

Administrative Surveillance and Fear: Implications for U.S.-Mexico Border Relations and Governance

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Abstract:

Fear has struck the people along the U.S.-Mexico border. Government authorities of the two nations have implemented techniques to secure the Rio Grande against drug trafficking, immigration, and terrorism. This article explores the issues and policies that have led to the escalation of violence on the U.S.-Mexico border and the 'politics of fear'. Firstly, Mexican and U.S. governmental authorities are examined in the context of their actions against the various drug cartels. Secondly, the impact of such actions on the nations' publics is analysed. The authors combine the theoretical conceptions of the 'media spectacle' and the politics of fear that create a 'spectacle of fear' to explain events in the region. Finally, the authors provide a theoretical interpretation of the politics and administration of security policies regarding the impact of violence in this border region, employing primarily the works of Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt, which are central to any discussion of the phenomena of politics and societal violence. Overall, this work seeks to interpret the 'culture of fear' forced on citizens and the conflict between power and violence. *Keywords:* border violence, politics of fear, media spectacle, drug war, policy interpretation.

Resumen: Vigilancia Administrativa y Miedo: Implicaciones para la Gobernanza y las Relaciones Fronterizas México-Estados Unidos

El miedo ha tomado por sorpresa a la población que habita en la región fronteriza México-Estados Unidos. Las autoridades han implementado acciones para combatir, en ambos lados del Río Bravo, el tráfico de drogas, la migración y el terrorismo. En este artículo se explican las causas de la violencia fronteriza que derivan en la 'política del miedo'. Primeramente, se analizan las acciones de las autoridades mexicanas y estadounidenses en contra de los denominados cárteles de la droga. En segundo lugar, se evalúa el impacto de dichas acciones sobre la sociedad en ambas naciones. Los autores combinan las nociones teóricas de 'espectáculo mediático' y 'política del miedo' para analizar el 'espectáculo del miedo' y explicar los eventos en la región. Finalmente, hacen una interpretación teórica de la política y políticas de seguridad en su relación con la violencia fronteriza en esta zona, empleando los trabajos de Michel Foucault) y Hannah Arendt, los cuales son centrales en cualquier discusión del fenómeno de la política y la violencia social. En resumen, este trabajo interpreta la 'cultura del miedo' y analiza la tensión entre poder y violencia. *Palabras clave:* violencia fronteriza, política del miedo, espectáculo mediático, guerra contra las drogas, interpretación de política pública.

Letter 30: Interregnum

The planet as a whole seems indeed to be in a state of interregnum these days. Extant political agencies bequeathed by the times before globalization are blatantly inadequate to cope with the new realities of planetary interdependency, while political tools potent enough to match the steadily rising capacities of powerful, though manifestly and self-admittedly non-political, forces are prominent mostly by their absence. *Forces systematically escaping the control of established political institutions and recognizable as fully and truly global (such as capital and finances, commodity markets, information, criminal mafias, drug traffic, terrorism and the arms trade) are all of a kind: however much they may vary in other respects, they all stoutly, cunningly and astutely – encountering no effective (let alone intractable, impermeable or unpassable) obstacles – ignore or openly violate territorially enforced constraints, closely watched interstate borders and local (state-endorsed) statute books (121) [italics added for emphasis].*

Source: Zygmunt Bauman. (2010). 44 Letters from the Liquid Modern World. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Introduction

The violence along the U.S.-Mexico border has escalated rather dramatically since the declaration in late 2006 of the ‘war on the drug cartels’ initiatives of former Mexican President Felipe Calderón.¹ Prior to the declaration, plenty of violence associated with efforts by both countries, including the U.S. ‘war on drugs’ and other initiatives, was already well established. In this paper, the authors analyse the ‘drug war’ border violence primarily, though not exclusively, examining the north-eastern region of Mexico and the U.S. state of Texas. Since both Mexico and the U.S. are ‘federal’ systems in terms of vertical power-sharing between the national and respective state governments, the ‘states’ and their governing apparatuses are also important in what is and has transpired with regard to violence along the international border. In addition to those governmental entities, local governments, especially cities headed by their mayors and councils, and their respective citizens, have played a critical role in the drug war – its *perception* and *actual implementation* – within the region along the Rio Grande (Río Bravo).

