

Reforming the Nation: Mexican Nationalism in Context

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Abstract. With the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement); the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*), and political crisis/reform all posing questions both old and new about Mexican nationalism, this article reconsiders the dimensions of the subject, the issues, and the empirical evidence. After setting out an analytical and theoretical framework for the study of nationalism, it concentrates on the many components of Mexican nationalism, the historic and on-going nationalist debates over the Indian, the American and the state, and the nature of nationalist policies over the years. It then reviews research related to such theoretical issues as the linkages between nationalist sentiments, ideas and policies, the social bases of nationalist ideas and perceptions, and the changes in nationalism. The article aims to place longstanding discussions of Mexican nationalism in a theoretical context and to derive conclusions which indicate appropriate directions for future research.

Introduction

With globalisation and the resurgence of ethnic movements ripping at the power and purpose of the nation-state from both ends, issues of nationalism and national identity have taken centre stage. This is particularly true in Mexico, where policy somersaults since the mid-eighties have raised fears of political subordination, cultural assimilation, and the ‘maquiladorisation’ of the economy; where the 1994 indigenous/peasant-based uprising in the southern state of Chiapas has crystallised questions regarding the ‘myth of national unity’ and the place of the indigenous within the nationalist discourse; and where the political struggle to reform the authoritarian regime has exposed deep-seated divisions over the nation’s interests and the purpose and role of the state in promoting them.

But despite the cries and laments, the promises and the assurances, contention over Mexican nationalism is nothing new. Perhaps few people have so hotly debated the issue of national identity and its meaning as have the Mexicans; and yet, analyses of the Mexican character and nationalism have rarely adopted a comparative or theoretical focus, just as few general works on nationalism have incorporated the Mexican case.¹ In attempting

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¹ Alan Knight, ‘Peasants into Patriots: Thoughts on the Making of the Mexican Nation’, *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1994), p. 135.

to move beyond this problem, this article develops a broad analytical and theoretical framework for studying nationalism. It then places the current nationalist debates in the country in their theoretical and historical context, and reviews a range of empirical works. The first section disaggregates the amorphous concept of nationalism, setting out a trinity of primary components. The second section then uses this framework to explore the debates, the dilemmas, and the evidence relating to the case of Mexico.

Nationalism: analytical and theoretical framework

The general literature on nationalism features extensive disagreement over virtually everything, from the meanings and origins of nationalism to its relative strength or weakness in the world.² For current purposes, a distinction will be made between national identity, national interest, and nationalist politics.³

National identity, the first component, refers to the subjective feelings or sentiments of attachment or loyalty individuals possess for an ‘imagined community’.⁴ It is marked by the intensity of these sentiments compared to other feelings of attachment, and by the factors that anchor these emotions, thereby forging a ‘distinctive identity’ that defines the group (the ‘we’) and the individual (the ‘me’).⁵ Among the internal factors that may anchor national identity are race, ethnicity, culture, kinship, language, religion (the so-called Eastern or ethnic/cultural model) and/or political ideology, creed, or a shared sense of history (the so-called Western or civic/political model).⁶ External influences also mould national identity. Like a common language, a common perception

² For a review of the extensive literature on nationalism see B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991); J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago, 1994); E. Gellner, *Culture, Identity and Politics* (Cambridge, 1990); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, (Cambridge, 1990); P. Rutland, ‘The Flourishing Literature on Nationalism’, *Choice* February 1995, pp. 901–9; and A. Smith *National Identity* (Nevada, 1991).

³ This distinction reflects the three prominent approaches in the literature and parallels the discussion by Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, p. 404, who separates sentiments (identity), ideas (interests), and actions (policies).

⁴ The term ‘imagined community’ is attributed to E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York, 1983). See Smith, *National Identity* for an exploration of nationalism as a feeling of attachment.

⁵ According to G. Gimenez ‘Modernización, Cultura e Identidad Social’, *Espiral, Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad* vol. 1, no. 2 (1995), p. 42, national identity performs three critical functions for the individual: (a) a locational function that enables the individual to orient him/herself within social space; (b) a selective function that helps the individual refer to set of values that sets out practical options; and (c) an integrative function that helps integrate past experience with the present.

⁶ The eastern/western categorisation is provided in H. Kohn, *Nationalism: Myth and Reality* (Princeton, 1955).

of the ‘other’ as well as resistance to subjugation helps to define the ‘we’, to solidify the sentiment of belonging, and even to heighten the importance of the nation itself.⁷

National interest, the second component within nationalism, draws on the idea of nationalism as a political principle, doctrine, or ideology, rather than as a sentiment of attachment. Broadly, the nationalist doctrine posits that a unique people or nation exists (often in a primordial sense), that its interests should prevail over all others, that a state is needed to promote and protect those interests, and that this principle is universally applicable.⁸ But while this doctrine holds that a state should be as independent as possible to protect the interests of the nation, it says little about what those interests are, what specifically the state should do on behalf of the nation, or what might be considered acceptable trade-offs in its pursuit of its amorphous objective. In short, nationalist doctrine enshrines national interest, but does not define it. This distinction is crucial since in general societies do not confront a decision over whether or not to cede national sovereignty, but only how much, and in what ways. Consequently, the idea of national interest as used here goes beyond the somewhat static and reductionist notion encapsulated within the nationalist doctrine to refer to the discourse defining national identity, the nation’s interests, the threats to the nation, and what, if anything, should be done to protect or promote the nation’s interests. Given the contradictory nature of nationalism – in which ‘people paradoxically attempt both to become modern and to defend themselves against modernity’⁹ – national interest is employed here to refer to the space where ideas, interpretations, and images, all flowing from the sentiments of belonging, struggle to negotiate the paradoxes. In the end, national interest refers then to that part of nationalism relating to the ‘imagined community’s’ struggle to define its ‘legitimacy’.

The third component of nationalism, nationalist politics, emphasises nationalism as a style of politics, rather than a ‘sense of belonging’ or an ‘ideology of legitimacy’. It encompasses the actions of political movements either seeking or exercising state power ‘based on the nationalist doctrine’.¹⁰ Focusing exclusively on the exercise of state power,

⁷ According to Edward Said, cited in M. Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, 1996), p. 6, ‘all societies acquire their identities through a juxtaposition to another: an alien, a foreigner, or an enemy’. On this ingredient in national identity see M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York, 1972); J. N. Pieterse and B. Parekh (eds.), *The Decolonization of Imagination: Culture, Knowledge, and Power* (Atlantic Highlands, 1995); and E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993).

⁸ Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, p. 2; and Smith, *National Identity*, p. 19.

⁹ G. Jusdanis, ‘Beyond National Culture?’, *Boundary 2* vol. 22, no. 1 (1995), p. 42.

¹⁰ Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, p. 2.

nationalist politics can therefore be categorised simply by reference to the three policy arenas: political, economic and cultural.¹¹ Political nationalism refers to state actions that promote the sovereignty of the state and its independence *vis-à-vis* other countries, that nurture loyalty to the state and state institutions (the secular religion), and that break down, weaken or undermine competing political loyalties or ideas.¹² Economic nationalism, in turn, refers to state programmes that protect or promote the economic interests of nationals by discriminating against non-nationals. These policies centre on issues of ‘economic growth, ownership of the means of production and the use of the national product’.¹³ Finally, cultural nationalism refers to state policies and programmes that nurture love for and loyalty to the culture (nation) as opposed to the state, and that protect that culture from foreign influence or internal forces that might weaken or undermine it.¹⁴

Disaggregating the concept of nationalism in this way – national identity, national interest and policies – not only helps set out distinct social/psychological phenomena, but more importantly helps underscore three theoretical issues: (a) the relationships among the three levels of analysis, (b) the social determinants of nationalism; and (c) the dynamics of nationalism. The first issue involves the relationships among the three dimensions. Since the three refer distinctly to sentiments (belonging),

¹¹ Generally, nationalist political movements refer to independence movements struggling to define the nation and politically consolidate or capture state power. Since the Mexican state exists, I focus exclusively on the policies of the state. It is also important to note that differentiating economic, political and cultural policies may, at times, be difficult. Policies of cultural nationalism, for example, can complement economic nationalism because both involve tangible benefits and regulate the market. (See H. Johnson, ‘A Theoretical Model of Economic Nationalism in New and Developing States’, *Political Science Quarterly* vol. 80 (1965), rpt in Hutchinson and Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 236–40.) Even asserting political control *vis-à-vis* a foreign power can take the form of regulating the market. Knight, ‘Peasants into Patriots’, for instance, interprets the oil expropriation of 1938 as more an example of political nationalism than a policy of economic nationalism.

¹² Jusdanis, ‘Beyond National Culture’, p. 24.

¹³ The quote is taken from L. Solís, ‘La política económica y el nacionalismo mexicano’, in *Lecturas de Política Mexicana* (Mexico City, 1977), p. 55. For a review on the concept of economic nationalism see Johnson, ‘A Theoretical Model of Economic Nationalism’.

¹⁴ It should be noted that such policies are considered nationalistic not because they promote the perceived interests of the nation (or are justified along those lines), but rather because they promote those interests to the exclusion of the interests of others. This means that even though a universal policy may be touted as promoting national interests (which it naturally will be given the fact that the legitimacy of the state rests on representing the national interest), if such a policy does not do so in an exclusive or discriminatory way, it cannot be considered nationalistic. A policy of economic opening, for instance, may promote the interest of the nation, but not by favouring nationals over non-nationals. Its focus, in other words, is not the particular nation.

interests (ideology), and policies, no *a priori* relationship exists. As a sentiment, national identity may provide only a weak indicator of the specifics of national interest, the level of perceived threat internally or externally, or views on how the nation's interests should be promoted. Some may perceive a threat internally or externally to the nation's interests, and hence support a staunchly nationalistic policy, while others may consider the same level of influence as non-threatening to the nation, or critical in helping to achieve more important national objectives (and thus an acceptable trade-off), or simply a fact of modernity (nature, the winds of change, etc.) and hence unassailable. Similarly, a certain type of identity or even a certain perception of the national interest will not necessarily correlate with the policies actually pursued by the state, since the latter tend to reflect the views of an elite and so to represent a degree of pragmatism.

To be sure, correlation is not the same as causality, but it does raise that question. In the general literature this is one of those many tangled areas of disagreement noted earlier. Generally, the primordialists, at one end of a continuum, emphasise the role of national identity (sentiments and attachments) in shaping ideology (national interest) and state policies, while the instrumentalists, on the other end, stress the role of the state (policy) in crafting a people's identity and their perceptions of the nation's interests.¹⁵ Given the intensity of this debate it is important to begin from the assumption that the causal linkage among these variables (sentiment, interests, policies) is neither straightforward nor unidirectional. This consequently broadens and even complicates the empirical questions about the linkages. What patterns or combinations exist among the three? What conditions determine whether or when identity and interests shape policies, or *vice versa*? What determines the distance between the three, and what happens when the gaps between these three grow?

