Graduate School of Development Studies

The Securitization of the War on Drugs in Mexico and the Intensification of Violence:

Exploring the possible effects of the relations between Mexico and the United States of America after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement

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List of Acronyms

ATP:	Advanced-technology products
CP:	Copenhagen School
CIDE:	Center for Economics Research and Teaching
DEA:	Drug Enforcement Agency
DHS:	Department of Home Security
EC:	European Community
FDI:	Foreign Direct Investment
IPE:	International Political Economy
IR:	International Relations
NAFTA:	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
NRA:	New Regionalism Approach
PGR:	Office of the Attorney General
PJF:	Federal Judiciary Police
PRI:	Institutional Revolutionary Party
SAP:	Structural adjustment programs
SSP:	Security and Prosperity Partnership
ST:	Securitization Theory
US:	United States
WTO:	World Trade Organization

Abstract

This paper explores some of the reasons behind the escalation of violence derived from the way in which Calderon's government has approached the problem of drugs. It addresses the questions: why did Calderon's administration decide to intensify the war on drugs -despite the violent consequences- and how did this process occur? I argue that Calderon's regime made this illegal aspect of trade its own battle for legitimization purposes, both nationally and internationally, and to foster economic and political collaboration from the US after the cooling of the bilateral relations following 9/11, through constructing drug trafficking as the major threat to Mexican national security and deploying the military forces to fight a war that was, from the beginning, predictably lost. At the same time, the US has used the same mechanism of portraying drug trafficking as a priority threat to the nation for fostering cooperation with Mexico in security and political terms. Nevertheless, NAFTA produces and reproduces the material and legal bases that nourish the threat that together, Calderon's regime and the US fight with a military war in Mexican territory, generating a vicious cycle and, as a natural outcome, the escalation of violence that Mexico faces nowadays.

Relevance to Development Studies

This study aims to expand the analysis of the securitization process of drug trafficking focusing on the case of Mexico by analyzing how drug trafficking has been socially constructed as a threat. In particular, it aims to explain how material and legal forces derived from the implementation of NAFTA influenced this process, which in turn has framed the context of violence and insecurity that prevents the further development of the country.

Keywords

Drug trafficking, NAFTA, New Regionalism Approach, Securitization theory, regional integration, Social Constructivism, US-Mexico bilateral relations, war on drugs.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Five months after President Felipe Calderon initiated his mandate in Mexico, in a speech delivered in 2007 during the commemoration of the 145th anniversary of the battle of the 5th of May, 1862, -when the Mexican army triumphed over the French army's attempt to invade the national territory- he stated:

> "Today, Mexico faces new enemies that threaten our future. There is an enemy of the nation which is the organized crime that threatens our homes' security and peace, our families' health, our development and our future… The indestructible patriotic vocation of our Armed Forces, their strength and decision have been and will keep being fundamental in this war" (*Presidencia de la República* 2007).

This speech is a reflection of the current view of the Mexican government towards drug-trafficking, a "threat" to security, peace, people's health and development, as well as of its main strategy to fight this issue: the use of the military.

The "war on drugs" in Mexico is not a recent phenomenon. Chabat (2010: 1-2) describes its first stages, explaining that from the beginning of the 20th Century, the Mexican governments from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – which remained in power for 70 years - "took a very pragmatic approach to the problem... there was a policy of tolerance *vis-à-vis* that activity." During the 1980s there was a qualitative transformation of the government's strategy, after the US' and Mexican authorities established that drug trafficking was a problem of national security. "With the objective of reducing the production and drug smuggling from Mexico to the US, both countries established a policy of war against drugs" (Schiavon and Velazquez 2009: 10).

With the implementation of a wider neoliberal agenda in Mexico in the late 1980s and the negotiation and implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the economic cooperation between Mexico and the US was fostered and there were some attempts to create institutions for cooperation in security, which derived most recently in the Merida Initiative (Clarkson 2011: 124-126). At the same time, NAFTA's economic processes generated further social and political effects. Among them, 'illicit actors' managed to take advantage of the economic opportunities that this agreement created. In words of Giraldo and Triunkas (2010: 433), "the growth of global trade and global financial networks provide an infrastructure and cover that illicit actors were able to exploit".

After the PRI was defeated in 2000, the involvement of the military forces (both the army and the Mexican air force) took a more important role in the fight against drugs. Nevertheless, the war on drugs declared by President Calderon in 2006 represents a turning point in Mexico's strategy in dealing with the commercialization of drugs, in which the military component became the base of this strategy (Cadena-Roa, 2011: 165-67).

During Calderon's mandate, the largest number of troops has been deployed, reaching 50,000 in May 2010 (Arana 2010), compared to the 18,000 deployed during the last year of Vicente Fox's mandate (2005-2006) (*Presidencia de la República*, 2006). At the same time, there has been a severe escalation of violence: more than 50,000 people have lost their lives in the last four and a half years for crimes related to drug trafficking (Mendoza and Navarro 2011), as opposed to the 9,000 registered during the six years of Fox's presidency (Merlos 2007). Many analysts had even established that Mexico is on the verge of becoming a failed state, as General J. N. Mattis -US Marine Corps Commander- argued in 2009 *("¿México, estado fallido?...*" 2009). Since Calderon initiated his term, Mexico started facing one of the most violent periods of its history.

Many academics have tried to explain in different ways the reasons why Mexican government decided to fight drug trafficking with such a strong military component, as well as the factors and actors that intervened in the decision to "militarize" this war and see this issue as a major threat to national security. These explanations go from the possibility of the US pushing Mexico to adopt these measures in order to render Mexican national security apparatus under the influence and oversight of the US (Cadena-Roa 2010: 167), to the impossibility of Calderon's government to adopt any different strategy due to the loss of control of past administrations over this issue (Chabat, 2010).

Other political economy analyses have attempted to link the intensification of drug trafficking in Mexico with the process of liberalization of the Mexican economy. In his analysis of the consequences of NAFTA after 15 years of its implementation, Peter Watt (2010) suggests that "[n]arcotrafficking, like neoliberal capitalism, it seems, thrives in areas of severe poverty and unemployment where the civilian population is economically and politically disempowered and where state authorities are not powerful or willing enough to prevent the violent conflicts that narcotrafficking has produced". Giraldo and Trinkunas (2010: 433) argue, in a similar way, that the "largely positive process of economic and political liberalization had a 'dark side'. In an increasingly global market place, illicit actors, like their counterparts took advantage of business opportunities wherever they occurred".

Nevertheless, there have not been sufficient analyses of the process by which narcotrafficking was framed as a security threat by Mexico and the US, as well as of the extraordinary measures taken by these governments. This could shed some light for understanding how and why this issue was "securitized" –meaning that the issue was portrayed by some actor(s) "as an existential threat to a referent object… [Asserting] that it has to adopt extraordinary means that go beyond the ordinary norms of the political domain" (Emmers 2010: 193), a term furthered explained in the next sections- in these countries and in the bilateral agenda, and how this has impacted the violence in Mexico.

This paper explores some of the reasons behind the escalation of violence derived from the way in which Calderon's government has approached the problem of drugs. More specifically, it addresses the questions: why did Calderon's administration decide to intensify the war on drugs -despite the violent consequences- and how did this process occur? I argue that Calderon's regime made this illegal aspect of trade its own battle for legitimization purposes, both nationally and internationally, and to foster economic and political collaboration from the US after the cooling of the bilateral relations following 9/11, through constructing drug trafficking as the major threat to Mexican national security and deploying the military forces to fight a war that was, from the beginning, predictably lost. At the same time, the US has used the same mechanism of portraying drug trafficking as a priority threat to the nation for fostering cooperation with Mexico in security and political terms. Nevertheless, NAFTA produces and reproduces the material and legal bases that nourish the threat that together, Calderon's regime -a strong supporter that agreement- and the US, fight with a military war in Mexican territory, generating a vicious cycle and, as a natural outcome, the escalation of violence that Mexico faces nowadays.

In order to explain these phenomena and the argument proposed, I suggest that a social constructivist analysis is particularly useful to examine the US-Mexico bilateral relations in which two important phenomena have taken place in the last two decades: 1) the "regional integration" process derived from NAFTA's implementation, and 2) the construction of narcotrafficking as a national security threat by both governments.

Varadarajan (2004: 341) explains that "truly making sense of national security entails a focus on the ways in which processes of globalization (particularly economic globalization) are (re)constituting the identities of nation-states –creating new forms of insecurities and giving rise to particular kinds of state security practices". Therefore, this study aims to expand the analysis of the securitization process of drug trafficking focusing on the case of Mexico by explaining how material and legal forces derived from the implementation of NAFTA influenced this process. I aim to understand how drug trafficking has been socially constructed as a threat (by which actors, the

interests behind it, the discourses and means used, and the claimed reference object) in the US and Mexico, with a special emphasis in the latter, as well as the material forces and the legal bases that NAFTA has generated under its neoliberal process of "regional integration" which facilitated this construction of the threat and the use of the strategies to fight it as nowadays in Mexico.

Even though NAFTA's success in creating "a region" is questionable, I will analyze some of the economic, political and social dynamics that it fostered between Mexico and the US to understand the material and legal bases that allowed the expansion of drug commerce and its further legitimate and successful constitution as a threat in these countries. This contradicts the optimistic predictions on the agreement, which estimated that economic cooperation would foster development, prosperity and more security, especially for Mexico (Miller 2008:3). Thus, using a constructivist approach of these phenomena I aim to understand how the security issue and the economic dynamics are intimately interrelated, deriving in the situation of violence that the Mexico faces in recent times. Varadarajan (2004: 320) argues that "questions regarding national security are closely interwoven with constant invocations of the desirability of a particular kind of global economy. This interweaving presents to IR scholars a question that has become sidelined in recent discussions in security studies: how are national security and the global capitalist economy interrelated?"

For these purposes, I conduct a three level analysis in which I divide the study of the political economy of NAFTA in two levels, the economic and the legal, in order to analyze and explain the interrelation of these two levels and their further relation with the third level proposed, the political, which refers to the process of construction of drug-trafficking as a threat.

I first analyze how, at one level –the economic-, NAFTA has created a real boost in the financial and commercial relations between Mexico and the US, making these two economic partners more interdependent. At the same time, as many authors have argued (Drache 2008a and 2008b, Cadena-Roa 2011, Mares and Vega Canovas 2010, among others) these relations also benefit other activities considered as "illegal", such as money laundering, human trafficking and, of course, drug trafficking.

At another level –the legal-, I analyze how NAFTA generates a specific materiality through the liberalization of the economies that influences a specific legal framework, which gives legitimacy to specific transactions but no to others. This agreement has promoted the exchange of "legal" goods and services that are regulated under the same agreement's dispositions, and coexists with legal frameworks that criminalize the exchange of those other "bads" that cross the Mexican-US border, such as migration, money laundering and drugs. The dynamics of legalization and criminalization enforced by

institutional and legal frameworks such as the 2000 Palermo Convention and the Inter-American Drug Control Abuse Commission -which ban and punish the participation in any criminal corporation dedicated to drug trafficking-, and the Smart Borders Agreement -which allows the free flow of certain categories of people and heightens restrictions against others, such as drugs-, inform in great part the context of the bilateral policies on security, at the same time that the expansion of the liberalization of the economies improved the canals for exchanging illegal products.