In the sections that follow, the authors provide a background of the issues and policies that have led to the escalation of violence on the border and the politics of fear. Firstly, Mexican and American governmental leaders are examined in the context of their political, social, and economic actions against the various drug groups and cartels that have now seen over 60,000 people killed in Mexico, tens of thousands more disappeared, citizens displaced from their homes in north-eastern Mexico, and local governments placed under the control of criminal organizations. The violence has caused increased migration to the U.S., especially immediately across

the border. In the U.S., the response by federal, state, and local leaders is to pass laws ostensibly designed to: (1) build fences targeting undocumented workers and potential *terrorists* including, now, drug gangs and their interdependencies; (2) criminalize undocumented workers and U.S. Latinos by forcing all to maintain legal papers on their persons; and, (3) in contrast to (1) and (2) *simultaneously* encourage cheap labour to enter the U.S. for building corporate profits.

Secondly, the paper analyses the impact on the nations' publics. The actual violence that is taking place in Mexico has paralyzed civic discourse by tactics taken by the drug cartels to eliminate dissent and simple discussion of their criminal movements and activities. Gang members have killed reporters and newspapers have been effectively shut down or taken over by the criminal syndicates. The *perception* of violence, how to combat its deleterious effects on politics, economics, and culture, especially on the U.S. portion of the border, has led to a *media spectacle* (Debord 1967/1995; Edelman 1964/1985), detrimental to societies and partially responsible for the continuation of the phenomenon of the politics of fear (Furedi 2005; Altheide 2006). We combine the theoretical conceptions of the media spectacle and the politics of fear to create the *spectacle of fear* to explain events in the region.

Finally, the authors will provide a theoretical interpretation of the politics and administration of public policies regarding the impact of border violence in this important international region, employing primarily the work of Foucault (1980) for its discussion of power in politics, and Arendt (1958) who extensively examines the utilitarian cycle created by the media spectacle's tendency to simplify politics and economics and the notion of 'means/ends' (based on the work of Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*) whereby '...in a strictly utilitarian world, all ends are bound to be of short duration and to be transformed into means for some further ends' (154). Furthermore, Arendt's (1970) concept of power versus violence is explored in the context of its impact on the State. The State is also under siege by the aforementioned criminal syndicates with an exacerbation of the violence promoted by the media spectacle. Both Foucault and Arendt are central to any interpretive philosophical or theoretical discussion of the phenomena of politics and societal violence. We examine some of their work here to provide a conceptual framework of politics and violence, which is central to our paper. Due to length restrictions their oeuvres are only partially represented in our analysis. It will be up to the reader to follow their work in a more complete manner. These theories of power, and the effects of violence, will be applied to our analysis to yield a way forward through the

spectacle-induced malaise of border politics and policy as it is currently manifested as it affects the State.

Background: illegal drugs, immigration, and terrorism

U.S. policy concerning the U.S.-Mexico border first took on a violent connotation beginning with Nixon's 1971 war on drugs campaign which was declared in response to increased recreational drug use by Americans beginning in the 1960s. An escalation of U.S. drug policy concerning the U.S.-Mexico border can be traced back to the early 1980s when the U.S. began to target the supply of cocaine from the Caribbean and south Florida in order to reduce smuggling to the southeast. U.S. Customs Service and Department of Defense activities were able to successfully reduce the flow and the use of radar limited the ability of drug traffickers to smuggle by air. Although U.S. officials declared the efforts a success, Andreas (2009) indicates the actions merely redirected the flow to the ground, particularly through Mexico, acting to empower and embolden Mexican drug trafficking organizations – today known as transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)² – eager to supply a large customer base in the U.S.