The second major theoretical issue revolves around the social determinants of the various aspects of nationalism. Even though cultures may be collective, sentiments and views 'are neither shared by all, nor are attempts to invent a culture (policies) necessarily embraced by an entire population'.¹⁶ At issue, then, are the patterns of identity and interest within a population, and the impact of key demographic and social variables, such as education, income, geography, occupation, etc. How are they related to feelings of national identity, perceptions of the national interest, or nationalist policies? Modernisation and post-

¹⁵ Smith, *National Identity* offers perhaps the best example of the primordialist view, while Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* and E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth and reality* (Cambridge, 1990) provide excellent examples of the instrumentalist perspective. ¹⁶ Jurdanis, 'Beyond National Culture,' p. 28.

materialist theory are the most prominent approaches in the literature connected with this issue but neither is exactly clear as to the nature of the relationship between socioeconomic status and education, on the one hand, and strength of national identity and support for nationalist policies, on the other.¹⁷ Although modernisation theory seems to clearly suggest an inverse relationship with the more educated and wealthier members of society embracing more universalistic principles and policies, the historical evidence remains spotty. Breuilly, for instance, found few clear theoretical or empirical reasons linking components of national identity or perceptions of the national interest to any particular group in society.¹⁸ Even Inglehart's theory of postmaterialism, linking more education to nonmaterial concerns, seems to suggest that beyond a certain level of development individuals would indeed become more concerned about such non-material values as culture and identity.¹⁹

The final theoretical area relates to the issue of change. Just as views regarding national identity and national interests are not uniform across the population, neither are they static across time.²⁰ Indeed, according to Benedict Anderson, 'nationalism has undergone a process of modulation and adaptation, according to different eras, political regimes, economies and social structures'.²¹ Not only have policies designed to protect the nation's interests come in and out of vogue, but the groups backing such policies have shifted position. At one point, intellectuals backed nationalism, while today they operate easily within an internationalist culture.²² Such changes, of course, merely beg the questions: what forces alter national identity, national interests, or national policies? and what patterns, if any, can be detected over time? Here again, modernisation theory offers one general though perhaps simplistic approach, envisioning a secular change from a position of strong nationalism during the

¹⁷ On modernisation theory see, for instance, D. A. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago, 1965); R. Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (New York, 1964); S. M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Baltimore, 1981); and L. Pye and S. Verba (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, 1965). On postmaterialist theory see R. F. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton, 1977). For analysis linking class to nationalism, ethnocentrism and racism see H. D. Forbes, *Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Personality* (Chicago, 1985).

¹⁸ Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, pp. 17–53.

¹⁹ See Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution*; and R. F. Inglehart, N. Nevitte and M. Basañez, *The North American Trajectory: Cultural, Economic, and Political Ties among the United States, Canada, and Mexico* (New York, 1995).

²⁰ L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 3–12, highlights the various historical permutations of the term nation itself to uncover critical junctures in its evolution.

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 158.

²² Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 118.

nineteenth-century to a weaker form of nationalism during the twentieth-century crafted by the spread of education, technology and the market. Such a view not only relates to long-term change, leaving open the question of short-term shifts in nationalism but it has come under attack in recent years on two fronts: first from postmodernist thinkers, who underscore everything from the ideological/hegemonic/gendered-based reductionism of modernisation theory to the politic of ‘cultural reconversion’ in societies undergoing ‘modernisation,’ and, secondly, from a post Cold War reality that features a broad-based resurgence of ethnonationalism and national resistance to globalisation.²³

Nationalism in Mexico

Despite the lack of attention to the case of Mexico in the general literature (and *vice versa*) noted at the outset, in many respects writings on Mexican nationalism parallel the genre. Just as the general literature divides over whether nationalism is a strong or weak force, and over what came first, confusion exists over whether Mexico brandishes a strong or weak brand of nationalism and whether the Mexican state actually preceded the nation or *vice versa*.²⁴ A review of the thinking and research on Mexican nationalism reveals many of these issues.

National Identity. Looking first at national identity, there is a large literature delving into the social/psychological character of the Mexican. In extensive tomes, Mexican authors have variously described Mexicans as

²³ On the postmodernist critique, including the idea of ‘cultural reconversion’, see, for instance, D. Ashley, *History without a Subject: The Postmodern Condition* (Boulder, 1997); J. Beverley, J. Oviedo and M. Aronna (eds.), *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America*. (Durham, 1995); N. Canclini García, *Culturas Híbridas: Estrategias para Entrar y Salir de la Modernidad* (Mexico, 1989) and *Transforming Modernity: Popular Culture in Mexico* (Austin, 1993); M. Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity* (London, 1990); S. Radcliffe and S. Westwood, *Remaking the Nation: Place, Identity and Politics in Latin America* (London, 1996); and Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

²⁴ On the state *versus* nation division, for example, A. F. Basave Benítez, *México Mestizo: Analisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andrés Molina Enriquez* (Mexico, 1992), p. 14, contends that in contrast to Europe, the Mexican state emerged first and then sought to create a nation. Frank Tannenbaum (cited in F. C. Turner, *The Dynamics of Mexican Nationalism* Chapel Hill, 1968, p. 27) also adopts this view, noting that with the end of Spanish rule ‘Mexico is not a nation’. Yet E. Florescano, *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico: From the Aztecs to Independence* (Austin, 1994), p. 222, contends that an identity based on the geography, religious values, and a recovery of its ancient past predated thoughts about autonomy and sovereignty: ‘... what the Creoles argued was that the basis of this society no longer rested on the king, but on the nation’. Even Knight in ‘Peasants into Patriots’ argues that in Mexico this nationalist sentiment came before state formation and that Mexico had to create a state almost from scratch.

harbouring an inferiority complex (Samuel Ramos); as alienated and alone, hidden behind complex masks (Octavio Paz); as juveniles, stuck in a state of infancy (Jorge Carrion); as sentimental despite an outward appearance of coldness and indifference (Jose Iturriaga); as stoic and aggressively emotional (Roger Bartra); and as highly spiritual and culturally creative (Jose Vasconcelos).²⁵ Despite the many differences, most analysts agree on the strength and importance of national identity to the Mexican – the intensity of the historic debate itself being a sign of this – and that Mexican national identity contains a wide mix of expressions and components. It encapsules such ethnic/cultural features of the ‘eastern model’ as: (a) *mestizaje*, with the *mestizo* representing the racial expression of the nation, and as an example of Vasconcelos’ ‘cosmic race’, a superior mixture and the future saviour of the world; (b) pride in past Indian civilisations once occupying the territory, including a sense of ‘primordial disintegration’ or the idea of a great and glorious history interrupted, diverted and degraded;²⁶ and (c) a reverence for the Virgin of Guadalupe, seen generally as God’s confirmation of the nation’s spiritual and even racial uniqueness.²⁷ With roots in the metanarrative of the Mexican Revolution, the national identity also contains strong civic/political aspects reminiscent of the ‘western model’, such as a shared belief in liberal democracy, strong anti-clericalism, a shared sense of history, a sense of the rights of peasants to own the land they work and of workers to share the fruits of their labour, and a corresponding distrust toward business, the Church, and foreign interests.²⁸

²⁵ See S. Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico* (Austin, 1962); O. Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* (New York, 1961); R. Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character* (New Brunswick, 1992); J. Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica* (Mexico, 1948).

²⁶ On the idea of primordial disintegration see Jusdanis, ‘Beyond National Culture’. Something held in a similar spirit is the ‘myth of the treasure of Texas and California,’ noted by Turner in *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism*. According to this myth had it not been for the US takeover of approximately half Mexican territory at the time, Mexico’s fate as a nation would have been different.

²⁷ On these components of Mexican identity see Basave, *México Mestizo*; D. Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano* (Mexico, 1980); Florescano, *Memory, Myth and Time in Mexico*; R. Gutiérrez Lopez and J. L. Gutiérrez E., ‘En torno a la redefinición del nacionalismo mexicano’, *Sociología* vol. 8, no. 21 (1993), pp. 87–101; A. Hernández Medina and L. Narro Rodríguez (eds.), *Como somos los mexicanos* (Mexico, 1987); S. Loeza, ‘The Changing Face of Mexican Nationalism’, in M. D. Baer and S. Weintraub (eds.), *The NAFTA Debate: grappling with Unconventional Trade Issues* (Boulder, 1994), pp. 145–57; C. Monsivais, ‘Notas sobre la cultura mexicana en el siglo XX’, in *Historia general de México*, 2 (Mexico, 1976), pp. 1374–1548; and H. C. Schmidt, *The Roots of Lo Mexicano: Self and Society in Mexican Thought, 1900–1934* (College Station, 1978).

²⁸ See R. Camp, ‘The Cross in the Polling Booth: Religion, Politics and the Laity in Mexico’, *Latin American Research Review* vol. 29, no. 3 (1994), pp. 69–100; I. Morales Moreno, ‘Mexico’s National Identity After NAFTA’, *America Behavioral Scientist* vol. 40, no. 7 (1997), pp. 858–83; and Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism*.

Both the intensity and content of Mexican national identity are also rooted in, and shaped by, juxtaposition to the USA: the predominant ‘other’.²⁹ As Carlos Fuentes puts it, ‘Mexican nationalism... is defined to a great extent by the proximity of another nationalism: the North American’.³⁰ The humiliation, deprivation and oppression suffered historically at the hands of the USA, or what Fuentes refers to as a loss of a centre of adherence, provides a common foundation that strengthens the sense of national identity and imbues it with a shared sense of distrust toward the USA, a keen sensitivity to perceived (real) US perceptions of Mexico’s inferiority (and that of all other non-western peoples) and interventionism, and even a tendency to perhaps reverse the logic, mirroring those same images.³¹ According to Paul Hollander, Mexican anti-Americanism ‘has been the most virulent and paradigmatic:’ a key component of national identity.³²

Indeed, much of the context of Mexican identity is fashioned by this juxtaposition. In the words of Octavio Paz, Mexicans view the USA as ‘inseparable from ourselves and... at the same time... radically and essentially extraneous or foreign... (the United States) is the image of all that the (Mexicans) are not; they are strangeness ([otherness]) itself’.³³ This Foucauldian reflective creation of self suggests that in many ways being Mexican means not being *gringo*, and, in certain contexts, affirming that distinction. It involves rooting the characteristics of the Mexican in his/her perception of the USA and *vice versa*. Hence Mexican identity embraces the glorious indigenous past, in part, as a critical and oppositional contrast to the absence of an ethnic identity in the USA; it exhibits pride in *mestizaje* as a contrast to the racial practices (apartheid and genocide) of the Europeans in the USA; it glorifies the culture’s spiritual, Latin heritage as a critique of the crass materialism of the north; it boasts respect for family and friends as a counter to the excessive individualism of the *gringo*; and it identifies with the rights of the weak and poor in the face of the rich and powerful of the North.

