

LIMITS
TO
FRIENDSHIP
THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

Robert A. Pastor
and
Jorge G. Castañeda

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SHAPING MINDS AND ATTITUDES

The Mexican Mind

Jorge G. Castañeda

On March 3, 1947, one hundred years after the fall of Chapultepec Castle to American troops, Harry S. Truman became the first President of the United States to visit Mexico City. During his stay, steeped in the symbolism of reconciliation, Truman stood guard at the old monument—just beneath the castle—to Mexico's "Child Heroes," a group of cadets who, a century before, leaped to their deaths from the overlooking parapets wrapped in Mexican flags. As General Winfield Scott's invading army approached Chapultepec in September 1847, the cadets preferred to die rather than surrender their national banner to the American invader.

Truman brought with him some battalion flags captured by Scott's soldiers and returned them to Mexican President Miguel Alemán, hoping to turn a new leaf in the two nations' relationship. In his welcoming remarks Alemán also spoke of the War of 1847. In line with Truman's gestures, and the presumed new era of cooperation in Mexican-American relations ushered in by World War II, Mexico's first civilian President since the Revolution of 1910 made a statesmanlike reference to the events of 1847: "The greatness of history never lies in eternalizing the past."¹ Observers on both sides of the border viewed the presidential encounter

as a milestone on the road to a new, "more mature" Mexican interpretation of the two nations' common history. Mexico, it seemed, was finally letting the dead bury their dead and putting the tragic and painful history of its relations with the United States behind it.

In fact, this was anything but a transformation and really nothing more than a fleeting episode in Mexico's long struggle to achieve a perception of its past truly shared by all its people. In 1986, nearly forty years later, as Texas commemorated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its secession from Mexico, a Texan congressional delegation—as well as Ambassador John Gavin and House of Representatives Majority Leader Jim Wright—appealed to the President of Mexico to allow the insignia flown by the New Orleans Grays at the Alamo to leave Mexico on loan. For over a century the flag had lain in the vaults of the same castle beneath whose shadows Truman and Alemán vowed to let bygones be bygones. Following the traditional Mexican aphorism—attributed to Benito Juárez—for dealing with the United States: "Say yes, but never say when," Mexican authorities responded: "The flag cannot be loaned now because of restoration. Neither can a photo be taken. They are restoring it and it is going to take a considerable length of time."²

Nations can be judged by the way they mourn their dead and read and write their history. Mexico's history is a subject of disagreement among our own people, not to mention historians, writers, and intellectuals of different political persuasions. But there is far more convergence on some aspects than others. Over the last several decades, a consensus has begun to emerge in Mexico concerning its relations with the United States, a tremendously important chapter of the nation's past. But that consensus is in many ways only skin deep, not extending to every corner of Mexican society.

Because of the traumatic nature of the events of that past, only slowly has Mexico—a divided country in many respects—been able to forge a unified vision of the turbulent and tragic history which we share with the United States. With time, events perceived so differently when viewed from opposite sides of the border have come to be seen on the Mexican side with growing, though not unanimous, accord. True, the vision clouds up if more recent events are considered. But the desire to build and conserve a Mexican consensus is present even in that more disputed focus, shaping the way millions of Mexican children today learn our nation's history.

The unified idea of the past has not arisen alone and spontaneously from the ashes of defeat and invasion, territorial losses and perceived humiliation. As in most countries, oral traditions passed on from parent

to child are of great importance. In Mexico, however, massive public elementary education, based since 1960 on free and compulsory textbooks, has played a key role in achieving an increasingly homogeneous vision of the nation's origins and evolution. As Mexico's most respected social critic, *Carlos Monsiváis*, has phrased it: "Elementary education has been the basis for the country's unification and the main vehicle for its nationalist impulse."³

Today there are fifteen million Mexican children under the age of twelve in school. They all learn about their country's geography, history, and culture from the same social science textbook. There is the first generation whose parents are also largely literate, having attended the same public school system and studied similar textbooks. Although there has never been unanimous support in Mexico for the standard textbook, it has gradually become a fixture of Mexican life precisely for the reasons which have made it anathema to its enemies and critics: it propagates a common, government-determined vision of the nation's past and present, its cultural and sexual mores, its system of values, and its place in the world.

In 1960, when the standard textbook's first edition was drafted, the effort was met with stiff opposition from the right wing, the Church, and the business community, particularly from the north. And when a second, revised edition was drawn up in 1972-73 under the outspokenly nationalistic and culturally broad-minded administration of Luis Echeverría, the debate over the book's ideological, cultural, and even sexual content, as well as its very existence, turned into a pitched battle between the country's political factions. Opponents of the new edition were attacked as "traitors to the fatherland," and its advocates were accused of wanting to annex Mexico to the Soviet Union, or at the very least to Cuba.

The heightened passions were understandable. In a country where almost half the population is under fifteen, the stakes are high in the struggle for school-age children's hearts and minds. Historical references are remarkably recurrent and significant in contemporary Mexico. The version of the country's past handed down to its children is of great political import. If the United States is a country of lawyers and respect for legal scripture, because as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., has written, Americans are "an essentially historyless people,"⁴ then Mexico might well be the mirror opposite. Laws have been rhetorically worshipped, "obeyed but not complied with," yet history and its lessons have traditionally been revered. Similarly, and this is clearly reflected in the differences between Mexico's schoolbooks and their U.S. equivalents, the Mexican outlook is more universal, less ethnocentric. In history, geogra-

phy, and other fields, Mexican textbooks devote more space and attention to events and trends abroad, and far less to purely domestic matters, than U.S. textbooks do.

The content of the 1972-73 edition of the textbook, still in circulation today, is a far cry from the Alemán-Truman honeymoon of more than forty years ago. The description it gives of Mexico's trials in its not so peaceful coexistence with our northern neighbor fulfills a decisive function in forming the vision of history which an immense majority of Mexico's schoolchildren will grow up with and remember. This role is not exclusive, or the same for all sectors of society; other factors also count, and children in private elementary schools are less influenced by it. Children's worldviews are not identical to what they are taught in the classroom. Adults' conceptions of the world, their country and its history, are not shaped only by what they learned at the youngest of ages.

This perhaps is more true in Mexico than elsewhere. Mexican children are extraordinarily sensitive to family influence, because of the strength and role of the family in Mexican society, as in most of Latin America. But like their U.S. counterparts, our children are also subjected to massive doses of television and comics, mostly of American origin or inspiration. When foreign observers of Mexico are struck by the contrast between most Mexicans' generally not hostile individual attitudes toward Americans and the strong nationalism present in textbooks, historical lore, and contemporary ideology, they are simply perceiving this split influence. School and the traditional family pull in one direction, modern-day television and "culture" in another, sometimes opposite, sometimes parallel direction.

The first mention of Mexican-American relations in the standard textbook appears in the fourth-grade social science manual. The initial reference is to the Texan secession of 1836.

Some North Americans had obtained permission to settle in Texas, which then belonged to Mexico. Afterward they became dissatisfied with the Mexican government and became independent. . . . In order to subdue them, Santa Anna ventured forth with an army which arrived in desperate shape. . . . He emerged victorious in the first battles against the Texans, but was taken prisoner at San Jacinto. The lack of arms and money made it impossible to reconquer Texas. Since most of the population was of North American origin, in 1845 Texas became part of the United States.⁵

The account of this initial U.S.-Mexican encounter is even-handed. Although some secondary-school history books narrate differently the

episode of the Alamo, for example, referring to "Mexican soldiers' heroism" and "Texans' greater resources and better arms," there is barely a chauvinistic flavor to it.

The standard textbook description of the Texan secession keeps its distance from many Mexican historians who stress American President Andrew Jackson's backing for the Texan cause. Nor does the textbook version dwell on the expansionist sentiment present at the time in the United States or on the links between the Texan secession and the upcoming American invasion of Mexico, which would lead to the loss of more than half the country's territory. The next mention of U.S.-Mexican relations in the fourth-grade schoolbook comes precisely in reference to that invasion.

