveness as a security policy persist. Despite the large cash injection received from the Mérida Initiative, a culture of impunity still reigns. Concerns over corruption and ineffectiveness of public officials have led to the astonishing rate of only 13% of all crimes being reported in Mexico (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Geografía, 2012, p. 10). To complicate the matter, record numbers of criminal offenses – other than drug trafficking – are being perpetrated by members of organized crime. Human trafficking and kidnappings are at unprecedented levels and continue to climb (U.S. Department of State, 2010b). Recent spikes in criminality and violence have overwhelmed Mexico’s legal institutions. Even more disturbing is arrests seldom result in a conviction, despite the number of arrests being at an all-time high

(Seelke & Finklea, 2013, p. 16). Crimes against persons are continuing to climb, while Mexican institutions remain unable to investigate, let alone punish, those responsible. Corruption and ineffectiveness is rampant in Mexican institutions. In simple terms, the cash influx from Mérida has done little to improve security in Mexico.

Mexican legal institutions have been widely criticized for being opaque, inefficient, and corrupt. The legal system is plagued by long case backlogs, high pre-trial incarceration rate, and an inexplicable inability to obtain convictions. Increasing arrest rates and, consequently, incarceration rates have led to a substantial expansion of prison populations. Preventative detention is also a common occurrence in the Mexican legal system. Those suspected of collaboration with organized crime can be held for 40 days without legal counsel, with a possible 40 day extension, which has led to serious abuses by authorities (Deaton, 2010). Because of this, many Mexicans are more scared of the legal apparatus of the government than the cartels themselves. To complicate the situation, many state facilities are controlled by crime groups so even if an individual was falsely accused and imprisoned, they are even more likely to join criminal organizations (Deaton, 2010; U.S. Department of State, 2012a, p. 6-8). This in itself gives reason to question Mérida's security capacity as even state security compounds are not controlled by the Mexican government. In a country where security is not dominated by the state, society falls victim to criminal impunity.

Nevertheless, the Mexican government insists that security is improving in the country. The government relies on footage of captured and killed drug lords to assure the populace that security is a pivotal objective in the war on drugs (Selee & Olson, 2011). Still record numbers of death plague the countryside and cities become battlefields for warring cartels. The situation Mexican society faces is one that typical armed conflicts produce. In Robert Kaplan's 1994 article, "The Coming of Anarchy," he describes what he found in Western Africa:

Disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism... When I was in the capital [of Sierra Leone], Freetown, last September, eight men armed with AK-47s broke into the house of an American man. They tied him up and stole everything



of value... An Italian ambassador was killed by gunfire when robbers invaded an Abidjan restaurant [capital of Ivory Coast]. The family of the Nigerian ambassador was tied up and robbed at gunpoint in the ambassador's residence. (Kaplan, 1994, p. 1)

This account is eerily similar to the situation in Mexico. Through his accounts it becomes clear that areas affected by conflict become some of the most dangerous places in the world, and in no small part the result of armed criminals. In other accounts, armed conflicts have increasingly developed criminal characteristics (specifically mafia characteristics) whereby horizontally organized coalitions of irregular armed forces negotiate "partnerships, common projects, divisions of labor or spoils," whereby they are able to control and even alter society (Kaldor, 2007, p. 95). That said, would it be such a leap to think that organized crime can, given certain tools and enough time, alter the very social makeup of a country?

In the case of Mexico it is already happening. The armed conflict has not only taken lives, but also the population's trust in the government. As the Mexican Attorney General (PGR) continues to let high-profile political corruption slip through their grasp, Mérida's security provisions have failed (Corcoran, 2011). Let's not forget about personal security, where one cannot even walk down certain streets without the possibility of getting shot. With impunity rates continuing to hover around 82% for homicides and even higher for other crimes, it is clear that crime has a stranglehold on society (Zepeda, 2012, p. 10-21). Despite governmental assurances, simply handing out guns to people does not translate into increased security across the board.

A UNODC study found that around a quarter of a million violent deaths worldwide can be attributed to the illicit drug trade annually (UNODC, 2012b, p. 97-98). It also showed that government officials and experts alike agree that drug-related violence is a serious problem. Without doubt the drug trade is one of the largest contributing factors to rising global death tolls. With no end in sight to the Mexican Narco-War, the only thing that can be certain is more deaths will occur. In light of these bleak statistics, counterdrug policy needs to be reassessed and the future of the Mérida Initiative determined.

