



Charting a New Course: Policy Options for the Next Stage in U.S.-Mexico Relations

The Evolving Mérida Initiative and the Policy of Shared Responsibility in U.S.-Mexico Security Relations

By Eric L. Olson

KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reaffirm and preserve the framework of shared responsibility. The United States and Mexico are safer working in tandem than when the countries are at odds with one another.
- Acknowledge the multiplicity of threats and factors contributing to insecurity. Investing in and expanding work on building resilient communities can be an effective way to reduce violence, increase public support for local governments, and improve overall security.
- Fully fund impact evaluation programs that provide evidence for further improving prevention work. Expand the geographic reach of evidence informed and evaluated programs that can demonstrate a positive impact on reducing crime and violence.
- Acknowledge that firearms trafficked from the United States are a contributing factor to high violence incidence in Mexico. Establish a high-level interagency working group to tackle the issue of firearms trafficking to Mexico, and prioritize investigations and prosecutions of straw purchases in the United States.
- Continue support for the full implementation of Mexico's adversarial criminal justice system through continued technical assistance, support for training of justice operators, and strengthening of the independence and professionalization of prosecutors and judges.
- Encourage and support the adoption of a police career and professionalization laws that establishes clear standards for each professional rank and objective procedures for promotions. Strengthen internal and external oversight mechanisms for police and prosecutors that are based in professional standards and where accountability mechanisms are clear.
- Elevate human rights practices in both countries to a public dialogue and reporting mechanisms that sets a bilateral agenda for improvements in human rights in both countries.
- Build on and foster greater military-military cooperation. Expand existing exchange programs for undergraduate and graduate education levels through creation and expansion of Semester Abroad programs. Increase academic and cultural activities that put Mexican and U.S. cadets in contact with each other for specific periods of time. Develop joint war games that can blend U.S. and Mexican units together with the common goal of the defense of North America.

THE EVOLVING MERIDA INITIATIVE AND THE POLICY OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY IN U.S.-MEXICO SECURITY RELATIONS¹

By Eric L. Olson²

The election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States opens a new era in U.S.-Mexico security cooperation. Whether the framework of “shared responsibility” that has guided security cooperation between both nations will be deepened and strengthened, as it has been over the past decade, or is completely overhauled is still unclear. This paper seeks to place the security relationship in its most recent historical context and reviews how the bilateral security cooperation framework has evolved and deepened beyond the original “Mérida Initiative” set out by Presidents George W. Bush and Felipe Calderón Hinojosa. We end with a series of policy options for building on and improving the relationship.

The safety and security of the United States and Mexico have always been intertwined. Nevertheless, suspicions based on historic conflicts; skepticism and distrust on both sides of the border; and, frankly, neglect by both governments left security cooperation, with a few notable exceptions, as an afterthought in bilateral relations throughout much of the 20th century. The United States was often frustrated with what it perceived as Mexican inaction against drug traffickers, and seeming tolerance for elevated levels of corruption and penetration of the state by criminal interests, and the lack of focus in confronting drug traffickers in a systematic and robust way. For its part, Mexico often felt blamed and victimized by crime and corruption that resulted from criminal groups seeking to supply a vast consumer market for illicit drugs in the north. Mexico felt pressured to deal with a problem that they viewed as largely in the United States and pointed to U.S. failure to reduce consumption and better regulate access to firearms as the source of many of Mexico’s own problems with corruption, violence, and impunity.

Not until the early 21st century, when escalating violence and the undeniable impact of transnational organized crime on the safety and wellbeing of all Mexicans became apparent, did both countries seek to define a policy of “shared responsibility” and mutual action to address these challenges. The new security framework hammered out between the Felipe Calderón and George W Bush governments in 2007 became known as the “Mérida Initiative” for the Mexican city where the framework agreement was signed.

While consistent in its commitment to a shared approach to addressing common security

¹ An earlier Spanish version of this article will appear in the “Atlas de la Seguridad y la Defensa de México 2016,” *Instituto Belisario Domínguez*, Senado de la República, México, Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia. Forthcoming.

² Author wishes to thank Ms. Ximena Rodríguez for her excellent research assistance throughout this project. She was the Mexico Institute’s research intern specializing in security cooperation.

concerns, the Mérida Initiative has not been static. It has evolved and expanded during the subsequent Obama and Peña Nieto administrations. Each successive government has added its own emphasis to the relationship that now extends well beyond the initial programmatic focus of the Mérida Initiative to include a robust framework for dialogue on multiple security fronts despite decreasing monetary commitments from the United States. With the new Trump administration the security relationship is likely to undergo further review and modification. The question is whether the security relationship will continue to deepen or experience a reversal to the more distant relationship of the past.

Origins of the Mérida Initiative

While the U.S. – Mexico security relationship stems back many years,³ it had entered a particularly turbulent time during the mid-eighties and through the end of the next decade. The murder of DEA agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena in Mexico in 1985 and the 1997 downfall of Mexico’s then-drug czar⁴ for connections to trafficking organizations were two major stumbling blocks. Efforts in the U.S. Senate to “de-certify” Mexico for failing to cooperate with the U.S. on counter-narcotics efforts further exacerbated an already tense relationship.

Mexico also began to experience an uptick in crime related violence in the later part of the nineties and the first years of the new millennium. Some of the violence occurred as a result of Mexico’s changing political landscape and the disintegrating centralized control of the long-ruling Partido de la Revolución Institucional (PRI), but shifts in international drug trafficking routes away from the Caribbean and into Mexico were also a factor.

Between the mid-90s and mid-2000s Mexican criminal organizations and traffickers became major international players often replacing Colombian organizations as the main buyers, transporters, and distributors of cocaine into the United States. What had once been primarily a Mexican marijuana trafficking business now became a lucrative transnational criminal enterprise with the capacity to move large quantities of cocaine and other illegal drugs into the United States. With major increases in the power and influence of Mexico’s organized crime groups, conflicts over routes and control of territory became a driving force behind shocking new displays of brazen criminal violence.

In the aftermath of a tightly contested presidential election in July 2006, Mexico’s President-elect Felipe Calderón reportedly became convinced that his country faced a dire situation in which the power and violence of criminal networks were threatening

³ For a fuller discussion of U.S.-Mexico military to military relations see: Iñigo Guevara Moyango, “A Bond Worth Strengthening: Understanding the Mexican Military and U.S.-Mexican Military Cooperation,” *Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, October 2016, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/a_bond_worth_strengthening_understanding_the_mexican_military_and_u.s.-mexican_military_cooperation_0.pdf.

⁴ “Mexico convicts former anti-drug czar,” *BBC News World: Americas*, February 23, 2000.

Mexico's national security and stability. At the time, government action against criminal groups was less focused and aggressive than many thought necessary. Calderón's alarm was so great that according to one account he raised the possibility of greater U.S. collaboration and support for his plans to confront criminal organizations during his inaugural meeting with President Bush.⁵ This initial conversation became the impetus for developing the shared responsibility framework that eventually became known as the "Mérida Initiative."

