**Report 1: Mexico, Border Issues and Immigration, United States Foreign Policy and Latinx Communities**

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Course/Number

Date

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Formerly the most sought narco in the Americas, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera was convicted on all counts on February 12. These included allegations of directing a continuous criminal organization, conspiracy to smuggle narcotics, and conspiracy to commit murder. A life sentence awaits him if his conviction stands. A trial in New York City that lasted for three months, costed millions of dollars and requiring heavily armed law officers for jury protection in 2019 led to the conviction of the cartel network. Some commentators and media houses have nicknamed this spectacle the "trial of the century" for its revelation of the inner workings of the Sinaloa Cartel, which El Chapo headed for a couple of decades. The cartel operations allegedly involve a network of Mexican drug traffickers, entrepreneurs, and corrupt Mexican politicians at the highest levels.

There have been gangs and a drug trade in Mexico for decades. Since President Felipe Calderón assumed office in December 2006, however, violence related to drugs has increased dramatically. Mexico's security is in jeopardy, according to Calderón, who has launched a full-scale offensive against the drug trade in response to the cartels' increasing influence in the nation. Shortly after becoming a power in 2006, over 36,000 troops were sent to nine states, where they destroyed crops, gathered intelligence, interrogated individuals, and seized contraband. He also initiated several reforms in the legal system and public security. Twelve years after former president Felipe announced the start of Mexico's War on Drugs, close to 200,000 people have lost their lives and nearly 35,000 have been reported missing. It is not hard to recall the carnage that Los Zetas members unleashed on the Laredo and Nuevo Laredo area on the other side of the border in 2004 and 2005. It's very common for criminals, police, and members of rival trafficking groups to engage in gun battles in Mexico. This is an important point to remember when addressing either violence in Mexico or violence done by Mexican traffickers in the United States. More than 22,000 people have been murdered in Mexico due to drugs since 2007, according to the Mexican Attorney General's Office.

The United States has recognized that drug traffic affects more than just Mexico. Thus it has agreed to assist Mexico and other Central American nations via the Mérida Initiative. Specifically, the United States has pledged $1.5 billion over three years to combat corruption in the countries mentioned above governmental institutions by supporting initiatives like the education and training of police officers, the creation of new security infrastructure, and the procurement of weapons and other military hardware to be used in the fight against drugs. Understanding the scope of Mexico's drug trafficking economy and its connections to the United States is necessary before tackling its security issue. When it comes to the drug problem in America, no other nation is as influential as Mexico. Several factors, including a shared border, Mexico's strategic location between producing and consuming countries, a long history of cross-border smuggling, and diverse, poly-drug, profit-minded DTOs, have contributed to Mexico's outsized influence on the U.S. drug trade. Marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine are all trafficked to the United States through Mexico. Most large sums of money seized in the United States originate in the illegal drug trade. Money worth eighteen and thirty-nine billion dollars a year is smuggled out of the United States on behalf of drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) in Mexico and Colombia, depending on who you ask. As a result, millions of Americans send billions of dollars back to Mexico each year. The Mexican government sees corruption as a direct result of the movement of large quantities of money. Strategically, the steady inflow of illegal funds into Mexico's economy undermines the long-term success of the country's lawful economy. These factors highlight why the United States and Mexico governments must work together to combat the drug-trafficking danger.

 This line of reasoning legitimized the United States' (U.S.) ongoing "kingpin policy" in Mexico and elsewhere in the Americas, which targets high-level drug cartel leaders (capos) rather than the hierarchies responsible for perpetuating the region's cycle of bloodshed. The costs of drug trafficking are mirrored in several other areas, including the criminal system, healthcare, productivity, and the environment. Therefore, a current anti-drug policy must focus on eliminating corruption via a comprehensive approach that reduces impunity, promotes human rights, lessens economic disparity, and fortifies educational systems.

Decades of unsuccessful war against drug cartels and operations, including the arrest of criminals like El Chapo, who oversaw the distribution of Asian methamphetamine to the United States through Mexican cartels, have failed to completely eradicate the narcotic issue, drug use and trafficking in the USA. Despite the failure of U.S. programs like Plan Colombia and the Alliance for Prosperity, this article gives insight into why the United States retains its geostrategic supremacy over the area. More important than El Chapo's punishment may be President López Obrador's recent announcement that his government would end the Mexican war on drugs to concentrate on criminal groups who extract rent, commit crimes, cause havock and steal oil. However, given previous occurrences, it seems improbable that the United States would let Mexico win the drug war, so here's hoping this is the end of the show.

**Reference**

# Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera and Laura Weiss, El Chapo and Mexico's Drug War Spectacle March (March 4, 2019)