

**PUSHING THE PROBLEM SOUTH: INTERDICTION AT
MEXICO'S SOUTHERN BORDER AND THE 2014 U.S.
MIGRANT CRISIS**

By

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned **Jordan Weinberg** hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

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Abstract

The U.S. sought to make its under-preparedness regarding the reception of migrant children, the underlying cause of the 2014 migrant crisis, anomalous. The extreme jump in inflows of unaccompanied children was soon made to be short-lived. As will be detailed in the following sections, in the aftermath of the migrant surge at the U.S. southwest border the U.S.' orientation towards the point of migrant interdiction swiftly changed course.

This paper seeks to understand why the U.S. migrant crisis of 2014 precipitated a southward push of the point of migrant interdiction away from the U.S./Mexico border and towards Mexico's southern border. In doing so, this paper will trace a short history of Mexico's border security policy leading up to and in response to the crisis, framing increasing interdiction at Mexico's southern border as the result of U.S. support of Mexico's border security policy within the context of U.S. foreign policy interests.

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Table of contents

Author's Declaration.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
List of Abbreviations	v
Introduction.....	1
1. Background.....	3
1.1 Why did they come to the border at once? An empirical understanding of pull factors	5
1.2 A short history of migration into Mexico	6
1.2.1 Early to mid-20 th century	6
1.2.2 Mid to late-20 th century and beyond	7
2. Forging a new security framework: A conceptual linking of U.S. hegemony and border security in post-Cold War Latin America.....	8
2.1 Advancing the U.S.' security agenda as sustaining U.S. hegemony	8
2.2 Counterterrorism and counternarcotics as the face of the post-Cold-War U.S. security agenda in Latin America.....	9
2.3 Border security as a pillar of post-9/11 U.S. security agenda.....	11
2.4 Position within the literature.....	13
3. Explaining-Outcome process tracing.....	15
4. Findings.....	18
4.1 Mexico: A thoroughfare.....	18
4.2 Mexico's border policy's brief changing face	19
4.3 The rise of Plan Sur.....	20
4.4 9/11 and the push south.....	22
4.5 Between programs	24
4.6 A renewed focus on the southern border	26
4.7 The Southern Border Program	28
4.7.1 An American prelude	28
4.7.2 Implementation of the Southern Border Program.....	29
Conclusion	32
References.....	34

List of Abbreviations

9/11- September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks

ABA- American Bar Association

AIC- American Immigration Council

AUC- *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defenders of Colombia)

CBP- Customs and Border Protection

DHS- Department of Homeland Security

DoD- Department of Defense

EOIR- Executive Office for Immigration Review

FARC- *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)

FY- Fiscal Year

ICE- Immigration and Customs Enforcement

INM- *Instituto Nacional de Migracion* (Institute of National Migration)

NAFTA- North American Free Trade Agreement

ORR/HSS- Office of Refugee Resettlement/Health and Human Services

PPP- Puebla Panama Plan

TGPT- Theory Guided Process Tracing

TVPRA- William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act

Introduction

The portrait of the “illegal immigrant” in the U.S. is often erroneously assigned the label “Mexican”. Though true that Mexico is still the top origin country, non-Mexicans now comprise the majority of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S [Krogstad, Passel, and Cohn 2017]- in part due to a steep rise in immigrants originating from Central America. Political instability, poor socioeconomic conditions and pervasive criminal violence (particularly in the “Northern Triangle” countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) have all but necessitated mass migration- resulting in Central Americans having become “the fastest growing segment of the Latin American immigrant population” in the last decade [Stoney and Batalova 2013].

This large-scale mobilization came to a head in 2014 when the U.S. experienced an unprecedented surge in the number of Central Americans attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border [Kandel 2017]- quickly dubbed an “immigration crisis” by domestic and international media alike [Greenblatt 2014; Nazario 2014; del Bosque 2014; Frum 2014; Lee 2014].

The “crisis” was not one of sheer volume of total inflows- yearly apprehension totals occurring at the U.S.’ southwest border in the first half of the 2000’s dwarf the amount registered in 2014 [Washington Office on Latin America 2016]- but rather one of procedural incapacity for a particular type of inflow. The defining characteristics of apprehensions in 2014 that distinguished that year’s inflow from years’ prior were the unusually high number of unaccompanied children and the children’s countries of origin. The 47,017 children apprehended in the first eight months of 2014 easily exceeded the 38,833 for the entirety of 2013, up from 24,481 in 2012 and 16,067 in 2011 [Negroponte 2014]. Additionally, 75 percent of the almost 70,000 unaccompanied children apprehended at the southwest border in 2014

originated from the Northern Triangle [Kandel 2017]. Five years prior, these figures were respectively only 18 percent and just under 20,000 [Ibid].

The U.S. sought to make its under-preparedness regarding the reception of migrant children, the underlying cause of the crisis, anomalous. The extreme jump in inflows of unaccompanied children was soon made to be short-lived. As will be detailed in the following sections, in the aftermath of the migrant surge at the U.S. southwest border the U.S.' orientation towards the point of migrant interdiction swiftly changed course.

This paper seeks to understand why the U.S. migrant crisis of 2014 precipitated a southward push of the point of migrant interdiction away from the U.S.-Mexico border and towards Mexico's southern border. In doing so, this paper will trace a short history of Mexico's border security policy leading up to and in response to the crisis, framing increasing interdiction at Mexico's southern border as the result of U.S. support of Mexico's border security policy within the context of U.S. foreign policy interests.

In order to define, and develop a deeper understanding of, U.S. foreign policy interests, this paper will explore the historical formulation of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America after the Cold War and how changes in U.S. foreign policy have shaped both the U.S. conception of security in the region as well as the effect this change has had on the Latin American countries themselves. Building off of this framework, further sections will apply this knowledge in relation to the U.S.' role in the construction of Mexico's border security policy in an attempt to understand the degree to which U.S. intervention is responsible for explaining outcomes in Mexico's border security policy development.

1. Background

The above-mentioned procedural incapacity stemmed from overwhelming numbers of unaccompanied children that, by law, are guaranteed care and placement [U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2015]. Unaccompanied children first encounter Customs and Border Protection [(CBP): an agency within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)]- after a determination is made by CBP that a child is an unaccompanied minor, DHS is required to transfer the child to the Office of Refugee Resettlement/Department of Health and Human Services (ORR/HSS)- which is then tasked with the provision of services to the child [Ibid].