According to Mexican children's history books, the nation was in poor shape on the eve of the war.

The country was functioning poorly. Almost no one paid taxes, and the national government was unable to pay its employees or its army. Debts, conflicts, and insecurity were on the rise. . . . There were not enough doctors and health problems were increasing dramatically.⁶

Once again, the historians charged with educating Mexico's future generations provide an accurate description, painfully honest in acknowledging that the Mexican nation-state did not yet truly exist as a working entity. This view becomes explicit as the account of the war gets underway.

Since many Mexicans blamed the country's ills on the central government, in 1847 a Federalist Constitution was once again put into force. The union of Texas with the United States and the North Americans' desire to take over New Mexico and California, which belonged to Mexico, led to their invasion of our country.⁷

Having established the historical record, the standard textbook makes an intellectually straightforward attempt to place the facts in a broader context. An effort is made to have Mexico's fourth-graders understand the reasons for the debacle by emphasizing the domestic aspects of Mexico's travail: "Mexicans were divided. Some thought that in order to raise money to defend the country, the Church's properties . . . should be sold off; others did not agree."⁸ There are no instances of "gringo-bashing," and the sparse references to North American ambition and expansionism are sober, even understated.

The school manual stresses that the real roots of the nation's defeat lay in the still embryonic nature of its existence. The "moral" of the story is all the more effective, and the subdued description bears witness to one of the reasons why Mexican nationalism endures: the facts speak for themselves. Consequently, the schoolbook concludes its tale of those troubled times with a brief explanation and a simple warning:

Many Mexicans had not realized what they were, but for the first time they felt Mexican in the face of the enemy, and they understood the importance of national unity. The country's situation was heartrending. . . . This entire period was confused and sad, but the Mexican nation was being formed and the road was a hard one.⁹

The true message the textbook's authors wished to convey with regard to the last century's defeat lies in these sentences. The message is simply that Mexico is lost, easily falling prey to American domination, when it is divided. When we forget our nationalism, the nation's very existence is in danger. This precept has been toned down over the years, but remains ever-present. The first edition of the standard textbook, published in 1960, was much more explicit than the more recent version in this regard. It quite openly—and rather demagogically and moralistically—preached: "The invasion of Mexico is an experience which we should never forget: the unity of all Mexicans is indispensable, for through domestic peace comes progress, and through progress, the strength needed to protect ourselves from ambition and injustice."¹⁰

For a country with extraordinarily strong regional, ethnic, and social divisions, whose origin lies in the eventually successful but extremely painful absorption of the conquerors by the conquered, this is a powerful message. Transmitted from generation to generation, through education and tradition, its updating, or modernization, has proved exceedingly difficult; many in Mexico today consider so-called more mature interpretations of the nation's history a thinly disguised form of national treason. They argue that there is literally no foolproof way of knowing when the process of nation-forming has come to term and when these more mature views will no longer jeopardize a still unfinished gestation. In the last analysis, if one takes the view of Mexican nationalism which millions of Mexican children are exposed to, and which many Mexican adults end up adopting, there are indeed no guarantees that the same cause—lack of a national identity—will not produce the same effect—national disintegration.

Needless to say, the dramatic events of the last century do not constitute the only chapter of conflict with the United States in Mexico's schoolbooks. The next significant example comes in the context of the Revolution of 1910. This is still a fundamental reference point for contemporary political debates and issues, and though it may be ever less relevant to modern Mexico, the nation's foremost institutions all date from the Revolution and its aftermath.

As every Mexican schoolchild knows, the Revolution began when a northern landowner, Francisco I. Madero, decided to challenge Porfirio Díaz in the 1910 presidential elections. Díaz had been in power for over thirty years, and was not quite convinced he should leave office. Electoral fraud, a call to arms, and massive social discontent arising from the dictator's economic policies finally drove him from power and catapulted Madero to the presidency. The growing reluctance of broad sectors of Mexican society to accept the massive presence of foreign—and particularly American—holdings in Mexico was an important factor in the *ancien régime's* downfall. Millions of acres of land, railroads, banks, utilities, and oil and mineral resources were all in foreign hands.

Immediately after Díaz's departure, though, problems emerged, and by early 1913 the old dictator's allies, as well as many sectors of the army, were plotting against Madero. In this context, the standard textbook describes the next major episode of overt American involvement in Mexican affairs. As history comes closer, Mexico's focus becomes sharper:

General Victoriano Huerta was among those [who refused to give up the privileges they held before the Revolution]. With the complicity of the United States' ambassador in Mexico, he betrayed Madero's trust and had him murdered in February 1913. Madero's assassination produced indignation throughout the country, and soon a popular movement against Huerta developed. . . . The United States took advantage of these circumstances to directly intervene in Mexico to protect its economic interests; with that purpose, in 1914 United States' troops occupied the port city of Veracruz.¹¹

Mexico's younger generations thus learn almost as soon as they can read that the United States has actively interfered in Mexican affairs, not only in the nineteenth century but also as recently as the Revolution. It has done so, according to compulsory textbooks used in most Mexican classrooms today, among other things by having one of its envoys in Mexico conspire to assassinate our national heroes. Hence it should

come as no surprise that the activities of contemporary American ambassadors arouse the suspicion and fears that they do. When a classically arrogant American envoy like John Gavin, who represented the Reagan administration in Mexico from 1981 to 1986, adopts a high-profiled and outspoken stance, he inevitably provokes negative reactions in many sectors of Mexican society. Every Mexican under forty has learned from the standard textbook that Henry Lane Wilson, Gavin's predecessor in 1913, actually did what Gavin was only accused or suspected of doing years later.

But according to the standard textbook, the United States not only conspired in Mexico through its envoys. It also meddled in Mexican affairs by sending troops and occupying parts of the nation far removed from the border, in its heartland. It did so for less than honorable, in fact illegitimate motives, acting in defense of what were base economic interests from the Mexican perspective as well as long-standing privileges and inequalities against which the Revolution was fought. The picture Mexican schoolchildren perceive is that the United States intrudes in matters which are none of its business, and does so on the wrong side.

The standard textbook has an ambiguous status in Mexico today. It continues to be a source of debate between the Church, the private sector, and the conservative political parties on the one hand, and the state and its secular and progressive defenders on the other. In many parochial and private schools, the standard textbook is set aside and other manuals are used. This is accepted practice: it is sufficient for the Ministry of Education books to be formally in the curriculum for these schools to remain on the right side of the law.

Disagreements over the textbooks' content and very existence will probably endure as long as they are used. And they undoubtedly will continue to be used, since if there is one issue on which the existing Mexican political system will not yield willingly—or at all—it is surely this one. Public education in Mexico carries overwhelming political and ideological clout, from children's perceptions to the strength of the 750,000-member PRI-affiliated teachers' union. So much so that when an optional standard textbook for high schools was drawn up in 1988, it rekindled many of the debates of its elementary school predecessor.

There is no standard compulsory textbook for middle and secondary schools. *Private* junior high schools follow rather conservative texts, whereas the Ministry of Education tends to recommend more progressive books for the *public* schools under its jurisdiction. Yet the private school books are not necessarily less nationalistic in their account of U.S.-Mexican history. Mexican conservatism has always possessed a denominationally sectarian, nationalistic anti-American streak. Ameri-

cans are not in the main Catholics, and Mexico gets into trouble when non-Catholics are allowed a free rein in the country's affairs.¹² Many nineteenth-century conservatives were convinced that only Catholics are truly Mexican, true Mexicans are all Catholic, and Mexico's only authentic friends are necessarily Catholic. This belief has a dated ring to it today, even for the religious right, but at least through the 1940s it was widely shared.

Ever since the nineteenth century's conflicts over the Church's land-holdings, the country's leaders have faced the daunting task of limiting the power of the Church in a massively Catholic nation. From the Cristero War in the 1920s through Pope John Paul's visit to Mexico in 1979, this attempt has given rise to unending tensions. The Reforma period in the 1850s was a watershed: a majority of the nation's population has supported the struggle to curb the Church's influence ever since. But the dissenting minority has always been a large and vocal one.

