# Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies

## Spring 2009

### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Harley Shaiken</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Narcovirus</td>
<td>Alma Guillermoprieto</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Siege</td>
<td>Denise Dresser</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First, Do Less Harm</td>
<td>Benjamin Lessing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Clean</td>
<td>Harley Shaiken Interviews Ricardo Lagos</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Problems or Cyclical Downturn?</td>
<td>Robert Reich</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley Bears Witness</td>
<td>Thomas Laqueur</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circus</td>
<td>Art by Fernando Botero With an Interview by Beatriz Manz</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America Should Bet on Energy</td>
<td>Ricardo Lagos</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greener Americas</td>
<td>Harley Shaiken</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His and Hers Politics</td>
<td>Roberto Guareschi</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army for Rent, Terms Negotiable</td>
<td>Maiah Jaskoski</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Migration and U.S. Foreign Policy</td>
<td>Lisa García Bedolla</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Programs, Political Opportunities?</td>
<td>Emily Curran</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Going to the Chapel:</td>
<td>Sarah Lynn Lopez</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in Migrant-Sending Communities</td>
<td>Daniel Alarcón</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafetín El Moshe: Location, Location . . .</td>
<td>Chico Simões</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamulengo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Front cover: La Santa Muerte looms over passersby in a Mexico City marketplace.

Photo by Patricio López Guzmán.
This issue of the Review has unusual range. It begins with an article by Alma Guillermoprieto on the narcoculture in Mexico and concludes with an article by novelist Daniel Alarcón on fine dining in a new restaurant in Lima, Peru. Normally, a trendy restaurant is difficult to get into; this one is difficult to get out of. It’s located in a Peruvian prison. No, the article is not fiction.

In between, Denise Dresser reflects on the violence gripping Mexico, the role of the Calderón government and the relation of the United States to these unfolding “drug wars.” Ben Lessing examines the context of the drug trade and the efforts to control it in the wake of a visit by Ethan Nadelmann, founder of the Drug Policy Alliance.

An interview with Chilean President Ricardo Lagos (2000-06) highlights his new role as a special envoy on climate change appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations. As part of the Center for Latin American Studies’ new program on Alternative Energy and the Americas, President Lagos and I visited Detroit, Michigan to spend a day with scientist and renewable energy pioneer Stan Ovshinsky. Lagos shares his impressions of the trip in a second article that looks at the challenges for implementing renewable energy in the Americas.

Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor in the Clinton administration, examines the global economic meltdown by probing the central question of whether we are in the midst of a severe cyclical downturn or a more fundamental structural transformation. The article is based on his opening remarks at the 2009 conference of the Progressive Governance Association in Viña del Mar, Chile.

Political tensions in Argentina and the ways in which that country is seeking to navigate turbulent economic waters are explored in an article by Roberto Guareschi, the former editor of Clarín, a leading Argentine daily. He focuses on the outsized role played by the ruling couple: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the current president, and Néstor Kirchner, who preceded her in office.

Finally, we are very pleased to showcase a striking new series of paintings by Fernando Botero that takes the Mexican circus as its theme. Even in reproduction, they convey a richness of color and style as well as the special magic that runs through the work of this great artist. The entire series includes 120 oils and 200 drawings.

UCB Professor of History Thomas Laqueur reflects on Botero’s choice to donate his extraordinary paintings and drawings on Abu Ghraib to the University of California, Berkeley. We are humbled by his generosity and feel there is no more appropriate home for these works than Berkeley, given the history and values of this campus.

Fernando Botero and Sophia Vari will join us for the opening at the Berkeley Art Museum on September 23, 2009. We look forward to seeing you there!

— Harley Shaiken
A young Tijuana man shows his tattoo of La Santa Muerte.

Photo from Associated Press.
At dawn on September 13, twenty-four male bodies were found in La Marquesa National Park, just outside Mexico City limits. They had been kidnapped the previous night in the neighboring state of Michoacán and transported to La Marquesa, where they were executed.

On the evening of September 15, as Mexicans were celebrating their independence from Spain, suspected traffickers lobbed three hand grenades into a festive crowd in Morelia’s central plaza, killing eight people and wounding many others.

On January 25, in the state of Baja California, the army captured Santiago Meza López. He had been paid $600 a week to dispose of those killed on his employer’s orders. Meza confessed that he had dismembered over 300 people and eliminated any trace of them by dissolving their body parts in vats of acid.

On February 15, just off Mexico’s Pacific coastline, a handmade, semi-submersible vessel carrying several tons of cocaine, one of dozens estimated to leave the Pacific coast of Colombia every year, was captured by the Mexican Coast Guard.

On that same day, in Mexico City, not far at all from where I live, two women were found dead in a car. Their bodies were in the trunk; their heads had been placed in coolers on the front seat.

Three weeks later, bodyguards for the governor of Baja California were arrested at a narcofiesta, along with some 25 members of an “extermination group” headed by Guatemalan assassins in league with traffickers from the state of Sinaloa.

How did this happen? How did Mexico come to this? Briefly, I hope to explain that the bloodshed and corruption now afflicting the country are the highly predictable result of the war on drugs and that the men who murder each other in the atrocious ways now grabbing headlines all over the world are strengthened and emboldened in their task by something we can call the narcocultura.

Coca leaves are neither toxic nor narcotic. In Bolivia and Peru, coca cultivation is traditional and legal. The crushed leaves are sold in tea bags in supermarkets and are very helpful for babies’ colic or grown-ups’ headaches. It is only when a roomful of coca leaves is crushed and processed with precursor chemicals — ether, kerosene or acetone — that a kilo of cocaine is produced.

Cocaine was initially developed as an anti-depressive in Europe; it was praised and prescribed by Sigmund Freud and legally manufactured in Europe and the United States. As its addictive properties became evident, therapeutic use was discontinued, and cocaine was declared illegal in the United States in 1914. But the market for the drug was already well established, and Richard Nixon’s declaration of war on this internationally traded commodity merely increased its desirability.

By the late 1970s, Colombian traffickers were importing coca paste from Bolivia and processing it into ready-for-export cocaine in laboratories hidden in the sub-Amazonian jungle. After the U.S. government pushed Bolivia to crack down on its drug trade, illegal coca cultivation and cocaine manufacture spread to Peru, then — after pressure was exerted on Peruvian growers and exporters — to Colombia. From Colombia, the trade spread to Brazil and then on to Venezuela and back again to Bolivia and Peru. Early on, Colombian drug traders expanded their trafficking networks into the Caribbean — to Haiti and very probably to Cuba — and into Central America and southern Mexico. Recently, the drug trade has started operating out of Africa, where the consequences will certainly be devastating.

Following the death of Colombian drug trader Pablo Escobar in 1993, the cocaine trade in Colombia fragmented. Although coca is still being grown in the Andes and continues to be processed largely in the Colombian sub-Amazon basin, control of the U.S. market has increasingly devolved into Mexican hands. Two-thirds of all the illegal drugs consumed in the United States enter the country from Mexico. (It is often forgotten, however, that the greater part of Mexican drug-smugglers profits still come from their export of home-grown marijuana.)

Upon taking power in December 2006, President Felipe Calderón made the fateful decision to deploy the Mexican army in those states where the drug cartels operate with almost complete impunity. How successful Calderón’s anti-narcotic military offensive will be is impossible to predict, but we can learn some lessons, at least, from the last great military offensive against traffickers, which took place back in the 1970s when much of the business was concentrated.
on Mexico’s Pacific Coast, in the marijuana-growing state of Sinaloa. A great many low- and mid-level traffickers were killed or arrested then. A great many military commanders and troops reached profitable agreements with the traders. And most of the truly powerful operators fled Sinaloa to restart their business in other states — Jalisco, Michoacán, Baja California and Chihuahua — where they continue to prosper to this day.

The Arellano Félix brothers set up operations in Tijuana. The Carrillo Fuentes family settled in Ciudad Juárez. A man called Joaquín Guzmán Loera (known as “el chapo” or “the short, stocky guy”) fled Sinaloa for Jalisco. After many epic adventures, including his escape in a laundry basket from a high-security prison, Chapo Guzmán resumed operations in his home state over a decade ago.

In the past, these three families had long-standing power and territory-sharing agreements, but the arrangements collapsed thanks to an aggressive upstart called Osiel Cárdenas Guillén. He was not from Sinaloa, and he emerged as the key trafficker in the Gulf Coast state of Tamaulipas in the early 1990s, shipping a large amount of illicit Colombian goods through the many busy crossing points there. While Cárdenas has spent the last several years in Mexican and U.S. jails, his former bodyguards and henchmen have taken over his share of the market.

It’s worth noting that these Gulf Coast successors to the Cárdenas empire, who call themselves the Zetas, are former military anti-narcotics commandos, many of them trained in the United States.

Much of the current bloodshed is the result of a dispute between the Sinaloa, Gulf Coast and border point traffickers over how the territory is to be shared.

But the violence we are seeing is also the traffickers’ response to Calderón’s declared offensive against them. Today, more than 30,000 troops patrol a dozen states, including Michoacán, Sinaloa, Baja California (including, most importantly, the city of Tijuana), Chihuahua (where the city with the highest murder rate, Ciudad Juárez, is located) and Tamaulipas (with the key border cities of Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo). Throughout the country, government officials have been threatened or murdered, and even high-ranking officials — vice-ministers and army generals — are among the victims. And the army and security forces are once again in full contact with the corrupting power of drug money.
Of course, corruption among the military and police forces is nothing new: during the seven decades that a single party ruled Mexico, corruption was generally tolerated, even encouraged. Virtually every government institution, including the various law-enforcement agencies, was staffed at every level by men and women who could be bought off for a good price — indeed, who expected to be bought off by the citizenry.

This twisted relationship with power is perhaps the most insidious element in the fight against the drug trade, and it is a central element of the culture in which traffickers thrive. But I would like to talk about narcocultura in a narrower sense: the production of symbols, rituals and artifacts — slang, religious cults, music, consumer goods — that allow people involved in the drug trade to recognize themselves as part of a community, to establish a hierarchy in which the acts they are required to perform acquire positive value and to absorb the terror inherent in their line of work.

The aspect of narcocultura most familiar to people in the United States is the music known as the narcocorrido. The form harks back to the epic narrative songs of the Middle Ages, which recounted the deeds and sorrows of heroes. Like all rural musical forms, the Mexican variant of the old epic songs was initially very simple. There was a guitar and a singer. However, because corridos took hold in the north of the country and because the north borders on the United States and because Texas had recently received an influx of German immigrants, accordions were incorporated early in the 20th century, modernizing the old-fashioned music. Still, the corrido would undoubtedly have faded away if it hadn’t been for the Mexican Revolution, which was, in the truest sense, a heroic enterprise. Pancho Villa in particular, the great trickster hero of all time, was a man of the people and an epic warrior who inspired dozens of corridos.

By the 1960s, however, once the revolutionary myth was no longer a source of national identity or great national satisfaction, and when television had equipped a huge segment of the population with a cosmopolitan outlook, the corridos were becoming extinct. But their spirit transmigrated to a lively region on the Pacific coast, where the traditional music

Pancho Villa (center), the original "trickster hero" of the traditional corridos.
was played with a big guitar known as the *tololoche*, two little sticks called the *redoba* and a lot of brass, notably the tuba.

The region was Sinaloa, and one of the many groups playing corridos there in the mid-60s would soon emigrate to California and become the most famous Mexican musical group of all time, playing *norteño* music with corrido lyrics about the world they knew — the world of the marijuana growers and smugglers whose links to the powerful were so… powerful. They called themselves Los Tigres del Norte, and their first big hit told the story of Emilio Varela and Camelia la Tejana, who smuggled marijuana stuffed in the tires of their truck.

At some point, the new corrido singers understood that if, in true medieval style, they wrote a song flattering a real, living person of circumstance, they would benefit. Many examples of the genre can be found on YouTube. Quite a few extol the virtues of Chapo Guzmán, the most wanted Sinaloa trafficker: “He’s a friend of those who are friends, an enemy of those who are enemies,” the song goes, and (I paraphrase) he controls a great deal of territory and is an all-around good thing!

In a country where success is hard to come by, drug traffickers are more successful than virtually anyone. In a country where one must constantly observe the niceties of hierarchy, traffickers respect no rules, and they spend their money in the same reckless way they use up their lives. The admiration born of these achievements makes other values acceptable. I offer, as an example, one last song from the narcoculture. It was written by Lupillo Rivera, who was born in Los Angeles but sings in Spanish for a primarily Mexican audience. A number of narcocorrido singers have been murdered in the last two or three years, but when all the other singers were running scared, Lupillo Rivera chose not to ease his way out of the genre. Instead, he came out last year with a record called “At a Private Party,” and the cover photograph very clearly gives one to understand that it was recorded in the *hacienda* or *rancho* of a drug lord or *jefe*. The first cut is called “The Boss Is Partying,” and the following is my literal translation of some of the lyrics:

The boss is partying, so we have to keep an eye on him. I remember that last time, when he started to drink, he took a very young girl with him when he left. The doors are now closed, so this party is going to last a long time. And… once he says, “Bottoms up,” and he’s done a few lines, there’s no telling when it will end. As usual, he has a visitor: it’s his friend, the colonel, who has brought the beauty queen he uses. It is a good idea to hide our own women, because you never know what they’ll get up to. We have to bring the jefe the best-looking women, and if he is bored with them, then we’ll bring him some that haven’t been used.
Contrabando y Traición
(Smuggling and Betrayal)

By Angel González  Sung by: Los Tigres del Norte

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Salieron de San Isidro
Procedentes de Tijuana,
Traían las llantas del carro
Repletas de yerba mala.

Eran Emilio Varela
Y Camelia La Tejana.

Pasaron por San Clemente
Los paró la emigración,
Les pidió sus documentos,
Les dijo “De donde son?”
Ella era de San Antonio
Una hembra de corazón.

CHORUS 1:
Una hembra si quiere a un hombre
Por él puede dar la vida,
Pero hay que tener cuidado
Si esa hembra se siente herida,
La traición y el contrabando
Son cosas incompatibles.

A Los Ángeles llegaron
A Hollywood se pasaron
En un callejón oscuro
Las cuatro llantas cambiaron,
Ahi entregaron la yerba
Y ahí también les pagaron,

Emilio dice a Camelia:
“Hoy te das por despedida.
Con la parte que te toca
Tu puedes rehacer tu vida,
Yo me voy pa’ San Francisco
Con la dueña de mi vida.”

CHORUS 2:
Sonaron siete balazos
Camelia a Emilio mata,
La policía solo halló
Una pistola tirada.

Del dinero y de Camelia
Nunca más se supo nada.

They left San Isidro
Coming from Tijuana,
Their car tires
Full of “bad grass” [marijuana].

