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Nations and Organizations: Explaining the Mérida Initiative Through the Essence of Decision

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NATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS: EXPLAINING THE MÉRIDA
INITIATIVE THROUGH THE *ESSENCE OF DECISION*

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NATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS: EXPLAINING THE MÉRIDA
INITIATIVE THROUGH THE *ESSENCE OF DECISION*

by

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THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explain state behavior and underpinning influences paramount to the political development of the Mérida Initiative. To accomplish this task, it crafts distinct, yet complimentary narratives that illustrate how and why the formulation of this policy unfolded. Utilizing historical, archival and empirical evidence, this thesis maps out the manners in which the national governments, organizational hierarchies, and bureaucratic entities involved with Mérida's origins reacted to the changing landscape throughout the policy's development.

The Mérida Initiative is critical to understanding how nations are approaching the problem of illicit crime organizations and institutional instability in the U.S.-Mexico region. Encompassing over \$1.5 billion of assets from the United States to Mexico, this policy encapsulates the portrait of the War on Drugs today. By systematically tracing the process of the Mérida Initiative's development through perspectives, theories, and evidence, this study generates useful insight towards understanding state behavior and the dynamics behind Mérida's beginnings. Findings suggest that the national governments of the United States and Mexico agreed to Mérida in order to seek an arena where capital for power projection purposes may be generated. Moreover, governmental organizations acted out of uncertainty rather than seeking expansion and more resources.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

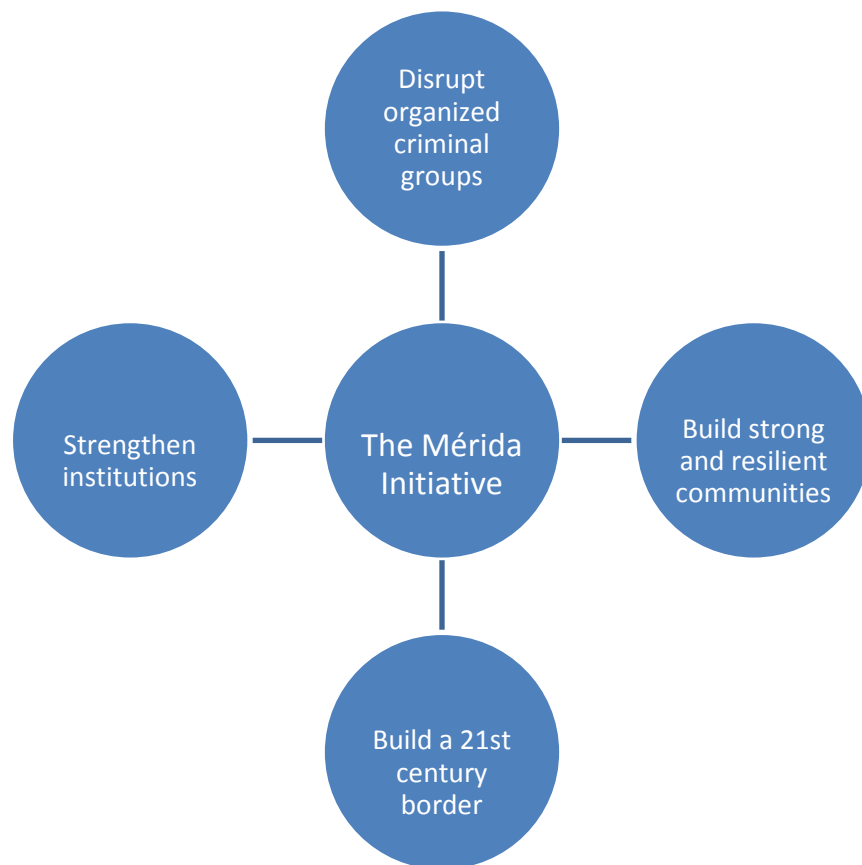
This chapter provides an overview to the fundamental ideas behind the diverse pathways to understanding the political development of the Mérida Initiative. First, a sketch of Mérida is provided. Second, the tenets of general argument laden within this work are discussed. Third, the research design is presented, as well as justification for the suitability of the approach taken herein. Lastly, an outline is provided for the chapters throughout the rest of this work.

1.1 WHAT IS MÉRIDA?

The Mérida Initiative can be aptly described as a \$1.4 billion aid package with the aim of combating criminal organizations in the Latin American region, particularly in Mexico, but also in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Central America. A good primer to conceptualizing the overall nature of the Mérida Initiative is by examining the original goals stated by the U.S. Government during the formation of the policy. "The four primary goals of the Mérida Initiative are to (1) break the power and impunity of criminal organizations; (2) strengthen border, air, and maritime controls; (3) improve the capacity of justice systems in the region; and (4) curtail gang activity and diminish the demand for drugs in the region (U.S. Congress 2009)." These goals lend insight on the rationale behind U.S. actions related to the policy, from its tendency to increase levels of militarization to efforts focused on centralized, sweeping reforms. However, the extent to which these tenets are useful for understanding the evolutionary direction of Mérida is mitigated by a lack of in-depth articulation from policymakers concerning the criteria for success encompassed within each objective.

Before reaching that point, it is necessary to trace the formulation of the policy itself in order to generate a proper context for understanding the dynamics of policy implementation.

Stemming from the language found throughout the formational stages of Mérida, the Department of State has promoted the recent version of the institutionalized goals of the Initiative through what has been termed as "The Four Pillars of Mérida."



Source: U.S. Department of State

Figure 1.1: The Four Pillars of Mérida.

Particularly, it becomes apparent that this trend of shifting rhetoric when compared to the encapsulated goals during the advent of Mérida leaves room for flexibility in what it means to be

a 'success' and 'effective.' Once again, criteria for determining these updated, loftier goals are nowhere to be found. This absence of contextualization may help explain why studies aimed at explaining the political development of Mérida have been largely avoided thus far. As a result of these simplistic all-encompassing goals, crafting a framework suitable for interpreting the data surrounding Mérida's history will be just as critical as future analysis of Mérida's efficacy.

These policy objectives were formed to provide focus for the vague nature of the Initiative. In essence, funds are released to countries through phases, signified by the attainment of certain marks of "progress" within these areas through effective use of resources from previous stages. However, the extent to which those thresholds for more funds are defined is up for discussion between policymakers on both sides, creating a likely conduit for high degrees of politicization surrounding this program. Additionally, how much funding is released at each threshold is also subject to a discretionary basis, creating an even cloudier environment for ascertaining explanations of how Mérida developed into a full-fledged policy stance in the War on Drugs.

Unlike past efforts to combat criminal organizations in Latin American countries, appropriation of funds for Mérida has been placed almost entirely in the hands of U.S. agencies. The reasoning behind this is that previous experience showed that giving target countries full autonomy over policy resources increases the likelihood of corruption and a lack of accountability (Government Accountability Office 2007; hereafter GAO). This significant shift away from previous U.S. foreign policy endeavors presents itself as a puzzling deserving of deeper analysis. The next section lays out the general argument of the thesis.

1.2 THE GENERAL ARGUMENT

Amongst other conclusions, Allison and Zelikow (1999) make two arguments that function as a springboard for the premises in this work. The first argument is that multiple frameworks can be used to complement each other in order to provide a stronger basis for inferences or explanation. Second, foreign policy analysis can be informed by conceptually-based analysis of a pertinent policy. In this section, I delve deeper into the questions that Allison left open at the end of his work. To accomplish this, I present a number of arguments whose purpose is to provide a guide of the prepositions at the foundation of this study.

- 1. There is a more effective method to accomplish Allison's goals without losing the original intent behind his work.*
- 2. Event narratives can uncover underlying dynamics relative to a concept in a policy event that lead to increased descriptive power for a theory.*
- 3. Nation states and organizations remain primary influences in a policy's development.*

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Roberts (1996) aptly notes that historical explanations of puzzles are more than mere event descriptions. Analysts can use this lens to formulate probabilistic contentions about the sequence of the events being explored. Should an event analysis provide valid conclusions, these inferences can then be reapplied in more general and tested with related questions. Another important consideration when crafting boundaries for this kind of research is understanding the limitations of the study. King et al. (1994) note that one fundamental limit is the inability of within-case analysis to outright exclude alternative explanations. However, this is not to say that

robust analysis is incapable of making substantive progress towards strengthening or weakening the basis for inferences.

In essence, this study's research design can be encapsulated by the idea of congruence. The congruence method can be effectively understood as a study where some theoretical foundation is articulated, then placed under scrutiny through its application to a relevant case (George and Bennett 2005). Previous scholarship has been able to utilize a number of contexts for undertaking case study, from rational choice to game theory (Bates et al. 1998). Hence, there are several types of frameworks that may be used as a setting for analytic narratives. This study creates a novel framework via the perspective-theory-case approach outlined in this chapter.

Unsurprisingly, there are ultimately more circumstances than can be stated, each of which may have some interaction or intervening effect on inferences or explanations. However, it is the aim of this study to utilize the availability of empirics and primary evidence as a test of significance on concepts deemed relevant to the puzzle at hand. This section elucidates the research design of this study. Crafting narratives that are capable of providing answers surrounding Mérida's development requires a clear and static context. To establish this context, I establish the perspective-theory-case approach as a system that effectively generates stories of Mérida that focus on a particular concept of interest.

The perspective-theory-case approach is the first direct successor to Allison's (1971) models. Overcoming his model's inherent weaknesses, this approach nonetheless remains true to Allison's attempts at explaining the evolution of policy. Instead of attempting to create a formal model within the qualitative realm, Allison's models are transformed into much more simplistic, yet still useful perspectives. These perspectives then function as an "umbrella" by which a concept of interest deemed relevant to a policy event is identified. With the contextualization

set, a suitable theory that can generate hypotheses is placed inside of that perspective. The perspective possesses core questions for the policy puzzle, while the theory postulates hypothetical expectations. Finally, these can be taken and utilized as the guide for crafting an appropriate narrative of the policy event under the scope of the given contextualization. For the sake of parsimony, each chapter that contains a narrative specifically handles the relevant concepts and theories to generating the most effective narrative under a given purview.

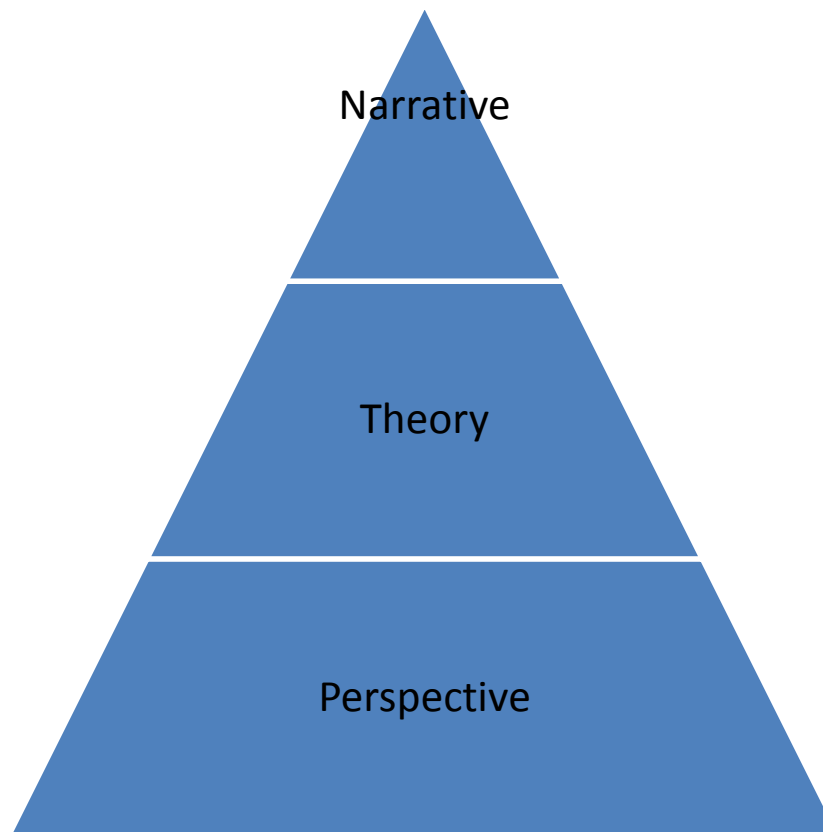


Figure 1.2: The Perspective-Theory-Case Approach.

1.4 ROADMAP

The remaining chapters explore the puzzle of Mérida's development. Chapter 2 presents a case for understanding Mérida as a rational response between two nations. Chapter 3 contains

a narrative of Mérida that is reliant on unpacking organizational processes. Chapter 4 attempts to wrestle with objections to the inferences drawn from the narratives in the chapters preceding it. Chapter 5 summarizes this study's findings and discusses how future research can benefit from lessons generated by this work.

Chapter 2: Mérida as Rational Response

When trying to solve the puzzle of Mérida's political development, a person must ruminate upon the most effective approach for eking out considerations that lay at the core of explaining the event. In seeking explanation for the Cuban missile crisis, Allison and Zelikow (1999) elucidate the importance of constructing a narrative from the perspective of rational state agents so as to understand the international event being studied. Likewise, noteworthy insight into the formulation of the Mérida Initiative can be wrought through the lens of state-level actions. This lens sets a stage whereby Mérida exists as the result of numerous strategic decision-making plays between involved nations.

Since Allison's work, scholarship has excoriated the broader claims central to the Rational Actor Model (RAM), citing a lack of refinement in theoretical stipulations (Bendor and Hammond 1992). More specifically, those wishing to utilize RAM to study events in a similar fashion to Allison must undertake greater effort to bring about an increased level of rigor when seeking explanation to any relevant puzzling event. In an effort to accomplish this, I implement a theoretical perspective that remains consistent with both the core of Allison's perspective in this approach, as well as an actual theory that provides room for testing expectations within a narrative for the Mérida Initiative's advent.

The construction of such a framework requires careful navigation between separate, but compatible ideas. Deriving a fitting approach for examining Mérida's political formulation requires the proper superimposition of the rational actor perspective and theoretical propositions from offensive realism. The justifications for these selections are provided in the following sections.

The remainder of this chapter presents an attempt at modernizing Allison's approach without losing the heart of its cause. Most importantly, I seek to increase the intensity of the RAM thought process without losing the real-world accessibility and relevance that Allison's original work possessed in order to explain the puzzling event that is the Mérida Initiative. I undertake this task through dissecting RAM analysis of Mérida's political development into three main parts. First, I introduce a contemporary take on RAM which will be referred to as the rational actor perspective. I aim to clarify much of the ambiguities left in Allison's original take through the emphasis of particular concepts and through the exclusion and clarification of dynamics inherent in RAM. I also attempt to remedy key overarching shortcomings from RAM's assumptions and implications before introducing questions that are significant to this perspective's narrative on Mérida.