### **4.3. Policy Options for the Future of U.S.-Mexico Cooperation**

The Mérida Initiative signified a much needed collaboration and acceptance between both countries. Realizing that the future of both their societies was tied, stronger cooperation has been established between Mexico and the U.S. The first objective of the initiative was to prevent drug production and inhibit trafficking operations. The second was to improve security and reduce drug-related violence. The unfortunate truth is that neither goal of the initiative has yet been successful. The only success has been the unintended consequence of improved relations and cooperation between the two nations. So what options remain for the future of the Mérida Initiative and U.S.-Mexican security cooperation?

Various policy alternatives for the Mérida Initiative have been established at this juncture. The first option is to abandon the program by allowing funding to expire after 2014. The second option is to continue with the “Beyond Mérida” approach introduced under the Obama administration. This policy embodies the original Mérida Initiative objectives but also integrates a “shared responsibility” approach to drug control and institutional reforms rather than military spending. The third option – a new approach – integrates “Beyond Mérida” with a greater focus on domestic drug policy as means of lessening demand and institution building as means of lessening supply.

Abandoning the Mérida Initiative would be an easy solution. The feasibility of successfully implementing programs in Mexico that both decrease drug operations and increase security conjointly in the face of the cartel’s ever-expanding influence seems nearly impossible. This notion has only been compounded by seemingly endless reports that Mérida is ineffective. The GAO has condemned the policy stated that the Mérida Initiative has been an utter failure since, despite the hefty price tag, little concrete results have been seen (GAO, 2007a, p. 7). In addition, the program has yet to set operational objectives, such as the establishment of timelines to facilitate accountability, instead relying on vague goals to drive counterdrug strategy.

Violence in Mexico has escalated at an alarming rate and the probability of “spillover” into the United States is growing evermore palpable. In discussing the

limitations of the Mérida Initiative, one has to highlight the north-south flow of drugs and illegal weapons, respectfully (Villiers Negro Ponte, 2009). This shortcoming highlights the failure of the policy in regards to both criteria. First, drugs continue to flow north of the border because there is still a demand. Second, illegal weapons trafficking is a direct result of the drug trade and leads to increased violence and crime rates. Therefore, besides failing to inhibit drug operations, the shortcomings of Mérida Initiative have actually led to the expansion of drug-related violence. Since Mérida funds cannot be used for domestic use, the U.S. Justice Department [USDOJ] (2010) cites the underfunding of Project Gunrunner as an example of a program that would benefit from moving away from Mérida in support of increased domestic funding (p. 53). A domestic program designed to stop the flow of illegal weapons, Project Gunrunner was placed on the backburner to other cooperative counterdrug operations. The Inspector General of the U.S. Justice Department suggested that a greater focus on domestic counterdrug operations may be the most viable way to reduce violence south of the border (USDOJ, 2010, p. 16). In Mexico, alternative development programs have been touted as the answer to the drug crisis (Seelke & Finklea, 2013, p.28). Mexico would provide positive incentives for farmers to abandon their drug crop cultivation in lieu of other high value crops. Programs such as these could provide for long-term success but with little immediate results. The only question that remains is could these programs outlast the cartels?

Besides failing to inhibit drug operations and increase security, some policy analysis has shown that U.S. counterdrug policies like the Mérida Initiative have actually led to the expansion of drug trafficking. Major interdiction efforts of the last part of the 20th century closed Florida and much of the Caribbean to drug trafficking, but left Mexico as an attractive substitute. As an unforeseen and unfortunate result of such interdiction efforts, small-time drug dealers quickly became the leaders of sophisticated and violent cartels (Bonner, 2010). Overall, as demand has grown so too has the flow of illicit supply. Maureen Meyer (2009) suggests that the Mérida Initiative applied the same flawed, unsuccessful military aid focus of previous Mexican domestic policy to an ever-worsening drug trafficking situation (p. 6-8). This suggests that the program was doomed from the beginning. On the other hand, to abandon a partially implemented program would be a complete waste of funds. As observed in the success of Mérida's

sister program, Plan Colombia, the length of the program has as much to do with its success as does the commitment to see it through (Villiers Negropte, 2009, p. 70).

