Vassar College

Global Customs: How Migration Policing Has Become the New Face of Empire in Guatemala

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts in International Studies

By

Christopher Unruh

Thesis Advisors:
Professor Joseph Nevins
Professor Daniel Mendiola

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This thesis is dedicated to the people of Guatemala.

My government has committed many unforgivable crimes against them.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On October 20, 2020, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) released a press statement titled: "Civil Society Organizations Denounce DHS Border Externalization in Guatemala, Call for Immediate Investigation". Within this report, 83 civil society organizations from the United States, Guatemala, and other Latin American states condemned the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for acting as a migration enforcement police within Guatemala. The statement was responding to an incident in January 2020 where DHS personnel, using unmarked passenger vans, detained migrants who had crossed into Guatemala from Honduras and then returned them to Honduras. This incident involved reckless actions on behalf of the DHS, which flagrantly violated migrant safety and human rights, and failed to provide them with information on their right to seek refuge and international protection. When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was initially investigating this action, the DHS denied the operation and attempted to cover up what had occurred.[1]

In responding to this incident WOLA wrote: "we condemn this latest incident as one more example of how DHS has overstepped its mandate in Central America, and acted with complete disregard for U.S. and international law… This operation is also one more example of DHS overreach into foreign policy and usurpation of the State Department's foreign policy mandate, in which DHS promotes migration deterrence as its sole policy towards the region."[2] While US Senator Bob Mendez (D-NJ) called this action a "painful reminder of how President Trump's anti-immigrant agenda has overtaken every aspect of this Administration's work," the expansion of the US policing apparatus throughout the Americas has been taking place before

[1] WOLA, "Civil Society Organizations Denounce DHS Border Externalization in Guatemala," WOLA, October 26, 2020, 1
[2] Ibid., 1

the Trump administration.[3] Instead, this incident reflects a much broader historical relationship between the United States and Guatemala that has created an environment where federal immigration agents can operate with impunity in a country over 600 miles from the closest point at the US - Mexico border.

This case study sits at the heart of what I aim to uncover throughout this thesis. What are the historical conditions which have allowed the Department of Homeland Security to become involved in the affair of policing Guatemala's borders? In this, it will be necessary to develop a much broader and holistic view of US intervention in Guatemala. While in the present, migration has been the principal lens through which US foreign policy views Guatemala, this has not been the case for all of history. US interests in Guatemala have long been dynamic, often reflecting its broader geo-political concerns. With this, what I want to argue is that this present form of migration policing reflects a novel manifestation of *empire*. Perhaps, put a different way: migration policing is just a new face of a long-lasting, trans-historical relationship constituting the US empire in Guatemala. While intervention has been undertaken in a multitude of forms and at a number of different institutional levels, each of these specific moments has contributed towards the larger incorporation of Guatemala under US political control. Integral to this history has been not only the physical deployment of agents of US foreign policy, but also an active undertaking at multiple levels to produce the borders of Guatemala.

While the following pages will construct a narrative of US intervention throughout time, we should caution ourselves from viewing the present, global position of the DHS, as an inevitable product of history. Assuming this only allows for those responsible to obfuscate their complicity in this process.

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[3] Minority Staff on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "DHS RUN AMOK? A RECKLESS OVERSEAS OPERATION, VIOLATIONS, and LIES " (Washington DC: U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE, 2021), 1.

In exploring this topic, I draw upon the ever-growing field of migration studies and its concern with the ways in which border enforcement regimes and security apparatuses control the mobility of migrant populations. Specifically, I and others are concerned with the ongoing process of *border externalization* carried out by states in the Global North such as the United States, Australia, and the European Union. Externalization refers to the extension and expansion of border and migration controls beyond the physically delineated territory of a certain country and into the neighboring or origin countries through which migrants transit within and through. The term refers to a wider range of practices in implementation such as, but not limited to, security systems at border crossings, interdiction operations, the militarization of third-country police and military organizations, as well as other measures aimed at preventing cross-border movements of certain populations altogether.[4] While externalization is certainly a creation of the 21st century, FitzGerald (2019) stresses that "measures to keep people from reaching sanctuary are as old as the asylum tradition itself."[5] As such, it is important to place this present trend of externalization within the larger historical context where states have wrested control over "the legitimate means of movement" within a global system of territorialized nation-states.[6]

Historically, much of the scholarship on externalization issues has been centered around the EU's relationship with states in North Africa, and how FRONTEX's Neighborhood Policy has imposed increasingly stringent policing structures to prevent the movement of Sub-Saharan Africans. While this thesis draws upon much of the analytical frameworks established by these scholars, I am concerned with examining this concept of externalization as it applies to the US policing apparatus in the Western Hemisphere. In that regard, activists and academics alike have

[4] For a longer analysis of border externalization, refer to: Inka Stock, Ayşen Üstübici and Susanne U. Schultz, "Externalization at work: responses to migration policies from the Global South," Comparative Migration Studies (December 2019)
[5] David Scott Fitzgerald, "Refuge beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers," Social Forces, March 3, 2020, 1.
[6] Ibid., 12.

become increasingly focused on studying this issue as it pertains to the relationship between the US and Mexico. These studies have centered around issues such as Title 42 - otherwise known as the "Remain in Mexico" order as well as US-Mexican joint efforts such as the Southern Border Program, and other efforts to control the flow of migration beyond Mexico.[7] Notable scholars who have written on this topic range from journalists such as Todd Miller, political geographers like Nancy Hiemstra, and human rights organizations such as the National Immigrant Justice Center and the aforementioned WOLA. One particularly notable and recent publication on this issue came from Levi Vonk and Axel Kirschner with their book *Border Hacker* (2022), which charts how the Southern Border Program has impacted the movement of Central American migrants in Mexico. Through these contributions to border scholarship, one clear theme is that the US border can be found in many places — certainly in Mexico and at its southern frontier, but also in other places throughout Latin America.

What I seek to study is the presence of the US-Mexico border as it exists within Guatemala and between itself and its neighbors. The existing scholarship has already thoroughly developed a conception of this expanding border regime as it pertains to Mexico, now it is necessary to understand how it has taken one step further south into this Central American country. Scholars focused on border externalization have analyzed Guatemala mostly within the context of its border with Mexico — often overlooking the presence of the US border in other spaces within the country, as well as how it has been intricately constructed. Moreover, I also want to complicate the ways in which we understand the border. In many regards, it is seen as a tool that uniquely impedes upon the mobility of migrants. While this is often the case, we should push ourselves to view the borders more so as an expression of certain power relations denoting

[7] Clay Boggs, "Mexico's Southern Border Plan: More Deportations and Widespread Human Rights Violations," WOLA, March 19, 2015.

who does and doesn't have access to transgress it.[8] In this regard, I want to draw upon Anssi Paasi's (1998) article "Boundaries as social processes: Territoriality in the world of flows," where they develop the idea that borders and boundaries fundamentally serve a role in societies as institutions and symbols. In this, they argue that the meaning of borders are constantly changing as they themselves are "processes that exist in socio-cultural action and discourses."[9] Thus, borders are both dynamic manifestations of social practices, and also influence the ways in which states and landscapes themselves are territorialized. With Paasi's framework in mind, we should approach the conversation about borders, critically examining how they have been created, for what purposes; then, how are they socially reproduced and in what critical ways has their meaning changed. Returning to the existing scholarship on the moving border, something that has been missing in the various perspectives on the subject is a larger historicized approach that places the territorial incursion of DHS officials within the legacy of US interference in Guatemala and what that means for the country's borders. This is what I seek to advance.

In developing my discussion around Guatemala, I am drawing upon the frames of analysis that have been developed by authors such as Greg Grandin (2004) and Daniel Wilkinson (2004) in their books *The Last Colonial Massacre* and *Silence on the Mountain* respectively. Their contributions to scholarship around Guatemala have allowed for a greater understanding of how the United States has been able to negotiate and contest the borders of Guatemala. The scope of their analyses is primarily focused on US interventionism during the 1950s and succeeding decades where "Cold War terror — either executed, patronized, or excused by the United States - fortified illiberal forces, militarized societies, and broke the link between freedom

[8] Anssi Paasi, "Boundaries as Social Processes: Territoriality in the World of Flows," Geopolitics 3, no. 1 (June 1998), 82.
[9] Ibid., 82

and equality."[10] While the focus of my thesis includes more than just this moment in history — yet, it is still a critical piece of this story — these authors provide invaluable assistance in helping us view Guatemala's borders as affording mobility to agents of US foreign policy.

Another valuable contribution to the literature that assists this study is Todd Miller's (2019), *Empire of Borders*, which is concerned with studying the ways in which border controls are used by the United States to reinforce certain hierarchies of power and restrict the movements of displaced peoples. In interrogating the world-making power this process has involved, Miller writes that "the U.S. border model has been paramount to the scaffolding of the current order of the globe, managing the antagonisms… between the haves and the have nots."[11] Critically, while not the sole focus of his exploration, Miller pays close attention to some of the particular unfoldings of this global border regime as it pertains to Guatemala. While he fundamentally views this process of an ever-expanding global border as a "massive paradigm shift," he also is quick to state that "here in Guatemala there was nothing new about the United States, behind the scenes, directing the show."[12] This is a particularly alarming statement, as it alludes to a much larger issue than just a DHS that conducts legally questionable operations. Rather, this is a border regime whose presence has been produced in part due to US intervention and serves to continually uphold the presence of the US *empire* in the country.

Finally, it is at this point that it is necessary that we unpack what exactly is meant when I refer to the US as an empire. To many US citizens it might be difficult to fully conceptualize their country as having an empire, in any definition of the term. Naturally, we are told from a young age that the country revolted against imperial powers in order to develop a nation that

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[10] Greg Grandin, The Last Colonial Massacre : Latin America in the Cold War (Chicago ; London: University Of Chicago Press, 2011), xiv.
[11] Todd Miller, Empire of Borders : The Expansion of the US Border around the World (London ; Brooklyn, Ny: Verso, 2019), 11.
[12] Ibid., 14

enshrined liberty as its central governing mandate. To see the US in any other way would stand in stark contrast to many of the discourses that lay at the heart of the nation's political system. Yet, it is necessary that we think critically about the US's position as an empire.

Assisting us with this, is important scholarship from authors Daniel Immerwahr (2019) and David Vine (2009) and their respective works *How to Hide an Empire* and *Island of Shame*. Immerwaher provides us with a rich history of how the US has always experienced political and geographic growth of its boundaries and borders over new territories. This story starts with the growth of the US westward under Manifest Destiny, before turning to an examination of how the US came to control far-flung territories throughout the world. The final act of this story — and the part that is of most value to this thesis — is Immerwahr's understanding of how the US reconstituted its global presence after World War II. At this moment, the US would "decolonize" itself by either releasing formerly held territories, giving them statehood, or putting them under new legal categories. In its place, Immerwahr argues that rather than the US shrinking in global power, it expanded ever outwards creating a "pointillist empire." The structure of this empire is one created by "foreign prisons, walled compounds, hidden bases, island colonies, GPS antenna stations, pinpoint strikes, networks, planes, and drones."[13]

In this regard, Vine examines one of these points on the island of Diego Garcia, which is in the Chagos Archipelago and governed under the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). In his story, he traces how the US colluded with Britain to deport the indigenous Chagossians and give the US a "strategic island" in the Indian Ocean that would serve as a forward operating base for military activities in that part of the world.[14] Ultimately, Vine reflects that Diego Garcia is a part

[13] Daniel Immerwahr, How to Hide an Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States. (S.L.: Vintage, 2019), 390.
[14] David Vine, Island of Shame : The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia (Princeton, N.J ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2009), 58-61.

of a much broader trend involving US bases imposing themselves on everywhere that the US considers critical to its national security interests. In his concluding chapter, he emphasizes the political and geographic importance of this process — as well as its historical significance — by writing that the US empire, unlike others before it, is defined by "a global network of extraterritorial U.S. military installations that allow the control of territory vastly disproportionate to the land actually occupied."[15] In effect, US hegemony is cemented over an entire region not by widespread colonial conquest, but instead by the presence of a small outfit of US personnel carrying out their foreign policy objectives.

Rightfully so, Vine (as well as others before him[16]) have explicated the US's global position as not only an empire, but an *invisible* one at that. In this regard, the political mechanisms of the empire are often hidden out of sight, and yet, deeply involved in the governance over these territories.[17] I am interested in pursuing this particular frame of analysis as it pertains to Guatemala, and examining how the country and its borders have become another point in this imperial network. In this regard, it will be necessary to unpack the various forms of intervention that Guatemala has experienced, as well as how this history has produced the country into a space that US national security interests can be mobilized against.

Methodology and Progression

The construction of my analysis is rooted in an interdisciplinary approach that takes seriously the facets of geography and history which are at play in this story. History has played a fundamental role in the development of the relationship between the United States and

[15] Ibid., 187.
[16] This conception was first laid out by anthropologist Enseng Hu in his 2004, "Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat."
[17] Vine, Island of Shame, 190.

Guatemala, and it is of the utmost importance that we understand the ways in which this has been intricately constructed. Similarly, and especially with regard to our present regime of migration policing, geography has produced — and is being produced by — the US incursions through Guatemala's borders. As such, these two places have become inextricably linked by histories of interventionism and geographies of displacement. As it stands, Guatemala and its borders are constantly being produced by the presence of the US within its territorial boundaries — the DHS's activities are only a novel representation of this.

This thesis will employ a wealth of primary and secondary sources which assist us in illuminating US involvement in Guatemala, as well as how this history has led to the very specific border regimes at the present day. Secondary sources will be drawn from a broad existing scholarship surrounding Guatemala — as well as the strands of empire, intervention, and policing involved in the political fabric of the state. These will range from authors who have proposed a particular conceptual framework within the context of borders in Central America, to detailed historical accounts about events being studied, or even ethnographic research that has been conducted within Guatemala and its borderlands. Moreover, these sources will be drawn upon for the purpose of further contextualizing a particular moment of study or to provide the perspective held by a scholar, activist, or other concerned parties. Additionally, secondary sources will be employed as evidence when official documentation has yet to be declassified or does not include all facets of a particular case.

Secondary sources provide an invaluable asset in the framing of my discussion, but the majority of what will be supporting my argument comes from the primary sources I employ. These sources will be used to illuminate how this system has been developed through a series of intricate steps taken by US officials to frame Guatemala as a threat to US national security

interests, thereby justifying their intervention. These sources come from: government documentation, treaties, press releases, congressional hearings, official reports, as well as: speeches, testimonies, and statements released by various officials. These forms of documentation will be critical in this investigation as they will illustrate the ways that the US frames these issues and their activities in their own words. Similarly, it will also involve a great deal of interpreting what was not explicitly said in a particular moment, but yet their actions (say an increase in funding, or the deployment of a certain number of officers) indicated otherwise. On this note, I also want to emphasize that the word *intervention* can have certain temporal implications, leaving many to think as if it is a one-time ordeal. Rather, these sources greatly assist us in seeing that intervention is a lasting phenomenon, and in fact, US involvement can tend to escalate to a presence much larger than the initial deployment. These approaches will allow for a greater and more critical understanding of the US approach to externalizing the border into Guatemala.

Following the conclusion of this introduction, this thesis will contain four more sections. Each chapter will contain a specific temporal focus and conceptual frame of concentration.

Chapter two, The Imperial Origins of Guatemala's Borders, will start this story with a brief overview of Spanish colonialism in Central America, before turning to the origin of Guatemala as a member of the Central American Federation. This project was a short-lived affair that would dissolve twenty years later, leading to the creation of Guatemala — as well as four other nations in the region. In this, it will be vital to chart out the ways in which the United States took specific steps to ensure that the federation wouldn't succeed, and also would never unify again. Among these, would be the US's involvement in demarcating the new boundaries between Guatemala and its immediate neighbors. Through this historical context, it will become clear that

the borders of Guatemala have never been a fixed entity — but rather were social and political constructions that the US took an active role in creating.

Chapter three, Negotiating Guatemala's Borders, critically examines the way in which agents of the US repeatedly transgressed these borders for the purposes of carrying out American foreign policy objectives. US interventionism in this narrative will take multiple forms. First and foremost there is the 1954 intervention and coup. While this is a topic that has been discussed extensively by others — and for this reason, I will be light on its study here — it is nevertheless important to review because it marks a critical shift in US involvement. From this point, I will chart out the US's intervention in support of the Guatemalan state's counter-insurgency against leftist and indigenous groups. This period of Guatemalan history saw over 200,000 people, mostly of Mayan descent, either killed or "disappeared" by the Guatemalan state. This act, which many have said constitutes genocide, was politically and materially supported by the US. Remarkably, the US's presence from the counter-insurgency would shift into taking on responsibilities around drug interdiction starting in the 1990s. This shift in focus mirrors how US national security interests moved away from fighting communism, and towards the "war on drugs." This US intervention focused on drug interdiction would mark an incredible increase in material support and a rapid build-up of US agents in the country. Moreover, this moment is also momentous in how the US took a proactive interest in securitizing Guatemala's borders against the movement of drug traffickers. This effort would only continue under the DHS.

Chapter four, U.S. Homeland-Securitizing Guatemala's Borders, will bring us into recent history as we chart the presence of the burgeoning DHS within Guatemala. First and foremost, we will briefly review how preventing the movement of "unauthorized populations" has become a central cornerstone of US national security policy following the September Eleventh attacks.