In the second section, I present the theory of offensive realism as an explanatory augment for this lens. I clarify pertinent concepts and applications before demonstrating how the foundations between this theory and the rational actor perspective are compatible. Finally, I present hypothetical expectations derived from this theory, but still under the purview of the rational actor perspective. The third section entails a narrative of Mérida's political development, honing in on insight that becomes evident through the utilized perspective and theory herein.

2.1 THE RATIONAL ACTOR PERSPECTIVE

In keeping with being a spiritual successor to Allison's work, it is appropriate to begin seeking explanation for the Mérida Initiative's formulation through what Allison originally deemed RAM. Given the dated nature of RAM's vague postulations (at least, insofar as attempting to be utilized as a formal model) and its incapacity to explicitly prescribe testable hypotheses, I implement the core of RAM in a new light. As Bendor and Hammond (1992)

posit, these limitations are not an unconditional death knell on RAM's validity as a tool for analysis. Rather, the insights provided by RAM can be rethought as a perspective by which more refined study can then be conducted.

This section presents the first attempt at modernizing RAM into a more directly applicable mechanism for theoretically refining our understanding of how state actors make decisions in foreign policy. In this context, RAM is transformed within the remainder of this work into the rational actor perspective (RAP). Before RAP can become a useful lens for seeking insights into Mérida's political development, it must be constructed as an operable framework. To accomplish this, I generate a relevant understanding of RAP as it is utilized within this study. Second, I highlight contingencies that have been mentioned as nuances that were originally not dealt with by Allison in an explicit manner. Finally, I present RAP's underlying questions of importance in regards to crafting a relevant narrative of the Mérida Initiative.

2.1.1 Constructing the Perspective

The rational actor perspective's aim is to function as an initial lens that dictates appropriate theory selection and narrative formulation. This section goes in-depth into the fundamental tenets of RAP and utilizes its guidelines to provide the framework for a narrative on the Mérida Initiative. In short, RAP provides an explicit context that engenders greater perspicuity towards the selection and application of a theory that houses pertinent hypotheses for studying Mérida. Constructing this perspective requires an initial visit into the core concepts most significant to any theoretical refinement under RAP. Secondly, I translate the concepts RAP's emphasizes into a usable foundation for further event analysis. Next, I make explicit the kinds of data that may be justified under a RAP study.

Defining Concepts

An introduction to RAP requires highlighting key notions that are utilized as parameters in determining what theoretical approaches fall within its scope. Drawing from Bendor and Hammond's (1992) breakdown of Allison's rational actor model, I discuss four essential characteristics. First, it is imperative to investigate the way that a rational actor perspective views the idea of who is enacting decisions. The second concept involves how RAP conceptualizes the idea of goals, or objectives, in describing any sort of decision-making process. Third, the idea of rationality must be addressed into order to have a springboard by which compatible theories can be utilized. Lastly, RAP possesses assumptions concerning the type of information that actors utilize through their normal means.

Transformed into a lens, RAP is able to maintain the core assertions held in Allison's work, since the threshold for a perspective is categorically distinct from formal models. Nonetheless, clarification is essential to grounding RAP as a preliminary framework that lays out sufficiently explicit guidelines that foster distinction between this perspective and others.

Identifying how analysts should conceive of relevant actors is important to contextualizing the subsequent explanations for any policy action. In line with Allison, RAP establishes the actor to be investigated as a singular "state." RAP focuses on two particular levels of specificity when it comes to analyzing the puzzle at hand.¹ The first level is what Allison refers to as the identified state. In this form, the state actor is conceptualized as an entity that history and politics can categorize. Categorically, the identified state is an explicit nation state, encompassing a slate of attributes and behavior that can lend insight into any potential narrative. The second level is known as the personified state. This state is essentially akin to equating state

¹ Allison's RAM illustrates four forms that the state can take: the notional state, generic state, identified state, and personified state. See (Allison and Zelikow 1999: 21-23) for a fuller discussion on the topic.

leaders to state action. In the case of Mérida, this means examining George W. Bush's actions as "the U.S. state", and Vicente Fox's actions as "the Mexican state."²

The concept of goals is something Allison's RAM initially endowed upon the state actor. Bendor and Hammond (1992) critique this notion as simplistic, postulating that there is a high probability that there are multiple goals pursued by any single state actor. Additionally, these goals are not static in nature, but rather fluid and hold the potential to be even contrary to each other. In regards to a state's goals in the decision-making process, focal points exist that may provide incentives for actors to compromise and coordinate actions (Schelling 1960). While pursuing the presence of focal points in and of themselves is arbitrary, seeking explanation for the degree by which coordination may be fostered between actors as a result of these shared decisions is a pertinent part of the larger puzzle.

Pursuit of these focal points while avoiding overly simplistic handling of the notion of a state actor's goals is a significant objective of any perspective seeking to explain policy action. RAP reforms the idea of goals to remedy RAM's shortcomings. In RAP, goals are not an explicit set of parameters that can be isolate from the development of the event narrative itself. In other words, RAP integrates the notion of state goals into the study being undertaken as opposed to futilely attempting to formally state them.

The rational capacity possessed by a state actor is an important consideration when utilizing RAP. Allison's RAM contends that state actors come about their decisions their some form of perfect rationality. Bendor and Hammond (1992) take issue with this stance, citing a

² It is worth noting that there are no explicit restrictions concerning the isolation of Bush or Fox (or in Allison's case, Khrushchev or Kennedy) from the actions/influence of other significant intrastate entities. Distinguishing whether an action was solely decided upon by the state leader or if they were influenced by close advisors or other government officials is not within the purview of RAP.

lack of consideration for a multitude of issues that are relevant to any sort of rational action.³ RAP defaults to this simple and perfect rationality, but is capable of being respondent to the nature of the study. Should Mérida's narrative reveal any form of imperfect rationality (or irrationality altogether), it is still entirely relevant under RAP since being able to calculate the actions themselves is not a fundamental concern.

How state actors acquire and utilize information is critical for seeking proper explanations for their decisions. Numerous critics (Bendor and Hammond 1992; Krasner 1972) emphasize that Allison's model assumes perfect information within any rational state action. This narrow interpretation risks the loss of valuable insight and handicaps any model that cannot reflect the dynamics surrounding information, forcing analysts to operate with a state actor's values driving the study. RAP allows for a study to attribute poor decisions to incomplete information, since it does not assume that governments are primarily value-driven. In the case of Mérida's political development, this allows a RAP narrative to consider pragmatically pertinent factors such as a lack of information sharing between the United States and Mexico (as opposed to poor values in strategy).

Focusing Analysis

Having discussed the core concepts surrounding RAP and distinguishing it from its predecessor, it is imperative to delineate how an analyst should utilize RAP in order to successfully conduct studies. As Krasner (1972) and even Allison (1999) himself assert, RAM allows for a seemingly infinite number of plausible stories given any number of convenient

³ These issues are specifically corrected for in RAP under the next subsection, "Contingencies."

assumptions.⁴ As a perspective, RAP functions as a theoretical umbrella that explicitly sets a context by which richer work can then be accomplished. By following RAP's prescriptions, a scholar can then utilize an appropriate theory that is functionally compatible with RAP's worldview. Once a theory is chosen for the relevant political puzzle, then questions can be drawn from both RAP and the subsequent theory to generate findings from the puzzle's narrative.

Finding the Right Evidence

Formulating an effective narrative using RAP requires inference from proper sources of evidence. To remedy some of the ambiguity found in Allison's earlier model, it is important to provide some explicit guidelines. The main incentive behind highlighting certain types of evidence is to uphold consistency in the narrative between the theoretical framework and empirical work. Any work undertaken should focus on evidence that encapsulates either the identified or personified state. For example, this includes official statements or public interviews from government outlets, policy texts, and any nation state-level actions. While this may not be an exhaustive listing, it is useful if future scholarship provides justification for the type(s) of evidence being used within RAP's purview.

An important qualifier for evidence via this perspective is whether it can contribute to the generation of insight on the public presumptions surrounding Mérida. Zelikow (1999) explains that, removed from negative connotations akin to myths,⁵ public presumptions are the reflection of significant actions that shape a particular historical event. These presumptions provide us with a portrait of the perceived societal reality, without any need to test the ultimate "truth" of

⁴ Bendor and Hammond (1992) criticize Allison for separating himself from his models and instead of seeking refinement for significant and inherent problems within them.

⁵ The idea of a 'public myth' tends to be "faith more than fact," (McNeill 1982) an attribute set apart from Zelikow's notion of public presumption.

that perception. This mass understanding of an event is most relevant to a perspective that focuses on nation-state interactions to generate explanations for policy development.

2.1.2 Contingencies

Having prescribed the basic tenets of the rational actor perspective, this section now turns to some of the most pressing issues concerning Allison's model and explains how RAP is positioned as a viable alternative. First, I discuss how my perspective is distinct from Allison's model in regards to predictions and calculations. Second, I engage with the decision and theoretic aspects of the original model and sort out how RAP is poised to contribute in this aspect.

Predictions and Calculations

The temptation to claim that a qualitative model can calculate decisions and predict future outcomes is great, but comes at crippling costs. There are requirements for rational games and other considerations that are outside the place of analyzing individual events of importance. Rather than maintain dreams of grandeur, RAP contextualizes explanations so that nuances and exceptions are not excluded by the narrative. Additionally, the relevant theory superimposed onto RAP generates hypotheses on its own that remain pertinent to RAP's broader questions.

The inevitability of uncertainty can potentially handicap the predictive power of an approach is dependent on rational action (Simon 1985). However, RAP sidesteps this issue by being situated apart from Allison's attempt to house predictive capabilities within his original model. RAP focuses on refining explanations of an event, as opposed to being burdened with claims of calculating how that explanation came to be (in terms of rational games) or how future actions can be predicted.

Unpacking Complex Decision-Theoretic Dynamics

Aside from key concepts, there are dynamics inherent to Allison's original model that should be distinguished from my perspective. These dynamics can be categorized as either decision-theoretic or game-theoretic.⁶ The rational actor perspective operates solely within the decision-theoretic realm. Conveniently, the essential shortcomings to Allison's model fall under the game-theoretic components. The reason for this is because Allison's model does not have the necessary elements to be successfully utilized to the extent that contemporary formal models are. Unfortunately, RAM is also unusable in the decision-theoretic realm because he conflates issues between both categories. In seeking the capacity to be utilized for its game-theoretic aspects, Allison's model also becomes too simplistic for any decision-theoretic ones.

The three key decision-theoretic aspects to RAP are derived from Bendor and Hammond's (1992) critique of Allison's model. Two, uncertainty and goals, have been remedied in the previous section. Time is the third dynamic that needs to be discussed. Paul Pierson (2005) contends that there are fundamental limitations that exist when political scientists use traditional means to analyze policy development through a historical lens.⁷ Thus, this chapter's analysis on the Mérida Initiative seeks to answer Pierson's call for more proper analysis.

In contrast to Allison's model, RAP does not implicate a delineation of "eras" relevant to Mérida (pre-, post-, etc.). Rather than viewing policy development as a single event that occurs within a narrow temporal range that begins with policy deliberation and ends with a legislation, RAP seeks to contextualize dynamics of time by making it secondary to the substantive

⁶ Bendor and Hammond (1992) contend that a rational actor model should have decision-theoretic and game-theoretic components. They define the first as concerning "attributes of the decision maker(s)" and the second as "strategic interactions" (305).

⁷ Most works on policy development have utilized a "snapshot" approach that unduly separates events of the past from the present, inferring policy *selection* when it should really be understood as policy *development*. (Pierson 2005).

significance of any particular data point. In short, categories of time should not restrict the piecing together of any relevant empirical and archival evidence that can fully tell the story of Mérida within this perspective.

2.1.3 Salient Questions

Having provided an overview on the core tenets related to RAP, it is useful to formulate pertinent questions from this foundation that can then provide some guidance for crafting a narrative seeking to explain the formulation of Mérida. From a rational actor perspective, the following questions are central to unveiling key pieces to solving this puzzle of policy development⁸: What are the perceived circumstances that lead the U.S. and Mexico to create the Mérida Initiative? Why did Mexico seek aid from the U.S. for its drug interdiction efforts? Why was the Mérida Initiative selected as a response? What are the goals of the U.S. and Mexico with regards to Mérida?

2.2 THE THEORY

The previous section has worked to construct the rational actor perspective as a foundational context by which rich analysis of the Mérida Initiative's development may be generated. Prerequisite to this analysis is the allowance for a theory which presents contentions that may aid in unraveling the puzzle that is Mérida to a higher degree of nuance than a mere application of the perspective alone. More specifically, RAP necessitates an actual theory that contains certain expectations about the way that Mérida's development unfolded. In this manner, the theory of offensive realism is a suitable component to heightening this chapter's explanatory and predictive prowess.

⁸ These questions are drawn from the roadmap suggested by Allison's conclusions (1971) as a deeper type of questioning that lies within the potential of a rational actor framework.

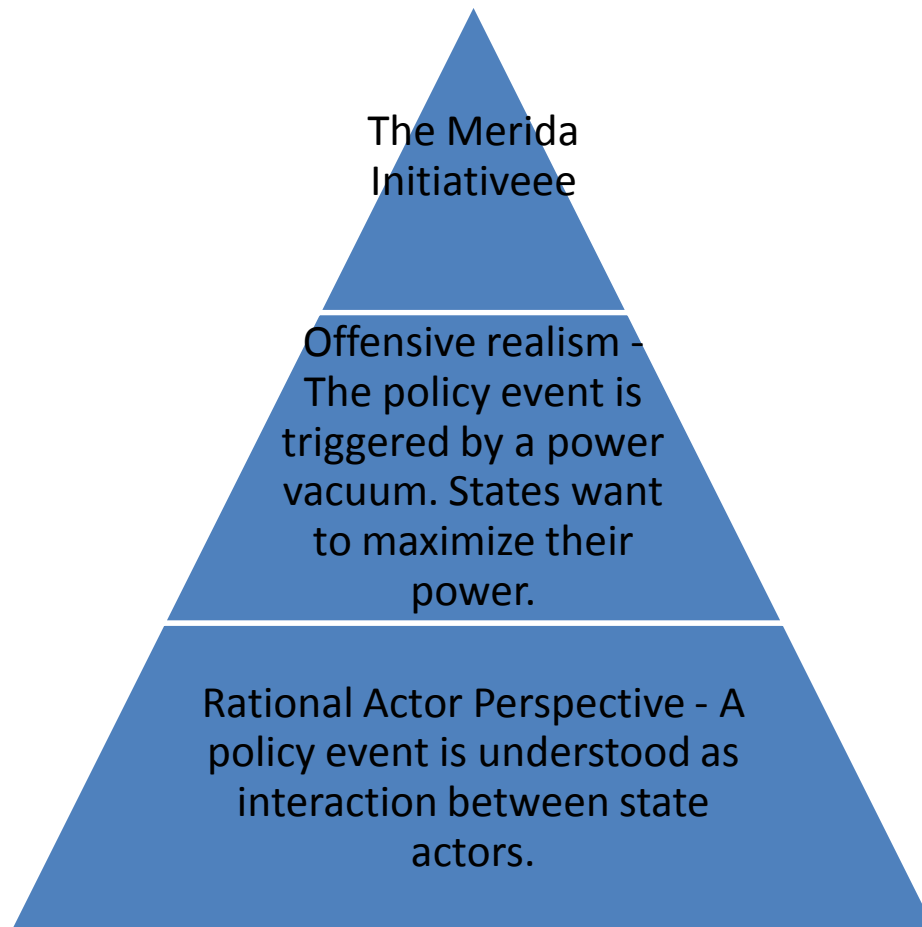


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework for the RAP Narrative.