They were Emilio Varela and
Camelia the Texan.

Passing through San Clemente,
They were stopped by Immigration.
He asked for their documents.
He said, “Where are you from?”
She was from San Antonio,
A woman with a lot of heart.

CHORUS 1:
If a woman loves a man,
She can give her life for him,
But watch out
If that woman feels wounded.
Betrayal and smuggling
Don’t mix.

They arrived in Los Angeles,
To Hollywood they went.
In a dark alley,
They changed the four tires.
There they delivered the grass,
And there they were paid.

Emilio says to Camelia,
“Today is your farewell.
With your share,
You can make a new life.
I am going to San Francisco,
with the mistress of my life.”

CHORUS 2:
Seven shots rang out
Camelia killed Emilio.
All the police found
Was the discarded pistol.

Of Camelia and the money.
Nothing more was ever known.
The audience for these songs is vast. Most listeners are civilians, as it were, and will never get more involved in the trade than through the simple enjoyment of a song. But many are in the drug life, and they are back-country folks or young men from the urban slums. They learn to kill, and in the emptiness and absence of meaning that follows murder, they look desperately for redemption and for grounding. They find it in consumer goods — narcojeans, narcotennis shoes, narcocars — and in the new religions, the narcocultos.

The oldest and best-known is the cult of Jesús Malverde, patron saint of Chapo Guzmán and other Sinaloa traffickers, a Robin Hood figure who is supposed to have been active in the late 19th century. His first name is Jesús, and his last name is a compound word: Mal-verde or Bad-green. We know that in gangster talk “bad” frequently means “good” and that in Mexican slang “verde” can refer to both dollar bills and marijuana. There is no documentary evidence that Malverde ever existed, but hundreds of people worship every day at his shrine, which is directly across the street from the Sinaloa government building. And it is reliably said that whenever Chapo Guzmán or another powerful trafficker needs to make an offering, the street is closed down to let him arrive and pray in peace. Jesús Malverde is deeply Mexican, from his legend (he is said to have made his first appearance to a mule-train driver) to his effigy, which is made of cheap ceramic and bears a certain resemblance to former President Vicente Fox.

The same cannot be said of La Santa Muerte, the Holy Death, Mexico’s newest and fastest-growing cult. The Santa is frequently associated with the Gulf Coast trafficking group — the Zetas — and with those who control the trade in downtown Mexico City. The image of the death figure worshipped in this new cult comes from medieval morality plays by way of Hollywood horror movies: the skeleton carries a globe in one hand and a scythe in the other, and its skull-face has no personality. La Santa Muerte is not related to the rituals of the Day of the Dead, in which Mexicans put up altars with images of their loved ones and honor them with their favorite music and food. The little skeletons used
to decorate the altar for this holiday are festively sinning figures, full of personality, used to remind us that life is fleeting — but fun.

The figure of the Holy Death is different: she works miracles for people in desperate need, including traffickers who may be oppressed by guilt or afraid for their lives. If you’re in the business of death, you might pray for a way out of the terrible fix you’ve gotten yourself into, and failing that, you might pray for a good death; you might pray that your body won’t be found in the trunk of a car and your head in a cooler on the front seat; you might pray that your throat won’t be slit open and the tongue pulled down so that your corpse appears to be wearing a necktie. Given that you know life is going to be short, you might pray for a decent end.

The latest news, 26 months after President Felipe Calderón’s declaration of war against the drug trade, is that 30 armed *narcos*, operating for the first time as a sort of paramilitary force, attacked a police barracks in central Mexico. This to me would indicate that treating a terrible health issue as if it were a war, and not a problem of injustice and societal dysfunction, eventually leads to real war. For years, U.S. anti-narcotics officials in Latin America, involved for too long in combating the drug trade, have said warily that fighting drugs is like pinching a balloon: if you pinch drug production in Bolivia, it pops up in Peru; pinch drug production in Peru, and it will pop up again in Colombia. I would like to stress that this is an almost criminally inadequate comparison, one that completely ignores the damage done to our societies in the 40 years of the U.S. war on drugs.

What the drug trade is really like is the HIV virus: once it infects the social body, it has devastating consequences, and there is no getting rid of it. Drug warriors may be able to bring down the level of drug trafficking for a few years, as the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency did in Bolivia. But the policy of combating drug use through warfare leaves behind a society in which pervasive illegal networks and an endemic habit of violence — the larger definition of narcocultura — have been acquired. The drug war, as it was fought in the early 1970s, involved three Andean countries, Mexico, Afghanistan and three countries in Southeast Asia. Forty years later, drugs are a scourge throughout the world. The war on drugs is not only a failed policy, it is a failed policy that has generated terrible and lasting damage. Only when we perceive and analyze the consequences can we start to figure out where to go from this disaster.

*Alma Guillermoprieto is an award-winning journalist and author as well as a visiting scholar at CLAS. This article is based on a talk she gave for the Center on March 18, 2009.*
As I reflect on my troubled country, the lyrics of a Bruce Springsteen song come to mind: “We’re a long, long way from home… Home’s a long, long way from us.” And that’s how it feels to live in Mexico during these turbulent times: far from democratic normalcy; far from the rule of law; far from home and close to everything that imperils it. Always on the lookout, anxious, suspicious of our own shadow. Invaded by the legitimate fear of walking on the street after dark, taking money out of an ATM, hopping into a cab, being stopped by a corrupt policeman, receiving a kidnapper’s call, losing a son, burying a daughter. My home has become a place where too many people die, gunned down by a drug trafficker or assaulted by a robber or shot by an ill-trained law enforcement officer or kidnapped and strangled by a member of a criminal gang, as was the case with the teenage children of prominent businessmen Alejandro Martí and Nelson Vargas.

Given the increasingly lawless conditions of the country he inherited, President Felipe Calderón had little choice but to act, and he is to be commended for doing so. The former ruling party that governed Mexico in an authoritarian fashion for over 71 years left behind a toxic legacy. During the 1980s, drug trafficking blossomed throughout the country as a result of political protection. Drug traffickers infiltrated the Mexican government, frequently aided and abetted by members of the Federal Judicial Police as well as state-level officials. The political structure built by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) allowed organized crime to swell, not despite the government but thanks to the blind eye it often turned.

After Mexico’s electoral transition to democracy in 2000, when members of the National Action Party (PAN) came to power, they discovered a precarious state of affairs but did little to confront the festering problems. Years of government inaction under former President Vicente Fox left key institutions infiltrated, hundreds of policemen dead, scores of judges assassinated, dozens of journalists missing. During the Fox administration, Mexico turned into a more violent country than Colombia; his successor’s task has been to recover lost ground and attempt to reconstruct the
authority of the Mexican state. As President Calderón stated in a recent interview: “We decided to operate on the body politic and discovered that it had cancer.”

Dealing with a problem that is more widespread and embedded than President Calderón originally envisioned has not been easy because the surge of drug trafficking in Mexico reflects a painful paradox: the government’s drug enforcement efforts are undermined by the corrupting influence of the drug trade, yet the drug trade cannot survive without the protection of compromised elements within the government. Cocaine traffickers spend as much as $500 million a year on bribery, which is more than double the annual budget of the Mexican Attorney General’s office. As a result, it frequently becomes difficult to distinguish those charged with policing smuggling from the smugglers themselves. Mexico is a place where, if you are the victim of a crime, the last person you call is a police officer.

In the face of police corruption, Calderón has turned to the military to take on the anti-drug effort. But bringing soldiers out of the barracks and moving them around the country at will is a cause for concern. As a result of its expanded role, the military is becoming the supreme authority — in some cases, the only authority — in parts of some states. And greater militarization is also leading to greater corruption within an institution that has turned into the last credible beachhead in Mexico’s longstanding battle.

In order to be more effective, Calderón needs to deal with Mexico’s culture of illegality. Over the past decade, Mexico’s transition to democratic rule has cast a glaring light on the country’s precarious, uneven and limited rule of law. Saddled by inefficiency and corruption, the Mexican judiciary cannot establish, ensure or enforce the rule of law. Cases of official corruption abound — with former governors accused of drug trafficking — and the credibility of public institutions has suffered when those proven guilty have eluded punishment. As a result, impunity runs rampant.

Over the past decade, the surge in drug trafficking and the government’s unsuccessful efforts to contain its effects have been symptomatic of what doesn’t work in Mexico’s dysfunctional democracy. As George Orwell wrote, “People denounce the war while preserving the type of society that makes it inevitable.” Mexico has a political, economic and social structure that makes crime possible. It is a country characterized by politicians who protect drug traffickers and drug traffickers who finance politicians; by those who launder money and by the unregulated financial institutions that allow the practice to occur; and by judges who become accomplices of criminals and criminals who...
can bribe them. And although Felipe Calderón has declared that the Mexican state is “winning the war” against the drug mafias, the truth is that government institutions frequently shelter their members. Drug trafficking in Mexico is nurtured by extensive corruption and persistent impunity. It feeds upon a country where 75 percent of crimes are not reported due to lack of trust in the authorities, where 98 percent of crimes are never resolved or punished.

So while Calderón’s efforts are to be applauded, they must also be accompanied by comprehensive measures that entail more than soldiers on the streets. The prospects for a stable, less insecure Mexico will be contingent on Calderón’s capacity to enact a major overhaul of the country’s judiciary and law enforcement apparatus. It will be dependent on the government’s political will to confront corruption at the highest levels — something Calderón has been reluctant to do. In other words, Calderón needs to fight not only drug traffickers but also the political networks that protect them. Otherwise, his efforts to confront organized crime will be tantamount to trying to cure cancer with an aspirin. Otherwise, Mexico will continue to combat symptoms while ignoring their causes.

President Calderón has told the United States that the heightened level of violence is a result of government efficiency in combating drug cartels, that the rise in executions is evidence of a firm hand and not an ineffectual one. But Calderón’s stance — and one he is forced to maintain due to political and electoral imperatives at home — side-steps structural problems that cannot be solved with more weapons, more bullets, more members of the military policing key cities, more blood on the streets, more simplistic solutions to complex dilemmas.

The current strategy — based largely on the increased militarization of Mexico — ignores high-level government corruption that no one really wants to combat. It ignores a police force so weak, so ill-trained, so underpaid and so infiltrated that good apples are spoiled by rotten ones. It ignores that U.S. military training of Mexican troops can end up empowering splinter groups like the “Zetas,” who leave the army to start up their own criminal gangs. It ignores that an enhanced military presence will probably result in more human rights abuses in a country where too many occur already. It ignores a concentrated, oligopolistic economic structure that thwarts growth and social mobility, forcing people across the border or into the drug trade in record numbers: 450,000 Mexicans are involved in the cultivation, processing and distribution of drugs according to a recent estimate. It ignores the existence of a permanent
underclass of 20 million people who live on less than $2 a day and view drug cultivation as a way out of extreme poverty. Drug traffickers are becoming more powerful in Mexico due to persistent historic patterns that recent governments have failed to confront.

If Mexico is unable to deal with its domestic corruption, it won't matter how many troops are trained, how many weapons are shipped or how many helicopters are bought. Colombia has spent over $5 billion in U.S. aid with mixed results: more security but no end to drug production. The lesson is clear: the main objective of the “war” that the Mexican government is engaged in should not only be the destruction of the drug cartels but also the construction of the rule of law.

At the same time, the United States needs to understand the enormity of the problem brewing in the neighborhood and the negative role it has played by largely ignoring the burgeoning drug trade in recent years. At first, President George W. Bush sought to engage Mexico on immigration and other issues, but after 9/11 the bilateral relationship was placed on hold by the war on terror elsewhere. As General Barry McCaffrey, former drug czar, recently declared: “During the last eight years we witnessed the disappearance of leadership in the area of anti-drug policy.” The Mérida Initiative, through which the U.S. provides a small level of financial and military assistance, is a necessary but insufficient step given the urgency of the situation.

Mexico’s crime-related ills have become a focus of attention among lawmakers, law enforcers and the media in the United States. Over the past several months, there have been more than eight congressional hearings, a segment on “60 Minutes” and numerous public statements made by key people in the American intelligence community, stressing Mexico’s plight. While this sort of attention is welcome — given the seriousness of the problems the country faces — a panoply of inconsistent, disjointed, contradictory stances has generated ill will south of the border.

Mexico doesn’t know whether it should pay more attention to those who advocate militarizing the border or to those who have come out against it, including President Obama himself. Mexico doesn’t know whether the U.S. will make a concerted effort to stanch the illegal smuggling of guns into its territory or whether that topic will be shelved by the “right to bear arms” argument. Mexico doesn’t understand whether it’s being criticized in order to generate congressional support for further aid and deeper collaboration or whether recent criticism is just political posturing by those who would welcome a bigger wall between the two countries. Members of the U.S government talk about the need for a “new paradigm” in the U.S.–Mexico relationship but then lop off $150 million from the Mérida Initiative designed to enhance military cooperation and intelligence sharing. Members of the Obama team talk about a “strategic partnership” with Mexico, but then Congress ends a demonstration project to allow some Mexican trucks onto American highways, as required under Nafta. Mexico then retaliates by placing tariffs on 89 U.S. products, affecting $2.4 billion in trade.

In the meantime, Mexican drug traffickers buy the arms that the U.S. sells; over 2,000 weapons cross the border on a daily basis, and many of them are sold in an illegal fashion. Mexican drug traffickers provide the cocaine that U.S. users demand; over 35 million American citizens are drug users. Mexican drug traffickers have set up distribution networks across U.S. cities because very little has been done to stop them from doing so. According to recent reports, drug trafficker Joaquín Guzmán has turned Atlanta into the Mexican cartels’ East Coast distribution center for cocaine and other drugs. Atlanta’s accessibility to key interstates, like I-95 and I-85, makes it a perfect hub for moving cocaine
State of Siege

and marijuana and taking bulk cash back to Mexico. The city’s fast-growing Mexican population, lured largely by the region’s building boom, has provided excellent cover and resources for the cartels’ U.S. emissaries. From there, cocaine is moved to New York, Pittsburgh, Miami, Chicago and Washington, D.C.

In the face of increasingly dire circumstances, the U.S. can help by promoting more antinarcotics operations within its own borders, of the sort espoused by Attorney General Eric Holder. The U.S. can help by clamping down on money laundering and the financial flows that have enabled Mexican drug trafficker Joaquín Guzmán to amass a billion dollar fortune and earn a place on the Forbes list of richest men in the world. The U.S. can help by addressing the demand for drugs in its own cities, and Secretary Clinton’s and President Obama’s recent remarks in this regard are most welcome. The U.S. can help by cooperating more and not less on security matters; by demanding more and not less accountability for the aid it offers; by insisting that, if Mexico wants a helping hand, it will have to clean up its own house and accept hard truths the government has tried to obscure.