Education is part of this problem, and by no means a minor part. The country has faced continuing difficulties in coming to terms with the secular nature of the state and state-sponsored, compulsory public education in a highly religious country. Needless to say, the problem is not resolved, nor will it be soon. But as in so many other areas, Mexican society has reached an understanding with itself on this matter over the years.

There are differences between the broad thrust of most secondary school textbooks and the standard elementary school manual.¹³ Regarding the War of 1847, for example, some junior high school accounts do not simply explain American behavior; they tend to justify it, or in some extreme cases to apologize for it and discreetly criticize Mexican intransigence. These history books suggest that Mexico should have known that it was going to lose, and might have saved a lot of blood and trouble—as well as possibly obtaining a better deal—if it had sold California and the other real estate in question instead of going to war over it. Mexican adolescents are taught that the authorities of the time turned down—perhaps intransigently—a series of American proposals.

Likewise, several textbooks commonly used in both public and private secondary schools suggest that perhaps U.S. involvement in the Mexican Revolution and particularly Woodrow Wilson's occupation of Veracruz were not entirely selfless. These accounts imply that American intervention on this occasion was essentially altruistic: the United States simply sought democracy in Mexico and an end to the Huerta dictatorship. But even these stress the unacceptable nature of U.S. intervention, both then and now, whatever its motives or purposes. The focus might seem para-

doxical, yet it is not untypical of Mexican nationalist sentiments. On the one hand, Wilson is portrayed as being on the right side: against the Victoriano Huerta dictatorship responsible for Madero's death. Yet by taking sides at all, the United States automatically puts those who resist it in a more favorable light. Thus in some accounts, Huerta even emerges as a patriot struggling against American interference.

The historical points made by secondary school textbooks concerning the effects of Woodrow Wilson's policy in Mexico may not be, strictly speaking, false. But their version of events differs dramatically from those in the standard elementary school textbooks, which traced the origins of this particular American intervention in Mexican affairs to the protection of American economic interests. Indeed, few Mexican historians and scholars—and undoubtedly few Mexicans in all walks of life—would accept that American interference in our domestic matters has ever been unselfish or well-intentioned. The nuances separating these viewpoints are all the more significant. Consequently, in order to bridge them, the Mexican political establishment has unanimously concluded that what counts is not the motive or purpose of American interference, but its very fact: no intervention is acceptable. This axiom of Mexican policy toward the United States, however, is not always taken for granted by other sectors of Mexican society.

A recent example illustrates this paradox. In early 1986, on the eve of the World Cup soccer championship in Mexico, the government was confidentially informed by Ambassador John Gavin that U.S. intelligence had uncovered a plot by guerrillas from El Salvador to infiltrate commandos into the country and disrupt the upcoming sports spectacular. The Reagan administration offered to help Mexico deal with the supposed threat. Notwithstanding serious concern in governing circles over the risks of terrorist incidents during the World Cup, and despite the generalized perception of President Miguel de la Madrid's government as the least anti-American administration in the last twenty-five years, the authorities refused to act on or even acknowledge Gavin's warning.

Hidden and ignoble American motives were immediately suspected. The subsequent closing of the U.S. Embassy Visa Section in Mexico City for several months because of "lack of guarantees for the safety of applicants from terrorist attacks" (according to the State Department), as well as Mexico's own investigations, confirmed the initial suspicions. There was no terrorist plot, no infiltration, and no U.S. assistance required. But this only became apparent after the fact and Mexico's first reaction was classically circumspect: if the United States expresses a desire to intervene in Mexican affairs, whatever the ostensible and de-

clared motivation, Mexico should refuse first and ask questions later. Yet if the episode had been made public at the time, significant sectors of Mexican public opinion would have criticized the authorities for not taking American views seriously.

This discord concerning the United States and Mexico's relations with it also affects scholarly works on the history of Mexican-American ties. As a result of its right-of-center leanings, the *General History of Mexico*, coordinated by the late Daniel Cosío Villegas and published originally in four volumes in 1976 by El Colegio de México, is perhaps more in tune with Mexico's present-day ruling elite and accordingly is the best example of a more academic Mexican view of the two nations' common history. It is widely used in Mexican high schools, both public and private, as well as in the first years of college.

Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, the author of the chapter devoted to the Texan secession and the American invasion, and probably Mexico's premier historian of this period—she was also one of the co-authors of the standard elementary textbook—provides a balanced and detailed characterization of the events which made both episodes and their outcome inevitable.¹⁴ Vázquez adopts the consensus view that the overriding cause of Mexico's debacle during the first thirty years of independence was the unfinished nature of our nationhood and institutions.

The noteworthy facets of this well-documented and sophisticated analysis of the U.S.-Mexican conflict lie in the statements it makes about the situation in Texas and the United States. Vázquez underlines the fact that Mexico lost Texas because of the sheer force of settler demographics and that American meddling and ambitions were just catalysts. By pointing out that in 1832 only 3,400 of a total of 24,700 inhabitants of Texas were Mexican, the historian concludes that the facts speak for themselves.

Similarly, she acknowledges that many settlers were initially opposed to annexation, if only because the United States had a less liberal land distribution policy than Mexico's or than an independent Texas would have permitted. Moreover, the author suggests that after the 1836 secession, Mexico might have been better off accepting the advice of Mexican as well as British leaders to recognize Texan independence in exchange for a commitment not to pursue annexation to the United States.¹⁵ The question of whether this would have altered the final outcome is not explored by Vázquez.

The Colegio de México book emphasizes the domestic factors in the United States which led to the American invasion of Mexico in 1846-47. It stresses the importance of the "Calvinist sense of mission and predesti-

nation" in American thought, as well as the lasting effects of the "lack of roots characteristic of a society of immigrants." A concluding sentence sheds light on how Mexican historians view the United States' past, and perhaps even the present or future:

The faith in the American Constitution as a formula for perfect government would provide a justification for expansionism, through the slogan of "extending the area of liberty," that is to say, extending American institutions in order to save those poor forsaken souls who did not know them and were bound by the chains of tyranny. Not all Americans realized the irony involved in the fact that in many cases—such as the case of Texas—the extension of the area of liberty was also an extension of the area of slavery.¹⁶

This is possibly a consensual "vision of Mexican intellectuals" and politicians' vision of the United States as a somewhat pretentious, probably conceited, and often hypocritical nation that perceives only those aspects of its own actions deemed worthy of its own mythology. Whether on the subject of Texan independence or today's "war on drugs," many Mexicans tend to accentuate the darker aspects of American life, those which the United States itself often refuses to acknowledge in its dealings with its southern neighbor.

As in the case of Texas's separation from Mexico, Josefa Zoraida Vázquez hints that in the negotiations over California and New Mexico preceding the 1847 invasion, the Mexican position was not entirely sound. In any case, it was incomprehensible to Americans, who

did not understand Mexican stubbornness, whereby in spite of their need for money, [the Mexicans] refused to sell uninhabited land, which they would lose anyway. But in addition to the conviction on the part of [Mexico's] Presidents concerning the impossibility of selling "national patrimony," there existed a strong feeling of national pride which felt a near obligation to respond with arms to multiple American insults.¹⁷

A similar lack of understanding is widespread among bankers and investors today who do not understand how Mexico, strapped for capital and technology, refuses to modify its legislation on foreign investment. Now as in the nineteenth century, the answer lies not in economic irrationality or ignorance, but in the fact that such choices are always made and placed in a wider context. Wisely or not, the question in 1846 was not a dollars-and-cents, cash-flow issue; nor is the present problem

one of setting the most advisable economic limits to foreign investment and foreign trade in Mexico. What is at stake is the perception by Mexican leaders and significant sectors of Mexican public opinion of the effects of certain decisions on our *viability* as a nation: selling California and New Mexico a century and a half ago, or permitting foreign investment in the Mexican oil and petrochemical industry today, for example.