The remainder of this section unpacks offensive realism in order to cleanly insert it as the nuanced lens within the broader perspective herein. First, I highlight the basics of the theory, paying special attention to main concepts and assumptions. Next, I contextualize these notions to the study of Mérida before presenting how these notions remain consistent and significant with the rational actor perspective. Last, I generate hypotheses from offensive realism for the narrative found later in this chapter.

2.2.1 A Conceptual Primer on Offensive Realism

Mearsheimer's (2001) theory of offensive realism essentially posits that the nature of the international system, with its opportunities for power maximization, leads states to engage in aggressive tactics (such as buck-passing and colonization) over balancing power (Schweller 1994).⁹ Furthermore, Mearsheimer (2005) explicitly draws out a number of fundamental tenets that encapsulate the presumptive framework built upon by offensive realism. It is important to highlight the assumptions most relevant to illustrating this theory's relevance to the RAP and Mérida's development. Offensive realism maintains that great powers are the essential actors to be studied, and they are both rational and driven by maximizing their survival. The theory also holds that a state remains inevitably uncertain over its understanding of the motivations of other states.

In addition to these theoretical components, there is also the task of highlighting the operationalization of concepts utilized by offensive realism to generate meaningful hypotheses. This explanation is important because these variables are what will guide how evidence is interpreted in case analysis. Mearsheimer (2001) provides two explanatory variables, power and geography, to generate hypotheses about state action from a structuralist standpoint. The concept of power is not at odds with other variants of realism, and broadly denotes the capacity of state actors to make decisions without restraint from other members of the system (Keohane 2002). Mearsheimer's notion of geography encapsulates the location of a state actor as an intermediary variable which can then lend offensive realism to craft explanations as an aggregation of both foreign policy and international interactions. The hierarchy between these

⁹ This is in stark contrast to defensive realism, where scholars maintain that state actors do not actively seek to dominate as much of a given system as they can (Waltz 1979).

two concepts is not extremely clear (Toft 2005), but the essence of these ideas is sufficient to craft expectations about the narrative within this chapter.¹⁰

Particularly through the rational actor perspective, offensive realism has the potential of providing us with specific hypotheses about state behavior in the face of opportunities within the international system. Seeking explanation for the Mérida Initiative's origins presents a puzzle that fits squarely within offensive realism's purview. To provide further clarity on this topic, I now apply the tenets of offensive realism to the case of Mérida to demonstrate the utility of using this theory.

2.2.2 Applications for Mérida

Having provided a cursory glance at the crux of offensive realism, it is critical to draw connections between the ideas in Mearsheimer's theory to how Mérida's development is analyzed later in this chapter. Useful insight on the case of Mérida can be generated through applying the broader notions found in Mearsheimer's theory. This section demonstrates that central components to Mérida pertain to the most relevant parts of offensive realism.

The idea of great powers as an approach has a deep tradition within the subfield of international relations. At its core, characterizing great powers involves examining actors who play significant and meaningful roles to the workings of the international system (Wendt 1995). At first glance, Mérida's case involving the United States and Mexico might seem an inappropriate relationship to examine through a lens that is interested with great powers. However, a closer examination of the case provides necessary context that positions both nations

¹⁰ Being a case-driven work, I do not seek to further refine these variables in the sense of providing advance towards any sort of formal model. That challenge lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

as great powers. The scope of the Mérida Initiative is within the Americas,¹¹ setting the international system in this instance to be the region affected by the policy's formulation. In that frame, both the United States and Mexico are top-tier players in the handling of drug cartel operations in the geographical space being explored.

The next consideration is offensive realism's contention that states are driven to maximize their survival. Framed by international relations scholarship as "anarchy," moments of opportunity in the system are believed to arise that lend themselves as conduits for states to use as points of response (Wendt 1992). In the case of Mérida, the presence of this anarchy can be found in two forms. Opportunity to stimulate state actors' drive for maximizing the likelihood of survival is featured prevalently as both the societal problems that lead to Mérida's implementation, as well as through the bargaining over the prescription of Mérida itself.

Uncertainty of information is also made apparent as a significant part of Mérida's development. Inconsistent degrees of information-sharing between states entrenched suboptimal or conservative strategies that may help account for what is initially seen as simple cooperation. Offensive realism's variables of interest, power and geography, are two dynamics that are front and center in the interactions between Mexico and the United States concerning Mérida. Particularly, the narrative in this chapter seeks to explore influences such as power projection, regional hegemony, and self-serving partnership-making.

2.2.3 Foundational Consistency

Having emphasized the fit between the case of Mérida and broader notions of offensive realism, it is pertinent to provide justification for the compatibility between the rational actor

¹¹ Further emphasis is on the United States and Mexico specifically, evidenced by funding allocation within the policy.

perspective and offensive realism.¹² This consistency is inherent within both components in two ways. First, both perspective and theory utilize similar core assumptions. Second, the distinct questions and dynamics of interests posed by both are not in conflict with each other.

The cores of both components view puzzles of interest in the same fundamental fashion. In essence, the unit of analysis is the state as the entity making decisions. Wendt (2004) elucidates that it is useful to understand inter-state interactions with the state as a single person. Offensive realism and the rational actor perspective see the state as a sort of "black box," where the focus of analysis is not on the inner workings of a given state, but rather on the evolution of state strategies from a collective level.

While both share similar roots, different questions arise as a result of distinct functions between a perspective versus a theory. However, these points of uniqueness do not necessitate points of divergence, as offensive realism merely offers a coloring of the slate provided by RAP. As such, the contentions to be examined within Mérida's narrative by offensive realism do not conflict with the broader lens, but rather allow us to delve deeper into a particular outlook that can provide more nuanced insight. The same is true for the variables of power and geography. These are merely tools to be used in the playground provided by the rational actor perspective.

The hypothetical expectations for Mérida that stem from offensive realism should also not be understood in the same fashion as any would-be predictive assertions held by RAP. Within the scope of this chapter, Mearsheimer's theory is being utilized in a search to uncover if there is evidence within the case of Mérida that suggests a strengthening or weakening of some of offensive realism's base propositions. This is mutually exclusive from RAP, which does not hold an innate capacity for calculating predictive measures for rational action.

¹² This consistency must be explicitly reasoned in order for the perspective-theory-case system to accomplish its aims.

2.2.4 Hypothetical Expectations

With a consistent foundation and proven relevance between theory and empirics, it is useful to present the expectations for Mérida generated by offensive realism. These contentions provide the grounds for process tracing within the case of Mérida to ascertain if offensive realism's presence as a motivator for U.S.-Mexico action in this instance can be confirmed. The following two contentions encapsulate the variables of power and geography to explain the institutional behavior present in the narrative of Mérida's development:

Contention 1: The Mérida Initiative was implemented as an arena for the United States and Mexico to battle for maximizing power towards regional hegemony, and thus only a cooperative agreement by proxy.

This contention holds that Mérida's development was primarily driven by both state actors' wanting to maximize their own survival. In essence, the humanitarian and democratic aspects of Mérida are merely incidental to the power-wrestling between the United States and Mexico in seeking to take the lead of the region's War on Drugs. Here, state behavior is being driven to the offensive strategy of taking "control of the situation" by the high degree of geographical proximity and ample opportunity for power. Mexico and the United States share a physical border, and are closely tied in culture and history. Multiple forms of power are generated through state action in the War on Drugs, such as military capabilities, intelligence, as well as other social forces.¹³

Contention 2: The United States saw the Mérida Initiative as an opportunity to leverage "blame of the situation" to Mexico.

¹³ The Mérida Initiative also focuses on institutional areas such as judicial systems and education.

Offensive realism would expect that the United States' approach towards Mérida exhibits characteristics of buck-passing. In other words, U.S. support of the policy is indicative of trying to "clean up the mess" perceived to have been caused by Mexico. This postulation interestingly contrasts to alternative explanations to U.S. involvement with Mérida, which tend to believe that the policy's development has had both the United States and Mexico as legitimate partners.

2.3 THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE: A FIRST LOOK

The rational actor perspective has provided the groundwork for a narrative that can explain Mérida's development through questions salient to its core interests. With RAP's helpful contextualization, offensive realism has been positioned as a compatible theory with interesting propositions that hold the potential to demystify the puzzle of the motivations behind Mérida. Now, it is fitting to unpack these questions and propositions into a "first look" of the Mérida Initiative.

To accomplish this task, the remainder of this section is divided into two parts. The first part presents the Mérida narrative within the scope of the rational actor perspective. The second segment utilizes the same base narrative, but isolates and emphasizes evidence and dynamics that shed light on offensive realism's hypothetical expectations for Mérida. Combined, these parts form a compelling story for how and why Mérida came into existence.

2.3.1 Unpacking the Perspective

An initial component to understanding the development of Mérida is highlighting the circumstances that precipitated calls for a regional security cooperation agreement. These situational dynamics set the stage for the predispositions, strategic considerations, and ultimate decisions of the United States and Mexico to adopt Mérida. An irrefutable discovery herein is

that the internal conditions within Mexico have played a significant role in shaping the mindsets of both countries, especially in regards to conceptions of border security.

One of the major problems in Mexico that precipitated calls for U.S. assistance as prescribed by Mérida was the rampant expansion of the Mexican illegal drug trade. However, the propagation of this harm was not solely in Mexico's hands. The principal drug problems that Mexico has faced are largely resultant of the immense demand for such drugs by markets within the United States (Reuter 2010). As a result, two conflicting perceptions are evidenced here. On the one hand, the United States sees Mexico as a producer of illegal narcotics. Meanwhile, Mexico views the general U.S. attitude as ignorance, since Mexico is inclined to believe that the United States holds notable responsibility for the problem as well.

In the realm of trade, the United States' relationship with Mexico is centered on promoting legal trade, whilst attempting to crack down on drug trafficking (Andreas 2002). This informational point suggests that a policy action such as Mérida is a departure from the "business as usual" relationship between the two countries, since Mérida deals directly (and primarily) with drug interdiction efforts. Furthermore, a focus on trade counterbalances the otherwise strenuous relationship historically conveyed between the United States and Mexico. The amicability shored up by mutual trade interests may have been the springboard for talks that lead to the formulation of Mérida.

Failed U.S. policies of the past have attributed to the contemporary political climate with respect to border security relations with Mexico. At the current, the United States is inclined to prioritize the criminal aspects of migration and drugs within policy prescriptions (McDonald 2002). This general tendency hints at the broad aims which are most important to the United States, especially in the time leading up to the enactment of Mérida. In tandem with the internal

turmoil within Mexico, this backdrop suggests that both the U.S. and Mexico would be more likely to agree to a security arrangement that promotes hard-line stances.

An additional wrinkle to the narrative of the Mérida Initiative's development lies in the fashion in which the United States and Mexico practice information-gathering. While perfect information is an unrealistic expectation, varying degrees of intelligence capabilities has a likely effect on the pathway either country follows when choosing an action deemed most strategic. For Mexico, much of its intelligence capacity has been hampered by corruption and a lack of successful institutional implementation (Curzio 2002). This means that there is a possibility that Mexico's decisions concerning Mérida may be suboptimal given the significant risk of incomplete or inaccurate information. In other words, Mexico's actions within this narrative should include the caveat that they should not necessarily be understood with the same strategic threshold given to the United States' actions. An inevitable degree of imperfect information is bound to exist in both countries' decision calculus, but Mexico faces uniquely steeper hurdles in this domain.

Another key piece to this narrative is uncovering Mexico's reasoning in its decision to seek help with its drug interdiction efforts from the United States. This dynamic is fundamental to ascertaining the position Mexico was in when it chose to enter the security cooperation agreement. A number of possible explanations may exist. Mexico could have sought foreign assistance out of desperation, unable to combat its domestic woes any further. Or perhaps, Mexico wanted to expand its relations with the United States and become established as an equal regional partner. However, I contend that these explanations are merely proxy for Mexico's desire to further entrench itself as an authoritarian state.

In Mexico, political regimes and state apparatuses resist reform, creating hurdles for democratization (Bailey and Cornelius 2007) and other attempts made by outside state actors to exert influence over their internal decision making. At the same time, some political regimes, such as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) throughout the 1900's, often "imported" ideas from the United States in trying to combat societal problems (Buffington 2007). In its agreement via Mérida, Mexico was essentially willing to forgo its resistance to outside influences over its affairs in favor of being able to create an avenue for "importation" of U.S. border security strategies and democratization.

In recent times, a number of pervasive factors in Mexico—from corruption to violence—has created an institutional environment where the state entrenches itself in authoritarian behavior (Shirk and Cazares 2007). The Mexican army, however plagued by corruption scandals, is still one of the main beneficiaries of Mérida, receiving amenities such as eight helicopters and military training by U.S. officials (Archibold 2012). This trend is important to emphasize, since it can help account for Mexico's potential to waver from commitments stipulated within the Mérida Initiative. These factors hint that Mexico's reasoning for involvement in Mérida may be less for the social democratic aspects and more for the promise of an increased capacity of both authoritarian and military domains.

The entire range of motivational factors driving Mexico's actions in regards to Mérida cannot be fully uncovered, much less verified. However, these pieces of evidence set the basis for a compelling tale that provides insight into significant portions of the decision calculus utilized by Mexico in this case. Despite its internal struggles with democratization, Mexico did not enter into Mérida with the United States as a last resort for its social welfare. Rather, all signs seem to point to Mexico's incentives being centered around seeing Mérida as a way to

strengthen its capacity to entrench its institutionalized authoritarianism within its own borders. To that end, Mexico may also want to be perceived by the United States as more of an equal, but not at the cost of its autonomy.

Having presented evidence that suggests that Mexico's internal struggles and U.S. inaction towards dynamics spanning across borders, it makes sense that Mexico would seek aid from the United States. Interestingly, Mexico's greatest concern for these problems lied not in improving measures of rights or civic capacity. Its drive for Mérida seems to have been centered on being able to stymie domestic problems so as to further embed its authoritarian style of affairs. Next, it is suitable to paint the next picture of this puzzle.

To more fully explain the Mérida Initiative's development, the goals of both state actors in their involvement with Mérida needs to be discovered. Our current perspective holds that understanding the goals of these two countries lends insight to the ultimate decisions that were made concerning this policy. Effectively highlighting relevant dynamics requires focusing on each actor specific aims and seek to note where both countries diverged or compromised, and how that may be reflected within the policy itself.