Original Focus on the Mérida Initiative

According to a report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the Mérida Initiative was designed to combat drug trafficking, transnational crime, and terrorism. Specifically, CRS explained:

The Mérida Initiative, as it was originally conceived, sought to (1) break the power and impunity of criminal organizations; (2) strengthen border, air, and maritime controls; (3) improve the capacity of justice systems in the region; and (4) curtail gang activity and diminish local drug demand. Initial funding requests for the Initiative focused on training and equipping Mexican security forces.⁶

Both Presidents described the Initiative as an attempt to "expand bilateral and regional counternarcotics and security cooperation".⁷

In the months following the joint announcement in Mérida, officials from both countries met behind closed doors to craft the details of the Initiative. The results were presented publically for the first time when President Bush requested from Congress \$1.4 billion over three years to support the Initiative beginning in Fiscal Year 2008.⁸ Thomas Shannon, then-Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, described the Mérida Initiative as an "urgent" aid package composed largely of equipment and training that could have "an immediate and important impact in the fight against organized

⁵ Alfredo Corchado, *Midnight in Mexico: A reporter's journey through a country's descent into darkness*, (Penguin, 2013): 175. "(...) Calderón told Bush that Mexico needed the U.S. government to partner with Mexico to restore security. 'I'm ready to do my part,' the president-elect told Bush (...)"

"But I need a partner."

⁶ Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin M. Finklea, "U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond," *Congressional Research Service*, February 13, 2012, pg. 7.

⁷ W. Cook, Clare Ribando Seelke, and R. Rush, "Mérida Initiative: Background and Funding," CRS Report for Congress, 2008.

⁸ It should be noted that U.S. funding for the Mérida Initiative is a small portion of the approximately \$4 billion the Government of Mexico is estimated to spend annually on similar security programs. Astorga, L & Shirk, D. "Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drugs Strategies in The U.S.-Mexican Context". Shared Responsibility U.S.-Mexico Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime. (Eds). Olson, E, Shirk D & Selee A. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Mexico Institute, 2010. Page 32.

crime,”⁹ and ultimately most U.S. legislators agreed to support the new plan.¹⁰

The Bush Administration’s original proposal to Congress was broken down into three broad baskets of assistance. The first of these baskets was the largest and included counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, and border security assistance. Together it represented roughly 62.59 percent of the Bush Administration’s budget request and included such high priced items as fixed and rotor-winged aircraft for use by Mexican security forces.

The second basket was primarily for public security and law enforcement programs including training, technology and information management programs to improve the capacity of Mexico’s civilian law enforcement agencies and support their modernization. This group represented roughly 22.37 percent of the Administration’s overall request to Congress.

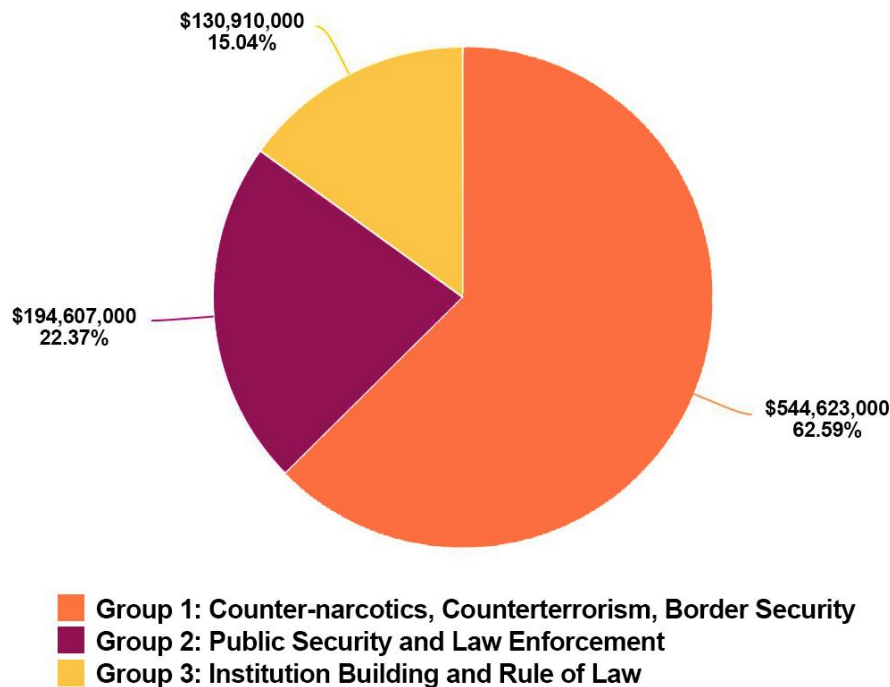
Finally, the third basket included programs related to institution building and rule of law promotion such as including support for Mexico’s judicial reform process, strengthening human rights, and programs to combat substance abuse in Mexico. This group represented roughly 15.04 percent of the Bush Administrations funding request to Congress.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The “Merida Initiative” was never put to a vote in the Mexican congress.

Graph 1.

Bush Administration Requests for Mérida Initiative



Amounts represent combined Bush Administration 2008 Supplemental Appropriations request and the Fiscal Year 2009 budget request to Congress. See, "Six Key Issues In U.S. – Mexico Security Cooperation", Eric L. Olson. Mexico Institute, Wilson Center. 2008. Page 3.

The announcement of such close security cooperation with the United States generated some controversy in Mexico where questions were once again raised about national sovereignty and the extent to which United States law enforcement, military, and intelligence personnel would be operating in Mexican territory and whether they would be armed.

Moreover, questions were raised about the program's heavy emphasis on hardware to facilitate the deployment of security forces. By placing greater emphasis on aircraft, scanners and x-ray technology, the program was emphasizing a traditional coercive approach to combating drugs. The need for institutional reforms in the justice system and strengthening the institutional capacity of law enforcement agencies to conduct investigations and combat crime was a lesser priority.

Additionally, while the Presidents and cabinet secretaries of both countries were involved in the formulation of the "shared responsibility" approach of mutual support and bilateral collaboration in confronting a common enemy, the traditional language of foreign assistance and aid to Mexico re-emerged in the U.S. Congress and press in a way that

seemed to undermine the original purpose. Was the Mérida Initiative simply the United States “helping” Mexico combat organized crime in the same way the U.S. helped Colombia battle armed groups and drug traffickers? Or was this a different model whereby a common enemy is confronted jointly with each side assuming its own responsibilities for action? More importantly, public commitments by U.S. officials to disrupt firearms trafficking, crackdown on money laundering and bulk cash transfers across the southwest border, along with renewed efforts to reduce consumption of illegal drugs in the United States were not tied to specific targets or funding initiatives that could better insure their fulfillment. As a result, there were doubts about how serious the U.S. was at addressing its own responsibilities in the struggle against criminal groups.

Adding to the controversy around the Mérida Initiative was the insistence by the U.S. Congress that human rights language be included in the funding package, further infuriating Mexican authorities that wanted to avoid the appearance of being “certified” by the United States on human rights grounds. The final 2008 funding package required the State Department to report to Congress on specific steps taken by Mexico to address human rights concerns. The areas to be reported on included: 1) efforts to improve the transparency and accountability of Federal, State, and Municipal police; 2) “conduct regular consultations with Mexican human rights and civil society organizations on the implementation of the Mérida Initiative;” 3) progress in ensuring civilian led investigations of police and military forces for alleged human rights violations; and 4) enforcement of the prohibition against the use of testimony obtained through torture.^{11,12}

Despite the doubts expressed in both countries, the U.S. Congress released a first installment of \$400 million in Mérida Initiative money for Mexico in 2008, and though U.S. legislators initially delayed the second installment in 2009 due to human rights concerns in Mexico, the Obama administration remained supportive of the policy.¹³

While the early focus of the Mérida Initiative was mostly on the budgetary and programmatic elements of the initiative, it is also worth noting that the plan called on intelligence, counter narcotics and law enforcement forces in both countries to work

¹¹ Act, Omnibus Appropriations. "Pub. L. No. 111-8, § 509." *Stat* 123 (2009): 363-364.

