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MEXICAN-AMERICAN INTERESTS IN US-MEXICO RELATIONS:
THE CASE OF NAFTA

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Center for Research on Latinos in a Global Society
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the question of whether or not a concern for Mexico's interests is a major motivation behind the foreign policy lobbying efforts of Mexican-Americans. To this end, it identifies and analyzes the motivations that propelled some Mexican-American organizations to become active in the process of NAFTA negotiation. It argues that these organizations did not seek to protect or advance Mexico's interests. Their advocacy of NAFTA represented an effort to enhance their own domestic position, not altruistic support of the Mexican government's position out of ethnic loyalty.

In a concluding note it suggests that this kind of behavior is likely to predominate given the nature of U.S.-Mexico relations and the historical relationship between Mexican-Americans and Mexico. It points out, however, that this does not mean that a turn of events might not induce them to try to influence U.S. policy on behalf, or against, the Mexican regime's interest, for example, concerning other issues such as drug trafficking or Mexico's internal political conditions.

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	I. INTRODUCTION	

I. INTRODUCTION

The announcement, in mid-1990, that the United States and Mexico would seek a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) heightened the expectation that Mexican-Americans, like Jewish-Americans, would mount a lobbying effort to play a role in the formulation of U.S. policy vis-a-vis the ancestral homeland. For decades the "Jewish lobby" has actively sought to influence American foreign policies with the purpose of favoring Israel's interests. Would Mexican-Americans be willing to do the same for Mexico? Would they try to advocate or block a particular U.S. trade policy on behalf of the ancestral homeland? This paper examines the accuracy of the argument that says that a concern for Mexico's interests is a major motivation behind the foreign policy lobbying efforts of Mexican-Americans. To this end, it identifies and analyzes the motivations that propelled some Mexican-American organizations to become active in the process of NAFTA negotiation. It argues that, contrary to this argument, these organizations did not form a Mexico Lobby that sought to protect or advance the homeland's interests, as has been the case of Jewish-Americans. Instead, these organizations became a force that promoted their own separate domestic socioeconomic and political goals.

This analysis proceeds in two steps. First, it begins with the analysis of the arguments that help account for the motivations that

drive ethnic interest groups to act in the of foreign affairs.¹ Second, it places the case of Mexican-Americans in a comparative framework by treating briefly the motivations that drive Jewish- and Cuban-American interest groups on matters of foreign policy. Third, it presents the case of Mexican-American interest group participation in the negotiation of NAFTA. As another point of comparison, this section incorporates aspects of the foreign policy lobbying efforts of African-Americans. It concludes with an examination of some of the implications of this analysis.

Here I will first clarify the scope of this project and explain the method used to examine the question of the interests of Mexican-Americans regarding NAFTA. In this analysis the "motivations" and "interests" will be used indistinctively to refer to the motives that induce ethnic organizations to engage in political action in foreign affairs. The assumption is that the political actions of ethnic groups in the sphere of fore affairs are a function of interests or motivations (Balbus 1971; Heinz et al 1993; and Schlozman and Tierney 1986).

The identification of interests or motivations is mostly based on an analysis of secondary sources in the case of Americans of Jewish and Cuban origin. In the case of Americans of Mexican descent, the examination of secondary sources is supported with data collected from printed and electronic media

¹For a good sample of articles which address other aspects of ethnicity and foreign policy, see the collections of art in Said (1981) and Ahrari (1987).

as well as from primary sources such as organizational purposive statements. Most importantly, it is enriched with data obtained between 1991 and 1993 through elite interviewing conducted primarily in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in Southern California. I conducted 18 in-depth interviews with Mexican officials as well as Mexican-American elites and representatives of organizations or sectors from different fields such as the community, business, religious, government, labor, academia, and media. The questions asked sought to identify the issues that most concerned Mexican-Americans, their role in U.S.-Mexico relations, their capability and prospects of participation in U.S. foreign policy-making, and their attitudes toward Mexico.

This paper does not seek to characterize or assess the interests or motivations of the Mexican-American community as a whole, or of the Latino/Hispanic population in general. This analysis applies fundamentally to the actors mentioned here, although I speculate that to some extent it also applies to a greater segment of the Mexican-American population in general.

II. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The motivations that trigger the foreign policy activities of American ethnic groups can be explained at least from two perspectives: affective and instrumental. The "affective" perspective assumes that ethnic groups are inspired to act on foreign policy affairs by how they feel about a particular

country or idea. One version of this perspective assumes that their efforts to promote or block policies are inextricably linked to an emotional and symbolic relationship with the homeland or its regime, and (b) are primarily driven by how the policies benefit or harm the country of ancestral origin or its government (Conner 1986; Esman 1986; Halley 1985; Stack 1993; a Watanabe 1984). Watanabe (1984) suggests that the motivation to become active on foreign policy affairs, especially in matters involving the homeland, derives mainly from the persistence of group's ethnic identity in the United States. The sustenance of ethnic identity results in the endurance or formation of emotional attachments--the "affective tie"--to the homeland, which induce the members of the group to try to influence the course of events and the policies of the United States on its behalf (Watanabe 1984, 160). Another version of the affective perspective assumes that ethnic groups attempt to influence foreign policy-making with the purpose of defending or promoting American principles, ideology, or ideas (Garrett 1981; Hackett 1981; Shain 1994, 1995) not only in the homeland but anywhere the world. Hackett argues that ethnic interests may thus be defined in terms of the "identification of a country or countries abroad with matters of principle, which often means some kind ideological identification" (1981, 50-51).

According to the affective perspective¹ ethnic actors are thus conceptualized as non-self-interested constituencies guided by empathy, solidarity, or commitment to a cause--i.e., altruism--rather than by the pursuit of their own domestic welfare.² In other words, the assumption is that ethnic groups are not guided by the prospect of receiving direct payoffs--tangible or intangible--from their efforts. In this sense, they are not fundamentally motivated

by the expectation of material gains or, as Lapid suggests, by the expectation that their lobbying campaigns will enhance their political status (1987, 10). Any expected benefits are largely symbolic and psychological; that is, they consist mainly of what Zeigler and Peak regard as "symbolic rewards," which are not "valued for their utilitarian potential" (1972, 68). These kinds of rewards primarily have a psychological value received from the emotional release of anxieties over a perceived threat (Zeigler and Peak 1972, 71).

By contrast, the "instrumental" approach emphasizes rational calculations and self-interest (Lapid 1987). The members of an ethnic interest group, Lapid argues, may act "for primarily utilitarian cost/benefit considerations" (Lapid 1987, 10). In acting mainly for instrumental reasons, the assumption is that ethnic groups specifically seek to obtain benefits or prevent losses for themselves, which, according to various investigators, may be both tangible or intangible. They may seek to promote or block issues, for example, policies that affect jobs or trade, that affect their own economic interests. Lapid (1987) contends

²For more on the concept of altruism, see Mansbridge (1990) and (1992).

that ethnic involvement on foreign affairs also embodies a vehicle to compensate for the domestic incapacity of the group. Ethnic groups are "dominated by the expectation that such a strategy will enhance the capacity of the ethnic group to deal more effectively with political elites and institutions in the domestic arena" (Lapid 1987, 10).

In addition, in acting instrumentally, ethnic groups pursue actions "regardless of ethnic ties and kinship considerations" (1987, 10). This implies not only that their actions may be guided foremost by self-interest, but that they may focus on country or international entity, not necessarily the ancestral homeland. As Longmyer states, "racial solidarity [gives] way to economic and strategic considerations" (1985, 17).

III. FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS OF AFRICAN JEWS AND CUBANS

Jewish-Americans

Since 1959, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has been the most powerful political force of the Jewish American community, and the most influential ethnic lobby involved in the United States' foreign affairs.³ The AIPAC's,

³For more on the foreign policy activities of Jewish-American interest groups see, for example, Bard (1987); Esman

(1986); and Lapid (1987). Also, see Stuart E. Eizenstat, "Loving Israel--Warts and All," Foreign Policy 81 (Winter 1990-1991), 105; Nimrod Novik The United States and Israel: Domestic Determinants of a Changing U.S. Commitment, (Boulder: Westview Press, in cooperation with Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies,

and the Jewish-American community's, major foreign policy focus is U.S.-Israel relations, and U.S. relations with the Middle Eastern countries to the extent that they affect the state of Israel. The primary foreign affairs concern of the AIPAC, and of Jewish-Americans in general, is the promotion of the welfare and security of the state of Israel. Based on the assumption that Israel '5 survival depends on "strong, continuing support from Washington," the AIPAC has become a vehicle to ensure an American commitment to Israel's security (Newsom 1996, 185-86).