In 2013, the DHS reported 23,000 transfers of unaccompanied children to ORR/HSS. Owing to the crisis, in 2014 this number rose to almost 58,000. By way of comparison, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations Assistant Director of Field Operations, Philip Miller, in a written testimony to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, characterized the over 18,000 transfers by the third quarter of 2015 as a, “return to more manageable numbers” [Ibid].

Domestically, atypical treatment procedures were adopted to deliver the required services to the influx of unaccompanied children. The inflows of migration in the U.S. reached crisis level not only due to the lack of preparedness for the sudden surge of unaccompanied children but due to the children’s geographical concentration- with an overwhelming number of children crossing the border in the Rio Grande Valley region and who as detailed above, require special processing and treatment [Stinchcomb and Hershberg 2014]. The 77 percent increase in CBP apprehensions of unaccompanied children from 2013 to 2014 highlighted discrepancies between government agencies’ supposed capacities and their ability to meet the extent of such an inflow of migration [Ibid]. Data provided by the CBP regarding year-to-year

apprehensions of unaccompanied children show that this type of, “migration from Central America is clearly not a new phenomenon” [Ibid].

The specific clustering of migration in the Rio Grande Valley however overwhelmed CBP agents and required the reallocation of agency personnel and migrant children [Hennessey-Fiske and Carcamo 2014], as well as atypical coordination between federal departments. Within the DHS, Secretary Jeh Johnson authorized the use of two immigration processing centers to house incoming children while rerouting hundreds of CBP patrol agents from less active border crossing sites to the Rio Grande Valley area [The White House 2014a].

The Department of Defense (DoD) lent use of various military installations to provide for the housing of migrant children as HHS required space to deliver services and care- in part due to the “overcrowding at CBP border facilities” [Ibid]. In total, DoD facilities were responsible for housing almost 8,000 children [Ibid]- over one-tenth of the total amount apprehended in the U.S. in 2014 alone.

Furthermore, the Department of Justice’s Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) published “an interim rule allowing for the designation of temporary immigration judges” [U.S. Department of Justice 2014] prioritizing the cases of unaccompanied children. EOIR’s move was criticized by the American Immigration Council (AIC), which argued that expedited adjudication likely preys on the unaccompanied children’s lack of understanding of court processes and notice of court proceedings [American Immigration Council 2016]. Furthermore, the American Bar Association (ABA) notes that far too few judges were appointed to provide temporary immigration assistance- doing little to address the growing backlog of cases and perhaps exacerbating the concerns of the AIC [American Bar Association 2014].

DHS opened two new processing centers to receive unaccompanied children, increased transportation resources to remove and relocate unaccompanied children from overcrowded housing facilities, and additionally instructed immigration prosecuting attorneys within the agency to, “prioritize cases related to unaccompanied children and adults with children” [The White House 2014a].

Finally, HHS raised the ceiling for the maximum number of children it can shelter in standard facilities for delivering care in order to provide for an almost three times greater number of children cared for as compared to the year prior [Ibid].

1.1 Why did they come to the border at once? An empirical understanding of pull factors

Though empirical evidence provides an understanding of the motivations for Central American emigration as not unique (and existing prior) to 2014, a less clear picture exists of the direct causes for the surge in unaccompanied children at this particular time.

The primary reasoning behind the occurrence of the surge is thought to have been the spread of misinformation regarding the treatment of Central American migrants under U.S. immigration policies [Farah 2016]. In analyzing the various pull factors of Central American women and children, Chishti and Hipsman note that many believed there existed, “a new U.S. law that granted a *permiso* (free pass) to non-Mexican women traveling with minors and unaccompanied children” [Chishti and Hipsman 2015]. This belief, while containing a grain of truth, stemmed from an unclear understanding of a 2008 Congressional act, the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). TVPRA postponed the immediate deportation of unaccompanied children from Central America and allowed the children to “present their claim for relief under U.S. law before an immigration judge” [Ibid]

while the children were typically turned over to family members residing in U.S. where the case, “could take months, if not years, to complete” [Ibid].

Adding to the proliferation of immigration policy rumors were human smuggling networks keen on exploiting a lucrative opportunity [Renwick 2014]. Former Vice President Joe Biden, speaking at the U.S. embassy in Guatemala estimated that, “between 75 and 80 percent [of Central American migrants] rely on very dangerous... human-smuggling networks that transport them through Central America and Mexico to the United States” [The White House 2014b.] Unauthorized immigration of Central Americans through Mexico and into the U.S. peaked in the mid-2000s, garnering the attention of Mexican immigration authorities. Seelke opines that an increased focus on targeting human smuggling has since made, “smuggling routes... more dangerous and therefore more costly” [Seelke 2016a] - making human smuggling, according to a 2010 UN report, an approximately \$6.6USD billion-per year industry [Associated Press 2014].

1.2 A short history of migration into Mexico

1.2.1 Early to mid-20th century

Mexico’s southern border with Guatemala has historically experienced two primary types of inflows of Central American migrants. One type of migration is temporary and Mexico is positioned as a destination rather than a thoroughfare to the U.S. This type of migration is seasonal and migrants are constituted primarily of peasant farmers from Guatemala attaining work, “in the planting and harvest of sugar cane, bananas, and other produce... [which] have long complemented [farmers’] income from subsistence farming on small plots of land in Guatemala” [Castillo 2006].

Migration from Guatemala to Mexico was long tolerated on the basis of Mexico's need, "to maintain an abundant pool of low-wage labor" in the leading agriculture producing, southern Mexican state of Chiapas [Garcia 2006]. The fluidness of such transborder migration called into question the artificiality of a border itself- Chiapas was annexed from Guatemala in 1824 [Cal y Mayor 1995], dividing the indigenous communities that long populated the area in pre-colonial times. Border enforcement would have likely served to undermine the important, "historical, cultural, and commercial ties between Chiapas and Guatemala" forged by over a century of bilateral trade and commerce [Garcia 2006].