The second policy option is to follow the modified strategy of the Mérida Initiative as set out by the Obama and Calderón administrations' new strategy. This policy has been dubbed "Beyond Mérida" or "Mérida 2.0." This strategy sets out a more inclusive bilateral collaborative approach focused on more institution-building than on equipment transfers (Olson & Wilson, 2010). Continuing the tradition that was set in the Mérida Initiative, Beyond Mérida is also founded on "four pillars" first articulated when President Obama made his 2011 budget request. In keeping with the "Beyond Mérida" rationale of maintaining successful elements and altering those that are not, the Obama administration called for refining the program to ensure widespread success and a broad approach to counterdrug efforts (Olson & Wilson, 2010, p. 3). The strategy was to nearly double Economic Support Funds (ESF) and cut International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds in half (U.S. State Department, 2013). This new strategy laid out a paradigm switch in U.S.-Mexican security cooperation.

Similar to the original Mérida, the four pillars provided a vague framework on which to build a strategy. Pillar one remained focus on disrupting and dismantling TCOs. This time, however, criminal organizations were to be treated as economic corporations instead of just armed combatants. Pillar two also remained the same, strengthening Mexican state institutions, but this time the budget allotted for this pillar was doubled. While the first two pillars are nearly the same as the original, the last two pillars were the defining aspects of this new paradigm. Going "beyond" Mérida meant that security had to be localized to deal with internal threats. This would entail moving security away from the border to communities where it was needed more. In short, pillar three focused on community based security programs (Olson & Wilson, 2010, p. 4). Following in the footsteps of pillar three, pillar four reintroduced the notion of "building strong and resilient communities" (U.S. Department of State, 2010b). This time social and economic reform would drive community building, instead of simply counterdrug programs. These reforms range from job creation to neighborhood zoning (Olson & Wilson, 2010, p. 5).

In her assessment, Villiers Negroponte (2009) concludes that while the Mérida Initiative is a step in the right direction, it is not enough to successfully curtail drug trafficking and violence (p. 40). To date nearly US\$ 2 billion has been used to fund Mérida operations, but only 5% of allotted funds have been spent on economic support (see Table 1). Mérida therefore pales in comparison to financial support received by other U.S. hemispheric partners – Colombia – in the ongoing fight against narco-trafficking (Reuter, 1992). The general rational amongst analysts is that while US\$ 100 million is ample to supply military aid, it is not enough to repair infrastructure and fix social ailments (O’Neil, 2010). In other words, spending so far has been focused too narrowly on military and law enforcement programs. This emphasis is in part due to both the U.S. government and the Mexican government’s preference of combating cartels, violence or otherwise. However, this also reflects a misunderstanding of Mexico’s fundamental challenge; as Mexico’s main obstacles are institutional weakness and economic inequality (Bonner, 2012; Grillo, 2011; O’Neil, 2010).

The difficulties that the Mérida Initiative faces are in no small part of the historical legacy in Mexico. Politically, Mexican insinuations were traditionally used for political benefit – to control rather than aid the population (Vulliamy, 2010). While democratization and across the spectrum competitiveness have rapidly changed the political situation Mexico was in over a decade ago, little transformation has happened in relation to institutional strength or economic inequality. Instead, impunity reigns, as cartels are as much part of society as the government of Mexico. While Beyond Mérida promised sweeping reforms, little has yet to materialize. Mexico’s slow economic growth and weak institutions have left many people in the margins (Grillo, 2011; O’Neil, 2010). With the likelihood of being prosecuted, much less convicted, for a crime, individuals continue to seek out cartel employment. In Ciudad Juárez, for example, some 40% of youth are neither employed nor studying – leaving them without hope for a better future, and, consequently, susceptible to the growing underworld of gangs and crime (O’Neil, 2010, p. 6). The challenges of addressing these underlying socioeconomic factors through reknitting Mexico’s social fabric in places such as Ciudad Juárez is what remains Mexico’s largest obstacle. It is not a coincidence that the extremes of socioeconomic instability and the current level of violence coexist in Mexico.