Many authors have alluded to this juxtaposition as a key force shaping

²⁹ Of course the USA is not the only external actor shaping Mexican nationalism, though it is arguably the most important. Turner, in *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism*, emphasises the role of xenophobia generally in shaping Mexican nationalism, particularly how the conflicts with Spain and France during the nineteenth-century served as a source of unity and national identity.

³⁰ C. Fuentes, *Nuevo Tiempo Mexicano* (Mexico, 1994), pp. 85–86.

³¹ This idea is taken from a more general point made by J. N. Pieterse and B. Parekh, ‘Shifting imaginaries: decolonization, international decolonization, postcoloniality’, in *The Decolonization of Imagination*, p. 8.

³² P. Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad, 1965–1990* (New York, 1992), p. 358.

³³ Paz, ‘El Espejo Indiscreto’ in *El ogro filantrópico* (Barcelona, 1979), p. 53. This work was originally published in *Plural* 58, julio de 1976.

the nature of the Mexican character. Roger Bartra, for instance, suggests that the image of Mexicans as spineless and idle is created in contrast to the pragmatic image of Anglo-Saxons.³⁴ The image of the Mexican inferiority complex described by Ramos and the alienation described by Paz are both anchored in a sense of failure *vis-à-vis* the USA: a point made even more pointedly by Carlos Rangel.³⁵ Alluding to this tendency, Maccoby even suggests ‘that Mexican authors underestimate the effects that living in the United States’ shadow has on their feelings of inferiority’.³⁶

Survey data offer an empirical portrait of Mexican national identity, and lend some support to these patterns. They show, first, that Mexicans are strongly nationalistic and proud of their nation. In a 1980 poll sixty-six per cent of respondents claimed to be ‘very proud’ of their nationality, while 65.3 per cent and another 30 per cent classified themselves as ‘proud’ and ‘somewhat proud’ in a 1985 survey.³⁷ And yet the data say little regarding the foundation of that pride. One regional survey in 1992 (conducted in the Valley of Mexico) found the highest degree of national identification with the flag, the national anthem and the *escudo*: all above race or language.³⁸ This suggests a civic/political foundation to Mexican nationalism perhaps stronger than the racial/ethnic dimension, though surely populations beyond the central region would identify less with the aztec-derived national symbol. Still, substantial data since the early 1960s have shown a general consensus regarding the goals of the Mexican Revolution, with support for such tenets as land reform waning, and for democracy increasing.³⁹ Finally, polls provide a sense of Mexican perceptions of self. In an open-ended word association question in a 1990 poll, the top three words Mexicans associated with ‘Mexican’ were

³⁴ Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy*, p. 32.

³⁵ C. Rangel, *The Latin Americans: Their Love-Hate Relationship with the United States* (New York, 1976).

³⁶ Cited in Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy*, p. 80.

³⁷ Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*, pp. 92–94; and I. Zavala, ‘Valores políticos’, in Hernández and Narro (eds.), *Como somos los mexicanos*, p. 107.

³⁸ R. de la Peña and R. Toledo, ‘El 87% de los mexicanos nacionalistas y patriotas’, *El Nacional*, September (1992), cited in Gutiérrez and Gutiérrez, ‘En torno a la redefinición del nacionalismo mexicano’, p. 93. C. Monsiváis, ‘Muerte y resurrección del nacionalismo mexicano’, *Nexos* no. 109 (1987), p. 20, even suggests that this civic portion of Mexican national identity might today include a sense of negative pride: ‘Somos el país mas corrupto o transa’.

³⁹ See, for instance, G. Almond and S. Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Boston, 1965); R. A. Camp, *Politics in Mexico* (New York, 1993); U. Beltran, F. Castaños, J. I. Flores, Y. Meyenberg and B. H. del Pozo, *Los mexicanos de los noventa* (Mexico, 1996); S. Morris and J. Passe-Smith, ‘Hegemonía cultural y valores en Jalisco’, *Carta Economica Regional* No. 52 (January-February, 1997), pp. 10–15; and Javala, ‘Valores políticos’.

trabajador (worker), *patriota* (patriot) and *flojo* (lazy), all well above such terms as responsible, honest, friendly and respectful.⁴⁰

Looking at the external factor, the data confirm, first, that Mexicans see themselves as distinct from the people of the USA. According to the 1986 *New York Times* poll, these distinctions centre on perceptions of the Mexican (self) as more religious, more concerned with family, and less materialistic than the North American, who, in turn, is considered far more individualistic, materialistic and less spiritual than the Mexican.⁴¹ And yet, despite these perceptions of difference, data from the World Values Survey in 1990 point to a pattern of shared political, economic and social values among the two peoples, and a growing convergence in these areas. The shared values spotlight religiosity, confidence in non-government institutions, autonomy over obedience in child rearing, and support for democracy, among many others.⁴²

Data also show Mexicans to have a somewhat favourable opinion of the USA, but one that does not necessarily translate into trusting their northern neighbour. A 1972 multi-country poll found a majority of respondents in Mexico expressing respect for the US, while a United States Information Agency-sponsored study in Mexico City in the early 1980s found 70 per cent of the respondents with a favourable opinion of the USA.⁴³ Similarly the 1986 *New York Times* poll found 48 per cent of the respondents having a favourable opinion of the USA, compared to 27 per cent with an unfavourable view. On a 1–10 scale ranking of countries, the USA received a 7.9 ranking, only behind Japan's 8.0 ranking. Yet despite these attitudes, data also show a high degree of distrust toward the USA. Two 1986 *Excelsior* polls, for example, showed 59 per cent of respondents classifying the USA as an enemy country, and 60 per cent grading the

⁴⁰ Beltrán, *et al.*, *Los mexicanos de los noventa*. See also E. Alduncin, *Los valores de los mexicanos: México entre la tradición y la modernidad* (Mexico, 1989); Hernández and Narro, *Como somos los mexicanos*; Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*; and the two Omnibus polls conducted by Mori (1992 and 1995) for similar data regarding the social and attitudinal characteristics of the Mexicans.

⁴¹ See 'New York Time Mexican Poll', (mimeo, 1986) and E. H. Epstein and C. A. Riordan, 'Bicultural Preparation and National Identity: A Study of Medical Students at a Mexican University', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* vol. 5, no. 2 (1989), pp. 239–63. For reports based on the former see *The New York Times*, November 16, 1986, pp. 1, 16 and November 17, 1986, p. A8. For one perspective on these differences see O. Paz, 'Mexico and the United States', in *Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York, 1985).

⁴² Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*. Within the framework presented here, these views belong within the area of national interest. But the point here is the convergence of values with the people in the USA rather than the content of the views. The important follow-up question would be whether this convergence of values reduces the perception of difference and/or distrust.

⁴³ These polls, "Images of the US" (1972) and "The Climate of Opinion in Mexico City" (1983), are cited in Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad*, p. 356.

USA as an unpleasant neighbour.⁴⁴ A 1990 poll also found over 50 per cent of respondents expressing distrust toward the USA, with more than twice as many distrusting the USA as trusting them.⁴⁵ Although less extreme, a 1991 *Los Angeles Times* poll found that more respondents distrusted the USA in business than trusted them (47 per cent compared to 45 per cent).⁴⁶ This split emerged in even more intriguing fashion in a regional survey conducted in Jalisco in 1995, where the USA was not only the second most distrusted country (behind Cuba), but also the second most trusted country (behind Japan).⁴⁷

National interests. As noted, national identity merely provides a framework for understanding the perceived needs or actions of the nation. But by itself, national identity says very little about who is a ‘good Mexican,’ who or what threatens the nation, what specifically are the nation’s interests, the respective weights of these interests, or what types of policies can or should be pursued in the nation’s name. In Mexico, three national interest discourses have been prominent, becoming particularly intense in recent years. These centre around the Indian (internal), the USA (external), and the role of the state.

With regards to the indigenous, the traditional discourse depicts two almost contradictory strands. On the one hand, as noted, a sense of glory regarding the Indian past has long been an important part of the nation’s identity. Ever since independence, governments have trumpeted this theme to mobilise supporters and/or demobilise opponents. Yet despite this strand, and in certain cases even underlying it, lay a discourse that casts the Indian and the Indian culture as not truly Mexican, but rather as impediments to the unification of the nation and obstacles to its political, economic and cultural development: in short, a threat to the nation’s interests.⁴⁸ *Mestizaje* was thus touted as the solution to this problem: a process of transforming the indigenous both racially and culturally, thereby forging national unity and overcoming obstacles to development. Such a view clearly contrasts with the notion of *mestizaje* as a cultural synthesis or a form of multiculturalism. Even in the early twentieth-

⁴⁴ *Excelsior* August 23–27, 1986. The polls are cited in R. A. Pastor and J. G. Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship: The United States and Mexico* (New York, 1988), pp. 37–38.

⁴⁵ Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*, p. 8.

⁴⁶ Data cited in F. Reyes Heróles, ‘Soberanía: conceptos, hechos y emociones’, *Este País* Agosto, 1995, pp. 32–45.

⁴⁷ Morris and Passe-Smith, ‘Hegemonía cultural y valores en Jalisco’. This sense of trust toward the USA may reflect not only the lessons of history, but the perception of differences since people tend to trust those most like themselves.

⁴⁸ On the treatment past and present of the Indian in Mexico see Basave, *México Mestizo*; G. Bonfil Bantalla, *México Profundo: Una civilización negada* (Mexico, 1987); Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*; Florescano, *Memory, Myth and Time in Mexico*; and Knight, ‘Peasants into Patriots’.

century, President Lazaro Cardenas pursued a policy framed by this discourse: a policy that sought ‘not to Indianize Mexico, but to Mexicanize the Indian’.⁴⁹

The 1994 uprising of the indigenous-based *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) in Chiapas – another in a long line of such uprisings in Mexico – has challenged this traditional discourse. Voicing demands for local autonomy, an end to racism, a respect for indigenous traditions and customs, and even the right to educate their young in their native language,⁵⁰ the insurgents of Chiapas have raised the consciousness of the nation’s indigenous, offered them a vehicle for political mobilisation while, at the same time, challenging traditional Mexican (*mestizo*) views regarding the Indian and the nation.⁵¹ Among the challenges, the Zapatista demand for a pluralistic nation in which the *mestizo* and indigenous cultures co-exist, questions the prevailing ‘myth of national unity’; it questions the modernist discourse according to which the indigenous are considered an obstacle to ‘progress’; and it forces the dominant *mestizo* culture to come to grips with the now glaring contradiction between the concept of the *indio* contained within its own (*mestizo*) image of itself and the situation, and the demands of the current indigenous population. In other words, the situation in Chiapas makes it more difficult for the *mestizo* to view him/herself as part of an indigenous Mexico, when to the indigenous s/he clearly represents the ‘other.’