¹² While often referred to as “human rights conditionality” the provision is not, strictly speaking, a traditional certification process. The Department of State does not certify Mexico, it simply reports to Congress on progress made on the established human rights criteria. It is then be up to Congress to decide whether to continue or freeze the affected funds if it agrees with the State Department’s findings. In theory, the State Department could report to Congress progress in Mexico on human rights grounds and proceed with disbursing funds without waiting for Congressional approval. Congress can act to “hold” or freeze the funds, but the Department of State is not technically required to wait for congressional approval before proceeding to disbursement. While the difference between a “report to Congress” and “certifying to Congress” progress on human rights cases may seem minor, the Mexican government saw the rhetorical difference as an added benefit because Mexico bristled at the notion of a unilateral “certification,” essentially the U.S. passing judgment on Mexico’s human rights practices.

together across agencies on both sides of the border. Many of the agency's had developed extensive individualized relationships with their cross-border counterparts prior to the Mérida Initiative, but cross border inter-agency coordination was infrequent and fears that these relationships could be weakened and intelligence information could be leaked when shared with a broader set of agencies was a major concern initially. Nevertheless, according to Sigird Arzt, former National Security advisor to President Calderon, once the coordination plans and ground rules were clarified and the agency heads were convinced that operational information would not be put at risk in the cross-border inter-agency process, all participants understood the roles they could play to improve efficiency in the fight against organized crime.¹⁴

The Evolution of Mérida under the Obama Administration

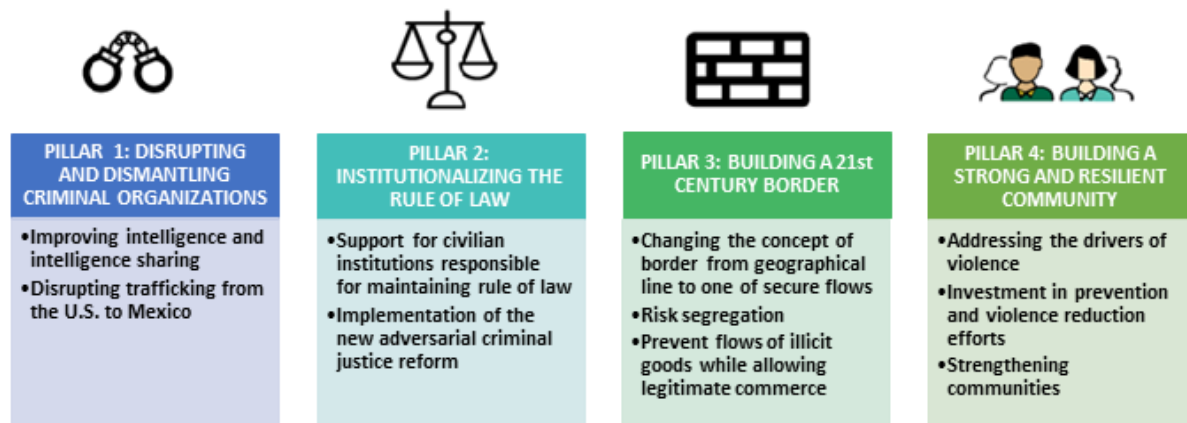
The arrival of the Obama administration in 2009 represented an important opportunity to reconsider U.S. security assistance with Mexico. With a new Democratic Party majority in Congress (elected in 2006) it could have been an opportunity for the Obama team to dramatically cut back on the Mérida Initiative, which by then was in the final year of the original three-year budgetary commitment. Nevertheless, the Obama Administration decided to re-think and re-orient some of the strategy but not dramatically alter it. Led by then U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Carlos Pascual, the Administration gave the security relationship a new framework built on the existing strategy but modifying it and adding new elements.

The new approach took shape around four strategic priorities, or “pillars.”¹⁵ The four-pillar strategy combined both short-term and long-term approaches to addressing the security concerns posed by organized crime. The short-term collaborative efforts focused on improving intelligence collaboration to arrest the leadership of criminal networks and dismantle their networks as well as intercepting the money and weapons flowing south that supported their criminal organizations. These strategies were laid out in the first two pillars (Pillar I: Disrupting and dismantling criminal organizations; and Pillar II: Institutionalizing the rule of law) and represented a continuation of the strategy pursued under the initial Mérida Initiative.

¹⁴Sigrid Arzt was National Security Advisor to President Felipe Calderón until April 2009. See Olson, E. L., Shirk, D. A., & Selee, A. D. (Eds.). (2010). *Shared responsibility: US-Mexico policy options for confronting organized crime*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Mexico Institute. P. 362 U.S.-Mexico Security Collaboration: Intelligence Sharing and Law Enforcement Cooperation.

¹⁵ E.L. Olson & C.E. Wilson, “Beyond Merida: The Evolving Approach to Security Cooperation,” *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars* (2010): 3.

Figure 1.



Two additional elements of the Mérida Initiative's reformulation included a greater focus on border and violence prevention. Pillar III introduced the "21st century border" initiative, and Pillar IV sought to refocus efforts to "Build strong and resilient communities" in Mexico that could better resist and prevent violence.

Support for border security (Pillar III) has long been a policy priority for the U.S. and was very much a part of the original bilateral security strategy between the U.S. and Mexico. The focus, however, was primarily on the U.S. – Mexico border where the U.S. was concerned about "spill-over violence" from Mexico's trafficking organizations engaged in serious battles for control of territory and access points to the United States as well as possible terrorist threats utilizing a relatively porous border to threaten the United States. Over time, these two concerns proved to be less pressing as violence was not "spilling over" from Mexico to the U.S. in significant amounts (U.S. border cities are some of the safest in the entire country), and no publically known terrorist attack in the United States has used Mexican territory as an entry point to the U.S.

During the Obama Administration the border security framework shifted to a border management strategy that sought to balance security, commerce, and human movement using the tools of "risk segregation" to more effectively manage the border. Rather than viewing every migrant or commercial shipment across the U.S.-Mexico border as a potential threat, greater emphasis was placed on separating the risky from the ordinary. To do so, greater emphasis was placed on pre-screening programs such as trusted traveler or trusted shipper programs that enabled those who were pre-cleared to move across the border with greater ease. Such preclearance programs not only benefited frequent travelers and shippers but had the added benefit of allowing border and customs authorities to spend less time examining low-risk entries and refocus their energies and resources to the unknown and, thus, potentially more risky entries.

The final pillar - building strong and resilient communities - called for a comprehensive approach to violence reduction through prevention programs. Pillar IV represents a significant evolution from the original Mérida Initiative vision from one primarily focused on a security and law enforcement approach to dealing with drug trafficking and organized crime to include a strategy that addresses the social determinants and drivers of violence. The original focus of the Pillar IV efforts were in three of Mexico's most dangerous cities – Tijuana, Ciudad Juárez, and Monterrey. These efforts included the creation of violence reduction programs with civil society's input and collaboration that entailed the improvement of public spaces, creation of jobs, and efforts to reduce demand for illegal drugs.

The Peña Nieto Period

The presidential campaign leading to the 2012 election of Enrique Peña Nieto was notable in one important regard: Mexico's security crisis, while constantly present in the minds of many Mexicans, was not the centerpiece of the electoral contest. Candidate Peña Nieto successfully converted the election into a referendum on twelve years of PAN rule arguing that he represented a new, more modern PRI that could govern more effectively and efficiently than any other party. He promised better policy coordination on security issues within the federal government and between local, state, and federal authorities.