Finally, at a third level –the political-, I will analyze how recent Mexican governments -especially Calderon's administration- supported by the US governments, undertook the process of constructing the discourse of drug trafficking as a major threat to national security and the mechanisms deployed to fight this problem, as well as the consequences of this strategy. Consequently, I will examine the links of this process with the material and legal bases studied that NAFTA created.

In order to develop the analysis proposed here, the first chapter of this paper explains the theoretical framework on which this analysis is based upon, namely "social constructivism". The second chapter analyzes different economic, political and social processes that the project of "regional integration" derived from the implementation of NAFTA has generated –with a stronger focus on Mexico-, in order to discern the material and legal forces that have benefited drug trafficking and its construction as a national threat, and discusses if this agreement has effectively resulted in a process of larger regional integration. The third chapter analyzes the process of the construction of drug trafficking as a threat by the US and Mexican governments, as well as the consequences of this strategy in Mexico after the declaration of the war on drugs by Calderon's administration, and examines the links of this process with the economic and legal ones previously analyzed from NAFTA. Finally, I bring the conclusions of this analysis.

Chapter 2
Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Constructivism in International Relations

The bilateral relations between Mexico and the US are very complex ongoing processes, involving various social, economic and political phenomena that different analytical lenses have attempted to explain. One of the approaches frequently used to characterize these relations is "Realism". According to Jackson and Sorensen (2007: 60):

> "Realists thus operate with a core assumption that world politics unfolds in an international anarchy: i.e. a system with no overarching authority, no world government. The state is the pre-eminent actor in the world politics. International relations are primarily relations of states. All other actors of world politics –individuals, international organizations, NGOs, etc.- are either less important or unimportant. The main point of foreign policy is to project and defend the interests of the state in world politics. But states are not equal: on the contrary, there is an international hierarchy of power among states".

Therefore, this term refers to "a theory of international relations that addresses how states achieve security and possibly other goals" (Glaser 2010: 16).

Schiavon and Velazquez (2009: 3) explain that many studies that had analyzed the US-Mexico relations have established that "in the US' relations with Mexico, the former has used a realist approach to achieve its goals. Throughout the history of this relationship there were episodes in which the great power used its military strength against its southern neighbor". Therefore, it is clear that for this approach the US is at the top of these hierarchical relations because of its stronger power, and it has been able to use this power to "project and defend" its interests against Mexico in different periods of these nations' histories.

These authors also explain that, on the other hand, an idealist/institutional-liberalist approach, which contends that the creation of institutions can give the necessary order to international system through cooperation, has also been used to explain the bilateral relations between the US and Mexico, explaining how Mexico has been forced to make use of this approach "because it does not have the necessary military capacities for confronting Washington in a different way… In this same context, Mexican governments have made use of the international organizations for trying to

solve bilateral problems with the US in a multilateral environment, whenever the bilateral option seems not favorable" (*Loc. Cit.*)

However, the two approaches described, often regarded as "traditionalist" (see for example, Buzan and Hansen 2009), were contested by various other ones for different reasons. In the case of realism, Glaser (2010: 16) states that this approach "gives little or no weight to individual states' political systems, their leaders, and other specific attributes of their domestic political systems". In a similar way, Agius (2010: 54) points out a critique to neorealist[1] and liberalist approaches, asserting that according to neorealists "states are 'like units', all seeking security in an anarchic world… Variants of liberalism generally agree on this aspect –states have certain goals to secure in the international realm. They may try and secure those goals via cooperation, but the same assumption is the rule –states have material interests".

For the specific case of security issues, for example, Ackelson (2005) develops an analysis of the US security policies on the Mexican border, arguing for a broader concept of security beyond the one that International Relations have "traditionally" used focusing on aspects that, yet, have an important role to play on that border, such as "power, military and police forces, defense hardware and troop deployment" (*Ibid*: 165-66).

In this paper I suggest that Social constructivism ("constructivsm" hereafter) is particularly useful to analyze three important phenomena that have taken place or been strengthened in the US-Mexico relations at least in the last two decades: 1) the process of "regional integration" derived from NAFTA's implementation; 2) the way in which narcotrafficking has been constructed as a national security threat by both governments, and 3) the links between these two phenomena.

Jackson and Sorensen (2007: 162) notice that originally constructivists in International Relations theory argued that "the most important aspect of international relations is social, not material... The study of international relations must focus on the ideas and beliefs that inform the actors on the international scene as well as the shared understandings between them". As a

[1] According to Nye (1988: 241), neorealism (or structural realism) is a line of theory developed by Waltz that consists on the premises of: analyzing power as a means to achieve goals instead of as an end pursued by states; the balance-of-power behavior by states is predicted from the structure of the international system; the structure is seen as an ordering principle, specification of the functions of different parts and the distribution of capabilities; the ordering principle in international politics is anarchy (the absence of a higher government above states), and the distribution of capabilities (multipolarity, bipolarity) predicts variations in states' balance-of-power behavior.

result, from this perspective the international system was said to exist "only as an intersubjective awareness among people; in that sense the system is constituted by ideas, not by material forces… It is a set of ideas, a body of thought, a system of norms, which has been arranged by certain people at a particular time and place… If the thoughts and ideas that enter into the existence of international relations change, then the system itself will change as well, because the system consists in thoughts and ideas" (*Loc. Cit.*).

Schiavon and Velazquez (2009: 4-5) further explain that constructivism works based on the following assumptions:

> "1) international relations essentially consist in interests, perceptions and ideas, not in physical forces; 2) the core element of constructivism is the group of ideas, assumptions and perceptions that are shared broadly among people; 3) these ideas and assumptions are built and expressed through the national interests and identity; 4) constructivists focus on the way the relationships are built and expressed through collective institutions, such as sovereignty, which has no material reality, but exists because people collectively think it exists."

In this sense, under this approach the construction of ideas and identities had traditionally been the core element to explain, as "ideas are the main source of power. Under this perspective, the interests, ideas, perceptions, identities and discourses that elites have about national and international realities are fundamental categories in the decision-making process of foreign policy" (*Ibid*: 5). Adler (1997: 225) explains that for constructivists ideas "-understood more generally as collective knowledge, institutionalized in practices- are the medium and propellant of social action; they define the limits of what is cognitively possible and impossible for individuals". As for Identities, Varadarajan (2004: 323) explains that for this approach "identity refers to the images of 'self' that actors construct and project, in and through their interactions with 'others'". Furthermore, Agius (2010: 53) asserts that identity "tells us who actors are, what their preferences and interests are, and how those preferences might inform their actions... Shared ideas construct identity and interests and are not given by nature".

In this way, constructivism has managed to differentiate itself from neorealist and neoliberal institutionalist approaches, "the former concentrating on the nature of conflict in international system and the latter's focus on the conditions that made cooperation possible" (Varadarajan 2004: 323). Constructivists have managed to put "into context the actions, beliefs, and interests of actors and understands that the world they inhabit has been created by them and impacts on them" (Agius 2010: 50). In this sense, it is important to analyze the perceptions, ideas and interests that have played a relevant role in the case of the Mexico-US relations.

Nevertheless, constructivist analysis varies considerably from other discursive or ideational approaches, such as Post-structuralism. Even though most constructivist works and Post-structuralism share the characteristics of rejecting positivist epistemology and methodology, as well as a commitment to social critique (Mutimer 2010: 97), for Post-structuralism "[t]he central claim was that the choice of different metaphors, euphemisms or analogies had fundamental consequences for how 'reality' was understood, and hence also for which policies should be adopted" (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 141).

As Marieke de Goede (2006: 4) explains, "Poststructuralism as a philosophical term developed to signify a break with structuralism as a linguistic theory that challenges the direct correspondence between language and the real world, and instead sees meaning as arising within the human system of language and signification." Therefore, according to post-structuralists "no materiality would ever be able to present itself outside of a discursive representation" (Buzan and Hansen: 142). This approach adopts "the concept of discourse rather than ideas" (*Ibid*: 37), differing in this way the ontological unit of analysis, and rejects "overarching grand narratives, and thus an acceptance that knowledge claims are always unstable and contingent" (Mutimer 2010: 97). In such a way, "the move from the study of ideology to the study of truth techniques[2], makes visible a sharp difference between poststructuralism and constructivist work" (de Goede 2006: 8).

Öjendal et al. (2001: 14) explain that constructivism nowadays "places emphasis both on material forces and on its tenet 'that international reality is a social construction driven by collective understandings, including norms, that emerge from social interaction'". Nevertheless, these authors also explain that in most of the constructivist analyses the strongest emphasis remains on the second aspect, for they claim that "understanding intersubjerctive structures allows us to trace the ways in which interests and identities change over time and new forms of cooperation and community can emerge" (*Loc. Cit.*).

Some other authors had indicated that not bringing material factors (including the economic) in the explanation of social phenomena can be problematic, "especially in the context of an expanding neoliberal world order that is constitutive of the identity of its basic units –the nation-states" (Varadarajan 2004: 321). On this regard, Varadarajan (*Ibid*: 320) argues that, by distancing themselves from a positivist epistemology and taking ideas as their ontological unit, constructivists undermine the importance of material forces in

[2] A term that de Goede (2006: 8) takes from the work of Foucault and that refers the politicization of technical knowledge, "the production of effective instruments for the formation, and accumulation of knowledge".

their analyses, since "in the process of emphasizing the social construction of identities and interests, constructivists have generally tended to ignore the important constitutive role of the global economy." This suggest, thus, the necessity of constructivist analyses to take into consideration the material forces influencing the ideas, practices and policies for any explanation of the latter. As this author (*Ibid*: 321) exemplifies, "one cannot make sense of national security policies without treating processes of neoliberalism as the inescapable ground for such practices".

Departing from this idea, this paper takes on a constructivist analysis of the process of North American "regional integration" since the implementation of NAFTA, using the "New Regionalism Approach" (NRA) and focusing on the processes and outcomes taking place in the US and especially in Mexico. Likewise, it analyzes the process of the social construction of narcotrafficking as a threat to national security in both countries and its inclusion in the bilateral agenda, using the tools provided by the Securitization theory and placing emphasis in the Mexican context and its consequences there. In this way, the objective is to shed some light on the links between these two processes, which will be explained in the next chapters. The next sections will further explain what the NRA and the Securitization approaches are.

2.2 New Regionalism Approach and the construction of regions

Regarding regional integration projects (such as NAFTA), it is important to note that social constructivists consider that "regions are not unitary or homogenous units" (Öjendal et al. 2001a: 14). On the contrary, from this perspective a region "is socially constructed and is analytically identifiable *post factum*; in other words, it defines itself" (Öjendal et al. 2001b: 252).