In response, the U.S. government has crafted an interdiction policy to attack the supply side of the drug problem by strengthening the U.S.-Mexico border, which was formalized by the U.S. government in 1990 when it denoted the region as a 'High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area' (Andreas 2009, 55). The U.S. military also got involved in the interdiction policy through the Department of Defense's establishment of the Joint Task Force North at Fort Bliss, which provides military support to law enforcement in order stem illegal drug trafficking.

A number of U.S. policy initiatives have been implemented in order to secure the border from illegal drugs, particularly in light of the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, which provoked fears of increased drug trafficking through commercial cargo into the U.S. In 1995, Operation Hard Line stepped up efforts to limit drug trafficking in commercial cargo. Low cocaine seizure numbers led to outcry in Congress and resulted in Operation Brass Ring, which was initiated in 1998 in order to substantially increase drug seizure numbers in commercial cargo through an increased reliance on technology. In spite of new technology and increased resources dedicated to interdiction, it is estimated that only 10 per cent of illegal drugs are intercepted at official U.S. ports of entry with the remainder passing through into the U.S. (Staudt and O'Rourke 2013, 225).

The tenor of U.S. policy on drug trafficking has recently shifted primarily in response to Mexican ex-president Calderón's 2006 'war on drugs', which has resulted in a large increase in violence. Payan (2013) notes that the Mexican government efforts have acted to increase violence since the cartels have taken the opportunity to weaken one another and seize rivals' territory. Since Calderón's declaration in 2006 over 60,000 people in Mexico have lost their lives as a result of the violence (Tuckman 2012). The increased violence in Mexico has led to subsequent worry about a spillover into the states that border Mexico. For example, both Texas Governor Rick Perry and U.S. Senator John Cornyn have used drug violence episodes in the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas in their calls for increased federal support along the border due to fears of potential spillover violence in Texas (Berghom 2009).

The Obama administration has taken a number of steps in order to address the potential for spillover violence in the U.S. The 2008 Mérida Initiative, a \$1.4 billion security cooperation agreement with Mexico, has provided Mexico training, equipment, and intelligence to improve law enforcement and judicial capacity to reduce drug related violence (Arteaga 2009). Its effectiveness has been questioned due to sluggish congressional allocation of funds and bureaucratic red tape that has slowed implementation (Payan 2013). In 2009, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano recommitted U.S. support, authorizing hundreds of new federal personnel to the border to assist Calderón with the cartels as well as to prevent violence from spreading to the U.S. (Martin 2013). In addition, President Obama authorized the deployment of 1,200 National Guard troops to the Southwest border in August 2010 to guard against potential spillover violence. President Obama also signed the Southwest Border Security Bill, which provides \$600 million to the effort and is heralded as one of the largest federal outlays for border security programmes in history (Janes 2010).

The newest tactic employed by the U.S. in response to the increased drug violence is the use of unarmed drones. Due to the rise in violence, the U.S. has begun to make use of (with Mexico's approval) high altitude Global Hawk drones along the U.S.-Mexico border as well as in the Mexican interior (Thompson and Mazzetti 2011). The use of drones permits the U.S. and Mexico to gather intelligence on drug cartels, allowing them to locate and follow TCOs activities. Former U.S. House Representative Silvestre Reyes suggested the use of armed drones to assassinate drug cartel leaders, which would arguably be a significant escalation of U.S. policy (Del Bosque 2011).

U.S. immigration policy in drug war times

Animosity in the U.S. to illegal immigration from Mexico is a relatively recent occurrence. As Andreas (2009) notes, for most of the twentieth century the flow of immigrants from Mexico to the U.S. was welcomed due to the cheap labour it provided American farms and businesses. The entrance of the U.S. into World War II exacerbated the country's labour needs and led to the creation of a guest worker programme known as the Bracero Program, which was in place from 1943-1964.

Scholars such as Payan (2006) link the end of the Bracero Program with the negative attitudes regarding immigration that persist to this day. The ending of the programme resulted in Mexicans seeking work in the U.S. without documentation, a trend that continued resulting in an estimated 4 to 5 million undocumented migrants in the U.S. by 1986 (Payan 2006, 55). The large number of undocumented migrants led Congress to pass the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which gave amnesty to 3 million migrants, enhanced patrols of the border, and penalized employers who hired undocumented migrants. Payan (2006) notes that 1986 marks a significant change in U.S. policy from one that considered undocumented migrants to be a labour problem to one that regarded them as a law enforcement problem.