The centerpiece of this argument was what the Peña campaign characterized as the under-performing and inefficient Mexican economy, which he promised to restore to robust growth with numerous market-friendly reforms. He also made the case that it was time to turn the page on Mexico's security challenges, and place these in the context of Mexico's enormous economic promise and potential. The campaign saw no focused debate on security policy, and Peña Nieto did not present a comprehensive alternative to Calderón's policy of aggressive confrontation.

To the extent security matters were discussed, Peña Nieto simply rejected the Calderón strategy as ineffective and one which produced elevated levels of violence, widespread fear, and growing distrust of government. Instead he promised a plan consisting of four goals that he would develop if elected: to reduce violence, to transition the military from its public security functions while standing up a specialized police force he called a "gendarmerie," to prioritize prevention programs, and to more effectively coordinate all aspects of the new security strategy.

Furthermore, neither the PAN's candidate, Josefina Vázquez Mota, nor the PRD's Andrés Manuel López Obrador, were inclined to engage in this kind of debate each for their own reasons. Vázquez Mota did not want to break entirely with Calderón by offering a dramatically different approach to improving public security and combating organized

crime, preferring instead to offer modifications on the existing policy. She also recognized that the public was overwhelmed by the violence that erupted so dramatically during the Calderón years, so a full embrace of the Calderón legacy was not politically viable. López Obrador offered critiques of the Calderón strategy suggesting problems of violence and organized crime reflected underlying problems of poverty and inequality. He suggested his approach would prioritize creating economic opportunity for at-risk youth and greater support for prevention [programs](#). Ultimately, it was difficult to distinguish the López proposals from those of Peña Nieto.

And if security strategy was not a focus of Mexico's presidential campaign that year then U.S.-Mexico security cooperation even less so. Only brief mentions were made of the commitment to continue working together with the U.S. within the framework of shared responsibility.

So it came as a surprise to U.S. officials and analysts when in the post-election period the Peña Nieto government signaled that it wanted a pause in the security cooperation agenda with the U.S. to give the new team a chance to assess the status of bilateral cooperation. Based on personal interviews with those close to the new government, several expressed concern that Mexico had lost control of the cooperation agenda, that the Calderón government had been too hands-off in coordinating the relationship, and that "collaboration" was taking place outside of the normal channels and without the knowledge of a central coordination point within the Mexican government.

The example most cited in this regard was the August 2012 armed attack on two alleged CIA agents traveling with Mexican naval officers south of Mexico City. Their vehicles were assaulted by numerous federal police believed to be working for an organized crime network.¹⁶ What was particularly alarming, even galling, to those close to the Peña Nieto government was that the CIA agents were reportedly operating with Mexican naval personnel but without the specific knowledge of civilian authorities. The existence of broad cross-national cooperation without centralized control and coordination was particularly alarming to many in Mexico's Secretariat for External Relations (SRE) and among Peña Nieto's incoming political and security advisors.

As a result, one of the first major announcements related to Mexico-US security cooperation from the Peña Nieto government was intended to improve bilateral coordination on security matters. In preparation for a visit to Mexico by President Obama in May 2013, Peña Nieto's new Interior Minister, Miguel Osorio Chong, announced the government would present President Obama with its new security plan including improved coordination through a "*ventanilla única*" or single coordinating office within the

¹⁶ Edward Fox, "US agents attacked in Mexico believed to be CIA," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/Latin-America-Monitor/2012/0829/US-agents-attacked-in-Mexico-believed-to-be-CIA>.

Secretariat of the Interior (*Secretaría de Gobernación* – SEGOB).

Secretary Osorio reportedly said, “(This) is the order that is being given to the (bilateral) relationship through the Secretariat of the Interior. Agencies will not be allowed to determine with whom they are collaborating. That is how it was being done before.”¹⁷

Secretary Osorio added, “Now there is only one channel, the Secretariat of the Interior, and from there, we can engage in orderly cooperation so that efforts aren’t duplicated.”

While the intention to promote greater coordination was merited, the new policy had the immediate effect of freezing many ongoing collaboration efforts. The message to Mexican security forces was that continued and new collaboration had to be cleared first through the central point of the Secretariat of the Interior, so many agency plans quickly ground to a halt as they sought to ensure full coordination and ultimately approval from the coordinating office.

Many U.S. officials, while concerned, sought to portray this process as a normal transition between governments with the new one seeking to assess the full nature of the security relationship with the U.S. and evaluating its priorities going forward. Nevertheless, U.S. officials also expressed alarm privately when the process of taking stock and defining a new Mexican security strategy took longer than expected. Peña Nieto’s governing priorities where elsewhere including introducing significant energy sector and educational reforms, and his desire to change the narrative about Mexico’s security challenges likely resulted in a slower redefinition of the government’s security strategy than many in the U.S. had expected or wanted. The U.S. was willing to support Peña Nieto’s pivot to an economic agenda, and certainly supported the new government’s efforts to modernize its energy and education sectors, but the U.S. was also anxious that progress in collaboration around anti-drug operations not be squandered, and carefully, gingerly, pressed the Peña Nieto government to continue those programs.

Ultimately, the collaboration agenda got back on track later in 2013 and early 2014 with a series of high-profile operations, arrests, and assassinations of cartel leaders. Many of these benefited from U.S. intelligence assistance including, most notably, the February 2014 capture of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera in the Pacific resort town of Mazatlán.

Such a spectacular capture signaled two important things to Mexico. First, that the U.S. could be a trusted and responsible partner in sensitive operations by playing a quiet

¹⁷ “México anuncia nuevo modelo ‘centralizado’ de seguridad con EEUU,” *La Opinión*, 2 de mayo, 2013, <http://www.laopinion.com/2013/05/02/mexico-anuncia-nuevo-modelo-centralizado-de-seguridad-con-eeuu/>. “Es el orden que se le está dando a la relación. Es vía la Secretaría de Gobernación. No se vale, ni se podrá, ni se permitirá que cada agencia determine con quien se entiende. Así se venía realizando antes “Ahora hay un solo conducto, es Gobernación, y de ahí, en orden, poder hacer una buena colaboración para que no se encimen los esfuerzos.”

behind-the-scenes role providing important intelligence information and support. Second, the capture of high profile cartel leaders continued to be politically popular and thus not a strategy the Peña Nieto government was likely to jettison despite campaign rhetoric suggesting they would take a new approach.¹⁸ What became increasingly evident to the U.S. and Mexican public was that the Peña Nieto strategy for dealing with trafficking organizations was not significantly different from that of the Calderón government, and the policy differences were more a matter of style (better coordination) and emphasis than in substance.

By late 2013 and early 2014 U.S.-Mexico security cooperation was back on track. No longer the primary issue in bilateral relations, as it had been throughout much of the Calderón administration, the countries nevertheless returned to the framework of shared responsibility established in the original Mérida Initiative. In effect, Mexico ratified the “four-pillar” strategy articulated by the Obama government in 2009 and continued to collaborate in all four areas as the Peña government moved forward.

Within the “four-pillar” Mérida strategy four priorities seem to have emerged during the Peña Nieto years: promotion of rule of law, support for justice sector reform, border security, and crime prevention.

As can be observed in the charts below, funds for these programmatic areas come from two sources within the Department of State: The Bureau of International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) and the U.S. Agency for International Development. The amount of assistance passing through the INCLE bureau is roughly four times greater than that passing through USAID.