Beyond Mérida was supposed to change this, yet, social reform programs continue to get pennies for every dollar military aid gets. Even more disturbing is that Mérida's inability to produce accountability mechanisms have led to continued high levels of corruption. Therefore, hiding behind a headline like "300 kg of Marijuana Seized" is the easy – if not only – way to claim success. This masks the problem at hand. Instead of measuring success through each pillar, success is measured through concepts not actually defined by the Mérida Initiative. Once the vast reservoirs of funds from the Mérida Initiative dry up, however, success will hinge upon the strength of state institutions, their implementation of consistent social and economic policies, and long lasting civil support.

According to SAMHSA (2012), the prevalence of illicit drugs will not diminish in the near future, but instead increase due to growing demand and production (p. 89). As both supply and demand grow, so too will the strength of the TCOs. As the cartels grow stronger they become increasingly difficult for law enforcement agencies to combat (Bonner, 2012). Under the Calderón administration, the Mexican government had limited success in establishing the rule of law. Calderón deployed military troops to increase personal security while also limiting corruption in his government (Grillo, 2011; Abu-Hamdeh, 2011, p. 46). Corruption is so widespread, however, and the influence of the cartels so great that even achieving a little more security was a feat. It is estimated that, despite the Mexican government committing thousands of troops and the U.S. supplying millions of dollars to this fight, less than one percent of the billions of illicit drug money is seized (Coleman, 2010). These disheartening statistics suggest that the "Beyond Merida" approach has failed the criteria of decreasing drug operations.

As drug-related violence has continued to rise, so too do questions of whether the "Beyond Mérida" policy has been successful at all. With each small step taken in the direction of increased security, it seems the government of Mexico takes two steps back. U.S. officials have claimed that increasing violence in Mexico is a result of drug demand going down (Olson & Wilson, 2010, p. 6). However, analysts found that drug demand has in fact remained the same, or in some cases increased (Carnevale Associates, 2011; SAMHSA, 2012). The two criteria – reducing violence and improving security – in addition to reducing both drug supply and demand, have not been met. It is clear that the "Beyond Mérida" strategy has not yet been a success. Granted that the

implementation of such an extensive policy takes time and the policy intentions are good, the policy does not account for domestic factors associated with the drug trade and does not focus enough on the underlying social and historical legacies of Mexico.

Where should U.S.-Mexican counter drug policy go from here? It is difficult to decide whether the Mérida Initiative has been a success or not. Considering it has never incorporated any type of measures and has yet to be fully implemented, who can say? Should the Mérida strategy be abandoned? Has Mérida provided enough resources to combat the enormity of TCOs? Should it be coupled with more progressive reforms that address the social lynchpins of drug trafficking? Is the scope of the Mérida strategy too narrow to achieve success? Perhaps the answers lay a little closer to home.

The Mérida Initiative was in fact modeled after other bilateral counterdrug policies. These policies focus on battling the transnational nature of TCOs but do little to address the domestic situations that give rise to them. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, among others in the Obama administration, has been a strong advocate of “shared responsibility” in the face of the drug problem (Clinton, 2010). Ironically, the United States is the largest supplier of assault weapons to the cartels that it is concurrently fighting against, as well as the largest customer of the same drug cartels. Essentially, the cartels are fighting the Mexican government with American weapons. The governments of Mexico and the United States are battling a highly lucrative industry responsible for employing thousands of people and using grizzle intimidation tactics.

Unfortunately, the current policies do not appear to be effective. Too long have these governments relied on military aid, squandering to address the social situation that gives rise to these criminal organizations. A third policy option that should be considered is using the “Beyond Mérida” approach as a building block. A strategy based on socioeconomic reform is more ambitious but they are better adept at handling the complicated realities of the Mexican Narco-War than a helicopter or a boat. While sustained military assistance to Mexico is necessary to curb cartel influence, a broader policy focus is imperative for success as historical failures suggest. Programs implemented in Mexico should focus on both local and national sustainability, something only social and economic reform can provide (Grillo, 2011). Taking a page from Plan

Colombia once again, this policy was successful in some ways just because of the sheer volume of funds and time provided through the governments. Mexico needs consistent, committed funding if nothing else. Consistent, committed funding is essential to empowering social and institutional reforms.