Then, we will shift to studying how this new mandate has led to the widespread militarization of migration policing authorities — both in the US and then in Guatemala. In this regard, we will then examine exactly how and when the DHS has become integrated into the policing apparatus of migrants in Guatemala (and its borderlands). This will closely involve DHS's activities over the years it has been active in the country. Looking at how it has been operating, who (with reference to both US and Guatemalan agencies) it has been working with, and in what ways it has become politically empowered.

Finally, chapter five will conclude this thesis by bringing together many of the topics, themes, and abstractions which have been uncovered through this investigation. While the time frame of this thesis is very wide, this chapter will demonstrate how the DHS's January 2020 police action is the broader result of US intervention in the country. Additionally, we will examine the ways in which DHS activities have (and more importantly have not changed) following the start of the Biden administration. Through this, we will gain a better sense of where the US border lies in Guatemala and what this reveals to us about the shape and form of the US empire in both Guatemala and throughout the world.

Chapter Two: The Imperial Origins of Guatemala's Borders

On a present-day map of the Central American region, you will find the Republic of Guatemala located tightly bounded by Mexico to the north, Belize to the east, and El Salvador and Honduras to the southeast.[18] The borders present on this map tell a lot of stories. There are straight and diagonal lines with Mexico and Belize, there are lines throughout which follow rivers and natural features — as well as many more demarcations which were made for no clear reason from the external view of the map-users gaze. To many, the borders of Guatemala might seem to be a bizarre, almost artificial, creation. It would be important to hold onto this feeling of 'artificiality,' because borders — in the political and geographic sense — are always constructed, created, and produced, never are they "natural."

[18] Charles L Stansifer and Thomas P Anderson, "Guatemala | History, Map, Flag, Population, & Facts," in Encyclopædia Britannica, February 4, 2019.

This exercise of perusing a map can reveal a lot about a country, but perhaps what is more powerful concerns what is not shown on a map. Cartography, more often than not, can serve as a de-politicizing force — in how it might erase questions around the territorial production of borders. In this regard, perhaps the more important question becomes: what are the types of stories, struggles, processes, and histories delineated borders erased? In working to conceptualize the effect that maps have had on our sociopolitical understanding of the world, the late geographer — and founder of The Cartography Project — John Brian Harley has provided numerous insights in the book *The New Nature of Maps*. He writes:

> Just as "the historian paints the landscape of the past in the colours of the present," so the surveyor, whether consciously or otherwise, replicates not just the "environment" in some abstract sense but equally the territorial imperatives of a particular political system.[19]

As such, maps become both representations of, and constitute how power is unfolded, negotiated, and enforced. Moreover, maps serve an essential function within the paradigm of imperial expansion as they "legitimize the reality of conquest and empire. They helped create myths which would assist in the maintenance of the territorial status quo."[20] Harley here assists us in resisting the urge to view maps — and in effect borders — as the objective and scientific constructions that they are so often depicted as. Rather, maps are selectively inclusionary to create a certain view of the world; the silences which are similarly excluded come to "enshrine self-fulfilling prophecies about the geography of power."[21]

As we approach this conversation on Guatemala, its borders, and how these demarcations have been negotiated, contested, and trespassed, it is important that we de-territorialize our

[19] J B Harley, Paul Laxton, and Center For American Places, The New Nature of Maps : Essays in the History of Cartography (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). 54.
[20] Ibid., 57.
[21] Ibid., 67.

approach to the geographies of this region. To accomplish this, it is important that we first reflect on how the borders of Guatemala were created. What are the politics of power reflected in this process of bordering? Specifically, how has the US played an intimate role in the demarcation and ultimately production of these borders?

This chapter will proceed as such: first starting with a brief narrative of Spanish colonization and the role it served in producing Guatemala as a political entity. Then we will examine how Guatemala became a state in its own right — as following their independence from Spain, Central America was briefly incorporated into the Mexican Empire and then the region became a federal republic. Following this, we will turn to a study of how the boundaries of Guatemala were "set" with its neighbors. Throughout the history of this border setting, the US involved itself as an arbitrator over these disputes. Through this earliest form of intervention, the US actively involved itself in dis-unifying the region, ensuring that the region would never again be a singular political entity — a prospect which was antithetical to the US's interests.

The Spanish Invasion of Central America

Guatemala is derived from the Nahuatl word for this region they called Quauhtemallan or Cuauhtēmallān[22], which roughly translates to "land of many trees"[23] Prior to the imposition of Spanish settler colonialism in the region, the land of Guatemala as we know it was largely under the domain of the Mayan civilization. It would be reductionist, however, to view the residents of this region as solely Mayan, because "the term would never have meant anything to Mayans in Guatemala, [as] there was never any common sense of identity or political unity among all the

[22] There are many contested translations of this term.
[23] Matthew Restall and Florine G L Asselbergs, Invading Guatemala : Spanish, Nahua, and Maya Accounts of the Conquest Wars (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 33.

various groups that we call Maya."[24] As such, the political formation of this region was composed of numerous kingdoms and states that were populated by a number of different ethnic and ethnolinguistic groups. Among these, the most powerful — or at least at the point immediately prior to the Spanish invasion — were the declining K'iche and the growing Kaqchikel populations.[25] This was the political environment that the Spanish first came in contact with during their attempts at the Southern expansion into Mesoamerica.

Prior to Spanish incursions into Guatemala in 1524, their colonial acquisitions had increased rapidly with dominance over the Carribean Islands, small holdings in Southern Central America in and around present-day Panama, and having recently completed their invasion of the Aztec Empire — incorporating much of present-day Mexico into the colony of New Spain.[26] On the whole, and has been the case with European colonization broadly, the Spanish regarded themselves as having a divine mandate to expand their holdings throughout the Americas. As such, within the primary documents from this time, there is little justification provided for the Spanish conquistadors invasion of their Southern neighbors. For the extent that it was mentioned, the primary conquistador of Guatemala Pedro de Alvarado writing to Hernán Cortés states that he sent an advanced warning to the Mayan population that he "was coming there to conquer and pacify the provinces within His Majesty's dominion".[27] He goes on to say that if the Mayan, K'iche, Kaqchikel, and others turn over their sovereignty to the Spanish and submit in vassalage to the crown, they would be "supported in all justice by me and the Spaniards of my company; but if not, I threatened to make war on them as rebellious traitors rising up against the service of our Lord the Emperor."[28] Thus it is demonstrated that the demand of submission of their land and

[24] Ibid., 4
[25] Ibid., 2/5
[26] Ibid., 23
[27] Ibid., 27
[28] Ibid., 27

territorial integrity to the Spanish Empire, was not viewed by first-hand accounts as not necessarily a war of expansion — but rather, a rightful imposition of power over a people they considered to be their subjects. This provides a larger view into what constituted "borders" during this period of colonial expansion as the Spanish largely viewed the Southern front of their territory as not only flexible and porous but also growing as a matter of its intrinsic existence.

From this position, the Guatemalan war of conquest was subsequently carried out from a period of 1524 to 1529. The first episode of the war (from 1524 to 1526) was conducted by conquistador Pedro de Alvarado.[29] While Pedro de Alvarado has long been regarded as the principal subjugator of Guatemala, Restall and Asselbergs (2007) contend that his brother Jorge de Alvarado should also receive substantial — if not greater — consideration as his wars of conquest from 1527 to 1529 destroyed the political structures and forms of resistance to a much greater degree.[30] Nevertheless, both brothers imposed a state of indiscriminate mass violence upon the people of the region. In the words of the K'iche commenting on the destruction of their country, they stated that the Spanish "pushed aside all the settlements and fortified centers; the Rabinal center was brought down; the Cakchiquel, the Tuhaleb, the Cubulcaal, Cunen Cakquilah, Booh, the Chocanah Xhil people, the structures of the Tzitzol,' none was spared".[31] What this quote is describing is the wholesale destruction of the various kingdoms, city-states, and smaller ethnic groups by the Spanish incursion. At the end of this six-year process, the Alvarados had acquired nominal political control over land stretching from present-day Mexico, through Guatemala, and into Honduras and El Salvador in the East.

[29] Greg Grandin, Deborah Levenson-Estrada, and Elizabeth Oglesby, The Guatemala Reader : History, Culture, Politics (Durham, Nc ; London: Duke University Press, 2011), 43.
[30] Restall and Asselbergs, Invading Guatemala, 12/3.
[31] Ibid., 6

Following the imposition of colonial rule, the governance of Guatemala, largely fell under two forms within the Spanish empire. First, the Spanish transformed colonial control in the region into the *Real Audiencia of Santiago de Guatemala* and then later on the *Captaincy*

General of Guatemala as a more permanent form of governance. The audencia was the first formal administrative division that created Guatemala as a defined political entity — governing over Central America — and set it as separate from the larger territorial holdings of New Spain. The audiencia essentially served as a colonial court and had a legislative body led by a governor who represented the viceroy that was located in Mexico City. The territory of the audiencia was expansive ranging from the present-day Mexican state of Chiapas in the West, through the present-day countries of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.[32] In this regard, the term *Guatemala* was used to refer to the entire region of Central America — as

[32] This map can be found at the Library of Congress, control number: 2004629011.

Guatemala city governed over this territory; then, Guatemala was also a specific sub-jurisdiction within where the present-day territory of the country was.[33] Starting in 1609, the government over Guatemala would transition from the audencia, towards the captaincy general model of governance within the Spanish imperial realm. The captaincy general system is defined by Tarver and Slape (2016) define the system as the "division of a virreinato (viceroyalty) in the colonial Spanish Empire with independent military capacities and a semi-independent government. These areas were set apart from the rest of the viceroyalty due to a high threat of either invasion by another European nation or attack by natives."[34] Many existing narratives on Spanish colonialism in Central America frame the transition between the audencia and captaincy general as the latter replacing the former political structure. I argue that it is less of a replacement and more that the government has become more militarized — with much of the former audencia political structures still remaining. For instance, the governor of the audencia remained in control over the region, yet they were also endowed with military responsibilities. While these leaders were in de jure controlled by the viceroys of their region, due to the distance between the captaincy general and the capital of the viceroyalty, the governor of the captaincy general governed largely independently.[35] In many respects, the imposition of the captaincy government represents the earliest form of division and the delineation of borders in Central America. Firstly, it was instrumental in nurturing this perception of Central America as politically separate from the central authority in Mexico City. Then, the captaincy general also involved itself with further dividing Central America into a series of *intendancies*.[36] These administrative divisions would become increasingly important following independence from Spain, as these internal borders —

[33] Hollis Micheal Tarver Denova and Emily Slape, The Spanish Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2016), 79.
[34] Ibid., 79
[35] Ibid., 79
[36]Robert H Holden, "Borderlands and Public Violence in a Shadow Polity," 2017, 212.

which were simultaneously loosely defined and not at all regulated under the captaincy system — would become the framework around which each constituent Central American state would become demarcated as separate, and ultimately later on independent.

The Post-Colonial Production of Guatemala

In 1821, the Central American states would declare their independence from the Spanish Empire. Following independence, there was a broad swath of land from Chiapas to Costa Rica who's political status was left largely undetermined. In this chaos, Central America would be incorporated into the First Mexican Empire under Emperor Iturbide. Iturbide, under his Iguala Plan, justified expansion on the grounds that Mexico was "heir to the former Spanish dominions" which were a part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain.[37] Ultimately, this period of annexation would only last until March of 1823 where due to internal turmoil the imperial system would collapse — leading to Central American independence.

Central America emerged from this period as the United Provinces of Central America in 1824. This federal republic was politically centered around the northern constituent state of Guatemala and its political bodies were all concentrated in Guatemala City. In many regards, this comes from the fact that almost all of the territory of this state was previously a part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala. Even the internal subdivision of the federation into constituent parts followed the division into intendencias that occurred under Spanish administration.[38] According to Holden (2017), unification of these territories rather than separation in disparate national communities was natural as they shared "the same language, religion, and even

[37] Beatriz Zepeda, "The Boundaries of Power. The Geopolitical Configuration of Mexico's Borders in the 19th Century," IdeAs, no. 18 (October 1, 2021), 5.
[38] Holden, "Borderlands and Public Violence in a Shadow Polity," 212.

experience of rule by the same overlord for three centuries, the reigning beliefs, legal systems and political customs were practically indistinguishable across Hispanic America."[39] This unification of Central American territories into one political entity[40] seemed more logical due to their previous colonial administration as one unified entity, in contrast to other South American territories such as Peru or Chile which were governed as separate jurisdictions.[41] Nevertheless, in many regards the early unification of the provinces seemed markedly less like the creation and development of a state defined by means of a regional Central American identity; rather, to many of the provincial leaders outside of Guatemala, it appeared as the continued political dominance of Guatemala City that was instituted under colonial rule.[42]

This power struggle that existed between Guatemala and the other constituent states would define the experience of the Central American Federation during its 20-year existence,

[39] Ibid., 212.
[40] The map above was produced in January 1864 by British Geographer James Wyld.
[41] Ibid., 212.
[42] William F. Slade, The Federation of Central America, 1917, 90.

and would ultimately produce the conditions of disunity. Integral to this conflict was the political debate between the pursuance of a centralized form of governance and a federal system which delineated and legitimized the differences between each province. This debate can be illustrated in how the union — despite being declared a confederacy from the start — was originally named the United Provinces of Central America, but gradually grew to be referred to internally as the Federal Republic of Central American or the Central American Federation.[43] Conflicts would repeatedly escalate between the provinces and Guatemala over the concentration of political power within Guatemala City, the capital of the union state. Slade (1917) detailed one such inter-state conflict wherein

> The people of Salvador had long been suspicious that a strong central party existed in Guatemala; they realized that the capital was located in the strongest state, and they charged the President with planning to change the government from the Federal to the central form. During the first session of Congress, in March, 1826, the Salvadoran deputies presenting petitions from the towns of Aguachapam and Metapan in the State of Salvador insisted that the seat of the executive government be removed to some place at least 40 leagues from Guatemala.[44]

This would become a recurring trend throughout the short-lived confederacy where the other constituent republics would remain deeply suspicious of the intentions of Guatemala. This instability would escalate to a number of brief military conflicts and states of civil war, in addition to widespread political discontent. As such, states would go through different periods of drawing away from, and then rejoining the union several times during escalated tensions.[45] It was not until May 30th, 1838 that the congress of the Federal Republic passed legislation which

[43] Slade, The Federation of Central America, 88; Holden, "Borderlands and Public Violence in a Shadow Polity," 213.
[44] Slade, The Federation of Central America, 90.
[45] Ibid., 91.

"declar[ed] the states free to constitute themselves as they might deem best, preserving, however, the popular representative form of government."[46] This was shortly followed by another legislative act on July 9th which stated that "the federated states of Central America are and by right should be sovereign, free, and independent political bodies."[47] At this point, the federation had become politically defunct with Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica becoming independent and sovereign nations in their own right. The secession of each state would follow rapidly over the course of 1838, with the political core of Guatemala ultimately declaring that the federal state was dissolved on April 17th, 1839.[48]

In reflecting upon the disintegration of the federal state, Slade (1917) emphasizes that "the formation of a powerful independent Central American Federation was not palatable to the Cabinet at Washington, for the principal reason, that the monopoly of the Isthmus would no longer be in the hands of Americans, but be open to the world."[49] In this, Slade is highlighting the fact that US interests can be better propagated within a divided Central America. This is best illustrated in how, despite attempting to reunify upwards of 20 times over the next century, the dream of unification would never come to fruition. In many cases, although not always, the US would take an active role in weakening the position of pro-unification factions. One particularly poignant case of this came on the centennial anniversary of independence in 1921 where the *Partido Unionista* — a pan-Central American movement — had begun one of the most successful campaigns in history to reunite the region. This one was done by first overthrowing the Government in Guatemala, and then in the other 4 republics; as such, all of Central America were led by pro-union leaders and were in a perfect position to bring the federation back.[50] In

[46] Ibid., 93.
[47] Ibid., 93.
[48] Ibid., 93.
[49] Ibid., 130.
[50] Kenneth J Grieb, "The United States and the Central American Federation," The Americas 24, no. 2 (October 1, 1967): 107–21, 107.

formulating this vision, Central American unionists advanced a progressive approach to unification by seeking to reconstitute the isthmus into a Central American Republic, which was composed of 20 different provinces; which broke with the previous framework of territorial division that was inherited from the colonial intendancies system.[51] This new republic would never come to be.

Several barriers imposed by US interests in Central America afflicted this burgeoning movement. The first of these being Nicaraguan concerns over how a unified state might interrupt provisions established in the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. This treaty gave the US exclusive rights to build a canal through Nicaragua territory, in exchange for monetary support. In this regard, once the union state came into existence they would have to renegotiate these terms and in the words of former (and future) Costa Rican president "the United States… would not allow it to be changed if it in any way harmed their own interests."[52] In this vein, Nicaraguan diplomats would abruptly leave the unification negotiations, citing that they needed to consult with their government and the US State Department.[53] Aside from interference vis-à-vis the Bryan-Chamorro treaty, US administrations had been historically opposed to unification on a larger level with one example being President Woodrow Wilson who was "unalterably opposed to encouraging the formation of a Central American Union [as] he feared that the new state would prove to be anti-American."[54] When the federation would provisionally unify (with just the Northern Triangle countries), the US opted for a policy of friendliness towards, yet political non-recognition for the new republic. This action ensured that other nations would not recognize

[51]Solano Muñoz, Edgar. "La república centroamericana en la visión de Salvador Mendieta y el Partido Unionista." Revista de Historia de América, no. 141 (2009), 51.
[52] Patricia A Vargas, "El Sueño de Las Provincias Unidas de Centroamérica En La Víspera Del Centenario de La Independencia. La Conferencia de San José, Costa Rica, Diciembre de 1920 – Enero de 1921," Revista Estudios 31, no. II (December 17, 2015): 1–18, 15.
[53] Ibid., 15
[54] Grieb, "The United States and the Central American Federation," 111.

the validity of the new Central American Federation, and in effect tarnished its legitimacy as a state.[55] Finally, some commentators at the time would proclaim that the US "signed the death warrant" of the Central American Federation by warning Honduras and El Salvador against intervening in Guatemala after an anti-unionist coup overthrew the government there. The remaining two union states justified their intervention under the direction of the provisional federal council that saw itself as the legal political entity throughout all of the Northern Triangle, including Guatemala. Ultimately, due to US pressure, Honduras and El Salvador did not invade Guatemala.[56] As a result, by 1922 the federation once again ceased to exist.