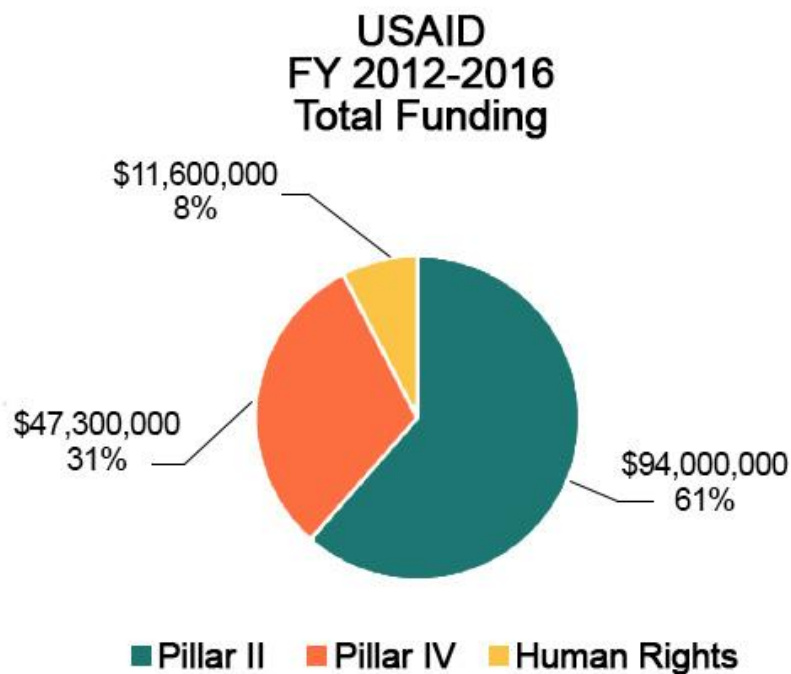
Regarding support for rule of law and justice sector reform, it is worth noting that both INCLE and USAID have devoted a majority of their funding to Pillar II (Institutionalizing the Rule of Law) programs since Fiscal Year 2012. In the case of INCLE roughly 58 percent of funding is Pillar II related, while USAID spends 61 percent of its Mérida-related budget in the same area. In budget terms, this makes justice sector reform by far the largest single component of U.S. funding for the Mérida Initiative. It suggests a significant redirection of priorities for U.S. assistance since the Mérida Initiative was originally announced in 2007.

U.S. support for justice sector reforms has come in the form of three major projects

¹⁸ It should be noted that the capture, escape, and re-capture of “El Chapo” ultimately resulted in even greater cooperation with the U.S. despite the obvious disappointment with “El Chapo’s” escape. The fact that the Peña government ultimately agreed to consider a U.S. extradition request suggests that the Government of Mexico understood the limit to its ability to handle such a powerful criminal figure, and, consequently, demonstrated its willingness to consider favorably his extradition to the U.S.

implemented by a U.S. firm, Management Systems International, Inc. (MSI). The first of these programs, known as PRODERECHO (2004-2007), predated the Calderón era's constitutional and criminal procedure reforms, reflecting efforts by the Fox government to reform the criminal justice system. While Fox's proposed reforms lingered in the Mexican Congress, preliminary technical legal studies and proposals supported by the MSI program enabled Mexican legal scholars to begin the process of developing what became eventual Constitutional reforms passed in 2008 that transformed Mexico from an inquisitorial to an adversarial criminal justice system (See chart below for a description of the two systems). Additionally, a significant portion of the PRODERECHO resources were destined to state-level reform efforts, especially in Chihuahua, a state that became one of the earliest to adopt the adversarial criminal procedure reforms.

Graph 2.

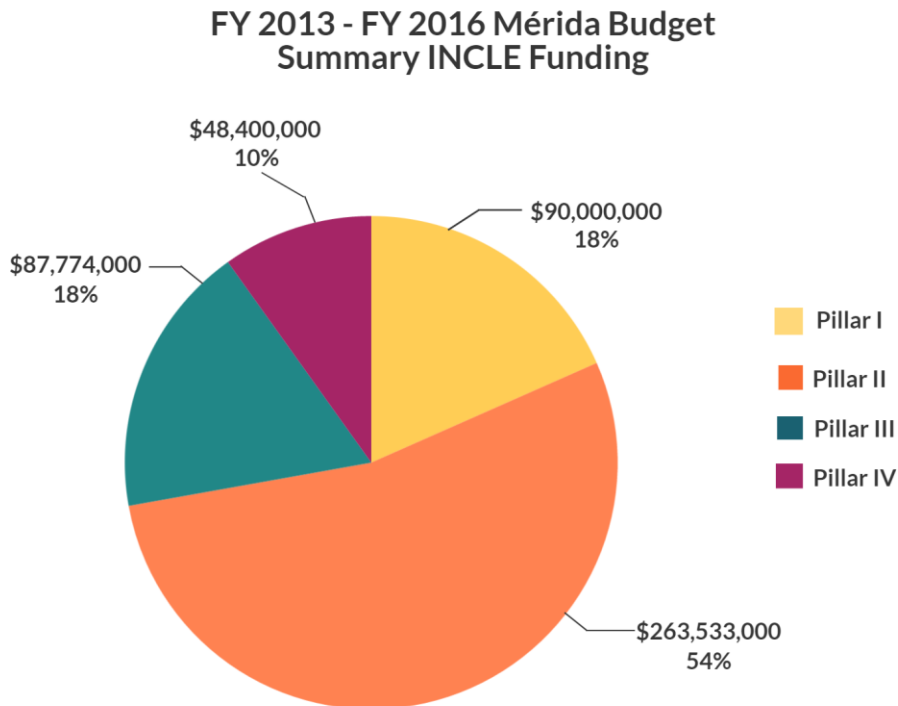


Source: Numbers provided by USAID. Note: These figures include some funds transferred from INL to work on anti-corruption issues and counted as Pillar II here. As a result, these figures do not match up with figures in Congressional Budget Justification documents. Furthermore, these figures only include actual program funds, excluding funds spent on salaries and evaluations.

The PRODERECHO project was replaced by the Justice and Security program (2009-2014). In this case the goal and objectives were to support Mexico's transition to an adversarial justice system that resulted from a 2006 constitutional reform. The Justice and Security program provided technical assistance, training, and expanding professional capacity within federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies to better align these with the new judicial system.

Finally, the PROJUST (Pro Justicia) program (2014-2019), also managed by MSI, represents the flagship effort by the U.S. to support the judicial transition in Mexico. Worth roughly \$3 million, it represents approximately 10 percent of Merida Initiative funds to support the judicial reform process. When taken together, all three projects represent a significant commitment by the U.S. to support Mexico's judicial and institutional reform efforts and desire for a more effective and efficient justice system.

Graph 3.



Support for border security (Pillar III) during the Peña Nieto yes has included improvements on the U.S. – Mexico border, as well as an expanded focus on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala. Using the same Pillar III framework described above, the U.S. has increased its investments in Mexican and Guatemalan border areas in coordination with both governments. Much of this investment has been to improve border infrastructure, force mobility, and the support the capacity of security and immigration personnel to enforce migration laws. Additionally, funds have been used to provide new technology, such as "mobile bio-kiosks" to improve the processing of migrants. Investments in Mexico's southern border have mostly taken place in the context of the Central American migrant crisis that has resulted in tens of thousands of migrants fleeing violence and economic hardship in Central America's Northern Triangle countries seeking relief in Mexico and the United States. Increasing migrant flows and the relative ease with which organized crime groups can transit international boundaries such as the

Guatemala-Mexico border has been a growing concern for U.S. policy makers for some time and reflects the increase in funding directed to southern Mexico.