Both Mexico and the United States need to understand that this is a war that will never be “won,” that it will never end if the demand for drugs north of the border is not stymied. To pretend that it can be won without dealing with drug consumption and demand-driven forces in the United States is to believe that one can stop an earthquake or a hurricane. For every drug trafficker who is caught, another one will emerge in his place.

As Detective McNulty says in the final scene of “The Wire” — the American television series that recreated the futile war against drugs in Baltimore — as he gazes upon his devastated city with a mixture of love and sadness: “It is what it is.” His despair is shared by many Mexicans today as we pay a very high price for our inability to construct a prosperous, dynamic, inclusive, lawful country in which citizens aren’t propelled into illicit activities in order to survive and criminals aren’t protected by the government itself. But we are also paying a very high price for American voracity. And because of that, millions of Mexicans like myself feel a long, long way from home.

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In this 2008 bust, the Mexican army seized $26.2 million cached in a house in Sinaloa.
vershadowed for much of the last decade by 9/11 and its aftermath, the war on drugs has made a sudden return to the headlines. In Mexico, more than 10,000 people have died since December 2006, when President Felipe Calderón enlisted the army in his fight against drug traffickers. With the bloodshed beginning to spill over the border and into the consciousness of the American public, the Obama administration has responded by simultaneously trying to support Calderón, hold him accountable and keep his war from spreading north. At the same time, President Obama has acknowledged that the United States — with its demand for drugs and wide-open gun market — is partially responsible for Mexico’s troubles.

Meanwhile, a flurry of opinion pieces from world leaders, public figures and influential publications were released to coincide with the March meeting of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the international body responsible for drug policy and enforcement. As the CND met to review its policies and chart out an action plan for the next decade, these opinion leaders called for a fundamental shift in global drug policy away from prohibition and eradication.

For Ethan Nadelmann, director and founder of the anti-prohibition Drug Policy Alliance, these are signs that the war on drugs as we know it is coming to an end. “I’ve never been so optimistic about the prospects for reform,” Nadelmann told a UC Berkeley audience, pointing to a number of trends across the globe: Europe’s almost unanimous decriminalization of soft drugs and its experiments with subsidized treatment programs for heroin users; the implementation of needle-exchange programs in conservative and authoritarian countries in Asia and the Middle East; and moves by state governments in the U.S. to repeal mandatory sentencing laws or even, as in California, to experiment with limited decriminalization. In Latin America, the Commission on Drugs and Democracy — a group centered around former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and César Gaviria of Colombia...
First, Do Less Harm  

— published a groundbreaking report and a companion op-ed piece in The Wall Street Journal declaring the war on drugs a failure and calling for policy reform, including the decriminalization of marijuana. Such a message, coming from well-respected, centrist figures of the Latin American establishment, signals a real breakthrough in Nadelmann’s view. “These are words nobody has used before: ‘the harms of drug prohibition,’ ‘the unintended consequences of repression,’ ‘a paradigm shift,’ ‘the breaking of taboos.’”

Taboo-breaking is precisely what is needed, according to Nadelmann. Drug prohibition has become an obsession for the U.S. as well as its hard-line allies at the UN, a crusade to be waged no matter what the cost. Indeed, where some analysts accuse the United States of using the war on drugs as an excuse to pursue its strategic interests in Latin America and elsewhere, Nadelmann called U.S. drug policy abroad “an international projection of a domestic psychosis,” arguing that prohibition and eradication have been detrimental to U.S. interests in places like Colombia, Bolivia and now Mexico.

This “psychosis” rests on a fundamentally misguided view of drugs as a problem of criminal justice instead of public health and economic regulation. Users need treatment, Nadelmann argued, not prison terms. The production and sale of drugs should be carefully regulated and monitored (as is the case with pharmaceuticals), not driven underground through prohibition. Governments should replace massive expenditures on policing and incarceration with education and treatment programs funded out of excise taxes. These alternative approaches, however, require admitting that drug use is a part of life and cannot be fully eradicated. And that goes squarely against the fundamental goal of global drug policy, as promulgated by the United States and enshrined in UN treaties signed by virtually every country on earth: creating a “drug-free world.”

A drug-free world has never existed and never will, Nadelmann maintained. Virtually every human society has used controlled substances for medicinal, spiritual, social and recreational purposes. In the United States, the prohibition of many drugs was motivated more by a desire to control the ethnic minorities who typically used them than by a scientific assessment of their relative harm or the feasibility of eradication. Cannabis, for example, was brought to the U.S. in the 1600s and grown widely as hemp until after the Civil War. It wasn’t until the 20th century that individual states began to ban its use. Some of the earliest prohibitions were enacted in Southwestern states like Texas and New Mexico where cannabis was associated with the Mexican immigrants who smoked it.

Eradication, Nadelmann argued, is an unrealistic goal for any drug with wide appeal. Prohibition of alcohol
certainly never achieved anything like an “alcohol-free world.” The UN’s own recent estimates of the size of the drug trade — $320 billion — make clear that decades of repressive action and costly enforcement have not significantly reduced drug use. But if talk of a drug-free world is pure political rhetoric, that rhetoric has hardened over time into an insistence on prohibition and eradication as the only acceptable goals of global drug policy and the denigration of alternative approaches as a kind of surrender.

This rhetorical rigidity was on display at the CND summit. In his opening address, the executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio Maria Costa, somewhat surprisingly acknowledged the “dramatic unintended consequences” of drug prohibition: organized crime, armed violence, corruption, the collapse of law and order and possibly the social contract itself. He even suggested that “if unattended, this criminal market will offset the many benefits of drug control.” Nonetheless, he held the UN line and continued to reject alternatives to prohibition as “a cynical resignation of the state’s responsibility to protect the health of its citizens,” “a historic mistake” and “policy change... in favor of drugs.”

Where the drug policy reform movement has had some success is in the increasing acceptance of the concept of harm reduction. Once nearly synonymous with needle-exchange programs, which facilitated drug use to some extent but also drastically reduced its negative health impacts, “harm reduction” now refers to a general approach that prioritizes the minimization of harm arising from drug use over the total repression of drugs per se. The medical marijuana movement is one outgrowth of this approach. In several U.S. states, patients for whom cannabis is medically appropriate can obtain the drug legally, reducing the risk of crime, arrest or adulterated drugs.

Underlying all specific harm reduction policy proposals is the general notion that criminalizing the user tends to compound the problems arising from drug use, leading to worse health and social outcomes. While some hard-liners still see harm reduction as a Trojan horse for legalization, the rhetoric of harm reduction has won a place alongside mainstream policy goals of “demand reduction,” “supply reduction” and “a drug-free world.”

The key to the success of harm reduction, Nadelmann argued, is the severity of the threat posed by the AIDS epidemic. Faced with the prospect of a devastating public health crisis, even staunchly anti-drug governments like those of Iran and Malaysia changed tack, bringing intravenous drug users into treatment centers where they could safely and legally obtain doses. The fact that these programs also led to a reduction in drug-related crime and, in some cases, higher rates of rehabilitation cemented their...
First, Do Less Harm

popularity. For Nadelmann, this in turn has bred an increasing openness to questioning the tenets of prohibition in general.

Yet harm reduction has thus far been limited to the consumption side of drug markets. Many of today’s most pressing crises, on the other hand, are in producer and transshipment countries, where the potential catastrophes that policy makers must weigh are not epidemics but armed conflict and outright state failure. Could the extreme outcomes seen in Mexico, Afghanistan or even in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro catalyze a reassessment of the costs of drug prohibition and a move to a radically different approach? Could the looming specter of a full-blown civil war among well-armed drug organizations and state forces crippled by corruption lead governments to set aside their qualms and bring producers and traffickers into some sort of regulatory system?

In the short run, this seems unlikely. The harm reduction approach, if applied to public security and organized crime, would shift the goal from eliminating drug trafficking groups to minimizing their negative impact on society, especially their use of armed violence. In practice, this would mean a move from confrontation to containment and deterrence. But the usual reaction to increased drug-related armed violence and the possibility of state failure is to escalate repressive measures, not rethink them. Calderón’s war is an example of this mindset, as is the U.S. response to the growing violence, the Mérida Initiative, which will provide hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid, plus equipment and training for Mexico’s army and police. In Afghanistan, U.S. Ambassador William Wood initially pushed hard to import the aerial spraying he oversaw at his previous posting in Colombia. Though aerial spraying has been rejected by Obama officials as too politically divisive, manual opium eradication is still considered a top U.S. priority, even as the Afghan state itself teeters on the brink of collapse.

More fundamentally, classic harm reduction advocacy rests on the argument that drug users are more victims than criminals, a case that cannot easily be made about drug dealers, particularly large, violent cartels. So it is not surprising that the proposal to decriminalize marijuana put forth by Cardoso, Gaviria and Zedillo is tied to an intensified campaign against organized crime. Their Commission on Drugs and Democracy report also highlights
how the divergence of interests between drug-producing and drug-consuming nations not only slows the pace of, but can actually be aggravated by, drug policy reform:

By not giving appropriate emphasis to the reduction of domestic consumption in the belief that the focus on harm reduction minimizes the social dimension of the problem, the policy of the European Union fails to curb the demand for illicit drugs that stimulates its production and exportation from other parts of the world.

This rift — in which one side’s harm reduction feeds the other side’s security crisis — threatens to unify hardliners and dissipate the momentum of reform movements around the globe.

When I asked him about this possibility, Nadelmann maintained his optimism about the prospects for reform, arguing that the producer–consumer distinction is blurring as drug addiction becomes a major problem in developing countries and the production of synthetic drugs and marijuana expands in the U.S. and Europe. For him, taboo-breaking is a long-term strategy that doesn’t address the immediate threats faced by countries like Mexico, which may need to establish law and order before considering alternatives. Nadelmann agreed, however, that sooner or later a harm reduction approach to security must be put squarely on the table. Reformers will need to make the difficult case that, just as users are driven to steal by their own criminalization, so too does global prohibition lead professional drug traffickers to rely on corrupting bribes and ever-costlier armed violence to stay in business. Over time, only the most ruthless and aggressive survive. Conversely, careful decriminalization and regulation could eventually create a market in which small, nonviolent producers and traffickers are the norm, as seems to have happened in California’s multibillion dollar marijuana industry. To leaders and policy makers facing drug markets made up of violent, highly organized armed groups whose tactical power in some areas approaches or exceeds that of the state, this may be a message they are increasingly ready to hear.

Ethan Nadelmann is the founder and executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, an organization promoting alternatives to the war on drugs. He spoke for CLAS on March 12, 2009.

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Growing Clean
Harley Shaiken Interviews Ricardo Lagos, May 2009

HS: You have said that being a part of the solution when it comes to global warming and clean energy is an unavoidable challenge for developing countries. Could you elaborate on what you mean by that?

RL: Developing countries have to have growth because we are still a long way from developed countries. However, at the same time, that growth has to be made in such a way that we are also able to decrease emissions. I know that it is possible to have growth without increasing emissions using new, currently available technologies. And this is the major challenge that we have: How are we going to be able to grow without increasing energy consumption? Why is this so important? By the year 2050, there will be nine billion people on this planet, and all the studies will tell you that those human beings will not be able to emit more than two tons of carbon dioxide per year without putting the security of the planet in peril. And that is a tremendous challenge for both developed and developing countries.

HS: You say that Chile ought to assume a position of leadership in clean growth through a matrix of renewables as well as through the generation of ideas and proposals. Could you elaborate on that?

RL: Chile has been a pioneer in promoting growth while at the same time applying social policies that increase the safety net and improve social conditions in the country; we have been able to grow while also reducing poverty from 38 percent to 13 percent in just 16 years. I think the combination of growth with equity — plus democratic values and respect for human rights, of course — makes Chile well-placed to take on an additional challenge. We need to have growth, but now it has to be growth without increasing emissions.

In 1990, 75 percent of the energy used in central Chile came from hydroelectric sources. Today it is only 50 percent. We turned to natural gas imported from Argentina, but since those gases are no longer available, we have had to turn to coal and oil. I hope this will change by the middle of this year, when a liquefied natural gas plant will come online in Chile, and we will return to gas. Nevertheless, it seems to me that we need to continue to look for alternative solutions.

In this sense, Chile is very fortunate to be home to the Atacama Desert, one of the best places on earth to get energy from the sun. I think that the Atacama is where we should look for alternative sources of energy, and that is why any new developments in solar energy are very welcome in Chile. If Chile is to continue to grow while increasing energy efficiency, it will be necessary to invest in new technologies. I think that solar and wind are two of the alternatives that we have to evaluate.

HS: What are the major political obstacles to moving in that direction in a country such as Chile?

RL: The major one, I would say, is that until recently people have thought that it is much cheaper to produce energy from coal. The problem is that we are a long way from finding technologies that allow us to capture and sequester carbon. Therefore, if we remain dependent on coal, we are not going to have a matrix of energy sources that allow the country to project a green image. And I think that it is possible to go in the right direction.

There are also some hydroelectric projects that can be developed — a total of about 1,000 megawatts in several hydro projects in central Chile and a 2,800-megawatt dam in Patagonia — but these projects are expensive and have to be analyzed in terms of their environmental effects. I think the challenges these projects face can be overcome, but Chile’s need for energy is going to be much greater than what we can get from hydroelectric sources. If we keep relying on coal, emissions will continue to increase, and that is not acceptable. While it is true that the government is taking steps to make more efficient use of our energy,
which is a move in the right direction, I think much more has to be done. The issue of deforestation will also have to be addressed.

HS: You have mentioned development and the importance of solar in the Atacama Desert. Do you view adopting a technology such as photovoltaic solar as possibly generating jobs and development in Chile?

RL: I think so. There have been tremendous improvements in technology. I think that in the future every house, office and big building is going to produce energy. In the future, in this century, the boundary between producers and consumers of energy is going to become cloudier because you may be a producer in the morning and afternoon and a consumer in the evening and at night. I think this is something to keep in mind. More developed countries are already requiring that new houses include some kind of renewable energy, like solar or wind, and I think that we should also look in that direction. And the kinds of solutions that Stan Ovshinsky is proposing should be available in Chile. Photovoltaic material like the kind United Solar produces is going to be very important.

RL: After the very recent summit in Trinidad and Tobago, I would say that President Obama is pursuing policy in two directions. First, domestically, he is saying, “Look, the package I have introduced to invigorate the American economy is going to be a huge investment, but part of that huge investment will be in new technologies that will allow us to have new sources of energy.” Secondly, he called for cooperation between countries in the hemisphere, and one of the areas he mentioned specifically was energy. I think that we, the developing countries here in South America, are going to have to better integrate our own energy resources while at the same time advancing in such a way that we can benefit from new technologies being developed in the United States. Cooperation in this area will be essential. It seems to me that, in the long run, cooperation on energy policy will be good for the U.S. and good for Latin America. And Chile would like to play a role in that cooperation.