Empirical studies related to perceptions of the *indio* and of the uprising are lacking, though those that exist present a somewhat perplexing

⁴⁹ A. P. Whitaker and D. C. Jordan, *Nationalism in Contemporary Latin America* (New York, 1966), p. 44.

⁵⁰ Many of these demands made their way into the first negotiated agreement between the rebels and the government, the San Andrés accord, forwarded to President Zedillo in December 1996. The reform package includes modifications in a host of constitutional guarantees for the ‘uses and customs’ of the 56 ethnicities in the country; guarantees for cultural diversity; respect for languages, religious practices, and traditional medicines; adjustments in legal procedures that provide for translations and for bilingual public defenders; the direct involvement of indigenous peoples in public works projects that affect them; and juridical personality for indigenous communities (see *MexPaz Bulletin* no. 31). Yet the Zedillo government subsequently backtracked on the agreement and refused to develop the required legislation, arguing that the initiative lacked ‘judicial precision’ and must not be allowed to fracture the constitutional order. The government’s concern centred on the issue of national sovereignty (see J. Sicilia, ‘El EZLN y el Estado nacional’, *Proceso* no. 1090 (21 de septiembre de 1997)).

⁵¹ In 1996, for example, the EZLN sponsored two major conferences to bring together and consult with other indigenous groups across the nation: the first in January in San Cristóbal de las Casas, resulting in a series of proposals regarding indigenous rights and culture; the second in the September in Mexico City during which over 600 delegates signed a ‘unity pact’ demanding ‘never again a Mexico without us!’ (*Mexico Update* No. 94, electronic version).

picture. The Beltran *et al.* study, for example, found that a large majority (66 per cent) felt that indigenous customs are not an obstacle to progress in the regions they inhabit: a view contrasting to that prevalent in the nineteenth-century. And yet, a majority support the paternalistic approach that flowed from nineteenth-century ideal. Indeed, 52 per cent felt that the government should integrate the indigenous into development, even if that affects their customs. More intriguingly, perhaps, this option was preferred to the alternative of letting the indigenous decide for themselves (agreed to by 39 per cent of the respondents).⁵² Though data is lacking over whether and to what degree the Zapatista uprising may be affecting perceptions of self or nation, the fact that the government has refused to cede to these cultural demands out of concern for national autonomy and national unity – leading to an extended breakdown in the negotiations – does suggest the nationalist nature of the dilemma and the importance of this discourse.

Besides the ‘Indian question’, a second historic nationalist discourse in Mexico concerns the USA. While the asymmetries of power, the political/economic/cultural differences and a history of an expansionist USA wielding power at Mexico’s expense are all indisputable, debate has longed raged in Mexico over the degree of threat that the USA poses, and what, if anything, can or should be done about it. Despite the popularity of the motto normally attributed to Porfirio Diaz, ‘Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States’, the debate over how to deal with the USA has been substantial. Some hold the view that US cultural, economic, and/or political influence constitutes a clear threat to the nation’s interests, a view rooted in and reflecting the lack of trust in the USA; yet others embrace a different position, often preferring to emulate the USA for the purpose of progress, rather than to reject its influence.

Three critical questions seem to underlie and inform the broader discourse regarding perceptions of Mexico’s national interest *vis-à-vis* the USA. The first is whether (or to what degree) modernity and progress are associated with foreign – in this case US – influence. Linking the two, on the one hand, leads one not only to question whether Mexico can be modern and still remain Mexican, but provides a basis for questioning, conditioning, or even rejecting any US influence.⁵³ Jorge Bustamante, for example, alludes to the fact that many people have tended to see what he touts as mere ‘middle-class values’ – ideas of individualism, a concern for social mobility, accountability of public officials, democracy – as a sign of the growing political influence of the USA, and thus a threat to national

⁵² Beltrán, et al. *Los Mexicanos de los noventa*, Tables 4.25 and 4.26.

⁵³ M. Tenorio Trillo, ‘Mexico: Modernización y nacionalismo’, *La Semanal* (Supplement to *La Jornada* July 11, 1993, p. 23.

cultural identity.⁵⁴ Indeed, one recent analysis defined modernity, in part, as ‘someter la soberanía nacional a las decisiones del FMI o del Banco Mundial o de Washington’.⁵⁵ On the other hand, rejecting this association, that is considering modernity as something independent of Americanisation – reformulates the issue of social change into universalistic and more acceptable terms. Since cultural, economic and political change is more palatable when it is considered endogenous, global or natural, then distinguishing the two provides the framework for accepting both progress and US influence. This alternative interpretation is thus constitutive of a discourse supportive of non-nationalistic policies and even of policies that emulate the USA.

But even if progress implies US influence, the second underlying question behind this debate centres on Mexico’s relative vulnerability to the USA. Generally, the greater the perceived vulnerability, the more likely the opposition to US influence. Hence, some authors – usually noting the asymmetries and the weight of US influence – see Mexico as highly vulnerable to the USA, and thus stress the need to guard against and counter this influence. Others, however, tout Mexican national identity as inherently strong (far stronger than US identity) and thus not endangered by greater US influence. Lajous Vargas takes this position, for example, when she calls it ‘absurd’ to be afraid of the Americanisation of Mexico because ‘Mexicans know...that we have the cultural resources required to assimilate external influences and to create...something new’.⁵⁶ Like many of the current political elite, she goes so far as to turn the nationalist argument on its head by linking the maintenance (as opposed to the loss or erosion) of Mexican identity to actually ‘encouraging competitiveness in a world built upon global exchange’ (in other words, greater US economic influence).⁵⁷ Jorge Castañeda makes a similar point by suggesting that today the urban, literate Mexicans ‘do not see their nationalism endangered by the food they eat, the clothes they wear, or where they keep their money’.⁵⁸ In other words, according to Castañeda, Mexicans are able to carefully differentiate and cast certain forms of US influences as nonthreatening to national identity.

There is little direct empirical evidence regarding the degree to which

⁵⁴ J. Bustamante, ‘The Mexico–U.S. Border: A Line of Paradox’, in R. L. Earle and J. D. Wirth (eds.), *Identities in North America: The Search for Community* (Palo Alto, 1995), pp. 180–194.

⁵⁵ G. Michel, ‘La Moda de Ser Moderno: Hacia una Fenomenología del Mito’, paper prepared for delivery at the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., September 18–30, 1995, p. 8.

⁵⁶ A. Lajous Vargas, ‘Mexico: Culture and Identity in the Information Age’, in *Identities in North America*, pp. 107–8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵⁸ Pastor and Castañeda, p. 57.

the population considers modernity or progress to be synonymous with US influence or Americanisation. Yet, evidence does suggest that many do see Mexico as vulnerable, and consequently adopt a cautious position. In the *New York Times* poll in 1986, for example, 69 per cent felt that US interests actually ran the Mexican economy as opposed to Mexican interests. After acknowledging a dramatic increase in the influence of the US over Mexico during the past few years, 67 per cent of respondents in the 1995 regional survey in the state of Jalisco classified the growing influence as negative.⁵⁹ The 1995 national MORI poll similarly found that 65 per cent of respondents felt that increasing integration meant a loss of culture, while 55 per cent expressed concern about the nation's loss of control over its petroleum.⁶⁰ As part of this tendency, 97 per cent of respondents in the Jalisco poll believed the government had the responsibility to protect national culture.⁶¹

Such data point to the final underlying dimension to the 'USA question': the issue of trade-offs or one's willingness to accept US influence/threat (and hence a reduction in national sovereignty) in exchange for something. Usually the something gained is economic growth and/or modernity. It is at this level that many people opt to emulate and embrace US influence for the purpose of achieving modernity, even though they recognise the negative impact such influence might have on the nation or the culture. According to Brading, this style of thinking characterised the nineteenth-century liberals, for whom 'progress was synonymous with imitation.'⁶² a view perhaps handed down to their twentieth-century counterparts, who have opted to pursue economic integration with the USA over other policy options. Indeed, Castañeda seems to suggest a type of 'modernizing test' for nationalistic policies: that such policies will be supported only when they are consistent with modernizing the country.⁶³

Fundamentally, the idea of trade-offs suggests a hierarchal structuring of political, economic and cultural interests: a scheme that would generally privilege political nationalism over other policy arenas – people are far more likely to entertain the idea of foreigners controlling businesses or cultural industries than controlling the government – and economic objectives (growth) over cultural objectives (purity of language). Data offer some indication of such hierarchies. The two (1992 and 1995) MORI polls, for example, showed a majority of the population

⁵⁹ Morris and Passe-Smith, 'Hegemonía cultural y valores en Jalisco'.

⁶⁰ This comes from an analysis of data from 1992 and 1995 polls conducted by and provided to me by MORI de México.

⁶¹ Morris and Passe-Smith, 'Hegemonía cultural y valores en Jalisco'.

⁶² Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*, p. 106.

⁶³ Pastor and Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship*, p. 15.

supporting closer economic integration with the USA, even though they acknowledged that such integration threatens cultural identity and the nation's control over petroleum. The Inglehart data similarly found a majority of respondents expressing the view that greater integration with the USA would have a positive effect on economic well-being, but negative consequences in terms of loss of culture and identity. Their data also showed a majority of respondents actually supporting political union with the USA (elimination of the borders) if it meant a higher standard of living.⁶⁴ To be sure, the desire to trade something for economic benefits has its limits. In the Jalisco survey, for example, though 40 per cent of respondents agreed that PEMEX would operate more efficiently if run by a US company, only five per cent recommended that the enterprise be sold to foreigners.⁶⁵

Just as the Zapatista uprising has challenged traditional views regarding the Indian and national unity, so too has the growing economic integration and NAFTA challenged Mexico's traditional views of the USA. Not only are such non-nationalistic and strikingly pro-American policies viewed as promoting prosperity, despite bringing increased US influence, but more importantly they have prompted the ruling elite to alter its traditional discourse regarding the USA. This has led to a de-linking of the anti-American strand of national identity and the state. For many, of course the issue is one of trade-offs that are made ever more urgent by the dire economic situation of the period. Aspects of this challenge will be explored more fully in subsequent sections on policy and change.

Beyond the Indian and the American questions, the third national interest discourse dotting Mexican history centres on the role of the state. Traditionally, the ruling elite has touted a strong, centralised and unified state as critical for the well-being of the nation. This view has supported a wide range of state policies, programmes and even wars, serving as the ideological *leitmotif* for both the Diaz dictatorship and the one-party, authoritarian regime that succeeded it. This issue relates directly to the perception of threat arising from internal (Indian) and external (USA) influences: the earlier national interest questions. In other words, the perceived need for a strong, unified state, the promotion of the 'myth of national unity,' has reflected the assumption that the USA would take advantage of Mexico if weakened by disunity – the historic lesson drawn by Justo Sierra – and the perceived need to convert the indigenous and incorporate them into a 'national' model of development.

⁶⁴ See Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*. In fact, support for political union increased as the beneficial trade-offs grew.

⁶⁵ Morris and Passe-Smith, 'Hegemonía cultural y valores en Jalisco'.