In the area of prevention, the U.S. has quietly increased its programming with the full support of the Mexican government. In particular, the U.S. has expanded its support for Pillar IV projects that were originally focused in three specific cities (Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, and Monterrey). As of 2015, USAID has used Mérida Initiative funds to support a project called, “Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia.” This project is administered by a U.S.-based implementing company called Chemonics International Inc. and has as its primary objective to “...contribute to strengthening the capacities of the different levels of government to design, implement, and evaluate public policies to prevent violence and crime.”¹⁹ To accomplish this objective, the project has pursued three initiatives including establishment of a network of cities engaged in youth prevention work; a special funding mechanisms (Fondo para la Prevención de la Violencia) to fund local prevention initiatives and encourage private sector investment in prevention projects; and a Public Safety and Violence Prevention Laboratory where you can “investigate, test, evaluate, and promote programs and successful models of prevention.”²⁰

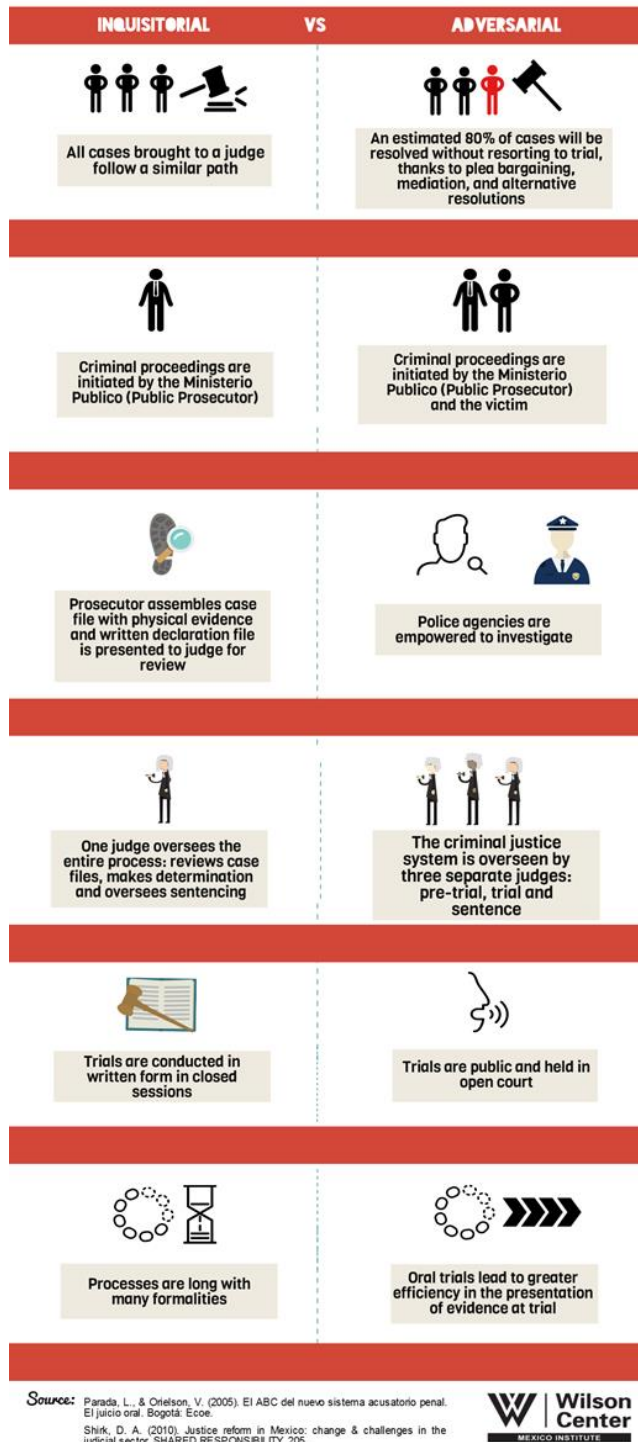
Finally, the issue of human rights has become increasingly relevant to the relationship as Mexico has struggled with several high profile and deeply troubling incidents of human rights violations. Two emblematic cases include the apparent massacre of approximately twelve civilians by army personnel in the city of Tlatlaya in June 2014. A second case involved the disappearance, and presumed death of 43 students from a rural normal school from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero in September 2014. In both instances serious accusations of cover up by authorities occurred in the aftermath of each case, and in the particular case of the 43 students, evidence of local police involvement and the use of torture for extracting confessions from alleged perpetrators is at the heart of the matter.

These and other troubling cases of human rights violations by security forces has presented a challenge for U.S. assistance programs because by law (the Leahy law) U.S. support for training and equipping foreign security force units is prohibited when there is credible evidence of human rights violations. To ensure against training and equipping alleged human rights violators, the U.S. must carry out what is known as the Leahy Law vetting process.

¹⁹ “Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia,” *USAID*, <http://www.chemonics.com/OurWork/OurProjects/Documents/JPV%20Brief.pdf>.

²⁰ “Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia,” *USAID*.

PAST & PRESENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS IN MEXICO



In terms of the bilateral security agenda, human rights issues have been handled in two ways. First, with relation to the human rights criteria and reporting required of the Department of State by Congress (see discussion above), the Secretary of State took the unusual and largely symbolic decision in October 2015 to transfer \$5 million in counter-narcotics assistance for Mexico to Peru.²¹

This action was necessary to comply with a provision Congress included in the Fiscal Year 2014 U.S. Foreign Assistance Act stating that 15 percent of counter-narcotics assistance to Mexico could be obligated only when the Secretary of State provided a written report to the Congressional Appropriations Committees outlining Mexico's progress in four human rights areas. While human rights reporting requirements have been standard since the Mérida Initiative began in 2008, the criteria were broadened with the 2014 funding bill. Congress added criteria requiring the Secretary to report on steps taken by the Government of Mexico to enforce "prohibitions against torture," to promptly transfer military detainees "to the custody of civilian judicial authorities," to devote government efforts to search for the victims "of forced disappearances," and to investigate and prosecute those responsible.²²

According to a State Department official familiar with the issue, the Department was

²¹ Eric Olson, "U.S. – Mexican Relations: The Challenges of Promoting Human Rights," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (November 23, 2015), <http://journal.georgetown.edu/u-s-mexican-relations-the-challenges-of-promoting-human-rights/>.

²² Ibid.

“unable to confirm that Mexico fully met all of the criteria in the FY 2014 appropriation legislation and thus did not submit the report (to Congress).” The State Department believed that Mexico had complied with earlier requirements, including those contained in the FY 2013 funding bill, and had taken significant legal steps, including instituting constitutional reforms to improve the legal framework for human rights, but had not reported sufficient progress related to the expanded criteria accompanying the 2014 legislation.²³

In response to the U.S. decision, Mexico’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs reportedly said the following:

“The U.S. government has recognized Mexico’s determination and progress to address particular human rights challenges...Bilateral dialogue and cooperation are the appropriate ways to address the current challenges in this regard.”²⁴

In effect, Mexico and the United States have started a separate “bilateral human rights dialogue” that brings together the relevant governmental actors – security forces, attorneys general, and foreign ministries – from both countries to consider human rights concerns on both sides of the border. This group has met seven times to discuss human rights concerns in both countries and the government of Mexico would prefer that this become the primary forum for discussing human right issues and thus avoid potential embarrassments and sensitivities that arose with the decision to transfer U.S. funds to Peru.