One of the major challenges faced by the United States and Mexico in the development of cooperative agreements is the lack of fully compatible state apparatuses (Ramos 2002). This lack of compatibility is derived from differing core systemic beliefs about such things as conceptions of social welfare and institutional legitimacy. The impact this has on Mérida's formulation is that both countries' differences on a given issue runs deeper than just the shared history or particular strategy. A notable rift exists between these two countries, enough that it may play a part in the actions taken by either state. As such, a decision made by either the

United States or Mexico should be unequivocally understood as an action undertaken with full understanding of the other party's motivations.

This narrative now turns to the integral part of the puzzle: Why Mérida? Preceding the Mérida Initiative, both Mexico and the United States had a history of tenuous relations, both as a result of historical baggage and domestic strife within Mexico. Despite these hurdles—or perhaps as a consequence of them—both countries decided that agreeing to Mérida was a rational response from both ends. For Mexico, U.S. aid through Mérida likely presented an option for stymieing domestic problems and providing unique opportunities. The United States valued Mérida as a way to reshape the regional landscape of the War on Drugs, and wanted to play a hand in remedying societal problems within Mexico.

Mexico likely saw Mérida as a godsend.¹⁴ Calderón sought to rally his country around the idea of something akin to Mérida during his first State of the Union address, citing the need to take further steps involving partnership with the United States (Iliff 2007). This sentiment has persisted, as more recent public remarks illustrate Calderón's continued belief that Mérida provides a pathway against the status quo within Mexico: “We face a defining moment. In our hands is the decision whether we continue with inertia or whether we push for deep changes to transform our country” (Embassy of the United States 2012).

It was not beyond the scope of reasonable options for the United States to establish an aid package with Mexico that would once again include military equipment as one of its primary components. The Mérida Initiative is also not the first instance that the United States has provided assistance to Mexico in its quest to modernize its military. In 1999, Mexico returned over 70 Vietnam-era U.S. helicopters that were provided only 3 years earlier due to immense

¹⁴ While the rational actor perspective alone cannot ascertain the likely reason as to why Mexico wanted the pathway provided by Mérida, that opportunity in and of itself was the perceived utility-maximizing action that Mexico wanted to undertake.

maintenance costs and persistent malfunctioning (Turbiville 2002). While this earlier instance may have strained the U.S.-Mexico relationship, it is rational for U.S. actions that resulted in Mérida to view the inclusion of military aid as a normal security option.

Mexico's reliance on its military fostered a point of convergence with U.S. views on how to handle illicit drug organizations. From Mexico's point of view, any fortuitous arrangement between itself and the United States would necessarily involve increased militarization. Since his first day office back in 2006, Calderón has aggressively used the military in the front lines against drug cartels (Verdugo 2009). The prescriptions found within Mérida, through its military equipment and training (Department of State 2012), provide that additional support for the military operations that Mexico perceives as key to its stability.

During a March 2007 meeting with George W. Bush¹⁵, Calderón decided to break precedent from previous Mexican administrations and asked the United States to formally join him in the fight against criminal organizations and the illegal drug trade. In spite of conflicting goals and institutional mindsets, Mexico and the United States were able to come to the agreement known as the Mérida Initiative. This policy has essentially encompassed a \$1.4 billion pledge from the Bush administration over the three years following the agreement. In return, Mexico was expected to meet certain landmarks for progress as determined by the United States, since it would be receiving the pledge in phases dependent on those advancements. As it turns out, Mérida was crafted as the result of both states coalescing rational action, despite imperfect information, competition, concerns for sovereignty, and ideological differences.

¹⁵ The meeting was held in Yucatán's capital city, Mérida.

2.3.2 Security Cooperation... Or a Competition for Regional Hegemony?

While some governmental rhetoric may have framed Mérida as a multinational partnership, the context underpinning such rhetoric can more deeply account for the seemingly earnest efforts towards the promotion of security cooperation. Particularly, actions related to policy formulation suggest that Mérida may be an instance of "American exemptionalism" - whereby the U.S. engages within the global theatre only if it can set and alter the rules based upon its own perceived interests (Ignatieff 2005).

The perception of security threats in the border region has lead the United States to react to many of Mexico's problems within the scope of securitization strategies. This mindset may be responsible for generating a sense of division between the two nations. Rather than looking at problems as shared hurdles that require cooperative solutions, the United States has categorically isolated those issues as threats to national security. For example, a National Drug Intelligence Center report cites Mexico's drug cartels as "the greatest organized crime threat to the United States" (U.S. Department of Justice 2009).

Mexico and the United States have also not maintained a consistent and positive diplomatic relationship (The Economist 2008). Earlier interactions between the states have been far from it. From 1846-1848, both countries were bitter enemies in the Mexican-American War (Eisenhower 2000), which might have left Mexico with a legacy that includes having a chip on its shoulder. Other recent engagements have seen the United States trump any significant bilateral discourse with an implementation of policies coinciding primarily with U.S. interests. Most notably, Operation Gatekeeper, a Clinton-era policy which has widely shaped the issues of illegal immigration and the notion of U.S.-Mexico borderlands, was a U.S. action marked by

nationalism and hegemonic tendencies that also directly affected the sphere of influence held by Mexico (Nevins 2002).

Historically, Mexico's level of militarization has risen alongside a greater emphasis on national security (Arzt 2007). Mexico's unwillingness to provide transparency to the United States in regards to its military strategies (Camp 1992) also provides evidence that relations have been uncertain and competitively inclined. U.S. covert actions in the Latin American regions, especially during the Cold War era, have also produced a negative impression amongst Mexican citizens in regards to how the United States treats its neighbors (Latell 2002). This evidence suggests that the international community—particularly nations relevant to the Mérida Initiative—may already perceive U.S. action as hegemonic within the status quo. Indeed, the shadows of the past may undermine any future earnest attempts by the United States to depart from their legacy of exceptionalism.

Although the United States and Mexico have participated in a "security community," both nations demonstrate a tendency to undertake actions within a scope that is based on their own strategic aims (Garcia 2002). As a result, cooperative arrangements are likely undertaken out of mutual convenience, with both nations feeling like an opportunity is presented where further capital for regional hegemony may be shored. Mérida provided an appropriate sphere where both Mexico and the United States could seek out spaces where power within the region might be claimed. Mexico's competitive intentions lie in its willingness to risk some degree of sovereignty if it meant that it could gain leverage through information-sharing and military training by the United States. U.S. attitude towards Mérida seems to have been centered largely around wanted to expand its own influential reach over Mexican domestic affairs. Therefore,

Mérida is the amalgamation of U.S. aims at power projection and Mexico's drive for maximizing its survival via an increase of its own institutional capability.

With its internal struggles, it should come as no surprise that the perception of Mexico's legitimacy in the global theatre has not been particularly positive. Despite any steps forward in overall improvement, the perception of Mexico by other nation-states is one that is defined by past problems (Beith 2011). There is a functional gap, then, between the state that Mexico believes itself to be and the picture held by other countries. The United States has been particularly skeptical of Mexico's brand, oft focusing its criticism on corruption scandals and military tactics (Carroll 2010).

This gap presents itself as a suitable incentive as to why Mexico would pursue signing into Mérida. Evidenced by past actions, Mexico wishes to continue its attempts at narrowing the discrepancy between its self-image and how others perceive it. However, this incentive characterizes Mexico's willingness to enter into the Mérida Initiative as a play at increasing its national brand. Rather than play second fiddle to the United States, Mexico is driven to show the international community that its methods of handling affairs deserves more credit. As such, Mérida provides an arena where Mexico can seek to increase its perceptual legitimacy through a cultural competition of sorts.

From an American standpoint, institutional weaknesses within Mexico have provided the United States ways to justify hegemonic intervention within Mérida. Moreover, the United States may already have been motivated to entrench unilateralism as the normal means of carrying out Mérida's prescriptions, and any perceived shortcomings via Mexico's end was enough fuel for an American hegemonic fire. Particularly, it has been Mexico's attempts at solving its own domestic problems related to criminal organizations that the United States has

isolated as a primary cause for the poor human rights conditions with the country (Valdez 2012: U.S Department of State 2011). Mérida as the selected response, then, may simply be the vehicle utilized by the United States to demonstrate that issues related to drugs, violence, and other illicit operations are largely the result of Mexican institutional inadequacy, as opposed to the demand of drugs within the U.S. borders.

While Mérida has made headway towards some of its goals, it is unclear if Mexico and the United States want these victories to be perceived internationally in the same light. What looks like cooperation at first glance might actually be cooption or a vie at shoring capital to exercise cultural hegemony. For example, Mérida has lead to the building of a shared police academy¹⁶ in the Mexican state of Puebla (Fox News Latino 2012). The United States may want successes such as these to provide examples that U.S.-led democratization in other countries is fruitful and that it can continue to lead the trend globally. Mexico, on the other hand, may want these advances provided by Mérida to foster the perception that it can go toe-to-toe with a country like the United States in terms of institutional management and strategy. In either case, an act said to aid in the fight to stop cartel organizations is likely a pawn within the greater competitive arena provided by Mérida.

¹⁶ The General Ignacio Zaragoza National Policy Training and Development Academy

Chapter 3: Mérida as Organizational Process

A second approach to peeling away the layers of the puzzle behind Mérida's political development shifts emphasis from understanding policy formulation at a macro-level context of nation-to-nation interaction to a construction of reality where organizations become the units of interest. Allison and Zelikow (1999) indicate that a narrative stemming from an organizational backdrop can shed light on policy decisions, as it did with the Cuban Missile Crisis. Seeking understanding about Mérida's origins requires a lens where policies exist as the result of how institutionalized organizations react to a status quo change given their inherent sets of rules and procedures.

Since Allison, scholars have censured the inferential capacities espoused by the Organizational Behavior Model (OBM). with particular concerns over its precarious reliance on organizations behaving in a simple and predictable manner (Bendor and Hammond 1992). Presenting the puzzle of Mérida in light of organizational dynamics remains important, so effort must be undertaken to transform OBM into a perspective that can maintain the core of Allison's approach. Moreover, a properly constructed perspective can then provide an explicit context by which an actual theory may be superimposed to test expectations over the narrative of Mérida itself, as well as highlight generalizable considerations.

This chapter presents an attempt at adapting Allison's OBM into a suitable perspective, presenting an appropriate theory that can generate useful insight, and establishing the narrative of Mérida's development as an organizational process. Initially, a rethought take on OBM is crafted. The goal is to utilize the useful components found in Allison's model and reorient the aims of these tenets so as not to fall prey to already established criticisms (Bendor and Hammond

1992; Krasner 1972). Particularly pertinent concerns to Allison and how my newly crafted perspective remedies these are addressed, and fundamental questions posed by this perspective in relation to Mérida are introduced.

After construction of the organizational processes perspective, I utilize a hybridized theoretical approach for managing garbage can hierarchies (Padgett 1980) and explaining the interplay of constraints and organizational behavior (Wilson 1989). Core concepts and case applications are presented before establishing compatibility between this theory and the organizational processes perspective. Finally, I formulate hypotheses to elicit a concrete set of findings from the broader narrative of Mérida's development.

3.1 THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES PERSPECTIVE

Despite its inherent shortcomings, Allison's OBM possesses an apt view for understanding dynamics of a policy event under a particularly useful light. To maximize OBM's utility while separating it from its problematic components, it is imperative to initiate seeking an explanation for Mérida's origins through a new purview inspired by Allison. The lack of any real specificity in concepts related to OBM, compounded by its overarching attempts at formally modeling organizational behavior, leave the original model with very little transferability in its current setting. To utilize these useful tenets, I seek to implement OBM's core through a more practical lens. Bendor and Hammond (1992) contend that the largest issues with OBM's utility is not that it cannot be a tool for analysis, but rather that Allison was trying to use it in a suboptimal fashion. The insights that can be generated via OBM are productive, but Allison's former model must be placed in a different role within a study if more refined analysis is being sought out.

This chapter represents the first explicit attempt at transforming OBM into an analytical device more suitable to its nature. Particularly, OBM is situated to generate insight on how

organizational processes impact the decision-making process of a specific policy. For this work, OBM is delineated from the perspective derived from its tenets, the organizational processes perspective (OPP). Before OPP can be helpful towards understanding Mérida's development, it has to be reformulated into an operational framework. The remainder of this section, then, presents the basis for the organizational processes perspective. Additionally, relevant concerns to Allison's model are highlighted to elucidate how OPP circumvents these issues so that questions of significance to this perspective may be accepted as legitimate. Finally this perspective's questions as they relate to the narrative of Mérida are presented as core issues that must grappled with in the case itself.

3.1.1 Constructing the Perspective

The OPP's goal is to function as a top-level lens that can dictate the boundaries for determining proper theoretical usage and subsequent narrative crafting. Unlike Allison's approach, OPP does not seek to predict or create formulae for dynamics that are beyond the reach of qualitatively analyzing single or small groups of events. As such, this section provides in-depth analytics of the foundation of OPP and how the utilization of its tenets can provide a context of interest for crafting narrative of a policy event. In essence, OPP presents the groundwork for ensuring compatibility between its broad context, theoretical postulation, and practical application. The following analytics are the starting point for placing this perspective in a role that can then be transferred to other studies of policy development. To instill OPP with a base level of operational capacity, I highlight its core concepts and translate the heart of Allison's original model in light of the criticisms it has faces since its inception. Translating the organizational behavior model into this perspective also necessitates clarifying how event

analysis under this purview should be characterized, as well as the suitable type of data that should be used within this approach.

Defining Concepts

A primer to OPP involves discussion on ideas inherent to its design which are meant to function as parameters for assessing what type of theoretical investigations would be appropriate when studying an event under this perspective. Broadly, this perspective views policy events from the lens that organizational processes influence the advent and development of any given policy. The question becomes how an analyst should go about identifying organizations and their processes for study. As Bendor and Hammond (1992) point out, Allison's (1999) appeal to chess rules and strategy as a way of understanding these organizational dynamics is both oversimplified, if not altogether unfitting. More specifically, these two primary concepts are ambiguously defined in Allison's OBM, which robs narratives of the potential for tracing nuanced processes that may better explain a policy's development (Cornford 1974; Wagner 1974).