Mexico cannot boast that it has always made the right decision, and sometimes, as events of the last century show, appearances may indicate that it made the wrong one. But the same modern and mature viewpoint expressed in the *General History* nevertheless concludes that "in spite of the costly losses, the country overcame the perils of disintegration, and the deep pessimism and traumatic experiences which it went through awakened the national consciousness."¹⁸ This may be a rationalization, but the statement is not entirely untrue: the selling of half the nation's territory in the nineteenth century would have spared Mexican and American lives, but might have sealed Mexico's fate as a nation. Sonora, Chihuahua, and Baja California would have gone the way of California, New Mexico, and the other territories ceded in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as demanded even after the war by the expansionist party in the U.S. Senate and in President James Polk's entourage. Fighting and losing proved to be a better deal than selling and perhaps losing far more.

This is not the only lesson which the *General History* draws from its overview of the history of U.S.-Mexican relations. In her study of American involvement in the Mexican Revolution and particularly the 1914 occupation of Veracruz, Berta Ulloa, one of Mexico's leading authorities in her field, takes a dim view of Woodrow Wilson's true motives for interfering in Mexican matters:

Wilson . . . adopted a "moralist" policy [toward Mexico] with imperialist ambitions. . . . The last stage, . . . which began in February of 1914, was the one in which Wilson's interventionist ambitions took form. With the pretext of an incident in Tampico, he ordered the armed occupation of the port of Veracruz. . . . Wilson's policy was rejected by Venustiano Carranza and by the Mexican people, and in addition did not achieve Huerta's resignation.¹⁹

From Ulloa's perspective, Wilson's reasons for intervening in Mexican affairs were far from altruistic. As in the elementary school textbook, this historian comes down squarely on the side of self-interested and not particularly well-intentioned causes for Wilson's Mexican adventure. As the dictator Huerta was about to fall, the United States began discussing

the future with Venustiano Carranza, who already wielded about as much presidential authority as was possible in Mexico during those turbulent times. Yet Wilson continued to defend short-term American business interests. In any case, whatever Wilson's underlying motives were, the author stresses that Carranza rejected American support for his attempts to overthrow Huerta. He emerges as a statesman who preferred to bide his time and reach power on his own terms, instead of owing Huerta's departure—and his own accession to the presidency—to American pressure. In the historian's words:

Carranza let Wilson know that his government had offended Mexico and damaged the Constitutionalists' chances. . . . He insisted that basic legal principles had been notoriously violated, that the long-lasting presence of the troops was an unjustified invasion, that [he] would never accept the support of a foreign invasion to ensure [his] victory, and that [he] did not believe that the sole purpose of Wilson's policy was to remove Huerta. . . . Wilson's compulsion to intervene in Mexico's internal affairs led him to order the occupation of Veracruz, a warlike act against the people which contradicted his claims of friendship, and which did not fulfill his goals. The immediate Mexican reaction was armed defense and to forget differences in the face of the common enemy, the United States.²⁰

These are the strongest statements made in the entire analysis. Regardless of Wilson's motives, given Carranza's refusal to accept American aid in removing Huerta from power, the issue was whether internal differences among Mexican factions should be set aside in the face of foreign hostility or intervention. In addition, Mexicans had to choose whether to accept foreign help for their domestic endeavors or to reject it, no matter how disinterested it appeared to be, nor how noble the cause.²¹ Carranza's reply to the first question was categorical—he continued to combat Huerta even while American troops patrolled Veracruz—and so was his answer to the second one. The precedent has remained valid.

In nearly all domestic conflicts in modern Mexico, the winning side—since the Revolution, the government side—has raised the specter of national disintegration due to foreign intervention. As in most countries, it has maintained that whenever the nation is threatened by external danger, domestic strife should take second place or, better still, be eliminated. But unlike elsewhere, the constant and powerful reality of foreign interference has lent substantial credibility to the threat of intervention. On those occasions when the Mexican left, and later the right, did not

accept the principle of stifling domestic dissent because of the ever-present danger of American interference, the price was high. The absence of any significant political opposition in Mexico until the mid-1980s was partly due to this phenomenon: too many opponents of the establishment have, often for the right reasons, committed the mistake of underestimating the widespread fear—well founded or not—of a new era of foreign involvement in Mexican matters.

Largely because of this fear, there has been little disagreement concerning the illegitimate nature of support from abroad for domestic purposes. The conviction that Carranza acted correctly in refusing Wilson's embrace is widely shared, and it has served its purpose of discouraging any break with this tradition. Under no circumstances is foreign assistance for internal politics deemed legitimate even today, though there is a tendency to acknowledge that Carranza's situation was somewhat exceptional. Woodrow Wilson *did* want to get rid of Huerta and *did* contribute to his downfall. This permitted Carranza to reject Wilson's overtures, claiming that Huerta's eventual departure was due exclusively to his struggle. Carranza thus owed nothing to the United States.

American support in Mexican politics today continues to be more of a liability than an advantage. In Mexico, as elsewhere, the "kiss of death" syndrome exists and cannot be countered by claims of historical inaccuracy. The fact that our revolutionaries and Presidents have traditionally sought some backing from the United States—if only by seeking safe haven on American soil or American arms—does not dissipate the perilous political connotations of an American embrace. It is simply one more illustration of the seemingly contradictory attitude that Mexico has toward U.S. involvement in its politics—simultaneously rejecting its intervention and seeking its backing.

These feelings may be changing today. Increasingly, right-of-center groups and politicians in the north of the country and in Mexico City are seeking out and receiving aid and encouragement from Mexicans in the United States and from American sympathizers. Yet the conservative National Action Party (PAN) militants who in 1986 sought to enlist U.S. Senator Jesse Helms's backing for their struggle were roundly condemned by all sectors of Mexican opinion, including their own party. Public opinion polls published in the Mexico City daily *Excelsior* weeks after the Senate hearings on Mexico chaired by Helms showed a high degree of anti-American feeling among those questioned: 47 percent said their "opinion" of the United States had worsened over the past five years; 60 percent felt that the United States was a disagreeable or un-

pleasant neighbor, and 59 percent considered it to be an "enemy country."²² The Helms hearings undoubtedly contributed to the extreme views held by many Mexicans.

Dissident groups on the left are also more frequently resorting to the foreign press to further their political aims. Human rights and civic associations are calling on institutions like Amnesty International to redress their grievances. The PAN recently took its claims of electoral fraud to the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Human Rights Court. As the Mexican economy opens up to the rest of the world, the nation's traditional definitions of what constitutes unacceptable intervention from abroad is changing, and will continue to do so.

But the foundations on which those definitions ultimately rest—that is, the way in which we Mexicans have obtained our knowledge of our country's history, and the importance we attach to the history of Mexico's relations with the United States—will probably change less quickly, if at all. That is perhaps the way it should be: every nation needs a common vision of its past, of its glories and its shames. It has taken Mexico many years to acquire one; it should not be relinquished or tampered with if it has served the nation well. Most Mexicans believe it has.

The American Mind

Robert A. Pastor

A fifth-grade student in DeKalb County, Georgia, studies U.S. history from a textbook that captures the nation's exuberance in its title, *American! America!* Mexico is mentioned in only five events, and this amounts to less than eight of 752 pages. The longest reference is about "winning Texas" and the U.S.-Mexican war in a section called "From Sea to Shining Sea."

The book draws a picture of the United States as a nation "of new opportunities and endless possibilities" propelled by a divinely inspired "manifest destiny . . . to bring progress and democracy to all of North America." In the path of this drive west, Mexico learned, as students would learn, that "the United States was on the move, and nothing . . . could stop it."¹ The Texan war for independence and the war against Mexico are not seen within the context of U.S. relations with Mexico or even with Latin America. In U.S. history texts, Mexico is a way station on the purposeful trek of the United States across the continent.

There are no standard national history texts in the United States; the very idea would evoke protests, anxiety, or disbelief among jealously independent school districts. The distrust of federal authority that remains an important leitmotif of the American political character is per-

haps most evident in the field of education. Local communities strenuously resist federal efforts to encroach upon or restrict local autonomy.