With this idea in mind, social constructivists developed the New Regionalism Approach as a way to analyze processes of regionalism. From this approach, "[t]he new regionalism is a heterogeneous, comprehensive, multidimensional phenomenon, which involves state, market and society actors and covers economic, cultural, political, security and environmental aspects" (Öjendal et al. 2001a: 4). The purpose of the NRA is "to move towards critical theory and a more comprehensive social science which accommodates state actors as well as market and civil society actors" (*Ibid*: 13), while taking into consideration that "geographical, historical, cultural and economic variables –

as well as patterns of conflict/security and other criteria- all create patterns of interaction and produce conceptions of 'regionnes'[3]" (Öjendal et al. 2001b: 252).

This differs from other analyses on regionalism. Ravenhill (2008b: 195) explains that "most of the theorizing in international relations on regionalism has concentrated on the European experience" which motivated the (neo)functionalist and intergovernmentalist analyses. The first of these "suggested how a regional grouping could generate a momentum of its own that would lead to a deepening of co-operation. The logic was that co-operation in one area of economic activity would produce pressures for co-operation in other areas as the costs of pursuing uncoordinated policies became increasingly evident to member states and private-sector actors, a process that neo-functionalists termed 'spillover'" (*Loc. Cit.*). In change, intergovernmentalists contend that "national states have primacy in the integration process… a strategy pursued by national states to strengthen their own positions. For writers in this tradition, to the extent that member states delegate authority to community institutions, such moves are 'calculated, rational and circumscribed'" (*Ibid*: 196).

However, as Fawn (2009: 7) explains, these works have "been seen as referring to the specific experience of initial West European integration, and a case that itself changed too fundamentally to provide wider lessons". Similarly, Kelly (2007: 203) contends that the neofunctionalist approach became too normative, for "regionalism was not simply an analytical approach, but a normative order-bringing project, that is, regionalization. Regional organizations were, along the EC [European Community] model, identified as the motor of such integration".

On the other hand, Kelly (*Ibid*: 198) also explains that traditional IR approaches "give regionalism scant attention. Neither Kenneth Walt'z (1979) founding work, Alexander Wendt's (1999) response, nor the mature work that appears in the neorealist-neoliberal debates (Baldwin 1993) mention it much". In addition, Fawn (2009: 31) points out that regarding the formation of a regional identity "both neorealism and neoliberalism give that aspect minimal attention". Moreover, this author (*Ibid*: 13) asserts that "A region exists when actors, including governmental, define and promulgate to others a specific identity".

[3] The term "regionness" according to Öjendal et al. (2001a: 15), refers to "the degree to which a particular region in various respects constitutes a coherent unit".

Thus, under the NRA, regionalism "can be seen as a political phenomenon, shaped by political actors (state and non-state) who may use regionalism for a variety of not necessarily compatible purposes" (Öjendal et al. 2001a: 15-16). Significantly, this constructivist perspective permits to integrate different actors (state, society and markets,) and variables (economic, political and security, for example) in the study of regions.

2.3 Securitization Approach and the construction of threats

Varadarajan (2004: 324) points out that in the case of security studies the constructivist analyses have "taken the form of a critique of the material ontology and empiricist methodology that has dominated the field". On this regard, Charret (2009: 17) explains that traditionalist perspectives usually declare "objectively" what "real threats" are, and focus on the military sector. More specifically:

> "Groups of scholars … treated the structure of the global economy as either making possible greater interdependence, and hence cooperation among nation-states, or ascribing certain structural positions ('core'/'periphery') that engender dependent relationships among nation-states. In both cases, the concept of state identity as dynamic, historically constructed structures of meanings that constitute both 'national security' and 'threats' gets overlooked" (Varadarajan 2004: 320).

In addition, traditionalist analyses in IR did not tend to address internal security issues to the states that could affect other states. "The fact that new differences and threats to societal security, such as drugs or migration are now on the table, indicates an expansion of previously state/military-centered security agendas to encompass issues that may be seen as somehow jeopardizing certain notions of society or culture –in particular national identity-" (Ackleson 2005: 169). Thus, constructivists argued for a broader analysis that includes the construction of ideas and identities when studying security, for they claim that "[t]he process through which threats are identified and given meaning is, for instance, better understood through an analysis of identity building and institutional transformation that does not lend itself to causality or quantification" (Buzan and Hasen 2009: 34).

In the international security studies, the Copenhagen School (CS) developed a constructivist approach to security, looking at it as a socially constructed concept where an existential threat depends "on a shared understanding of what constitutes a danger to security" (Emmers 2010: 140). From this interpretation, this School generated the concept of "securitization" as a way to rethinking security and "broadening the conception of security… providing a framework to analyze how an issue becomes securitized or desecuritized" (*Ibid*: 137).

An act of securitization, according to the CS, is when a securitizing actor "articulates an already politicized issue as an existential threat to a referent object… [and] asserts that it has to adopt extraordinary means that go beyond the ordinary norms of the political domain" (*Ibid*: 139). For this approach, the security act depends on successful speech acts "that persuade a relevant audience of the existential nature of the threat as well as the adoption by the securitizing actor of emergency powers to address the so-defined threat" (*Ibid*: 141). Thus, the securitization act "is facilitated by internal or linguistic factors and by external or contextual factors, the social capital of the speaker and the nature of the threat" (Charrett 2009: 13).

Although this approach is characterized by Buzan and Hansen (2009: 213) as "a discursive conception of security", it is different from a post-structuralist perspective. As these authors (*Ibid*: 143) explain, "Security politics, argued Poststructuralism, was fundamentally about the construction of a radically different, inferior and threatening Other, but also, since identity is always relational, about the Self'. In contrast, the approach developed by the Copenhagen School focuses "on the (causal) consequences of identities rather than on the discursive and political processes through which these identities are (unstably) constituted" (*Ibid*: 215).

Thus, this constructivist approach is useful to understand how drug trafficking has been socially constructed as a threat (by which actors, with what interests, the discourses and means used, and the referent object) in countries like the US and Mexico, the strategies adopted by the governments to fight it, as well as the relevance that this issue acquired in the bilateral agenda, as it offers analytical tools to analyze how, why and by whom a specific issue becomes "securitized".

Buzan and Hansen (*Ibid*: 214) explain that "securitizing actors are defined as 'actors who securitize an issue by declaring something –a referent object- existentially threatened"', and can be political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists and pressure groups. Meanwhile, referent objects are defined "as 'things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival"' (*Loc. Cit.*), and can include "the state (military security); national economies (economic security); collective identities (societal security); species, or habitats (environmental security)" (Buzan et. al., as cited in Emmers 2010: 137).

Therefore, the securitization approach comprises a two-stage analysis: the first one "concerns the portrayal of certain issues, persons or entities as existential threats to referent objects"; the second stage "is completed successfully only once the securitizing actor has succeeded in convincing a relevant audience (public opinion, politicians, military officers, or other elites) that a referent object is existentially threatened. Only then can extraordinary measures be imposed" (*Ibid*: 139).

According to Emmers (*Ibid*: 138-139), one advantage of the securitization approach is that it provides a spectrum to identify issues from non-politicized to securitized: "An issue is non-politicized when it is not a matter for state action and is not included in public debate. An issue becomes politicized when it is managed within the standard political system… Finally, an issue is plotted at the securitized end of the spectrum when it requires emergency actions beyond the state's standard political procedures".

Furthermore, as Emmers (*Ibid*: 140) argues, governments and political elites have a certain advantage in seeking to influence audiences and calling for the implementation of extraordinary measures, which helps to understand the reasons behind a securitizing act, since it can provide benefits "including a more efficient handling of complex problems, a mobilizing of popular support for policies in specific areas by calling them security relevant, the allocation of more resources, and so forth". Nevertheless, the audience still has the right, however, to reject the speech act.

Since one of the main purposes of this study is to analyze the way in which recent Mexican governments -especially Calderon's administration- have engaged with the securitization process of narcotrafficking, using the discursive means for achieving it and the military forces as the extraordinary measures to fight it, the state's power and the subsequent role of the military are emphasized over other important dynamics and actors, such as social movements, the role of other political forces, the self-image (identity) of narcotaffickers, etc. In this way, some critiques might state that the approach used in this study is state-centered and biased towards the power of this actor.

According to Charrett (2009: 16), the conceptualization of securitization in the securitization theory (ST) reproduces "subjectivities of fear and othering… and replicates the notion that state power and ordering are required to manage threats… CS utilizes a particular understanding of security which does not challenge the dominant or militarized view of security… ST thus feeds into the logic that immediate and undemocratic state action is the only method to manage security concerns". This is what this author calls the "normative dilemma" of securitization, which consists on "how one might engage with security without replicating dominant subjectivities; how might an analyst apply ST without reproducing or legitimizing the potentially harmful, neglectful or exclusionary securitization of a referent object: the negative securitization of a referent" (*Ibid*: 15).

However, other approaches could be used to study those other phenomena, such as the human security approach, in order elucidate those elements not studied here and, probably, combine them to complete the picture of such a complex phenomenon. The human security approach "challenges the state-centric approach to security by suggesting that people who are the victims of political violence, usually from state authorities, can be

as insecure as those threatened by conflict between states" (Kerr 2010: 123). Thus, this approach may shed more light about the consequences on individuals and societies that the drug on wars has brought.

Another critique of the constructivist approach, derived from a post-structuralist point of view, suggests that it does not commit to the analysis of the construction of identities. According to Buzan and Hansen (2009: 215), the reason for which the securitization approach takes a more fixed conceptualization of identity is "a legitimate analytical decision", since "one may separate analytically the process of identity constitution from the point where identities have become fortified to such an extent that they function as fixed in security discourse". Therefore, for practical purposes this paper does not engage on analyzing the process of constructing the identities of the nations, the political elites, or other actors that might be part of the process of the discursive construction of drug trafficking as a threat.

2.4 Operationalizing the theories

As previously stated, by using the analytical tools provided by the NRA and the securitization approach, this paper analyzes the process of "regional integration" generated by NAFTA to see the material and legal forces derived from this agreement that facilitated the process of securitization of drug trafficking in Mexico, interlinking these two phenomena.

The first part of this study uses the New Regionalism Approach, "which is designed to capture the heterogeneous and multidimensional processes of emerging regions and regionalization" (Öjendal et al. 2001a: 12) to analyze the characteristics of the process of regional integration occurring –if so- since the implementation of NAFTA, focusing on the economic and legal processes derived from (and overlapped in) this region, and placing emphasis, for explanatory purposes, on the cases of the Mexico and the US. This analysis develops a characterization of NAFTA, establishing the origins of this agreement, the actors involved in its implementation and the interests pursued by them; some economic aspects derived from this agreement; some of the socio-economic and political effects, and the legal spaces that NAFTA creates for "criminalizing" certain practices (such as migration and narcotrafficking). Subsequently, it poses the question if there is a real process of regional integration being developed between the countries that signed this agreement, taking into consideration aspects of identity as well as the economic, political and social trends happening in these countries.

Afterwards, making use of the securitization approach developed by the Copenhagen School, an analysis of the process of the construction of the discourse of narcotrafficking as a threat to national security particularly in Mexico is conducted, emphasizing the consequences for this country.

According to Emmers (2010: 149-150), this approach is built upon a series of questions and steps that are addressed in this study: 1) "it asks who the securitizing actor might be"; 2) "who or what is to be protected?"; 3) "from what kinds of threats are the referent objects to be protected?"; 4) "who decides on what is a security issue?", and 5) "what means are to be used to tackle the existential threat?"