In most discourses about Guatemala today, there is little inclusion around the ways in which these particular histories of state construction have influenced the contemporary political environment. Yet, it is important to consider how the Central American federation, and the way it has been since kept divided, has reflected in the composition of the borders throughout the region. Holden (2017) encourages us not to view the dissolution of the Central American Federation as the sudden imposition of firm borders throughout the isthmus. Rather, this is a region that throughout a vast majority of its history had internal subdivisions, but still fostered the free movement of people within its boundaries. As such, borders within and between the different states in the region would be imposed in a very processual manner. Holden describes how far into the 20th century, there was a "chronic incapacity of the isthmian states to delimit or even identify their own boundaries, much less to maintain jurisdiction."[57] In this regard, it becomes clear that in Central America broadly these borders had yet to become endowed with a particular social meaning beyond perhaps where the legal system of land ended and another began.

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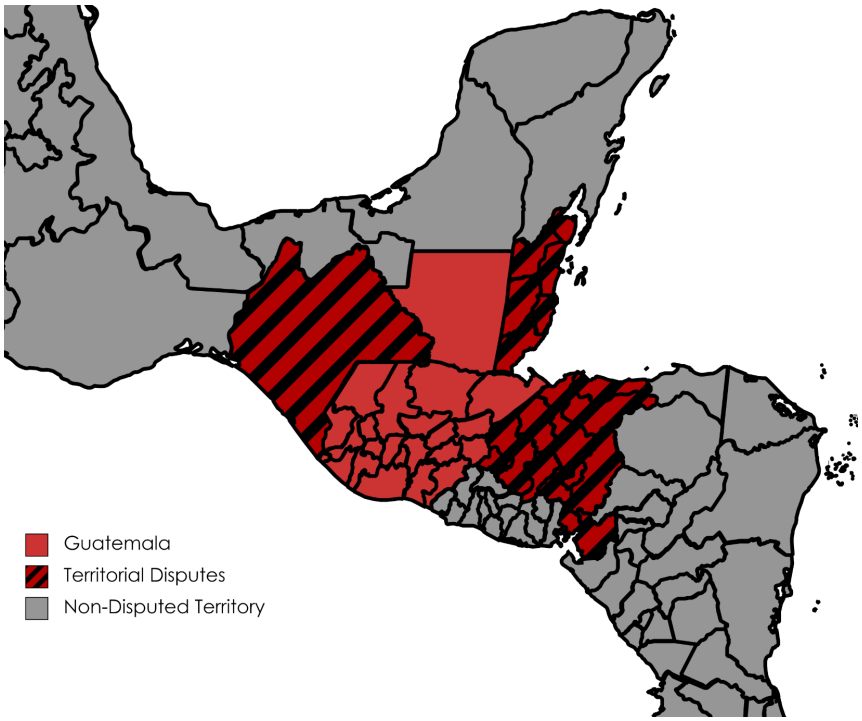
[55] Ibid., 112/4.
[56] Ibid., 116/7.
[57] Holden, "Borderlands and Public Violence in a Shadow Polity," 212.

Demarcating the Frontier[58]



Upon Guatemala's independence in 1841, the country had a number of territorial disputes with its neighbors that had remained in the region since the colonial period. Among these were the disagreements between itself and Mexico over the Chiapas and the Suconosco regions, as well as with Honduras over where their boundary was. Throughout the end of the end of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th century these states put forth a concerted effort to settle these disputes, through arbitration led by the United States. Throughout both of these border dispute settlement processes, US presence was pervasive. One perhaps standard account given for the US's involvement in these affairs is from Grieb (1967) who details that "above all, Washington desired stability in the region. This would terminate the frequent diplomatic crises that the United States inevitably was drawn into, and also would facilitate American financial penetration."[59] In most cases, this was the usual way in which the US would self-describe why it

[58] The map below was created using www.mapchart.net
[59] Grieb, "The United States and the Central American Federation," 113.

would be involved in a particular issue — stating that they were a "concerned party"; in virtually all the available primary documentation, little thought was given to questioning why the US was involved in affairs outside of its own borders. If we are to understand the final state of Guatemala's borders today, it is important to interrogate how they were produced within these dispute settlements — as well as how not only the concerned states in the disputes, but also the US, contributed towards achieving their own national priorities through this process.

Mexico-Guatemala Border Setting[60]

Ever since Guatemala's separation from the Mexican Empire, the country had actively continued to hold territorial claims over the province of Chiapas. Chiapas was for much of its history a constituent member of the former captaincy general. However, following the separation of the Central American states from the Mexican empire, Mexico was determined to hold on to Chiapas and in order to do so the Mexican state held a series of faux elections in the province. Zepada (2021) describes what transpired as: "although most of them voted in favour of the union with Central America, the oligarchy of Ciudad Real (currently San Cristóbal de las Casas) intervened to impose vote counting criteria that largely favoured incorporation into Mexico."[61] As a result of this, Chiapas would be incorporated into Mexico — much to the dismay of Guatemala. Their territorial disagreements expanded to include the region of Soconusco, which was annexed into Mexico in 1842.[62] As a result of these territorial disputes, Guatemala and Mexico would remain in a significant state of tension throughout much of the 19th century.

[60] Most of the primary sources available for this intervention were written from the perspective of the Mexican delegation sent to the US in order to resolve this dispute. Specifically, the vast majority of them were written by Matías Romero, a Mexican diplomat.
[61] Zepeda, "The boundaries of power. The geopolitical configuration of Mexico's borders in the 19th century," 4.
[62] Ibid., 8.

Throughout the 1870s, the conservative Guatemalan leadership would begin making aggressive moves to regain control over these regions as a means to bolster their own political capital. This would lead the Mexican government to take a proactive stance in the civil war which was occurring in Guatemala at the same time, by "support[ing] the Guatemalan liberals in exchange for a commitment to negotiate the boundaries between the two countries."[63] The liberals would emerge victorious in this struggle, however, the territorial dispute would continue to endure throughout the remainder of the 1870s. By 1881, Guatemala state forces and other agricultural interests were regularly entering the Soconusco region — leading Mexico to denounce Guatemala as conducting "a formal armed invasion" into the region.[64] In response to these perceived transgressions, Mexico began to mobilize for war — causing Guatemalans to retreat and petition for arbitration over this boundary question.

From 1881 to 1882, in order to bring an end to this state of low-grade conflict, Mexico and Guatemala entered into negotiations over where the border belonged. In entering the negotiations Mexico claimed that Chiapas and Soconosco were the rightful territories of Mexico since they had been in their possession for an extended period of time, and had become codified with the government structure as provinces of the Mexican state. Romano (1897) makes this argument when he writes that: "although Mexico had been in possession of Chiapas for over fifty years, and it was as much a Mexican State as any State here is one of the United States of America, Guatemala claimed that Chiapas, and more especially Soconusco, rightfully belonged to her."[65] Romano goes further into this by stating that:

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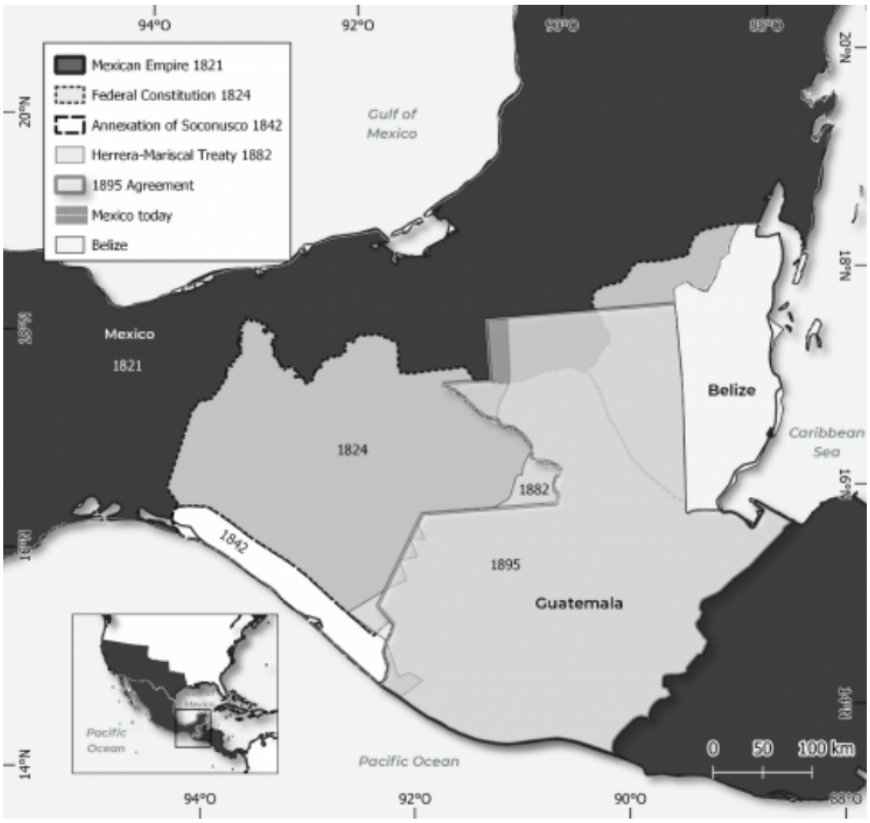
[63] Iibd., 8
[64] Ibid., 8
[65] Matías Romero et al., "Settlement of the Mexico-Guatemala Boundary Question," Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York, 1897, 125.

> "the importance of Guatemala's recognition that Chiapas and Soconusco were lawfully an integral part of Mexico was in my opinion so great, and the existing boundaries between Chiapas and Soconusco, on the one side, and Guatemala on the other, were so clearly established by the actual exercise of sovereignty, that I thought it advisable to accept the provision that the President of the United States should fix these boundaries, on the basis of actual possession."[66]

Romero is writing this within a context where the Guatemalan government was requesting mediation by the United States, believing that the US "was entirely on [their] side in the boundary question with Mexico" due to the support expressed towards Guatemala by the Garfield administration.[67] Zapada (2021) details that Guatemala gained US support through "offer[s] to facilitate the construction of an interoceanic canal on Guatemalan territory in



[66] Ibid., 132.
[67] Ibid., 130.

exchange for U.S. support *vis-à-vis* the Mexican government."[68] In responding to this particular historical moment, Romero is expressing that Mexico would only accept US mediation if judged only on the basis of who was currently governing the territory. Ultimately, the Mexican government would gain an advantage in the negotiation process after the assassination of President James Garfield, leading President Arthur to attain power and effectively shift US policy towards the boundary question.

In comparison to the Garfield administration, President Arthur's administration was not as supportive of Guatemala's political ambitions, namely their larger goal to reunify Central America which was being spearheaded by their current leader President Barrios. Specifically, US Secretary of State Fredrick Frelinghuysen was deeply opposed to this prospect and would use the territorial disputes over Chiapas and Socconosco as a means to weaken the political power that Guatemala held in the region.[69] Frelinghuysen wrote to General Barrios, leader of Guatemala at the time, that the US was a:

> friend of both interested countries, had the greatest desire to see amicably settled the difficulty existing between them, and that on this account, if both of them should ask for the arbitration of the United States Government, it would be readily granted; but that the United States could not propose to either of them, at the suggestion of the other, to accept such arbitration.[70]

While on the surface, this position seems to be a standard approach given the circumstances of this case. In reality, this represents a stark shift in policy, which drastically weakens the Guatemalan position. Placed within the geo-political context, Guatemala's political and military

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[68] Zepeda, "The boundaries of power. The geopolitical configuration of Mexico's borders in the 19th century." 9.
[69] Ibid., 8.
[70] Romero, "Settlement of the Mexico-Guatemala Boundary Question," 139.

power is miniscule when compared to Mexico's - it was only with the support of the US, that Guatemala had any chance in succeeding in acquiring the territory.

This shift in US policy provided a drastic boost towards the Mexican position, and ultimately Barrios relented to the Mexican delegation that they would not be able to sustain their claims to Chiapas and Soconusco. Barrios acquiesced, due in part to both the vast difference in military capabilities between the two states and that "those territories had been so long in the possession of Mexico, that it would not be possible for her to recover them."[71] As such, the Herrera-Mariscal Treaty was signed in September 1882 which had Guatemala revoke all claims to sovereignty it held over those regions of Southern Mexico. It would take about another 15 years for all conflicts over the border to end between the two states as both countries and the US participated in the process of delimiting the territorial bounds in the region. Specifically, the provisional agreement which was signed in Washington DC, designated the US in article four to be the arbitrator in deciding where the boundary would fall if the two states disagreed on the placement of the border in any specific space between Guatemala and Chiapas/Soconusco.[72] This effectively granted the US a very significant role in the bordering process of the newly formulated Guatemala - Mexico frontier. Ultimately, this arbitration process would continue until 1897 when the formal demarcation of the border would be completed by all three parties.

The US would gain immensely from the settlement of this border dispute as President Barrios — and Guatemala by extension — experienced a significant decline in their position as a regional power. The loss of territory to Mexico greatly hampered their ability to lead the reunification project by means of political persuasion. In an attempt to reunify Central America instead by means of military power, Guatemala would invade El Salvador. This war would end

[71] Ibid., 147.
[72] Ibid., 159.

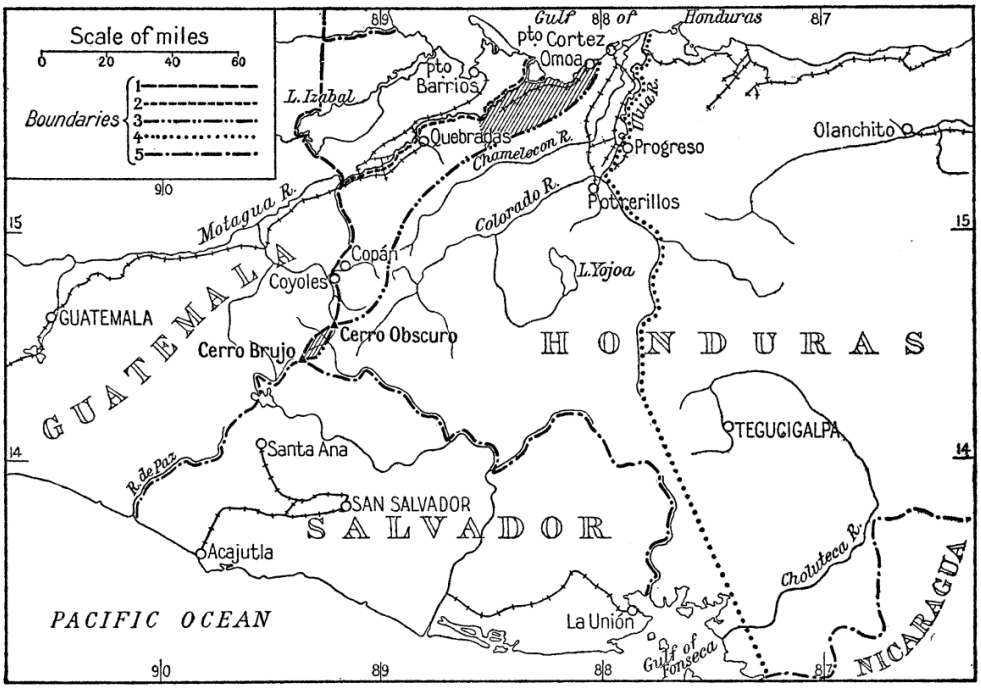
disastrously for Guatemala as President Barrios — who was leading this invasion — would die during this war, ultimately ending this attempt at reunification.[73] To this end, the Arthur administration, and especially Secretary of State Frelinghuysen, achieved their foreign policy objective of preventing Guatemala from succeeding in the reunification project. As such, through this case we can see how the boundary was effectively used as a tool by the United States to deny Guatemala from achieving greater political power and influence in the region.

Guatemala-Honduras Boundary Dispute

Following the independence of Guatemala and Honduras from firstly the Spanish, and then the Central American Federation, there were a considerable number of disputes which existed between the two countries. In 1845, the two countries signed a treaty which stated that "the states of Honduras and Guatemala recognize as their common boundary that laid down for the diocese of each in the Royal Ordinance of Intendentes of 1786."[74] The issue with this is that the royal ordinance did not clearly outline the boundaries between these two states. As a result, the two countries were left in a state of tension that persisted throughout the nineteenth and into the beginning of the twentieth century. From 1890 and through the 1920s, Guatemala and Honduras made a number of attempts at resolving this dispute through an inter-state commission. However, little progress was made in terms of negotiating a settlement as both sides felt they hadn't reached an agreement which best divided up a landscape with "considerable population, important transportation lines, and rich agricultural resources that are now undergoing rapid development."[75] For these reasons, both states held particularly aggressive claims on the other

[73] Vargas, "El sueño de las Provincias Unidas de Centroamérica," 4.
[74] Raye R. Platt, "The Guatemala-Honduras Boundary Dispute," Foreign Affairs 7, no. 2 (1929), 323.
[75] Ibid., 323/406.

country's territory.[76] In supporting their claim, Guatemala utilized a royal *cédula*[77] from 1563 which denoted Guatemala as having a boundary lying deep in Honduran territory, stretching all the way to the Gulf of Fonseca and giving Guatemala a small border with Nicaragua. Similarly, in Honduras's most extreme proposal, they claimed land all the way to British Honduras



Map of the region in dispute. 1. Approximate boundary of extreme Honduran claim. 2. Boundary of minimum Honduran claim at Washington conferences, 1918–19. 3. Boundary of minimum Guatemalan claim. 4. Approximate boundary of extreme Guatemalan claim. 5. Boundaries of adjoining countries. The ruled areas show the minimum claims of Honduras at the Cuyamel conferences, 1928.