Furthermore, a paradigm shift is vital to stopping the carnage in Mexico. A shared responsibility approach here could be the key. Historically, drug supply countermeasures south of the border have been bombarded with funds, but insufficient attention is given to the problem of demand north of the border. Therefore, a greater focus on domestic problems on both sides of the border is a priority while bilateral cooperation is also maintained. The United States makes up five percent of the world's population and seventeen percent of the world's drug consumers (SAMHSA, 2012). Counterdrug programs must focus on and fund social and community based programs with the same zeal demonstrated through years of counternarcotic military operations in order to effectively reduce drug operations and violence. In addition, combatting the flow of guns south of the border is just as important as stopping illicit drugs from getting north of the border (Seelke & Finklea, 2013, p. 11). While things such as poverty and economic inequality still need to be addressed in Mexico, the United States needs to battle with its own demons of gun culture. Without significant ground being made on both sides of the border and appropriate social reform, the governments of the U.S. and Mexico would be fighting an unwinnable war.

When evaluating options for the future there is only one clear policy choice that both decreases drug operations and increases security in Mexico. The first option is not it. While abandoning Mérida might make way for more adept social program, it leaves security lacking. The second option is not the clear policy choice either. Despite the Mérida Initiative coming leaps and bounds from its military aid focused origins, too much funding is going to providing weaponry to the Mexican military. Without significant change in society, no amount of weapons will ever be able to combat the culture of impunity. So, that leaves option three. Building upon established framework is often the easiest way to implement policy since it provides a starting point. The Mérida Initiative without doubt is a good starting point but more has to be done. Through implementation of social reform, dealing with domestic issues, and still building security cooperation, the third option is the only one that satisfies all the criteria established.



## **5. Conclusion: The Peña Nieto Administration**

The Mérida Initiative has had some positive impacts: it opened dialogue between the United States and Mexico and improved security relations that had been historically lacking. Following the tradition of Calderón, the first trip for then-President-elect Enrique Peña Nieto was to visit Mexico's northern neighbor, the United States. While there, as part of the pledge to a broader reform agenda, President Obama and then-President-elect Enrique Peña Nieto agreed to continue security cooperation on November 27, 2012. Peña Nieto emphasized, however, that his administration would shift security priority to citizen security expressing a desire to "reduce the violence situation" (White House, 2012). This is likely to affect the future direction of bilateral efforts as the Calderón Administration put greater emphasis on state level security rather than individual security. Both he and Obama have also expressed a desire to boost economic ties between the two nations, as part of the United States engaging Mexico's broader society. Still, any results from a comprehensive approach will take time, making it somewhat problematic for policy makers looking for rapid results. It is the next generation that will benefit from socioeconomic reform as better academic and employment opportunities will lead to a more prosperous future. Realistically, it will also take a generation to transform Mexico's institutions, creating systems where impunity is the exception, not the rule.

The drug trafficking problem in Mexico is enormous. Massive surges of violence unquailed by government intervention have accompanied the ever-present culture of impunity associated with drug trafficking. This has been evident in the apparent failures of both Mexican and American drug policies in Mexico. Nevertheless, building upon Mexico's transition over the last two decades, broader U.S.-Mexican economic and political engagement could lead to positive change. This project has outlined the complexity of counterdrug policy and the enormity of the problem in Mexico. After assessing the three options for future cooperation using the established criteria, the third

policy emerges as the best course of action for Mexico: the “Beyond Mérida” approach should proceed while focusing on domestic social factors that influence the drug trade.

“Beyond Mérida” should be used as a framework for a more progressive policy that will incorporate a sustained, long-term commitment to reform Mexican society and institutions, both a victim of cartel influence. To truly eradicate the rampant culture of impunity, civil involvement is necessary. One of the most positive aspects of Mexico’s recent tradition has been the expansion of its middle class and civil society. Historically seen as a country of “haves” and “have nots,” Mexico’s broader economic reforms, in conjunction with the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) has led to stable economic growth that has enabled the rise of a Mexican middle class – over some 30 million strong (de la Calle & Rubio, 2012). It was through this middle class that democratization began in 2000, pushing out Mexico’s seven decade ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), who had long-time implicit arrangements with narcotic traffickers (Masci, 2001). As voters, the middle class was responsible for one of the largest seismic political shifts in Mexico’s history and remain an essential group for future political reform in Mexico. As such, this economic and voting bloc represents a strong ally for the United States and Mexican reformers intent on strengthening state institutions and reforming society.