The U.S. government's solution to undocumented migrants, which is designed to stop the problem at the border, escalated with the initiation of what Andreas (2009) refers to as the U.S. Border Control Offensive, beginning in the Clinton administration. This offensive resulted in the tripling of the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) budget between 1993 and 1998 with border enforcement garnering a significant portion of the new windfall (Andreas 2009). The actions coincided with a growing anger toward undocumented immigration in the U.S. exasperated by political entrepreneurs (Andreas 2009; Payan 2006).

These events resulted in a number of notable militarized operations reflecting the new offensive approach along the Southwest border including Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Operation Gatekeeper in California, and Operation Safeguard in Arizona. Operation Hold the line involved placing Border Patrol agents a small distance apart, essentially creating a human wall to deter migrants. The operations in California and Arizona went a step further by building walls and erecting fences 'to prevent economic invaders from coming across the border' (Payan 2006, 68).

While economic incentives have pushed immigrants from Mexico to the U.S. in the past, the recent drug violence is providing an additional reason for people to leave (Wolf 2009). The Internal Displacement Monitoring

Centre (IDMC) estimates that more than 100,000 Mexicans have been displaced as a result of the drug violence (Rosenberg 2011). This displacement has been well documented by a project at the University of Texas at El Paso, which has referred to the migration of citizens to escape drug violence from Mexican cities such as Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo as ‘Mexodus’ (Payan 2013, 16). This happens to coincide with a current backlash against illegal immigration in the U.S. As a result, some of the strictest anti-immigration legislation in generations has been passed, such as Senate Bill 1070 in Arizona, which makes failure to carry immigration documents a crime and gives police greater power to detain anyone they suspect of being in the state illegally. Similar legislation is currently being considered in a number of other states including Texas and Florida.

Fears of terrorism in drug war times

The events of September 11 and the subsequent war on terror waged by the U.S. in response injected a sense of fear into the border discourse. According to Payan (2006), politicians and policymakers analysing September 11 placed blame in part on failures in immigration procedures and border security in keeping terrorists from entering the U.S. Consequently, a number of policies were implemented in order to address the threat that immigration and the border pose to national security starting with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which consolidated the various border agencies in order to provide a unified presence.

According to Andreas (2009), September 11 led to an escalation of immigration enforcement along the U.S.-Mexican border with the U.S. Border Patrol tripling in size between 2001 and 2009. The military also plays a greater role with Joint Task Force North, which was involved in drug interdiction in the past, receiving an expansion of its mandate to include illegal immigration due to the perception stemming from 9/11 that all migrants could be potential terrorists (Andreas 2009). In addition to border enforcement, U.S. policy also turned to immigration procedures. The Real ID Act of 2005 resulted in the setting of federal standards for states driver’s licenses, which include having applicants’ show their social security number and proof of their legal status.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which September 11 and fears of terrorism have altered the border come from another controversial policy in the Real ID Act, which waives all laws that interfere with the erection of border walls. This legislation has allowed the federal government to erect walls without hindrance. This wall became a reality with the implementation of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI) by the Custom and Border Protec-

tion in the same year. Policies in SBI include the construction of a \$3 billion, 670 mile long wall along the southwest border from Brownsville, Texas to San Diego, California as well as the creation of a \$1.6 billion virtual fence, known as SBInet, in Arizona (Pérez-Treviño 2010) in an effort to reduce the flow of people and drugs across the border.