HS: One final question: How might the new administration in the United States partner with Chile and other countries in the region on issues related to climate change and also related to renewable energy?

Ricardo Lagos was president of Chile from 2000 to 2006.
Are we in a cyclical downturn of the business cycle, or do mounting structural problems underlie the current recession? This distinction is an important one, both in economic and political terms. Many people around the world assume that the global economy is undergoing a cyclical phenomenon — a deep and dangerous downturn, to be sure, but nonetheless primarily cyclical. It is assumed that a recovery will follow and that the global economy will be restored to its previous, pre-crisis growth path. Many anticipate that recovery to occur within the next year. According to this view, fiscal and monetary policies are necessary to stimulate the global economy in the interim. We may also need some temporary recapitalization of our credit markets and a few modest regulatory changes to our financial systems in order to get credit markets working. Beyond these fixes, however, nothing else needs to change. The recovery will happen, and the world economy will get back on track.

To me, this is a wrongheaded and dangerous view. What we are witnessing is not just a cyclical downturn but the culmination of many structural problems. Unless addressed, these structural problems will generate deeper and deeper cyclical downturns over time and more and more modest, if not anemic, recoveries. There is no getting “back on track” because the track we were on got us into this crisis in the first place. The track we were on was not sustainable.

Those who see the current crisis as mainly a cyclical phenomenon would rather not address the underlying structural problems that have been growing for years in the financial markets. These
include increasing speculation, ever more myopic short-term demands for financial returns and, perhaps most basically, the ever-enlarging political and economic power of the financial sector relative to the real economy. Cyclists, if I may call them that, may be willing to temporarily recapitalize financial markets, root out some conflicts of interest, provide more disclosure and require financial institutions to be better capitalized. While all these steps may be necessary, they are hardly sufficient for avoiding the next financial crisis.

The only way to do that is to take more fundamental steps, including changing compensation practices in financial markets to better align them with long-term profitability rather than short-term speculative bets. We should also change tax systems so that patient capital is better rewarded than short-term investments — reducing capital gains taxes on long-term holdings and increasing them on short-term holdings. And we should follow the suggestion Yale professor James Tobin made many years ago and impose a small transfer tax on all financial transactions, maybe one-tenth of 1 percent of their value, thereby throwing a bit of sand into the wheels of finance and slowing financial markets lest they move toward excess.

Understanding this crisis in structural rather than cyclical terms would also force us to look at widening inequality and its pernicious effect on aggregate demand, both in the United States and around the world. We might then see that the solution is not merely stimulating the economy. A substantial Keynesian stimulus may be necessary, but it will not be sufficient: we must also reverse the trend toward inequality. With so much concentration of wealth and income at the top, there is inadequate aggregate demand for all of the goods and services the economy is capable of producing. The rich have a smaller marginal propensity to consume than the middle class or the poor; that is, they do not spend nearly as much or as large a percentage of their income as everyone else. That’s why they’re rich. After all, the meaning of being “rich” is that you already have most of what you need.

In the United States, the growth of the median wage has slowed since the 1980s. During the last recovery, between 2001 and 2007, the median wage adjusted for inflation actually declined for the first time on record. Where did the money go? To the top. As late as 1980, the top 1 percent of income earners in the U.S. took home 9 percent of total national income. By 2007, after almost
Structural Problems or Cyclical Downturn?

three decades of increasing economic concentration of earnings and wealth, the top 1 percent took home 22 percent of national income.

I do not mean to suggest that we should blame the rich for our current circumstances. I am simply pointing out that this sort of dramatic inequality has a cumulative effect on aggregate demand. The only way the U.S. middle class was able to continue to spend in recent years was by going deeply into debt. But, as we all now know, that was not a sustainable strategy. The last time the United States experienced economic concentration on this scale was 1928, just before the Great Crash. In the 1920s, as in the late 1990s and early years of this century, the American middle class went deeply into debt — until the debt bubble burst. I am not suggesting a necessary cause and effect; the causes of the Great Crash of 1929 and the Great Downturn of 2008 were in many ways quite different, but merely pointing out that social equity and economic growth are not opposed, as some have suggested. To the contrary, unless prosperity is widely shared, economic growth is impossible to sustain.

During much of the last three decades, policy makers in the United States have been mesmerized by a philosophy that can best be characterized as “trickle-down economics” or, to use its more formal title, “supply-side economics.” It has stood for the notion that tax reductions on the income and wealth of the richest members of society will benefit everyone else because the rich will thereby be inspired to work harder and invest more. Rarely has an economic theory been tried in practice and so obviously failed. President Bush cut taxes on America’s wealthy in 2001 — income taxes, capital gains taxes and inheritance taxes — and nothing trickled down.

Progressives, by contrast, should be calling for “trickle up” economics. Such an approach would
be based upon public investments in the health and education of all our people and in the infrastructure linking them together. Such investments add to the productivity of ordinary people, thereby making them more economically valuable. This added value enables them to command higher wages. And with higher wages, they can afford to purchase more goods and services. Aggregate demand can be sustained because more people have greater capacity to buy. Higher productivity enables the entire economy to grow more quickly. Even the wealthy prosper to a greater extent than otherwise. In this way, the benefits “trickle up.” Appropriately, the revenues necessary to make these investments would be derived from a more progressive tax system in which the very wealthy contribute a larger share.

This is not the time to address the structural imbalances between countries running large trade surpluses, such as China and Japan, and those running large trade deficits, such as the United States. But there is no question that these imbalances, too, are unsustainable. When the dollar begins to drop, as is inevitable once the global economy begins to recover, the great American middle class will discover that it is even poorer than before because everything it purchases from abroad will cost that much more. This makes my argument for public investment even stronger.

The third domain of structural reform — after finance, inequality and public investment — is the environment. Many cyclists understand the imminent danger of climate change but think it an issue to be addressed when, and to the extent that, the global economy can afford to do so — once the current deep recession is over. Structuralists, on the other hand, know that the current economic crisis is particularly deep and long-lasting at least in part because of the cumulative costs of climate change. Those costs are sometimes difficult to measure or to see as a whole. They

The state of Georgia is only just emerging from an unprecedented drought that began in 2007.
come as droughts, floods, hurricanes and rising sea levels. They show up as shortages of arable land and of water. They express themselves in the increased cost of insurance. And, of course, in the increased cost of carbon-based fuels.

Uncertainty itself is an economic cost, and the uncertainties surrounding increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and commodities markets are taking a considerable toll. They are a drag on economic growth. If one takes a structural rather than cyclical view of the current global downturn, it makes no sense to wait for a supposed “recovery” to get to work on slowing the process of climate change. Major nations should impose a tax on carbon-based fuels or an effective “cap and trade” system immediately and should invest significant sums in alternatives to carbon-based sources of energy.

We are in a progressive moment. In the United States, we have a young and dynamic new president who seeks to achieve many of the structural reforms I have outlined. The global economic crisis has, moreover, precipitated a reexamination of the roles of governments and markets. It has cast doubt on the so-called “Washington consensus” of the 1990s, which assumed that markets always know best. The question, however, is what happens when the immediate crisis is over, when the global economy looks as if it is beginning to turn the corner. Even if the recovery is weak, as I predict it will be, its mere existence may be enough to divert attention from structural reform. It may convince policy makers as well as the broader public that the cyclists were correct all along — that although it was severe, the global crisis was not unlike other recessions. Therefore, we need not do anything dramatic or fundamental about our financial institutions, our public investments, widening inequality or climate change.

On the other hand, if the current crisis does have a silver lining, it would be a resurgence of progressive thought and action strong enough to carry forward the necessary structural reforms right through the next upturn in the business cycle. In this changed political landscape, policy leaders and the public would understand that even when the global economy is in a cyclical recovery, the real challenge continues.

Robert Reich is a professor of Public Policy at UC Berkeley and was Secretary of Labor during the Clinton administration. He spoke at the 2009 Progressive Governance Conference and Summit held March 26-29 in Viña del Mar, Chile.
On September 22, 2009, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum (BAM) will welcome Fernando Botero’s generous gift of 26 paintings and 30 drawings from his Abu Ghraib series to Berkeley and to the museum’s permanent collection. Valued in the multiple millions — although Botero has always said they would never be for sale — this is the largest gift in BAM’s history and one of the largest in the history of any American university collection.

Botero began work on this series in the summer of 2004 after reading Seymour Hersh’s revelatory and disturbing report on torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib in The New Yorker. His images are not strictly documentary, not a translation of the infamous and much reproduced snapshots into another media. They are a great artist’s effort “to make invisible things visible,” to represent and thereby interpret, through a new visual vocabulary, the outrages that had been perpetrated on Iraqi prisoners in American custody. The benign and gently grotesque figures for which Botero is famous have become dark and malignly grotesque figures of the body humiliated and in pain.

Some of these controversial paintings and works on paper were shown as part of a larger exhibition of the artist’s work in Rome in the summer of 2005; some were subsequently exhibited in the new Würth Museum in Künzelau and at the Pinatoceta in Athens. Exhibitions were planned as well for Milan and Valencia. When, in November 2006, they were finally exhibited in the United States — in the private Marlborough Gallery of Botero’s dealer in New York — it became clear that no public museum in this country had the courage to show them.

Berkeley’s Center for Latin American Studies responded by inviting the Abu Ghraib pictures and Botero himself to campus. The exhibition opened on January 29, 2007, in the catalogue room of Doe Library, a space that had been transformed into an art gallery in record time. Fifteen thousand people saw the works in the course of seven weeks; over 600 people attended a conversation between Botero and
Following his work on Abu Ghraib, Fernando Botero took up a new theme: the circus. In May 2009, Beatriz Manz interviewed Botero about his inspiration for these recent works.

BM: The Circus presents an extraordinary view of many things that go beyond the performance. The light, color, style, space and poignancy touch the viewer. Why did you choose this theme?

FB: While I was in a small Mexican town on the Pacific coast, I went to a circus that had arrived one day. I found it especially attractive because it was a poor circus, like those that came to Medellín when I was a child — a group of poor people who did everything, from selling tickets and ice cream to confronting a toothless lion, walking the tightrope, swinging on the trapeze, juggling, etc. It was a very Latin American version of a universal theme.

BM: Had you been thinking about the circus for a long time or was there a specific moment of inspiration?

FB: Not really. It was a revelation that came at that moment. I was aware that the circus had been a very attractive theme for many well-known and lesser-known artists, a subject dignified in the work of Renoir, Seurat, Lautrec, Picasso, Chagall, Léger, Calder and many others. Nonetheless, I had never dealt with it. I began to reflect on the multiple possibilities worth painting and the poetry that runs through the theme, and I decided to do something. That something is more than 120 oils and 200 drawings. For the moment, I have nothing more to say.

BM: What touches you most about the Mexican circus?

FB: As I said before, the circus is universal. It exists everywhere, including Mexico with its Mexican touch. There is no other human activity that presents the visual artist with the human body in poses like the circus. Just think of the contortionist, the tightrope walker, etc. At the same time, there is the poetry that captures the philosophy of life: nomadic people who live in wagons and who have the circus as the permanent background of their lives.

BM: What do the paintings mean to you?

FB: Painting this series, I felt a great liberty in the color, the movement, the theme. There is no justification for a Latin American to paint camels and lions if he’s not painting the circus. Much of that liberty has stayed with me in the new themes, the traditional subjects of painting, that I am currently working on.

Beatriz Manz is a professor of Geography and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley.
LEFT:
“Trapeze Artist”
178 x 100 cm, 2007, oil on canvas.

BELOW:
“Tightrope Walker”
151 x 101 cm, 2007, oil on canvas.

RIGHT:
“Contortionist”
103 x 84 cm, 2007, oil on canvas.

FOLLOWING PAGES:
“The Flying Eagles”
99 x 137 cm, 2008, oil on canvas.
LEFT:
“Trainer with Dog”
163 x 117 cm, 2008, oil on canvas.

RIGHT:
“Tiger”
143 x 97 cm, 2008, oil on canvas.

BELOW:
“Trainer with Lion Cubs”
125 x 168 cm, 2007, oil on canvas.
“Circus Family”
153 x 176 cm, 2008, oil on canvas.
Poet Laureate Robert Haas and hundreds more came to other related programs organized by the Center. It was the enthusiasm of this welcome that inspired Botero to give his works to Berkeley rather than to their many other suitors in this country and abroad.

That BAM has become their permanent home is important for three related reasons. In the first place, these works are not primarily political art; they are art and of an unusual sort: they depict the suffering of war. Suffering has a long history in Western art, especially in religious art, and Botero’s works are deeply informed by this tradition. But depictions of the suffering of war are far rarer: Caillot’s of the Thirty Year’s War, Goya’s of the Napoleonic Wars in Spain; Otto Dix’s paintings of the trenches of the Great War and of its mutilated survivors; and Picasso’s “Guernica.” In each case, this art has become the prism through which the individual suffering that results from collective conflict and political decisions are imagined and remembered. Berkeley will have, for study and contemplation, art that may well come to stand for a defining moment in the history of this country and the Iraq War. And BAM will have an artistic resource through which both formal and historical aspects of the depiction of suffering and questions about the relationship between art and politics can be studied and debated. Whatever else the Abu Ghraib works might be, they are thus an enormous visual and intellectual resource to the campus and the public at large.

Second, this art is here in large measure because of what Berkeley represents for the history of free speech and critical engagement with the great public issues of the day. This university has a special mandate, given its tradition, to be the home of art that bears witness to a controversy and demands interrogation. Art may be, as Botero says, “a permanent accusation,” but more importantly it is a permanent invitation to serious looking, which is in turn an invitation to serious thinking: the business of a university.

And finally, art of this quality and engagement promises to become an important participant in the life of BAM and the university. Although not painted for this site, as was José Clemente Orozco’s great “Epic of American Civilization” for Dartmouth’s library, the Abu Ghraib works are likely to play a similar role here. They announce that art is important to a liberal education and that seeing is a way of thinking about things beyond the beautiful. They offer us the opportunity to contemplate how a morally serious painter has imagined a dangerous moment in the new century. Well into the future, people will be able to come to campus to confront Abu Ghraib through the vision and craftsmanship of Fernando Botero.

Thomas Laqueur is the Helen Fawcett Professor of History at UC Berkeley.
One wonders whether President Barack Obama’s meeting with the heads of state of the Americas is the beginning of a new stage or if it is just business as usual.

This new stage calls for different agendas, visions of the future, political proposals in step with an unavoidable global reality and able to meet today’s challenges. The danger of starting in once again with empty rhetoric is reminiscent of another era and fails to take advantage of opportunities for our present and our future, such as the invitation to work together on energy and the environment.