(present-day Belize) and the Yucatán Peninsula. They claimed this not on the grounds of any specific official decrees from the Spanish administration, but rather presented a number of maps and other documents which they interpreted as placing the land under Honduran jurisdiction.[78]

Apart from Guatemala and Honduras, the third party that has been integral to this negotiation of these borders has been the United States. Platt (1929) detailed how the region of

[76] As seen on the map above.
[77] Cédula roughly translates to the word: document.
[78] Ibid., 324/5.

dispute had a landscape which was extremely rich in agricultural production with a number of US multinational agriculture firms invested in the region. Specifically, two rival banana planters competed to establish dominance in this region: the United Fruit Company (UFCO) and the Cuyamel Fruit Company (CFC) which had agreements with Guatemala and Honduras respectively.[79] As such, US corporate interests were also interwoven into this struggle over territory as both companies wanted a settlement that would further enable their own economic ambitions. Aside from these companies, the US Department of State more broadly was invested in this territorial dispute as they repeatedly offered the participation of various presidential administrations to serve in arbitration, and interjected themselves into a number of conferences held on the matter. By the end of the 1920s, the boundary dispute had escalated into a series of military encounters between the two states, leading the US executive branch to pressure Honduras to acquiesce to a judicial decision on the matter by the International Central American Tribunal.[80] This was a path to settlement which Honduras had previously resisted citing that in their opinion there was "there was no adequate panel of judges available to sit on such a question."[81] Ultimately, this International Central American tribunal would convene in Washington DC in December 1831, with participating tribunal members: Dr. Emilio Bello-Codesido, of Chile, who was designated by Honduras, and Dr. Luis Castro Ureina of Costa Rica, who was designated by Guatemala — and then Chief Justice Hughes of the US Supreme Court, who served as the presiding member.[82]

In their decision on the final border, the tribunal stated that a decision would not include the facts of the economic character of the region or who might retain a military advantage, but

[79] F. C. Fisher, "The Arbitration of the Guatemalan-Honduran Boundary Dispute," American Journal of International Law 27, no. 3 (July 1933), 415.
[80] Ibid., 410.
[81] Platt, "The Guatemala-Honduras Boundary Dispute," 323.
[82] Fisher, "The Arbitration of the Guatemalan-Honduran Boundary Dispute," 410.

rather would be made on "the facts of actual possession; the question whether possession by one party has been acquired in good faith, without invading the right of the other party; and the relation of territory actually occupied to that which is as yet unoccupied."[83] The final boundary decision largely mirrored the “minimum Guatemalan claim” on the map above with the territorial division starting at the edge of Salvadoran frontier, traveling north to the mouth of the Motagua River on the Gulf of Honduras.[84] Similarly, according to Fisher (1933), this border largely mirrored the “line of actual possession traced by the Guatemalan and Honduran engineers in 1910,” as well by US economists and geographers who surveyed the region in 1919 and 1932 respectively.[85] According to the sources available, both sides seemed amicable to the result of this settlement as they expressed their satisfaction with the decision that the tribunal arrived at.

With respect to the concerns of other actors involved, namely the two fruit companies: the UFC benefited as the newly-settled boundary included a substantial amount of land that previously fell under the domain of the CFC — and within which they had constructed a considerable amount of infrastructure. Now placing this agriculturally-developed space under the custody of Guatemala would enable the UFC to further expand their economic activities into a space which was previously controlled by their rival corporation. While this point might seem minor in the grand scheme of other processes taking place in this study, the UFC (now known as Chiquita) becomes an immensely important political actor — who is repeatedly empowered by the outcomes of US foreign policy. While we see this more directly in the next chapter, in no small part did the result of this treaty further create a political environment where by the 1950s the UFC would possess so much land that “only 10% of the land was available for 90% of the

[83] Ibid., 425.
[84] Ibid., 425.
[85] Ibid., 425.

population."[86] Chiquita today is still ever-present in the country as it dominates the banana industry — one of Guatemala's five primary export items — while regularly perpetrating a culture of abuse against its plantation workers.[87] Certainly the situation of the present is not a direct consequence of this treaty, yet it is important to appreciate the ways in which UFC's power was further entrenched as a result of this boundary settlement.

Closing Thoughts

With the settlement of the Guatemala-Honduras boundary dispute, Guatemala's territorial borders would become set on a map in the form that they are now recognized as.[88] Nevertheless, these analyses of the border-setting process should not leave one with the understanding that these borderlands have suddenly become well-defined and demarcated zones of separation. Rather the International Crisis Group (2014) makes the case that these boundaries have experienced a case of trans-historical "government neglect" and that today "most of Guatemala's borders are unmonitored."[89] From their final settlement and into the present, Guatemala has only ever staffed a maximum of 15 formal border crossings on all of its frontiers — sometimes much less than that. Meanwhile, there are many "*puntos ciegos"* (blind spots) that the government has no capacity to control or monitor. Moreover, life in the borderlands means little to most residents as "political demarcations hardly exist: many cross daily to work, visit relatives or buy and sell foodstuffs and other essentials, such as gasoline, at cheaper prices."[90] As such, it is clear that

[86] Council on Hemispheric Affairs, "Peeling Back the Truth on Guatemalan Bananas," Council on Hemispheric Affairs, July 28, 2010.
[87] Ibid.,
[88] It is important to note here that Guatemala still retains a border conflict with Belize over disagreements remaining since British rule in the region. Guatemala currently claims about two-thirds of Belize, and this dispute is currently at the International Court of Justice awaiting further arbitration.
[89] "Corridor of Violence: The Guatemala-Honduras Border," International Crisis Group, June 4, 2014, 1.
[90] Ibid., 1.

Guatemala's borders, boundaries, and territorial limits have been in a constant state of flux and reconstitution since its original foundation.

Yet, within this dynamism, the US intervened in the social production of these borders. This process gives us a greater insight into why Passi (1998) cautions against viewing the bordered state as "the fulfillment of a historical destiny."[91] The creation of these boundaries in Guatemala were anything but natural. Rather, the process of bounding the country was deeply reflective of the particular power relations at play in the region. Certainly, every country has a stake (whether these be social or economically driven) in determining where the boundaries would lie. Yet, the US took on a principal interest to ensure that Central America would remain divided, whilst taking early steps to impose the empirical and stratified vision of a border between Guatemala and its neighbors. This is central to US interests in Guatemala, as into the present controlling the country's borders was seen as critical to US national security policy. Even in a US Defense Department study conducted in 1963 wrote on how the borderlands between Guatemala and its neighbors were so sparsely populated and variably controlled, which "constitute[ed] ideal and relatively safe areas for organizing invasions by all kinds of subversive groups," In developing a US approach to these perceived threats, the same Defense Department report suggested that "that every isthmian country should receive a US border control specialist" to instruct these nations on how to properly police their territorial divisions.[92] Put in another way, US interests are critically focused on transforming Guatemala's borders into spaces where US national security interests can be carried out. In this regard, these borders are to be constructed to permit the movement of agents of US foreign policy — whilst limiting the movement of those perceived to lay at the exterior of acceptable political activity.

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[91] Paasi, "Boundaries as Social Processes: Territoriality in the World of Flows," 69.
[92] Holden, "Borderlands and Public Violence in a Shadow Polity," 212.

Chapter Three: Contesting Guatemala's Borders

This chapter will be focused on the contestation of Guatemala's "sovereign" borders. The term, contestesting, is employed in the broadest sense possible because borders are naturally always in a dynamic state of dispute and negotiation as they reflect the different forms of power which are embedded within these geographic spaces. Said power, allows for different political entities and actors to transgress and move within and between the country and its borderlands — whilst also producing the boundaries of the state, and limiting access to mobility for those at a lower level in any power hierarchy. With this being said, we will proceed with a careful examination of how Guatemala's borders have been negotiated and contested as a means of mobility for the agents of US foreign policy. Better put, this will analyze the ways in which the US intervention actively contests the "sovereign" nature of Guatemala's borders.

"America's Backyard"

Up until this point, it has become increasingly apparent in the ways in which the United States has grown increasingly invested and involved in the affairs of Guatemala, as well as between itself and its neighbors. In the case of territorial disputes with both Mexico and Honduras, the US readily intervened in assisting with a settlement. The US's consistent participation in the politics of Central America was the product of a particular social construction in which the US has placed itself as the dominant state in The Americas. This relationship has its roots in the Monroe Doctrine which declared that states in The Americas are protected from further colonization, intervention, or other forms of imperialism which might be practiced by European states. In the words of President Monroe: "any attempt" by Europeans to "extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere" would appear "dangerous to our peace and safety" and

as evidence of "an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."[93] The implications of this declaration go beyond protecting Latin America from ambitious European powers, but rather it served as the promulgation of a US foreign policy that stated that all of The Americas fell within its zone of influence and that the US had a freehand to act as they saw fit. President Cleveland re-articulated this in no uncertain terms when he stated in 1895 that "today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition."[94] While many states in Latin America can certainly articulate the devastating results of such a foreign policy, Guatemala has had to endure a particularly deadly legacy. The series of interventions practiced by the US throughout the 20th century, greatly defines the relationship that we can witness today. Or as Miller (2015) says: "nothing could be more uncontroversial" to most than the presence of US agents in Guatemala.[95]

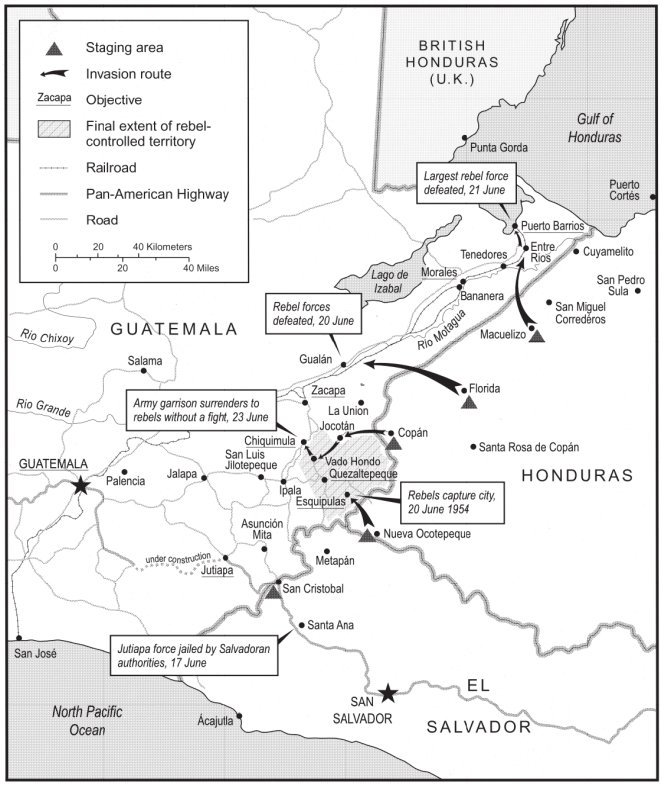
In 1954, a visceral manifestation of this foreign policy would come into existence where the United States under the auspices of the Central Intelligence Agency carried out a coup d'etat of the democratically elected Arbenz government in Guatemala. In an operation, entitled PBSUCCESS, the CIA and others in the US government saw the Arbenz administration as an example of how for the first time "Communists had targeted a country in America's backyard" for subversion and transformation into a "denied area."[96] The primary source of the US's distress of Arbenz was rooted in his Decree 900 released in 1952 which expropriated idle land throughout rural Guatemala and redistributed it to the rural population of predominantly indigenous people — all the while paying landowners for the confiscated land. Most historians and even US aid officials at that time regarded this policy as a moderate reform that was

[93] Mark T. Gilderhus, "The Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications," Presidential Studies Quarterly 36, no. 1 (2006), 8.
[94] Ibid., 10.
[95] Miller, Empire of Borders, 30.
[96] Nick Cullather, Secret History : The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8.

"constructive and democratic" in its aims.[97] However, this policy had the effect of deeply alienating the United Fruit Company which had extensive land holdings throughout the country — with much of it being idle land. In response to these threats to its monopolistic position in Guatemala, the UFC went to great lengths to encourage the idea that Guatemala was a threat to US national security. Edward Bernays, a propagandist for United Fruit, laid down a PR barrage which brought reporters from major newspapers all throughout the US to Guatemala and "report on Communist activities" there.[98] In turn, the UFC received support from the US government in their dispute over the expropriation of their land, with the State Department charging the Guatemalan government with discrimination against a US firm. With this being said, historians today widely debate the extent to which the UFC was an influential motivator for US intervention. Schlesinger and Kinzer (2005) make the case in their expose *Bitter Fruit*, that operation PBSuccess at its core involves "the CIA, the U.S. State Department and the Executive Branch [who] conspired on behalf of the United Fruit Company to overthrow the government of Guatemala."[99] While many include UFC as a significant factor for intervention, others cite the communist paranoia in the US government. This is illustrated in the CIA's own declassified report where they write that the State Department saw decree 900 as having the possibility to "mobilize the hitherto inert mass of rural workers, destroy the political effectiveness of large landholders, and spread disorder throughout the countryside."[100] It is more likely a product of equal parts: geographic proximity, the empowerment of the rural population, the rise of social policies focused on distribution, and the decline of US agro-capitalist influence, which all played a large role in influencing the US decision to intervene. Ultimately, these factors led the "CIA [to

[97] Ibid., 22.
[98] Ibid., 18.
[99] Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit (David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005), vii.
[100] Cullather, The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 23.

see] Guatemala as a threat sufficient to warrant action… [and] "a potential threat to US security."[101] Within the political imaginary of the agents of US foreign policy, Guatemala was an integral component of securing and protecting the US homeland.



Actual invasion, late June 1954. Copyright ©1998 by Indiana University.

While this analysis is not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of the 1954 intervention in Guatemala (see Cullather 2006; Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005; for an analysis of different perspectives Streeter 2000), what I would like to highlight here is the process of *border negotiation* which the CIA conducted in during its intervention. This use of negotiation refers to the ways in which US personnel, arms, and other tools of war transgressed Guatemala's borders. While the CIA guidelines for this operation ruled out a "*direct* United States armed intervention," they adopted strategies that were being employed at a similar time during

[101]Cullather, Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 24.

Operation Ajax in the overthrow of Prime Minister Mossadegh in Iran.[102] These strategies consisted of operating an internal propaganda campaign through clandestine radio stations throughout Guatemala, arming and supplying internal dissidents, as well as bolstering rebel armies which were based in Honduras — within its borderlands with Guatemala.[103] One US reporter, Evelyn Irons, visited this region in the lead-up to the invasion and reported witnessing many militants "receiving wads of dollar bills passed out by men who were unmistakably American."[104] Immerman (1980), further detailed US involvement in preparing the rebel forces for invasion by furnishing Castillo Armas, the US's chosen replacement for Arbenz, "with all the requisites for the invasion. He received money and an 'army,' among whose ranks were many mercenaries recruited from the area… [and] shipments of rifles and other small arms, machine guns, and ammunition found their way to rebel centers."[105] On June 18th, 1954, the rebel army crossed into Guatemala and swiftly conducted several small engagements with the Guatemalan military. By June 23rd, Arbenz resigned believing that this small force precluded a much larger invasion. He believed that Eisenhower intended to "go to great lengths to assure the invasion's success, perhaps even to send American troops."[106] The US, however, never intended to escalate assistance. Allen Dulles, the director of the CIA, writing to Eisenhower said that "the entire effort is ... dependent upon psychological impact rather than actual military strength."[107] This gamble would pay off for the US.

While the 1954 intervention is a flagrant example of US imperial policy at work. I am perhaps more concerned about what this reveals to us about Guatemala's borders. In

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[102] Richard H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History," Political Science Quarterly 95, no. 4 (1980), 642; Cullather, Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 39.
[103] Cullather, Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 52.
[104] Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History.," 642
[105] Ibid., 642.
[106] Ibid., 647.
[107] Ibid., 647.

conceptualizing this, I draw upon Passi (1998) who details how discourse in political geography can often fall into the *territorial trap* of reinforcing "the traditional assumptions of state territoriality and fixed images of the bordered world of nation-states and identities."[108] This idea of the territorial trap is drawn from an earlier work by John Agnew (1994), who writes within his work that the trap involves: "(i) regarding states as fixed units of territorial sovereign space, unchanging through time; (ii) separating domestic (inside) from foreign (outside) political spaces; (iii) treating the territorial state as a container of society."[109] The case of intervention in 1954, assists us greatly in complicating how we view the territoriality and sovereignty of Guatemala's borders. As what does sovereignty truly mean when the US is able to transgress Guatemala's bounds for the purpose of enacting its own national security priorities. Rather, borders should not be perceived as exclusive containers of different societies, keeping the jurisdiction of one political entity separate from another. In this case, Guatemala's sovereignty and right to self-governance only goes as far as it does not compromise US interests in the country. In this regard, while Guatemala might be one land, one territory, there are multiple sovereignties active within it.