Despite the controversy surrounding several serious human rights case, and maybe in light of it, U.S. funding specifically directed to support human rights programming in Mexico has increased significantly in the last year. In particular, USAID has devoted approximately \$8 million for human rights projects separate from its support for the implementation of the adversarial judicial reforms, and separate from the Mérida Initiative. One of the principle human rights programs supported by USAID is to be administered by Chemonics International, Inc., the same firm that is implementing the new violence prevention programs. According to the Chemonics website, “The [EnfoqueDH](#) project is supporting the Mexican government to integrate human rights-based approaches in its legislative frameworks and institutional processes.”²⁵ Furthermore, “A key objective of this five-year program is incorporation of a human rights perspective within regulatory, federal, and state frameworks. To achieve this, the program supports public servants and civil society stakeholders in identifying and meeting their needs for National Human Rights

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Elisabeth Malkin and Azam Ahmed, “U.S. Withholds \$5 Million in Antidrug Aid to Mexico in Human Rights Rebuke,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/20/world/americas/us-withholds-5-million-in-antidrug-aid-to-mexico-over-human-rights.html?_r=0.

²⁵ “Building a Human Rights-Based Approach to Public Policy in Mexico,” *Chemonics International*, <http://www.chemonics.com/OurWork/OurProjects/Pages/Mexico-EnfoqueDH.aspx>.

Plan implementation.”²⁶

The Future of U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation

It is also worth noting that despite the importance the U.S. places on its security cooperation agenda with Mexico, the amount of money Congress has approved for the Mérida Initiative has declined. See budget table below:

Table I. FY2012–FY2017 Mérida Funding for Mexico
(\$ in millions)

Account	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016 Request	FY2016 (est.)	FY2017 Request
ESF	33.3	32.1	35.0 ^a	33.6 ^b	39.0	39.0	49.0
INCLE	248.5	195.1	148.1	110.0	80.0	100.0	80.0
Total	281.8	227.2	194.2	143.6	119.0	139.0	\$129.0

Source: U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations FY2013-FY2017*.

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

a. \$11.8 million of ESF was designated for Global Climate Change (GCC) programs in Mexico.

b. \$12.5 million was designated for GCC programs.

Such figures seem paltry in comparison to U.S. assistance for Central America where President Obama requested \$1 billion in Fiscal Year 2016 resources and Congress approved \$750 million. And a second billion dollar aid package for Central America was requested by the Obama administration for FY 2017, and it would appear that the U.S. Congress is likely to approve somewhere close to another \$700 million, or \$1.4 billion in two years for Central America at a time when Mexico would receive roughly \$268 million, or 80 percent less, in the same timeframe.

From one perspective this might signal that Central American security is more important to the U.S. than Mexico's, but nothing could be further from the truth. Instead it signals that the security relationship has moved beyond the strictly programmatic components as defined by Mérida Initiative assistance programs, heralding a new era of security cooperation. The current U.S.-Mexico security frame now extends to the kind of high-level strategic dialogue with a much broader agenda, and more in line with the kind of high-level economic dialogue already in place between both countries.

²⁶ "Building a Human Rights-Based Approach to Public Policy in Mexico," *Chemonics*.

In effect, both the Obama Administration and the Peña government decided to expand the security cooperation agenda when they established the Bilateral Security Cooperation Group (Grupo Bilateral de Cooperación en Seguridad - GBCS). According to the Secretariat of Interior: “The Bilateral Security Cooperation Group is the main high-level US-Mexico forum for the strengthening of strategies on issues that are of common interest. Also, it provides a strategic framework for coordination of security based on the principles of shared responsibility, mutual trust and respect for the sovereignty, jurisdiction and laws of both nations.”²⁷

Among the various issues addressed by the GBCS are: “joint actions ... underway to stop drug trafficking, money laundering, arms trafficking, smuggling and human trafficking. It is worth noting, specifically the strengthening of the accusatory criminal justice system, the prison system, and the professionalization of the police. Also the fight against drug trafficking, including reducing drug demand and illicit crops, as well as possible areas of cooperation to strengthen actions on cybersecurity.”

The expanded bilateral security agenda reflected in the GBCS was also recently confirmed in a White House communique following the July 22, 2016 meeting between Presidents Obama and Peña. Among other things, the White House “Fact Sheet on United States-Mexico Relations” framed bilateral security cooperation in three areas: Improving Migration and Refugee Protection Protocols; cooperation in combating heroin trafficking and poppy cultivation; and “Security and Justice Cooperation - Mérida Initiative.” The implication is that the security relationship has transcended the Mérida Initiative and encompasses a range of emerging issues that are dealt with in the context of dialogue. Bilateral security issues are no longer constrained by a predefined programmatic agenda. As a result, the security relationship has evolved, matured, and is probably at its highest point in history.

Military-to-Military Relations on the Rise

Another element of the U.S. – Mexico security relationship is the military-to-military (mil-mil) relationship, which occurs outside the immediate confines of the Mérida Initiative. As in the civilian realm, mil-mil relations have been hampered historically by mistrust and unfortunate and misguided military interventions by the U.S. during the first decades of the 20th century. More recently, mil-mil relations have also seen moments of significant collaboration and the current state of the relationship is at a high point.²⁸

The relationship mirrors many of the challenges of the growing civilian security relationship, but has by and large avoided public scrutiny and thus occurred within a

²⁷ “Celebra reunion Grupo Bilateral de Cooperación en Seguridad México-EU,” *El Portal*, October 16, 2016, <http://elportal.mx/celebra-reunion-grupo-bilateral-de-cooperacion-en-seguridad-mexico-eu/>.

²⁸ Guevara Moyango, “A Bond Worth Strengthening,” 56.

limited scope of activities. The most important activities include training and expanded educational opportunities for the militaries of both countries, the transfer and/or sale of equipment from the U.S. to Mexico, and simultaneous patrols along the northern border designed to improve communications the institutions as well as build confidence and trust between them.

Nevertheless, Guevara argues that, “Despite a rapprochement process that began in 2006 and remains ongoing in 2016, the U.S.-Mexico military relationship still has ample room for growth... Bilateral trust needs to be a key goal for both militaries and once obtained, it needs to be constantly nurtured and reinforced...Bilateral trust is unfortunately not a commodity that countries can procure; it is rather the product of a well-planned investment strategy.”²⁹

Depending on the priorities and emphasis the new Trump Administration brings to the security relationship, the mil-mil component may provide the greatest opportunity for growth. Whether the framework of shared responsibility continues or is set aside by the new U.S. government to focus on other priorities, it seems likely that the mil-mil relationship will continue and strengthen even in the midst of other developments in the civilian security relationship.

What has the potential to undermine the relationship is an overly nationalistic, vitriolic, and ultimately unilateral U.S. border policy that will force the Mexican military, as well as the entirety of the Mexican government to reevaluate the bilateral relationship and potentially become more defensive in its posture with the United States. Such a development would indeed be unfortunate.

Some Early Challenges for the Trump Administration

Since the framework of shared responsibility in security cooperation was established in Mérida in 2007, successive governments in the U.S. and Mexico have refocused and/or expanded the security relationship without fundamentally abandoning the concept of shared responsibility. A core rationale for this policy has been the belief that security in both countries is enhanced through cooperation rather than each country “going it alone.” From the U.S. perspective, issues such as border security are greatly facilitated and enhanced when both countries are working together rather than at cross-purposes. And it would be impossible for the U.S. to influence the security agenda on the Mexico-Guatemala border without a cooperative Mexico.