Conceptualizing organizations is a common practice for scholars interested in organizations and institutionalized hierarchies¹⁷. The dissonance that exists between definitions is largely a result of the need for scholars that utilize a particular approach to adapt an understanding of organizational entities that can be translated into researchable data. In OPP's case, organizations can be conceived quite simply as government agencies. More distinctly, OPP characterizes organizations as these agencies or subunits, but exclusively through the context of machination. OPP does not permit eking out considerations for politicking, but rather views

¹⁷ Allison and Zelikow (1999) already undergo an extremely in-depth historical review of the different approaches that scholars have utilized to conceptualize "organizations" and "processes." For a more contemporary review of a few other ways that scholars have conceived of these ideas for analysis, see also Payan (2006).

organizations as complex bodies that have a protocol which establishes a program a functions which are imperfectly followed.¹⁸

These ideas are relatable to the "garbage can" approach for analyzing organizational behavior. OPP seeks to bridge this manner of thinking with conventional organization theory concerns. Padgett (1980) explains that critics of garbage can theories tend to hold that it can only be used for "highly decoupled and unorthodox organizational systems" (538). However, OPP is not susceptible to these concerns for two reasons. First, the narrative in this chapter will illustrate that the development of the Mérida Initiative set a stage where organizational systems were necessarily unorthodox given the nature of Mérida's prescriptions and the state of organizational processes. Second, critics of any garbage can approaches to organizational analysis conflate the notions of organizational decoupling and process decoupling. To accurately convey how organizations utilize their SOP to handle a situation requires only that the processes of the organizations themselves are not structurally interrelated¹⁹.

Having clarified the notion of organizations, it is useful to present how OPP contextualizes the processes of government agencies. In essence, these organizational processes are the rules, protocol, and government "red tape" that have been encapsulated within the standard operating procedures (SOP) of any particular organization. However, OPP explicitly mandates that SOP is distinct from other influential factors often included within studies of organizational behavior (Moe 1991; Padgett 1980; Allison 1971). These factors include the relations between high level-agency officials and the Executive Office, reasons behind policy stances of department secretaries, and individual-level behavioral forces that impact the formulation of organizational action. While these factors do contain explanatory leverage over

¹⁸ These explicit tenets are never drawn by Allison's model.

¹⁹ Furthermore, any observations of this attribute may very well be a mishandling of research design where two subunits of an organizations are erroneously analyzed as two separate organizations entirely.

our policy event of interest, it is imperative that OPP does not conflate influential dynamics of different types. In other words, OPP seeks to test hypotheses grounded within the effect that organizational processes have on policy development, separate from the impact that individuals have on those organizational processes. This characterization is paramount to generating useful results where OPP has a specific toolkit to handle only one kind of relationship (organizational output on policy action), and the study of those other dynamics requires a separate perspective entirely.

Both the concepts of organizations and organizational processes have to be understood as mechanisms apart from the political games of politicians and bureaucrats in order to properly assess influential dynamics over a policy event's development. More specifically, OPP's purpose is to generate basis for inferences in regards to how organizational processes in and of themselves affected Mérida's formulation.²⁰ With these concepts in hand, it is appropriate to next discuss how the explicit context laid out by OPP should be utilized.

Focusing Analysis

A critical misstep with Allison's organizational behavior model is its inclusion of too many different ideas within its study of "organizational behavior." In his original model, studying organizations becomes extremely confusing where any entity with rules and a relation to governmental operation could be conceived of as an organization. The result of this is that many scholars have become unsure of the distinction between his models on organizational

²⁰ This is not to say that OPP contends that ONLY organizational processes contain merit. Rather, it is placed in its role as being capable of shedding light on unique nuances only findable is a very narrow lens is applied. Allison (1971) himself notes that one of the primary contributions of his work was to illustrate that each "model" contains part of the puzzle.

behavior and governmental politics (Bendor and Hammond 1992)²¹. As the second perspective in this work, OPP places itself as a broad yet clear purview that makes definitive boundaries for assessing a starting point to research in this vein. By following the prescriptions throughout this section, a scholar can then place a suitable theory within the scope of OPP's foundation. Once that theory is selected to study the policy event of interest, questions, hypotheses and expectations can then be generated from both OPP and the specific theory deemed most pertinent to the puzzle at hand.

Finding the Right Evidence

Crafting an effective narrative from the use of OPP mandates that special attention is paid to the types of evidence which are used in creating a basis for findings. The issues of conflation inherent in Allison's "model" necessitate that at least a guideline is provided to direct work in a more focused manner. The purpose behind focusing on particular kinds of evidence is to maintain a level of clarity from the narrative of Mérida through the theory and broader perspective of OPP. Studies undertaken in this way should focus on data that can suggest insight on the forms that organizational processes take, as well as particular processes that are inclined to have an impact on the policy event being examined. For instance, evidence that would be suitable focuses on specific organizational protocols, organizational responses to some part of a policy event, or the involvement of an organization with the policy's development given some institutional mandate (jurisdiction, etc.).

The primary consideration when evaluating the suitability of evidence within this perspective is assessing if the effects of organizational processes can be denoted apart from

²¹ They go further to say that it is currently considered that Allison's government politics model is simply an extension of the organizational behavior model.

insight into the politicking that occurs "behind the scenes." Padgett (1980) elucidates that bureaucratic organizations (characterized through SOP) are separate "roles" from analysts, department secretaries, and the executive. His formal representation of garbage can hierarchies illustrates that an essential difference between these sections of a "Routine Organizational Structure" is the influencing factors behind their decision making process. Program chiefs are related to SOP, while Secretaries and Presidents are driven by problematic preference and analysts by unclear technology (Padgett 1980).

With the organizational processes perspectives, analyzing the dynamics of SOP and their effect on the policy event of interest must be held mutually exclusive from eking out explanations for individual personnel. In this sense, evidence provided by particular individuals of an organization are conveyed by OPP only as evidence for understanding a particular organizational output's effect on the policy being analyzed, and not for integrating dynamics from both levels of analysis to make sweeping claims.

3.1.2 Contingencies

Given the foundation of the organizational processes perspective, this section rectifies how inherent shortcomings of Allison's organizational behavior model are viably remedied through the transformation into OPP. To accomplish this, I draw the core differences between OPP and Allison's model in regards to how rationality should be conceptualized. Next, I unpack some of the more troublesome dynamics from Allison's model as they relate to studying the decisions of organizations and the behavior of individuals within those structures.

The Conflation of Bounded Rationality

When qualitatively analyzing organizational behavior, it may initially seem more effective to utilize cursory glances of a plethora of organizational dynamics in order to provide holistic conclusions and inferences.²² However, in seeking to generate overarching insight across sectors of organizational structures, endogenous issues often arise. More specifically, attempts to capture everything occurring in an organizational structure within a single concept such as "behavior" or "culture" leads to analysis that misses the potential to eke out implications from more specific parts of that organization. The dynamics at play between subunits of an organization, for example, need to be separated from studying the effects that SOPs have on the case of interest.

When attempting to ascertain the capacity of organizations to exercise bounded rationality, Allison's model and more generally, organization theory, tend to assume that an organization's capacity to implement its measures is categorically inferior to the logical capacity of individuals within those organizations. Utilizing these constraints as precursors to analysis functionally excludes a number of dynamics that are critical to examine when seeking insight into organizational puzzles.²³ Conversely, Simon (1947) successfully implemented study of administrative behavior by utilizing the opposite baseline assumptions. In his case, it was individuals who enacted bounded rationality and the organizational structures which possessed a greater degree of potential for efficiency.

The issue that arises when crafting a narrative with considerations of bounded rationality is that burdens of predictive prescriptions are forced to enter the equation of analysis. Simply

²² Allison (1971) and Payan (2006) are able to tell us much about the Cuban Missile Crisis and Drug War (respectively) focusing on analysis of organizational behavior.

²³ These include discounting scenarios where the formative base logic of an organization is actually more effective at carrying out objectives that subunits or groups therein (Bendor and Hammond 1992).

put, studying organizational effects on policy development through a qualitative purview is hampered by unnecessarily seeking out calculative predictions for how an organization (or parts therein) came to decide upon their response in altering or maintaining SOPs and internal political bargaining. The organizational processes perspective is solvent for this conflation of bounded rationality by not placing a context for analysis that is inclusive of these internal organizational dynamics. While study of these factors is pertinent to more fully understanding organizational behavior, it is pertinent to first parse through the substantive formulation of SOPs and their subsequent effects on the policy case.²⁴

Unpacking Complex Decision-Behavior Dynamics

Apart from the core concepts already discussed, Allison's model presents another challenge that OPP is designed to be better equipped to handle. This hurdle manifests itself as a fundamental discrepancy between the manner in which Allison's model relates simple decision rules and behavioral outcomes. Allison's reliance on simple decision rules creates a research space where a number of missteps create a risk for fault inferential claims. OPP remedies these issues by appropriately limiting the perspective's framing for analysis away from assessing subunit responses to changes in SOP.²⁵

Wilson (1989) explains that the presence of multiplying interests throughout and between government agencies leads to inherently vague, and oftentimes fluid, objectives. This inherent dynamic within organizational structures increases the likelihood that any narrative-based study into organizational behavior that includes efforts into formulating a typology is at risk of

²⁴ Separating these two sets of dynamics is essential to generating inferences useful for understanding both. While formal interpretations of organizations may afford analyzing these variables simultaneously, narratives can get deeper into matters only if more rigor is undertaken when crafting the variable(s) of interest.

²⁵ OPP still emphasizes an assessment of changes in the SOPs themselves.

mismanaging inferential conclusions. Thus, any successful work in this regard must be exceedingly careful in what attributes are linked to particular concepts being utilized.

Bendor and Hammond's (1992) critique of Allison's model includes highlighting a problematic connection between Allison's simplistic view of organizational behavior and his subsequent tossing aside of intra-procedural dynamics via instances of combinatorial complexity to present his findings as consistent. To remedy this, OPP's conceptualization of hierarchies of protocols does not necessitate an oversimplification of findings when the perspective is concretely involved with affording room to the possibility that distinct (and potentially conflicting) standard operating protocol may be partially responsible for explaining organizational behavior. This also helps account for the inherent shortcomings in Allison's model in regards to poor predictive capacity and abstract approach to assessing organizational dynamics. As with the rational actor perspective, OPP utilizes Pierson's (2005) approach to categorizing observations within the case in regards to time. Rather than simply provide a "snapshot" of the policy event with the organizational outputs in the periphery, this chapter seeks to emphasize continuous observation within the case of Mérida instead.

3.1.3 Salient Questions

With an operational perspective in hand, it is fruitful to generate questions of interest that can light the way for narrating the origins of the Mérida Initiative. From an organizational processes perspective, the ensuing questions become paramount to discovering the dynamics involved with the case of Mérida²⁶: What government organizations have been involved with the political development of Mérida? What capability and limitations do these actors have, and why?

²⁶ As a result of transforming Allison's model into a 'perspective' as broadly suggested by Bendor and Hammond (1992), it is possible to utilize these question forms which were only posed as concluding remarks in Allison's (1971) original work.

What standard operating procedures did government organizations follow that fostered their response to Mexico through the security cooperation agreement known as the Mérida Initiative?

3.2 THE THEORY

The previous section has established the second perspective that will provide an operational frame for generating insight about the Mérida Initiative's origins and formulation. However, before undertaken analysis on Mérida, a theoretical framework within the perspective's boundaries needs to be presented in order to acquire useful expectations that can shed more nuanced light within an organizational-centric analysis of Mérida's development. As with RAP, the subsequent step for drawing inferences from Mérida's narrative is to produce a theory that can foster explanatory and predictive leverage for the organizational processes perspective. This section presents such theory-laden groundwork through the utilization of a "managed" garbage can hierarchy, with particular inclusion of constraining influences upon organizational processes.

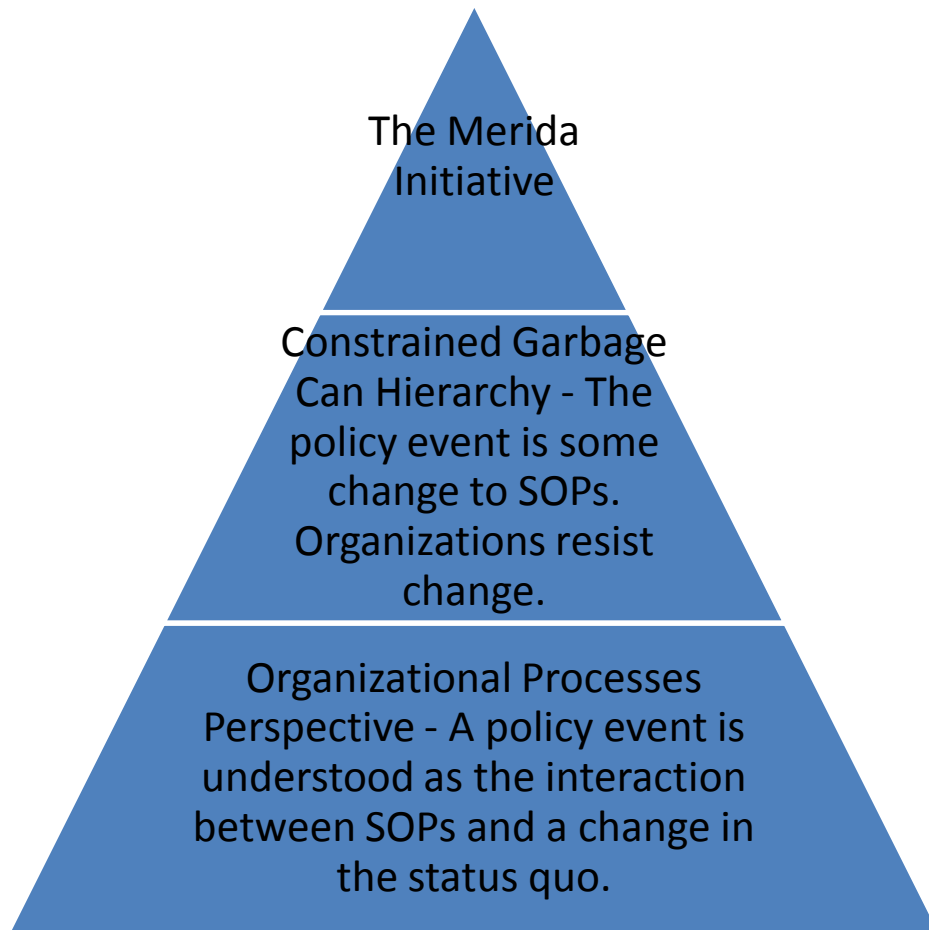


Figure 3.1: Theoretical Framework for the OPP Narrative.

The rest of this section constructs this theory of constrained garbage can hierarchies in order to allow for a clear superimposition of it over the broader perspective. First, a conceptual primer is presented on the theory, presenting established independent variables and general characteristics. Next, I tie these broader ideas to both OPP's tenets and the case of Mérida so as to craft a more effective narrative. Finally, I generate contentions from this theoretical foundation that will function as parameters for emphasizing particularly pertinent nuances from the more general analysis driven by OPP.

3.2.1 A Conceptual Primer on Managing Garbage Can Hierarchies and Constraints in Organizational Processes

Padgett (1980)'s theory of managing garbage can hierarchies presents the foundation for analyzing nuances of SOPs that may otherwise be overlooked or misattributed by other potentially applicable theories. Padgett contends that dynamics surrounding ambiguity can be fruitfully applied to organizational structures that possess rigid constitutions.²⁷ According to this theory, the influences of ambiguity are disaggregated into three different sectors of a "routine" organizational structure. For OPP, the sector of bureaucratic organizations are of particular relevance because they encompass the static entity that is essentially directed by SOPs. The behavior of these organizations are resultant from how SOPs mandate they should act given a certain change from the status quo.