In this way, the present analysis aims to explain the links between some of the socioeconomic and political processes that the implementation of NAFTA has created, and the security policies adopted by the US' and Mexican governments towards drug trafficking, examining how the successful construction of drug trafficking as a threat to national security in both countries has been impacted by the material and legal forces that this agreement has produced. As Cadena-Roa (2011: 142-43) states, "given the obviously close connections between halting North American integration and the Mexican security crisis, the new regionalism and constructivist perspectives are more adequate than other theories to understand the inter-related developments in the region in the last decade", considering that the NRA "takes into account unintended consequences from the global environment, informal and illicit dimensions, and a plurality of actors that push and pull the process in different directions" and that a constructivist approach can help to "understanding the way problems, policies and interests are constructed and redefined".

2.5 Methodology

In order to conduct the analyses described above, this paper is based on a qualitative research based on primary literature such as official reports of the different organisms involved in the fight against drug trafficking in Mexico and the US, as well as on a review of recent secondary literature about the study of the processes of regional integration in the NAFTA region and the development of the war on drugs in Mexico.

With this information, a deductive analysis of these two phenomena is conducted, applying the theoretical approaches described and discussed above. These constructivist approaches are, as suggested by Varadarajan (2004: 325), critical about the traditional analyses in IPE (functionalism and intergovernmentalism, for example) and security studies (such as neorealism and liberalism) which depart from a positivist epistemology and an empiricist methodology.

Therefore, rather than analyzing the efficiency of the policies of regionalism or security implemented by the governments, this paper engages more in the study of how and why these phenomena have been constructed and taken place the way they have (and not in other ways) in the specific cases

of Mexico and the US (with a specific focus on the former and excluding Canada from the analysis for practical reasons), to point out the politics behind those processes and the implications of these political decisions.

2.6 Limitations of the analysis

Regional integration projects and drug trafficking are very complex processes that involve different political, social and economic dynamics within and between the countries. Schmidt (2008: 322) notes that "[p]olitical reality is vast and complicated. No one methodological approach is able to explain it sufficiently". Although this study aims to expand the analysis of the securitization process of drug trafficking focusing on the case of Mexico by explaining how material and legal forces derived from the implementation of NAFTA influenced this process, there are other relevant phenomena that are part of the complexity of drug trafficking and the violence generated in Mexico, which this paper is not going to analyze in depth for reasons of methodology and space.

One example of this is the social and legal consequences of using the military as the pillar of the war on drugs in Mexico, creating possible canals for "naturalizing" the presence of the military on civic spaces. Although this is an important and interesting issue to analyze from the current Mexican context, it would require a whole new and different study to engage properly with such a broad topic.

Another important limitation of this analysis is that, due to the nature of the topic, there is no sufficient and reliable data available regarding the phenomenon of narcotrafficking in Mexico (including facts, figures, trends, numbers, names, dates, etc.) Moreover, trying to get it from primary sources, such as interviews with the own drug dealers or the authorities who fight them, or ethnographic studies, would imply much time and economic resources, as well as risks due to the intensity of the violence in the country. Therefore, this paper will rely on data already collected by other authors and the different media, which can portray an approximation to the real figures of the problem.

Chapter 3
Analyzing NAFTA: the facts, the legal framework and the construction of a region

"[A] process of progressive economic and social integration has taken place among the two countries which expresses itself in high levels of trade, financial and labor flows" (Mares and Vega-Canovas 2010: 1).

For many years there has been a marked division of opinions regarding NAFTA. Many authors celebrate some of the effects that the process of economic integration pursued by this agreement has generated for the economies of the three countries involved in it, while many others stress the social and political effects derived from it. This chapter develops a characterization and an analysis of the origins, processes, effects and consequences of NAFTA departing from a constructivist perspective.

This free trade agreement was negotiated and signed by Canada, the US and Mexico in 1993 and implemented in the three economies in 1994 (Clarkson 2011: 108). As Marchand (2001: 200) points out, this project of regionalization of the North American political economy "is mostly an elite-driven process". This author (*Ibid*: 202) describes that for the emergence of NAFTA "[k]ey economic and political actors in the US, Canada and Mexico found each other in this common project of 'neoliberal open regionalism' and ensured its adoption. Rather than the common perception that NAFTA mostly benefited US transnational firms, it should be stressed that Mexican political (and economic) elites as well as Canadian conservative elites also favored the creation of NAFTA".

According to Marchand (*Ibid*: 203), the actors involved in the negotiations, implementation and support for NAFTA have been: 1) transnationally oriented business elites from the three countries, who are part of regionally integrated production networks or global commodity chains and favor a limited regulatory framework to facilitate the trade and investment activities of their firms; and 2) political elites of the three countries who support a neoliberal agenda and have close ties with the industrial and financial capital.

For the particular case of Mexico, Icaza-Garza (2008: 187) describes the attitudes of the political elites during the negotiation and implementation of this agreement, explaining that "Carlos Salinas de Gortari's government in Mexico became a key promoter of open regionalism, believing that it was a non-discriminatory policy option. Later, under Ernesto Zedillo and Vicente Fox's administrations, open regionalism frameworks were endorsed due to their perceived compatibility with the multilateral goals of the World Trade

Organization (WTO)". On the other hand, regarding the US' perspective Miller (2008: 3) points out that "NAFTA, President Clinton and corporate leaders claimed, would create new, better-paying jobs for Americans and virtually eliminate illegal immigration across the Southwest Border by creating sustained economic prosperity in Mexico".

Furthermore, Icaza-Garza (2008: 187) characterizes the nature of this agreement asserting that "Mexican 'open' regionalism is better understood as an expression of the worldwide ascendancy of neo-liberal regional strategies that characterized Latin American public policy in the early 1990's". In this respect, Miller (2008: 2) explains that the "neo-liberal globalization characterizes economic reforms instituted in the 1980s, largely in response to the economic downturn and international debt crises of the previous decade. These reforms prioritized competitive free market capitalism, private ownership, 'free trade', export-led growth, strict controls on balance of payments and deficits, and drastic reduction of government spending, social welfare spending in particular".

What is more, the attitude of the Mexican government towards the agreement has not changed in the most recent administration. As Icaza-Garza (2008: 198) states, "Felipe Calderon Hinojosa from the right-wing National Action Party, has supported regionalism as it was promoted by his predecessor Vicente Fox. It advocates a broadening and deepening of market–driven regional strategy". But what are the results that NAFTA has brought to the region after seventeen years of its implementation, especially to the weakest country (Mexico)?

3.1 Optimistic perspectives of NAFTA's results

According to some perspectives coming from the field of International Political Economy[4], NAFTA has been a successful project in different fronts, especially in the economic and financial dimensions, celebrating thus the success of this project of neoliberal regionalism. Mares and Vega-Canovas (2010: 1-2), for example, argue that since the implementation of NAFTA there has been a progressive economic and social integration of the US and Mexico,

[4] According to Ravenhill (2008a: 19), International Political Economy (IPE) "is a field of enquiry, a subject matter whose central focus is the interrelationship between public and private power in the allocation of scarce resources… IPE seeks to answer the classic questions posed in Harold D. Lasswell's (1936) definition of politivs: who gets what, when, and how?"

and that the essence to any appropriate response to the challenges that the region is facing nowadays is "economic integration".

Vega-Canovas (2008: 55) states that as a result of NAFTA the US and Mexico "saw their trade and investment relations undergo exponential growth". This author emphasizes many effects that NAFTA has brought to the Mexican economy. For him, this agreement "has helped Mexico to become a successful exporter of manufacturing products and an attractive location for foreign direct investment, which, in turn, made important contributions to Mexico's financial recovery and economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s and helped to maintain economic stability in the first six years of the twenty-first century" (*Ibid*: 56). Moreover, he explains that NAFTA changed Mexico's pattern of trade, displacing the primacy of oil and primary goods on its exports by manufactured goods, which "has meant that manufacturing exports have become the engine of growth for domestic output. The evolution of manufacturing exports has also shown a trend toward the production of more complex goods in terms of design, production, and commercialization" (*Ibid*: 58). Regarding this last point, Mares and Vega-Canovas (2010: 8) remark that the export of advanced-technology-products (ATP) to the US grew 149% between 2002 and 2008.

In terms of foreign direct investment (FDI), Vega-Canovas (2008: 59) also shows that there was a considerable increase of the flows from the US to Mexico, since "[f]rom 1989 to 1994, the amount of FDI was on average US $4.6 billion per year, while from 1996 to 2000, it almost tripled to US $11.8 billion. FDI reached a peak of US $27.7 billion in 2001 and came down to an average of US $ 14.6 billion between 2002 and 2004".

Even one of the most important social effects that NAFTA has exacerbated, migration, has been assessed by these optimistic perspectives highlighting the economic effects on the Mexican economy, for "Mexicans who work in the US represent close to one-fifth of the Mexican work force and their remittances in 2008 were close to 21 billion dollars, representing the first source of foreign exchange surpassing oil and tourism" (Mares and Vega-Canovas 2010: 1).

All in all, the balance in economic terms that Vega-Canovas (2008: 57) presents, states that:

> "[The] two-way trade boomed at an average annual growth rate of 17 percent, tripling between 1993 and 2004, rising from US $85 billion to US $280 billion… Mexican products increased their share in the US import market from less than 7 percent in 1993 to 16.6 percent in 2004. Since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994, Mexican exports and imports have increased 291 percent and 148 percent respectively, with a balance favorable to Mexico".

Regarding the results for the US economy, "[m]ost US States have seen their exports to Mexico triple since NAFTA came into being. Additionally, about 45 percent of Mexico's exports are composed of goods previously imported from the United States" (Mares and Vega-Canovas 2010: 3).

However, these authors recognize that this growth and the interdependence of these two economies have not been symmetrical. As Mares and Vega-Canovas (2010: 1) show, "Mexico is currently the US' third largest trading partner, after Canada and China, accounting for approximately 8.4 percent of US exports and imports. The United States on the other hand is Mexico's dominant trading partner, accounting for two-thirds of both exports and imports". Therefore, the agreement has resulted on a high dependency of the Mexican economy to the one of its northern neighbor, while Mexico represents only a small destiny of the US economy. Moreover, as will be discussed next, "NAFTA has not meant that everyone in North America has prospered" (Vega-Canovas 2008: 56).

3.2 Critical assessments of NAFTA's results

Many authors that analyze NAFTA agree on the high social costs that the members of the agreements had faced after its implementation -such as inequality, migration and exacerbation of drug trafficking- especially in the case of Mexico for being the least developed partner. These more critical assessments on the agreement point out the necessity of taking into serious consideration the study of elements such as the way trade is taking place and goods are being produced, the distribution of gains and losses, and the socioeconomic and cultural aspects, among many others.

In economic terms, one of the effects for Mexico that has been noticed refers to the accumulation/extraction of wealth by foreign-business capital and the impoverishment of Mexican labor. "In 2001, almost 100 percent of the maquiladoras were handled by foreign private firms established in Mexico. However, the spillover effect of these operations on the broader economy was very limited because, among other reasons, only 'a narrow range of processing or assembly operations benefited the labor market'" (Icaza-Garza 2008: 188). In addition, in terms of wages, "the majority of Mexican workers have not seen an increase in real wages in over a decade" (Vega-Canovas2008: 60).