Yet despite this tradition of local independence, social science textbooks reveal a remarkable degree of homogeneity across the nation. Frances FitzGerald analyzed these textbooks and found that they "differ from one another . . . not much more than one year's crop of Detroit's sedans."² Local communities in the United States reject the idea of a national text but unconsciously choose from a small number of similar textbooks. This is due to a commercial response to a national market, but it also reflects a common national experience. The homogeneity is also possible because the textbooks are not perceived as vehicles of a partisan interpretation of U.S. history.

The United States has been described by one journalist as nine separate "nations [that] look different, feel different, and sound different from each other."³ And yet these separate "nations" educate their children with the same television programs and similar textbooks. Only four states—Texas, California, Florida, and North Carolina—require publishers to include a special appendix on their state. The publishers accede to this request from the first two states because of the size of the market and from the latter two because their local districts all purchase the same book. Except for those appendices, all students in the United States study their history from similar textbooks.⁴

The U.S. texts both reflect and influence their nation's character. If Mexico's self-concept has been derived partly from its defeat by the United States, the national identity of the United States has been influenced more by its victories. The implicit instruction of U.S. textbooks is to stimulate initiative and inspire ambition and confidence in Americans as individuals. The lesson that American youth should draw from its history is to be proud, optimistic, and confident in the nation's future. Each generation passes to the next its task of moving the nation forward and keeping the story of the United States a success. Mexico's place in U.S. books is small.

In 1895, Theodore Roosevelt, who would become President six years later, and Henry Cabot Lodge, a senator from Massachusetts, tried to divert America's attention from internal development to new global horizons. To prepare youth for a role on the world stage, the two of them wrote a book, *Hero Tales from American History*. Their stated purpose was to tell stories in a way that instilled in Americans "manly qualities . . . of patriotism, and of lofty adherence to an ideal [that] are essential to the well-being of a masterful race."⁵

One of the stories was about the Alamo, described as "one of the most

resolute and effective fights ever waged by brave men against overwhelming odds in the face of certain death." That essay, which was written by Roosevelt, describes the war of Texan independence as resulting from the jealousy of Mexicans who could not accept the brave, hardworking American settlers. In an effort to suppress Yankee ingenuity, according to Roosevelt, the Mexican General Antonio López de Santa Anna "invaded Texas" and committed "dreadful atrocities." Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and other heroes who defended the Alamo were described as "men of iron courage and great bodily powers," but their numbers were too few and Santa Anna was merciless. Their heroism, however, inspired their compatriots to defeat Mexico at the battle of San Jacinto.

By the 1980s, after two very popular movies, North Americans still remembered the Alamo, but the new textbooks replaced Roosevelt's zeal with some balance and the righteousness with some sensitivity. From *American America* the fifth-grader in 1988 did not learn whether the Mexicans or the American settlers were to blame for Texas's war for independence. Instead, the war is described as a result of cultural and political differences between English-speaking Protestants from the United States and Spanish-speaking Catholic Mexicans. The Mexicans said that North Americans could settle in the vacant northern part of their country if they would accept certain conditions—for example, converting to Catholicism. The settlers accepted the conditions in principle, but not in practice, and a new Mexican leader, General Santa Anna, changed some of the rules. Santa Anna tried to raise taxes, centralize power in Mexico City, and restrict further immigration. In response to these decisions, the settlers revolted.⁶

Even in this fifth-grade textbook, students learned that the war was not a clear-cut struggle between right and wrong, since the settlers had slaves and Mexico theoretically had abolished slavery in 1829. But the enduring, subliminal point of the war was the inequality of the struggle: a few settlers were able to defeat a large army. North Americans were the underdog—a role the United States savors. That is why the most celebrated and remembered battle of the war was the Alamo even though it was a defeat. The text inflates the numbers and rounds them off, describing the odds as daunting—"200 courageous fighters held off about 5,000 Mexican soldiers for twelve days." The Alamo symbolized even more sharply than Sam Houston's surprise victory at San Jacinto the determination of a nation with a destiny.

The "Child Heroes" of Mexico play somewhat the same role in Mexican history as the Alamo heroes play for the United States, but with an important difference. The Mexicans took their own lives, reflecting a fatalism that is prevalent in Mexico but absent from U.S. history books.

In contrast, the Americans never gave up. Not only did they defy their fate to triumph in spirit, but the settlers also achieved a practical goal, giving Sam Houston time to recruit volunteers to stop the Mexican army. In short, the lesson of the war, like that of the history book, was that "nothing could stop America."

In more advanced grades, the American picture of the war becomes grayer. U.S. high school students learn, for example, that part of the reason that Santa Anna tried to reassert control over the northern part of his country was that he suspected, with justification, that the North Americans harbored aspirations for independence.⁷ His decisions, however, made his fears come true, a self-fulfilling pattern that was not unique to Mexicans.

The student also learns that northern and southern states disputed whether the fruits of western expansion would be slave or free states, and that this division, in turn, inhibited further expansion. In 1836, all but 61 of 6,000 Texas settlers voted for annexation to the United States. Andrew Jackson wanted to annex Texas, but he did not ask Congress to do that because he judged it would divide the country and could provoke a war with Mexico.⁸ The overall message of the high school texts is that the responsibility for the Texan war was shared, and the settlers overcame great odds to win. As in the elementary texts, the emphasis was on the heroism of the Americans, not on the weakness or villainy of the Mexicans.

In the case of the U.S.-Mexican war, the causes of the war and the conduct of the United States are described in a straightforward way by American history texts, although the interpretation and the level of detail vary according to the age of the student and the bias of the historian. Our fifth-grader learns that Sam Houston allowed Santa Anna to return to Mexico after he accepted and signed two treaties, one recognizing the independence of Texas and the second accepting the Rio Grande as the border. The Mexican general subsequently renounced both treaties and threatened war if the United States annexed Texas. James K. Polk did not share Jackson's fear of a war with Mexico, and campaigned in 1844 for the presidency as an expansionist Democrat. Before his election, the Senate rejected a treaty that would annex Texas, but afterward Congress sensed the shift in the public mood and approved the annexation by majority vote in a joint resolution. Mexico then broke diplomatic relations, and Polk sent John Slidell to negotiate the purchase of California and New Mexico. Mexico would not receive Slidell, let alone negotiate with him.

Impatient with Mexico's intransigence, Polk then ordered General Zachary Taylor to march his troops to the Rio Grande, the southern

border of the new state of Texas. After Mexican troops fired on Taylor's, Polk asked Congress on May 11, 1846, to declare war. Within two years, American troops captured California and General Winfield Scott controlled Mexico City. On February 2, 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. Mexico accepted the Rio Grande as the southern boundary of Texas and ceded New Mexico and California to the United States for \$15 million.

In the secondary school texts, North American students learn that Polk was prepared to go to war if Mexico would not sell California or settle the Texas boundary dispute. Polk was therefore preparing a declaration of war when news arrived that Taylor's forces had been attacked by Mexico.⁹ More advanced texts indicate that "Polk baited Mexico into war" in order to acquire California. In addition, the debates within both countries are given more attention. Within Mexico, a "revolution" on January 1, 1846, brought to power a new government that was "spoiling for a fight against the United States."¹⁰ Within the United States, the more bellicose side also won, albeit without a revolution. The South and West supported the war, but the northern states viewed it as an expansionist conspiracy of slave owners. The Whig-dominated legislature of Massachusetts denounced it as a war of conquest.

How was Mexico portrayed in these histories? Santa Anna was "unscrupulous" for having deceived the United States on three separate occasions. Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager, two of America's foremost historians, describe the Mexican government as "inefficient, corrupt, and tyrannical."¹¹ Although Americans prevailed in most of the battles, they fought hard against larger Mexican armies. The main theme of the histories of the war, however, was not that the United States was an underdog. Nor did historians argue that the United States was right.

Most historians recognize that the war was one of conquest, but only a few dwell on this facet. Some note that the conquest of weaker neighbors was the rule in international relations, not the exception; what was unique was that the United States acquired only the northern part rather than all of Mexico, and paid for it, an unusual act for a victorious imperialist. These are all digressions, however. The principal theme of the histories of the war is summed up in the concluding comment that the treaty with Mexico "almost completed American expansion across the continent."¹² For students of American history, the war is not viewed as against Mexico, but rather as completing the expansion of the Republic.