The Politics of Counter-Insurgency

Following 1954, it quickly became clear to US operatives that, in their own words, "while PBSUCCESS succeeded in removing a government, it failed to install an adequate substitute."[110] Rather, the US codified right-wing power in the country. These successive governments were highly repressive to any social movements which threatened the

[108] Paasi, "Boundaries as social processes," 70.
[109] Rogers, Alisdair, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin. "territorial trap." In A Dictionary of Human Geography. Oxford University Press, 2013.
[110] Cullather, Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 113.

socio-economic standing of the upper class and external economic interests; this instituted a culture of violence within the structures of the country which was dependent on the continual intervention of the US to support their repression. From 1960 to 1996, Guatemala entered into a state of protracted conflict between the government forces and various insurgent factions which aimed to displace the chokehold over governance that the military held since the 1954 coup. Throughout this conflict, the United States grew increasingly committed to bolstering the Guatemalan security forces. Jonas (1996), details how the US significantly reinvested itself by "approving" another coup in March of 1963 which suspended the upcoming election and further entrenched the military junta. During this time, the insurgency had grown rapidly responding to the continuing growth of authoritarianism in the country. In 1966, in order to further prop up the Guatemalan government, the US became directly involved in counter-insurgency operations with the aim of "professionaliz[ing]" the Guatemalan military.[111] Jonas (1996) writes that:

> United States sent hundreds of Green Berets to Guatemala and played a crucial role in training and reorganizing what it viewed as an inefficient army; the goal was to transform it into a disciplined counterinsurgency force, driven by Washington's Manichaean "national security" logic, that could keep Guatemala from becoming a "second Cuba." This is the origin of the killing machine that is today the Guatemalan army.[112]

As such, US interventionism in Guatemala was still operating under the paranoia that Guatemala, and the insurgency composed of leftist and indigenous elements, could serve as a beachhead for socialism in Central America — and in effect threaten US "security" interests in the region.

Aside from the introduction of US military forces into the country, additional counterinsurgency advisors would come from policing backgrounds. One such example is John

[111] Susanne Jonas, "Dangerous Liaisons: The U. S. In Guatemala," Foreign Policy 103, no. 103 (1996), 146/147.
[112] Ibid., 147.

Longan, a former Border Patrol agent with a track record of brutal violence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. He was contracted by the CIA to join an international police corps focused on training local security forces " to destroy the effectiveness of the Communist apparatus in free world countries."[113] Longan first arrived in Guatemala in 1957, before moving through a number of other Cold War battlegrounds — namely: Brazil, Venezuela, Thailand, and the Dominican Republic. Returning to the country in 1965, Longan quickly assembled a paramilitary unit that would carry out his *Operación Limpieza* (Operation Cleanup). Grandin (2004) details how "within three months, this unit conducted over 80 raids and multiple extrajudicial assassinations, including an action that during the course of four days in March, captured, tortured, and executed more than 30 prominent left opposition leaders. The military dumped their bodies into the sea, while the government denied any knowledge of their whereabouts."[114] Grandin, puts a tremendous emphasis on the actions of Longan, and their role in the escalation of violence within Guatemala's counter-insurgency. Specifically, he details that many of strategies Longan brought into Guatemala were first developed and "used to capture migrants on the border," before being brought into this region and serving as the "decisive step in the unraveling of Guatemala, empowering an intelligence system that over the course of the country's civil war would be responsible for tens of thousands of disappearances, 200,000 deaths, and countless tortures."[115] The presence of a former Border Patrol agent in this story is particularly powerful, as it demonstrates in a very visceral sense that the US's approach to migration in its own borderlands is so intensely militaristic that it can be imported into a landscape experiencing a civil war — and achieve remarkable efficiency in its ability to kill.

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[113] Grandin, The Last Colonial Massacre, 73.
[114] Ibid., 73.
[115] Greg Grandin and Elizabeth Oglesby, "Washington Trained Guatemala's Mass Murderers—and the Border Patrol Played a Role," The Nation, January 3, 2019.

US support of Guatemalan security forces would remain steadfast throughout the remainder 1960s and into the 1970s, where the US would ultimately send more than $33 million dollars to the Guatemalan military.[116] This relationship was further developed despite knowledge at the highest levels of the US government that the Guatemalan military was actively carrying out covertoperations which included the "kidnapping, torture and summary executions" of real or alleged insurgent forces.[117] In the late-1970s, US support for the counter-insurgency would wane ever-slightly. Jonas (1996) identifies that"the rise of human rights politics" during this time would influence US foreign policy, as it had become increasingly clear the extent to which the civil war — and by extent US support — was enabling the Guatemalan military to carry out acts of mass-violence. The Carter administration attempted to impose conditions on US aid to the country, and congress cut some forms of security assistance during the years of 1977 to 1983.[118] Similarly, the Guatemalan government would reject an offer of $2.1 million to the US military "because it was conditioned on improved performance on human rights."[119] Nevertheless, US support for the Guatemala military would remain, and no administration during the 1970s would publicly oppose the activities that were taking place — as ultimately, these death squads were still achieving the central aims of US foreign policy in the region. US commitment to supporting the Guatemalan military would escalate following the start of the Reagan administration. Even prior to Reagan's election, Allan Nairn (1980) would report that two retired generals with prominent positions in his campaign would travel to Guatemala and tell government officials that "Mr. Reagan recognizes that a good deal of dirty work has to be done."[120] Once in office, Reagan would carry out these sentiments by rapidly escalating the US's covert war in the country, by

[116] Douglas Farah, "PAPERS SHOW U.S. ROLE in GUATEMALAN ABUSES: In Declassified Documents, Diplomats Describe Massacres, CIA Ties to Army," International Journal of Health Services 29, no. 4 (1999), 898.
[117] Ibid.,
[118] Jonas, "Dangerous Liaisons: The U.S. in Guatemala," 148.
[119] Farah, "PAPERS SHOW U.S. ROLE IN GUATEMALAN ABUSES," 898."
[120] Grandin, "Washington Trained Guatemala's Mass Murderers - and the Border Patrol Played a Role."

providing critical support to the military leadership of Guatemala. One such example is the de facto head of state: General Efraín Ríos Montt, a man who seized power in a coup during the Spring of 1982 and who Reagan called "a man of great integrity" and "totally dedicated to democracy."[121] In addition to this moral support, Reagan would also go to great lengths to further supply the Guatemalan security apparatus with monetary assistance, equipment and manpower to further bolster their operations.

In assisting us with further interrogating the activities of the US government during the latter half of the insurgency (from 1980 until 1995) comes from the Department of Defense (DoD) who released their *Guatemala Review: Report to the Secretary of Defense on DoD Activities in Guatemala*. This document, while still containing many sections which have remained classified, reveals the extensive nature of US support for the US counter-insurgency operations. In describing the nature of their intervention, the DoD states that the US was working around four main objectives: "promoting a stable democratic government to include ending the Marxist insurgency; eliminating human rights abuses; responding to the economic and social needs of the Guatemalan people; and reducing drugs and drug trafficking."[122] Throughout the 1980s in particular, specific US activities were focused on gathering intelligence on insurgent groups for the Guatemalan military and then further their operations against these factions. In order to carry out this mission, the DoD reports in this 15 year time frame "there were 1,366 deployments… involving at least 25,021 DoD personnel."[123] Additionally, the US provided substantial material support to the Guatemalan government in the form of "$28 million in grant aid and $3.384 million in International Military Education and Training[,]" as well as a UH-1

[121] Ibid.,
[122] Department of Defense Office of Inspector General, "Guatemala Review: Report to the Secretary of Defense on DoD Activities in Guatemala (U)" (United States Government, December 6, 1995), 4.
[123] Ibid., 5.

Table 1. DoD Deployments to Guatemala 1980 to July 1995

Year	Number of DoD Deployments	Number of Personnel
1980	20	52
1981	24	46
1982	32	55
1983	35	55
1984	46	60
1985	41	50
1986	45	55
1987	92	158
1988	90	596
1989	110	1,404
1990	119	1,249
1991	66	211
1992	149	712
1993	225	7,721
1994	172	7,637
1995	100	4,960
Total	**1,366**	**25,021**

helicopter in 1983. With regards to the specific activities that US personnel were carrying out during this time, most of it has remained classified; this only released operations were a "joint humanitarian civic action exercise" held at Fuertes Caminos in 1993 through 1995, and a medical action exercise conducted by the US government in Medrete from 1988 through 1995. Both of these training exercises are described as being conducted to illustrate "for the citizens of Guatemala the role of the military in a democratic society[,]" while also responding to certain material inequalities that they were experiencing. The remaining seven operations have been left classified by the DoD. Similarly, in a section detailing their intelligence collection activities: they state that intelligence was collected on the insurgency and drug trafficking operations — the following 10 pages detailing the specific operations have been left completely classified.[124] What this leaves us with is that there is a clear picture of a tremendous amount of resources and

[124] Ibid., 8 - 23.

manpower being directed into Guatemala during the ending years of the conflict — their exact operations within the country leave a lot of room for further investigation. Nonetheless, it is clear that throughout this time, the US government has actively positioned itself as an integral actor within the security and military structures of Guatemala.

It seems almost absurd how much resources the United States have funneled into this small Central American country. Yet at the same time the larger citizenry of the US seem amnestic about our involvement in Guatemala — other Cold War battlegrounds have obfuscated this history. Even the US government for its part seems to not remember their own complicity in creating a state of mass-violence. To this, Grandin (2004) details that by 1986, the US State Department had already undergone a process of forgetting their own positionality vis-à-vis Guatemala. In a report summarizing the previous two decades of conflict in the country, the State Department would make the statement that "Guatemala is a violent society."[125] Discussing the seeming institutionalization of violence as a means to accomplish political aims, the report writes that "the explanation for Guatemala's high level of violence probably is rooted in cultural and sociological factors unique to Guatemala."[126] In further explaining this, the State Department makes the claim that this violent tendency in society is originally derived from an indigenous culture where violence is used to settle any dispute.[127] The narrative that the US government is perpetuating here is first and foremost fundamentally racist, as it plays into larger colonialist stereotypes of indigenous people as being "uncivilized." Secondly, it provides the US with a convenient reason for the mass-violence which actively obfuscates their own responsibility for empowering violence in the Guatemalan military. Grandin (2004) puts it best when he writes that: "the imaginative projection of violent propensities upon Guatemalans abetted official

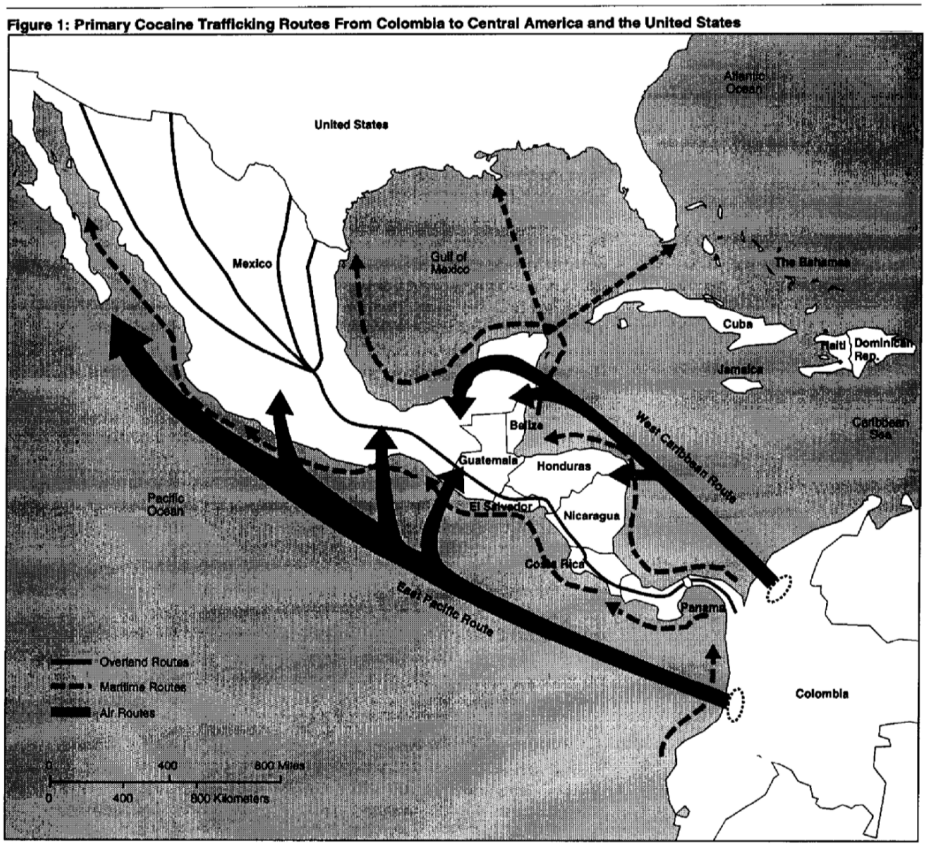
[125] Grandin, The Last Colonial Massacre, 99.
[126] Ibid., 100.
[127] Ibid., 100.

amnesia about U.S. collusion in repression — an amnesia that, to borrow from the document itself, became institutionalized over time."[128] The political effect of this institutionalized amnesia has been immense. Despite the US's direct involvement in further de-stabilizing Guatemala throughout the civil war, following the end of the conflict the US would not only be deployed in the country, but by most available metrics it would escalate its presence. This time, however, US intervention would shift away from the previously pursued national security threat of Communism — as the Cold War had by and large come to a close in 1989 — and instead justify its presence under the newly articulated "war on drugs."

War on Drugs Interventions

In the 1990s, the US became intimately involved with drug interdiction in Guatemala in an effort to secure the borders between the Central American state and its neighbors. The US government and its various policing agencies, viewed Guatemala as a central piece in their strategy against the movement of narcotics toward the United States due to its geography as a halfway point between the cocaine-producing regions of South America and the United States. The DoD touched on its own participation in this process in the aforementioned report on Guatemala where it stated that "after 1989, the focus of intelligence collection activity shifted from the insurgency to narcotics trafficking… [and] since 1990, DoD personnel in Guatemala have supported the Drug Enforcement Administration's effort to interdict narcotics trafficking in Guatemala by transporting law enforcement personnel, detecting suspected trafficking activity, providing intelligence support and assisting in planning counterdrug operations."[129] According to the numbers they provided in their report, approximately 23,894 DoD agents were deployed to

[128] Ibid, 101.
[129] Department of Defense, GUATEMALA REVIEW, 5.



Guatemala during the period of 1989 to 1995.[130] While some of these personnel might have been assigned to work on cases related to the insurgency, as the ending years of the conflict coincide with this increased focus around the movement of drugs. It is evident that under this global approach to immobilizing drug traffickers, the US became increasingly empowered to operate in the country in an unparalleled fashion.

Assisting us with further understanding how extensive this intervention was, in August 1994, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that in addition to the DoD, the State Department, Drug Enforcement Agency, U.S. Customs, and U.S. Border Patrol were all involved in Guatemala under the auspices of carrying out Operation Cadence. Operation Cadence was an inter-agency directive — an inter-state effort with collaboration from local

[130] Ibid., 5.

police and military authorities — involving the "deployment of specially trained U.S. law enforcement agents to Guatemala who worked with information and intelligence developed by DEA, DOD, and Customs to seize trafficking aircraft and their cargoes."[131] Moreover, in addition to drug interdiction activities, US law enforcement agencies were also concerned with funneling funds and infrastructure to, as well as carry out training exercises with, the Guatemalan National Police, Guatemalan Treasury Police, and Guatemala Military Intelligence in order to bolster their drug enforcement capacities. Through this operation, in the fiscal year of 1993 alone, these agencies directed over $48 million dollars to support the various programs of this operation. To illustrate the extent to which US operations have become so widespread in the country, one Guatemalan senior narcotics control officer stated that "air and land interdiction rates in Guatemala would fall by at least 80 percent without U.S. assistance."[132] The US agencies regarded Operation Cadence and their drug interdiction actions in Guatemala to be examples of their most successful programs in Central America — a model to be further replicated.[133]

Within this report, two of the involved agencies which are of particular interest to this study are the roles that the U.S. Customs Service and the U.S. Border Patrol serve in bolstering the counter-narcotics operations. Starting with the Customs Service, their operations focus on tracking the movement of drug traffickers once they cross into Guatemalan airspace and then coordinating with the interdiction teams in Guatemala on where the suspects will land in the country. Additionally, they also provide general narcotics interdiction and inspection training to Guatemalan authorities.[134] The Border Patrol, meanwhile, was the most involved agency in the country, going further than just advising and also actively carrying out drug interdiction

[131] United States General Accounting Office, "Drug Control: Interdiction Efforts in Central America Have Had Little Impact on the Flow of Drugs," August 1994, 6.
[132] Ibid.,7.
[133] Ibid., 4.
[134] Ibid., 32.

operations on the ground in Guatemala in conjunction with the local police. The report details that the specific mandate of the US Border Patrol involved "instruct[ing] host country personnel in road interdiction techniques and methods for controlling the overland movement of narcotics."[135] Implicit in both the activities of the Customs Service and Border Patrol is an underlying effort to harden Guatemala's porous borders. The GAO state it more clearly themselves when they write that the Central American states are "used as a bridge by drug traffickers" and the efforts of US border police in the region are to securitize the region to such a degree that this is no longer possible.[136] The presence of these two organizations in Guatemala as early as 1995, demonstrates that the same agencies which would later police migrants under the DHS, were already active in furthering US security interests.