1.2.2 Mid to late-20th century and beyond

The second type of migration is more akin to the refuge and the escape of Central Americans from, "civil war and associated economic, political and social upheaval" [Johnson 2008] partially responsible for fueling the events of 2014. Prior to today's regional insecurities faced by the various Northern Triangle countries as a consequence of drug-related criminal violence and the internal political conflicts of decades past, migration from Central America (transiting through Mexico) to the U.S. was relatively uncommon. Before a successive wave of oppressive regimes in northern Central America from the 1970s to 1990s, cities like "Washington, San Francisco, New York, and Miami," [Garcia 2006] had small but dense Central American populations. These population centers later "served as magnets, encouraging further migration" as the political violence necessitated the northward migration of Central Americans- particularly from Guatemala and El Salvador [Ibid]. Mexico's role as a thoroughfare for Central Americans has to this day intensified as migrants, "cross Mexico's southern border... and continue through Mexico en route to the United States" [Johnson 2008] joining the now established communities of Central Americans in many of the U.S.' major metropolitan areas.

2. Forging a new security framework: A conceptual linking of U.S. hegemony and border security in post-Cold War Latin America

Through the lens of its impact on U.S. foreign policy, identifying the U.S.' policy response to the 2014 crisis as an isolated incident removes it from its historical context. The sociopolitical factors, namely criminal violence and illicit drug trafficking, that precipitated the 2014 crisis are necessarily understood as inextricably linked to the last three decades of both increased northward migratory patterns of Northern Triangle residents and U.S.' foreign policy vis a vis security in Central America.

Furthermore, in expanding the scope of this paper from a sole focus on Central America to one inclusive of South America, the term "Latin America" will be adopted to henceforth identify Central and South America in one grouping. As such, a critical understanding of the U.S. policy response and the effect it had (and continues to have) on Mexico's increased interdiction of Central American migrants situates it among alike, historical U.S. involvement in Latin America.

The question then becomes not one of "is the U.S. outsourcing border security to Mexico?" but, "*why* is the U.S. outsourcing border security to Mexico?"

2.1 Advancing the U.S.' security agenda as sustaining U.S. hegemony

The U.S.' current unrivaled position as global hegemon has lent itself to, "consolidate, exploit, and expand [its] relative advantage" [Posen 2003]. This is primarily based on the U.S.' "command of the commons"- the idea that the U.S. through its relative advantage over all other sovereign states is afforded, "vastly more military use out of the sea, space, and air than

[others]... and that others would lose a military contest for the commons if they attempted to deny them to the United States” [Ibid].

Its “command of the commons” has allowed the U.S. to enjoy a “unipolar moment” [Ibid] following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This unipolar moment, the foundation for the current state of U.S. hegemony, has been the vehicle for the implementation of U.S. foreign policy. Posen and Ross suggest that the proliferation of U.S. security interests, “is motivated by both power and peace” [Posen and Ross 1996]. Central to achieving peace however is the configuration of power, and a system in which, “only a preponderance of U.S. power ensures peace” [Ibid].

This particular brand of hegemony, which Posen and Ross label “primacy”, is integral to an understanding of U.S. foreign policy since the Cold War, as the “United States’ preeminence in a unipolar system has been the overriding grand strategic goal of every administration beginning with that of President George H.W. Bush” [Layne 2009]. Brooks and Wohlforth take this further and argue that the post-Cold War international system has gifted the U.S. an opportunity to, “reshape key elements of the [international] system to better serve [U.S. security] interests” [Brooks and Wohlforth 2008]. As such, U.S. foreign policy in regards to the advancement of U.S. security interests is central to maintaining the U.S. global standing.

2.2 Counterterrorism and counternarcotics as the face of the post-Cold-War U.S. security agenda in Latin America

The absence of threat based on a fear of “international communism” [Petras 2000] upon the end of the Cold War led to a, “generational shift of political attitudes and conditions in Latin America, the United States, and the world” [Carothers 1990]. Carothers notes that the primary driver in U.S. policy toward Latin America had been, “the desire to prevent the

emergence of leftist or perceived Communist governments from coming to power,” [Ibid] and as this threat declined significantly with the fall of the Soviet Union the result was a policy vacuum in regards to the scope, or mission, of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America.

Though no clear issue of overwhelming importance set the agenda for future U.S. involvement in Latin America in the years immediately following the Cold War (post-1991), Carothers theorized that U.S.-Latin America interests would primarily revolve around economics or areas with, “strong economic components (such as drugs and immigration)” [Ibid]. This was evident in Plan Colombia, finalized in 2000, which sought to strengthen the connection between “economic development and security,” [Marcella 2001] as the primary driver in securing peace in Colombia as U.S. “primacy” saw fit.

However, 9/11 dramatically reshaped the U.S. foreign policy agenda in Latin America—away from a link between economic development and security link and towards one between anti-terrorism and security. Now, circling back to the Cold War, a focus on containing and eliminating the “internal enemy” was key to achieving U.S. security goals of Cold War-era Latin America. In this sense, a focus on, combatting local communism became key to the U.S. regional security doctrine. Post-9/11, though the threat of communism was gone, the “internal enemy” remained. In the context of post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy, the “internal enemy” took the form of homegrown Islamist terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and al Qaeda [Emerson 2010].

Ever the focus on the “internal enemy” and absent of communist encroachment on the state as well as Islamism, U.S. counterterrorism in the context of its security interests in Latin America became explicitly linked with counternarcotics. A shift in policy in both action and rhetoric abruptly occurred, as the “War on Terror” and the “War on Drugs” became a two-headed beast of sorts, and, “the Secretary of Defense made countering terrorism the U.S.

military's number one priority" [Isacson, Olson, and Haugaard 2007]. The newfound mission of the U.S. Southern Command, in charge of, "support[ing] U.S. national security objectives" in Latin America (officially: Central America, South America, and the Caribbean) [U.S. Southern Command], resulted in the "War on Terror" slowly bleeding into the "War on Drugs" as, "[d]rug traffickers became 'narco-terrorists' [and] [a]ll illicit cross-border activity...became potential channels for terrorism" [Ibid].

Battagliano argues that the U.S.' two-pronged "War on Terror"/"War on Drugs" focus in Latin America has quickly supplanted any competing security interest in the region and that the two "wars" together serve as, "the guiding mission for Washington's assistance programmes in the region" [Battagliano 2012]. Empirical evidence makes this statement largely inarguable. As of 2007, U.S. economic assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean, "exceeds military aid by only about a third", down from the late 1990s when economic assistance, "equaled more than twice the amount of military and police aid" [Isacson, Olson, and Haugaard 2007].

Furthermore, in reviewing the main premise of the above section- i.e. that any advancing of the U.S. security agenda is a move to sustain U.S. hegemony- then the "War on Terror"/"War on Drugs" serve as, "one pretext to deepen bilateral military relations with Latin American countries" [Mercille 2011] and advance U.S. security interests further.