With a grasp on the specific unit of analysis being utilized by Padgett's operationalization of garbage can hierarchies, it is useful to extrapolate on key forces he identifies that have primary roles in shaping SOPs. The idea of change can be understood as either minor or major, whereby the former lends itself to passive resolution of issues and the latter tends to require active deliberation for deciding upon the proper adaptive measures to take (Padgett 1980). On the broader note of ambiguity, Padgett embraces earlier garbage can model proponents (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972) that assert the inevitable absence of a sufficient degree of clarity within any organizational structure. As a result, analytical emphasis should be placed on an aggregate understanding of the "flow" of behavior, and not maintaining an excessively detailed picture of organizational workings.

²⁷ While Padgett's theory goes further in generating suggestions for effective organizational management, tenets of his work outside the scope of the OPP are not included within this section.

With the garbage can hierarchy in hand, the specific restraints provided by a more sophisticated investigation into SOPs can now be examined. Wilson's (1989) work on bureaucratic entities also plays a fundamental role in constructing a rigorous lens for generating theoretical predictions for the OPP narrative of Mérida. In line with presumptions, Wilson believes that bureaucratic red tape affects government organizations in a manner distinct from private businesses. Government agencies, then, have a different set of motivations, ranging from a lack of personal profitability to a risk-averse decision calculus. Moreover, Wilson identifies three main constraints to governmental organizations, which can effectively function as the independent variables for explaining the relationship between garbage can hierarchies and a policy's development.

The first of these constraints is that government organizations cannot (through legal means) act for private profit. Second, agencies are structurally unable to shift personnel and resources to where administrators see fit. Rather, the government institutions has explicit mandates which fundamentally impede any significant micro-management. Third, and perhaps most importantly, a government organization works to enact agendas that are not necessarily prudent if it were left up to that organization's leadership. This creates an environment where discretion is not institutionalized at bottom or middle tiers of organizational structures.

3.2.2 Applications for Mérida

Having provided a portrait of constrained garbage can hierarchy, it is fruitful to connect the ideas behind Padgett's and Wilson's works with the narrative later in this chapter that seeks explanation to Mérida's development. Insight into Mérida can be drawn more efficiently if a discussion is presented which applies the core notions found within the theory being utilized

within the organizational processes perspective. This section illustrates just how relevant this newly hybridized theory is for crafting a narrative of the Mérida Initiative.

The notion of organizational processes has been often utilized as a way to ascertain dynamics concerning agency efficiency and behavior. The unit of analysis provided by the constrained garbage can hierarchy theory (organizational SOPs) can be aptly applied to a narrative involving the agencies that played meaningful roles in Mérida's development. Evidence for this case illustrates that government agencies were the prevalent type of organizations, so Wilson's constraints also become applicable.

When it comes to analyzing Padgett's conceptualization of change, it should come as no surprise that the Mérida Initiative is an unquestionably major change. This is an important qualifier, since finding that Mérida's development was a major change can suggest that it may be able to explain any triggering of active and aggressive organizational management tactics that could be found in drastically and swiftly altered SOPs. Seeing that the tenets of the constrained garbage can theory are especially pertinent to understanding Mérida's origins, the narrative in the final part of this chapter will appropriately be able to investigate the influences that the three constraints identified by Wilson had on the shaping of organizational outputs. With this knowledge, inferences may be able to shed light on the role organizational SOPs played in creating Mérida.

3.2.3 Foundational Consistency

Seeing that constrained garbage can theory and the case of Mérida are easily translatable, it is important to justify that this theory is sufficiently functional under the broader purview of

the organizational processes perspective.²⁸ This consistency can be demonstrated in two ways. First, OPP and constrained garbage can theory share assumptions which are logically equivalent. Second, the hypotheses generated by the theory are compatible extension from the broader questions posed by OPP.

The foundations for both theory and perspective view the puzzle of policy development under the same light. More specifically, the unit of analysis remains identical. Organizational SOPs are being examined with the presumption that they possess explanatory power for understanding policy events. Payan (2006) contends that entities other than organizations may even "matter less" when investigating the evolution of SOPs and their effect on a particular policy. This perspective-theory combination also remains consistent in providing greater specification than Allison's organizational behavior model. While Allison focuses on broad dynamics such as organizational outputs, change, and culture, the perspective and theory herein isolate SOPs as the output for examination and a particular policy event as a concrete proxy for culture and institutional change.

The theoretical contentions concerning Mérida's development are not at odds with the broad-based questions that guide the narrative in this chapter. The questions posed by OPP are a functional precursor for the hypotheses that are generated by constrained garbage can hierarchy theory. For the purposes of this study, the combination of Padgett's and Wilson's approaches are being utilized to uncover if understanding organizational dynamics through a lens of constrained garbage can hierarchies is fruitful endeavor. Moreover, OPP's questions are the general guideline for understanding Mérida's origins through this perspective, and the more specific hypotheses allow analysis to eke out especially insightful nuances.

²⁸ As with RAP, the perspective-theory-case approach necessitates disambiguating the compatibility between theory and perspective.

Furthermore, the independent variables of no private profitability, insufficient organizational autonomy for placing and implementing objectives, and the lack of structural capability to responsively reallocate personnel or resources are logical extensions from the general suppositions posited by OPP. This relationship between theory and perspective provides an opportunity to account for interaction effects inherent in this part of the puzzle. Rather than viewing the relationship between a policy event and organizational outputs as an aggregate of decisions from within those organizations, this study's setup provides a higher degree of efficient specificity. This is accomplished through analyzing the combined effects of constraints on the formulation of organizational SOPs, and then linking those changes as explanations to the manner in which a given policy came about.

3.2.4 Hypothetical Expectations

Having demonstrated that there is both consistency and applicability for this chapter's perspective, theory and empirics, expectations for Mérida can be generated from constrained garbage can hierarchy theory. These contentions are critical to the forthcoming narrative since they provide a clear basis for tracing the organizational processes that impacted the ultimate shape that the Mérida Initiative took. Particularly, investigating the evolution of organizations in this context can then help explain both the path organizations embarked upon, as well as the resulting influence they had on Mérida.

Contention 1: Government agencies involved with Mérida's development will opt for default SOPs over considerations of effectiveness.

This contention maintains that government organizations often favor a status quo approach to solving problems over assessing if any new course of action would yield more favorable. The forces to look for in this case include the three independent variables laid out

within the theory. Each of these functions as an inhibitor which sets government agencies on a course towards least resistance. Mérida's narrative can provide insight into these forces and provide another case for strengthening or weakening these notions.

Contention 2: The likelihood of SOPs becoming entrenched or altered in response to Mérida is dependent upon the interaction being understood as a 'minor' or 'major' change.

While Mérida's advent is a major change in policy stance, the perception of that change varies between organizations. The reasoning behind this tends to be that not every organization is given every policy as the top priority. Jurisdiction, finite resources, and the current state of SOPs impact how drastic an organization views their role in implementing Mérida.²⁹ This interestingly contrasts from possible explanations for organizational outputs in regards to Mérida, where it might be believed that organizations are constantly seeking to maximize resources and expand jurisdictional prowess.

3.3 THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE: A SECOND LOOK

The organizational processes perspective has provided the foundation for a narrative concerning Mérida's origins via the answers its tenets seek. Through the explicit context laid out by OPP, constrained garbage can theory can provide substantive analysis through its generation of pertinent hypotheses that are poised to shed light on crucial pieces to Mérida's broader puzzle. With these tools in hand, a "second look" at the Mérida Initiative may now yield insightful findings.

In order to adequately craft Mérida's organizational narrative, the remainder of this chapter contains two levels of analyses. The first utilizes the core questions posited by OPP as a

²⁹ Expectations for this behavior are supported through the linked dependence on shared pools of power and resources (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

framework for generating inferences. The second level focuses on subsections of the broader narrative, isolating nuances that can eke out considerations for strengthening or weakening the hypotheses provided by the constrained garbage can hierarchy lens.

3.3.1 Unpacking the Perspective

An essential step in presenting the organization-centric story of the Mérida Initiative is identifying the key organizational processes that played a role in the formulation of the policy. Along with highlighting the government organizations that influenced the evolution of Mérida, it is also imperative to assess characteristics of these entities. With this knowledge, the key SOPs in regards to Mérida can be aptly related to the organizational makeup at play.

A number of U.S. organizations have been unable to meet their core missions with consistent effectiveness. The U.S. Customs Service, now a part of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)³⁰, is attributed as the primary agency responsible for stymieing the flow of illegal activities through U.S. ports of entry (GAO 1999b 26). The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)³¹ has had to face increasing concerns of organizational overstretch as a result of rising numbers of applications and border crossings (GAO 2008b). These and other shortfalls in meeting overall organizational objectives may have undoubtedly created some of the impetus that lead to U.S. support of Mérida.

The question of funding for Mérida can be aptly placed within the scope of this narrative. Appropriated funds originated from the Department of State (DoS), and as a result of SOPs, the funding stemmed from three accounts belonging to three agencies within the DoS. The International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account was primarily set for

³⁰ CBP is a federal agency under the Department of Homeland Security.

³¹ ICE is a federal agency under the Department of Homeland Security.

developing the institutional capacity of U.S. and Mexican agencies to combat illicit operations. These funds were aimed towards Mexico's civilian Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) and the Mexican intelligence service, the Center for Investigation and National Security (CISEN). The Economic Support Fund (ESF) account was utilized for surveillance, as well as land and air efforts. Appropriately, these funds were tied to support the Mexican Navy (SEMAR) and Mexican Army and Air Force (SEDENA). The Foreign Military Financing (FMF) account was focused on promoting law and human rights. Unlike the other two accounts, an additional agency was placed in charge of overseeing implementation of this cache of funds. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was involved with Mérida in its charge for raising standards of justice systems and human rights, although it does not contain a qualified internal branch to appropriately distribute these funds.

Table 3.1: Funding for the Mérida Initiative

	Appropriated Funding (in millions)
INCLE	\$669.5
FMF	\$415.5
ESF	\$35.0
Total	\$1120.0

Source: GAO 10-253R.

The Department of State is the spearhead for coordinating efforts regarding the Mérida Initiative (GAO 2010b). The DoS has long-standing SOPs that are evident in two distinct characterizations. First, it equates appropriations with progress, leading to strong inclinations towards prioritizing the production and transportation of obliged equipment, as well as seeking to

utilizing allocated funding. Second, it does not particularly concern itself with generating evaluations that can show how effective the equipment, training, and other uses of funding have (or have not) been (GAO 2010b). These two characteristics are evident throughout the narrative, hinting at a sort of dual nature that may be prevalent within the U.S. organizational infrastructure.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has always been at the forefront of U.S. operations undertaking drug interdiction efforts. DEA efforts around Mérida have centered on expanding the capability of law enforcement institutions. As such, it primarily handles combating the violence generated by drug cartels, and favors a reliance on tactics inclusive of hard power in the form of ground forces and military equipment (U.S. Congress 2011).

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) asserts its role as an overseer for Mérida's policy prescriptions. Through ICE, CPB and the U.S. Coast Guard, the DHS sets the SOPs for numerous trainings programs, procurement of equipment and technology, and setting the tone for U.S. ports of entry from Mexico.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) possesses two tenets from its SOP that has been its foundation for engagements with Mérida's development. First, the FBI's National Gang Task Force (NGTF) implemented the Transnational Anti-Gang Task Force (TAG), which is illustrative of the "on-the-ground" approach which encompasses much of the FBI's focus in regards to its involvement with Mérida (Kaiser 2008). The second type of SOP is in the realm of information sharing. Through coordinating efforts with numerous agencies, the FBI has lead the creation of the National Gang Intelligence Center and an Officer Exchange Program. These initiatives borne from tactics already in the FBI's SOPs demonstrate that the FBI was a pivotal organization during Mérida's formulation and remains to be so.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)³² has been especially responsible for combating gun trafficking and training Mexican law enforcement officials. ATF's renowned canine handling is one aspect of its SOP that garnered attention in the early stages of Mérida as a tool which might help bring progress to the Initiative's mission (ATF 2010). As a part of the Southwest Border Initiative and a logical extension from Mérida, ATF became involved in Project Gunrunner. Initiated in 2005, this program aimed to comprehensive curtail the amount of firearms being illegally crossed between the U.S.-Mexico border (Department of Justice 2010). Although it preceded Mérida, ATF's involvement in Gunrunner placed the agency in a position where it was already built to play the role of combating illicit firearms trafficking so that when Mérida was signed, ATF was immediately designated with similar assignments.

Since Mérida's advent, government organizations have often been as influenced by the very policy they have sought to shape. The Mexican Federal Attorney General's Office (Procurador General de la República), or PGR, has received intensive training regiments with the aim of reducing corruption and inadequate performance as part of the Mérida Initiative (Lowell and Mines 2011). The PGR has been a relevant organization since the formulation of Mérida given its position within the Mexican government as the responsible institution for investigating and prosecuting federal crimes.

Aviation deliveries from the United States to Mexico as a result of Mérida have been earmarked for particular agencies (U.S. Embassy 2011), thus impacting their SOPs. The Mérida Initiative Aviation Program is a prime example of how interaction effects between organizations and Mérida lead to the creation of SOPs. Through this program, the SSP has received six Blackhawk UH-60M helicopters and a contract for an Intelligence, Surveillance and

³² ATF is a subunit of the Department of Justice.

Reconnaissance (ISR) Dornier 328-JET aircraft in 2012. The Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) has received eight Bell 412 helicopters. Three Blackhawk UH-60M helicopters and four CASA 235 maritime surveillance aircraft have been delivered to SEMAR.

Within the realm of the Mexican justice system, Mérida has provided funding for the establishment of 12 Alternative Justice Centers (AJCs). The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs has documented that these centers work to reduce the massive backlog throughout the Mexican courts through utilizing swifter means for resolving minor offenses. These AJCs have supplanted the SOP of Mexican arbitration by introducing a streamlined approach to handling lesser offenses with the aim of allowing the Mexican courts to focus on the graver crimes.

The urgency by which Mérida was developed did have some spillover momentum for how agencies carried out certain prescriptions. U.S. agencies worked to expedite the construction of equipment to send as swift aid for Mexico's drug interdiction efforts. In conjunction with the Department of State, the Department of Defense (DoD) was able to significantly reduce the production time for a package of Bell helicopters by conferring with the helicopters' makers. Additionally, the Mexico-U.S. bilateral implementation office (BIO) in Mexico City has been created with the expressed purpose of facilitating decision-making for Mérida (Lowell and Mines 2011). Despite its symbolic potential, the BIO office is immensely hampered from enacting anything apart from existent SOPs as dictated by other agencies whose jurisdiction lie within the actual implementation of Mérida.