Similar to immigration, the illegal drug trade has been defined by the U.S. government as a potential terrorist threat due to the recent increase in drug violence in Mexico. The rise in violence has raised fears among U.S. policymakers regarding the Mexican government's ability to control the drug cartels. For example, U.S. House Representative Michael McCaul, Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, has introduced legislation that would designate top Mexican TCOs, including the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, the Arellano Félix Organization, Los Zetas, La Familia Michoacana, the Beltrán Leyva brothers, and the Juárez Cartel as foreign terrorist organizations (Aguilar 2011b). Such a designation would give U.S. law enforcement personnel additional tools to fight Mexican originated TCOs, including the ability to freeze assets and increase penalties for certain offenses. Several lawmakers have backed McCaul's legislation – including former U.S. Representative Silvestre Reyes whose spokesman noted in 2011 that cartels, 'Frequently engage in brutal acts of narco-terrorism to undermine democratic institutions and the rule of law, and to incite fear among the people and law enforcement' (Aguilar 2011b, para. 9).

U.S. media and the politics of fear

Given the wide exposure the issue has received in the media, it is evident that fear plays a key role in the discourse on border issues, U.S. immigration policy, and national security policy.³ Most often this fear is associated with terrorism, undocumented immigration, and with the potential spread of Mexican drug-related violence into the U.S. These purported threats to U.S. national security are almost universally said to be literally climbing over the U.S. southern border from Mexico.

This growing sense of fear has evolved and gotten more complex since the turn of the century. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and former President Felipe Calderón's 'war on drugs', which began as Calderón began his first year in power at the end of 2006, are key events that have changed the image of Mexico in the eyes of the U.S. public. As a result, fear has become an essential component of U.S. policy towards its southern neighbour. Mass media are essential to spreading this growing sense of fear. 'The corporate media has been exploiting fear for decades in their excessive presentation of murder and violence and dramatization of a

wide range of threats from foreign enemies and within everyday life' (Kellner 2003, 91). It is worth mentioning that some journalists who work for the mainstream media seem to have their own or imposed agendas, given the marketing prospects of bloody sounding headlines.

Nowadays, in the U.S., the idea of a terrorist threat, and the fear that it can come through the southern border has combined with the unprecedented levels of drug violence in Mexico, and the possibility that this violence could also spill across the U.S.-Mexico border. The perception of a deadly threat made up of drug violence and terrorism creeping over the border and the need to combat its entrance into the U.S., has created a media spectacle (Debord 1967/1995; Edelman 1964/1985; Kellner 2003, 2007, 2008), detrimental to societies and partially responsible for the continuation of the phenomenon of what we could define as 'the politics of fear'.

This media spectacle weds concepts such as 'narco-insurgency' and 'narco-terrorism', and has even brought in the possibility of an alliance of the U.S. deadliest enemy – Al Qaeda – and the brutal Zetas organized crime group. The attention such a spectacle generates has intensified fear in the U.S., especially among U.S. border residents. In turn, this growing fear is used to justify extreme border security measures, including harsh legislation against undocumented immigrants (Correa-Cabrera 2012).

Immigration and the politics of fear

The U.S.'s current immigration policy framework cries out for radical reform. But rising levels of drug violence in Mexico have made reform more difficult. The last few years have seen many failed attempts to reform the dysfunctional U.S. immigration system. Indeed, even tougher legislation that 'criminalizes' undocumented immigrants is on the table in several U.S. states, and most notably in Arizona.⁴ Anti-immigrant groups have pushed the politics of fear, arguing that a greater number of undocumented workers translate into more crime, less jobs for native-born Americans and a slower economy. The following statement of former DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff is an unambiguous expression of the 'politics of fear':

In order to secure our homeland, we have to secure our borders. For at least the past decade, illegal entry into the United States along our southwestern border has been a significant problem. The flow of illegal traffic through the border region imperils our ability to fight terrorism by stopping the illegal entry of terrorists, and exposes our border communities – and the rest of the United States – to the ill effects of drug smuggling, human smuggling, and gang activity (DHS 2008, 1).

Chertoff's statement, made in April of 2008, is a clear warning that a greater flow of undocumented Mexican migrants into the U.S. challenges U.S. national security because it promotes both terrorism and crime. The politics of fear in the U.S. portrays the 'illegal' immigrant (or alien as the person is sometimes referred to) as the enemy that 'hurt[s] low-skilled Americans, burden[s] taxpayers, create[s] an unassimilated underclass, encourage[s] lawbreaking, [and] compromise[s] border security' (Griswold 2002, 1).