2.3 Border security as a pillar of post-9/11 U.S. security agenda

Even prior to 9/11, border insecurity remained one of the primary vehicles in achieving stability as seen fit by the U.S. regional security agenda. In 1999, from the U.S. vantage point, insecurity along the Colombia-Panama border region all but necessitated intervention. A combination of significant drug and firearm smuggling and the intensification of the conflict

between FARC and AUC paramilitaries, “converted the country into a serious threat to regional security in northern South America,” for the Clinton Administration- the importance of maintaining border security in Colombia influenced significantly the creation of Plan Colombia [Bagley 2001].

In acknowledging the recent spread of democracy throughout Latin America and the uptick in drug trafficking through the Mexico-Central America corridor, the U.S. Western Hemisphere security strategy (pertaining to Latin America) has replaced the “proliferation of communist governments” with “narcoterrorism” as the primary security threat in the region. As such, Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, General James T. Hill, on the regional security issues faced by Latin America, painted the threat of narcoterrorism as “a weed” that thrives in “ungoverned spaces such as... unpopulated border areas” [Manwaring et al. 2003].

Border security is seen not as separate from the U.S. counternarcotics focus in its foreign policy towards Mexico but rather as a means to reduce the production, supply, and spread of narcotics. Meyer and Seelke contend that border insecurity along Mexico’s southern border is a result of the structural weaknesses of the governments of Mexico and the Northern Triangle countries, as neither possesses, “operational control over their borders and territories” [Meyer and Seelke 2014]. Growing concerns over the position of Central America as a thoroughfare in the transportation of cocaine from South America to the U.S. were validated in 2011 by a series of maps made public by the United States Southern Command. Two of the maps highlighting suspicious air and maritime activity show a disproportionate amount of stopovers in Central American countries [U.S. Southern Command 2011]. Ports along the coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala are considered to be “the principal transshipment points” for cocaine entering Mexico and the U.S. [Selee, Arnson, and Olson 2013].

While interdiction of migrants is of secondary concern to narcotics, unimpeded migration represents a symptom of border insecurity that exacerbates weaknesses in border control as migration widens the scope, and stretches thin the capabilities, of what border patrols must police. As in Plan Colombia, Mexico's Merida Initiative (detailed later in section 4.6) maintains that poor socioeconomic performance and the criminal violence associated with drug trafficking are the primary contributors to regional instability [Cook and Seelke 2008]. With the Merida Initiative and Mexico's Southern Border Program (detailed later in section 4.7), a counternarcotics focus is in turn a focus on eliminating the factors that stunt regional security and in a sense, the potential of prosperity or at the very least the potential of stability- prosperity and stability both significant motivating forces of emigration.

2.4 Position within the literature

In reviewing the above literature, primarily of the international relations discipline, a clear focus is placed on primacy's (or hegemony's) role in the proliferation of U.S. foreign policy interests vis a vis security. Instead of opting to continue in this line of research, this paper is constructed around building on the existing literature in order to better understand the impact of hegemony in the development of policy. As to be explained in the following section, this paper is primarily concerned with an understanding of U.S. primacy's role in deciding, or at the very least influencing, the development of Mexico's border security policy. In the context of foreign policy, much attention is paid to macro-level power relations and political cost-benefit calculations between states- states being the primary actors. As discussed further, this paper focuses not only on the power relations and political cost- benefit calculations between states themselves but between individual actors (and agencies) responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy. In doing so, this paper seeks to understand not only whether

U.S. primacy is present in regards to the formulation of Mexican border security policy but also how exactly it manifests.

3. Explaining-Outcome process tracing

This paper seeks to situate the southward push of the point of migrant interdiction away from the U.S.-Mexico border and towards Mexico's southern border after the 2014 U.S. border crisis among the historical occurrence of the role of U.S. primacy and its influence on Mexico's security policy post-9/11.

In an attempt to do so, a process-tracing method will be employed to provide an answer to the paper's primary question, exploring the historical role of U.S. foreign policy in the formulation of Mexico's border security policy. The analysis will trace the history of post-9/11 U.S.' foreign policy in Mexico vis a vis border security leading up to the formulation of Mexico's Southern Border Program, framing increasing interdiction at Mexico's southern border as the result of U.S. support of, and intervention into, Mexico's border security policy within the context of U.S. foreign policy and hegemonic interests in Mexico.

Collier writes of using a process-tracing method in one's research that in, "characterize[ing] a process, we must be able to characterize [the] key steps in the process" [Collier 2011]. Even further, this paper's attempt to make an inference in the discovery of the link between the nature of U.S. primacy (and foreign policy interests) and the subsequent effect on Mexican border policy is an analysis of a process that rests on a conceptual understanding of U.S. primacy and as such takes the form of "theory guided process tracing" or TGPT [Falletti 2006].

The theoretical lessons deduced from the existing literature on U.S. foreign policy in Latin America post-9/11 suggest that Mexico's border security policy is heavily influenced by U.S. primacy and U.S. primacy's shaping of its foreign policy agenda. Given the above section's discussion of U.S. primacy and further foreign policy outcomes, this paper puts

forward the hypothesis that U.S. primacy resulted in the push of the point of migrant interdiction away from the U.S.-Mexico border and towards Mexico's southern border after the U.S. migrant crisis of 2014.

However, this paper is neither "theory-testing" nor "theory-building" but rather using the theory of U.S. primacy as a foundation for crafting an explanation of a particular outcome, studying not the mechanisms that cause Mexican border policy but the particular outcome that resulted in the push of migrant interdiction southward to Mexico's southern border [Beach and Pedersen 2013]. As such, instead of taking a "theory-centric" approach attempting to build on generalizable theories, this paper takes a "case-centric" approach, focusing on the complexity of a context-specific case. This is due to the fact that, "producing knowledge that can be generalized across many cases [is] difficult" while accounting, "for particularly puzzling outcomes" such as why interdiction spiked along Mexico's southern border after the 2014 U.S. migrant crisis is more manageable [Ibid].

In this sense, theory takes the form of a heuristic device guiding the inductive approach to examining the "facts" of the case at hand. Examining evidence related to the formulation of Mexican border security policy leading up to and since 9/11 and its applicability to the hypothesis that U.S. primacy has held considerable influence- helps to establish the premise of U.S. primacy as a necessary criterion that may explain Mexico's actions.