Between the war and the Revolution of 1910, many important events in Mexico and in its relationship with the United States pass unrecorded in the fifth-grade text. In the 1860s, Mexico was occupied by France,

initially with the aid of Spain and Great Britain. After the Civil War, the United States helped Mexico to liberate itself, and then both nations embarked on thirty years of economic modernization. Porfirio Díaz, who ruled Mexico during most of this time, invited foreign investors, and about half were Americans. The fifth-grader then learns that the Mexican Revolution began with the overthrow of Díaz and that U.S. businessmen tried to prevail upon their government to intervene in Mexico to protect their interests. But the American people did not want to go to war, and "through their labor unions, church groups, and the newspapers," they persuaded the Senate to pass a resolution calling for a peaceful settlement of the differences with Mexico.¹³ There is no mention of the landing of troops at Veracruz, but the section on the Mexican Revolution is entitled "Intervening in Latin America," and it includes a reference to the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua at that time.

In secondary school texts, in less than one page, American students learn of the "civil war" in Mexico and the events surrounding the landing of the marines in Veracruz. There is no mention of U.S. "complicity" in the death of Francisco Madero. More advanced history books report that U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson conspired with reactionary generals—Huerta and Félix Díaz—to overthrow Madero, but he did so in contravention of instructions he received from the U.S. Department of State, and there is no evidence that he was either aware of or conspired in the murder of Madero.¹⁴ The ambassador's behavior was condemnable, but he was acting on his own against government policy during a transition between Presidents. President Woodrow Wilson was so horrified by the coup and the murder that he refused to recognize the Huerta government.

The major issue for the United States was how to respond to the violence and continued threats to U.S. citizens and property. Although Woodrow Wilson's sympathies were with the Constitutionalist forces of Venustiano Carranza, he first adopted an attitude of "watchful waiting." Then he tried unsuccessfully to mediate between the two sides. In April 1914, in response to a purported insult, and also to prevent the delivery of a shipment of arms from Germany to Huerta's forces, the marines landed in Veracruz. Huerta's followers fought the marines, and there were casualties on both sides, but this event and a subsequent mediation helped the Constitutionals to ease Huerta out of power.¹⁵

U.S. history books report both the chaos of Mexico's revolution and the pressures on Washington to protect American citizens and property. Beyond that, some historians stress the restraint of the Wilson administration; some, its arrogance and intervention. The intervention at Veracruz is the first event in the history texts in which the United States

related to Mexico as a complex nation rather than as a challenge to U.S. ambitions.

The Mexican Revolution and U.S. intervention are brief episodes in American history. President Wilson's sympathy for the Revolution and his attempt to unseat Huerta are viewed as well intentioned but contradictory, and to some historians, simply hypocritical. U.S. history books, particularly modern ones, are not reticent about criticizing the nation's impatience, insensitivity, or interventionism.

Contemporary views of Mexico are most sharply highlighted when placed in front of earlier history books. Each generation interprets the past in a different light with a different purpose. History does not change, but the collective memory of a nation evolves as contemporary events increase the importance of some past events and render others less relevant.

In her study of U.S. history textbooks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Frances FitzGerald was astonished to find how much both the style and the content changed. More startling is the rapidity with which modern interpretations change. In the nineteenth century, major changes in history books were visible every generation; in the first half of the twentieth, every decade; in the last two decades, every three years.¹⁶ Nineteenth-century historians, according to FitzGerald, were deeply biased against all foreigners, but especially Spanish, who were described by one scholar, Jedidiah Morse, as "naturally weak and effeminate."¹⁷ Textbooks tended to list prejudices and stereotypical negative traits of Latin Americans. Only in the 1920s did FitzGerald detect the first signs of a readiness to recognize Latin America's contributions to the world.

During World War II, the American Council on Education established a committee to analyze the inter-American content in textbooks in various fields in order to try to improve understanding of Latin America.¹⁸ The committee found "no evidence of conscious and perverted antagonism toward Latin America—no effort on the part of any group willfully to distort the story of inter-American relations." But it did identify some racial prejudices, a "Kiplingesque condescension," and a tendency to stress the political and military aspects of the relationship more than the economic and cultural dimensions.¹⁹ The report concluded that the quantity and quality of scholarship on Latin America had improved over the previous quarter century, but more progress was needed.

As part of its study, the committee analyzed how various history texts described the U.S.-Mexican war. To its surprise, the committee found that the books had become so sympathetic to the Mexican point of view

that the typical reader might "be led to take a critical view of the American position and to acquire a tolerance, if not complete approval, of Mexican acts."²⁰ This conclusion reflected a combination of the historians' detachment and the committee's wartime patriotism.

The debate between isolationists and internationalists that had long divided the nation was resolved by World War II. The lesson drawn in postwar textbooks was unequivocal: peace and prosperity depended on a sustained international role for the United States. Reflecting this prevailing view, U.S. texts encouraged a new generation to think internationally.

More profound change in American life and its textbooks came in response to the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the Vietnam War, and the new wave of immigration from Latin America and Asia beginning in the late 1960s. Textbooks began to acknowledge the racism in American society, the interventionism of American foreign policy, and the changing character of the nation. Students were encouraged to view other cultures as different rather than deficient. U.S. history books no longer began with the discovery of America in 1492 but rather with the migration from Asia 25,000 years before. Sections were included on the Aztec and Mayan civilizations and the various Indian tribes that inhabited North America before the Europeans arrived. The new books redefined the national identity of the United States to incorporate Mexican and other Third World immigrants, and these peoples were viewed more sympathetically than ever before.²¹

All of these changes are evident in the texts used by today's students. American history is still a success story, but the texts also strive to be balanced and fair. Conflicts are portrayed as having multiple causes. Blame is apportioned to both sides. The new relativism and willingness to acknowledge past mistakes is not an exhibition of weakness or guilt, as some critics contend; rather it is a combination of an old optimism and a new sensitivity.

Each country's history is organized around different fears and focused on different horizons. The three cases that are at the center of this chapter—Texan secession, the U.S. invasion, and intervention in Veracruz—are Mexico's traumas, and indeed, the United States uses different terms to describe the first two. If the United States shared Mexico's fear, we would have noted the conspiracies of Mexican ambassador Matias Romero in the 1860s to unseat Abraham Lincoln and oust Secretary of State William Seward,²² or focused on the Zimmermann telegram from Germany in 1917, offering Mexico the territory taken by the United States in the nineteenth century in exchange for an alliance with Germany in World War I. But these incidents, which could arouse American mis-

trust of Mexico, either are footnotes in U.S. history books or omitted altogether.

Part of the reason for the different emphasis is simply that the United States is a world power for which Mexico plays a peripheral role, while Mexico is preoccupied with maintaining its independence from the United States. American leaders view the Soviet Union and world Communism as primary threats, but they are worried that the American people are more preoccupied by domestic concerns. Reflecting a widespread elite concern, U.S. histories in the postwar period have tried to discredit isolationism and encourage each generation to remain involved in the world.