Yet despite this historic position, many have been critical of this view, and the inherent trade-offs it entails. In what Rafael Segovia refers to as the ‘nation versus state debate’, for example, many stressed the need for democracy and liberty in opposition to President Elias Calles’ efforts to impose cultural, political and economic unity.⁶⁶ Octavio Paz’s criticism decades later of the bureaucratic state – the ‘philanthropic ogre’ – similarly reflects a rejection of unity at the cost of liberty and democracy.⁶⁷ Today, this debate echoes even louder. Although many still view the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), strong presidentialism, and a centralised state as guardians and embodiments of the nation, others attack these same institutions as threats to the same nation. One brand of this argument emphasises the strengthening of civil society and the free market as moves conducive to the national interest – moves that also open the nation to greater US penetration – rejecting the historic role of a centralised state. Carlos Fuentes goes even further, perhaps by touting the PRI itself as the supreme threat to the nation: ‘an obstacle not only to democracy but also to the State, and because it is national, to the nation itself’.⁶⁸

Nationalist politics. These debates over national identity and national interests provide the backdrop for a brief look at the nationalistic policies of the Mexican state. An extensive exploration is well beyond the scope of this article. Like the debate over national interest – and paralleling it – history reveals a mix of nationalist and non-nationalist policies marked by both change and continuity.

Focusing first on policies of political nationalism, historically the government has sought to strengthen central political control and weaken competing centres of loyalty: a policy of ‘imposed national unity.’ To this end, throughout the nineteenth-century it fought wars against Indians (too many to note),⁶⁹ against regional interests (Texas, Yucatan), and against rival political factions (conservatives); under liberal regimes it struggled to eliminate or at least eclipse the cultural, economic, and political bases of the Church and the indigenous communities; and following the anarchy of the Revolution, it sought to recast the state as the supreme arbiter and sole embodiment of the national interest.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁶ R. Segovia, ‘El nacionalismo mexicano: Los programas políticos revolucionarios, 1929–1964’, in *Lecturas de Política Mexicana* (Mexico, 1977), p. 46.

⁶⁷ O. Paz, *El ogro filantrópico: historia y política 1971–1978* (Barcelona, 1979).

⁶⁸ C. Fuentes, ‘The Decay of Nations’, *New Perspectives Quarterly* Fall (1991), p. 12.

⁶⁹ According to Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism*, p. 77, Indian revolts were quite common and ‘occurred almost every year between 1821 and 1910.’

⁷⁰ Segovia, ‘El nacionalismo mexicano’, p. 48. See also A. Knight, ‘Popular Culture and The Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910–1940’, *Hispanic American Historical Review* no. 74, no. 3 (1994), pp. 393–444.

creation of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR) by Calles in the late twenties, the incorporation of mass corporate organisations under Cardenas in the thirties, and the electoral/political reforms solidifying the one-party PRI system in the fifties, as well as fraud and repression throughout the period, all helped achieve these centralising objectives.⁷¹

Externally, as well, the nation's leaders have long stressed difference, threat, and distance from the USA, while politically avoiding direct confrontation and intervention. Generally, Mexican governments have pursued a policy shaped by the desire to 'stop, or at least control, the United States' misdeeds against Mexico without endangering stability or prosperity,' including an emphasis on the need for respect and the determination never to visibly cave in to US demands.⁷² Yet the style and details of the policy have varied. For instance the post-revolutionary leaders deployed a strongly anti-imperialist and anti-American rhetoric, and a foreign policy that resisted US influence.⁷³ Yet, from the 1940s to the early 1970s, governments eased-up on the anti-US rhetoric and accepted certain US programmes, though according to Loaeza, they continued a policy of essentially ignoring the USA, either by exaggerating cultural differences, or by dealing with the USA through third parties or multilateral organisations. However, by the 1970s, under Echeverría, policy toward the USA once again grew more assertive and nationalistic.⁷⁴

In conjunction with these policies, the state has used its control over education to help shape the discourse supporting them. Centralising and secularising education allowed the government to weaken control of the Church, and to instill its worldview and version of history. Analyses of Mexican school text books, for example, reveal not only an anti-clerical position, but also present stereotypical differences between the Anglo and the Latin, and stress the dangers of US intervention, and the need for national unity. According to Castañeda, 'the true message of the authors of the school texts is that Mexico is – easily subject to American domination, when it is divided'.⁷⁵

⁷¹ For reviews on the use of political and electoral reforms to centralise and consolidate political power see J. Molinar Horcasitas, *El tiempo de la legitimidad: Elecciones, autoritarismo y democracia en México* (Mexico, 1991); and S. Morris, *Political Reformism in Mexico: An Overview of Contemporary Mexican Politics* (Boulder, 1995).

⁷² Pastor and Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship*, p. 123.

⁷³ García Castro, 'Identidad nacional y nacionalismo en México', p. 37.

⁷⁴ Loaeza, 'The Changing Face of Mexican Nationalism', p. 155; Solís, 'La política económica y el nacionalismo mexicano', p. 61; and Turner, *The Dynamics of Mexican Nationalism*, p. 249. For a general review of Mexican foreign policy and US–Mexican relations see M. Seara Vazquez, *Política exterior de México*, second edition (Mexico, 1984); and M. E. Schumacher (ed.), *Mitos en las relaciones México-Estados Unidos* (Mexico, 1994).

⁷⁵ S. Corona Berkin, 'EUA Para Niños: La imagen de EUA en los libros de texto de las primarias Mexicanas de este siglo', paper presented at the XIX Congress of the Latin

Policies of economic nationalism have also varied, indeed more so than the policies of political nationalism, and have exhibited a certain cyclical tendency. At the time of national independence Mexican leaders saw trade with the USA as a danger to national autonomy and thus erected stiff trade barriers.⁷⁶ A few decades later, however, the liberals embraced trade and economic cooperation with the USA in the name of progress. This policy reached its fruition during the *Porfiriato* when the ruling elite, downplaying the dangers of influence by foreigners and harping on its positive impact, allowed the nation's economic resources and industry to concentrate in the hands of foreign interests. Reversing course again, the post-revolutionary elite pursued a much more nationalistic programme designed to protect the nation against foreign economic interests, while promoting the interests of workers and peasants. Among other outcomes, the series of laws and regulations dotting the period limited foreign ownership and investments, favouring the hiring of nationals over foreigners, placing key industries under state or national control, and privileging certain national businesses over foreign-owned businesses. Such policies of import-substitution peaked in the seventies under Presidents Echeverría and López Portillo, accompanied by a spectacular growth in the size and power of the state.

Culturally, history also shows a variety of phases and shifts in policy directions. In the nineteenth-century, together with the Catholic church the state pursued a policy of promoting (imposing) Spanish, and weakening the indigenous culture. In subsequent years, the liberals sought to weaken the Church's role in society, while spreading a secular-based identity rooted in both a reverence for the indigenous past and a more cosmopolitan, liberal future, though this eased during the *Porfiriato*.⁷⁷ Following the Revolution, the new elite reinvigorated the state's effort to (re)define the nation's identity, pursuing what Calles touted as a 'psychological revolution'.⁷⁸ This struggle enshrined the interests of the worker, the peasant, and the middle sectors – in the

American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., September 28–30, 1995, p. 7; and R. A. Pastor and J. G. Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship: The United States and Mexico* (New York, 1989), p. 28.

⁷⁶ R. J. Salvucci, 'Texas, Tyrants, and Trade with Mexico', reprinted in *Latin America and the World Economy: Dependency and Beyond* (Lexington, 1996), pp. 60–68.

⁷⁷ See Brading, *Los orígenes del nacionalismo mexicano*; Loaeza, 'The Changing Face of Mexican Nationalism'; Solís, 'La política económica'; and Turner, *The Dynamics of Mexican Nationalism*.

⁷⁸ Cited in A. A. Bantjes, 'Burning Saints, Molding Minds: Iconoclasm, Civic Ritual, and the Failed Cultural Revolution', in W. Beezley, C. E. Martin and W. E. French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, 1994), p. 265.

establishing convention of the PNR Perez Treviño called these ‘the great exploited masses’ – to the exclusion of the upper classes (landowners and business), the Church, the Indian and some intellectuals.⁷⁹ It also refashioned and redeployed the policies designed to curb the influence of the Church, and enshrined *mestizaje*, through education and the support of muralists, as the racial ideal while glorifying the nation’s Indian roots, and it used the power of the state culturally to ‘convert Indians into Mexicans’. As Julie Erfani points out, ‘the Cardenas government ensured that a single nation triumphed culturally over the ‘mosaic of regions and communities’.⁸⁰ Yet after World War II, the government embraced a programme of ‘unidad nacional’, downplaying class conflict and opposition to the USA.⁸¹ Concurrently, the government loosened its grip on education, allowed the establishment of schools ‘oriented to teaching a foreign language and culture,’ and eased its tight grip on the Church.⁸² Still, the government continued to support a vast array of cultural activities, including policies in defence of the Spanish language, state regulations that limited the influence of foreign cultural industries, state subsidies for the arts, and even programmes targeted at Mexicans in the USA, to help reaffirm their sense of Mexican identity.⁸³

Since the mid-eighties, however, most of these nationalist policies have undergone considerable readjustment, challenging the ideas that once sustained them. Politically, divisions within the government, heightened partisan competition, and recent moves to reduce the size and scope of the state, particularly the state’s control over education, have all undermined the policy of ‘imposed unity’. Depending on the outcome of the negotiations with the EZLN, the government may cede even more control to organisations competing for the people’s loyalty. At the same time, of course, recent governments have dramatically reversed policy toward the USA, embracing its northern neighbour as an important ally. In striking historical contrast, the country now accepts an array of US programmes of assistance, allows foreign election observers, and through NAFTA, has actually given both the USA and Canada the authority to at least evaluate whether Mexico abides by its own domestic laws. This policy has its limits, to be sure, as evidenced by the Mexican governments

⁷⁹ Segovia, ‘El nacionalismo mexicano’.

⁸⁰ J. Erfani, *The Paradox of the Mexican State: Rereading Sovereignty from Independence to NAFTA* (Boulder, 1995), p. 43.

⁸¹ Segovia, ‘El nacionalismo mexicano’, p. 48. In a separate paper, the author contends that with the disappearance of the USA as the external enemy, global communism assumed the role. See R. Segovia, ‘Nacionalismo e Imagen del Mundo Exterior en los Niños Mexicanos’, *Foro Internacional* vol. XIII, no. 2 (1972), p. 275.

⁸² Epstein and Riordan, ‘Bicultural Preparation and National Identity’, p. 243.

⁸³ For an overview of the government’s cultural policy see R. Tovar y de Teresa, *Modernización y política cultural: Una visión de la Modernización de México* (Mexico, 1994).

harsh criticism of US policy toward Cuba throughout 1996 and 1997, particularly the Helms-Burton law.