Has Latin America responded with the interest and gravity this issue demands? President Obama broke the ice. He proved that he has a new way of approaching international concerns. He indicated with solid conviction that the most powerful nation in the world cannot solve today’s problems alone, just as the rest of the world knows that without the United States, these problems will have no solution.

So we must listen closely to the emphasis that this North American head of state places on the issue of energy. On the eve of the Summit of the Americas in April 2009, he explicitly stated this intent: “I look forward to pursuing a new Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas that will help us learn from one another, share technologies, leverage investment and maximize our comparative advantage.”

What do these words mean for us? How are we going to respond in order to demonstrate political maturity in addressing the issue? We are not starting from scratch. Some time ago, when we proposed the creation of an “energy ring” among South American countries, we did so in an earnest desire for integration, with each country contributing a variety of resources for efficient use by all. Oil, natural gas, hydroelectric power, biofuels, plants to harness the energy of wind and sun, all in a map of possibilities for the present and the future.

The UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean took up the idea and developed
preliminary studies that we should take up again and discuss with our neighbor to the north. Just the existence of the gas pipelines proves that by adding a little more than a thousand kilometers — and a dose of political will — a wide-reaching South American network could be established, able to unite the Atlantic and the Pacific.

But we must also understand that in the progress towards the improvement of today’s energy resources and the creation of new sources, the key lies in having access to new technologies. We need these technologies, and the invitation of the North American leader makes this ever-increasing access possible, especially if we consider the United States’ power to create new technologies in this hemisphere and in the world.

I saw proof of this reality a short time ago, when I was visiting Detroit, once a city of 1.8 million and now home to only 900,000 as a result of the ever-shrinking auto industry. But in that same Detroit, we visited places that gave us a glimpse of the world of the future, thanks to solar energy and new trends in auto making: they may be hybrids now, but soon they will be electric or hydrogen-powered.

Ironically, in Detroit, the giant automobile companies failed to see the new technologies being developed right under their noses. Ironic because Japan was paying attention to these new developments, and now Japanese hybrids are already on the market, packed with technology developed in Detroit years ago.

Next year, we’ll also see North American hybrids, but where will they get their batteries? From Japan. And behind this story is a name that Latin Americans should get to know very well: Stan Ovshinsky. A self-taught man, Ovshinsky is an amazing inventor, with over 350 patents to his name (or in the name of his company). In the early 1960s, following his democratic ideals and his dream of a world with a better quality of life, Ovshinsky began to work on the creation of alternative energy. With impressive long-range vision, he founded Energy Conversion Devices on the outskirts of Detroit, decades before anyone had begun to talk about oil shortages and when the issue of global climate change was nowhere near the top of our daily agenda.

Ovshinsky’s boundless creativity came up with semiconductor materials of hydrogenated amorphous silicon, which spurred on new branches of materials engineering, encouraging the development of semiconductors, solar energy and electric-hybrid vehicles. The plants that today produce his flexible, thin-film solar panels are an inspiration.

But beyond all this, Ovshinsky’s vision tells us that if we combine hydrogen and solar energy, we are working with the most abundant elements of the universe. We are beginning a stage in which we are slowly leaving behind our problematic dependence on fossil fuels, especially oil. In addition, the production and installation of what some are already calling “the hydrogen circuit” could create millions of jobs, many of them on this continent.

We certainly must include this reality in the intelligent design of Latin America’s future. This means working with a perspective on our energy resources, with the intention of not being left behind and with the understanding that we will emerge from the current economic crisis forging new paths towards development.

Changing energy sources is one of the keys to the 21st-century economy. It is a reality that Latin America cannot ignore but which demands our efficient action and an openness to new possibilities on the international scene. In the long term, perhaps this will be the deepest meaning of the Summit in Trinidad and Tobago.

Ricardo Lagos, president of Chile from 2000 to 2006, accompanied Harley Shaiken to Detroit, where they met with Stan Ovshinsky as part of the “Alternative Energy and the Americas” program. This article originally appeared in Spanish as an opinion piece in Clarín, a leading Argentine daily.
Greener Americas
by Harley Shaiken

President Obama sought to turn the page both symbolically and substantively on the United States’ relations with its southern neighbors during his first visit to Latin America. While much of the news coverage centered on his new Cuban travel initiatives and his stop in Mexico to bolster President Felipe Calderón in the drug wars, Obama also addressed the critical issues of energy and the environment during his four-day trip.

In his opening remarks at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, held April 17–19 in Trinidad and Tobago, President Obama proposed a new Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas:

Each country will bring its own unique resources and needs, so we will ensure that each country can maximize its strengths as we promote efficiency and improve our infrastructure, share technologies, support investments in renewable sources of energy. And in doing so, we can create the jobs of the future, lower greenhouse gas emissions and make this hemisphere a model for cooperation.

The week after the summit, the president reiterated his commitment to alternative energy during a visit to a wind turbine tower plant located on the site of a shuttered Maytag appliance factory in Newton, Iowa. He candidly pointed out how far the U.S. has to go in the area of renewable energy. “Today, America produces less than 3 percent of our electricity through renewable sources like wind and solar,” he said, in spite of the fact that “we pioneered solar technology.” The president pointed to a potential source of funds for moving forward both domestically and in the hemisphere: the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which earmarks $15 billion annually for a decade to develop clean energy, including solar and wind power.

The combined momentum created by the president’s visits to Latin America and Iowa has led to high expectations for energy policy change both at home and abroad. The challenge will be to demonstrate progress during this time of economic crisis and scarce resources.

In order to build on the initiatives laid out by President Obama, I propose a new Alliance for Green Prosperity which would incorporate the best elements of FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy and JFK’s Alliance for Progress. In addition to energy and the environment, it could focus on jobs and development. An appropriate place to inaugurate the Alliance would be where the U.S. and Latin America meet: the border. Building a solar installation in the desert bridging the U.S.–Mexico border would underscore the fact the sun’s power can create jobs and prosperity and is unlimited and available to all.

As a start, the Alliance for Green Prosperity would have six components that integrate existing initiatives with new ideas:

1. Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas. The program that President Obama announced at the summit could highlight new research and working technologies from universities, national laboratories and innovative private sector firms throughout the Americas. It could also provide a forum for officials in which they could consider tax, regulatory and subsidy policies to increase the production of alternative fuels and make them more competitive with fossil fuels. In this way, countries could
compare their experiences with various techniques and better understand the advantages and disadvantages of each in meeting their particular needs.

2. **Clean Energy Deployment Program.** The U.S. would contribute to a new green infrastructure fund to provide loan guarantees and, in some cases, grants for the development of new projects. The use of stimulus funds to create green jobs is both appropriate and critical. The U.S. would also use its influence in international funding agencies, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, to coordinate and expand funding for the construction of new alternative energy projects in the hemisphere. Solar, wave, geothermal, wind and biomass energy research efforts would be strategically positioned across the Americas in much the same way that regional ocean energy research sites are chosen by the European Union.

3. **Buy Green in the Americas.** The Alliance would include a commitment by national governments to “buy green.” For example, the U.S. government could agree to install solar panels on the roofs of all new federally funded buildings. The Recovery Act already mandates the purchase of 17,600 fuel-efficient vehicles for the federal fleet. A pledge of this sort would create both a powerful symbol of the effectiveness of new technologies and the economies of scale necessary to drive down production costs, making these technologies more competitive and speeding their diffusion. Given that governments are the largest consumers of goods, services and energy in the hemisphere, this action alone would drive economic opportunities up and prices down across the clean energy landscape.

4. **Re-Power the Americas.** In the United States, the demand for alternative energy technologies could be met by converting unused manufacturing capacity, such as idled auto plants in the Midwest, thereby utilizing existing skills and creating much-needed jobs. In particular, solar manufacturing and advanced battery production could play a central role. This conversion to the new energy economy could be encouraged with tax incentives and retraining allowances, becoming a model to be replicated throughout the Americas.

   In Central America, Costa Rica is aiming for carbon neutrality by 2021. Chile is already exploring solar as a major energy source and an engine for job growth. Models such as these should be aided, developed and diffused.

5. **Energy Cooperation Facts.** A small number of highly visible projects could be launched that capture the spirit of the Alliance. For example, solar schools could be built throughout the hemisphere and cross-border wind farms could be installed on the Nicaragua–Costa Rica border (perhaps on the site of the once-proposed “peace park”) as well as on the U.S.–Canada border.

6. **Green Roads Out of Poverty:** A major issue in poor communities across the Americas and around the world is the energy needs of the poor. These needs are largely unmet by the renewable energy research programs emerging across the region. A special research and deployment program would be created to specifically address the needs of the poor, focusing on efforts like those to dramatically reduce the costs of solar home energy systems as well as ancillary technologies such as water purification and solar- and wind-powered refrigeration.

   An Alliance for Green Prosperity could rebuild the strained and neglected relationship between the United States and the other countries of the hemisphere by tackling three of the defining issues of the 21st century: energy, development and the environment.

**Harley Shaiken is the Class of 1930 Professor of Letters and Sciences and the chair of the Center for Latin American Studies at UC Berkeley.**
Argentina took just a year and a half to start crawling out of its self-induced economic collapse in 2001, thanks in part to the country’s exceptional agricultural prosperity and the increased value of commodities on the international market. Today, Argentina is flirting with a new crisis, but this time, the country’s private problems could combine with a worldwide recession.

“Recovery” from the 2001 collapse merely meant the return of a certain degree of normalcy in the political, financial and economic institutions. The wounds from this crisis are still evident in persistent and unjustifiable levels of indigence: for millions of Argentines, the crisis continues.

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As always, Argentina’s crisis is all about politics. President Néstor Kirchner (2003-07) managed to impose a certain degree of order through an authoritarian style of leadership, a disregard for institutional formalities, a combative air and a sense of continual emergency.

Néstor Kirchner was succeeded by his wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (elected by a wide margin), but he did not leave power. He continues to be the touchstone for the government. Every time she confronts a serious problem, he appears in public — as the president of the ruling party — to defend her and rail against her adversaries. And whether he means to or not, Kirchner reminds everyone of his own importance.

Why didn’t Kirchner run for reelection? Those closest to him would admit that he wanted to avoid the inevitable “lame duck” phenomenon of a second term. He and his wife could potentially alternate in the presidency indefinitely because the country’s legislation allows an unlimited number of reelections but no more than two consecutive terms. So in
theory, the Kirchners could succeed one another perpetually, as long as they can win elections.

This ploy of formally leaving the government without stepping back from the highest level of decision-making pushes the envelope in terms of legality. A president who only exercises her functions with the aid of her spouse is an anomaly that threatens some of the attributes of democracy.

Having a couple as president implies a degree of secrecy and subterfuge. While Néstor Kirchner doesn’t take part in the formal acts of government, his presence is as palpable as the ghost of Hamlet’s father. Everyone knows that when it comes to really serious concerns, his opinion matters most; even the pro-government media takes it for granted.

Yet this situation was consciously approved by the majority of Argentine voters, who were still unnerved by the economic collapse and credited Kirchner with rescuing them from the depths of the crisis — the country’s economic activity had dropped 16 percent between 2001 and 2003 — when in reality he just took advantage of and reinforced an imperceptible recovery already underway when he took office.

This stretching of the rules is seen elsewhere in the Kirchner administration. For example, the government fixes the official statistics to its liking: rates of inflation, poverty, distribution of wealth, etc. The Kirchners’ closest allies defend the couple’s actions, saying this fudging of the facts saves the country billions of dollars on bond payments whose interest is pegged to inflation.

The magic of the Kirchners lasted until Argentina’s middle class realized that the country was no longer in a state of emergency. You could say that they were foiled by their very success. Vast sectors of the population began to reject the couple’s confrontational approach, and at that very moment, the Kirchners were trumped by the agricultural industry.

The fight over soybean export taxes lasted for months. The farmers — from agro-industry giants to small-scale producers — set up roadblocks and threw a wrench in the economy by creating shortages in key consumer goods. However, these clearly illegal actions had the support of the middle class. This sector — so volatile all over the world — was sick of the Kirchners’ belligerent style and happy to have someone put them in their place.
The Kirchners suggested that the issue be dealt with in Parliament, where their party held a clear majority, but — surprise, surprise — the issue deadlocked. The tie was broken with a victory for the farming industry and the political opposition allied with them, thanks to an even bigger surprise: the vote of the vice president himself, who suddenly became an adversary of the Kirchners.

The Kirchners took their defeat in Parliament as a very serious crisis, publicly describing it as an attempt to overturn their government. The agricultural producers were no saints and even included some reactionary sectors, former allies of the military dictatorship who had been displaced from economic and political power by the processes of globalization and specialization. The presidential couple felt overwhelmed: up until this point, they had a Parliament that ceded one function after another to the executive branch, even allowing the Kirchners to make changes to the budget and to allocate funds to friends and allies at their discretion.

At this point, the Kirchners threatened to resign, according to those closest to them. It must be hard for those outside Latin America to understand, for it seems like pure magical realism: one night of defeat and the presidential couple curses the citizenry, “We are leaving, and you will inherit chaos!”

But it was an empty threat. Since then, the Kirchners’ reality has gone sharply downhill. In a very bad year combining parliamentary elections and an international economic crisis, they stretched the limits of legality yet again, pushing up the date for presidential elections — set for October by the nation’s Constitution — because they feared that the international crisis would be even worse by then, and the angry population would vote against them.

The simulation and coercion would be farcical if it weren’t for the damage that they imply for the democratic system. Fixing the date of an election is no guarantee that you won’t lose. So with his popularity sinking, Néstor Kirchner came up with the concept of “testimonial candidates.” Even if they were to win, these candidates wouldn’t actually take office.

For example, Daniel Scioli, the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, the main electoral district, is standing for Parliament, but he would hardly leave his current position for a seat in the legislative branch. He is a very popular former powerboat racer, and it appears that he is just running to draw votes to the ruling party and away from other, “real” candidates. Just like the official statistics, testimonial candidates are not exactly real candidates: they are a mock-up, “testimony” to a way of understanding politics.

A significant portion of Argentine society is responsible for this situation. They voted for Menem en masse: “He may be corrupt, but at least he’s effective.” They also voted for Kirchner and forgave his excesses: “He may be authoritarian, but at least he pulled us out of the abyss.” But now out of that gaping hole, Argentines have begun to see that the Kirchners are vulnerable and their government is not free from corruption.

That’s how things stand as we head for parliamentary elections on June 28. In the same vein of magical realism, the vice president has let his sideburns grow long to emphasize his resemblance to the father of the nation, José de San Martín, while he refuses either to resign or to ally himself with those who bought him to power. On the contrary, he has taken sides with the opposition, perhaps in the hope that the Kirchners will lose the election and make good on their threats, which they have issued once again through an informal spokesman: If they lose, they are leaving. In that case, Vice President Julio Cobos would take over the presidency.