In the context of the "Explaining-Outcome" mode of process tracing as defined by Beach and Pedersen and to be employed in this paper, historical narratives provide a rich source for which outcomes may be explained. One particular historical junction along the chronology of Mexico's southern border security policy, leading up to and since 9/11, represents a critical point of interest in identifying the mechanisms of U.S. primacy that are hypothesized as

informing the Southern Border Program. This point is the predecessor to the Southern Border Program known as *Plan Sur* (Plan South).

The hypothesis focuses primarily on U.S. primacy's effect on the proliferation of counterterrorism and counternarcotics security policy in Mexico and the subsequent effect on post-2014 migrant crisis Mexican border security. In addition, the hypothesis positions domestic state agency in Mexico as secondary in power to U.S. primacy in the formulation of bilateral security agendas in Latin America. This is necessary to establish the relationship between U.S. primacy and the increased migrant interdiction at Mexico's southern border vis a vis Mexico's Southern Border Program in order to answer the question:

Q: *How did U.S. primacy precipitate a push of the point of migrant interdiction away from the U.S.-Mexico border and towards Mexico's southern border after the U.S. migrant crisis of 2014?*

4. Findings

4.1 Mexico: A thoroughfare

Mexico experienced an immense population growth in the middle of the 20th century growing from 19.7 million in 1940 to 48.2 million in 1970 [Tuiran et al. 2002]. The sudden population explosion placed a, “growing strain on the economy and state services” [Fitzgerald 2008]. In 1974, the government of Mexico responded by increasing restriction of immigration into Mexico through the reformation of the 1947 Law of Population [Ibid].

U.S. primacy had little to no effect on Mexico’s 1974 immigration reform rather it was Mexico’s internal population dilemma that necessitated such reform. However, it is important to establish Mexico’s position today as a place of transit for migrants moving onto the U.S as an occurrence that resulted both because of and in spite of the reforms.

Firstly, Mexico’s restrictive immigration policy made it so that, “obtaining permanent work authorization in Mexico became more difficult than receiving a ‘green card’ for the United States” [Buchenau 2001]. For Central Americans this removed the incentive of Mexico as a destination for temporary employment given that a path to legal migration was unlikely to occur. Additionally, Central Americans had to contend with the illegality of such migration into Mexico, an offense punishable with imprisonment [Contreras and Campbell 2006].

Secondly, owing to the hypocrisy of, “expect[ing] the United States to continue to serve as a safety valve,” in mitigating the economic consequences of Mexico’s extreme population growth while at the same time severely restricting immigration into Mexico [Buchenau 2001], later administrations revisited the 1974 reforms and progressively softened their stance on immigration [Ibid], eventually culminating in the 2008 decriminalization of illegal entry into

Mexico [Gonzalez-Murphy and Koslowski 2011]. The leap in migration from Central America to the U.S. in the 1990s and 2000s corresponds with the rhetorical promises of a more liberalized immigration policy and Mexico's tacit acceptance of Central Americans transiting through it en route to the U.S.- evidenced by the federal provision of migrant assistance services (such as Grupo Beta [Smith 2001]) operating in conjunction with the existing laws that attempting to curtail migrants arrival into Mexico.

4.2 Mexico's border policy's brief changing face

Throughout the duration of Vicente Fox's Presidential campaign, Fox pledged his support for tackling the problem of illegal Central American migration into Mexico while at the same time making rhetorical promises to focus on assisting Central American migrants in the dangers they faced transiting through Mexico [Palacios 2002]. After his victory in December 2000, Fox stepped aside from the restrictive immigration policies that persisted throughout the last quarter of the 20th century, and sought to instead enact preventative measures- targeting economic development in Mexico and Central America. Fox's plan, Puebla Panama Plan (PPP), focused largely on the proposed establishment of maquiladoras (assembly factories) in southern Mexico and nearby Central American states in an attempt to mitigate the causes for potential Central American migration into Mexico, while providing a promise of immediate employment for local populations and the opportunity for long term economic growth in the hope that multinational corporations would continue in expanding their presence in the region [O'Neil et al. 2004].

Though PPP was eventually adopted and continues to this day, as President George W. Bush took office in January 2001, the focus began to shift away from preventative measures targeting development and back towards restrictive measures directly intended to halt flows of migrants.

4.3 The rise of Plan Sur

Immigration reform was touted as one of then-candidate George W. Bush's key domestic priorities. Bush aggressively pursued states with large Latino voting bases, "stumping for Latino votes in California, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Florida, and New York," throughout his Presidential campaign- stressing the U.S. (and his own personal) cultural and economic ties to Mexico and its citizens [Gutierrez 2007]. Upon assuming office, President Bush's first official foreign visit was to President Fox at his ranch in San Cristobal, Mexico [Bush 2001]. Here, President Bush and President Fox agreed upon a bilateral approach to migration titled, "Towards a Partnership for Prosperity: the Guanajuato Proposal", with a focus on tightening border controls of both countries in order to address growing concerns over illegal migration and its effect on the economic partnership of U.S.-Mexico in the context of NAFTA and subsequent labor migration agreements.

Though the convergence of national security and migration of the post-9/11 era of U.S.-Mexico bilateral relations had as of yet not occurred, the groundwork for Mexico's adherence to U.S. foreign policy interests was laid. The Guanajuato Proposal represented a swift change of rhetoric from President Fox's promise to push for an open border a la the European Union only a few months prior to his meeting with President Bush [Unnamed 2000].

Over the following months took place a series of, "formal high-level discussions... on migration and labor issues between Mexico and the United States [as] [b]oth governments recognize[d] that migration and its relationship with border safety [were] a shared responsibility" [U.S. Department of State 2001]. On June 22nd, 2001 the U.S. Department of State released a statement detailing the meetings that took place in the U.S. between the Secretary of State and the Attorney General of the United States and the Secretary of Foreign Relations and the Secretary of the Interior of Mexico on April 4th, June 6th, and June 8th. These

meetings consisted of a review of border policies in both countries and their subsequent alignment with the U.S.-Mexico's "common goal" of the Guanajuato Proposal- the restriction of the flow of migrants over the U.S.-Mexico border [Ibid]. Out of these meetings was drafted the, "Plan of Action for Cooperation on Border Safety", containing one significant pillar- the dismantling of networks of smuggling and trafficking into Mexico and subsequently the U.S.