The fear of spill-over violence

There is no doubt that drug violence in Mexico has multiplied since the year 2006 when former Mexican president Calderón declared 'war' on drugs. It is also true that this strategy didn't produce the desired results. In fact, some have even claimed that Mexico is on a path to becoming a 'failed state'. According to Nicholas Casey and José de Córdoba of the Wall Street Journal, 'some parts of Mexico are caught in the grip of violence so profound that government seems almost beside the point'. They mentioned, for example, the cases of 'Ciudad Mier and surrounding Tamaulipas state' (Casey and De Córdoba 2010, para. 22).⁵ What is more, mass killings in different parts of Mexico demonstrate just how little control the federal government exerts over some Mexican states.

However, we do not believe that Mexico's problems of drug violence pose a grave threat to the U.S. as some U.S. media and politicians have charged. Clearly, rising violence is a threat to Mexico. But so-called spillover violence has so far been almost non-existent. Almost all the violence perpetrated by Mexican organized crime groups has remained south of the border (Correa-Cabrera 2012). 'We have the occasional incident, (but) it is a very tiny fraction compared to what is going on the other side of the border' (Ybarra 2011, para. 21), wrote Tony Payan, an associate professor of political science at the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP).

Notwithstanding this fact, many Americans are deeply worried about a potential escalation of this phenomenon. Their worries give some U.S. politicians the opportunity to create a media spectacle about Mexico's growing violence. Using their access to mass media, these politicians present a spectacular view of violence spiralling out of control in Mexico and threatening U.S. national security. The politicians see the violence the product of a so-called 'narco-insurgency' by Mexican TCOs whose habits of carrying out beheadings, mass killings, and bombings 'are drawing comparisons to murders by Muslim extremists' (Aguilar 2010, para. 1).

Narco-terrorism and the politics of fear

Some top-level U.S. government officials – including Joseph W. Westphal, the former Under Secretary of the Army, and former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton – have suggested Mexico is under siege by a narco-insurgency or narco-terrorists.⁶ During a U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, a top adviser to President Obama said ‘terrorists seeking to unleash havoc in the United States could use Texas’ porous border with Mexico to enter this country’ (Aguilar 2011a, para. 1). James Clapper, former Director of National Intelligence agreed and said that Mexico’s extreme drug violence ‘could pose a significant threat to the U.S’. (para. 2) (see Correa-Cabrera 2012, 207-8).

These officials are not alone. Former U.S. Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-El Paso) has repeatedly charged that Mexican TCOs frequently commit acts of narco-terrorism. Reyes is in step with U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul, who, as already mentioned, has been seeking to designate seven of the top Mexican cartels as ‘foreign terrorist organizations’. According to Reyes, ‘such a designation would provide additional tools to help combat drug cartels and the threat they pose to the security of the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America’ (Aguilar 2010, para. 9).

Many have suggested that troops be sent to the U.S. border to fight the alleged narco-insurgency and keep Mexico’s mayhem from spilling over the border. U.S. intelligence and security officials have suggested the existence of ties between the major drug cartels operating in Mexico (such as the Zetas) and Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, or Al Qaeda affiliates. For example, Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Janet Napolitano, mentioned this possibility in testimony before a congressional committee in February of 2011. In particular, she expressed Washington’s concern because of an ‘eventual alliance between Al-Qaeda and the Zetas’ (Wilkinson 2011). But the spectacular form in which media has presented the risks of escalating spillover violence and alleged narco-insurgency – and even narco-terrorism – seems to depict an inaccurate and unrealistic panorama (Correa-Cabrera 2012, 208).

An alliance between the terrorists of Al Qaeda and the Mexican Zetas is unrealistic if one takes a close look at the goals and characteristics of these two organizations. Mexican TCOs ‘are not ideologically motivated and the Mexican government is trying to make a strong distinction between those things’, according to Eric Olson, a senior associate at the Mexico Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Aguilar 2010, para. 11). Carlos Pascual, former U.S. ambassador to Mexico, has also argued that there is no evidence the cartels have ‘a political ideology or a re-

ligious ideology, and we need to make that distinction'. Pascual insists that 'the lines should not be blurred to link the cartels with terrorist activities with an ideology' (Aguilar 2010, para. 8).