History sits differently on the two countries. In Mexico, it is like a block of granite, inhibiting movement. In the United States, it is like a rolling stone. In Mexico, the past "lives." Mexicans are justly proud of their heritage, the great Mayan and Aztec civilizations, the colonial buildings, but they are more pessimistic about the future. In contrast, Americans take pride in their newest building, the latest invention, the most recent success. The past motivates, it does not slow the future in the United States.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the sheer quantity of information on Mexico that has washed into the United States has been tidal in its dimensions. Like most cultural "invasions," the one from Mexico has not been imposed; it has been embraced in its many forms—from consumer products, like Dos Equis beer, to the increasing use of the Spanish language, to new restaurant chains like Taco Bell, to sports figures like Fernando Valenzuela. Newspaper and television coverage of Mexico has also increased sharply in recent years, and since 65 percent of the population is said to receive its foreign news from television, one should not underestimate the influence of TV in shaping the popular view of Mexico.²³

Whether television and tacos have had more influence than textbooks on the way Americans think about Mexico is impossible to determine, but the contemporary U.S. image of Mexico is discernible from an analysis of public opinion polls. The predominant image that Americans have of Mexico is friendly and sympathetic, but very concerned. In a Harris Survey in August 1986, Americans—by the substantial margin of 75 to 18 percent—felt a genuine affinity for Mexico.²⁴ In public opinion surveys in 1978, 1982, and 1986 conducted by Gallup for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Americans were asked how favorably they viewed various countries in the world. Mexico was consistently ranked among the top five. It was viewed more favorably than any other Third World country, and since 1982 Americans have felt "warmer" to Mexico than

even to Israel.²⁵ This feeling is based partly on proximity and direct experience. In a 1986 survey, 48 percent of those who responded said that they had visited Mexico. The only foreign country Americans visited more often was Canada; only 37 percent had been in Europe.²⁶

Americans view Mexico as very important in itself and as compared with other countries. The Harris Survey found that 93 percent of the American people believe that a "stable, reliable, and friendly" neighbor is important for the United States. In all the surveys of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Americans recognized that they had a "vital interest" in Mexico. This appreciation increased sharply between 1978 and 1982, probably as a result of the Mexican oil boom and increased press attention. In 1978, 60 percent of the U.S. public and 90 percent of a sample of national leaders indicated that the United States had a vital interest in Mexico, which was ranked fifteenth of twenty-four countries in the "vital interest" category.²⁷ By 1982, 74 percent of the American public and 98 percent of the elite believed that the United States had a vital interest in Mexico—the seventh most important country of twenty-two. Those figures remained stable in 1986.

In the 1982 Council survey, the public was asked whether the United States would be threatened if a Communist government came to power in each of six countries. Of those countries, which included France, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, Mexico stimulated the most concern, with 61 percent of the public and 70 percent of the elite viewing it as "a great threat," as compared, for example, with 31 percent of the public and 37 percent of the elite viewing a Communist government in France as "a great threat."

The importance that Americans attach to Mexico stems not only from the fear of a threat, but also from a recognition of the interdependence of the two economies. When asked whether economic problems in Mexico affect the United States, 77 percent said that they did and only 19 percent disagreed.²⁸ Other surveys indicate that four out of five Americans think that illegal immigration from Mexico is a serious problem for the United States, and three out of four believe that the drug flow from Mexico is a major reason for the U.S. drug problem.²⁹

The principal themes of the two nations' history books resonate in the public opinion polls. Americans feel close to Mexico, but they sense that these feelings are not reciprocated. While 83 percent of Americans are friendly toward the Mexican people, only 52 percent believe that the Mexican government is friendly toward the United States. One-third of Americans feel that the Mexican government is *not* friendly to the United States. This is surprisingly high for a neighbor, but if anything, it probably underestimates the actual negative attitudes of Mexican gov-

ernment officials toward the United States. Similarly, while 93 percent of Americans feel it is important to have "a stable, reliable, and friendly neighbor," 53 percent of Americans do *not* believe that the Mexican government is such a neighbor.³⁰

Americans like Mexico, and they are certain that Mexico is important to the United States, but they are extremely uneasy about whether the country can solve its problems. In a series of questions, 52 to 63 percent of Americans said that current problems of drugs, debt, corruption, and illegal immigration demonstrate that there is something "seriously wrong with the way Mexico is being run."³¹ An extensive survey by Yankelevich Clancy Shulman asked some blunt questions about U.S. attitudes toward Mexico in July 1986. If the responses, which were embarrassingly direct, had been statements by U.S. senators rather than a poll, they might have caused a diplomatic incident. Sixty-nine percent of Americans indicated that they thought the source of Mexico's problems was that it was "poorly governed" while 8 percent thought it was "well governed." Sixty-five percent believe there is a lot of political corruption in Mexico; only 16 percent think there is not much corruption.³²

The analysis is clear, but Americans are uncertain what policy the United States should pursue toward Mexico. A *Time* poll indicated that more than half of Americans think the government should not increase foreign aid to Mexico. In another poll, Americans split as to whether the United States should give priority to Mexico over other needy countries. Finally, 54 percent agreed that the United States should pressure Mexico to have free elections as a way to solve its problems, while 41 percent disagreed with that prescription.³³

These disparate views are not surprising in a nation as vast and diverse as the United States. One cannot speak of a single U.S. view of Mexico, but in trying to understand contemporary American feelings about Mexico, it might be useful to visualize two interacting sides of the American mind. One side of America is proud of its history and accomplishment, and another side is supportive of our friends and sympathetic to the underdog. The first side defends the United States in any international dispute, and the second is more willing to listen to the other side, and if that other side is relatively poor and weak, to defend that position even against their government.

Some groups and individuals reside permanently on one side or the other. Some on the right, for example, believe that the United States is without fault and the other party to a dispute is always wrong. Some on the left think that the United States has been mostly or all wrong in its foreign policies. Most educated Americans, however, are probably in-

fluenced by both tendencies; they are both proud of the United States and sympathetic to smaller, poorer nations.

The two tendencies are evident in the debates in Congress and on editorial pages of the major newspapers. In a content analysis of thirty-one newspaper and guest editorials on Mexico in *The New York Times* from 1983 through 1986, there were roughly an equal number of articles that were critical of Mexico's policies (thirteen) and critical of U.S. policy toward Mexico (twelve). The other six articles did not blame one side or the other.³⁴ Reflecting the two sides of the American mind, the *Times* opened its pages to the U.S. view of Mexico's problems first, and then, to the Mexican view of U.S. criticisms. About one-third of the guest editorials between 1984 and 1986 were written by Mexicans, who lectured Americans: "Don't Push Mexico" and "Enough Mexico-Bashing." Editorials of the *Times* agreed that Senator Jesse Helms should "Stop Bullying Mexico," and then appropriately, with the other hand, criticized the electoral fraud in Chihuahua in "Mexico Bashes Itself."³⁵ For the most part, Mexican views are integrated into the public debate in the United States. This is sometimes because some Americans view U.S. policy as many Mexicans do: as dominating and oppressive; and sometimes Mexicans themselves are invited to state Mexico's position.

Some, like former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick, confuse the American tradition of openness to different views with weakness, and sympathy for poorer neighbors with a "blame America first" perspective. Such a characterization is equivalent to the Mexican dismissal of a U.S. view, but in the more open debate in the United States, Kirkpatrick's opinion misses the point. The debate in the United States is not between pro- and anti-American positions but between those who accept Washington's definition of U.S. interests and those who would favor an alternative definition.

In some ways, the U.S. debate is a reflection of the international negotiation. When U.S. policy is partly an accommodation to the other side's position and interests, it is also a smooth blending of the two sides of the American mind—of pride in the United States and respect for others. Other times, in response to events or changes in the world, one tendency will prevail in the collective mind of America. For several years after the détente with the Soviet Union initiated by Richard Nixon, the United States was more relaxed about its own security and more open and interested in the views of Third World nations. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian seizure of U.S. hostages, the more aggressive, less tolerant tendency of America was ascendant.

The tendency that prevails in the U.S. approach to Mexico depends on international events, but also on Mexico's policies and statements and

the deepening appreciation of Mexico's importance to the United States. This last factor has served in the last decade to temper the more aggressive side of the United States. Mexicans may not be aware of this because as they listen to the debate between the two sides of the American mind, they tend to pay most attention to the strident voices arguing for a more assertive posture, and discount the calmer voices calling for a more respectful approach. At the end of the debate, however, U.S. policy is more likely to reflect a quiet compromise between these two tendencies.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which America's view of its history influences current attitudes toward Mexico. Public opinion surveys have not asked questions that would permit such a judgment; perhaps the absence of such questions is an unintended confirmation that history plays a smaller role for the United States than it does for Mexico.