In the weeks following the U.S. Department of State's public release of the "Plan of Action for Cooperation on Border Safety", Mexico launched "Plan Sur", which represented a reversal of course regarding the previously lax enforcement of Mexico's southern border around the state of Chiapas. The U.S.-backed border security policy "was designed as a short-term crackdown on irregular migration on the Mexico-Guatemala border" [Ogren 2007]. A significant motivation for Mexico's Plan Sur was the U.S.' rebuke of President Fox's "open border" plan. As a Presidential candidate, Bush condemned Fox's push to liberalize movement along the U.S.-Mexico border. In a meeting with President Fox, Bush noted that he, "believe[d] [the U.S.] ought to enforce our borders" [Kettle 2000]. In this sense, the implementation of Plan Sur was based on Mexico's understanding that the U.S. held significant leverage as the dominant receiving country of emigration from Mexico and as such the U.S., "encouraged Mexico's implementation of Plan Sur, particularly if Fox wanted to advance his immigration agenda in the United States" [Grayson 2002].

Plan Sur represented Mexico's acknowledgement of U.S. primacy through its attempt to placate U.S. interests in tackling smuggling and trafficking at Mexico's southern border in order for Mexico to establish the necessary environment for achieving its own policy goals- goals which depended on satisfying U.S. foreign policy interests of the time. Plan Sur fits this paper's conceptual framework of U.S. primacy as informing Mexico's border security policy as it was Mexico's acceptance of the preponderance of U.S. power in bilateral migration talks

that dictated the playing field (U.S. tit-for-tat encouragement of Plan Sur in exchange for receptiveness towards Mexico's migration agenda) and Mexico's subsequent border policy (Mexico's logic of consequence in accepting the U.S.' position of leverage).

4.4 9/11 and the push south

Just days before 9/11, Presidents Bush and Fox met to discuss the potential of establishing further migration agreements that would help to liberalize labor migration mobility across the U.S.-Mexico border [The White House 2001]. However, the attacks in New York and Washington put a halt to these talks as the U.S.' primary reaction to the attack was to, "tighten borders to such a high degree that they were rendered nearly impassable" [Meyers 2003].

After 9/11 the U.S.' policy response centered around border control related measures that sought to achieve, "security through cooperative action with Canada and Mexico" within bilateral agreements known as "Smart Border Agreements" [Ibid]. As a result, the "U.S.-Mexico Border Partnership Action Plan" established mutual cooperation in three aspects of border security: infrastructure, flow of people, and flow of goods [U.S. Department of State 2002]. Within this bilateral agreement was a focus on migrant interdiction at Mexico's southern border and, "a de facto border shift by the United States from the Río Grande to the Río Suchiate in the South of Mexico" [Diegelmann 2010]. This was done through U.S. support of Mexico's parroting of U.S. security at the U.S.-Mexico border. The U.S. assisted Mexico in, "increas[ing] the number of border agents, establish[ing] new blocks and increas[ing] military participation"—effectively militarizing Mexico's previously porous and relatively unsecured southern border [OECD 2003].

What was initially expected to be a temporary border enforcement policy, Plan Sur continued until 2003 in conjunction with the *Smart Border Agreement* and its longer than expected implementation follows the conceptual framework's understanding of the linking of migration enforcement and national security as a result of the events of 9/11. Whereas previously (pre-9/11) the migration agenda of U.S.-Mexico under the Bush and Fox administrations was primarily intertwined with economic policy (specifically labor migration and economic partnership under NAFTA), a working group of members of the Executive Branch and Senate of Mexico, "Prospects and Design of Platforms for the Construction of a Mexican Migration Policy", noted that post-9/11 bilateral discussions regarding migration "altered the bilateral agenda" as the U.S. sought to make the handling of increased migration into southern Mexico a bilateral security approach between itself and Mexico [Working Group on Prospects and Design of Platforms for the Construction of a Mexican Migration Policy 2005].

An addendum to the initial hypothesis was the placement of Mexico's domestic agency as secondary to U.S. primacy in matters of border security at Mexico's southern border. This is due to Mexico's position as a transit state which by its nature is, "not regionally nor economically powerful and tend[s] to have asymmetrical power relationships with northern neighbors", suggesting that Mexico's increased southern border security came as a direct result of U.S. foreign policy interests [Kimball 2007].

In light of the findings uncovering President Fox's push towards open borders or at the very least more liberalized border movement prior to the changes in border security after 9/11, U.S. primacy falls short of explaining the addendum as the actions of President Fox represent a careful analysis of placating U.S. foreign policy interests in order to achieve the domestic interests of Mexico. Still, this does not disprove or weaken the presence of U.S. primacy in

dictating Mexico's course of action. In fact, this bolsters the argument that Mexico's domestic considerations are not independent unto themselves, but rather what headway Mexico is able to gain with the U.S. in achieving its own domestic interests (liberalized border movement) is dependent on first satisfying U.S. foreign policy interests.

4.5 Between programs

Under President Fox, increased security at Mexico's southern border had less to do with Mexico's calculations of the domestic consequences of Central American immigration and more to do with appeasing U.S. foreign policy interests in order to satisfy Mexico's own demands. President Fox hoped to liberalize labor migration mobility- banking on the idea that emigration could act as, "an escape valve for the country's economic problem" in very much the same way it had been positioned in the 1970s after Mexico's great population increase [Gonzalez-Murphy and Koslowski 2011].

Policy change at Mexico's southern border was a result of U.S.-Mexico collaboration and not an intrinsic Mexican initiative. In turn, little domestic attention had been paid to reformation of Mexico's immigration laws since the previous changes enacted in 1974. President Fox's appeasement of U.S. interests was due largely to combatting U.S. lawmakers view of Fox's hypocritical calls for liberalized borders despite Mexico's Constitution severely limiting the rights of immigrants and leaving space for a lack of due process in deportation [Waller 2006].

As stated above, the discussions between Presidents Bush and Fox regarding the liberalization of the U.S.-Mexico border just days prior to 9/11 were shelved. However, towards the end of Fox's presidency, the *Instituto Nacional de Migracion* (INM- a unit of Mexico's Secretariat of the Interior responsible for overseeing matters of migration) compiled

internal proposals on bilateral immigration reform inspired by the potential (albeit wasted) of the two Presidents' meeting. These proposals were synthesized into a report titled, "*Hacia una política migratoria del estado mexicano*" [Secretaria de Gobernacion 2014] (Towards a Migration Policy for the Mexican State [Gonzalez-Murphy and Koslowski 2011]), which represented an attempt to address U.S. lawmakers highlighting of Mexico's double standards (expecting liberalization from the U.S. while keeping restrictive laws on record) by acknowledging Mexico's need for reform.