On the economic side, the changes have been even more striking, though consistent with the historic swings. In contrast to the nationalistic policies of Echeverría and López Portillo, the succeeding governments of De la Madrid, Salinas and Zedillo reduced or eliminated tariffs, dropped most industrial policies, lifted restrictions on foreign investments and technology transfers, and ended preferential treatment of national businesses and the domestic market. Entrance into GATT (currently the WTO) in 1986 and NAFTA in 1994 further enshrined and committed the nation to these non-nationalistic economic policies. Such moves are reminiscent of the liberal policies dotting Mexican history, particularly the *Porfiriato* and the period of ‘unidad nacional’ of the fifties, and as such, seem to conform to the historic cycle.

Finally, in the cultural realm, recent governments have embraced policies that dilute the state’s ability to define and shape national identity, pushing back programmes and regulations relating to control of language, education, the media, and consumption patterns. Salinas, for example, removed quotas on the importation of books in Spanish that dated back to the seventies; he removed the stipulation under the *Ley de la Industria Cinematográfica* that required theatres to devote 50 per cent of screen time to Mexican movies; he altered the *Ley de Fomento para la Protección de la Propiedad Intelectual* to pave the way for the proliferation of US franchises; and, as mentioned, he passed reforms that broadened the role of the Church, the private sector, and even foreigners in education.⁸⁴ Moreover, restrictions on foreign participation in radio and television were eased, despite the maintenance of restrictions on foreign ownership. At the same time, government programmes supporting culture have been slashed or restructured, despite the fact that these pale in comparison to the impact of a now unleashed commercial and internationalised media.

To be sure, such policy somersaults have triggered intense nationalistic debate – the national interest discourse – with many accusing the government and the PRI of abandoning the nation’s interests. For instance, José A. Ortiz Pinchetti accused recent governments of submission before the USA, averring that the only way to regain credibility would be to ‘retake the nationalist banner and the defence of national sovereignty.’⁸⁵ Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leader of the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática*

⁸⁴ See Tovar y de Teresa, *Modernización y política cultural*; M. de María y Campos, ‘Las industrias culturales y de entretenimiento en el marco de las negociaciones del tratado de libre comercio’, in Guevara and García (eds.), *La educación y la cultura ante el Tratado de Libre Comercio* (Mexico, 1992); and L. González Sousa, *Soberanía Herida: México-Estados Unidos en la hora de la globalización*, volume 2 (Mexico, 1994).

⁸⁵ Quoted in *La Jornada* 2 June 1996, p. 7.

Table 1. *Analytical framework of nationalism: the case of Mexico*

National identity (sentiments-attachments)	National interests (ideas, ideologies, discourses)	Nationalist politics (actions, state policies)
Intensity – strong-weak /Components (1) Internal (a) Ethnic/cultural <i>Mexico: Mestizaje,</i> glorification of Indian heritage, reverence for Virgin of Guadalupe (b) Civic/political <i>Mexico: Goals of</i> Revolution, democracy, social justice (2) External – common view of others; view of self as reflected in others, etc. <i>Mexico: Contrast with</i> North American, trust in the USA	/Who constitutes the nation? <i>Mexico: Indian question</i> /Degree of external threat to be countered and how? <i>Mexico: is US influence a</i> threat and how can it be countered? (a) Association of modernity/progress and US influence? (b) Mexico’s perceived vulnerability to US influence – high or low? (c) Trade-offs – influence in exchange for what? /Role of the state? <i>Mexico: centralisation,</i> ‘imposed unity’ to counter internal and external threats	/Nationalist versus non- nationalist (1) Political nationalism – centralisation- decentralisation, imposed unity, emphasis on sovereignty <i>vis-à-vis</i> other countries <i>Mexico: Continuous history</i> of centralisation and domestically imposed unity and distancing from the USA (2) Economics favouring national businesses and the domestic market; restricting foreign economic interests <i>Mexico: Cyclical pattern –</i> currently non-nationalist programmes under NAFTA (3) Cultural – defining national identity, nurturing love of national culture, restricting alternative influences from within or without <i>Mexico: Continuous history</i> of imposed cultural unity

(PRD), two-time presidential candidate and current Governor of the Federal District, characterised Zedillo’s privatisation scheme as nothing less than treasonous, claiming that the government ‘has subordinated Mexico to the hegemonic project of the US... [and that] the country is being turned over to the US, just as it was in its time during the US invasion’.⁸⁶ Even the usually pro-US *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN) referred to the ‘the risk of losing values of *mexicanidad*’ inherent within the government’s policies in their 1994 presidential platform.⁸⁷

Table 1 summarises the discussion thus far. It presents the three areas

⁸⁶ See the interview with Cárdenas in *Proceso* 1042 (20 de octubre de 1996).

⁸⁷ See *Proceso* 915 (16 de mayo de 1994), pp. 60–62.

of nationalism set out in the initial section, and summarises the Mexican debates and historical tendencies. At the same time, it highlights many of the changes and challenges of the current period, and sets the stage for a discussion of the theoretical issues.

Theoretical Issues

Interrelationships among sentiments, ideas and actions. The initial discussion highlighted a trio of theoretical queries: the interrelationship among the three dimensions of nationalism, the social determinants, and change. Looking first at the issue of linkages among the three levels of nationalism, some general hypotheses can be offered. First, it seems likely that certain components of national identity would be tied to certain aspects of national interest. An individual harbouring a weak attachment to the nation, for instance, would probably be less prone to perceive threats to national interests, and hence less likely to support nationalistic policies, than someone with a stronger sense of national identity. Similarly, someone whose identity is more strongly rooted in cultural/ethnic foundations (e.g. *mestizaje*) would probably be more likely to perceive multiculturalism (from Indians or the US culture) as a threat to the nation and, in turn, to support policies that turn Indians into ‘moral’ *mestizos*, or that counter the cultural influence of the USA, while someone whose identity is rooted more in civic/political considerations would be more concerned about political or economic sovereignty than issues of culture. Likewise, individuals who emphasise differences between North Americans and Mexicans and/or who strongly distrust the USA would be more likely to support nationalistic policies than those exhibiting a sense of trust or admiration towards their northern neighbour.

Empirical research lends some support to these hypotheses, though data on these questions are largely absent. For instance, analysis by Inglehart *et al.* show that people with less confidence in the government and non-governmental institutions tend to exhibit weaker feelings of national pride. It also shows that individuals with lower levels of pride in the nation and those harbouring higher levels of trust in the USA are more supportive of policies of economic integration.⁸⁸ In fact, the Inglehart *et al.* data shows trust in the USA to be a good predictor of the desire for closer economic ties with the USA, a positive evaluation of NAFTA, and a willingness to entertain closer political ties. Unsurprisingly, in short, those who distrust the USA are least likely to support either economic or political integration.⁸⁹ This finding is strongly echoed by Davis’ analysis

⁸⁸ Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*, pp. 92 and 94.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

of polling data from the early 1990s, showing general attitudes toward the USA and trust in US–Mexican relations to have a stronger effect on attitudes toward NAFTA than perception of economic utility, party identification or region.⁹⁰

Yet while certain components of identity and interests seem to fit together, it is also clear that certain components of national identity and perceptions of national interest generally thought to go together may only be loosely related. Despite the historic discourse, for example, little evidence supports a sharp pro-Mexican/anti-American dichotomy. Though trust in the USA does seem to be an important determinant of policy preferences, evidence also suggests that admiration of the USA, the use of English words in daily life, or imitating the consumption patterns of the USA does not make a person any more or less Mexican, or say anything about the nature of their national identity. As noted, it is clear that many, as a trade-off, support non-nationalistic policies despite a strong sense of nationalism or distrust toward the USA, just as many may imitate US consumption patterns despite remaining suspicious or distrustful of their northern neighbour. This echoes Castañeda's statement that 'Even the modern Mexican middle classes continue to harbour deep feelings of resentment and even anger at the United States. [and that] Their penchant for American lifestyles and products should not be mistaken for an ebbing of traditional suspicion and hostility toward the United States.'⁹¹ This suggests not only a much more nuanced view of the linkage between national identity and national interests, but also perhaps a fourfold classification including not only the strong pro-Mexican/anti-American and weak Mexican/pro-American positions, but also a weak Mexican/anti-American, and strong Mexican/pro-American constructs.⁹²

Another often noted theoretical linkage centres on the relationship between the nationalist policies of the government, on the one hand, and certain perceptions of the national interest and components of national identity, on the other. From a clearly instrumentalist perspective, many analysts have emphasised the role of the state in shaping and manipulating Mexican national identity and the prevailing discourse on national interest.⁹³ What Carlos Monsiváis refers to as the 'control estatal del

⁹⁰ Charles L. Davis, 'Mass Support for Regional Economic Integration: The Case of NAFTA and the Mexican Public,' *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 14(1), 1998: 105–130.

⁹¹ Pastor and Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship*, p. 16.

⁹² The idea of a four-fold classification was suggested by John Passe-Smith. For an exploration of this see Morris and Passe-Smith, 'Hegemonía cultural y valores en Jalisco'.

⁹³ See, for instance, Beezley, *et al.*, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*; R. Bartra, 'Culture and Political Power in Mexico', *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1989), pp. 61–69; García Castro, 'Identidad nacional y nacionalismo en México'; Monsiváis, 'Muerte y resurrección del nacionalismo mexicano'.

significado de ser mexicano' has long been used, according to Roger Bartra and others, to legitimise the state and stifle or delegitimise domestic dissent.⁹⁴ Yet despite the historical efforts of the state to invent tradition, others have shown that the state has never been as successful as originally thought. Knight, for instance, gauged the government's efforts at inculcating anti-clerical and class-conflict views among the public as weak and relatively short-lived.⁹⁵ Such limits to state power leave one to ponder either the permanency of national identity or, at a minimum, the difficulties of manipulating it.

This issue is of particular importance today, given the delinkage between the historic nationalistic rhetoric and the positions adopted by recent administrations. If one simply accepts the view that in the past the state and the ruling elite were responsible for imposing nationalist and/or anti-American ideas, then not only should a change of policy not provoke significant conflict – since the state could simply 'unimpose' or 're-educate' the public –, but continuing nationalistic and anti-American sentiments can be downplayed as anachronistic.

But it is possible to go further and consider causation from the other side of the fence. In this case national identity and popular perceptions of national interests in Mexico may influence state policy, shaping change in policy, placing limits on policy, or igniting conflict when the gaps become too wide. But because analysts have yet to explore the impact of public opinion on policy in an authoritarian regime, it is difficult to evaluate this causal equation. Still, this position reflects an argument in Inglehart, *et al.* that attributes the changing policies toward the USA to a change in values in Mexico, particularly the spread of post-materialist values and the convergence of these values with the USA.⁹⁶ This explanation seems particularly apt with respect to the new political elite. In an analysis of his third presidential *Informe*, for instance, Salinas explained/justified his 'new' policy toward the USA as due to the fact that the USA now shows an 'attitude of respect', and Mexico exhibits a 'new disposition, free of myths and prejudices'.⁹⁷ In other words, changes in policy are a consequence of changing national values and perceptions.