Nonetheless, there are times when U.S. history is awakened and becomes a contemporary issue. On a visit to Indonesia in 1962, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy was asked about the U.S.-Mexican war by some students. He conceded that it "was not a very bright page in American history." His remarks were forgettable everywhere except in Texas, where they provoked outrage. Texas Senator John Tower condemned Kennedy for his "glaring ignorance," and the Houston District of the Veterans of Foreign Wars sent Kennedy a history of Texas along with a letter denouncing his remarks.

The Attorney General was later asked about the incident, and he explained that when he returned from Indonesia, he met with the President and Vice President Lyndon Johnson in the White House. In mock seriousness, Robert Kennedy explained that his brother "said he wasn't going to muzzle me, but from now on, all speeches on Texas should be cleared with the Vice President."³⁶

It is, of course, easier for the country that won the war to make light of the history. This particular incident recaptured—albeit once over lightly—the debate within the United States on the war, with Texas fighting and Massachusetts protesting. Texas is still proud of its role, and Massachusetts apologetic. The different interpretations of this event illustrate the division in the American mind. But with the possible exception of some people in Texas and Massachusetts, most Americans do not debate history as much as they do current policy. Americans are unlikely to feel either much pride or much guilt over the fact that the U.S. expansion across the continent was at the expense of Mexico.

Free of the baggage of a past, Americans have a contemporary image of Mexico as a country that is very important to the United States and one for which they feel a fondness and affinity. It is very instructive that

one of the final entries in the fifth-grade history book is a discussion of the "challenges of the 1980s," and Mexico is one of the few challenges mentioned. The book describes President Reagan's plan for a North American Accord, a vague proposal for greater cooperation among the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and says, correctly, with both sensitivity and a tinge of regret: "The Mexicans were hesitant about agreeing to this partnership."³⁷

Each new proposal from the United States suffers from historical amnesia; each hesitant and suspicious response from Mexico suffers from historical paralysis.

As one explores the galaxy of problems that both separate and unite the United States and Mexico, history is not just a vision of the past. It continues to divide the two countries, but contemporary problems do not stem from interpretations of history. Nor are the problems due to historians' adjectives that excite national pride on one side and rage on the other, or the omissions and exaggerations of the events that are alternately embarrassing to one side and provocative to the other. These only tug on the margins of the issue.

The center of the problem is simply that the United States is a nation that does not feel a need to remember its past, and the Mexican government feels it cannot afford to forget it. Mexico is anxious to redeem its past while the United States is a nation that is preoccupied with forging a new future.

And yet it is precisely because the present is an interpreter, not a prisoner, of the past that history need not be a barrier in U.S.-Mexican relations. There is, in brief, nothing fixed or predetermined about the way each nation should use its history. Different generations can use it differently in the United States, but also in Mexico. There have been times, for example, when Mexican leaders seemed ready to ignore or pour water on the history, and other times when they preferred to stoke the embers.

Josephus Daniels, U.S. ambassador to Mexico from 1933 to 1942, unintentionally offers a colorful case study of the different uses of history. Daniels, a North Carolina newspaper editor and close friend of Franklin D. Roosevelt, is acknowledged in both countries as the best U.S. ambassador to have served in Mexico. He begins his memoirs with a story that shows how relations sometimes can be improved by betting on the future rather than reliving the past.

When Daniels informed his wife that President Roosevelt asked him to be ambassador to Mexico, his wife, whom he called his "best counselor," protested strongly that he could not accept the position. Daniels was puzzled and asked why. "Don't you remember Veracruz?" she

responded. "Have you forgotten that you sent the fleet to Veracruz in 1914 and as a result a number of Mexicans were killed by the Navy's landing party?"³⁸

Daniels admitted: "I had forgotten all about the Veracruz expedition." "You and Franklin Roosevelt may have forgotten about it," his wife replied, "but you may be sure the Mexicans have not forgotten. They will not receive you."

When Josephus and Addie Daniels dined later with the President, she could not help asking Roosevelt why he had appointed her husband. Roosevelt said that it was "an excellent appointment, and . . . I know he will make a great Ambassador."

Addie Daniels then asked the President, "Have you forgotten Veracruz?"

The President was silent for a moment and then said, "I had forgotten all about the Veracruz incident. Had the Chief?"

In 1914, Josephus Daniels was Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration and the "chief" of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was then Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Daniels sent the order for the marines to land at Veracruz, and Roosevelt was responsible for implementing it. The action resulted in the death of 126 Mexicans and 19 Americans. In trying to understand why both he and the President had failed to recollect the incident, Daniels thought the reason was that he and Roosevelt "had believed that we were really aiding liberty-loving Mexicans to free themselves from the Huerta reign of absolutism."

Addie Daniels was right. The Mexicans did not forget Veracruz; nor did they remember it as her husband did. After newspapers reported Daniels's appointment, Mexican protesters stoned the U.S. embassy. Handbills condemned the appointment as "a slap at the Mexican people and the spitting upon the memory of the dead who defended Veracruz." The papers called on "workers, peasants, soldiers, students," everyone, to reject the appointment, but the Mexican government granted agreement—acceptance of the ambassadorial appointment—in less than one day. Dr. José Puig, the Minister of Foreign Relations, had been ambassador to Washington and knew Daniels as a man of liberal views and a friend of organized labor. Puig not only took the risk of accepting a controversial appointment with what the embassy described as "unprecedented rapidity," but he committed himself to it. He called in the Mexican press, told them of Daniels's background, and suggested that they "would be wise to let sleeping dogs lie."

Upon learning of Mexico's decision, Roosevelt dictated a telegram instructing the U.S. chargé in Mexico City to meet with Puig to express the President's personal appreciation for the prompt decision and to ask

Puig to inform his President that Roosevelt "has complete confidence in Mr. Daniels, who is an old and trusted friend and that the selection of so distinguished a national personage and close associate of the President is for the purpose of indicating the deep and friendly interest" of Roosevelt in excellent relations. Privately, and without informing the U.S. government, the Mexican government took special precautions to assure Daniels's security the moment he crossed the border.

Mexico's risk was richly rewarded. Relations between the two nations began well and, despite many serious problems in a convulsive period that could have led to conflict, remained strong throughout the Roosevelt administration. Daniels himself played a central role in developing a relatively sympathetic and tolerant U.S. policy toward the Mexican Revolution and particularly the nationalization of U.S. oil companies.

What would have happened if the Mexicans had hesitated or responded negatively to the appointment of Daniels? We do not need to speculate, because Roosevelt later confided what his reaction would have been: "If the Mexicans cannot deal with Daniels, they can have no dealings with me." If Mexico had responded negatively to the appointment, Roosevelt would have responded in the same manner, and the downward cycle of a deteriorating relationship would have begun. At the minimum, the possibility of good relations would have been lost, perhaps irretrievably during the turbulent 1930s.

History can be used to inhibit or prevent communication. If suspicions born in history cause people to see only the negative shadows of a decision or an event, past mistakes will be repeated indefinitely. But as the case of Daniels's appointment shows, history need not be a barrier. Like sleeping dogs, history could be put aside, and a good story of a Mexican risk and a generous response by the United States could be remembered.

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INTERVENTION

From Mexico Looking Out

Jorge G. Castañeda

On April 22, 1983, Anthony Arredondo, the U.S. consul in Hermosillo, the capital of the border state of Sonora, hosted a supper attended by local leaders of the National Action Party (PAN), which in recent years has made important inroads in the north of Mexico, and by conservative local businessmen. Also present, and perhaps more importantly, was Archbishop Carlos Quintero Arce of Hermosillo, generally considered one of the more conservative members of the Mexican ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The dinner created a minor commotion in Mexico, which sprang from one simple problem. Through its diplomatic representatives, the U.S. government was viewed in Mexico as openly interfering in Mexican domestic politics by publicly meeting—and thus associating itself—with the conservative opposition to the government. In this way, Washington was considered to be taking sides in internal Mexican matters, and more or less conspiring against the government of President Miguel de la Madrid. At a time of growing political difficulties in Mexico, and in an area of the country where the opposition was gaining ground, representatives of the U.S. government were getting together with the pro-American opposition and with a church leader who supported it.