Upon Felipe Calderon's election, Fox's successor, tangible reform began to take place. In 2008, Mexico's first major policy change involved, "reduc[ing] the punishment for illegal entry from up to ten years in prison to a maximum fine of [\$277USD]" [Nowrasteh 2014]. The decriminalization of illegal entry had a dramatic effect on interdiction at Mexico's southern border. While the total proportion of migrant deportations occurring from the southern border states of Chiapas and Tabasco as well as the southern states of Oaxaca and Veracruz stayed relatively constant, the years following the decriminalization saw a major drop in total migrant deportations. This is to say that proportionally, the focus of the point of interdiction at the southern border remained unchanged, but total interdiction decreased.

A non-exhaustive breakdown of deportations helps illustrate this point. The years in which new policies are enacted (*italicized*) are used as bookends instead of being included in the measurements due to the lack of overlap between deportation data and the implementation of said policies. In other terms, the policies were implemented midway through deportation statistics collection, making it difficult to assign the deportation statistics of that year to the given policy change.

2001: *Implementation of Plan Sur*

2002-2007: 170,836- Yearly average of deportations [Instituto Nacional de Migracion 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008]

2008: *Decriminalization of illegal entry*

2009-2013: 70,399- Yearly average of deportations [Instituto Nacional de Migracion 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014]

2014: *Implementation of Southern Border Program*

Putting Mexico's 2008 immigration reform into context with Plan Sur shows that Mexico's actions reflect a constant gauging of its position based on Mexico's perception of the view of the U.S. and calls into question the political motivations for the sudden increase in deportations from Mexico immediately after the implementation of the Southern Border Program.

4.6 A renewed focus on the southern border

In the eyes of U.S. foreign policy, Mexico's southern border has long played second fiddle to the U.S.-Mexico border. The Merida initiative, an ongoing U.S.-Mexico joint-security agreement with the primary target of, "combating drug trafficking and organized crime" [Seelke and Beittel 2009] has helped deliver over \$2billion in security aid to Mexico since 2008 [Seelke and Finklea 2017]. This agreement was a conscious effort on behalf of the U.S. to amplify the effectiveness of then-President Felipe Calderon's increases in security spending upon his taking office in 2006 and to further encourage greater spending of Calderon's government [Ibid]. Still, for the first few years of the Merida initiative, Central America "was not a central geographic focus" [Isacson, Meyer, and Morales 2014].

Yet the regional insecurity within Central America persisted. The violence associated with drug trafficking and gang turf wars left an indelible mark on the region. In recent years, both El Salvador and Honduras have traded positions atop the global homicide rate rankings with Guatemala trailing closely behind [United Nations 2017]. At the heart of the drug

trafficking-related violence are criminal gangs, *maras*, which can trace their origins back to the U.S. Substantial waves of deportations of Central American nationals (particularly from the Northern Triangle) caused an explosion in gang membership in the late 2000s, and the U.S. Southern Command estimates that over 60,000 *mara* gang members are operating in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala today [Seelke 2016b]. When compared to the 8,500 *mara* gang members operating in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama [Ibid] it becomes apparent that gang violence in the region is particularly concentrated in the Northern Triangle near Mexico.

The lack of attention paid to the growing violence in the Northern Triangle changed in 2011 when the DoD allocated, “\$50 million ‘to improve security along the Mexico-Guatemala-Belize border’ out of \$84.7 million in [DoD] counter-narcotics support funding to Mexico that year” [Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul 2016]. The DoD continued to invest heavily in counternarcotics support for Mexico providing, “\$83.5 million in FY2012, \$68.8 million in FY 2013, and \$50.8 million in FY 2014” [Ibid].

Three reasons likely motivate the U.S.’ renewed interest in Mexico’s policing of its southern border. The first is due to the U.S. acknowledgement that Central America had become the primary thoroughfare for narcotics reaching the U.S. (previously it had been Caribbean nations). In its *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2012*, the Department of State’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs estimated that some, “95 percent of the cocaine leaving South America for the United States moves through the Mexico and Central America corridor” [U.S. Department of State 2012].

The second reason is that Mexico experienced a sharp decline in organized crime-related violence in 2011- a trend that continued for three more years up until the implementation of the Southern Border Program [Seelke and Finklea 2017].

The third reason is related to the sudden uptick in apprehensions by CBP of persons from countries other than Mexico at the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2011, only just over 54,000 apprehensions occurred. This ballooned to over 99,000 in 2012 and over 153,000 in 2013 just before the crisis occurred (by way of comparison this number was over 257,000 in 2014- the year of the crisis) [U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2016]. In 2014 a UNHCR publication, *Children on the Run*, a study on the primary motivations for Central American emigration, interviewed unaccompanied children who had arrived to the U.S after 2011. The study concluded that, “violence and threats of violence by organized armed criminal actors” was a primary contributor to emigration from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2014]. In light of the UNHCR publication, the U.S. focus on counternarcotics and smuggling interdiction is then viewed as a preventative measure to address the push factors causing migration from the Northern Triangle as a means to alleviate the pressure felt at the U.S.-Mexico border.

4.7 The Southern Border Program

4.7.1 An American prelude

In response to the crisis that began and ended in the summer months of 2014, the immediate foreign policy action taken by the U.S. was in large part a bifurcated push to move the site of interdiction further south- away from the U.S.’ southwest border and toward Mexico’s southern border.

Firstly, the U.S. engaged in preventative measures- a considerably greater degree of diplomacy with the governments of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico occurred, “to establish a common understanding of the migration crisis and [to] coordinate a response” [Meyer et al. 2016]. This culminated in a shared public awareness campaign, spearheaded by

CBP, intended to dissuade the next wave of migrant hopefuls from journeying north [Hiskey 2016]. Titled, “Dangers Awareness Campaign”, the campaign made aware Northern Triangle citizens of the, “dangers involved in irregular migration to the United States, and... misperceptions about U.S. immigration policies,”- airing over 6,000 radio and television announcements in Northern Triangle countries between June 30 and October 12, 2014 [Ibid].