The fact that this unusual vice president, a bit player on the national scene, has suddenly become the most popular politician in the country for betraying the Kirchners and tipping the scales in the victory for the agricultural sector speaks reams about Argentines’ lack of political consciousness.

The Kirchners have an advantage in the divided opposition, which isn’t able to forge much of an alternative beyond promising to respect the rules of democracy. Even still, it is possible that the ruling party will lose its majority in Parliament.

The country seems on the brink of confronting the following problems:

- The economic crisis will generate social tensions that may become severe, and there will be no soy at $650 a ton to strengthen national monetary reserves. Agricultural products are the country’s main export.
None of the electoral scenarios guarantee total success for the ruling party. While it may get more votes than the leading opposition group, the question is what the relative loss will be and what concrete impact this will have on the power struggles in Parliament. It is quite possible that the Kirchners will have to face two more years at the helm but with much less wind in their sails, a daunting situation for a pair who have been used to running roughshod over the opposition.

Argentina’s political system is no help: it lacks a tradition of crisis administration through negotiation and agreement. The democracy that was restored in 1983 had three strong leaders — Alfonsín, Menem and Kirchner — who strove for hegemony rather than negotiation and De la Rúa, a vote of hope more than conviction: he seemed like the ideal man for encouraging consensus, but he failed.

Perhaps these factors will be obstacles that, once overcome, actually serve to strengthen the system. The greatest danger, however, lies in their becoming the elements of a “perfect storm.”

Néstor Kirchner himself seems determined to summon such a storm: he has implied that if his party is defeated in the parliamentary elections, his wife will be maneuvered out of office and Argentina will collapse into a crisis as severe as that of 2001.

Of course Kirchner wants to use fear to draw votes. But, to a certain extent, he has only gone public with possibilities that some leaders of the opposition have been discussing in secret: the deadlock of the political system, the resignation of Cristina Kirchner, the risk of anarchy.

Sectors of the opposition are considering the establishment of a coalition party in order to face just such a crisis. As for the Kirchners, nobody knows what they are planning.

This battle between the government and the opposition is taking place against the backdrop of Argentina’s extremely frail political system. Democracy was restored 26 years ago, but — as in many other Latin American countries — it has not yet reached maturity.

Roberto Guareschi is a journalist and a university professor. For 13 years, he was the executive editor of Clarín, a leading daily newspaper in Argentina.
Since countries across Latin America began to transition to civilian rule in the 1970s and 1980s, their armed forces have largely returned to the barracks to focus on security work. For Ecuador and Peru, this has meant focusing on security challenges in particularly unstable regions. In Ecuador, the army is concentrated in the north, where social conflict surrounding the country’s oil industry is combined with destabilizing influences spilling over the border from Colombia. In Peru, remnants of the Shining Path insurgency remain active in the central and southern highlands, areas critical to the country’s oil, natural gas and mining sectors. While national security challenges have led the two armies to focus most intensively on these specific regions, private-sector influence most effectively explains who benefits from their work in those zones. In effect, extractive industries have essentially hired the armies and have benefited from army services far more than the “public.”

Ecuador

Ecuador’s northern and northeastern provinces have faced two main security challenges since the country’s 1979 transition to democracy. First, protesters demanding restitution from oil companies for land use and environmental damage have interrupted oil production in the northeast, jeopardizing the extraction of a resource that constitutes approximately 40 percent of Ecuador’s total exports. Second, the northernmost provinces of Esmeraldas (western coastal), Carchi (highlands) and Sucumbios (eastern jungle), have experienced general insecurity linked to neighboring Colombia’s internal conflict, with problems ranging from extortion and homicide to drug and arms trafficking. This insecurity has intensified since 2000, when the U.S. and Colombia implemented Plan Colombia, a major offensive against insurgents that has pushed the conflict south. These twin challenges have caused the Ecuadorian army to focus on the north, with its official priorities including defending the border from incursions by armed Colombian insurgents, fighting crime and protecting strategic areas, including oil interests.

At the national level, two clients offer resources to the army in return for security services: the U.S. Southern Command and oil companies. Agreements made at this highest level commit the army to missions and thereby “frame” more specific negotiations at the local level. The Southern Command provides support for the army’s antinarcotics and border defense efforts in the north. In negotiations with the local Southern Command representatives, known as the MilGroup, Ecuadorian army leaders have welcomed U.S. resources, even though they commit the army to antinarcotics, a mission disliked by officers for having the potential to corrupt the military.

In the oil sector, until recently, written contracts between companies and the defense minister established in broad terms their respective commitments: security for companies in exchange for support for the military, including fuel, communications equipment, transportation, health care and room and board. The largest known contract was a 2001 five-year contract signed by the defense minister, the head of the state oil company Petroecuador and 15 private oil companies. Within this structure, each company also signed similarly broad contracts with army division commanders.

In 2007, the government made three main changes to the national-level contracting process in an attempt to halt direct contracting between the private sector and the military. First, the new organic defense law prohibited the armed forces from performing private services. Second,
providing a loophole around that law, Executive Decree 433 defined protecting the oil industry as a national security interest and explicitly assigned the army to provide security for both public and private oil interests. Third, in this new context, Petroecuador now pays $10 million annually to support the military’s security work for the country’s oil interests — both public and private — according to a four-year contract.

While decisions made at the highest levels commit northern army commanders to a certain amount of antinarcotics and oil security work — based on definitions of national security interests and contracts with the oil sector — it is at the local level where brigade and battalion commanders generally decide troop commitments and the resources required for each assignment. It is at this level that the most meaningful negotiations between army representatives and their clients take place. Therefore, a commander’s entrepreneurship, relationships with clients and bargaining skills all affect the amount of funds secured. These local-level deals continue to take place, in spite of the above-mentioned organic law, which outlaws such resource exchanges.

Because oil companies pay the most, they benefit the most from the army’s services. Specifically, the army is commissioned to patrol infrastructure, guard wells, confront protesters and participate in negotiations between communities and companies. Local deals between army commanders and oil companies have been ongoing throughout the post-transition period. The army’s loyalty to the private oil sector was apparent in my interviews with officers, who frequently described working for oil companies as being much more comfortable than their other assignments. The depth of the army’s focus on the oil sector is most evident, however, in the numbers.

Both news reports and interview responses document substantial commitment of resources to oil security. The army’s Fourth Division, the division most responsible for oil security in the northeast, has committed approximately 25 percent of its forces to permanent oil security. In practice, additional army units — from the Fourth Division and from the army’s special forces brigade in the highlands — regularly put aside other assignments in order to address oil “emergencies.” Even in Sucumbios, which borders Colombia’s war-ridden province of Putumayo...
and therefore faces particularly intense insecurity on all fronts, private oil security takes priority. For instance, the special forces battalion “Rayo 24” — known to be the most operative unit in the north — has two detachments devoted entirely to oil security, both of which are based away from the border. Additionally, the remainder of the battalion has regularly provided added support to the oil sector from the unit’s central base.

MilGroup also has influence over northern army units, but its power pales in comparison to that of private oil. In the post-2000 period, MilGroup began channeling resources to the north through direct relations with army commanders there. In response, not only have northern units embraced antinarcotics work, but local commanders have also regularly approached MilGroup officials to request more resources. Yet MilGroup loses out to oil companies in its open competition for army services. For example, in late 2007 during massive oil protests in Dayuma, Orellana — south of Sucumbíos — MilGroup provided supplies to a local school in an unsuccessful effort to help satisfy local needs and quell protests. MilGroup’s goal was to enable the army to conclude its oil security work and turn to U.S. priorities: antinarcotics and border defense efforts further north.

Two additional local clients are landowners and government officials. In Carchi and Esmeraldas, wealthy landowners — common targets of crop and livestock theft, extortion and kidnapping — provide fuel, tires and room and board for army patrols. (This security is in no way “public”; patrols do not serve the nearby impoverished communities.) Resources from landowners constitute critical support for the army battalion in Carchi, which is void of oil or associated infrastructure. In contrast, access to security services is more limited for owners of palm oil plantations in coastal Esmeraldas. They must compete with the local battalion’s main client, private oil, which provides the army with resources in exchange for security for the privately owned Oleoducto de Crudos Pesados, a pipeline that transports heavy crude from the Amazon to the Pacific.

Local government officials constitute a final group of clients. They reimburse battalions for anticrime work — especially urban patrols — with fuel subsidies, equipment and payment of labor costs for on-base construction projects.

Peru

Peru has also undergone a privatization of the army’s security services. There, the focus is on counterinsurgency efforts to eliminate the remnants of The Shining Path, a guerrilla organization that shook the countryside in the 1980s and early 1990s. The organization is now active only in small regions of the country, including the Upper Huallaga Valley and the southern highland region of the Valley of the Ene and Apurimac Rivers (known by its Spanish acronym, VRAE), the latter being the insurgency’s center of military training and activity. In this context, Peru’s government has ordered the army to focus on eliminating the insurgency above all other missions. The reality on the ground, however, is that the army’s counterinsurgency efforts in the VRAE are largely for sale to private companies in the mining and hydrocarbons sectors; the army patrols the areas of the valley that are critical for industry in return for logistical support.

The case of Peru’s natural gas consortium, Camisea, demonstrates this dynamic, as its gas line crosses through the VRAE. As of late 2005, the army had units near each of the 14 Camisea installations that ran along the largely underground pipeline, a number equal to approximately half of all army counterinsurgency bases operating in the VRAE at the time. Peru’s army has conducted counterinsurgency patrols near Camisea installations in return for resources, according to agreements between the “Los Cabitos” brigade in Ayacucho and Transportadora de Gas del Perú (Gas Transporter of Peru, TGP), the
consortium Camisea formed to build and operate its natural gas pipelines. As of 2005, all of Los Cabitos’ counterinsurgency bases — numbering more than 10 — were lined up along the pipeline. TGP built and supplied these bases and covered all food and fuel costs. As a private security official explained, “Officially, Los Cabitos... have their strategic plans that determine where their bases are and what patrols they do, but somehow, coincidentally, their bases end up by Camisea, and their patrols are there as well.”

As of early 2009, Peru’s army also contracted its services to Techint, the private Argentine company that is a leading member of the TGP consortium. The two army bases nearest to Techint’s Block 57 construction project in La Mar, Ayacucho, conducted regular patrols around the project, and in return, Techint’s station supplied the bases. The army plans to add another base in La Mar, and Techint is seeking security from that new base, too.

In sum, extractive industries have privatized the Peruvian and Ecuadorian armies by buying the armies’ services and reaping disproportionate benefits relative to the public. Strategic decision making at the national level certainly influences the overall mission and the amount of military presence in different regions of the two countries. Nonetheless, on a day-to-day basis, local commanders allocate troops not according to technical decisions regarding national security interests but rather according to who can and will reimburse the army for its services. Private actors in the natural resource sectors pay — and benefit — the most. This dynamic is true both where the army’s main mission is counterinsurgency, as in Peru, and where the army is assigned to multiple missions, ranging from border defense to protest control, as in Ecuador.

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Immigration, particularly Latino migration, has become a hot topic in American politics. In popular discourse, immigration is described as a personal decision made by an individual or family, with little consideration of the macroeconomic context that influences that decision. One important and often overlooked structural constraint related to immigration patterns is U.S. political and economic involvement in the country of origin. This involvement is critically important for understanding Latino migration flows to the United States.

U.S. engagement with Latin America has a long history, and it has assumed a different character in different regions. Many Latin American migrants worked for U.S. companies in their home countries. Many were directly recruited by those companies to come to the United States, and those companies often lobbied the U.S. Congress to ensure continued migration flows. The economic development policies pursued by Latin American governments — and therefore the economic opportunities available to their populations — were often strongly influenced by the U.S. government and financial sector. During the cold war, U.S. strategic concerns and levels of military aid also affected the ability of social movements to redistribute wealth in these countries. Thus, the way in which the United States expressed its political and economic interests in the region affected Latin Americans’ economic and political situation on the ground, the facility with which they were able to migrate to the United States and the legal terms by which they were accepted under U.S. immigration policy.

The United States’ relations with Latin America have been deeply influenced by two important U.S. principles: manifest destiny and the Monroe Doctrine. The idea of manifest destiny — that the United States was “destined” to be an Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation stretching from coast to coast — had its roots in colonial political thought. Since the colonial period, many Americans have believed that it was God’s will that the United States should control the North American territory and that the nation needed to be based on a common set of political ideals, religious beliefs and cultural practices. Over time, the idea that it was the United States’ destiny to control a particular geographic sphere would expand beyond the North American continent and extend across the Western Hemisphere through the Monroe Doctrine.
John Adams’ son, John Quincy Adams, developed the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, when he was President James Monroe’s secretary of state. Formulated when many Latin American countries were fighting to gain independence from the imperial European powers, the doctrine sought to ensure that Europe did not re-colonize the Western Hemisphere. In his State of the Union message in December of that year, President Monroe declared that the United States would not interfere in European wars or internal affairs. Likewise, he expected Europe to stay out of the affairs of the New World. European attempts to interfere in the Americas would be interpreted by the United States as threats to its “peace and safety.”

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt added the “Roosevelt Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine, which defined U.S. intervention in Latin American domestic affairs as necessary for national security:

All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.

This corollary was used to justify U.S. intervention in Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. It was officially reversed in 1934 with the advent of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “good neighbor” policy towards Latin America. Nonetheless, the principle that the United States’ political and economic interests are intimately related to that of Latin America remained. Throughout the 20th century, the United States’ economic interests played a central role in...
the development of Latin American banking, infrastructure and industry. Similarly, the U.S. government, particularly after the start of the cold war, continued to intervene in Latin American governmental and military affairs. This, in turn, has had important effects on the timing and make-up of Latin American migration to the United States.

**Mexico**

Mexican-Americans constitute the largest Latino group in the United States, making up two-thirds of the total Latino population, and have been present in the Southwest since that region was a part of Mexico. One aspect of Mexican migration that is not often emphasized is its relationship with U.S. economic and political interests, both in Mexico and the United States.

During the Porfiriato (1876-1911), Porfirio Díaz oversaw a massive restructuring of the Mexican economy. Many of these economic changes were funded by U.S. companies, leading to significant U.S. involvement in the Mexican economy. By 1900, U.S. companies owned 80 percent of Mexican railroads, 75 percent of mining and 50 percent of oil fields. In addition, during the Porfiriato, an estimated 300,000 displaced Mexican peasants migrated from southern to northern Mexico to find work. From there, it was only a short step to the United States.