A military-centered aid approach is not working. Plan Colombia showed that cartel influence could be eradicated, but only through social and economic reforms (Flores & Lallande, 2009). Historically, Mexican presidents have fought organized crime through “combating fire with more fire” with little to show for it (as cited in Abu-Hamdeh, 2011, p. 50). Clearly, a new approach is necessary. In Mexico this has been realized through President Peña Nieto’s pledge to continue the fight not only against the cartels but against poverty, violence, and impunity as well. Despite Peña Nieto’s supposed reformist agenda, opposition leaders from the conservative National Action Party (PAN) and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution have endorsed President Peña Nieto’s policies under the unified “Pact of Mexico” (Associated Press, 2012). Defying the partisan history of Mexico, there seems to be a new atmosphere in Mexican politics where politicians are ready to tackle the problems of economic depravity and corruption, at least for now.

President Peña Nieto outlined a strategy that aims to achieve a “Mexico in Peace” where success is no longer measured by amounts of drugs seized or number of cartel leaders arrested, instead measured in reductions in violent crime rates (Corcoran, 2012). As President Peña Nieto put it, “[Mexico is] in no way abandoning the fight,” but being able to cope with changing obstacles will be a sticking point for future U.S.-Mexican security relations as both the specific type of assistance and the depth of U.S. involvement requested by the Peña Nieto government are likely to change (see Peña Nieto, 2012). Peña Nieto’s security strategy explicitly prioritizes crime prevention, citizen participation, and human rights; essentially switching the focus of the Mérida strategy from emphasizing military efforts (pillar one) to a broader socioeconomic reform foundation (found in pillars two and four). Policy makers, however, are likely to closely monitor whether or not those pledges are translated into concrete results.

Many details of Peña Nieto’s security strategy will have implications for the future of U.S.-Mexican cooperation and the Mérida Initiative. It is as yet unclear as to what type of success this new strategy will produce. Theoretic strategies that envision sweeping reforms are all well and good but without tangible results can fall to the wayside. As discussed before, rather dismantling what has already been done, a reconfiguring of collective priorities could prove to be a more effective way to deal with the cartel problem. Problems with security and drug trafficking in Mexico require long-term solutions, and therefore a comprehensive program should address a range of criminality.

Mexico’s government and people have shown an admirable dedication to eliminating drug cartels and the culture of impunity in their country. Meanwhile, the United States has a unique relationship with Mexico and will play an important role in this fight. Nevertheless, as the bodies pile up daily along the U.S.-Mexican border, it remains uncertain whether politicians in Mexico and the United States will have both the patience and resolve to see the fight through. If they do, real reforms have to be made and there is a chance in ten years that the situation in Mexico will be gone, or at least improved. If they don’t, both countries will be facing the same challenges in a decade. Assembling the success that has already been made, and building on it far into the future, a strong framework of institutional and social reform should be the basis for the next phase of U.S.-Mexico security cooperation in this fight against the cartels.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A.

### Complete Funding Table

**Table A1. 2007-2013 U.S. Assistance to Mexico by Account**  
(Figures in Millions)

Account	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 (Estimate)	Account Totals	2013 (Request)
INCLE	36.7	263.5	406.0	365.0	117.0	248.5	1,436.7	199.0
ESF	11.4	20.0	15.0	15.0	18.0	33.3	112.7	35.0
FMF	0.0	116.5	299.0 <sup>a</sup>	5.3	8.0	7.0	435.8	7.0
IMET	0.1	0.4	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.6	4.9	1.5
NADR	1.3	1.4	3.9	3.9	5.7	5.4	21.6	4.0
GHCS <sup>b</sup>	3.7	2.7	2.9	3.5	3.5	1.0	17.3	0.0
DA	12.3	8.2	11.2	10.0	25.0	33.4	100.1	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>412.7</b>	<b>738.8</b>	<b>403.7</b>	<b>178.2</b>	<b>330.2</b>	<b>2,129.1</b>	<b>269.5</b>

Sources: U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY2008-FY2012, FY2013 Executive Budget Summary*.

Notes: GHCS=Global Health and Child Survival; DA=Development Assistance; ESF=Economic Support Fund; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; IMET=International Military Education and Training; INCLE=International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; NADR=Non-proliferation, Anti-terrorism and Related Programs.

- a. \$94 million counted here as part of 2009 funding was considered by appropriators "forward funding" intended to address in advance a portion of the 2010 request.
- b. Prior to 2008, the Global Health and Child Survival account was known as Child Survival and Health.