But the idea that Mexican TCOs could ally themselves with terrorists has become a part of public discourse because of groups whose aim might be 'to promote fear among the U.S. public in order to further their political and economic agendas' (Correa-Cabrera 2012, 209). This fear has been used to justify draconian immigration laws and the deployment, in some cases, of troops to the border. Unfortunately, these types of actions are misguided and could seriously damage the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. In many cases, the politics of fear appear to respond to specific political, ideological and economic interests while closing off channels of cooperation and communication between the U.S. and its southern neighbour.

Fear and violence: the meaning and effects of power

'Power and violence are opposites; where one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance....Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it' (Arendt 1970, 56).

'... the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth' (Foucault 1980, 122).

Drug violence has had an extremely negative effect of the Mexican media. This has contributed to generate further fear among the U.S.-Mexico border population. Gang members have killed reporters, and newspapers have been effectively shut down or taken over by the criminal syndicates. Mexican TCOs seem to exercise control of the media by silencing the formal media and presenting their own information through social media in order to send messages to rival organizations and the Mexican government. A power vacuum has been created by the collapse of the State in several states in Mexico. The drug cartels have filled the void using social media to present their claims to control Mexican institutions to the detriment of its citizens. On the whole, power of the governmental institutions is in jeopardy, given the violence initiated and threatened by a growing number of TCOs in Mexico as the politics of fear (Furedi 2005; Altheide 2006) continues.

The distinction between power and violence is important as 'Power is indeed of the essence of all government, but violence is not. Violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of [justified]

guidance.... And what needs justification by something else cannot be the essence of anything' (Arendt 1970, 51). Arendt defines power as corresponding 'to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (44). Arendt further submits that scholars in the discipline of political science have made a rather poor effort of defining words such as *power*, *strength*, *force*, *authority*, and *violence* – 'all of which refer to distinct, different phenomena and would hardly exist unless they did ... [and] to use them as synonyms not only indicates a certain deafness to linguistic meanings, which would be serious enough, but it has also resulted in a kind of blindness to the realities they correspond to' (43). Foucault's (2007) notion of power is subtly and importantly different from Arendt's definition. Foucault's (2007, 1980) body of work consists of power wielded by the state through its *apparatuses* – institutional mechanisms based on European territorial monarchies based on mercantilism, population, and the knowledge of government based on political economy ('the father's management of the family's goods' [2007, 107]) – which, of course, Mexico and the U.S. have European-historically influenced institutions of government and these are used to coerce the general population for its purposes. Foucault builds his concept of historical *governmentality* based on

... institutions, procedures, analyses, reflections, calculations, and tactics ... that has the population [*Note: compare with our concept of publics*] as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. Second, ... I understand the tendency, the line of force, ... throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we can call 'government' [leading to apparatuses, and a series of knowledges].... Finally, ... I think we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually 'governmentalized' (2007, 108-9).

With both analyses by Arendt and Foucault, we may see the foundations of power vis-à-vis the State. Arendt's distinction between Power and Violence⁷ is useful for our analysis in that the two descriptions signify the current struggle for domination between the drug cartels and elements of the Mexican government. Foucault's (2008) concept of *governmentality* and its implications for Power is also useful for placing into context the ability of government apparatuses to maintain Power in the face of violent forces at-