In terms of jobs, NAFTA did not create the new better-paying jobs or the sustained economic prosperity in Mexico expected by the optimist views of President Clinton and US corporate leaders claimed. Gallagher et al. (2009: 10-12) explain that:

> "Mexico showed employment gains in the *maquiladora* sector, adding about 660,000 jobs since NAFTA took effect, to total 1.2 million in 2006. Employment in Mexico's non-*maquiladora* manufacturing sector was lower in 2008 than it was in 1994 (except in micro-enterprises, which are mostly outside the formal sector of the economy). In August 2008, there were 1.24 million non*maquiladora* manufacturing jobs, 159,000 fewer than when NAFTA took effect… In agriculture, on the other hand, employment losses have offset most of the gains in the *maquiladora* sector and in formal sector services employment…. [T]otal employment is down from 8.1 million in the early 1990s to 5.8 million in the second quarter of 2008, a loss of more than 2.3 million jobs."

Politically, as Clarkson (2011: 129) explains, the implementation of NAFTA did not result in a more complex regional governance structure, with strong institutions that could help to distribute power and benefits among the three countries; on the contrary, "its institutions had been carefully designed to be too weak to construct mechanisms that would generate a self-sustaining dynamic at the continental level. Nor could they offset the power of the dominant member while augmenting that of the smaller ones". Therefore, contrary to the neofunctionalists or intergovernamentalists predictions, NAFTA did not create a spillover effect derived from the gains of economic cooperation to enhance other forms of political cooperation in the region and establish *ad hoc* strong institutions.

In social terms, one of the main effects generated by NAFTA is the massive flows of migrants going from Mexico to the US annually. "It is estimated that three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Mexicans enter the United States illegally" (Drache 2008a: 9). Significantly, according to Miller (2008: 5), "as of March 2005, a survey conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center estimated the undocumented population at 11.1 million, with roughly 6.3 million from Mexico".

The reasons behind this huge phenomenon are various, but among them Drache (2008a: 10) points out that "[t]he very success of NAFTA has driven more than two million Mexican peasants off their land". Regarding this point, Miller (2008: 4) explains that "hundreds of thousands of small farmers -unable to compete with American and Canadian grain imports that had, in the first year of NAFTA's implementation, captured one-third of the Mexican grain market- had their lands seized for debts and headed North to find work as migrant farmers in the United States."

Another enormous side effect of NAFTA is the proliferation of drug trafficking both from Mexico to the US and within Mexico. Many arguments can be built to explain this effect, but a good picture of this is elaborated by Cadena-Roa (2011: 151), which states among some reasons behind this issue that Mexico is the neighbor of the largest market for drugs in the world (the

US), it has huge levels of corruption, poverty (that affects more than 50% of the population), and the incapacity of Mexican economy to create the necessary jobs.

Furthermore, this author (*Ibid*: 152) explains that nowadays "there are some 150,000 people directly involved in the Mexican narcotics business and another 300,000 people involved in the production of marijuana and opium cultivation and processing". This situation was enhanced by the severe recent financial crisis and the deterioration of the security systems in major Mexican cities, which created optimal conditions for recruitment by criminal organizations, since drug cartels make profits estimated at $13-25 billion per year from drug trade, including the trafficking of cocaine and methamphetamines (*Loc. Cit.*).

In terms of national defense, Clarkson (2011: 121) explains that "since September 11, 2001, North American governance has reverted to earlier modes of government-to-government relations –and so an earlier form of regionalism- in which the continental hegemon[5] presses its neighboring governments to bend to its will, in this case to guarantee the security of the American homeland". The terrorist attacks of 9/11 represented a watershed in the US-Mexico relations, in which security became the main concern for the US and monopolized the bilateral agendas with its southern neighbor. "If economic borders have largely been dismantled under the banner of free trade, security borders have suddenly become more sensitive" (Vega-Canovas 2008: 62). Therefore, this could be seen as the critical juncture in which processes of securitization (of migrants and drug trafficking, for example) started gaining *momentum*, within a context marked by the push of further economic integration -which supposedly would derive in more prosperity for the countries, including more security-.

Consequently, the regionalization of the North American political economy "is creating new social, political, and economic spaces as well as new forms of exclusion and inclusion along the lines of class, race, gender and ethnicity" (Marchand 2001: 207). Issues such as drug trafficking and the massive flows of illegal migrants to the US can be seen as "the manifestations of an informal integration pushed by the process of globalization" (Mares and Vega-Canovas 2010: 5).

[5] According to Krahmann (2005: 534) "Hegemony can be defined as capabilities that are matched by influence over other states in the international system".

3.3 Legal frameworks in the NAFTA era

Besides the evidence that NAFTA has created the conditions for a boost of the phenomena described above, this agreement also provides the legal framework for criminalizing certain practices, such as drug trafficking and illegal migration.

As an effect of economic liberalization, Buscaglia and Long (1988: 66) explain that countries had to reform their legal frameworks towards more market-oriented ones, since:

> "[as]s a result of foreign and domestic pressures, countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico were forced to reconsider the role of many of their institutions, and started to adopt legal frameworks that more closely resembled the bodies of law prevailing in countries exporting information intensive goods and services. Trade-driven institutional harmonization became the new development strategy throughout Latin America".

On this regard, French (2005: 539) points out that "Free trade has the general effect of opening up borders and loosening restrictions on imports".

In addition, Raustiala (1999: 123) states that international trade laws encourage the implementation of structural adjustment programs (SAP), which push "countries to reform their domestic economies in line with neo-liberal economic precepts: to specialize, export, and use their comparative advantages to compete on the global market."

Nevertheless, Buscaglia and Roemer (2007: XXIV) notice that another effect of globalization is that the deep economic transformations that less developed countries have been experimenting "on the road to globalization, deregulation and privatization of their public assets, which at the same time imply a raise in the application of public law towards more complex relations between state and society, has generated a 'dark side' of globalization, which provides better opportunities to commit high-complexity crimes", drug trafficking being one of those complex crimes.

Gootenberg (2009: 18) explains that the commercialization of drugs was not always a banned and prosecuted practice; "[p]rior to the last century, drugs were not generally divided into illicit and licit classes, and as border-crossing commodities, they actually played vanguard economic and cultural roles in the construction of the modern world". Nevertheless, the switch that occurred in

the 20th Century changed the dynamics regarding this activity, "[o]nce certain drugs became restricted or banned, starting with a string of international opiates conventions since 1912, they fast escaped to scattered zones where production could be safely concealed and pursued. Commerce became smuggling and the newly defined crime of narcotics peddling became tainted in the West as an arch-evil crime" (*Ibid*: 22).

After the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Convention), international and national laws were built to punishing the participation in any criminal corporation dedicated to narcotrafficking, which includes producing, selling, buying or financing illicit drugs, as well as directing any of the other activities (Buscaglia et al. 2007: 89-93). At the hemispheric level, for example, the Inter-American Drug Control Abuse Commission, held by the Organization of American States, is a mechanism created for cooperation in anti-drugs actions (*Ibid*. 90). However, Raustiala (1999:103) explains that "international drug control law is primarily oriented toward its main task of suppressing illicit trafficking around supply reduction rather than demand reduction".

The emergence of security as the main issue in the bilateral agenda between Mexico and the US after 9/11, in a context in which borders should facilitate the exchange of (certain) goods and services for fostering economic integration, further enhanced the conditions for legalizing certain conducts and criminalizing others. Regarding the introduction of the Smart Borders - agreements aimed to secure the borders while keeping them open to legitimate trade (Vega-Canovas 2008: 55)- in 2002, Cooper et al. (2008: 4) point out that it "connotes a sharp divide between allowing the free flow of certain categories of people and heightening restrictions against others. Terrorists, of course, top the list of fears. But to the concern is added other 'bads': drugs, trafficking of people, and money laundering".

Afterwards, at a March 2005 meeting in Waco, Texas, the three governments proclaimed a "Security and Prosperity Partnership" (SSP) (Clarkson 2011: 124), which was a project pursing a further harmonization of security standards between NAFTA's members, especially against terrorism, while "getting rid of a set of policies and measures that stand in the way of more beneficial trade and investment flows" (Vega-Canovas 2008: 62).

However, Clarkson (2011: 128) explains that "[a]lthough the SPP reaffirmed the three federal government's rhetorical commitment to reconcile the demand for maximum border security with the integrated economy's need for minimum border-trade restrictions, DHS's [Department of Home Security] institutional autonomy within the Beltway resulted in ever more onerous border restrictions being imposed on travelers and trucks alike". Moreover, as Cadena-Roa (2011: 164) argues, since the SPP was projected, "it increasingly

became clear that security had replaced prosperity… the SPP is based on the principle that 'our prosperity is dependent on our security'… [T]he SPP had the purpose of armoring the shared economic space against security and terrorist threats".

This shows how in the case of the NAFTA region, there have been two parallel legal frameworks coexisting, one that aims to promote trade liberalization of certain "licit" goods, and one criminalizing those practices that do not fit into the first one, such as narcotrafficking. At the same time, there are inconsistences that exist in practice in pursuing more security at the borders and more trade liberalization at the same time. "As drug control law grows more ambitious, targeting not only drugs and traffickers but also the legal chemicals and products used in the manufacture of drugs, and the movements of capital produced by their sale, it may increasingly constrain legal trade and financial liberalization" (Raustiala 1999: 92).

The accuracy and effectiveness of punitive measures against drug trafficking are contended by authors like Gootemberg (2009: 20), who asserts that:

> "[G]iven the notorious price elasticity of demand for habit-forming products, once illegal to sell, drugs easily take care of the added 'risk premium' demanded by new smuggling operations… Once this illicitness cycle accelerated under chase-'em-down drug wars… the quantity of such illicit drugs produced skyrocketed and their prices plummeted, making them dramatically available for the masses".

Similarly, French (2005: 530) states that drug cartels had managed to "take advantage of NAFTA's borderless society to advance their goals." This author explains that drug traffickers create "legitimate" businesses, such as trucking, shipping, railway and storage companies that they can use for cunducting their activities (*Ibid*: 529). In this way, Mexican drug dealers have managed to co-opt the legality of certain products and practices for conducting the commerce of drugs. "Thus, Mexican drug cartels have emerged as sophisticated and diversified operations that operate in the shadows of business to supply the United States with illicit substances of all kinds" (*Ibid*: 530). He exemplifies his argument by showing that drug cartels benefit from low regulation of chemical precursors for drugs –which, for medical purposes, are included in the category of legal goods-, the improvement of transportation and infrastructure -which help trading licit and illicit goods-, more volumes of goods to sneak illicit substances, and less border inspections (*Ibid*: 533-36).

On the other hand, regarding the SAPs, Raustiala (1999: 124) explains that "by requiring sweeping restructuring of economies and the substantial rollback of the state in the domestic economy, structural adjustment can spur drug production because drug production is very profitable and provides a steady source of jobs for dislocated workers and peasants". Thus, as French (2005:

539) asserts, "free trade agreements impede sovereign state's abilities to prevent illegal drugs from crossing their borders while simultaneously making it easy to produce and import the illicit substances".