3.3.2 Pragmatically Effective SOPs... Or an Overreliance on the Status Quo?

A significant factor to the organizational discord between different sectors of Mexican government can be attributed to the absence of equalized standard operating procedures. With

the advent of the cartel crisis in Mexico, swift expansion of the military lead to massive instability due to a lack of institutionalized bridges between the Mexican military and local law enforcement. Moreover, the absence of checks and balances for the military in localized scenarios has lead to unnecessary risks to Mexico's welfare (Arzt 2007). This evidence provides an insightful data point to ascertain that Mexico's organizational heads may have indeed been more concerned with the process of responding to the escalation of violence throughout the country as opposed to ensuring that the outcome itself would be a successful one.

For instance, ameliorating the issue of public mistrust towards the Mexican police force involves increasing the consistency of implementing initiatives across different levels of the same organization (Varenik 2007). This remains a challenge in light of inconsistent levels of bi-national interagency efforts, as well as the overlap in jurisdiction that has arisen as a result of President Calderón's aggressive placement of military forces throughout problem areas in Mexico during times when the local police force was unable to contain the violence and illicit operations of drug cartels.

For decades, the U.S Department of Justice (DoJ) and White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) have crafted the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) that dictates the tactics that governmental organizations are mandated to follow (GAO 1999a). This overarching plan illustrates that U.S. governmental organizations are not built with the capability to alter objectives autonomously, nor can they shift personnel and resources that were allocated for a particular purpose by the NDCS. The NDCS might also account for what may be perceived as organizational indifference towards implementing Mérida and the trend of agencies to characterize Mérida as a major or minor change based on litmus provided from outside a given agency.

Mérida's prescriptions for training Mexican police, military and political forces are not a novel approach. In fact, part of the DEA's primary strategy in foreign operations has involved training foreign units for roles in law enforcement since the 1990s (GAO 1999a). This evidence suggests that organizational SOPs already point agencies towards a foreign operation roadmap that includes training foreign police and military. Combined with the absence of any evaluation measures for Mérida, this dynamic is paramount to ascertaining that government organizations involved with Mérida's development err on the side of following current SOPs over "rocking for the boat" for the possibility of greater efficiency.

For U.S. organizations, there have been a number of important programs throughout the years that, like Mérida, lack any base measures for evaluating mission effectiveness. The Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI) was initiated by the Department of State to address shortfalls concerning the numbers and qualifications of members (GAO 2006). Despite the stated importance of solving for this cap, no institutionalized efforts were made to evaluate the effectiveness of the DRI. In 1999, the U.S. Department of State spearheaded the Southwest Border Economic Development Initiative, an effort to foster coordination between federal and local levels to improve the overall base economic quality of life in the border region (GAO 1999b).

Interestingly, there is evidence that points to entities within the U.S. organizational infrastructure that are seeking to reform the current tactics that are utilized for implementing Mérida. For example, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) suggests that even when there are organizational mechanisms like the GAO to push for reform, the SOPs remain entrenched in previous precedents (GAO 2010a). Although there is no controversy on the crisis state of many of the issues Mérida was built to handle, it remains the norm for governmental organizations to stay the course with already assigned strategies.

Challenges to carrying out the Four Pillars of Mérida are exacerbated by a low level interagency cohesion. The lack of coordination between ATF and ICE is the result of ambiguous roles, the absence of a shared database, and an outdated interagency agreement that does not account for the contemporary dynamics of combined efforts (GAO 2009b). Cooperative engagement of shared mission objectives is also lacking between the United States and Mexico. Despite the formulation of Mérida, Mexican officials have been unsuccessful in maintaining coordinated efforts with ATF because of their insufficient utilization of ATF's electronic tracking systems for illicit firearms activity (GAO 2009b).

Despite the seemingly predictable restricted and risk averse behavior exhibited as the norm throughout government organizations, there are some caveats that diverge from the aggregate. For example, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)³³ has had a new component incorporated into its SOP, whereby it is responsible for producing the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR). The INCSR compiles annual summaries of how major transit zones relevant to drug interdiction efforts are proceeding, with Mérida as one of its most important objectives (GAO 2008a). While this caveat leaves a point of promise for increased organizational effectiveness in regards to Mérida in the future, the absence of substantive measures for mission objectives and the high degree of entrenched organizational overlap between involved agencies means that there are more fundamental problems inherent to the structural makeup of these government entities.

The influence of organizational outputs on policy development is significant, as it can act as the primary demarcation for what results in an "optimistic" or "pessimistic" future for Mexico (Bailey and Cornelius 2007). For some agencies, Mérida merely meant business as usual, while for other organizations, it reshaped their primary mission. Nonetheless, the constraints that

³³ INL is a bureau within the Department of State.

impede more effective organizational outputs explain the absence of many seemingly crucial components to the Mérida Initiative. A lack of measures for evaluating Mérida's accomplishments and failures, as well as an entrenchment in the mindset of how SOPs are in the status quo may help explain a seemingly contradictory conclusion from this narrative. On the one hand, organizations that were paramount to Mérida's development did not directly generate a roadmap for meeting the lofty goals that had been set out. Conversely, certain organizations were extremely effective in carrying out their particular objectives in regards to implementing Mérida.

Chapter 4: Retracing the Modes of Mérida

This work has thus far presented and analyzed distinct, yet complementary narratives to ascertain the underlying forces that have influenced the development of the Mérida Initiative. To gain deeper insight into this puzzle, it is imperative to critically analyze the consequences and divergent explanatory paths that are tied to this study. Indeed, it behooves analysis immensely if authors endeavor to highlight possible objections to their research and make attempts to wrestle with at least some of the more apparent suspected controversies.³⁴

This section seeks to provide that helpful re-examination in two fundamental venues. First, implications that can be drawn from this work are introduced in order to better situate Mérida's narratives in the realms of policy and academia. Second, alternative explanations to Mérida's development are explored, with emphasis on likely questions that may arise from assessing each of the two narratives that have been crafted in the previous chapters.

4.1 IMPLICATIONS

Assessing the implications of any work is oftentimes as important a task as constructing the work itself. Unfortunately, it is categorically more difficult for qualitative analysis to effectively address pertinent counterpoints as a result of the subjective nature of the beast.³⁵ Nonetheless, it remains critical to eke out implications from a project via authorial perspective. The generated insight concerning Mérida's formulation has important lessons that should be explicitly brought out for the sake of parsimony. The first lesson involves applying the insight

³⁴ Robert Mickey explicitly highlights possible objections to his own work and effectively addresses them within a single appropriate section (2005).

³⁵ Even with the presence of subjectivity in quantitative study, there are at least measures which can generate uniform results to indicate a certain level of rigor (robustness checks, standard errors, etc.).

garnered from these narratives to better inform policymaking in a substantive fashion. The second lesson lies in identifying the impact that this work has within political science.

4.1.1 Policy Applications

The process of tracing the underlying dynamics at the heart of Mérida provides an instance where policymakers can become aware of tendencies that may exist more generally and pervasively throughout the formulation of other policies. Awareness of these tenets can aid in constructing an institutional environment that can foster more appropriate frameworks for policy proposals and emphasize particular nuances that are paramount for implementation stages to reach any degree of meaningful success. The two lessons within this section seek to generate this awareness. While these suggestions are not entirely novel, tying their merits to the narratives in the previous chapters can perhaps lend greater credence to the beliefs behind these applications.

The first application to policymaking is acknowledging the importance of understanding the nuances of status quo protocols within institutional infrastructures before a policy is enacted. In other words, the narratives of Mérida (particularly through OPP) illustrate the complications that may occur when organizational considerations are assessed only after policy prescriptions have been enacted. It can be inferred from the organizational processes narrative that delaying the clarification of mandates for government agencies until after the advent of a policy can lead to a plethora of problems that undercut the effective achievement policy objectives. Ultimately, inadequate policy implementation should be a problem that governmental institutions work to remedy. Placing a greater emphasis on organizational dynamics during the formulation stages of policy may engender a more streamlined, efficient approach to tackling societal issues.

The second observation relevant to policymaking is a fundamental one that has been echoed by a myriad of studies across all disciplines, but remains nonetheless timely. The narratives contained in the previous chapters reassert the importance of creating evaluative measures to gauge the effectiveness of policy implementation. In the case of Mérida, the absence of evaluative measures was likely a contributor to the problematic degree that many pertinent dynamics remained obscured, if not entirely unknown. Including a framework for evaluating the effectiveness Mérida's implementation might have lead Mexico and the United States to make different decisions since more scrutiny towards Mérida would have been put in place post-enactment. Organizational processes would have been able to utilize their current SOPs with greater efficiency if interagency communication networks were mandated at the advent of Mérida. These and other shortfalls might have been remedied if they had been properly identified through an institutionalized litmus. Policies in the future stand to benefit from the inclusion of explicit tests for gauging the direction of its development given these insights generated from the narratives of Mérida.

4.1.2 Methodological Considerations

Implications are also especially apparent in the realm of academia. This study possesses characteristics that should be linked to practices and trends in research so as to position the analysis herein within the broader scope of the discipline. Particularly, there are a number of considerations in relation to qualitative methodology that should be highlighted. These considerations seek to increase the propensity for determinate research designs, increase the degree of rigor in analysis, and foster the foundation for more accurate inferences. This section discusses some of those considerations.

An unfortunate colloquial assumption about qualitative research is that explication of pre-theory contexts are necessarily vague and implicit as a result of theoretical misspecification seemingly intrinsic to qualitative scholarship. While this is prevalent within the discipline, it is not an incorrigible problem. Initial insight can be drawn directly from the structure of this work's research design. The perspective-theory-case approach is a proposed solution that can provide the necessary clarification in contextualization that can increase blanket levels of rigor in qualitative research. In other words, explicitly placing an "umbrella context" via a clearly delineated perspective fundamentally clarifies the subsequent theoretical lens being utilized to study the puzzle of interest. Perhaps most importantly, this approach has the potential to increase the base level of decipherability of other researchers seeking to utilize a theoretical framework for their own work.

In an effort to increase the significance of small-N findings, scholars are sometimes tempted to make "logical extensions" about a single concept and subsequently group functionally synonymous ideas so as to claim more general findings. However, analysts should not seek higher levels of parsimony at the expense of conflating interrelated concepts as singular mechanisms for observation. The narratives of Mérida's development provide a persuasive case for following this advice. Under the rational actor perspective, a combination of the decision-theoretic and game-theoretic would have spelled disaster. Explaining the actions between the United States and Mexico in terms of the Mérida Initiative and predicting subsequent rational actions are two entirely different endeavors.

Through the organizational processes perspective, conflating the interplay between SOPs and their cumulative impact on Mérida with assessing the behavioral tendencies of individuals within those organizations would have made the entire study moot. Each of these concepts, as

well as the ones presented related to RAP, requires separate theoretical frameworks since the nature of the data gathered behind each is entirely distinct. In the case of OPP, garnering insight over SOPs and their effect on Mérida required an intense investigation into primary documents and other evidence that could provide a sharp portrait of what had transpired. To investigate and draw inferences about the individuals within those organizations, one would need to utilize psychological approach and theorize about their collective behavior apart from assessing the dynamics of institutionalized interaction between organizational SOPs.

4.2 EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

A crucial step in testing the veracity of inferential findings involves scrutinizing the approach that was initially utilized for study. An appropriate method for assessing hypotheses is through addressing claims that assert a divergent path of dependence. Possessing this specific aim, counterfactuals take the form "If it had been the case that C (or not C), it would have been the case that E (or not E)" (Fearon 1996).³⁶ This section presents some plausible alternative explanations to the narratives of Mérida within this study and seeks to further establish inferential robustness via the utilization of counterfactuals. For clarity, the counterfactual exploration is categorized via the narrative to which it applies.

4.2.1 The RAP Narrative

The RAP narrative of Mérida utilizes theoretical expectations drawn from offensive realism to generate a basis for drawing conclusions. The crux of the hypothesized causal factors is the overarching motivation that drove the decisions of the United States and Mexico in agreeing to Mérida. A plausible objection to this study is that both countries agreed to Mérida

³⁶ Daniel P. Carpenter also assesses alternative explanations through counterfactuals in his book *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy* (2001).

due to a shared desire to stymie cartel violence and stabilize the region. There are two counterfactual responses to be made, specific to each country's action:

(1) If the United States was not given the opportunity to use Mérida for power projection and shoring up hegemony, then it would not have signed the agreement.

(2) If Mexico was not allowed enough autonomy through Mérida to entrench its quasi-authoritarian governance and chance to increase its legitimacy as a regional "great power," then it would not have agreed to the Initiative's terms.

In short, the humanitarian, democratization, and bilateral cooperation inherent to Mérida is not a necessary condition for causing Mexico and the United States to sign onto the agreement.

4.2.2 The OPP Narrative

The OPP narrative generates its hypotheses from constrained garbage can theory. These hypotheses seek to characterize organizational SOPs and understand their interactions with Mérida. An understandable counter-narrative to the story in Chapter 3 would contend that organizational SOPs and their influences on Mérida came as a result of organizations seeking to expand their resources. The counterfactual to this claim can be made as follows:

(1) If SOPs do not reflect an expansion of organizational jurisdictions during Mérida's development, then organizations were not driven by a desire to encroach upon institutionalized precedents.

This counterfactual is duly supported through the OPP narrative, where "red tape" and an underestimated view of the gravity of Mérida's prescriptions lead to an organizational environment where there is not evidence to support suspicions of interagency power grabs or turf battles.

This section has attempted to relate where and how this study should be placed within the broader spheres of policymaking and academia. The observations herein are meant to generate thoughtful discussion on the trends inherent in policy development and qualitative scholarship. In sum, policymaking can benefit from crafting evaluation measures and understanding organizational SOPs before a policy is enacted to increase the likelihood that implementation is met with a greater degree of success. Academic scholarship can stand to increase the transferability of typological understandings of phenomena as well as adopt a conceptual approach favoring specificity over artificial inferential significance. Additionally, alternative paths to Mérida's political development have also been wrestled with in an effort to solidify the inferences and conclusions presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The Legacy of Mérida

This chapter seeks to summarize and synthesize the inferences based on the narratives in the previous chapters. This study has utilized two distinct, yet complementary perspectives that paint a portrait of Mérida containing rich analysis of fundamental puzzles. While these findings contain room for further refinement and testing, they nonetheless shed insight on pertinent dynamics surrounding the policy. The remainder of this chapter divides parting thoughts within two contexts. First, a conclusive look at the puzzles investigated in this work is presented. Second, pathways for future research are highlighted to provide a starting point for future efforts towards understanding both Mérida and other policy events.

5.1 THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE: A FINAL LOOK

The theoretical lenses utilized within this study have provided the groundwork for crafting narratives which contain evidence for generating substantive answers to the questions and hypothetical expectations that have been posed. Allison's (1971) analysis on the Cuban Missile Crisis found that despite disagreements between his three models, each inference provided a useful piece to the larger policy puzzle. Similarly, this study of Mérida generates answers for questions that stem from two distinct perspectives. Keeping the lessons from Allison in mind, each narrative possesses unique insight that can then be combined into a deeper, yet more general understanding of Mérida's formulation. This section unpacks inferential findings through categorizing the answers found in each narrative, then combining them to formulate conclusions about Mérida and, more generally, policy development.