Most accounts of Mexican migration to the United States argue that it was the social upheaval caused by the Mexican Revolution, a bloody conflict which occurred from 1910 to 1920, that led to the first major wave of Mexican migration to the United States. While the Mexican Revolution unquestionably played a key role, a closer examination of the number of yearly arrivals after the turn of the century reveals that Mexican migration to the United States began to increase in 1908 and grew significantly in 1909 and 1910, before the revolution had taken root (see Table 1). Similarly, migration levels continued to grow throughout the 1920s, despite the reduced level of political violence in Mexico.

Thus, Mexican migration flows to the United States are at least in part explained by economic restructuring and U.S. involvement in Mexican economic development policy starting in the late 19th century. These factors initiated an internal migration process that in turn led to increasing movement from Mexico to the United States, a process that continues to the present day. This movement was facilitated both by the government and by business interests in the United States. U.S. companies regularly sent recruiters to Mexico to bring back workers, often paying for their transportation costs. Congress did its part by setting no limitations (until 1965) on the numbers of migrants who could enter the United States from the Western Hemisphere.

**Table 1. Mexican Immigrants to the United States, 1904–1967**

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Puerto Rico

The U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico since the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 has significantly affected the economy of the island and driven Puerto Rican migration to the United States. From the beginning, the U.S. government sought to “modernize” the Puerto Rican economy. In support of these modernization efforts, in 1947 the Puerto Rican legislature approved the Industrial Incentives Act, which provided tax breaks, low-cost labor and land to U.S. businesses to encourage them to move manufacturing to the island. U.S. government officials referred to this act as “Operation Bootstrap.” As a result, from 1958 to 1977, Puerto Rico experienced dramatic economic growth, averaging over 9 percent a year. Factory employment doubled during the same period, and the number of factories grew by about 20 percent. The industrialization also coincided with a dramatic decline in the agrarian sector. In 1950, 40 percent of the labor force worked on farms; by the late 1980s, that number had fallen to 3 percent. Thus, in a very short period of time, the Puerto Rican economy was transformed from an agrarian-based system to an industrialized one.

This transformation led to significant social dislocations within Puerto Rican society, in particular to the mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States. The island’s dramatic rates of economic growth did little to affect employment levels. In fact, total employment in Puerto Rico actually decreased, from 603,000 jobs in 1951 to 543,000 in 1960; employment did not return to its 1951 levels until 1963. The growth in industrial jobs was unable to keep up with population growth or to compensate for job losses in the agricultural sector and home needlework industry.

What made the continuation of this program possible, despite high unemployment, was the unrestricted movement of Puerto Ricans to the United States. Because they are U.S. citizens (as a result of passage of the Jones Act in 1917), Puerto Ricans require no immigration documentation to migrate to the United States, accelerating a process that began at the turn of the 20th century. An estimated 470,000 Puerto Ricans — 21 percent of the island’s population — emigrated in the 1950s in a movement which has become known as the Great Migration.

Cuba

The United States also occupied Cuba after the Spanish-American War. U.S. troops were withdrawn in 1902 but not before the United States had forced the insertion of the Platt Amendment into the Cuban constitution. Twice rejected by the Cuban constitutional assembly, the amendment, which allowed for U.S. intervention in Cuba whenever the United States deemed it necessary, was finally passed when U.S. leaders made it clear that their soldiers would not leave the island until the amendment was adopted verbatim in the constitution.

It was not long before the United States felt the need to exercise its right of intervention. In response to a Cuban revolt in 1906, Teddy Roosevelt said:

I am so angry with that infernal little Cuban republic that I would like to wipe its people off the face of the earth. All we have wanted from them is that they would behave themselves and be prosperous and happy so that we would not have to interfere. And now, lo and behold, they have started an utterly unjustifiable and pointless revolution and may get things into such a snarl that we have no alternative save to intervene …

The United States intervened and remained in the country until 1909. The U.S. intervened again in 1912 (staying until 1917) and 1922 and, in 1933, was instrumental in removing...
dictator Gerardo Machado. Although the Platt Amendment was rescinded in 1934, the United States remained deeply involved in Cuban economics and politics. As a result, by the late 1950s, the United States owned 90 percent of Cuban mines, 80 percent of public utilities, 50 percent of railways, 40 percent of sugar production and 25 percent of all bank deposits. Historian Terence Cannon argues that the United States did not fear the Cuban Revolution because it “owned” Cuba.

The Cuban Revolution led to the first mass migration of Cubans to the United States. Like Puerto Ricans, Cubans had been present in the U.S. since the late 19th century, but their numbers escalated dramatically as Cubans began fleeing the revolution in 1959. Since it was the height of the cold war, their presence was supported and encouraged by the U.S. government. Not only were Cuban immigrants given preferential treatment under the 1966 Cuban Refugee Act, they also received significant financial support — an estimated $4 billion — from the U.S. government. To this day, Cubans are the only immigrant group given automatic residency upon arrival in the United States. That, of course, encourages Cuban migration and is a direct result of the symbolic role that opposition to the Castro regime plays within U.S. foreign policy.

**Central America**

Central America’s proximity to the United States has long made it a target of U.S. political and economic interests. In 1927, U.S. Undersecretary of State Robert Olds described how the United States understood its role in the region:

> The Central American area constitutes a legitimate sphere of influence for the United States, if we are to have due regard for our own safety and protection... Our ministers accredited to the five little republics... have been advisors whose advice has been accepted virtually as law... we do control the destinies of Central America and we do so for the simple reason that the national interest dictates such a course... There is no room for any outside influence other than ours in this region... Until now Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those which we do not recognize and support fall.

The United States often expressed its support or opposition to these regimes through military action. The U.S. military invaded Nicaragua in 1894, 1896 and 1910 and occupied the country from 1912 to 1933. U.S. troops entered Honduras in 1903, 1907, 1911, 1912, 1919 and 1924, in most cases in response to internal conflict over electoral outcomes. The United States government was instrumental in engineering the secession of Panama from Colombia so as to be able to build the Panama Canal and was heavily involved in the country’s politics in order to ensure the canal’s function and defense. U.S. companies, particularly the United Fruit Company (now
Chiquita Banana), were also heavily invested in many Central American countries. United Fruit developed an integrated production plan, not only producing bananas but also building and controlling the infrastructure necessary to get them to market — including roads, railroads, utilities, ports and so on. In many Central American countries, United Fruit owned the majority of the existing infrastructure, making it a key player in the countries’ internal affairs.

This economic role lay at the heart of the U.S. intervention in Guatemala in 1954, which resulted in the establishment of a brutal military dictatorship. The United States also supported a similarly brutal regime in El Salvador. The extreme inequality that characterized both country’s economies, and the lack of any possibility for political dissent, led to the development of strong guerrilla movements in both places. The result was civil war and extreme violence, leading to massive social dislocation and the beginning of large-scale Guatemalan and Salvadoran migration to the United States.

These migrants were met with an unfriendly U.S. administration led by Ronald Reagan. Known for his fierce anti-communism, Reagan argued: “The national security of all Americans is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves here, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere.” As a result, the administration dramatically increased its military and economic assistance to the region. In total, the United States provided $6 billion in economic and military aid to El Salvador during its 12-year civil war. Given the country’s estimated population of about 2.5 million people in 1980, this sum is equivalent to $2,400 for every Salvadoran individual. U.S. economic and military aid to Guatemala was not at the same level, with direct military aid during the 1980s totaling only $30 million. However, in both cases, the Reagan administration had strong political reasons not to acknowledge the extreme human rights violations perpetrated by its allies. As one U.S. diplomat who served during the Reagan administration put it: “Unless they [administration officials] see a guy like D’Aubuisson running a machete through somebody, they’re inclined to ignore it... There is absolutely zero conception of what these people are really like, how evil they really are.”

As a result, fewer than 5 percent of the Central American petitions for political asylum were approved, and, unlike the Cuban case, the government provided no assistance to facilitate Central American immigrants’ settlement in the United States. In 1981, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) formally criticized U.S. policy, arguing that the United States was not living up to its international responsibilities. Reagan did not change his policies. Subsequent administrations did regularize the status of some Central American migrants, but many remain in legal “limbo” in the United States.

**Conclusion**

As we have seen, there were important domestic and international political reasons why the U.S. government involved itself in the politics of Latin American countries and encouraged or discouraged migration from them. These economic and political interests have had a significant impact on which countries Latin American migrants originate from, when they come and how they are treated upon arrival. For different reasons, the U.S. government has made immigrant settlement much easier for some national-origin groups than for others. This brief overview should make clear the importance of U.S. foreign and economic policy in explaining the current face of Latin American migration to the United States.

Lisa García Bedolla is an associate professor of Education at UC Berkeley. She spoke at CLAS on March 2, 2009.
Poverty Programs, Political Opportunities?

by Emily Curran

Can an anti-poverty program sway an election and, if so, is this evidence of clientelism? While such questions are of abstract and abiding interest to political scientists, they acquire concreteness and currency in Mexico, where President Felipe Calderón won the 2006 election by fewer than 300,000 votes following a campaign in which the opposition repeatedly accused the government of manipulating antipoverty programs for political ends.

The question of the electoral returns to welfare spending in recent Mexican presidential elections was at the heart of Beatriz Magaloni’s CLAS presentation. In her talk, Magaloni argued that political parties have reaped substantial electoral rewards from anti-poverty programs associated with the party label. In Calderón’s case, she claimed, this electoral boost gave the National Action Party (PAN) candidate more than enough votes to account for his razor-thin victory over Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

“Without these programs, the PAN would definitely have lost,” said Magaloni.

But are these electoral returns to welfare spending evidence of clientelism? Clientelism implies an explicit exchange of material benefits for votes. Evidence that an antipoverty program’s beneficiaries tend to vote for the party associated with that program is consistent with clientelism, but it is also consistent with a legitimate process by which voters reward parties that implement popular policies.

While López Obrador and his allies favored the clientelistic account during the 2006 campaign and its aftermath, Magaloni asserted that it is the latter, legitimate process that explains the electoral benefits that accrued to the PAN in that election. Her argument rests on the distinctive nature of the programs themselves.

Mexico’s flagship antipoverty program during the 2000-06 presidency of panista Vicente Fox was Oportunidades, a conditional cash transfer program (CCT) that provides targeted benefits to poor families provided
that recipients keep their children in school and bring them in for regular health check-ups. Started as Progresa under the PRI administration of Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), the program was renamed and expanded under Fox. Crucially, Oportunidades is an entitlement program that chooses recipients based on objective measures of poverty rather than through the discretion of national politicians. Barring a major improvement in economic status or a failure to meet the program’s education and health requirements, a family’s benefits cannot be withdrawn.

Discretion is the key to clientelism, Magaloni argued. Since discretion is absent from entitlement programs, the political latitude for clientelistic manipulation is absent as well. Thus, electoral returns from Oportunidades and similar programs signal voter approval and the policy’s popularity rather than inappropriate campaign practices.

So just how large were the electoral returns from Oportunidades in the 2006 election? The question is straightforward but difficult to answer. That a policy’s beneficiaries vote for the party associated with that policy in greater numbers than do non-beneficiaries is not, in itself, evidence that the policy generated electoral rewards. While beneficiary status under Oportunidades is based on objective criteria, beneficiaries may nevertheless differ systematically from non-beneficiaries in other ways that make them more likely to vote for the PAN.

To overcome the challenges posed by such factors, Magaloni employed advanced statistical procedures to estimate the number of voters who supported the PAN in 2006 as a direct result of Oportunidades. Her results indicate high electoral returns from welfare spending. Beneficiaries of the program are estimated to have been 11 percent more likely to vote for Calderón than their non-beneficiary counterparts. Beneficiaries were also roughly 7 percent less likely to vote for López Obrador.

Nearly 5 million Mexican families had received monthly transfers from Oportunidades by 2005. With that many beneficiaries, an 11 percent increased likelihood of voting for the PAN translates into a large electoral swing. In a very tight election, such a swing can, and arguably did, make all the difference.

Legitimate electoral gains aside, Magaloni also highlighted another distinctive feature of the new entitlements programs in Mexico: they work. The population living in extreme poverty has declined in Mexico since the late 1990s, when the first CCTs were implemented. Though linking this decline to entitlements programs would require a paper all its own, it is no stretch to imagine that substantial monthly cash infusions to over half the population living in extreme poverty may have played a significant role.

Oportunidades and other CCTs represent a watershed for welfare spending in Mexico. For the first time in the country’s history, Mexico’s poorest citizens are receiving benefits based on economic status rather than partisan political support. Previous antipoverty programs, such as President Carlos Salinas de Gotari’s (1988-94) National Solidarity Program (Pronasol) and post-revolutionary land reforms were highly discretionary and were manifestly manipulated for political gain. In this respect, entitlements are a major step forward for the Mexican welfare state.

Nevertheless, while national-level discretion in the administration of CCTs has been removed, discretion at the municipal level remains. Magaloni’s current research explores these local processes, and this work may uncover persistent clientelistic practices at the local level. If so, then Mexico’s welfare transition from discretion to entitlements remains incomplete.

Beatriz Magaloni is an associate professor of Political Science at Stanford University. She spoke at CLAS on March 16, 2009.

Emily Curran is a graduate student in the Department of Political Science at UC Berkeley.
Along history of predominantly male emigration from Mexico to the U.S. has resulted in lopsided gender ratios in Mexico. In an electoral democracy, a decrease in the male population might lead women to increase their political participation and representation. However, male–female gender ratios do not mirror political participation; women’s power in numbers does not equal political power.

Migration scholars have largely focused on the social and political worlds of migrants in the United States, with scant attention dedicated to how migration impacts sending communities, women’s daily lives and regional gender relations.

Jorge Bravo argues that male-heavy migration has had important and surprising political consequences in Mexico. More specifically, in his recent talk at CLAS, he detailed the ways in which migration has changed domestic life, political will and participation, spurring a gendered politics in Mexico. Bravo maintained that lopsided gender ratios in specific localities have had dire consequences for female domestic life and diminished women’s participation and representation in the political arena.

In the 1990s, over 80 percent of Mexico’s emigrants were males. In high-migration areas, there were 138 females for every 100 males between the ages of 18 and 29. These numbers have had critical social outcomes for local marriage markets.

Bravo drew several conclusions based on a 2003 Mexican Census Bureau survey involving 30,000 respondents entitled “Mexican National Survey of Intra-Household Relationships.” As a result of the dwindling pool of potential mates caused by out-migration, females have been forced to lower their standards and cast a wider net as their bargaining position weakens. Migration not only impacts the pool of available male mates but also calls the eligibility of those who remain into question. Their education levels and job status are critical to their desirability. Bravo finds that many women are most interested in men who emigrate. This is because migration is a self-selective process, and migrants are viewed as men who are actively trying to increase their standard of living.