Another effect of the punitive legal framework against drugs that authors have usually pointed out refers to corruption. Regarding this, Gootemberg (2009: 30) claims that "corruption, fanned by American drug and trade policies, became so institutional in Mexico as to preclude any genuine U.S. efforts to use the imploding Mexican state to fight drugs". Buscaglia et al. (2007: 88) explain that the massive "flows of money (from clean or unclean origins) bias the nature and scope of the legal frameworks that the Congress enacts and distorts the public policies in general, representing therefore a 'state's potential capture' that threatens national security and social development in Mexico". Therefore, the illegalization and prosecution of drugs production and commercialization, far away from halting these practices, have brought negative political and social consequences, such as the vast corruption of Mexican authorities. "Greater effectiveness in drug control leads to greater incentives on the part of traffickers to invest in the corruption and manipulation of the drug control agents" (Raustiala 1999: 101).

Thus, the way in which drugs have been framed and addressed by the Mexican and the US' governments has had huge political, social and economic effects. As Gootember (*Ibid*: 26) explains, "[t]he core dynamic functions under an institutional denial: that the harder we ban them… the more lucrative they become, resulting in evermore extended and socially injurious drug booms". NAFTA generates the materiality through the liberalization of the economies that influences this legal framework, legitimizing specific transactions but not others. Nevertheless, the criminalization of drugs has created a vicious cycle in which the prosecution of such profitable and complex practices creates the need for more "international bureaucracies (from the DEA to Interpol) devoted the day-to-day dirty work of policing and fighting flows" (*Ibid*: 14), with the violent consequences that this has generated in Mexico.

3.4 NAFTA: A region?

Öjental et al. (2001a: 4-5) describe the characteristic interests of the states in the new wave of regionalism:

> "The contemporary wave of regionalism cannot be understood as a distinct alternative to the national interest and nationalism, but is often better explained as an instrument to supplement, enhance or protect the role of the state and the power of the government in an interdependent world. The states today experience a lack of capacity to handle global challenges to national interests, and increasingly respond by 'pooling sovereignty'. At the same time they give up sovereignty and may ulti-

mately end up as semi-independent parts of larger political communities".

In the case of North America, as mentioned before, political and economic actors in the three countries pushed together to negotiate and implement NAFTA, a project of neoliberal open regionalism, showing that "there was a clear 'coincidence of interests' between political and economic elites, both within the region as a whole as well as within the respective countries" (Marchand 2001: 204).

However, after almost two decades of its implementation, many authors argue that the attempt to create "an integrated entity that is more than the sum of its Mexican, Canadian and American parts had already failed –along with any prospect of what might pass as continental governance- well before the financial crisis of 2007-09 had struck, further disintegrating the continent into its component states" (Clarkson 2011: 108).

As Marchand (2001: 207-209) states, a revealing fact is that, so far, there is no regional identity created between the members of the agreement, except for, probably, a common aspiration towards cosmopolitanism in the big urban areas, because NAFTA relies on an elite-led regionalism project based on neoliberal principles. As the study conducted by CIDE (Center for Economics Research and Teaching) in 2010 shows, "the great majority [of Mexicans] identify primarily as *Latin American* (51%)… [However] Mexicans are far less likely to describe themselves as *North American* or *Central American* (7% in each case), showing far less sympathy for those geographic entities closer to home" (Crow et al. 2001: 26).

Moreover, social movements have taken advantage of the spaces created by NAFTA for resisting it. A clear example is that some opposition groups "have formulated an alternative ethics-based regional identity around notions of social and environmental sustainability and social justice" (Marchand 2001: 209). Thus, even when NAFTA might have generated a growth of more regionalized economic elites "citizen attitudes in the three countries have remained measurably resistant to developing a continental consciousness" (Clarkson 2011: 134).

In economic terms, although some authors think about NAFTA as a success for certain economic results in the countries (such as Mares and Vega-Canovas 2010), authors like Clarkson (2011: 121) contend these assumptions by showing how currently the economic trend within the region is more centrifugal and not centripetal, since the countries (especially the US) are paying more attention to the global arena (mainly to cheaper-labor countries, like China) than to their NAFTA partners, for which he argues that "the economic basis for a consolidation of North American regionalism is disappearing".

Politically, there are no regional institutions of significance developed to regulate effectively the economic space created by NAFTA (*Ibid*: 133). In many issues, the US continues to set up the agenda according to its national priorities and principles. A clear example is the case of security, where the US effort to fortify its homeland security through regional projects, such as the SPP, "remains US-dominated and unbalanced" (*Ibid*: 128), and despites the efforts of the countries –trilaterally or bilaterally- to tackle down issues like terrorism, migration and drug trafficking, these efforts have not resulted in more security for the region as the Mexican security crisis demonstrates it.

Mares and Vega-Canovas (2010: 5) argue that some of the challenges derived from NAFTA in the US-Mexico relationships involve "the dramatic reach of the economic globalization process, failed efforts to integrate the Western Hemisphere as well as the limits of NAFTA integration, and the need to incorporate new social forces as a result of the beginning of democratization in Mexico and its further development in the U.S."

Chapter 4
Securitizing drug trafficking: the construction of a threat

As mentioned before, this paper will make use of the analytical tools provided by the securitization approach to analyze the discursive construction of narcotrafficking as a threat and the consequent measures adopted by Mexican governments to fight it. According to this approach an act of securitization is when a securitizing actor articulates an issue as an existential threat to a referent object, and asserts that it has to adopt extraordinary means to combat it, persuading a relevant audience of the existential nature of the threat and the adoption of those emergency powers to address the threat.

4.1 Historical evolution of the securitization of drug trafficking in Mexico

In the analysis of the Mexican case, it is important to mention that since the beginning of the 20th Century the US adopted a strategy towards drug trafficking which made illegal the consumption and production of drugs. The approval in 1914 of the *Harrison Narcotic Act* by the US, which prohibited opium, opiates and cocaine, caused that "the illicit traffic of these substances from and through Mexico became a permanent activity of people willing to supply the demand of the illegal market" (Astorga 2003: 353).

This decision originated the legal framework with which both countries had to build up their strategies for fighting this problem and the bases for the further criminalization of the issue. Cadena-Roa (2011: 141) points out that the criminalization of drug production and trafficking "derives from the way they are defined by law. When states forbid the production and trade of given products and services, but there remains a strong demand willing to pay the price for these goods, then illegal markets emerge". Similarly, Gootemberg (2009: 13) notes on this regard that "'drugs' –which are actually tricky to define –are psychoactive substances and commodities that, for a variety of reasons since 1900, have been construed as health or societal dangers by modern states, medical authorities, and regulatory cultures and are now globally prohibited in

production, use, and sale".[6] For its geographic position and for being a fertile soil for growing forbidden crops, "Mexico could not escape the economic logic imposed by the conformation of an illicit market whose main consumers were out of its territory, at the other side of the northern border" (Astorga 2003: 14).

In the first decades, this activity was typically fought with police and intelligence means, while the participation of military forces in the counter-drugs activities in Mexico started in 1938, "when the military of the 4th Military Zone helped to destroy opium crops in Sonora, with the consultancy of agent Scharff, from the US Department of the Treasury" (*Ibid*: 57). Since 1947, the responsibility to lead this fight was delegated to the Office of the Attorney General (PGR[7]), and the military were legally just facilitators of the PGR's activities, helping only in seizures and eradication tasks (*Loc. Cit.*).

In the 1950s, the US anti-drugs authorities stated that "in order to have substantive results, the strategy consists on implementing a campaign for getting rid of every known trafficker as soon as possible and attacking immediately the new comers. This task was an obligation of the Mexican government..." (*Ibid*: 322). In 1962, a document from the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) stated that the situation of drug trafficking in Mexico would not improve "unless Mexican authorities recognized their responsibilities. It was recommended to put emphasis in changing the attitude towards the southern neighbor until reaching a point in which all levels of the Executive and Judicial powers perceived drug trafficking as something 'abominable and a source of national tragedy'" (*Ibid*: 338).

The scheme against production continued during the 1970s, a decade during which "there was an impressive reduction in the volumes of marijuana and heroin produced in Mexico, which made many think that drugs were not going to be a significant domestic or international problem for Mexico" (Chabat 2006: 6). Most importantly, before the 1980s, drug trafficking was not perceived as an issue that threatened the national security of a country, and it did not have a higher priority in political terms. (Astorga 2007: 11)

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[6] Also, Gootemberg (2009: 33) explains that there is a misuse and confusion in terminology regarding drugs and narcotics, since "As dangerous drugs became thus defined and categorized early in the century, they emerged as undifferentiated 'narcotics' –the word exudes a deadening menace- a label that misrepresents both the bodily effects and specific perils of most illicit substances".

[7] *Procuraduría General de la República*, in Spanish.

However, there was a modification of the governmental strategies during 1980s, when "the successful campaign against drugs began to collapse and Mexico recovered the place it had in the 1970s in terms of drug production" (Chabat 2006: 6). In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed a document called *National Security Decision Directive 221*, where he declared "by the first time that drug trafficking was a national security threat for the United States, [and] he authorized the participation of the Department of Defense in a large number of antidrug activities... Immediately, the Mexican government 'discovers' that Reagan's thesis is also valid for its case and by decision of president Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado integrates it in its national security strategy" (Astorga 2007: 11-12).

According to Astorga (*Ibid*: 16), the Reagan thesis caused three effects on the strategies towards drug-trafficking:

> "First, it seems to generalize the idea that what is valid for the United States is also for the rest of the world under its influence. Second, the dominant discourse conceives the emergence of trafficking and drug traffickers as an activity and as agents necessarily alienated from the structures of political power everywhere and at all times… Third, the judicial and police vision… is reinforced nowadays with the direct, open and legitimate participation of the military in leading the operations for fighting drug trafficking."

Also in 1986 the US initiated the annual certification's process, "aimed to punish those countries which, in the eyes of Washington, did not collaborate sufficiently in the fight against drugs" (Chabat 2006: 7). This punishment was exerted through sanctions in economic and military aid, loss of trade preferences and votes against in multilateral lending institutions (Cadena-Roa 2011: 148). Since this process started, Mexican governments took all the measures to obtain the US' approval on Mexico's anti-drugs programs, although these certifications indicators' "measured the will to fight drugs, not the effectiveness" (Chabat 2010: 3).

Therefore, since the mid-1980s, drug trafficking started to become a major political problem in Mexico, both domestically and internationally, and a closer cooperation between the US and Mexico was fostered in order to fight this problem. Moreover, the first step towards portraying narcotrafficking as a threat to national security was taken by the US under Reagan's administration, with a concern about drug consumption in that country and the objective "to intervene more strongly and decisively in other countries' processes of designing and implementing drug policies". (Astorga 2007: 12). Due to the tensions in the bilateral relations derived from the scandals of corruption after the assassination in 1985 of the Drug Trafficking Enforcement (DEA) agent, Enrique Camarena Salazar, and a Mexican Pilot, Alfredo Zavala Avelar (Cadena-Roa 2011: 147), and the undeniable power with which the US executed its anti-drugs policies (imposing the annual national certifications to

other countries, for example), de la Madrid's administrations ended up adopting the US approach and policies for fighting this problem. Nevertheless, the military forces were still used only for eradication campaigns (*Ibid*: 160) and not as the extraordinary means to fight the threat.