One of the most prominent cases involving the AIPAC is its Lobbying campaign of the U.S. Senate in 1981, in opposition to the sale of AWACS reconnaissance planes to Saudi Arabia (Bard 1987; Newsom 1996; Reich 1984). More recently, in 1994, AIPAC tried unsuccessfully to convince the Bush Administration not to link housing loan guarantees to restricted construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank (Newsom 1996).

American-Jewish activity represents the prototype of effectively-based involvement. In no other case it is as clear that emotional factors play a preponderant role as mobilizers of group action. Experiences like the Holocaust, earlier anti-

TelAviv University, 1986); Bernard Reich, The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984); Steven Spiegel, "Ethnic Politics and the Formulation of U.S. Policy Toward Arab-Israeli Dispute," in Ethnic Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy, ed. Mohammed Ahrari (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Edward Tivnan, The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); and Robert H. Trice, "Domestic Interest Groups and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," in Ethnicity and U.S. Foreign Policy, 2nd. ed., ed. Abdul Aziz Said (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981).

Semitism in Eastern Europe, the establishment of the state of Israel, the June War of 1967, and later the Yom Kippur War, h confronted the Jewish Diaspora with the prospect of the destruction of Israel and a potential threat to the survival (symbolic or real) of the whole Jewish collectivity (Esman 19 Lapid 1987). Numerous analysts coincide in that, without doubt, a sense of fear is the paramount sole stimulus for much of the political activity of Jews (Esman 1986; Lapid 1987; McMathias 1981).

Although American Jewish groups have pursued a rational in supporting many of the State of Israel's policies, it has been a self-interest goal to enhance their domestic welfare--either economic or political. Indeed, many American Jewish interest groups have incurred in high costs of all kinds, especially financial, to mount their campaigns to help Israel other members of the Jewish diaspora, especially in the former Soviet Union and Africa. There is no evidence that they have expected any payoffs for themselves. One could argue that Jew American organizations like the AIPAC, and the Jewish-America community in general, have benefited in political terms as a result of their actions on foreign affairs. They have gained national political visibility and leverage. But their increased political power has been a byproduct, not the intended result their efforts on behalf of Israel (Lapid 1987).

Cuban-Americans

The Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) represents one of the most influential ethnic interest groups in the foreign policy domain, and is the most powerful in the Cuban American community.⁴ Since its creation in 1981, the CANF's primary foreign policy focus is on U.S.-Cuba relations, although it also has focused on U.S. relations with other countries, which (a) were communist like the former Soviet Union; (b) had leftist revolutionary movements such as Africa and Central America; or (c) are supportive of the Cuban regime like Mexico. Unlike Jewish American organizations, the CANF does not act on behalf of the Cuban government, but against it. The CANF has made it its *raison d'être* to advocate U.S. policies designed to provoke the fall of the Castro regime (Fernandez 1987, 1996; Casal 1978). More specifically, the CANF was particularly active in emotionally intense campaigns to promote the passages of the Torricelli Law in 1992 and the Helms-Burton Law in 1996, both of which hardened and, in the latter case, internationalized the embargo against Cuba (Fernández 1987, 1996).

The CANF, and most sectors of the Cuban exile community,

⁴For more on Cuban-Americans see Lisandro Perez, "The Cuban-American Community and U.S. -Cuba Relations, "Background Paper Prepared for The Inter-American Dialogue Task Force on Cuba, 1991; Carla Anne Robbins, "Dateline Washington: Cuban-American Clout," *Foreign Affairs* 88 (Fall 1992), 162-182; and Alicia M. Torres, "The Cuban-American Community at a Crossroads," Background Paper Prepared for the Inter-American Dialogue Task Force on Cuba, 1991.

especially in Miami, are primarily guided by affective considerations. Both Rendón (1988) and Hackett (1981) coincide in that, in actions involving Cuba, ethnicity is a crucial fact among Cuban-Americans. Rendón states that, "In a very real 5 the major "foreign" concern among Cuban Americans is their homeland, their relatives and friends there, its future, and their desire to return" (1988, 193). At the same time, anti-communism seems to be another major force in their lobbying activities, especially those involving Latin American or African countries with Cuban-style revolutionary movements (Fernandez 1987; Hackett 1981). The CANF's purposive statements reflect non-instrumental nature of their actions, and its principled attitudes, by indicating that their paramount concern is the defense of ideological and moral principles valued by the American people and the well-being of the Cuban people (DeSipio 1996).