Closing Thoughts

The "war on drugs" is still very much a reality of the political landscape in Guatemala. US intervention in narcotic interdiction is ongoing with one such example being the deployment of 200 Marines to Guatemala in 2012 as a part of "Operation Martillo, a military plan meant to disrupt cocaine trafficking routes that pass through Central America on their way from Colombia to the United States."[137] In response to the continued presence of the US military in their country, Iduvina Henandez Batres from the Guatemala City-based NGO *Seguridad en Democracia* (SEDEM, Security in Democracy) stated that "we have the sense that [fighting narcotrafficking] is a pretext to return to the level of military deployment that was maintained during the height of the armed conflict, which resulted in acts of genocide."[138] Clearly to Batres, the US's continued

[135] Ibid., 26.
[136] Ibid., 2.
[137] Dawn Marie Paley, "Strategies of a New Cold War: US Marines and the Drug War in Guatemala," Toward Freedom, December 20, 2012.
[138] Ibid.,

presence is larger than any one specific political objective; rather, intervention has been perennial, focused on maintaining a strong political presence in the country in order to achieve the shifting aims of US national security policy.

While it has become increasingly clear that since 1954 the US has maintained some form of presence in Guatemala, we should not make the assumption that each of these forms of intervention constitute the same shape of intervention. US involvement has been dynamic, constantly shifting from one threat to another — never having a concrete conclusion; yet, what has remained consistent is that US interests in Guatemala have always been justified under the guise of national security. Meanwhile, what has this meant for Guatemala's borders? Paasi (1998) assists us with this, wherein they write that "boundaries are not 'constants' but mean different things for different actors in different contexts."[139] As such, borders — the institution tasked with containing and to a large degree producing a state's sovereignty — are dynamic processes whose meanings are always changing in response to different political pressures. While borders are often conceived as tools of selective inclusion/exclusion in a normative sense, the repeated incursion of US agents into Guatemala has demonstrated that their own mobility is seldom affected. In this process, the borders of Guatemala have become redefined to such an extent that when the US policing apparatus intervenes in the country, it has become a normal affair. All the while, this process is also reflective of the US's power which enables it to contest and produce Guatemala's borders. While this relationship has empowered agents of US foreign policy, a similar process of disempowerment has occurred at the scale of the migrant in Guatemala who have experienced displacement and have chosen to move — confronting a growing world of walls.

[139] Paasi, Boundaries as Social Processes, 81.

Chapter Four: U.S. Homeland-Securitizing Guatemala's Borders

It has become increasingly clear that for agents of US foreign policy, Guatemala's borders have been permeable for the purpose of their movement. In this regard, the borders around Guatemala have acted much more like frontiers at the periphery of the United States - carefully constructed and produced to be conducive to further implementing the aims of US policy. Up until this point, however, the focus of the story: migration, has largely lied at the margin of this conversation. One such reason for this is that while Guatemala has consistently remained a concern of those who construct US national security, the mobility of Central Americans has only become a relatively recent focus of US foreign policy in the region. As such, the objective of this chapter is to first demystify the role of migration as a national security threat to the US policing apparatus, and then how these perceived threats have legitimated the continued US presence in Guatemala, as well as what that intervention has entailed.

Border Policing After September 11th

In the 9/11 Commission Report, the commission members clearly identified that in their opinion — and in that of national policymakers — weak borders and poor migration controls were one of the principal security shortcomings which lead to the attack. Within the reports executive summary, the committee described that prior to 9/11 the US had a system of "permeable borders and immigration controls[,]" which was created as a result of that "neither the State Department's consular officers nor the Immigration and Naturalization Service's inspectors and agents were ever considered full partners in a national counterterrorism effort. Protecting borders was not a national security issue before 9/11."[140] Much of this analysis around seemingly-permeable borders is what lies at the greater crux of what the committee identifies as

[140] TThe 9/11 Commission, "9/11 Commission Report: Executive Summary," Office of Justice Programs, 2004, 13

the two systemic weaknesses plaguing the US border system: "a lack of well-developed counterterrorism measures as a part of border security and an immigration system not able to deliver on its basic commitments, much less support counterterrorism."[141] The articulation of these systemic weaknesses, contributes toward the construction of a national security narrative which positions migrants and their mobility as an active threat to the safety of the United States as there exists the possibility that illegal entrants may be terrorists. An immediate air of suspicion is cast upon migrant persons — many of whom, much like terrorists, are also traveling by way of false documentation. In addressing these identified weaknesses, the commission advocates for the further expansion of security and policing in the zones between the ports of entry, while working with Mexican and Canadian authorities to expand the policing of migrants in these spaces. In many respects, this was not necessarily a novel policy recommendation as the Border Patrol had been militarizing this part of the country since their earlier national strategy: *Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond*. This document articulates that through a build-up of wall, security systems, and law enforcement in the US Southwest they could accomplish a strategy of "prevention through deterrence" by raising "the risk of apprehension to the point that many will consider it futile to continue to attempt illegal entry."[142] While the US policing apparatus was broadly heading towards militarizing this region, 9/11 would mark a watershed moment in the identification of unauthorized migration as a national security threat.

The consequences of these policy recommendations are evident in the ways in which the US-Mexico border has undergone a radical transformation by way of a massive increase in Border Patrol personnel and the implementation of technologies designed for a war zone. In a

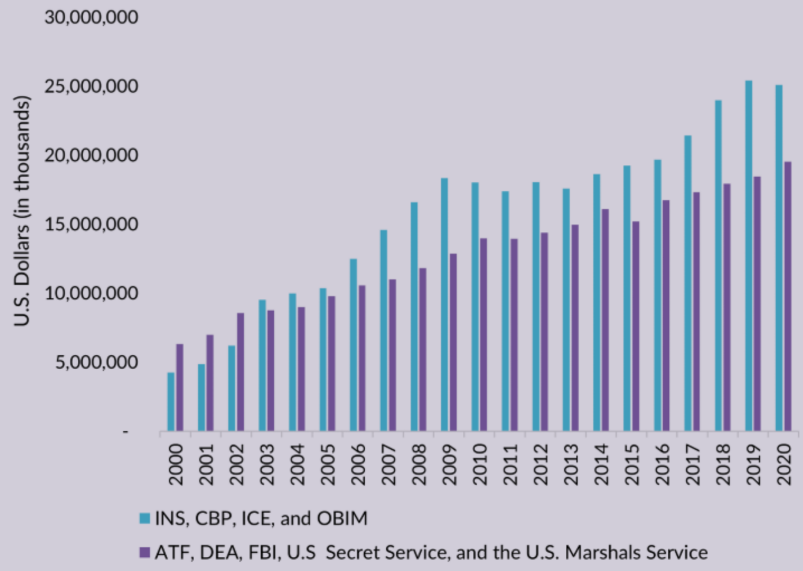
[141] 9/11 Commission, "The 9/11 Commission Report," July 22, 2004, 384
[142] US Border Patrol, "National Strategy: Border Patrol Strategic Plan 1994 and Beyond," 1994, 1.

2021 report, Muzaffar Chishti and Jessica Bolter assert that the legacy of 9/11 for immigration has been one where:

> national security remains the dominant, if not exclusive, lens through which all immigration policy is viewed. The result is a highly securitized immigration apparatus with vastly increased budgets and large-scale arrests, detention, and removal of noncitizens based on significantly enhanced data-sharing between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.[143]

What this looks like in practice is that federal spending since FY 2000 has increased nearly sixfold from an initial budget of $4.3 billion to the $25.1 billion that is appropriated for immigration enforcement today. Since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security

Figure 1. Annual Budgets for U.S. Immigration Enforcement and Principal Federal Criminal Law Enforcement Agencies, FY 2000-20



Notes: Immigration enforcement data for 2000 cover the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS); in subsequent years, immigration enforcement was carried out by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Office of Biometric Identity Management (OBIM). The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the Secret Service; and the U.S. Marshals Service are the federal government's principal federal criminal law enforcement agencies.
Sources: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of archived Department of Justice Budget Summaries and Fact Sheets from 2000 through 2014, available online; Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Budgets-in-Brief from 2003 through 2020, available online; Department of Justice Budget Summaries and Fact Sheets from 2015 through 2022, available online.

[143] Muzaffar Chishti Jessica Bolter, "Two Decades after 9/11, National Security Focus Still Dominates U.S. Immigration System," Migration Policy Institute, September 21, 2021.

shortly after 9/11, the United States has cumulatively spent more than $315 billion on the enforcement of federal immigration laws. Similarly, as appropriations increased, enforcement personnel has tripled from an initial 32,000 employees under the INS to a current 105,000 employees between the different immigrant components of the DHS.[144] The driving logic behind this incredible increase in immigration spending is that under the Secure Fence Act of 2006, the DHS was mandated to attain complete operational control of the entire US-Mexico border, with the congressional act further defining that the department must work towards "preventing 'all unlawful entries into the United States'— specifying that this would include blocking terrorists — through a network of barriers and technology."[145] The demand to prevent all unlawful entries is an impossible mandate for the DHS to reach, yet this (coupled with the multitude of funding available to them) empowers the department to pursue many — unconventional, often not legally authorized — methods of policing to address the movement of migratory populations.

Department of Homeland Security

The DHS only came into existence a little over 20 years ago with the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, initiating the largest governmental reorganization since the Department of Defense was created in 1947. In this process, 22 existing agencies with a diverse array of responsibilities would be restructured and placed under one executive cabinet agency. In this process, the two agencies with authority over migration, U.S. Customs Service (which the Border Patrol fell under) and the Immigration and Naturalization Service would be reorganized into three agencies: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.[146]

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[144] Ibid.,
[145] Ibid.,
[146] Department of Homeland Security, "History," Department of Homeland Security, June 15, 2018.

What the DHS introduced beyond a central executive organization managing most of America's security affairs, was the notion of *homeland security* within the US political lexicon. Since 9/11, no American leader, nor the agency itself, has clearly defined what the term encompasses. To the extent that a definition has been provided, the 2010 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review characterizes homeland security as centrally concerned with threats related to terrorism, but all the while also involved with the "intersection of evolving threats and hazards with traditional governmental and civic responsibilities for civil defense, emergency response, law enforcement, customs, border patrol, and immigration"[147] Kahan asserts that as a result of the broad scope of these responsibilities, homeland security has become something that is highly flexible, being applicable to wherever policymakers see fit. Kahan makes the case that "without standards, anyone might be able to characterize any issue or concern they believe poses a 'threat' to our nation as a homeland security issue, in order to gain greater policy attention or increased funding for pet programs—even if the 'threat' is not clearly related to the types of dangers that can be credibly said to affect the nation's security."[148] James Traub (2016), has further written on the idea of threat where he dictates that: "the rise of "homeland" thus tracks the rise of the national sense of vulnerability. As we use it now, "homeland" means "the country insofar as it is endangered."[149] In further elucidating upon this point, Masha Gessen in their study of DHS policing activities in Portland during the Summer of 2020 writes a critical reflection on the political ramifications of this organization where they say:

> "Homeland" is an anxious, combative word: it denotes a place under assault, in need of aggressive defense from shape-shifting dangers. The original proposal for the D.H.S.

[147]Jerome Kahan, "What's in a Name? The Meaning of Homeland Security – Journal of Security, Intelligence, and Resilience Education," Journal of Homeland Security Education, no. 2 (2013), 6
[148] Kahan, "What's in a Name? The Meaning of Homeland Security," 8.
[149] James Traub, "The Dark History of Defending the 'Homeland,'" The New York Times, April 5, 2016.

> described the agency as "a new government structure to protect against invisible enemies that can strike with a wide variety of weapons"; one hypothetical example of an invisible enemy was "a non-citizen that intends to enter our nation and attack one of our chemical facilities." The nation used to protect itself against other nations and their hostile military forces, but now it had to fear individuals. This is the premise on which secret police forces are built. Their stated purpose is to find danger where normal human activity appears to be taking place. The D.H.S. began with mobilizing against the foreign-born, via Immigration and Customs Enforcement (which replaced the Immigration and Naturalization Service). The logic of the secret police, however, dictates that it perpetually has to look in new places for threats.[150]

Through this passage, Gessen argues that the Department of Homeland Security, in cases where rule of law is suspended, acts with virtual impunity and is weaponized against the continually produced threats to US security.

Globalizing the Homeland

The consequences of the 9/11 attacks were felt beyond the immediate territory of the United States, as around the world new security systems would form through cooperation with the US. One source of this pressure came from a 9/11 commission recommendation that the US must go further than just policing its own immediate borders, and begin a campaign of global border cooperation in order to scrutinize inter-state movement. In the words of the report:

> The U.S. government cannot meet its own obligations to the American people to prevent the entry of terrorists without a major effort to collaborate with other governments. We should do more to exchange terrorist information with trusted allies, and raise U.S. and

[150]Masha Gessen, "Homeland Security Was Destined to Become a Secret Police Force," The New Yorker, July 25, 2020.

> global border security standards for travel and border crossing over the medium and long term through extensive international cooperation.[151]

What this policy recommendation works to assert is that the United States, and its law enforcement agencies, will never fully "secure the border" without also militarizing the borderlands between and within every other country on earth — especially those where identified threats to national security may originate from. It would be the DHS that would become centrally responsible for executing this policy recommendation.

Six years later, the subcommittee on the border, maritime, and global counterterrorism convened for a hearing on "Homeland Security Beyond Our Borders: Examining the Status of Counterterrorism Coordination Overseas." In the introduction to this hearing, the subcommittee chairwoman Hon. Loretta Sanchez described the purpose of this congressional group as discussing strategies for the US to "push our borders out,"[152] and using this hearing to evaluate the role of the DHS as the principal organization working toward accomplishing this task. In this hearing, Marisa R. Lino, the Assistant Secretary in charge of international affairs in the DHS described the growing international scope of the department's affairs. In this, she describes how the DHS has "over 1700 personnel assigned outside of the United States in approximately 70 different countries." In the eyes of the DHS, the scope of their mission "does not begin at the U.S. coastline or border. It begins before a person sets foot on an airplane bound for the U.S. or before a container is loaded onto a ship bound for a U.S. port."[153] In delineating the international authority that the DHS enjoys, Lino describes that some "overseas personnel are assigned to embassies; the rest work in locations related directly to their programs: airports, sea ports, border

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[151] 9/11 Commission, "The 9/11 Commission Report,"385.
[152] Marisa R. Lino, Homeland Security Beyond Our Borders: Examining the Status of Counterterrorim Coordination Overseas, interview by Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism, 2007, 2.
[153] Ibid., 12.

crossing stations, and so on."[154] As of this hearing, the primary bulk of the work that the department was engaged in was focused on "training and technical assistance to foreign law enforcement agencies based on the expertise developed through domestic operations."[155] Specifically, the sectors in which they aim to invest the majority of their resources abroad are in the areas of "maritime security, border management and fraudulent document detection."[156] Through these excerpts from Marisa Lino's statement in the congressional hearing, the DHS's global strategy becomes better illuminated as a means to expand the reach of the US borders vis-a-vis the exportation of the strategies and objectives of US law enforcement entities — which were developed in relation to the political environment of the US — onto the authorities in countries which lay at the exterior of the US security systems. In effect, every border — and particularly those identified as a concern to the homeland security of the US — should become as militarized as the US-Mexico border, where these approaches of policing were first developed.

What Marisa Lino laid out in this hearing has largely stayed consistent within the approach of the DHS as it pertains to international policing. Five years later, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano under the Obama administration would repeat similar points said by her predecessors working in the DHS under the Bush administration. In a panel discussion hosted by the Wilson Center, Secretary Napolitano would speak at length about the "international dimension of homeland security." In her introduction, she gives insight into the rapid growth of the DHS's international presence over the previous five years: the department, she reported, had stationed personnel in five more countries and grew to have the "third largest international footprint of any agency of the federal government."[157] To Sec. Napolitano, this externalization of

[154] Ibid., 14.
[155] Ibid., 13.
[156] Ibid., 13.
[157] Secretary Janet Napolitano, "International Dimension of Homeland Security" (January 20, 2012), 3.

DHS activities is an inevitable result as "domestic security and international security are inextricably intertwined… And that means that we have to look at our physical borders as our last line of defense and not as our first."[158] While much of this conversation around security is focused on issues of terrorism, Sec. Napolitano makes it clear that the department views immigration enforcement as the second most important element of the DHS activities abroad.[159] In this regard, while the global expansion of the department is carried out through a discourse of reducing violence — strategies to globalize America's migration regime follow closely behind or are implemented simultaneously.