4.2 Analysis of the conjunction of the NAFTA era and the securitization of drug trafficking in Mexico

In the 1990s, Salinas' (1988-1994) counter-drugs strategies and his collaboration with the US were aimed to push further the economic bilateral agenda he was pursuing, named NAFTA. In 1992, a memorandum from the Defense Intelligence Agency Joint Staff in Washington linked the approval of NAFTA to Mexico's counter-drugs policies, stating that NAFTA's pending approval would probably continue to influence president Salinas' policy decisions on drug issues *vis-à-vis* the US (Chabat 2006: 9). Meanwhile, "Salinas' administration decided to make reforms in the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking due in part to the pressures associated with the commercial opening and the negotiation of NAFTA" (*Loc. Cit.*).

Nevertheless, according to Astorga (2007: 21-22), Salinas did not involve the military in the fight against drug trafficking under the argument that he did not consider necessary "to expose the military to the same channels of corruption that were favored and seized by the commanding officers of the PJF [Federal Judiciary Police]… Salinas thought that the government he was leading was able to control the phenomenon without using extreme measures, or that the phenomenon was not as bad in terms of governability as the rhetoric of national security would point out."

On the contrary, President Zedillo (1994-2000) opted for an increasing intervention of the military forces claiming reasons of "national security" (*Ibid*: 22). In addition, Zedillo increased the collaboration with the US on this issue. He "granted US vessels and planes access to Mexican airports and ports... Also, during the Zedillo administration, the US government collaborated closely with the Mexican police forces in training and selecting the members of the Mexican new anti-drugs unit." (Chabat 2006: 10-11). In parallel, during Zedillo's mandate Mexico and the US had a stronger economic collaboration, especially after the first year of the implementation of NAFTA and the bailout that Mexico received from the US to overcoming the huge financial crisis of 1994-1995.

Vicente Fox (2000-2006) kept the tendency of using a stronger military component for fighting drug trafficking. This happened especially, after a meeting on August 2000 with Barry McCaffey, the anti-drugs-tsar in the US, in which the latter pointed out the necessity of using the Mexican military in

fighting drug trafficking, which "showed the limits to the anti-drugs politics of the Mexican government. The militarization policy… similar to the strategy supported by the US government in other Latin American countries, won the game" (Astorga 2007: 63). Hence, the US government's pressure made Fox to "tip the scales towards the military forces, for which they had the faculties to intervene in all aspects of the antidrug fight. It was the first time that a major general was designated as the head of the PGR. Fox's administration evoked as well 'national security' reasons" (*Ibid*: 22). Indeed, Adolfo Aguilar Zinzer, Fox's Presidential Advisor on National Security, affirmed that "there was no bigger risk to national sovereignty than drug trafficking" (*Ibid*: 30). Remarkably, during Fox's administration the levels of drug-related violence increased in a significant way, from 1,080 deaths in 2001 to 2,100 in 2006 (Chabat 2010: 5).

The terrorist attacks against the US on September 11, 2001, had huge consequences on the bilateral agenda on security between Mexico and the US. It was after these attacks and the subsequent preoccupation of Bush's government about security issues that the SPP came into live in 2005, which - as explained- aimed to harmonize security standards between NAFTA's members while pursuing policies to incentive more trade and investment flows.

According to Schiavon and Velazquez (2005: 15), under this project "the main interest of Bush's administration was centered on the national security agenda, and other topics, such as trade, investment, environment, migration and narcotrafficking, were put on second place and/or linked to the issue of security. In short, the main effect of 9/11 on the Mexico-US relations was the securitization of the bilateral agenda from the US perspective". This time, the threat of drug trafficking was deepened by combining it with terrorism; "[a] new discourse was rebuilt with characters of an international 'nacroterrorist' species interested on attacking the US and disabling the democratic countries" (Astorga 2007: 23). On the other hand, the SPP represented for Mexico a trade-off. "First, Mexico would comply fully with U.S. demands on security matters. Once it gained access to the U.S. policy loop, it would negotiate the regulatory corollaries that applied to trade… [For example] Mexican products as avocados would no longer be vulnerable to border stoppages arbitrarily declared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration" (Clarkson 2011: 125).

Therefore, the SPP meant the convergence of NAFTA's regional integration project with processes of securitization of threats, such as terrorism or narcoterrorism, due to the primacy that security matters gained in the bilateral agenda especially pushed by the US. As Cadena-Roa (2011: 166-167) suggests, "since the SPP was introduced, NAFTA expanded its reach to North American security without public or even legislative debate". This agreement was meant to be a regional policy where the process of constructing the region under the economic component of "prosperity" and the construction of common threats would combine. Nevertheless, Clarkson (2011: 128) explains that by 2009 "vehement opposition to the SPP from right-wing nationalists in

the United States and left-wing nationalists in Canada and Mexico combined to push the SPP into oblivion".

Process of securitization under Calderon (the securitizing actor)

On December 1st 2006, President Calderon initiated his mandate after some very controversial elections, where he won by less than 0.5 percent of the votes (Schiavon and Velazquez 2009: 12). Ten days later, he intensified more than ever the involvement of the military in the counter-drugs activities.

The discourse: referent object and threat

On December the 11th, the Secretaries of Interior, Defense, Navy and Public Security, along with the Attorney General, joined together before the national media to announce the "Joint Michoacan Operation", executed by the Cabinet of Security (integrated by the mentioned authorities) following orders of President Calderon (*Presidencia de la República* 2006b). In this operation, under the argument of national security as well, more than 5,000 troops were deployed in the Mexican state of Michoacan, having the mission of eradicating illicit crops, establishing checkpoints on highways and secondary roads to control drug trafficking, searching and apprehending suspects, as well as finding and dismantling drugs' selling spots (*Loc. Cit.*).

A day later, on December 12th, at a press conference Calderon stated:

> "…this year in the first days of [my] Government I presented, for consideration of the Deputies' Chamber, a budget that considers an increase of almost 60 percent for the Secretariat of Public Security's tasks and almost 20 percent for the national Armed Forces. All of them responsible of safeguarding the physical integrity and the patrimony of Mexican people, the internal security and the national security. This involves an effort with no precedents. An effort that allows us to carry out operations, as the one initiated yesterday in an entity close to the State of Mexico, Michoacan, devastated by the organized crime. An operation that has the goal of fully reinstating the control of the governmental authority on that territory and over its population, combating the trafficking of narcotics, destroying drugs' crops in that state and, in one word, recovering normality and tranquility for the Mexicans who live in that state" (*Presidencia de la República* 2006c).

With these discourses and actions in which Calderon stated the necessity to protect "the physical integrity and the patrimony of Mexican people, the internal security and the national security", from "the trafficking of narcotics", he started "what has become a highly contested and controversial War on

Drugs. As a result Mexico has witnessed an escalation of violence that makes the Mexican state to appear weak and the whole country increasingly unstable, insecure and violent" (Cadena-Roa 2011: 140). This military fight against drug cartels and drug traffickers in general would last for the rest of his mandate.

The extraordinary measures

Mexican drug dealers nowadays export different types of drugs to the US. "Due to increased demand from the United States and the closing of production sites and transit roads elsewhere, Mexico became the best available alternative for the production, storage, transportation and introduction of drugs to the United States market" (Cadena-Roa 2011: 147). Almost 30 percent of the heroin (made from opium produced in Mexico) imported into the US comes from Mexico (French 2005: 530). In addition, "negotiations between Colombian and Mexican drug cartels over transport and routes fell under the control of Mexican organized crime, which… finally, pressured the Colombian cartels into sharing 50 percent of the value of the shipment. By this time, between 50-70 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States was transported through Mexico" (Buscaglia and Gonzalez-Ruiz 2006: 275).

Regarding the demand of drugs, Aguilar-Valenzuela (2009) explains that "according to the statistics of the US authorities, demand in this country has remained stable in the last 40 years, varying only in its composition: more marijuana in the 1960s and 1970s; more cocaine (and crack) from 1985 and up to the end of that Century; more methamphetamines since then and up to now when its consumption started to go down", while the Mexican health authorities report that only 0.4 percent of Mexican population is addicted to some kind of drug and its consumption has remained low throughout the time. Therefore, the US is still the main market of the drugs produced in and transported though Mexican territory, creating, as already pointed out, estimated profits of $13-25 billion per year for drug cartels.

Cadena-Roa (2011: 159) describes that there are seven major cartels working in Mexico, and "since there is no real competition in terms of drug quality and prices, cartels fight each other for control of territory and access to transportation routes and markets" (*Ibid*: 155). Moreover, Astorga (2007: 51-52) describes that there is no organization or coalition in the Mexican drugs' industry that predominates "so that it could impose clear rules of the game… There is a fight for hegemony. There are no big organizations which tentacles embrace even the last street-drug-dealer; and therefore they lack the capacity to control the violence beyond certain limits and strategic interests in the competition against players at the same level".

Thus, there is a scenario of very powerful drug cartels fighting against each other and against the government, which deployed the military to halt their activities. Calderon's administration used the military's good reputation among Mexican society and the US to legitimize the use of the military mechanisms to fight drug traffickers, with the understanding that it would be a temporary and extraordinary measure.

A convinced audience:

As Clarkson illustrates (2011: 127), from the perspective of the US, "[s]ending [Mexico] in its army to battle the cartels did not produce victory in Ciudad Juarez, but it did gain the Americans' respect and helped produce a more cooperative binational approach to tackling a desperate situation". In addition, according to the 2010 PEW Research Project, 80% of Mexican population supported the use of the Army to fight drug trafficking.

The interests

Schiavon and Velazquez (2009: 12) state that:

> "Felipe Calderon became president in December 2006 in very difficult conditions, which impacted his foreign policy… This caused that the president's legitimacy was questioned when starting his mandate by approximately a third of the population, which considered that the elections were not clean. Additionally, after the presidential election, Mexican society was politically polarized as the result of the little difference in the elections' outcomes. Second, president Calderon inherited from the last administration a generalized violence, produced by the fight between the drug cartels to control the markets and the routes, with an increasing number of deaths between the cartels, policemen and civilians. In this context, the new president decided to take severe actions with a double objective: to increase his legitimacy and the security in the country."

In this way, a reason for Calderon's choice to fight drug trafficking in the way he did, relies on the pursuit of internal legitimacy after the highly controversial elections' results of 2006.