There is no question, however, that, as a result of their actions, especially in the enactment of the Torricelli and the Helms-Burton Laws, the CANF and members of the right-wing, Castro sector in Miami have gained in political terms. According to Fernandez (1996), the CANF, especially its leader, Jorge Mas Canosa, and other influential Cuban Americans have significantly increased their political capital" in Washington, D.C. or Miami. Yet their actions can be construed as effectively-driven, since the prospect of psychological reward for making the regime's life difficult, and eventually toppling it, can be viewed as their main intended payoff.

One may add that it is possible that in some instances, the motivation to overthrow Castro is associated with the expectation of returning to the island and regaining lost properties. That expectation has been so remote in the future and the specific properties to be regained or obtained so hypothetical that the major motivation still seems better characterized as affective than instrumental.

Thus a combination of both forces, ethnicity and ideology, is at work in the case of Cuban-Americans. The triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the imposition of a Marxist-Leninist regime on the island, the loss of properties and positions, and their exile experience created intense anti-Castro and anti-Communist sentiment especially among the powerful right-wing sector led by the CANF (Fernández 1987).

IV. MEXICAN-AMERICAN INTERESTS VIS -A-VIS NAFTA

Mexican-American participation in the negotiations of NAFTA, the most significant Mexican-American attempt to influence foreign policy and U.S.-Mexico relations so far, involved two major actors. The top Mexican-American interest groups can be classified by their conditional or unconditional support for the agreement. The unconditional pro-NAFTA camp consisted principally

of the Hispanic Alliance for Free Trade.⁵ This lobbying group included associations like the Latino Business Association, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (UHCC) and the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC); the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); and most members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus like U.S. Reps. "Kika" de la Garza (Texas) and Bill Richardson (New Mexico).

The second group was characterized by conditional support for NAFTA. It was formed by Mexican-American civil rights organizations like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), on the one hand, and the Southwest Voter Research Institute (SVRI), on the other.⁶ These three organizations, in addition to others, coalesced in 1991 to form the Latino Consensus on NAFTA.⁷

Unlike the case of Jewish- and Cuban-Americans, the

⁵The Alliance was a non-profit and non-partisan collection of organizations and leaders. "Hispanic Support Builds for FT Fast Track." Puente (1991).

⁶The SVRI is a non-profit, non-partisan organization. Its mission statement defines it as "chartered to conduct research which may be used to improve the level of political participation in Hispanic communities." Antonio Gonzalez and Richard Nuccio (1988).

⁷These organizations are construed here as Mexican-American even though they might refer to themselves as Latino or Hispanic, and although they purport to represent the interests not only Mexican-Americans, but of the whole population of Latin American descent. The reason for doing so is that the majority of their members or leadership are Americans of Mexican ancestry.

instrumental dimension of Mexican-American attempts to influence U.S. -Mexico relations vis-à-vis NAFTA is reflected on the self-oriented nature of their core objectives. The pro-NAFTA lobby was concerned foremost, not with Mexico's well-being, but with how the agreement affected the economic interests of its members, and, more generally, the interests of the Mexican-American community as perceived by its leaders. According to Ricardo Romo, they say in NAFTA an opportunity to "economically [empower) the bicultural, bilingual U.S. Hispanic community."⁸ Similarly, Henry Cisneros asserted that the purpose of their efforts was "to capture gains for Mexican Americans and . . . to minimize the number of people who might lose."⁹ The expectation was that Mexican-Americans would benefit significantly from greatly increased trade and investment opportunities in Mexico (Moreno 1993). Before NAFTA was approved Gonzalez Gutierrez anticipated that, "If the North American Free Trade Agreement is passed, Latino business leaders may go further to demand the establishment of trade and investment 'quotas' in exchange for their lobbying efforts on behalf of the agreement" (1993, 233). Indeed, the unconditional pro-NAFTA lobby expected concessions from the Mexican government in return for supporting its position (Mendoza 1993). The Mexican government obliged in July 1992, by announcing the establishment of the Nafin Hispanic Reserve

⁸Romo was director of the Tomas Rivera Center in San Antonio, Texas. Puente (1991, 2).