The Border Between the United States and Guatemala

As it has become the official policy of the organization to expand ever outwards the organization's sphere of security in order to secure the US borders and "defend the homeland." Naturally, Guatemala — as it has many times throughout its history — is a geographically logical space for these apparatuses to expand into. US presence in the country has already been long established, and a focus on the border while often not an explicit mission objective — it was an implicit goal that came with the securitization of the state against the movement of drugs. Additionally, Guatemalan displacement and migration is not a novel phenomenon as hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans traveled northwards to Mexico, Canada, and the United States during the civil war. While these trends had somewhat declined following the 1996 peace accord, migration to the United States started to increase rapidly throughout the 2010s due to the proliferation of mass violence brought by various regional drug cartels, as well as other forms of structural violence brought on by socio-economic decline further intensified by the increasing

[158] Ibid., 3.
[159] Ibid., 28.

effects of global climate change which disproportionately harms the largely rural and agricultural sectors that many in Guatemala are dependent on.[160] Similar to many other displaced

communities, the Guatemalan — as well as other Central American — migrants have faced widespread racialization and dehumanization by different groups within the United States.[161] Conservative media, as well as different presidential administrations, have made it a point to vilify these populations, and mobilize public outrage around their movement towards and into the country — notably in response to the *caravans* that Central Americans traveled in for collective protection. One example of this dehumanization came in April of 2017 when during an interview, President Trump stated that his deportation of Central Americans was aimed at: "putting MS-13 in jail and getting them the hell out of our country… we are cleaning out cities and towns of hard-line criminals, some of the worst people on earth, people that rape and kill

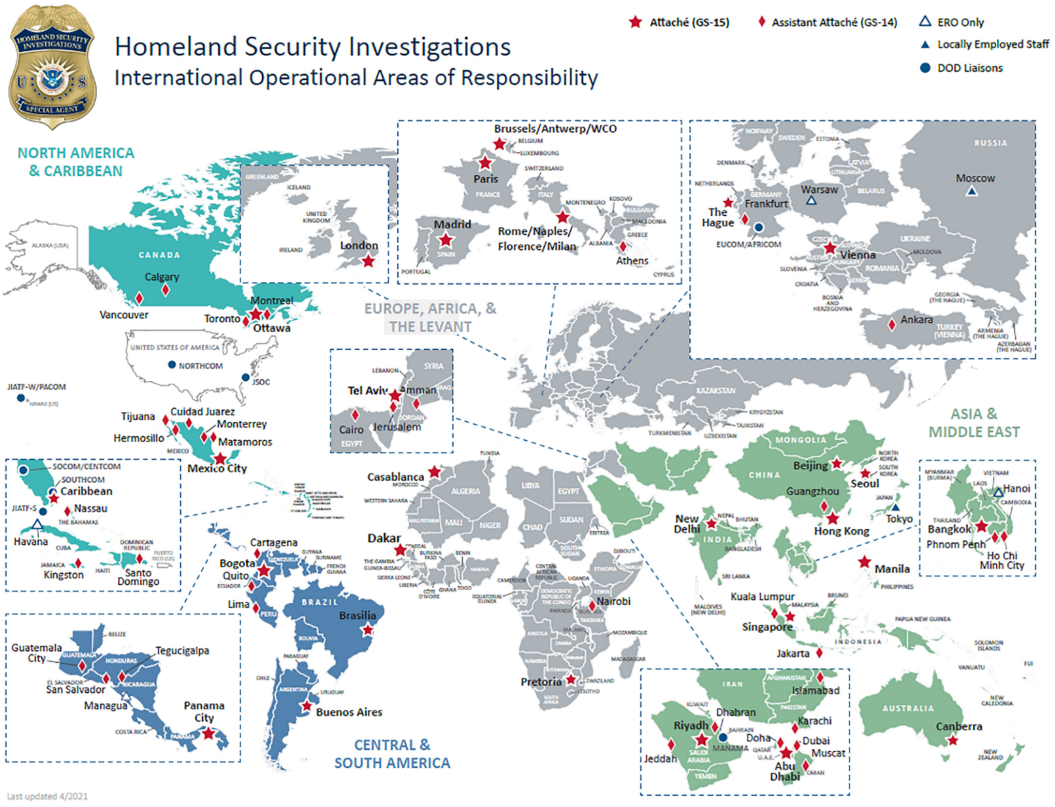
[160] Sarah Bermeo Alverio David Leblang, and Gabriela Nagle, "Rural Poverty, Climate Change, and Family Migration from Guatemala," Brookings, April 4, 2022.
[161] The map above comes from the Norwegian Refugee Council report: "Fleeing for their lives in Central America."

women, people that are killing people just for the sake of having fun."[162] In these horrific and deeply racist statements, Trump is not only conflating Guatemalan migration with the drug cartel: MS-13, he is also articulating a vision of a foreign policy that aims to prevent further Guatemalan migration. This was an approach which was already underway in Guatemala, as detailed by Miller (2019) where during his visit to the country in January of 2017, he noted that the country has increased border patrol units supported with "training, equipment, and orientations" from the US government.[163]

The New Insurgents

For much of its early intervention into the border policing of Guatemala, the US had primarily concerned itself with materially bolstering the capabilities of the Guatemalan authorities — while also establishing its own infrastructure for policing. By and large, little is known about the extent to which the DHS was operating within Guatemala under the George W. Bush administration. What is known, however, is that at some point the department started operating and stationing a number of agents (including from ICE and the CBP) at the United States embassy in Guatemala City. This operation would continue to grow, and eventually, the DHS would open an "assistant attache office" near the US embassy, where they housed the "Homeland Security Investigations," agents, under the DHS's International Operations Division.[164] ICE on their website states that the attached office serves the purpose of housing various immigration-related and international visitor programs which provide services to Guatemalans. Additionally, these offices also hold the "Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit

[162] Leisy J. Abrego and Alejandro Villalpando, "Racialization of Central Americans in the United States," in Precarity and Belonging (Rutgers University Press, 2021), 60.
[163] Miller, Empire of Borders, 30.
[164] U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, "International Operations."



Programs" (TCIU).[165] In a February 2017 memorandum, DHS secretary John Kelly would state that the principal purpose of the attache office and the TCIU program in the region were to "dismantle transnational criminal organizations that are facilitating and profiting from the smuggling routes to the United States" and that he advocated for expanding ICE and CBP's presence at the office for these purposes.[166] While there are homeland security investigation attached offices all across the globe, it is clear that their operations in Guatemala have provided an ideal staging area for further organizing their policing strategies of migrant populations.[167]

Miller (2019) provides a useful insight into the material investment committed by the US government when he details how from the period of 2008 to 2014 the US government provided increasing funding to Guatemala for the purpose of assisting the country in addressing its "border

[165] Ibid.,
[166] John Kelly to McAleenan Kevin et al., "Implementing the President's Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements Policies," February 20, 2017, 12.
[167] Map is from: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website: "International Operations."

security deficiencies."[168] Specifically, this money was coming to the country through the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) — which was giving over $1 billion to Guatemala as well as El Salvador and Honduras to bolster their border control systems.[169]

During this time period the Pentagon was also aiding the countries with an additional $357.2 million on top of CARSI for "similar purposes including border enforcement."[170] Within Guatemala, a significant amount of this funding has gone towards bolstering various military units which are located on their border with other countries. These are the Interagency Task Forces: Tecún Umán (on the Guatemala-Mexico border), Maya Chortí (Honduran-Guatemalan border), and Xinca (on the (Guatemala-El Salvador border).[171] All three of these interagency task forces receive a significant amount of funding and training from SOUTHCOM (the US Southern Military Command structure), as well as support from DHS agencies such as the CBP and ICE.[172] In many regards, how are SOUTHCOM's activities here something remarkable? The US has been supporting Guatemala in counter-insurgency tactics in one form or another for over half a century. The significance of this, however, should be understood that the new insurgents are not necessarily Marxist and indigenous revolutionaries or even drug cartels, but are migrants.

During the closing years of the Obama administration, the DHS's presence in Guatemala experienced rapid growth as it sought to bolster the operations of its TCIU programs. In more detail, Isacson (2019) describes that the TCIUs are:

> comprised of foreign law enforcement officials, customs officers, immigration officers, and prosecutors who undergo a strict vetting process and complete a prerequisite

[168] Ibid., 37.
[169] Ibid., 37.
[170] Ibid., 38.
[171] All three of these military units appropriate the name of different indigenous groups in Guatemala.
[172] Isacson Adam and Kinosian Sarah, "Which Central American Military and Police Units Get the Most U.S. Aid?," WOLA, April 15, 2016.

> three-week International Task Force Agent Training (ITAT) course at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC). Upon completion of training, TCIU members work together with ICE to investigate significant threats.[173]

While the TCIU had been operating in some capacity prior, in 2015 the program was expanded in response to the growing number of Guatemala migrants who were crossing the US - Mexico border. In legitimating this policy, a Government Accountability Report details that the TCIU programs in Guatemala were expanded in order to respond to the number of unaccompanied children who were migrating from Guatemala.[174] The growth of this unit, however, empowers the DHS to conduct operations beyond just disrupting child smuggling. Rather with the increased resources, the DHS can conduct operations that are focused on migration much more broadly. One such example is the TCIU's Operation Citadel which was first started in 2014 and has continued to operate into the present. Citadel involves DHS (with CBP and ICE) agents operating in Guatemala with the intention of dismantling "large-scale transnational criminal organizations involved in human smuggling."[175]

It is common to read, and especially from government sources, that the US is involved in taking down criminal organizations involved in human smuggling. What this particular use of language is erasing: is that they are effectively working to dismantle migrant mobility. Statistics from the Mexican National Institute of Migration report that six out of ten Guatemalan migrants pay traffickers to cross the border and another 43% pay for guidance through Mexico — often for the reason that it would be safer for them to rely on human traffickers to assist them in going northward.[176] Certainly, the line between being consensually and nonconsensually trafficked is

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[173] Isacson Adam, "80 Homeland Security Agents to Guatemala? We've Seen This Before. It Doesn't Work.," WOLA, June 5, 2019.
[174] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Improved Evaluation Efforts Could Enhance Agency Programs to Reduce Unaccompanied Child Migration," July 2015, 13.
[175] Isacson,"80 Homeland Security Agents to Guatemala? We've Seen This Before. It Doesn't Work."
[176] Guatemala Human Rights Commission, "Los Zetas in Guatemala."

often blurry. Nevertheless, migrants are highly reliant on these services in order to ensure their safe passage and the increased policing of these organizations adversely affect migrant mobility.

The Trump Administration

The Trump administration significantly bolstered the activities of the DHS in Guatemala to an unprecedented level. In a similar manner, displacement and migration from Central America had also reached unprecedented levels. One report from DHS stated that 72% of all migrants who were apprehended in FY 2019 had originated from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. In their own words, the DHS's ever-increasing presence in the region was done with the aim to "further expand asylum capabilities and improve safety, security, and prosperity throughout the region" by way of increasing these countries' border security systems.[177] Throughout 2017 and 2018, much of the DHS's activities mirrored what the organization had been typically doing during the Obama administration, however, with an increased focus on border security. One report from GAO indicated that in 2017, CBP and ICE agents (among other US agencies) trained over 4,600 Guatemalan police officers on border patrol and migration management approaches.[178] Similarly, in a May 2018 prepared statement before the House of Representatives, Guadalupe Ramirez — Acting Director of Field Operations for the CBP — stated that in Guatemala the CBP "conducts International Border Interdiction training, coordinated and funded by the Department of State… these courses provide instruction on multiple aspects of border security, including targeting and risk management, interdiction, smuggling, search methodologies, analysis, canine enforcement, and narcotics detection

[177] Department of Homeland Security, "Fact Sheet: DHS Agreements with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador," Homeland Security, November 7, 2019.
[178] U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Central American Police Training: State and USAID Should Ensure Human Rights Content Is Included as Appropriate, and State Should Improve Data," GAO, no. GAO-18-618, 20.

identification."[179] These policies demonstrate that while the scope of DHS's operations in Guatemala has tended to be wide-ranging — it has become increasingly focused on the ways in which they can directly influence Guatemalan policy towards the securitization of borders.

President Trump's vision around increased policing of migrant communities would come to greater fruition within Guatemala where on May 27th, 2019, the DHS signed a "Memorandum of Cooperation" (MOC) with the Guatemalan Ministry of Government which guaranteed increased cooperation in policing the displaced and migratory populations both from Guatemala and also transiting through the Central American state. In a congressional hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, representatives from the State Department described the agreement as means to designate "areas in which the two governments commit to working in good faith to enhance cooperation on border security, training, joint actions to counter illicit flows of people, drugs, and money, and improvements in the identification, administration, and detention of illegal immigrants."[180] Effectively, the DHS is framing migrants, not as individuals who are fleeing mass violence, climate change, and disintegrating economic structures, but rather as criminals aiming to subvert US law. The social construction of migration as a crime is accomplished by associating their mobility with the similar movement of illicit drugs and money, further empowering the DHS to respond to migration in the same way they would police cartels.

In response to this memorandum, thirty-five civil society organizations from the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica expressed their deep concern over the MOC as another effort of the department to export and externalize the border enforcement policies of the US onto Central America. The aspects of this policy that these organizations find themselves principally concerned with are the physical deployment of DHS agents, as well as agents from

[179] Guadalupe Ramirez, "Combating Opioid Smuggling along the Southwest Border," Written Testimony, 7/8.
[180] Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "U.S. Policy in Mexico and Central America: Ensuring Effective Policies to Address the Crisis at the Border," Hearing, September 25, 2019, 42.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) into Guatemalan territory. According to one Reuters article, the "DHS would deploy up to 65 agents from Customs and Border Protection, and up to 24 agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement" with more agents possibly being deployed in the near future.[181] Specifically, with regards to the make-up of the ICE agents involved, Miroff and Sieff (2019) reported that 18 will be from the Homeland Security Investigation and intelligence analyst division of the organization, and the other six will be from the Enforcement and Removal operations division. These agents representing ICE are particularly interesting because it illustrates how many of the individuals they are bringing in have more than just technical knowledge as they are extensively trained in conducting field operations.[182] While a DHS official informed Reuters that the agents would act as "advisers" with "no law enforcement authority," these civil society organizations reported that "DHS investigators have already participated in a joint anti-smuggling operation in Guatemala City under this agreement, and CBP and ICE agents are currently present in Guatemala on its border with Mexico".[183] In the eyes of civil society organizations, the presence of US immigration enforcement authorities in Guatemala is a threat to the mobility of Central American migrants and an attempt by the US government to "circumvent its obligations towards asylum seekers" by preventing them from reaching the US - Mexico border in any capacity.[184]

In addition to these civil society organizations who see the DHS's activities in Guatemala as a clear case of border externalization, individuals within the DHS have also said just as much. Mirof (2019) reported how an anonymous individual within the DHS stated that "U.S. authorities hope that the effort will cut off popular routes to the United States and deter migrants from

[181] Sofia Menchu, "U.S. To Deploy up to 89 DHS Agents to Guatemala: Document," Reuters, June 25, 2019.
[182] Nick Miroff and Kevin Sieff, "Trump Administration to Send DHS Agents, Investigators to Guatemala-Mexico Border," Washington Post, May 31, 2019.
[183]Ibid.,; Latin American Working Group, "Press Release: Civil Society Organizations Express Deep Concern over U.S. Efforts to Externalize Border Enforcement to Guatemala," Latin America Working Group, June 14, 2019.
[184] Iibid.,

beginning their journeys north through Mexico." Similarly, acting secretary of the DHS Kevin McAleenan also described the initiative as "combating human trafficking and the smuggling of illegal goods, helping to limit 'push' factors that encourage dangerous irregular migration to the U.S., perpetuating the ongoing crisis at our border."[185] In another statement McAleenan stated that the specific mission in Guatemala holds incredible importance to the Department because "we're going to try and interdict this flow where it starts… [and] address threats at the earliest possible point."[186]Another element of this expansion in DHS activities that is of particular interest is the fact that agents will be assigned to work directly on Guatemala's border with Mexico, and will be authorized to carry a firearm.[187] This marks a significant shift in policy, as prior to this DHS were more concentrated on training Guatemalan police, as well as operating some policing actions internally more centered around Guatemala City. Instead, the DHS will be serving to significantly further militarize Guatemala's borderlands as they "will assist with training on port-of-entry operations as well as internal checkpoints within Guatemala[,]" specifically within the department of Huehuetenango where emigration levels are among the highest in the country.[188] In another statement McAleenan made on the value of the MOC, he stated that "we've invested in a continuing presence in Central America for several years now. What's different about this agreement is the direct operational partnership." As such, the MOC serves to remove some of the previous operational restrictions that the department faced — whilst further entrenching the DHS within the security apparatus of Guatemala.

According to Mirof and Sieff (2019), the presence of DHS agents was well-received by the Morales administration. In fact, U.S. Rep. Vicente Gonzales (D-Tex.) met with Guatemala's

[185] Mirof and Sieff, "Trump administration to send DHS agents, investigators to Guatemala-Mexico border."
[186] Geneva Sands, "US Border Patrol Agents Will Deploy to Guatemala to Train 'Side-By-Side'," CNN, May 31, 2019.
[187] Mirof and Sieff, "Trump administration to send DHS agents, investigators to Guatemala-Mexico border."
[188] Ibid.,

ambassador to the US, who told him that Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales would welcome the presence of the US military on their borders. After this meeting Gonzalez wrote a letter to President Trump where he stated that "Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales has indicated that he would welcome the introduction of U.S. troops on Guatemala's northern border… if you want to see fewer apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border, I would strongly encourage you to seriously consider President Morales' offer."[189] In an article released by the Guatemalan newspaper, Prensa Libre, they included a comment from Mario Mérida — a former Vice Minister of the Interior — who stated that while this proposal should be analyzed for its potential efficacy, he didn't consider the strategy "out of place because he justified that 'it would come to promote the security and economic development of the region.'"[190] While there was never a formal statement made by Morales on this matter, Rep. Gonzalez would state that he would continue to push for military deployment to Guatemala, with Morales approval.[191]

Outside of these statements made from the Guatemalan leadership, other sources in the civil society sphere would oppose the advancement of the US security apparatus into Guatemala. One source of resistance comes from a statement made by from a lawyer for the Guatemalan Studies Center who said that Morales' decision is "contrary to the policy of the right to migrate" and further stated that it is a worrying position to advocate as it negates their national sovereignty by "ceding territory to foreign troops."[192] Similarly, the transnational US-Guatemala solidarity network NISGUA would denounce the expansion of US agents into the country as an act of "border imperialism." To this end, they write that:

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[189] Ibid.,
[190] Edwin Pitán, "Esta Es La Carta Que Evidencia La Oferta de Jimmy Morales de Abrir Fronteras a Soldados de EE. UU.," Pensa Libre, June 1, 2019.
[191] Mirof and Sieff, "Trump administration to send DHS agents, investigators to Guatemala-Mexico border."
[192] Iibd.,

> The War on Drugs and other U.S. foreign policy disasters have moved the southern U.S. border further and further south for decades. In July, the Trump administration accelerated this push south by declaring Guatemala a "third safe country," weeks after militarizing the border department of Huehuetenango with U.S. troops.[193]

In a similar manner to NISGUA'S approach to the MOC, indigenous communities in the Huehuetenango department would protest the imposition of US federal agents in the region by protesting outside a number of government buildings that the DHS was operating out of, holding up signs saying "GRINGOS GO HOME."[194] In further elaborating upon their assertion that this is an act of border imperialism, NISGUA writes that increased US presence in Guatemala — and particularly in Huehuetenango which experienced some of the worst violence during the civil war — is a "violation of the 1996 Peace Accords and a revictimization of survivors of state terror."[195] While one can't assert that these sources of dissent encompass the totality of Guatemalan opinion, as for example Morales' National Convergence Front has largely welcomed US intervention, it is nevertheless clear that there is a high degree of internal opposition.