tacking the structure of the State. He notes that civil society has non-egoistic interests that bring people together separately and distinctly, bonding them together, that is different from purely economic transactional relations (p.301). Foucault states further that there is a paradoxical relationship between liberal economic rationalism and civil society as one moves towards an economic state in that ‘the constitutive bond of civil society is weakened and the more the individual is isolated by the economic bond he has with everyone and anyone’(p.303). Foucault unravels the constitutive elements of society in order to reveal structures that affect governmentality of the State. Bauman (2010), following Foucault, shows that modern states are under siege through a variety of means via capital and finances, commodity markets, information, criminal mafias, drug traffic, terrorism and the arms trade (121) – and these activities are all targeting various states in Mexico for our study where the State (of the state) is susceptible to attack by TCOs such as the Gulf Cartel and the Zetas, and subsequently displacing governance by national and state political leaders across areas of the country. The case we are making here is that concepts in political theory based on Power and Violence are still applicable today in the face of new anti-State phenomena based on the media spectacle. The new seeds of the State’s destruction are sowed by the effects of drug trafficking and terrorism. Power and Violence lead to the making of a new era: the politics of fear.⁸

The media spectacle surrounding the Violence has led to a lack of public discourse useful in having deliberations for effective governance and civic understanding necessary for a healthy *polis* (Stone 2002) and a weakening of State Power.⁹ Through the corporate-owned news media, fear is promoted as a commodity through the selling of news and information sensationalizing Violence in Mexico, through U.S. media sources. The media spectacle (Debord 1967/1995; Agamben 1993; Bauman 2010; Kellner 2003, 2007, 2008) serves as a primary source for the promotion of Violence in the region. Politics has been truncated through the mean/ends utilitarian-induced market spectacle (Debord 1967/1995; Kellner 2003, 2007, 2008; and based on Arendt 1958), which effectuates a disruption of the *polis* through the ravages of the market (Stone 2002). The era of the politics of fear prevails on the border of the U.S. and Mexico through government actors and non-governmental personnel utilizing the spectacle for material gain at the expense of civil society.

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Notes

1. Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) took over as Mexican president on 1 December 2012.
2. The term 'drug trafficking organizations' (DTOs) has recently fallen out of use to the more updated term of 'transnational criminal organizations' (TCOs). Hence, we will use this last term in the present work to describe the various drug cartels vying for hegemony in Mexico.
3. See Staudt (2009), which includes a related and interesting critique of national security paradigms.
4. On 23 April 2010, Arizona Governor, Janice K. Brewer, signed into law legislation against undocumented border crossers. The bill would make it a crime under state law to be in the country illegally. It would also require local police officers to question people about their immigration status if there was a reason to suspect they are in the country illegally. On 28 July 2010 – one day before the law was set to go into effect – a federal judge blocked several of its key provisions, arguing they were unconstitutional. U.S. District Judge Susan Bolton issued a temporary injunction that halted key parts of SB 1070 that would have required police to check the immigration status of anyone they suspected of being an illegal U.S. resident (Davenport and Cooper 2010).
5. Consider, for example, the massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas in August, 2010; the events in Mier, Tamaulipas in November, 2010, when more than 50 per cent of the town's 6,500 residents fled to the neighbouring city of Miguel Alemán, as a response to extreme drug violence; the kidnapping of bus passengers on 25 March 2011 and the subsequent discovery of clandestine graves near San Fernando, Tamaulipas – that revealed the assassination of more than 200 people.
6. For example, in September 2010, Clinton declared that 'drug violence in Mexico bears the mark of an insurgency' by the use of car bombs and 'seems more and more like to Colombia 20 years ago' (Stevenson 2010).
7. The concepts of power and violence are hereafter capitalized to distinguish Arendt's meaning of the terms.
8. The politics of fear with regard to terrorism, in general, is fully elaborated by Furedi (2005) who notes that it 'contains the implication that politicians self-consciously manipulate people's anxieties in order to realize their objectives' (p. 123). Also instructive here is Altheide's (2006) statement that 'The politics of fear relies on a compliant media that will carry news reports and other popular-culture messages that promote fear' (p.

- 47). Both scholars' works are interpretations of the politics of fear regarding terrorism that has relevance here.
9. It is worth noting that this condition does not apply to the whole U.S.-Mexico borderlands. While Ciudad Juárez is an extremely violent city, for example, it has a thriving civil society and media here widely report on violence and drug-related incidents. On the other hand, paramilitarization of organized crime in northeastern Mexico has effectively silenced the media and greatly limited social mobilization.

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