5.1.1 The RAP Narrative

The rational actor perspective narrows the scope of analysis to understanding the Mérida Initiative as an interaction between state actors. The salient questions from this perspective center on identifying how Mexico and the United States perceived circumstances leading up to Mérida's creation, and the countries' subsequent reactions resultant from the constantly changing sociopolitical environment. In relation to these questions, chapter 2's narrative diverges from colloquial assumptions about the driving forces behind state actions in the formulation of Mérida. Analysis reveals that Mexico's domestic crisis involved drug cartels, institutional corruption, and general instability which required aggressive tactics such as militarization of areas where police forces were inadequate, to seeking a more substantial remedy via the Mérida Initiative. The United States had been concerned with the degree of illicit operations between the U.S.-Mexico border, and wanted to solve the domestic drug problem through "fixing" the problem of its drug supply—the Mexican drug cartels. Despite a shaky historical relationship, both the United States and Mexico agreed to sign the Initiative.

The superimposition of the theory of offensive realism helps explain why. Under RAP's context, offensive realism generates hypotheses for explaining the actions of the United States and Mexico in regards to Mérida. Offensive realism contends that the United States and Mexico's actions were the result of power-seeking within the discord in the international system caused by the problems of drug cartels, corruption, and other conditions that precipitated Mérida. A story is then told where, despite the air of humanitarianism and bilateral "cooperation," both U.S. and Mexican government actions concerning Mérida were largely driven by desires for power projection, garnering leverage for regional hegemony and entrenching domestic institutional practices.

5.1.2 The OPP Narrative

The second perspective in this study conceptualizes Mérida's development as a plethora of organizational SOPs that play a significant role in the formulation and evolution of the policy. The organizational processes perspective concerns itself with isolating and characterizing the relevant organizational outputs that drove the formulation of Mérida. Chapter 3's narrative uncovers that there are a number of organizations from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border whose SOPs played a role in shaping Mérida and subsequent efforts of implementation.³⁷ The U.S. Department of State was found to be the primary organization whose outputs dictated the mandates for all other organizations and their SOP. Other organizations, such as the FBI and DHS, played key roles in providing venues for military equipment and training of Mexican police forces. A number of Mexican organizations, such as SEMAR and SEDENA, embodied the SOPs for receiving aid aimed at improving Mexico's institutional capacity to combat illicit drug operations.

The theory of constrained garbage can hierarchies provides a useful scope within OPP for generating expectations about why organizational SOPs evolved in the direction that they did in responding to Mérida's prescriptions. When reacting to challenges posed by Mérida, organizations opted for actions mandated by past precedents instead of seeking alternative which could yield better results. The narrative also uncovers that while Mérida's advent was understood as a 'major' policy change, each organization calculated its ultimate role in Mérida as one of 'minor' proportions. Hence, organizations became further embedded in their pre-existent SOPs and sought to achieve their objectives with tactics that had already been previously mandated by the higher levels of government.

³⁷ The exhaustive list of the agencies involved in Mérida's development can be found in Appendix B.

5.1.3 Putting It All Together

The narratives crafted under each perspective have uncovered key pieces to the puzzle of Mérida's development. However, richer analysis can be found through the combination of core tenets from both perspectives to illustrate a more comprehensive picture. This study finds that the Mérida Initiative's origins stem from an understanding that the aggregate actions of the United States and Mexico's national governments and organizations play a pivotal role in uncovering the core influences behind Mérida's development. The United States and Mexico see Mérida as a chance to become more powerful within the region, with the stated goals of the Initiative merely being a byproduct of palatability for media and citizenry. Organizations on both sides of the border characteristically default to already instituted SOPs in carrying out their Mérida-related objectives. Interestingly, this offers a sharp contrast to normative assumptions that organizations inherently seek to expand jurisdictions and resources. In sum, both perspectives provide a cohesive narrative due to the absence of contradictory findings and the strengthened inferences drawn from a unified narrative.

Another theme evident throughout the narratives is that each party held prevailing notions of image maintenance considerations. In the RAP narrative, both the United States and Mexico worked to ensure that certain perceptions were maintained concerning the nature of their actions in relation to Mérida. The OPP narrative illustrates that organizations were characteristically concerned with how their efficiency (or lack thereof) was perceived by other institutional entities. Even when these image maintenance endeavors are well intended, they risk being unnecessarily influential in the decision making calculus of an actor (Shepperd and Kwavnick 1999).

5.2 PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The narratives encapsulated within this work have made inroads towards illuminating the directions that future research can take to further expand upon the relevant knowledge base. Two particular venues for new research are identified. The first is the assessment of research ideas that can further unravel puzzling dynamics related to the Mérida Initiative. These new projects can further refine the understanding of this significant policy stance, and more importantly, continue to solidify the basis for drawing inferences that can be applied to the broader study of policy development. The second area involves the construction of studies which begin to investigate puzzles related to policy development in other cases. Through the proliferation of this kind of scholarship in other policy areas, theoretically refined conclusions can be generalized to a greater degree.

5.2.1 Continuing to Unravel Mérida

As a result of this study, there are now a number of approaches that can be utilized to develop an even further nuanced understanding of Mérida's development. This is not to say that the inferences generated by the RAP and OPP narratives are incomplete or inconclusive, but there are additional considerations that can be undertaken in order to increase the robustness by which the findings in this study can possess. Three pathways to achieve this are presented within this section. The first pathway is to utilize the research design in this design to formulate a third narrative for Mérida's development that focuses on the dynamics between individuals. The second venue involves the incorporation of elite interviews to the narratives of Mérida. The last improvement lies in including all other countries that have been a party to the Initiative. These projects can generate unique insight about the dynamics surrounding Mérida and can also contribute to the overall understanding of Mérida's origins.

The Governmental Politics Perspective

Allison's (1971) third model, the Governmental Politics Model, contains blueprints for constructing a perspective on policy development that can form the basis for another narrative concerning Mérida. This can be effectively accomplished through the utilization of the perspective-theory-case approach as outlined in the research design and implemented in the chapters 3 and 4. Moreover, I have already compiled the evidence for this project. By conducting extensive searches in congressional records and publicly released statements of policymakers and persons of interest, I possess a plethora of data for constructing the substantial components of a governmental politics narrative.

The current challenge lies in crafting the precursory theoretical lens (or lenses) that are capable of generating inferences from the intricate and divergent dynamics inherent without the broader perspective. In other words, it is crucial that a theory is properly built for constructing the expectations from this massive amount of evidence, as this would be the basis by which conclusions would be made. However, the unique nature of interpersonal interactions within the scope of understanding policy development is a very delicate process that could not be condensed into an appropriate format for this thesis as the first two perspectives were. Efforts throughout this thesis had been made to appropriately ascertain this particular form of data, but more time is required to delve deeper into the subfield until an adequate lens is built. This endeavor is a natural next step to this project that can then feasibly be added to the current version of this study.

Elite Interviews

Another element of Allison's (1999) work involves interviewing different levels of officials concerning the policy event of interest. These elite interviews may be able to further

confirm or contrast from findings based on current evidence. While originally a proposed component to this thesis, I found that the turnaround times between communiqués and low response rates from initial attempts to contact individuals meant that I would risk the timely completion of this project if I prioritized conducting elite interviews over generating inferences within this study. Thus, the scope prescribed by the research design was recalibrated and the process of elite interviews can now be engaged with the necessary timeframe for ensuring that there is a potential for building as in-depth and relevant a collection of interviews as possible.

Expanding the Case

In order to meet the constraints of this study, analysis of Mérida's development has been focused on the interactions between the two most significant parties. While emphasizing the dynamics most relevant to the United States and Mexico, a number of useful inferences have been drawn from the compiled evidence about the Initiative. However, these findings can benefit further from expanding the scope of this study to include all countries that are involved with Mérida. Adding a perspective cognizant of considerations that are important and may be unique to Central America, Haiti, the Caribbean, and the Dominican Republic can strengthen the basis used for drawing findings.

Another venue that can be utilized for going further into crafting historical explanations for Mérida is expanding the scope of exploration. Allowing more time to elapse can potentially increase the depth and veracity of findings herein. Five years from now, there may be additional evidence that becomes available for analysis. Revisiting studies that implement a historical framework can often prove fruitful for verifying initial inferences. For example, Allison's (1998; 1978) work was able to benefit from declassified reports and additional interviews throughout the decades that lead to a refinement of a number of his original conclusions and assumptions.

5.2.2 Retransforming Policy Development

Through this study, a second area can be identified where future research can be undertaken. Analysts seeking to solve puzzles of policy development concerning a particular policy event can utilize the research design found in this work as an operable framework to craft relevant narratives whereby conclusions can then be generated. More specifically, this thesis acts as an example for scholarship interested in understanding the dynamics behind the formulation of a different policy. If these other policies possess a puzzle that is pertinent to state actors or organizational processes, then the RAP and OPP can be adopted for undergoing analysis. Even if the most important dynamics of a policy event require entirely distinct contexts, the perspective-theory-case approach outlined in this study can provide the foundation for undertaking scholarship that can be more easily transferable in generating findings that can affect a broader spectrum of questions concerning policy development.

There are a number of different policy areas that contain programs and initiatives each with their own nuances and puzzles. This study's approach illuminates a novel system for encapsulating a policy's story and garnering findings that can be aptly related to other policies. Indeed, the findings discussed earlier in this chapter demonstrate the effectiveness that the perspective-theory case approach possesses. The findings themselves are also illustrative of the compelling tale behind Mérida's development from top-level and organizational lenses. This new knowledge stands to provide a deeper understanding of the Mérida Initiative, as well as inform policy analysis and qualitative research.

Macedo et al. (2005) articulate that social sciences can have some meaningful impact on American civic life. Part of that impact involves uncovering paths by which accountability can be upheld. In tracing the origins of Mérida, this work situates itself as a beacon for helping

citizens to understand that only when the development of a policy is understood can contemporary reform be effective.

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Appendix A: Acronym List

AJC - Alternative Justice Center
ATF - Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
BIO - Mexico-U.S. bilateral implementation office
CBP - U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CISEN - Center for Investigation and National Security
DEA - U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
DHS - U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DoD - U.S. Department of Defense
DoJ - U.S. Department of Justice
DoS - U.S. Department of State
DRI - Diplomatic Readiness Initiative
ESF - Economic Support Fund
FBI - Federal Bureau of Investigation
FMF - Foreign Military Financing
GAO - Government Accountability Office
ICE - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
INCLE - International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
INCSR - International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
NDCS - National Drug Control Strategy
NGTF - National Gang Task Force
OBM - Organizational Behavior Model
ONDCP - White House Office of National Drug Control Policy
OPP - Organizational Processes Perspective
PGR - Mexican Federal Attorney's Office
RAM - Rational Actor Model
RAP - Rational Actor Perspective
SEDENA - Mexican Secretariat of National Defense
SEMAR - Armada of Mexico (Mexican Navy)
SOP - Standard operating procedure
SSP - Mexican Secretariat of Public Security
TAG - Transnational Anti-Gang Task Force
USAID - U.S. Agency for International Development

Appendix B: Governmental Organizations Involved in Mérida's Political Development

Mexico

Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional (Center for Investigation and National Security)
Procuraduría General de la República (Federal Attorney's Office)
Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (Secretariat of National Defense)
Secretaría de Marina (Mexican Navy)
Secretaría de Seguridad Pública (Secretariat of Public Security)

United States

Customs and Border Protection
Department of Defense
Department of Homeland Security
Department of Justice
Department of State
Drug Enforcement Administration
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Government Accountability Office
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Agency for International Development
White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

Appendix C: Persons of Interest

This appendix lists individuals who played an evidence role in the formulation of Mérida. The positions denoted are the capacities that these political actors held when they had substantive interaction with some developmental stage of Mérida.

Rodney Benson, Asst. Administrator, Chief of Intelligence, DEA
Rep. Gus Billirakis (R-FL), Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management
William Brownfield, Asst. Secretary of State, INCLE
Robert Bunker, Senior Fellow, Small Wars Journal, El Centro
Scott Burns, Deputy Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy
Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO), Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management
Sunita D'Monte, Congressional Budget Office
Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-SC), Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management
Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Jess Ford, Director, International Affairs and Trade Team, GAO
Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ), Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Allen Gina, Acting Asst. Commissioner of U.S. CBP's Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination
Rep. Al Green (D-TX), Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism
William Hoover, Asst. Director for Field Operations, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Roberta Jacobson, Deputy Asst. Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs
David T. Johnson, Asst. Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Kenneth W. Kaiser, Asst. Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation
Rep. William Keating (D-MA), Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management
Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism
Marisa R. Lino, Asst. Secretary for International Security Affairs, Department of Homeland Security
Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL), Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management

Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY), Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere

John Negroponte, Former Director of National Intelligence and Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico

Shannon O'Neil, Fellow for Latin American Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

Alonzo Pena, Deputy Asst. Secretary of Homeland Security for Operation, ICE

Anthony Placido, Chief of Intelligence, Drug Enforcement Agency

Rep. David Rivera (R-FL), Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation, and Management

Andrew Selee, Director, Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars

Thomas A. Shannon, Jr., Asst. Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

Gary Shiffman, Adjunct Professor, Center for Peace and Security Studies, Georgetown University

Mariko Silver, Acting Asst. Homeland Security Secretary, Office of International Affairs

Pamela Star, Associate Professor, Public Diplomacy, School of International Relations, Director of the U.S.-Mexico Network, University of Southern California

Vita

A native of El Paso, Texas, Richard Sebastian Flores graduated from Cathedral High School in 2005. During his undergraduate education, Richard was involved in a number of extracurricular activities, particularly intercollegiate speech and debate. In the spring of 2009, Richard was one half of the team that won UTEP's first state championship in parliamentary debate. After earning a B.A. in Political Science from UTEP in December 2010, Richard enrolled in the graduate program in Political Science that following spring.

During his tenure as a graduate student, Richard has worked as a teaching assistant for numerous instructors. This experience culminated with his charge of teaching Stata to an entire section of POLS 2312 throughout Fall 2012. He has also served as a research assistant to Dr. Charles Boehmer, Dr. José Villalobos, and Dr. Irasema Coronado during different semesters and across a number of projects. In addition to a number of articles written as a researcher for the 2012 Mexico Elections Project, Richard also has four journal articles currently in different stages of the academic review process. Moreover, Richard has represented UTEP's Department of Political Science through eight conference paper presentations, six panels and two workshops. One highlight includes being recognized as the top participant in *Jornadas Fronterizas* (Border Workshops), a student colloquium on U.S.-Mexico border issues, which was sponsored by and held at the University of Texas at Austin on November 2011. Under the mentorship of Dr. Cigdem Sirin, an early version of this thesis was presented at the 2011 Emerging Scholars in Political Science Conference, which was sponsored by and held at the University of Michigan.

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