⁹cisneros is former major of San Antonio, Texas, and former secretary of Housing and Urban Development during the first Clinton Administration. Puente (1991, 2).

an initial fund of \$20 million to promote joint ventures between Mexican and U.S. Hispanic businesses.¹⁰

Likewise, the Latino Consensus on NAFTA saw an opportunity to advance what it saw as the community's interests in the United States, especially in the Southwest, where the largest concentration of Mexican-origin population resides. As a condition for its support for NAFTA, it required the incorporation of at least two components to the agreement: (1) the creation of a North American Development Bank (NADBANK) "to mobilize resources to invest in U.S.-Mexico border infrastructure environmental upgrading and sustainable development in areas where NAFTA causes job-loss;" and (2) worker retraining and job creation programs for workers displaced by NAFTA ("National Latino Summit" 1993). Indeed, it was not until after the Bush administration and the Salinas government committed themselves to the establishment of NADBANK as a side-agreement that Congressman Esteban Torres (D-California), among other Mexican-American legislators, delivered his vote for NAFTA.¹¹

Besides the pursuit of material interests, their attempt

¹⁰This fund is formally called the NAFIN-Mexican Investment Council (CMI) Cooperation Agreement. The agreement was signed National Financiera (NAFINSA), the Mexican Council of Investments and the Program for the Mexican Communities Abroad, on the one hand, and Raul Yzaguirre (NCLR), Jose Niño (USHCC), Ernesto Chavarria (TAMACC), and Manuel Rosales (California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce), on the other.

¹¹Zavala 1996. See Zavala for an account of the involvement of Latino Congressmen in the process of passing NAFTA.

reflected an additional goal, at least in the case of the Latino Consensus, related to the minority status of Mexican-Americans in United States. Their efforts were guided by the expectation that they achieve both domestic recognition for the community and a measure of political empowerment. As a Mexican diplomat I interviewed stated, "Without NAFTA the Southwest Voter Research Institute would have not had the visibility that it had, nor would a bilateral agenda have emerged in which Mexican-Americans played an important role."¹² Similarly, a labor leader stressed that these organizations "saw an opportunity to be players in U.S.-Mexico relations to acquire credibility and receive funding for investment, [they were] not necessarily looking out for the Mexican people."¹³ One media executive underlined the idea that "foreign policy must be part of the Chicano Agenda if they want to become power players."¹⁴ In the past, other Mexican American group leaders and scholars had also expressed that one primary objective in seeking involvement in foreign affairs, especially vis-à-vis Mexico, was to gain access to an "international forum for voicing grievances" given that they had not been able to gain entry to the U.S. media and other arenas (de la Garza 1983, 408).

There is little evidence to suggest that a sense of loyalty toward the Mexican government motivated Mexican-Americans to attempt

¹²Interview in Los Angeles on September 23, 1992.

¹³Interview in Los Angeles on January 20, 1993.

¹⁴Interview on September 26, 1992 in Los Angeles. Note that this media executive is not the same one mentioned on footnote 17.

attempt to influence U.S. trade policy toward Mexico. The statements made by MALDEF, NC~, SVRI, and many other Mexican-American individuals in leadership positions emphasized NAFTA's benefits for Latinos in the U.S. and hardly took notice of having considered Mexican interests in any explicit way. Several interviews support this assessment. When questioned whether or not Mexican-Americans felt any duty to support the Mexican government's interests, one interviewee in Orange County responded, "Not necessarily, it depends on our goals and objectives. . .our loyalty is toward the U.S."¹⁵ Another one responded that Mexican-Americans have "feelings of solidarity with the Mexican motherland, but not with the Mexican government."⁶ Another media executive stated matter of factly that "there is no affinity with the Mexican government."¹⁷ Even a Mexican diplomat expressed his candid expectation that Mexican Americans eventually would probably support Mexico's position vis-à-vis NAFTA, but "mostly for rational reasons," by which this official meant self-interest.¹⁸ That both these coalitions ended up favoring trade policies supportive of Mexico's position--i.e. to pass NAFTA as accorded--does not mean that the main concern Mexican-Americans was to favor the Mexican government's interests. The fact that the

¹⁵Interview with a staff executive of a member of the Board of Supervisors in Orange County on September 28, 1992, in Santa Ana, California.