Closing Thoughts

A little over six months after the MOC would go into effect, the case which opened this thesis would occur. On January 15th, DHS agents would rent a number of unmarked vans in order to detain a number of Honduran migrants, and deport them back across the Guatemala-Honduras border. In the Senate Democrats report on the matter, they write that "CBP personnel participating in the operation had overstepped the authority of their authorized training activities" by assuming a direct role in preventing the migrants from transiting through

[193] Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, "Guatemala Resists U.S. Border Imperialism," NISGUA, September 2019, 1.
[194] Ibid., 2.
[195] Ibid., 2.

Guatemala.[196] Specifically, the DHS violated the INL-DHS interagency agreement which stated that: "U.S. personnel under this agreement will not conduct immigration or law enforcement operations; they are in the country for mentoring, advising and capacity-building purposes only."[197] In the following investigation into this matter, the DHS would attempt to cover-up their involvement by initially notifying the State Department that they were not involved in this police action. One week later, however, the DHS would admit that they had falsely denied their involvement — and would acknowledge that this event violated their mandate in the region.[198]

To the extent that those responsible have been held accountable for their actions, the Democratic staff report writes that "in recognition of the gravity of the transgression committed, DHS stated that it had curtailed the assignment of the personnel in Guatemala who authorized the joint operation and that the individual would be returning to Washington immediately."[199] Beyond placing the responsibility of this action onto one individual, the DHS and associated agencies merely acknowledged that this incident opened the US to a litany of potential liabilities, in addition to failing to ensure that the human rights of those detained were upheld.[200] To this end, the DHS demonstrated that those civil society organizations which spoke out against the MOC as a dangerous escalation were right to do so. As in all, there was no recognition at any governmental level that this event was the result of a deeper systemic empowerment which enabled US agents to act with impunity within Guatemala. Furthermore, there was no commitment, or even suggestion for that matter, to withdraw the DHS presence from the region.

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[196] Minority Staff on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "DHS RUN AMOK?" 6.
[197] Ibid., 9.
[198] Ibid., 7.
[199] Ibid., 7.
[200] Ibid., 8.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

"Reality is not destiny; it's a challenge…

We are not doomed to accept it as it is."[201] *- Eduardo Galeano*

The US has always been crossing Guatemala's borders. Even at the outset of Guatemala's birth as a new state the US found itself involved in its affairs. These interests have been highly dynamic, shifting between the many insurgent threats that the US perceived as violating their national security. To borrow directly from the CIA's own report on the 1954 intervention, for much of the 19th and 20th centuries the US feared the transformation of Guatemala into a "denied area" for the purpose of carrying out US foreign policy.[202] While the US's newest fixations on drug and migration movement has constituted a different form of threat — as these particular activities are less involved with internal political transformation — they have nonetheless ensured continued US involvement.

This relationship can be understood in part through Guatemala's geographic position as the Northernmost Central American state. The US has long held the imperial belief that Central America, and Latin American more broadly, is a region under its exclusive sphere of influence. While this is certainly rooted in a legacy from the Monroe Doctrine, it is still a form of thought that is normalized in US political discourse. This can be seen where in 2014, John Kerry, Secretary of State under the Obama administration, felt comfortable stating "the Western Hemisphere is our backyard. It is critical to us."[203] It is undeniable that other countries in Latin America have also experienced a visceral articulation of this foreign policy (Panama, Colombia,

[201] Scott Witmer, "Writer without Borders," In These Times, July 14, 2006.
[202] Cullather, Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala," 8.
[203] "Secretary Kerry Defining Backyard Diplomacy," C-SPAN, May 9, 2013.

and Chile could speak well to this). Yet, Guatemala has provided a valuable case study where US presence has become highly visible and deeply interwoven into the social fabric of the Guatemalan security regime. Miller (2019) makes note of this during his own trip to Guatemala in 2017, where upon encounter with a major in the US military at the Zacapa military base in the Guatemala-Honduras borderlands, he remarked "I was truly surprised to see a U.S. soldier; I'd expected any U.S. presence to be hidden."[204]

While we can, and should, view the present migration policing apparatus through this extensive history of intervention, we should not view this in a purely teleological manner. In no uncertain terms, should the DHS's activities in deporting Honduran migrants be seen as an inevitable product of history, or even geography for that matter. Each intervention has been undertaken in a very purposeful manner, in order to further achieve the US's national interests. Ultimately, the act of pursuing these interests created the conditions that have forced communities to migrate. The subsequent imposition of migration controls in response to these displacement crises constitutes in the eyes of Harshia Walia (2013): "*border imperialism*." Border imperialism, she argues, is where "border controls are most severely deployed by those Western regimes that create mass displacement, and are most severely deployed against those whose very recourse to migration results from the ravages of capital and military occupations."[205] In the case of Guatemala, one can clearly trace this connection.

One such example can be seen within the department of Huehuetenango in the western highlands of Guatemala. In an article written by Mirof and Sieff (2019), they reported that some of the highest numbers of Guatemalan immigrants are coming from the department of Huehuetenango, as just in a seven month period, from December 2019 to June 2020, more than

[204] Miller, Empire of Borders, 30.
[205] Harsha Walia, Undoing Border Imperialism (Oakland, Ca: Ak Press ; Washington, DC, 2013), 6.

3% of the department left for the US. They further write that "villages along the Pan-American Highway through Huehuetenango have been emptying out, and in some places, residents say half the population has left for the United States in the past two years."[206] The people of Huehuetenango are not foreign to the concept of migration as many people from the region fled north during the civil war. This region in particular saw some of the worst of its violence as its largely indigenous population experienced a total of 89 massacres committed against them by the US-backed counter-insurgency.[207] The ramifications of this violent period have resulted in the indigenous population of Huehuetenango facing steep structural exclusion from the country's political institutions that are dominated by ladino[208] leadership, as well as other tools of social advancement such as education.[209] Additionally, the population of Huehuetenango also faces some of the worst poverty in the country as its dominant economic sector: agriculture, is steeply declining under the growing pressures of climate change.[210] Under pressure from economic instability, food insecurity, as well as growing violence from drug cartels, residents of Huehuetenango feel as if their only choice is to leave. Yet, if the lasting effects of US policy weren't enough, the people of Huehuetenango must also contend with a detachment of DHS agents assigned to their department to assist the Guatemalan police with preventing further emigration.[211] Huehuetenango demonstrates a very clear link between the instability brought about by the US's past interventions and how the current efforts of migration policing is a means to obstruct one of the few tools Guatemalans have to ensure their safety: their mobility.

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[206] Mirof and Sieff, "Trump administration to send DHS agents, investigators to Guatemala-Mexico border."
[207] Gariwo, "Guatemalan Genocide," Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide.; Andrew Selee, Luis Argueta, and Juan José Hurtado Paz, "Migration from Huehuetenango in Guatemala's Western Highlands" (Migration Policy Institute, March 2022), 5.
[208] This term is a legally recognized category in Guatemala referring to people of mixed ancestry, as well as of a non-indigenous background.
[209] Selee, "Migration from Huehuetenango in Guatemala's Western Highlands," 14/6.
[210] Ibid., 20.
[211] Mirof and Sieff, "Trump administration to send DHS agents, investigators to Guatemala-Mexico border."

At the start of Biden's administration, it appeared as if the US might de-escalate its presence in Guatemala. Early in his term President Biden repealed the "Asylum Cooperative Agreements" that Trump created between the US, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. This policy was instituted shortly after the Memorandum of Cooperation, and was a similar product of Trump and the DHS's approach towards migration at that time. While this policy was changed, Biden and the DHS under Secretary Mayorkas did not take steps to renegotiate or repeal the MOC — this agreement was just too beneficial for US interests. As such, the DHS is still in an active border security arrangement with Guatemala. And for all intents and purposes, the DHS — despite its previous overreach — is largely operating business as usual.

In articulating the position of the DHS's operations under the Biden administration, Francis J. Russo a representative from the CBP stated before the Committee on Homeland Security in a July 2021 hearing that "CBP personnel deployed to Guatemala in early June [2021] to provide advisory and capacity-building expertise to the government of Guatemala to improve border security efforts, target human smuggling groups, and enhance trade and customs modernization."[212] Similarly, in this hearing representatives from the Homeland Security Investigations also described the mission of the TCIU in Guatemala as aimed at upsetting human smuggling networks. In accomplishing these tasks, these representatives from the DHS describe how they are working "with the government of Guatemala to open up checkpoints, to conduct inspections."[213] Fundamentally, the DHS is still operating at high capacity within Guatemala. A quick review of recent news articles would also show one just as much. Michael Ruiz from Fox News reported on February 7th 2022, that "ICE teams up with Guatemala police to bust 10 suspected human smugglers linked to 19 murders," then Adam Shaw also from Fox News

[212] Committee on Homeland Security. "DHS'S EFFORTS to DISRUPT TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS in CENTRAL AMERICA ." Hearing. July 28, 2021, 10.
[213] Ibid., 20.

reported on October 29th 2022, that "ICE launches 'takedown' operation in Guatemala to nab human smugglers and corrupt cops, rescue migrants."[214] A few days before this article was published, Adam Isacson from WOLA would report that the DoD donated 95 vehicles to the Guatemalan military earmarked "to support border security efforts in Guatemala."[215] Specifically, these vehicles would be given to regiments of Guatemala's military that are involved in policing the borderlands (particularly within those provinces with the highest number of migrants).[216] It is evident that as of the writing of this study, the DHS is still involved in managing, controlling, and militarizing Guatemala's borders. US intervention is still underway in this country.

The US Empire in Guatemala

Unlike the empires before it, the US has come to control Guatemala not through colonial subordination — but rather by incorporating into its global security apparatus. Enseng Ho (2004) would write that the modern empire can be defined by two traits: *invisibility* and *remote control*. To this end, he writes that the US has an "extraterritorial" empire where "remote control bombers fly ever higher out of sight, while military advisors disappear into the Filipino jungles, Yemeni mountains, and Georgian gorges" — one could also add Guatemalan highlands.[217] What is complicated here is that US agents are not particularly hiding in Guatemala. The US intervention in Guatemala is transparent to the extent that today there is an evident presence of DHS agents in the country, actively policing migrants. What is invisible, however, is the extent to which this is perceived as an empire. US activities in Guatemala are not exactly a hierarchical imposition of

[214] Michael Ruiz, "ICE Teams up with Guatemala Police to Bust 10 Suspected Human Smugglers Linked to 19 Murders," Fox News, February 7, 2022.; Adam Shaw, "ICE Launches 'Takedown' Operation in Guatemala to Nab Human Smugglers and Corrupt Cops, Rescue Migrants," Fox News, October 28, 2022.
[215] Adam Isacson, "The U.S. Announced a New Military Aid Donation to Guatemala. Here's Why It Is a Mistake," WOLA, October 20, 2022.
[216] Ibid.,
[217] Engseng Ho, "Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat," Comparative Studies in Society and History 46, no. 02 (April 2004), 232/8.

policy, rather the intervention of today looks more like a partnership between two states. On this, Ho writes that "America's friends are free to come and go… [the] dominance, intimacy, and consequences that flow from the relationship remain unacknowledged."[218] Yet, the image of a partnership is key to the extraterritorial empire as it creates an environment where the "U.S. enjoys rights in those lands but owes no legally demandable obligation to foreigners there."[219] Certainly the Hondurans who were detained by the DHS do not have a pathway to legal recourse, nor would those killed by the US-backed military during the civil war. The US empire is given the autonomy to act as they need to, in order to achieve the country's national security interests — with little regard to the human cost.

The US empire has also given us a particularly valuable lens through which we can understand how intervention has been involved in the production of Guatemala's borders as a space which facilitates the fulfillment of US national interests. To this end, Paasi (1998) reminds us that we should view "boundaries as complicated social processes and discourses rather than fixed lines," whose meaning shifts between different political actors, in different political contexts.[220] In a similar manner, boundaries are constitutive of power relations informed "sustained and reproduced by historically and geographically specific social practices."[221] When approaching the case of Guatemala's borders, it is easy to reduce the US's involvement in Guatemala's borders down to the militarization strategies of the present. Yet, borders have always lied at the center of this imperial entanglement. Intervening in Guatemalan affairs has involved an active undertaking by the US to negotiate the movement of their foreign policy through these borders. This has involved movement in a very literal sense such as through the

[218] Ibidi., 232
[219] Ibid., 230
[220] Paasi, Boundaries as social process, 73/80.
[221] Ibid., 82.

deployment of US agents in Guatemala during the Cold War; then there is also movement in a more abstract way, for instance how US political goals can transcend borders and influence interstate disputes not directly concerning them. This can be seen through the US's involvement in influencing the region by overseeing, advising, and arbitrating Guatemalan affairs throughout the late 19th century. While these constitute very different forms of "movement," it nonetheless demonstrates that a certain "social practice" of US intervention has become normalized in the two country's relationship. This practice has contributed towards the production of Guatemala's borders as a space which can be transgressed by the US for the purpose of securing its national security priorities in the country.

While the borders of Guatemala have certainly become reconstituted to promote the mobility of US agents, Guatemalan and other Central Americans have not been afforded that same right. This is in many regards the principal effect of empire, empowerment for some at the expense of others. To this end we must remember that while migrants are currently experiencing the brunt of this imperial marginalization, under the US security regime, ultimately, we all suffer. Migrants are confronting this empire at its frontier, within these "twenty-first century battlefields." Yet, this securitized empire can be found everywhere — it is a global network connecting the borders of Guatemala to different spaces of conflict and movement all over the world. This global system even penetrates the imperial core as US citizens face repression from the national security state in their own social movements. Miller (2019) touches on this during his interview with global security expert: Guy Halper who states that:

> you are living in a sense under an occupation. And you are under an occupation of the ruling classes. Then you get into this whole issue of capitalism in crisis. Neoliberalism, the whole system is unsustainable. The whole world is burning up. Income disparities are

> out of the sky… there are many marginalized and impoverished by the system. The ruling classes have to have security states.[222]

This homeland security state is one that is rooted in the interventions of the past, while being perpetually upheld by its inherent globalizing and self-legitimizing nature. Yet, it is an unsustainable system. Border controls are only a temporary stopgap within a future of increasing mass-migration brought on by the empire's trans-historical reverberations: structural instability, insecurity, and violence — all further intensified by climate change (another imperial product).

This is not to say we should abandon all hope and leave migrants, as well as the many other communities throughout the world which are caught in the network of the US empire, to be left to have their lives devastated under the justification of "national interest." Rather, we must move towards, in the words of Vine (2009), a "humanpolitik — a human-centered foreign policy based around international cooperation and diplomacy that places human lives, regardless of nation, above perceived and shortsighted notions of national interest and security."[223] To those who have long legitimated the US's empire, this might seem ill-advised, naive, and downright inconceivable. Even so, we must challenge ourselves to understand how we can be involved in pursuing this new form of politics. One good place to start would be in Guatemala, and at its borders. To this end, we must begin to recognize that "the freedom to stay and the freedom to move are revolutionary collieries refusing imperial bordered sovereignties."[224] No longer shall mobility be held as a monopoly by the agents of US national interests, instead we must approach an understanding that no human being is illegal. Ultimately, walls only serve to further reinforce global hierarchies and inequalities "between the haves and have nots."[225]

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[222] Miller, Empire of Borders, 74.
[223] Vine, Island of Shame, 192.
[224] Harsha Walia, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Nick Estes, Border & Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2021), 216.
[225] Miller, Empire of Borders, 11.

This thesis must serve as a call to action. Many oppressive institutions throughout history have seemed impossible to overcome, and yet people on the path to justice have found a way to topple them. While the US empire certainly represents a particularly novel form of global control, it is not omnipotent. In the words of Walia (2020), "injustice is not ordained to determine our future."[226] In this regard, we cannot and must not give up in the face of overwhelming power. Our bordered world has been purposefully designed to keep us separated, distracted, and pitted against one another — creating the perfect conditions for the empire to prosper. We must imagine something different. We must strive to come together, with reverence to our shared humanity. Only through this global solidarity will it become clear that a better and more just world is possible. We just have to fight for it.

[226] Walia, Border and Rule, 215.

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