In the end, though the three aspects of nationalism seem to play off on one another and perhaps change in tandem, it is difficult at this point to

⁹⁴ Monsiváis, 'Muerte y resurrección del nacionalismo mexicano', p. 13; Bartra, 'Culture and Political Power'; and Pastor and Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship*, p. 36.

⁹⁵ Knight, 'Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico'.

⁹⁶ Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*.

⁹⁷ S. Morris, 'Reforming the Revolution: Changing the Message to Save the Messenger?', paper presented at the annual conference of the Southeastern Council on Latin American Studies (SECOLAS), Antigua, Guatemala, February 17–21, 1993.

assess the directionality or intensity of the relationship. Though evidence shows that trust in the USA correlates with support for policies of integration with the USA, such a position can be consistent with a strong sense of national identity and a recognition that such integration threatens the nation's cultural integrity. And although current policies may downplay the traditional strains of nationalism, it is difficult to show that such nationalistic views or anti-American positions are fading or a thing of the past. What is perhaps clear is that the linkages are far more complicated and nuanced than they seem at first glance.

The Social Bases of Nationalism. The second theoretical area deals with the social determinants of national identity and national interest. Three areas warrant review: the impact of class, of region, and of contact with the USA.

Looking first at class, despite a traditional view in the literature associating Latin American nationalism and anti-American sentiment with the elite and intellectuals but not necessarily to the masses, numerous studies offer some support to the more conventional modernisation thesis showing upper income groups to be a less nationalistic and more pro-American than lower income groups.⁹⁸ Bustamante's 1982 survey of major cities in the interior and border regions, for instance, showed that the higher the standard of living, the lower the degree of Mexicanness.⁹⁹ Similarly, data from Inglehart, *et al.*, the two MORI polls (1992 and 1995) and Beltrán *et al.* revealed a strong positive relationship between income level and support for closer ties to the USA and/or NAFTA. Upper income groups, moreover, were less likely to admit a preference for purchasing national products and proved more than twice as likely than lower income respondents to support the idea of allowing a Mexican with foreign parents to become president.¹⁰⁰

Yet other studies suggest a much more complicated picture regarding the impact of socio-economic position on national identity, and on perceptions of national interest as measured by policy preferences. In contrast to the pattern noted above, Zavala found the less educated from the lower middle classes, rather than the upper classes, to exhibit the lowest levels of pride in being Mexican. Indeed, he found a slight tendency for higher income and educated respondents to be more likely to disagree with the non-nationalist statement that 'we should ensure

⁹⁸ For a review of the more traditional views linking nationalism with the elite, see Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad*, p. 356.

⁹⁹ J. A. Bustamante, *Identidad Nacional en la Frontera Norte de México: Hallazgos Preliminares* (Tijuana, 1983).

¹⁰⁰ Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*; Beltrán, *et al.*, *Los mexicanos de los noventas*.

economic development even at the cost of losing part of our identity and sovereignty'.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in response to the choice of incorporating the indigenous into national development, even if it means a loss of customs or letting the indigenous decide, the Beltrán *et al.* study showed upper income respondents more likely to select the imposed integration position.¹⁰² At the same time, a variety of studies have uncovered no significant linkage between class and patterns of identity or perceptions of national interest. The MORI surveys in 1992 and 1995, for example, showed class to have no significant impact on an individual's evaluation of the level of threat posed by economic integration to Mexico's culture or to its control over petroleum. In short, though the upper and middle income groups may be more likely to support integration – because they see themselves as reaping the most benefits – they showed no greater inclination to see such integration as less threatening and, in fact, may even consider the cost higher than other income groups.¹⁰³ Likewise, Davis failed to uncover any correlation between general attitudes toward the USA or trust in US–Mexican relations, on the one hand, and the socio-economic status or occupation of individuals, on the other.¹⁰⁴

With regard to region, some evidence does tie nationalist ideas or perceptions of interest to region, but not necessarily in the manner expected. Bustamante, for example, found border residents, though more likely to use English in their daily conversations – and although more likely to listen to 'Mexican' music than non-border residents¹⁰⁵ – to exhibit a stronger sense of national identity and pride than non-border residents.¹⁰⁶ The MORI 1992 survey also uncovered limited and unexpected regional differences regarding support for NAFTA, with the greatest level of support for the trade agreement registered by respondents in the central region, and with support from the northern and southern regions differing only negligibly. The fact that 27 per cent of both the southern and northern respondents registered opposition to NAFTA and

¹⁰¹ Zavala, 'Valores políticos'. ¹⁰² Beltrán, *et al.*, *Los mexicanos de los noventas*.

¹⁰³ Another way of looking at this is based on class-based interests rather than on perceptions of national interest. The MORI data show general agreement that NAFTA will benefit the rich more than the poor. Hence the opposition registered by lower income groups to such policies as NAFTA could be seen as stemming more from the perception that the agreement does not benefit them, while the rich support the agreement because they see it as benefiting them. In other words, opposition/support stems from its economic, class-based impact as opposed to issues of nationalism versus universalism.

¹⁰⁴ Davis, 'Mass Support for Regional Economic Integration.'

¹⁰⁵ J. M. Valenzuela Arce, 'En la Frontera Norte de México: Tratado de Libre Comercio e Identidad Cultural', in G. Guevara Niebla and N. García Canclini (eds.), *La educación y la cultura ante el Tratado de Libre Comercio* (Mexico, 1992), pp. 327 and 329.

¹⁰⁶ Bustamante, 'The Mexico-U.S. Border'.

69 per cent and 70.5 per cent respectively favoured it, surely raises questions about the impact of region on perceptions of the national interest as measured by policy preferences.

Closely related to the issue of region and even class is the impact of contact with the USA on views of 'self' (nation) and 'other' (USA). As suggested by Jorge Castañeda, it seems reasonable to expect that individuals tied more closely to the USA – like the families of migrant workers in the USA, workers and professionals in the export or tourist sectors – will harbour a different view of their northern neighbour, and will support a distinctive set of policies as compared to those with limited or no ties to the US economy.¹⁰⁷ But despite Monsiváis' indictment of the US-educated elite as being 'cada día menos mexicanos', empirical evidence and direction of the relationship is not clear.¹⁰⁸ While Epstein and Riordan showed contact with the USA to weaken an individual's level of expressed ethnocentrism, Bustamante attributed the stronger sense of national pride and identity among border residents to the greater and more constant contact with the USA.¹⁰⁹ And while it could be argued that middle and upper income groups have greater contact with the USA through travel, business, etc. – and hence the evidence pointing to a positive relationship between socio-economic position and a less intense sense of nationalism would be relevant – Castañeda contends that the distinction between those tied to the USA and those not tied to the USA crosses class lines. This question is important given the large numbers of Mexicans currently living in the USA, whose experience alters their perception of self, nation and other, and who in turn influence the views of their compatriots.

Finally, with regard to age, the empirical record again offers mixed results. On the one hand, the Alduncín study shows younger respondents to be more likely than older respondents to want Mexico to be like the USA.¹¹⁰ And yet, on the other hand, the MORI polls gauging support for NAFTA failed to uncover any significant linkage with age. Of three age cohorts (below 30, 30–49 and over 50), the youngest respondents in both 1992 and 1995 were actually *more* likely to oppose NAFTA than the 30–49 age group.

¹⁰⁷ This thesis is discussed in E. Semo, 'Los vinculados, o por que sigue ganando el PRI', *Proceso* no. 1045 (10 de noviembre) (electronic version).

¹⁰⁸ Monsiváis, 'Muerte y resurrección del nacionalismo mexicano', p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Epstein and Riordan, 'Bicultural Preparation and National Identity'. The study comparing border and non-border residents is discussed in Bustamante, 'The Mexico-U.S. Border'.

¹¹⁰ Results are cited in Gutiérrez and Gutiérrez, 'En torno a la redefinición del nacionalismo mexicano'.

The dynamics of nationalism. The final theoretical issue centres on the question of change. As the previous discussion makes clear, despite the historical roots of Mexican nationalism, identity, interests and policies have all undergone change over the years. This is perhaps most clearly visible with regards to policy, since public opinion data has just recently begun to confirm changes among the populace in terms of identity and national interest. Still, the limited available data also support the conclusion that views and perceptions do change. Just from 1981 to 1990, despite the short period of time involved, the World Values Survey detected a significant shift of over ten percentage points in the number of respondents expressing pride in being Mexican.¹¹¹ Data from the MORI polls similarly reveal a dramatic drop of 10 and 17 percentage points among the two groups supporting NAFTA, a fall of 16 percentage points among those evaluating the nation's relationship with the USA as adequate, and a corresponding increase of 34 percentage points (a doubling) of those seeing NAFTA as a threat to Mexican culture: all changes in just a three year period. While it is important not to confuse short-term shifts in preference with nationalism *per se*, these views are nonetheless a fundamental part of the discourse regarding the nation and its interests, and in some ways a reflection of underlying nationalist sentiments.

Whether focusing on long-term or short-term shifts in the nature of national identity, perceptions of national interest, or nationalistic policies, the central theoretical issue centres on the factors shaping such changes. Generally, the literature on Mexico identifies three factors shaping change in nationalism. The first, alluded to earlier, involves the impact of changes in one area on the other areas. As noted earlier, just as many attribute the strengthening of a nationalist identity to past government policy, many see recent policy changes as setting the stage for altering popular sentiments and attitudes regarding the nation. Hellman, for instance, contends that popular support for NAFTA in Mexico reflected the ability of the governing elite to not only make its case to the public, but to dominate the debate.¹¹² In this context, recent policy changes portend perhaps a growing acceptance of multiculturalism, perhaps a growing familiarity with the USA as the contacts grow and spread, and/or perhaps even a nationalistic backlash if the gaps between identity, interests and state policy become unmanageable. From a more primordialist angle, however, one could also argue that recent changes in nationalist attitudes in Mexico alter nationalist policies. Again, as noted earlier, this seems to

¹¹¹ Cited in Gutiérrez and Gutiérrez, 'En torno a la redefinición del nacionalismo mexicano'. ¹¹² Hellman, 'Mexican Perceptions of Free Trade', p. 195.

be the underlying position embraced by Inglehart *et al.* study: that a change in popular values and the convergence with US and Canadian patterns makes the people more receptive to a change in public policy involving the USA.¹¹³

To an extent, though, attributing changes in national identity to state policies or *vice versa* merely begs the question of change: what then alters identity or policies? A second factor shaping the shifts and turns of Mexican nationalism, and prominent in the literature and the debate, is modernisation. According to this interpretation, the spread of modern ideas, the diffusion of global culture, the changes in technology and the expanse of the global market all tend to separate culture from territory, making culture and identity a matter of individual choice, and enhancing not only fragmentation, but also tolerance and pluralism.¹¹⁴ In short, as noted in the opening passage, globalisation erodes the power and purpose of the nation-state.¹¹⁵ Within this framework, supporters of NAFTA, like the liberals of the nineteenth-century, equate integration and free trade with the natural flow or sweep of history, as inevitable as it is desirable. This modernisation view, of course, parallels and supports data linking class to declining levels of nationalism, and support for non-nationalistic policies since, as Soledad Loaeza contends, modernisation's impact on identity occurs first among those of the upper and middle classes.¹¹⁶

But despite the popularity (ideological appeal) of this view, others emphasise that modernisation has not eliminated nationalism, only altered it, forcing it to seek different types of expression.¹¹⁷ According to Castañeda, Mexicans are not less nationalistic today than in the past, but that their nationalism 'is presently seeking new goals and new causes to espouse'.¹¹⁸ Indeed, technology may spread and markets globalise, but without necessarily modifying people's views of the world, of others or of self in the way anticipated by modernisation theory, and without altering the hierarchical structure of global political and economic power.¹¹⁹ And just as the forces of modernisation may be able to eclipse nationalist thinking, they also have the potential to trigger a nationalistic

¹¹³ Inglehart, *et al.*, *The North American Trajectory*.

