Your Name

Instructor Name

Course Number

Date

U.S- Mexico security cooperation through The Merida Initiative

***Introduction:***

For more than a decade Mexico is being threatened by the Violent Criminal Organization. The situation not only affects Mexico but it creates an alarming issue in the south-west border region of the USA as well. The drug trade has been considered as unlawful from a long time but the transactional criminal organizations have created havoc to have control over the drug trafficking. In 2007 The United States created a rule of law partnership with the government of Mexico to control the drug crime trafficking in the country. This rule of law partnership is called the Merida initiative. This partnership has been a central piece of bilateral cooperation to maintain security in the region (Seelke). The Merida intuitive is a proposal of $1.4 billion from the side of the USA to invest in the drug war of the central-America and Mexico. The Congress has allocated $400 million for Mexico and for Central America $65 was assigned. Until 2007 Columbia was the concern of the USA and now the foreign policy marked a shift. Now the USA has started giving aids to Mexico to control drug trafficking and criminal activities (Abu-Hamdeh).

***A brief overview of the current policy relationship including the major issues facing the countries***.

USA is interfering in Mexico and Central America in order to guarantee the “national security” which include the geopolitical and socioeconomic interests of the USA in the region. Therefore, the USA is managing the internal orders of the country.

The havoc in Mexico leads towards the recognition of an authoritarian system that has more political and military power. The system violated human rights, increased criminal action, and drug trafficking so this invites the interference of the USA for the guise of cooperation, help, and defense. If the Mexican government is overthrown or threatened then the USA was going to send her troops to control the economic and social chaos in the region. The current security, political and economic model given by the United States shows the interests of the USA in Mexico. Mexico lost 23000 innocents lives in operations against the increasing drug trafficking in the country. The nation is becoming a hub of crime and terrorism. It is the biggest platform that violates human rights and the country is also very dangerous for social movements and the freedom journalists. The extractions of natural resources and environmental degradation are also increasing in the region (Delgado-Ramos and Romano).

After the Mexican revolution in 1910. The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) party and the current government have created a monopolistic political power. The supreme authority belongs to the President and who is been ruling for 6 years and Mexico is facing various internal and external issues since then. The country is going through a problem of unfair distribution of resources and wealth along with demographic growth. It needs the assistance of USA to get desirable economic growth. The USA is facing a huge influx of migrates from Mexico and creates an alarming situation in the border. The second issue is that both sides of the border face social, economic, and physiological sensitivities (Smith).

The Merida initiative does three things, firstly, it clarifies the position of both of the government’s that the drug cartels of Mexico are criminals. Secondly, the USA is excepting the responsibility of controlling this cartel and dealing with the transactional criminal Organizations. Finally, the intervention of the USA in Mexico will be limited and it sets only a militarized nature of status-quo. The cooperation of the USA and Mexico is useful for both the country’s political elites because it fixes the debate of various issues within the countries (Gallaher).

The Merida Initiative works in four folds, it works to dismantle criminal roots from Mexico, strengthen the border control through the air and maritime forces, brings reform in the justice system and to finish gang activities by banning on the demands of the drug. It is a package with the diverse program and its first initiative is an Assistance to improve the rule of law and to strength various civil institutions. The laws related to anti-drug funding are adjusted and privatization reforms are brought by the result of, Merida initiative. The concept of NAFTA plus was given to bring institutional changes for drug control and to bring reforms in Mexico’s drug war. Free trade Agreement between Canada-Mexico and USA was also being signed in order to increase the economic stability of Mexico. The second important component of USA’s Merida initiative is the “Law Enforcement and Security Assistance” which increased military and police training, weaponry and militarization of the border (Paley).

The US government says that this approach is necessary to disrupt the criminal groups in Mexico and to build a good 21st-century border. The third component of the Merida Initiative is the effect of the steps taken for a drug war that includes the reorganizations of the criminal groups and narcotics flows. This is done by the militarized interruption in the trafficking network. However, it is more like a par militarization (Paley).