Additionally, Calderon's administration has intensified international collaboration with the US, particularly since 2007 when he "proposed to the Bush Administration the establishment of the so-called Merida Initiative, that contemplated a package of 1.4 billion US dollars during a three-year period in order to improve the fight against drug trafficking" (Chabat 2010: 8). As Schiavon and Velazquez (2009: 19) discuss when explaining the beginning of

this Initiative, "coincidences in interests and perceptions between the United States and Mexico about security, drug-trafficking and organized crime fighting allowed creating a novel and important strategy for cooperation". These authors point out that drug trafficking brings out elements of complex interdependency in the relations between this countries, which made the initiative possible, since it is "a problem originated and escalated because of the demand of drugs existing in the United States and the supply that Mexico maintains. That is why the United States and Mexico need to cooperate mutually to face this common problem" (*Loc. Cit.*).

Clarkson (2011: 126) argues that this Initiative "signaled a historic sea change. It represented Washington's acceptance that security in its border states was endangered by the insecurity generated on the other side of the border by the Mexican drug cartels' battles for turf. Simultaneously the Mexican government recognized it could not impose its control over the cartels without massive U.S. financial and technological assistance".

It is important to note that this Initiative rather than being a regional project involving the three countries, it took place in a bilateral way, which could be seen as a sign of the weakening of the regional integration project pursued by NAFTA. Nevertheless, as Cadena-Roa (2011: 166-67) asserts, this project, as the SPP, has been US-dominated and has the purpose of expanding the US domination on the political and security realms over Mexico while already having much cooperation and influence over Canada, for which he states that it "is arguably the SPP reloaded, in a bilateral format". Therefore, it can be said that the economic interests and dynamics in the region still persist (moreover the illegal ones), although with a different way to pursue security policies, which nevertheless keep criminalizing the commercialization of drugs.

In terms of the bilateral relations, this cooperation is convenient for the US, making Mexico more dependent on the US in terms of policies and security, and for Mexico in order to gain international legitimacy and enhance its relations with the northern neighbor. Nevertheless, drugs' commercialization has not been halted and the US is still the primary source of weapons for Mexican organized crime, since according to "the State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report for 2009, 95% of the drug related killings were carried out with U.S.-purchased or stolen firearms (guns are illegal in Mexico)" (Mares and Vega-Canovas 2010: 13).

In this way, Calderon's administration (the securitizing actor), with a large support of the US governments (both Bush's and Obama's) managed to successfully construct a securitization act. By using different speeches stating how the actors and activities related to drug trafficking represent a threat to the Mexican national security, the families' integrity and Mexican institutions and values (the referent objects), his government succeeded at convincing its

relevant audience (the Mexican society that support the use of the military in the war on drugs, the political elites, the military officers and the US governments) that those referent objects are existentially threatened. Moreover, it was gained support to impose the subsequent military strategies as the extraordinary measures to fight the threat. This, for purposes of internal legitimation after emerging from very questioned elections, and for international support -especially from the US- to also get recognition and foster the collaboration with the US to fight this war.

This process of securitization took place in the context of regional integration and economic liberalization fostered by NAFTA, in which "traffickers enjoy an extra benefit in that 'higher trade volume results in more places to hide drugs and, ceteris paribus, a lower probability of interdiction and seizure'" (French 2005: 535). This neoliberal economic process facilitates the commercialization of drugs, as discussed before, and undermines the authorities' efforts to prevent drugs from crossing borders, since inspections are more costly and seen as dumping, and for the corruption involved in them (Raustiala 1999: 120-21). As Gootemberg (2009: 15) puts it, "Drug trades are both the underside and product of trade liberalization: pressures for enhanced commerce and for shrinking states collide with the dictates of tighter control over unwanted trades. Nowhere is this tension clearer that with NAFTA and intensified smuggling and militarization along the United States-Mexico border during the 1990s".

In addition, the legal framework existing in NAFTA, which generates the materiality through the liberalization of the economies for legitimizing specific transactions while criminalizing others -as narcotrafficking-, has created a vicious cycle. Drug trafficking has been benefited by the opening of borders, the prosecution of drug traffickers has made their activities more complex and profitable and –thus- there has been a perceived need to implement more radical mechanisms to tackle these activities, with the drastic violent consequences occurring in Mexico nowadays.

Moreover, as Raustiala (1999: 97) asserts, "[p]olitically, drug control has great marquee value for political leaders and continues to receive high-profile support". This can be seen with the analysis of the process of securitization of drug trafficking fostered by Calderon's government, which (initially) gained much support of Mexican population, the political class and the international (specifically the US) community. Significantly as proposed by Emmers (2010: 142), "an act of securitization can lead to the further legitimization of the armed forces in politics as well as to the curbing of civil liberties in the name of security in well-established democratic societies", a phenomenon that has already taken place in Mexico.

The strategies implemented by the US and Mexican governments for dealing with this problem seem to be, at least, insufficient -if not mistaken-, since "the way the problem is defined (prohibition should be enforced) and how the policies should be implemented (on the supply side), are at the base of the current Mexican security crises" (Cadena-Roa 2011: 142). This has derived in the escalation of violence in Mexico that has resulted in some 35,000 casualties in less than five years (González, 2011) and the control of larger zones of Mexican territory by drug cartels; the intrusion of the military apparatus in the civilian state; a harsher fight by drug cartels with more sophisticated weapons, better strategies, more violent means and more mechanisms to corrupt and infiltrate the Mexican state; and, as Cadena-Roa (2011: 160) explains, more space for violations of human rights and immunity by the military, due to the fact that they were judge by a special military legislation instead of a civic one.

Nevertheless, as Astorga (2007: 31) states, with the rhetoric in which drug traffickers are seen as a threat to national security, national institutions and public life, "if the authorities loose [the war], it is the traffickers' fault for surpassing them with a superhuman power; and if they win, even little battles, their modern quixotic image grows, which can be capitalized politically, for they have fought an enemy previously defined as superior". Hence, the reproduction of this threat and the fight against it had important legitimizing effects both internally and internationally, even when the results of the fight were adverse.

As Mares and Vega-Canovas (2010: 12) state:

> "The onslaught of violence by Mexican criminal organizations is not just a result of the drug trade. The development of vast new means of laundering money in the global financial networks and the ready availability of high powered weaponry in a global market that includes the US has made drug gangs that existed for decades into newly powerful threats to public safety and order. Human trafficking and kidnapping have become extremely lucrative enterprises as well. The criminal organizations have extremely effective intelligence gathering, brutal intimidation tactics, and deep pockets for bribery."

In addition to that, it is important to have in mind that, in Cadena-Roa's (2011: 143) words: "at the base of the Mexican security crisis lies the decision to criminalize the production and consumption of drugs, and to enforce prohibitionist laws mainly on the supply side. These definitions are clearly a matter of social construction because they could be redefined otherwise." In this way, it is clear that after the US developed its prohibitionist strategy towards drugs, Mexico became "a laboratory of political and police strategies aimed to control that supply" (Astorga 2003: 14). From there on, the

international relations between both countries were deeply transformed, getting more interconnected with the phenomenon of drugs.

Nevertheless, Mexican governments have dealt with drug trafficking in different ways and with different motivations. Presidents from the PRI, in general, had a policy of certain tolerance towards drug dealers, while collaborating superficially with the US in campaigns of seizure and eradication of drugs. However, from the mid-1980s this collaboration started to be more intense, since the US declared drug trafficking a threat to national security (followed by the Mexican government). Salinas wanted to collaborate as much as possible with the US in order to foster the implementation of NAFTA, while he did not want to show the size of the problem either domestically or internationally by deploying the army. Fox opted for a tougher strategy by deploying more military forces and collaborating closer with the US, since the bilateral agenda was kept as secondary by the latter after the terrorist attacks of 2001.

Yet, Calderon was the president that radicalized the strategy by making the military the cornerstone of the war on drugs, as a means to gain the national and international legitimation and recognition that his presidency needed. Thus, the recent Mexican presidents have used a securitization approach of drug trafficking for pursuing some other own interests.

As Cadena-Roa (2011: 141) argues, "[t]his current crisis in Mexico has not emerged out of thin air, as narcotic, security and even terrorist threats are three widely recognized negative and unintended consequences of globalization". This phenomenon has strong material and legal forces behind it which nourish it constantly. With the boost of trade and finance generated by the economic integration fostered with NAFTA, not only legal but also illegal goods and businesses were benefited by the liberalization of the economies. "There is an enormous potential supply of people willing to work for the drug cartels which offer rapid profits, a sense of power they can exert personally at gunpoint, and a sense of belonging to an organization that gives them significant responsibilities" (*Ibid*: 152).

These factors combined with the prohibitionist approach towards narcotics, the criminalization of drug-commerce, its conceptualization as a major threat by both countries, and the normative frameworks enforced by NAFTA, set up the environment for an escalation of illegal activities, more competition between illegal sectors, tougher strategies by the governments, and more violent means by all of these actors to gain, regain or retain power and/or economic benefits. Meanwhile, nowadays "we are witnessing the unfolding of a complex phenomenon whose actual contours and consequences are uncertain not only across Mexico, but over the entire region" (*Ibid*: 139).

Chapter 5
Conclusions

The Copenhagen School argues that "societies should, as much as possible, operate within the realm of normal politics where issues can be debated and addressed within the standard boundaries of politicization" (Emmers 2010: 142). Although this aspect of the approach has been criticized for its normative connotation, the process of securitization of drug trafficking in Mexico is illustrative regarding the consequences of securitizing issues that could be managed in different ways.

It is unquestionable that the NAFTA era has brought to Mexico many considerable economic, political and social changes, which have created different many interests for the Mexican political class. A characteristic of the four governments that have ruled the country since the negotiation and implementation of the agreement (Salinas, Zedillo, Fox and Calderon) is their proclivity towards a strong support of the economic dynamics involved in it. The legal frameworks in the country have been changed and modeled by these administrations for allowing a further harmonization with those of the other NAFTA member -especially the US' ones- and for deepening the collaboration which now is not only in the economic realm, but also in security matters. So far, the US has been setting the way in which –at least- the economic and security legal frameworks should be developed, but the Mexican political elites have managed to take advantage of their implementation, despites the social consequences that they could generate.

The case of the securitization of narcotrafficking in Mexico reveals how the convergence and interaction of these economic dynamics, legal frameworks and political interests, have resulted in a vast escalation of violence taking place in this territory, rather than in a successful way to prevent the production, commercialization and consumption of drugs. It is evident that the strategy chosen by the Mexican government has harmed its society and has failed to combat these illegal activities.

In this way, a rethinking of the strategy towards the issue of drugs in Mexico is necessary. A benefit of the constructivist approaches used in the present analysis is that they allow realizing that things could be constructed in different ways. So the strategies for combatting drug trafficking could and should be reconstructed in a different way, one that involves less harmful outcomes for Mexican society. The way issues are politically constructed matters, and as a political construction there is always interests involved in these processes, but Mexican institutions and population will not be able to

handle much more insecurity and violence if these political interests keep ignoring the real situation and the population's demands.

Nowadays there are many social movements taking place in Mexico which claim for a different strategy, for constructing the issue in a different way, being that the legalization of drugs, the implementation of policies aimed to tackle other social issues, such as poverty, and the restructuration of the political and judiciary institutions, as is the case of the movement organized by the poet Javier Sicilia (Miglierini 2011). Movements like this one and the pressure of the Mexican society permit to be optimistic about the possibility of a near change in the government's strategy and a reduction of the harmful effects that the current tactics have generated.

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