¹¹⁴ Gimenez, 'Modernización, Cultura e Identidad Social'.

¹¹⁵ Despite some thorny theoretical issues it raises, I would tend to view globalisation as the spread of global capitalist relations and to consider it as similar to and part of what is usually referred to as modernisation. To an extent then, I would characterise globalisation as a new bottle for the same old wine that dates back well into the colonial period, when the modernist discourse began to emerge.

¹¹⁶ Loaeza, 'The Changing Face of Mexican Nationalism'.

¹¹⁷ See García Castro, 'Identidad nacional y nacionalismo mexicano'; and García Canclini, *Culturas Híbridas*.

¹¹⁸ Pastor and Castañeda, *Limits to Friendship*, p. 15.

¹¹⁹ Lajous Vargas, 'Mexico: Culture and Identity in the Information Age', p. 107.

Table 2. *Theoretical issues of nationalism: the case of Mexico*

Interrelationships among identity, interests, policies (correlation-causality)	Social determinants	Dynamics/change (factors promoting change in identity, interest, policies)
<p>(1) Identity with interests – sentiments shape perception of threat and support for policies</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: pride in nation tied to support for nationalist policies; identity based on ethnic/cultural foundations more likely to perceive threat from within or abroad and support nationalist policies; the lower the level of trust in the USA, the more likely to support nationalist policies</p>	<p>(1) Class-based divisions</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: mixed record. Higher income groups less likely to support nationalist policies, but more concerned about threat to cultural identity</p> <p>(2) Region</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: stronger identity among border residents; higher support for NAFTA among residents of the centre, yet no difference among southern and northern residents</p>	<p>(1) Impact of change in identity, interests or policies</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: Policy changes have downplayed threat from USA; underlying cultural changes and convergence have prompted policy changes</p> <p>(2) Modernisation/globalisation – shifts loyalty to higher geographic unity (cosmopolitanism), weakens support for nationalist policies</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: Globalisation has undermined nationalist policies of the past</p>
<p>(2) Identity/interests with policies – state policies foster identity and interests (instrumentalist view) – identity and interests shape state policies (primordialist view)</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: record unclear. Strong state trying to impose a distinctive identity and ideology with limited success. Convergence thesis of value change preceding policy changes. Examples of policy reversals due to nationalist outcry.</p>	<p>(3) Contact with Other</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: contact with USA tied to less ethnocentrism, stronger identity, and support for NAFTA</p>	<p>(3) Situational factors – crisis</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: Cyclical pattern – Economic crisis – cyclical pattern – crisis of the 1980s prompted reversal of nationalist tendencies; crisis of 1995 reversed public opinion, but not policy. Political crisis: EZLN uprising in 1994, prompting re-evaluation of cultural policies regarding the indigenous population</p>
<p>(3) Hierarchy of interests – reflects on tradeoffs</p> <p><i>Mexico</i>: greater willingness to withstand loss in area of economic and cultural sovereignty than loss of political sovereignty; greater willingness to consider political union in exchange for increased standard of living; least willing to do so in exchange for loss of culture</p>		

backlash, though little is known about when or why such a backlash might occur. In some ways, of course, the Chiapas uprising can be seen to be in this context.

Although modernisation/globalisation can be seen as bringing important, usually linear, changes to feelings of national identity and perceptions of national interest, conjunctural factors seem equally if not even more important in affecting any modulation in nationalism. Erfani and Smith, for example, both show historically how international developments shaped the twists and turns of Mexican nationalism.¹²⁰ From this perspective, it is clear that the major factor prompting the recent changes in perceptions of national interest and in policies toward the USA was the debt/economic crisis of the eighties, and perhaps the end of the Cold War. Facing massive foreign debt, a dramatic rise in interest rates, a curtailment of foreign lending, global recession, and political pressures from the renewed hegemonic power of the USA, de la Madrid, Salinas and Zedillo faced few options but to dismantle the nationalistic economic policies of their predecessors, naturally claiming in the process that the attitudes in and toward the USA have changed, and that the past is behind them. As Peter Smith notes with regard to Latin America, ‘leaders and peoples... have not chosen affiliation with the United States out of admiration, loyalty, or affection – but because it has appeared to suit their purposes’.¹²¹ Similarly, it was the dramatic rise of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas in 1994, and not modernisation, that provoked a reevaluation of the role of the Indian in society and that may pave the way – depending on the outcome of current negotiation – for much greater degrees of pluralism and multiculturalism.¹²²

Finally then, Table 2 summarises the findings from this section. It sets out the three theoretical questions, highlights a range of hypotheses, and offers some generalisations regarding the case of Mexico.

Conclusion

To paraphrase the Czech playwright Milan Kundera, history’s problems and paradoxes tend to repeat themselves, but since they always surface under unique conditions and elicit different responses, history never does. In like manner, despite extensive debate, a turbulent history, and a tendency toward ‘imposed unity’, the nature of Mexican nationalism is

¹²⁰ Erfani, *The Paradox of the Mexican State*; and P. H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (New York, 1996).

¹²¹ Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, p. 330.

¹²² Clearly the reevaluation of the place of the indigenous has a range of causes and is not solely the result of the Zapatista uprising. Indeed, as alluded to earlier, the uprising is part of a larger and longer-term process. Nonetheless, within Mexico the uprising has magnified and sharpened the debate.

not clear and remains contested. Beginning with a conceptual division of nationalism into identity, interest and policies, this article has examined the dimensions, discourses and debates over Mexican nationalism. The findings can be generalised within three points. First, analysis points to a nationalist profile containing a range of variations, debates, and changes. Despite its importance to Mexicans, national identity draws on an unclear mix of both ethnic/cultural and secular/civic roots. And although it seems to rest rather loosely on a common perception of the 'other', broader feelings like whether to trust or emulate the USA vary considerably. Similarly, though a general historic pattern seems to exist with regards to views of the indigenous, the USA and the role of the state, debate has long attended these issues. And though staunchly nationalistic policies dot the historic landscape, the presence and intensity of these policies have varied considerably over the years.

Secondly, and adding to this pattern of debate and change, the discussion has highlighted how current developments seem to be challenging traditional ideas and patterns regarding the nation and its interests. The indigenous-based uprising in Chiapas and the prolonged negotiations have reinvigorated historic questions about the role of the indigenous in the nation's identity and the importance of 'national unity' in pursuing the nation's interests. The shift in policy toward the USA – best indicated by NAFTA – has similarly ripped at the near fit that once seemed to exist between the prevailing perceptions of 'self' and 'other' and public policies. Such a challenge raises issues not only about the future of integration between the two countries, but the future of Mexican identity itself. Both these challenges, in turn, collide within the discourse over the role of the state. Not only is the state challenged from without by the indigenous in Chiapas, but also by growing pluralism which weakens and undermines the 'philanthropic ogre' and its ability to shape national identity and dominate the nationalist discourse. Policy changes during the past decade have added to this trend of 'desimposing' the unity that once existed, crystallising once again these historic nationalist debates.

Finally, an exploration of empirical studies on the issue of Mexican nationalism has provided a sense of the perceptions of Mexicans toward the nation and the USA, while pointing to a series of paradoxes regarding the determinants of national identity and perceptions of national interest among the population and, to be sure, a range of unexplored questions. Fitting within the modernisation theory, the evidence shows upper and middle income groups to be less nationalistic than lower income groups, on the one hand, thus lending greater support to non-nationalistic policies like NAFTA. And yet on the other hand, perhaps because of their

material situation – and hence consistent with postmaterialist theory – they are less willing to trade ‘loss of identity and sovereignty’ for improved economic conditions: a measure, perhaps, of greater nationalism. Similarly, with regards to the issue of contact with the USA and its influence, it seems, on the one hand, that the upper income groups have greater contact with and knowledge about the USA – many of the new political elite in particular received educations in the USA – and that this contact is tied to a less critical posture toward the USA, support for policies of integration, and a generally weaker degree of nationalism. And yet, on the other hand, the research by Bustamante showed that people with significant contact with the USA – border residents – exhibited a greater sense of nationalism than those in the interior. Beyond such paradoxes, existing empirical work has left open many questions regarding the prevailing patterns of Mexican nationalism, including the linkage between identity and perceptions of the national interest, the impact of policy changes on popular perceptions, and even the seemingly growing gap between the nationalistic views of the elite and the masses.

Most agree that nationalism blossomed as a component of modern society and represents an historical phenomenon. But whether as a result of globalisation and convergence we are witnessing the final epoch of nationalism, a transformation, or simply a cyclical swing, such movements are neither smooth, peaceful, nor linear, particularly given the uneven nature of development and the gross power disparities among and within countries. In this context, Mexico, the only developing country bordering the most powerful country of the twentieth-century, and now the first Latin American country to enter into a free trade agreement with a developed country, stands as a crucial test case to understand the dynamics of nationalism and its role. As seen here, though many have addressed these themes and reams of data have accumulated, the complexities regarding Mexicans’ views toward self, the indigenous community or the USA have yet to be fully understood. Just as greater US influence and globalisation may not lead to an erosion of Mexican identity, a convergence of political/economic values with its northern neighbour may not mean a greater respect for or trust in the USA or support for non-nationalistic programmes. And as shifts in opinion and policy during the 1995 economic crisis suggest, underlying views and opinions may fluctuate wildly despite history or even convergence. Either way, of course, much remains to be explored in this area as well it should be since understanding the dynamic nature of Mexican nationalism may be a crucial ingredient in understanding the prospects for Huntington’s hypothesized ‘Clash of Civilizations’, the success or failure of NAFTA, the future of Mexican politics, or even the nature of being Mexican.