Lopsided gender ratios also impact domestic life by heightening male violence and abuse against their female partners. In areas with more uneven sex ratios, there are higher levels of physical, emotional and economic abuse of women. There is also evidence that decision-making within the household is increasingly male dominated in such localities.

The survey’s breadth is limited, however, by the fact that it contains no information on whether or not households received remittances or had any members in the United States.

The impacts that lopsided gender ratios have on local marriage markets and domestic space spill over into the political realm. In a 2007 study “Migration, Remittances and Politics in Mexico,” which entailed over 1,000 individually-based surveys, Bravo addressed women’s political engagement at the mass level. Mass level political behavior and local-level political activism shape political engagement, local governance, the construction of the public good and the gendered nature of political outcomes. Bravo investigated whether or not women were informed about political issues, if they talked about politics and what they did to protect or confirm their interests. Today, in towns with uneven gender ratios, women are less represented on the municipal councils and less politically active than in localities that are more gender balanced. This is due, in part, to unfavorable local marriage markets.

On average, at the national level, 12 percent of Mexicans born in Mexico are in the United States. Yet, some areas have 50 percent of their population in the U.S., while others have none. Only 13 percent of those surveyed by Bravo received remittances. Those who received remittances were less likely to vote, and those who expressed a desire to migrate were less likely to be politically engaged. Thus, to generalize from Bravo’s findings, high migration areas are likely to experience less political engagement overall.
Regional differences in party politics and political activity might also impact women’s political participation in important ways. For example, in areas that are embroiled in particularly close races between Mexico’s three leading political parties — the PRI, the PAN and the PRD — parties try to get out the vote to increase participation in the election. The recent turmoil in Oaxaca is another example in which local politics might influence Bravo’s findings about women’s political participation.

This study has caused Bravo, and others, to ask how policy can address rising gender inequalities across Mexico. Equally prescient is Bravo’s concern that local “gender gaps,” differences in men’s and women’s political and social needs, are either amplified or muted in local governance due to gendered politics. Policy makers and migration scholars can now begin to understand how changing demographics influence behavior from the domestic to the political realm.

Women’s strategies for coping with a diminished marriage market and an increase in domestic abuse in localities with lopsided gender ratios are not only cause for alarm but also important areas for fine-grained, ethnographic research. The out-migration of males continues to have an important impact on women’s personal experiences, voice within the community, viable life options and emotional vitality.

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Cafetín El Moshe: Location, Location...

by Daniel Alarcón

For Carlos Luján Martínez, it’s not hard to imagine the day when someone shows up at the high security prison he temporarily calls home just to taste his most famous dish: Spaghetti a lo Luján. He says this with a playful smile, as if such a thing were obvious. As he sees it, the dish that bears his name is light, tasty, but above all, addictive. The recipe comes from Brazil, stolen — Luján uses this very word, grinning ironically — from a woman he met on one of his many trips throughout Latin America and the United States. The dish might seem simple, but it’s all in the preparation: thin noodles, a splash of olive oil, green onion, red pepper, chicken breast, salt, parsley. Not anyone can make it, and like any good chef, Luján won’t reveal his secrets. He offers me a taste. Delicious.

There are clouds above Lima’s Miguel Castro Castro prison today, taking the edge off the typically sweltering summer heat. It’s lunch time at the most successful privately-owned restaurant in the Peruvian penitentiary system, and head chef Luján revels in the chaos. He keeps his black hair short, the ends frosted a metallic golden color, although in the interests of hygiene, he wears a hat when he cooks. His cargo shorts are baggy, his black t-shirt a little tight and his three piercings (both ears plus his right eyebrow) all match. Luján gives me a brief tour of the half-built kitchen, speaking of the unfinished space as if the improvements were already complete. Soon there will be a second refrigerator, a pizza oven and a separate counter where he can work out his recipes in private. Naturally, Luján hopes to be free long before the kitchen is done. For now, he and his helpers — all of them inmates — make do as best they can in the tight space.

Like any kitchen in the midst of lunchtime rush, many tasks must be completed all at once to satisfy the hungry customers. One man crouches over an electric hot plate, frying an egg for steak a lo pobre, while another quickly dices tomato on the cramped counter top. A man digs through the freezer for ground beef, stepping over another, who sits on the floor peeling potatoes. Luján and his sous-chef, Roberto, a shy young prisoner doing a 15-year sentence for kidnapping, share two electric hot plates jerry-rigged from a single outlet, the boiling red coils sunken into a cement countertop. It’s hard to figure out where best to stand without getting in the way. There is a prisoner manning the window, taking orders from the customers, writing everything down in a notebook. Someone turns up the volume on the stereo, and suddenly a burst of music fills the space. Techno. Everyone perks up at the sound, and the pace of work quickens, if only for a moment.

Officially, this is the hall for lawyers, a space for inmates to meet with their legal representatives. According to the menu I’m handed, it’s the “Cafetín El Moshe.” For many years, the inmates at Castro Castro and their lawyers shouted at each other in a depressing auditorium with awful lighting and terrible acoustics — the echo was so bad it was often impossible to carry on a simple conversation. Last year, after long negotiations, the prison authorities decided to open up a new space, and the Moshe was born. The administration in charge of the national prison system (known as INPE, its Spanish acronym) worked with private investors, using inmate labor to build the restaurant. The wood, press board and nails alone cost nearly $5,000. Taking into account the kitchen equipment, electrical wiring, tile flooring, lighting, tables and chairs, the cost must have been many thousands of dollars more.

Until he is freed, Luján runs the Moshe. As he cooks, he tells me of his adventures and assures me that, though he is imprisoned now, he considers himself a very lucky man. He’s seen something of the world (California, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Miami, Brazil); he’s learned from a lot of people along the way; and the optimism and energy he exudes come from experience. He knows how to deal with a prison sentence. This is his fifth time inside, and he’s never been in for too long. Eighteen months was his longest stretch, and that was for his first conviction. As for the details of his current case, his explanation is quick and quite deliberately obscure. I only manage to make out a few phrases: “April 29th,” “Los Angeles,” “some Hindus,” “Chase Manhattan Bank.” He doesn’t seem too concerned. He’ll be out soon enough.

“This time,” Luján assures me, “I’m innocent.”

In any case, his career in and out of prison has taught him to value certain privileges. “One of the things you miss the most is the food,” Luján says. What the Moshe attempts to mimic is the atmosphere and the taste one might find in a good restaurant anywhere else in the city.
Carlos Luján Martínez shows off his specialty, Spaghetti a lo Luján. Photo by Claudia Alva.
Since Luján's customers can't go out into the street, he brings the flavor of the street to them. In just two months, it has become the preferred meeting place for inmates from all sectors of the prison, a place to relax and enjoy the warm breeze, a place to see and be seen. If it weren't for the iron gate and the barbed wire at one end of the dining area, it might be possible to forget you're surrounded by killers, terrorists and drug traffickers, some of whom have been inside these walls for a decade or more.

There are no prices on the menu, though some of these dishes cost as much as $6, an extravagant price given the location. This is precisely what sets the Moshe apart from its competitors. If you want to eat cheaply, there are ten other eateries, places where you can have lunch for slightly more than a dollar. The Moshe is in another category and appeals to a more exclusive clientele. Here, an inmate from the U.S. lunches with an inmate from Nigeria, while both of them wait for their respective lawyers. Well-known convicts, be they former ministers or ex-generals or drug traffickers, drink coffee and chat discreetly with their friends. It's not uncommon to see the head of prison security hunched over a plate of Spaghetti a lo Luján, should his hectic schedule allow the indulgence. I heard tell of one inmate, a man doing 25 years for terrorism, who petitioned the authorities for special permission to dine at the Moshe. He was receiving a visit from a family member he hadn't seen in 15 years, and he wanted to take her somewhere special.

These sorts of stories are important to Luján. When it was suggested he run the restaurant, he agreed, on certain conditions. He had to run it his way; it had to be his sort of place. Quality food, fresh ingredients, a place where everything was prepared professionally. No chicken wings with the feathers still on them. The chicken breast may be frozen, but it's still good quality. Even the plates themselves have a modern design — sleek and square — from Luján's own personal collection, or in some cases, copies made in the prison's own ceramics workshop. Luján notes with pride that his cooks use real olive oil, something you won't find in any other restaurant in Castro Castro. “This is Asia,” Luján says, referring to the stretch of opulent beaches south of Lima, pronouncing it in English, as some ridiculous people around here often do: Ei-sha.

The restaurant is named after Moshe Abdalla, an Israeli prisoner doing a 30-year sentence for drug trafficking. He is not, Luján is quick to point out, the owner of the restaurant, and in fact, who the actual owners are is a little unclear. One person explained it this way: “The Moshe belongs to everyone and to nobody” — a typically cryptic prison riddle of the sort often used on outsiders. Moshe, the prisoner, however, functions as a sort of unofficial mascot of his namesake restaurant. He doesn't work there exactly, but should anyone order the Arab salad a lo Moshe, he’d be the one to make it. In two months, no one has ordered it. While I talk with Luján and the others, Moshe slinks about, coming and going from the kitchen as if it were his living room, eventually settling into a corner where he sits, smoking and reading a crime novel in Hebrew. Every now and then, he looks up from his book and shouts at a cook to keep his hat on. “¡Gho-rha! ¡Gho-rha!” he yells in his exotically accented Spanish. He moves like a shadow, appearing briefly by my side to serve me a cup of orange soda before disappearing again. He has a thin, sad face, curly hair and the beginnings of a salt-and-pepper beard. Eventually he says to me, “You ate at the Arab restaurant in Miraflores, right? The one on Diagonal, in front of Kennedy Park?”

“Yes,” I say, though that must have been at least six years ago.
He shrugs. “I remember your face.”

Sometimes one feels that prison is a different and separate world, that one has nothing in common with the men whose bad decisions or bad luck brought them here. That’s a mistake and an incomplete picture of society. If you are Peruvian and you enter any high security prison in your country, you will inevitably recognize certain faces from television or the newspapers, and you’ll hear certain names that sound familiar. If you stay long enough, you’ll likely run into someone you know: a family member or someone from the neighborhood, the friend of a friend of a cousin you haven’t seen in years. It’s another universe, but it’s still Peru, a living reflection of everything that goes on here. Everything we’d like to hide is buried here: the terrorists, rapists, kidnappers, corrupt politicians, killers and thieves with whom we live on the outside, each and every day. All the races and regions of the country are here and, because of the drug trade, a vast foreign contingent as well. There are rich and poor, members of the aristocracy and hapless victims paying for the mistakes of others. There are very educated inmates as well as those who are taking advantage of their time inside to learn those skills the Peruvian educational system never taught them: how to read, for example. Some have wasted their entire youth inside, while others remain loyal to the codes of criminality that landed them here in the first place. All of them are anxiously awaiting release, so they can resume their lives, charting out new paths or retaking the old one. What is certainly true is that there is a constant dialogue between the world outside and the one inside, that everything one sees on the streets of Lima and its provinces will eventually be reflected in the jails.

An example: seated in the dining area of the Moshe, it’s clear that the explosion of interest in Peruvian cuisine has made it to Castro Castro. It’s impossible to imagine that someone could have opened a high-end restaurant inside a high security prison before the sudden interest in Peruvian food. Luján himself is an admirer of Gastón Acurio, perhaps the best known ambassador of Peruvian cuisine to the world, owner of restaurants all over Peru, Latin America, Europe and the United States. Luján’s partner, Roberto, worked for many years at Los Delfines, one of Lima’s most luxurious hotels, where he perfected his cebiche, a recipe that even the dour prison guards assure me is amazing. He’s been in Castro Castro for more than five years now, convicted of kidnapping, but he hasn’t forgotten what he learned there. The two friends share an attention to the details of fine dining, lessons picked up at some of the capital’s finest restaurants and, in Luján’s case, abroad. They pay attention to the look of each dish, and are proud of the attentive service they provide their guests. A few weeks ago, a well-known drug trafficker who didn’t like the taste of his lunch announced his displeasure by shattering his plate on the floor.

And what happened? A scuffle? A fight? A riot?

One of the Moshe’s workers came out to sweep up the shards and clean up the mess, while Luján prepared another dish more to his client’s liking.

I ask Luján, “What do the prison’s other restaurant owners think of you?”

He responds instantly: “They hate me,” he says.

It’s not easy to bring a culture of fine dining to a prison. When the novelty wears off, it’s possible that many of the inmates will go back to the competition, to the cheap lunches served in plastic bags and made to be eaten quickly. Drug traffickers think that because they have money, they know what good food is, Luján says. But they’re wrong.
They're just pretending. And the common criminals are even worse. They — “The riffraff from Roberto’s pavilion,” as Luján calls them affectionately — don’t like the food at the Moshe. For people like that, good food is simple, the same three or four dishes they know, served in massive portions. Lomo saltado, with lots of tomatoes and onions. A mountain of pasta with meat sauce, grated cheese on top — parmesan if you have it, but if not some local Andean variety, and they won’t know the difference. But Luján sees himself as an educator, and little by little he’s reaching them. He teaches them about the different traditions of Peruvian cuisine, about the great variety of ingredients we have at our disposal, the resulting diversity of flavors. It’s an uphill battle, but he enjoys it. Just recently, he convinced a few cautious inmates to try pesto. They liked it, he tells me. Now they even order it.

They can never remember what to call it exactly, but they order it all the same.

The Moshe opened on a Tuesday in January, and that first Saturday, visitor’s day, they racked up almost $800 in sales. It was a sensation. Some inmates — the troublesome type, the kind who bring problems — don’t have permission to leave their cell blocks. But by now they too have heard of the Moshe, and they have their food delivered. Luján shows me his styrofoam to-go boxes, proof of his unexpected success. Each visitor’s day, he prepares around 10 portions of his famous dish that go outside the prison walls. His Spaghetti a lo Luján is going where he can’t. That’s a first step. The second is for regular limeños to come by just for lunch.

There’s a third step too, but for now it will have to wait. When he’s released, Luján wants to open a Peruvian restaurant in Costa Rica, where he has friends and even possible investors. He’ll be out soon, and he’ll go directly to San José. He hasn’t settled on a name just yet, but he tells me it’ll be something “very Peruvian.” Maybe something in Quechua to honor his mother, a native of Ayacucho, a mostly indigenous southern province. But one thing he has decided on is this: he won’t do it without Roberto. They’re a team. He looks over at his business partner, who’s busy preparing a dish for the hungry prisoners. Roberto has a few years left on his sentence, so Luján will just have to be patient. He turns to me, shaking his head with emotion. “Me and that little thug are going to conquer the world.”

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Magellanic penguins march to the sea in Chile's Tierra del Fuego.

Photo by Mike Fernwood.