Security in both countries is enhanced through cooperation rather than each country “going it alone.”

Furthermore, the delicate balance between security and preserving the economic,

²⁹ Ibid.

cultural, and social ties that benefit both countries require constant communication, coordination and ultimately trust between government agencies on both sides of the border.

Conversely, a policy focused narrowly on security at the borders, or one that is based exclusively on counter-narcotics operations is likely to undermine the benefits of a fuller relationship and ultimately fail in its own traditional view of the war on drugs. Decades of the war on drugs has produced many outcomes – some good, like putting brutal criminals in jail; others bad, like the mass incarceration of low level non-violent drug offenders, unacceptably high levels of violence and, more importantly, the failure of the war on drugs to actually stop drug cultivation, processing, trafficking, and consumption in any country in the region.

These are the challenges that an incoming Trump Administration will face. Will the Administration pursue policies that preserve the framework of shared responsibility and a cooperative security strategy that requires the countries to work together with a common purpose? To adopt a cooperative agenda implies a U.S. willingness to continue investing in demand reduction efforts in the U.S. with greater emphasis on treatment options, and programs with a proven track record of reducing recidivism. It also implies taking serious steps to disrupt the flow of firearms south and new initiatives to make money laundering more difficult and more costly to criminals.

The history of security cooperation between the two countries has shown that coordination and collaboration are far more effective tools for enhancing outcomes than purely unilateral approaches. Such unilateral approaches would undermine the spirit of cooperation that has imbued the relationship for nearly a decade of Republican and Democratic administrations in the U.S., and PAN and PRI governments in Mexico. Ultimately, the Trump Administration will have to decide whether the U.S. is safer and its national security is best served by a collaborative or antagonistic relationship with Mexico.

Below are a series of policy options that the new administration might consider as it takes the reins of government.

A Policy Framework for the Next Administration

Reaffirm and preserve the framework of shared responsibility. The United States and Mexico are safer working in tandem than when the countries are at odds with one another.

Acknowledge the multiplicity of threats and factors contributing to insecurity. Violence and insecurity are not solely caused by international drug trafficking. Issues of youth violence,

and community level violence are often driven by other factors such as extortion, ineffective state response to criminality, and lack of educational and economic opportunity targeted to at-risk youth. Investing in and expanding the work encompassed in Pillar IV – building resilient communities – can be an effective way to reduce violence, increase public support for local governments, and improve overall security.

Continue support for crime prevention and violence reduction programs. Fully fund impact evaluation programs that provide evidence for further improving prevention work. Expand the geographic reach of evidence informed and evaluated programs that can demonstrate a positive impact on reducing crime and violence.

Acknowledge that firearms trafficked from the United States are a contributing factor to high violence incidence in Mexico. Establish a high-level inter-agency working group to tackle the issue of firearms trafficking to Mexico, and prioritize investigations and prosecutions of straw purchases in the United States.

Continue support for the full implementation of Mexico's adversarial criminal justice system through continued technical assistance, support for training of justice operators, and strengthening of the independence and professionalization of prosecutors and judges.

Encourage and support the adoption of a police career and professionalization laws and that establishes clear standards for each professional rank and objective procedures for promotions.

Strengthen internal and external oversight mechanisms for police and prosecutors that are based in professional standards and where accountability mechanisms are clear.

Elevate human rights practices in both countries to a public dialogue and reporting mechanisms that sets a bilateral agenda for improvements in human rights in both countries.

Build on and foster greater mil-mil cooperation. Expand existing exchange programs for undergraduate and graduate education levels through creation and expansion of Semester Abroad programs; increased academic and cultural activities that put Mexican and U.S. cadets in contact with each other for specific periods of time; and development of joint war games that can blend U.S. and Mexican units together with the common goal of the defense of North America. (Guevara)

Conclusion

The framework of shared responsibility first articulated in the context of the Mérida Initiative agreement between Presidents Bush and Calderón continues to provide the

architecture for bilateral security cooperation between Mexico and the United States. But the range of issues addressed in the bilateral context, and the level of bilateral engagement and dialogue is no longer limited to strict programmatic areas that emerged in the original Bush request to Congress for the Mérida Initiative and subsequent initiatives undertaken by the Obama administration. The bilateral security agenda has evolved, as it should, and is no longer confined to four pillars or any specific assistance program, regardless of their importance. Instead, the fact that there is an institutional space for ongoing bilateral dialogue that can address new and emerging threats is a sign of the maturity of the relationship.

What is lacking from the current strategy is a framework for evaluating progress. Dialogue is taking place at the highest levels, intelligence and law enforcement cooperation continue to deepen, and funds are being disbursed to improve police capacity and transform Mexico's justice system. While these are positive steps and signs, the disturbing increase in homicides in Mexico during 2016 should raise concerns. It may be too early to predict a long term rise in violence, but it may also be a warning sign that increased dialogue and engagement, better cooperation, and continued funding are not enough to reduce the violence and manage the risks associated with organized crime. It may be time to re-examine the strategy itself to determine if the dialogue, collaboration, and funding are directed in the right way.

To continue dialogue and funding without assessing the success of the strategy in objective terms – such as less violence and homicides, increased public trust and collaboration with the state, reduced numbers of at-risk youth, and the successful transformation of criminally active youth into positive contributors to society– then Mexico and the United States risk failing to take advantage of good relations to define a more successful approach to the security challenges faced by both countries. Hopefully, this kind of reflection will help inform the decisions taken by the incoming Trump Administration when it inherits what has been a historic partnership between neighbors.

It is not unusual for a new administration to take time to take stock of the complex and multilayered relationship between the United States and Mexico. Both the Obama and Peña Nieto administrations did so and each decided to make adjustments to the relationship within the framework of collaboration. So it will not be a surprise if the new Trump Administration takes some time to evaluate the relationship and its priorities with Mexico. The fundamental question the incoming administration will have to answer is whether to continue the path of collaboration with Mexico or pursue a policy that is more narrowly security focused and based in unilateral actions. Given the complex and serious issues on the security agenda between both countries and collaborative approach with both nations committing to addressing their own challenges, and working together to solve mutual concerns is the preferred approach.

About the Author

Eric L. Olson is the Associate Director of the Latin American Program and Senior Advisor on Security to the Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. His research and writing has focused primarily on security issues and the impacts of crime, organized crime, and violence on democracies. He has also written about police reform and judicial institutions as a vehicle for addressing the problem of rapidly expanding crime in the Americas. He has traveled extensively in Mexico, Central America and the Andes. Prior to joining the Wilson Center he was a Senior Specialist in the Department for Promotion of Good Governance at the Organization of American States from 2006-2007. He served as the Interim-Director for Government Relations at Amnesty International USA, and was Amnesty's Advocacy Director for the Americas from 2002-2006. Prior to Amnesty, he was the Senior Associate for Mexico, and Economic Policy at the Washington Office on Latin America for eight years. He worked at Augsburg College's Center for Global Education in Cuernavaca, Mexico from 1989-1993 where he was the program director. From 1986-1988, he worked in Honduras, Central America as a development specialist for several local non-governmental organizations. He has testified before the United States Congress on several occasions, appeared in numerous press stories as an expert commentator on human rights, drug policy and organized crime.