***The reasons for initiating changes to existing policy:***

Strengthening the security conditions in Mexico is always been the priority of the USA. The increase in funding from the USA in the form of Merida Initiatives has a negative as well as a positive aspect. The positive side is that Mexico will get to have modern military technologies and it will train its armies based on modern training systems. The negative aspect is that it will increase the militarization to fight against organized crime. So the decision making based on defense mechanism will discourage the democratizing process of the state. The second thing is that drug trafficking is not a bilateral issue but a global issue so it should be tackled globally (Benítez). Another major flaw in this policy is that it is enhancing war like mentality by starting a war against crime. This war included arbitrary killings, illegal arrest, and drug-related homicides.

***The possible policy options to be considered:***

* Mexican Institutions should be made fully transparent
* As one of the motives of the Merida, initiative is to improve the justice system in Mexico but little is done to uproot the corruption in Mexican Institutions. The USA should train the police administration, judiciary, and lawyers in order to implement the American system of justice. So the USA needs to stop militating funding and start investing in the training programs that will improve the system of justice in Mexico.
* Mexico lacks the resources needed to train policy to fit in the new system and if the get investments from the USA they will be able to fit in the system described by the USA. So the human rights mentioned by the Mérida institution can’t be implemented until the Mexican government would not ensure that until the policies and judiciary system is not given the authority to control human right violations in Mexico.
* Control the domestic demand and supply of weapons and drugs on both sides of the border.
* The militarized drug-war had violated human-rights in Mexico and the United States of America has to stop the mugging of weapons in the border if the States wants to maintain illegal trafficking to neighboring Mexico. The US government needs to take domestic action on both sides of the border. It needs to find out the mastermind behind the drug and weapon trafficking and it is possible that both sides of the border would have the drug dealers not just in Mexico. The transport of firearm from the USA is the main cause of violence in Mexico.
* The framework of shared responsibilities should be preserved.
* These two countries are safer when the work together so Trump zero-tolerance policy over the border crises will not help to build up the mutual relationship.
* The factors contributing to the insecurity be acknowledged
* The USA should invest in building resilient Mexican society and the relationship between the people and government should be improved in order to fight against crime.
* Human right practices should be elevated by the bilateral agenda for improving educational and cultural activities.

***The pros and cons of each policy option or alternatives:***

If the Mexican institutions are made transparent then the domestic violence can be minimized but it needs the full intention of USA to professionalize the police and judiciary. It is time-consuming and costly to change the full makeover of the policies of the justice system in Mexico.

While if the USA controlled the domestic supply of firearms to Mexico then it can lessen down the violence in Mexico but it will also demand a reform in the gun-control laws of the States and those laws might turn US citizen against the government. As the maximum number of US citizen say that gun keeping ensures their personal security.

However, if the shared responsibilities will be preserved then the present government have to show some tolerance on the border crisis and will have to deal with the immigration issue differently. It will demand a whole shift in the paradigm set by Donald. Trump.

Mexico will be needing funds for improving its educational activities and the USA has to plan another scheme for that. So it is very costly but they can work on initiating exchange programs and that will help to build up the mindset of Mexican people.

***The best policy options:***

Violence and insecurity are not only caused by drug trafficking but driven by factors like lack of economic and educational opportunities and ineffective response of state against criminality. So the best policy will be to design a bilateral agenda for improving educational and cultural activities. The second most important one is to build transparent institutions by investing in training programs of judiciary and police. These two policies will go together to have a violence-free society.

***Conclusion:***

The Merida Initiatives agreement done by President Bush and Calderon helped to maintain bilateral security within the countries. But the program went beyond its four pillars and it looks more like a military operation than a funding scheme. It is enhancing the war mindset of the people by training the military force and providing new war technology to Mexico. This increased the homicide and killing of Mexican people. The collaboration, funding and dialoguing should be directed in an accurate way.

It is time to re-examine to direct the policy in the right direction. The funding should no more be on training military but used on professionalizing the police and judiciary. The second most important thing is that violence could not be controlled by only controlling drug trafficking. The mindset o9fthe whole generation needs to be changed in order to have a peaceful society. This can be done by investing in the educational uplift of the society so if the USA wants to maintain bilateral peace with Mexico then the funding should be directed in the right way. The bilateral collaboration should be maintained to have full control over the increasing criminals in the region. The USA has to show some resilience in the border issues and both sides of the border need to be examined to get into the roots of drug-related violence.

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