Secondly, the U.S. supported the implementation of Mexico’s Southern Border Program in July of the same year. The two primary objectives of the Southern Border Program were, “first, to protect migrants who enter Mexico, and second, to manage the ports of entry in a way that promotes the security and prosperity of the region” [Wilson and Valenzuela 2014]. With, “only 11 formal crossings and more than 370 informal crossings” [U.S. Department of State 2014] the Mexico-Guatemala border is notably porous [Isacson, Meyer, and Morales 2014] and serves as a key area of entry into Mexico- a crucial point of interdiction for reducing the amount of Northern Triangle migrants attempting to make their way to the U.S.

Former CBP Commissioner Alan Bersin perhaps best encapsulates the U.S.’ intensified focus on interdiction at Mexico’s southern border with his 2012 quote, “the Guatemalan border with Chiapas, Mexico, is now our southern border” [Miller 2014].

4.7.2 Implementation of the Southern Border Program

The Southern Border Program was, “designed to increase inspection and interdiction capacities, and reduce drug and human trafficking along Mexico’s southern border with Guatemala and Belize” [U.S. Department of State 2014]. In the months following the implementation of Mexico’s Southern Border Program, Congress passed the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 which included, “\$79 million... above the Administration’s FY2015 request for the Merida Initiative in Mexico, including support for

efforts to secure Mexico's southern border" [Meyer et al. 2015] while, "total State Department support... for Mexico's southern border strategy was expected to exceed \$86.6 million prior to the enactment of the FY2015 appropriations measure" [Ibid].

Unsurprisingly, the apprehension rates regarding inflows of Northern Triangle migrants skyrocketed soon after the adoption of the Southern Border Program. U.S. support was a key factor in Mexico's, "greatly increased... immigration enforcement efforts" [Seelke 2016c] given that the sharp rise in U.S. funding toward strengthening Mexico's southern border security directly corresponded with a rise in southern border apprehensions of unaccompanied children and a subsequent decline in the U.S. in the year immediately following the crisis.

The Southern Border Program is best viewed as a continuation of U.S. affirmation of Mexican efforts to increase security at Mexico's southern border in the context of the Merida Initiative [Seelke and Finklea 2017]. This is similar in nature to the growth in financial support from the U.S. closely following the birth of the Southern Border Program. Obama's (ultimately unmet) \$3.7 billion budget request to stem migration flows in peak crisis time [The White House 2014c] and President Pena Nieto's public announcement of the start of the Southern Border Program occurred on the same day (July 8, 2014) [Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul 2016]-signaling the two countries' approach to a coordinated effort in tackling Central American migration issues.

One year following the implementation of the Southern Border Program, Congresswoman Kay Granger echoed Bersin's sentiments proclaiming, "Mexico is on the front lines of combating the illegal migration issue and we must do all we can to help Mexico strengthen its borders" [Granger 2015]. Discursive promises are not tantamount to this paper's understanding of U.S. primacy's influence but the rhetorical and financial support provided to Mexico both preceding and following the implementation of its Southern Border Program

suggest U.S. foreign policy interests consisted of positioning Mexico as the primary interdictor of migrants originating from Central America- especially given the substantial increase in Mexico's deportation of Central Americans. In 2015, "there were 198,141 apprehensions of illegal immigrants, 90 percent of whom were from Central America... the record number for the past six years" [Castillo 2016].

Conclusion

This paper's understanding of U.S.-Mexico policy vis a vis border security revolves around the premise that U.S. primacy allowed for the proliferation of the U.S.' foreign policy interests in which security stood at the center. Even further, the U.S. conception of security within Latin America and in the years following 9/11 had a large focus on counterterrorism and counternarcotics, resting on or at the very least supported by, strict border control.

The hypothesis then assumed that U.S. primacy due to the conditions that primacy allows, was responsible for the push of the point of migrant interdiction south towards Mexico's southern border following the 2014 migrant crisis. In order to illustrate the empirical effect of primacy on Mexico's border policy, the predecessor to Mexico's Southern Border Program, Plan Sur, was highlighted.

An analysis of Plan Sur suggests that primacy did indeed have an impact on Mexico's border security policy but for a different reason than what was assumed in the hypothesis and drawn from the conceptual framework. U.S. foreign policy interests' were not an end unto themselves in regards to the construction of Mexico's border security policy. Rather, Mexico understood that in order to achieve its own domestic interests relating to the liberalization of the U.S.-Mexico border, it needed to satisfy U.S. foreign policy interests, which in this case was explained by the conceptual framework- the desire to curtail human and goods smuggling from Central American into Mexico.

The analysis of the Southern Border Program, while less clear in Mexico's objectives, does not deviate from the quid pro quo nature of the motivations for implementing Plan Sur. The beginning of this paper highlights the U.S.' inability to stem the flow of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border as well as its inability to adequately provide care for the migrants upon

their arrival in the U.S. Mexico's timely response to the crisis represented a careful calculation of shoring up its own southern border needs- a policy that was sure to be met with support by a U.S. that was struggling to police its own southern border.

In sum, U.S. primacy in regards to the proliferation of its foreign policy interests and its security agenda does not solely explain the motivation for Mexico's course of action taken in the context of the construction of Mexico's border security policies. For example, Mexico had a keen interest in both southern border security policies. In Plan Sur, Mexico had the opportunity to gain favor in the hopes of achieving a more liberalized northern border with the U.S. In the Southern Border Program, the 370 some informal crossings at Mexico's southern border represented a crucial gap in Mexico's ability to protect its border, and by announcing its program in the midst of the U.S. crisis, it was sure to gain U.S. financial and political support.

This paper asked the question, *"How did U.S. primacy precipitate a push of the point of migrant interdiction away from the U.S./Mexico border and towards Mexico's southern border after the U.S. migrant crisis of 2014?"* The findings show that the answer to this question lies well before the events that unfolded in the summer of 2014. Both Plan Sur and the Southern Border Program suggest that U.S. primacy leaves Mexico a warped sense of agency. U.S. primacy may not directly lead to Mexico's border security policy, but it dictates the environment in which Mexico chooses how to police its borders. In this sense, there does not exist a linear relationship between U.S. primacy and Mexico's southern border security policies, but rather U.S. primacy informs such border security policies because of Mexico's acknowledgement that satisfying U.S. foreign policy interests are a necessary step in achieving Mexico's own interests within the context of the U.S.-Mexico's bilateral relationship.

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