¹⁶Interview with a labor leader. See footnote 13.

¹⁷Interview in Los Angeles on September 28, 1992.

¹⁸Interview in San Diego, California on September 30, 1992

interests of Mexico and Mexican-Americans coincided was circumstantial. Furthermore, although at some point the Latino Consensus included in its agenda issues of human rights and violence in Mexico, these concerns never became a major focus of concern in its lobbying activities.

There are at least three reasons why Mexican-American support for NAFTA was driven by instrumental and not affective considerations which require close examination. First, there has been no emotional incentive to act on behalf of or against Mexico's interests. Unlike the relationship between American Jews and the Israeli regime, the relationship between the Mexican regime and Mexican-Americans historically has been characterized by mutual wariness, mistrust and, at best, indifference and occasional ceremonial solidarity. Despite the fact that many Mexican-Americans feel solidarity with the Mexican people and have family, cultural, and material links with Mexico, de la Garza et al conclude from their survey that their "attachments. . .do not constitute for [Mexican-Americans) an ongoing interest either in homeland politics or in U.S. policies toward the homeland" (1992, 24). Prior to 1990, leaders of Mexican-American organizations and the Mexican government (presidents or other government officials) had had sporadic communication.¹⁹ Since 1990, however, when the prospects of NAFTA

¹⁹See Jose Angel Gutierrez (1986); and Carlos H. Zazueta, "Mexican Political Actors in the United States and Mexico: Historical and Political Contexts of a Dialogue renewed," in Mexico-U.S. relations: Conflict and Convergence, eds. Carlos Vásquez and Manuel García y Griego, (Los Angeles, CA.: University of California Press, (1983).

were first raised, the Mexican government began to take clear and significant steps to seek a rapprochement with the population of Mexican origin in the United States.²⁰ Despite these efforts, Mexican-Americans do not seem to exhibit an urge to actively involve themselves in U.S.-Mexico relations with the principal goal of promoting, protecting, or frustrating Mexico's interests. Most Americans of Mexican descent are critical of Mexico's ruling elites (de la Garza et al 1990, 145), and many blame them for the socioeconomic misery that has forced Mexicans to migrate to the United States. Yet they do not hate the Mexican regime as the Cuban Americans of the CANF hate the Castro regime. Furthermore, despite the economic and political crises in Mexico that began in 1982, Mexican-Americans do not perceive any serious threats to Mexico's survival or observe any dramatic events involving their Mexican brethren abroad or the homeland's ruling elites such as the Middle-Eastern conflict, the Holocaust, or the Cuban revolution, which have driven American Jews and Cubans into the political arena for affective reasons.

Second, there are geographic and demographic factors which account for the instrumental approach taken by Mexican-Americans with respect to U.S.-Mexico relations. As has been stressed before, the majority of the U.S. population of Mexican origin resides in the Southwest. More than 60 percent of U.S. Hispanics are located in Texas, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, of which

²⁰See Gonzalez Gutierrez (1993) and García-Acevedo (1996).

nearly 90 percent are of Mexican origin.²¹ Approximately 40 percent of all U.S. Mexican-origin population lives in California and 30 percent in Texas.²² In addition to its proximity to Mexico, the Southwest includes those states which in the U.S. have the largest trade volume with Mexico, and it is where the concentration of Mexican-American businessmen and professionals can be found. In addition, as in the case of African-Americans, there is a relatively significant concentration of the Mexican-American labor force in the manufacturing sector, the one most negatively affected by job-flight to Mexico. This meant that, as Zavala suggests, Mexican-Americans "were going to be disproportionately affected by NAFTA whether this was in the form of a net benefit or loss to the community" (Zavala 1996, 2).

Third, the nature of the issues involved in U.S.-Mexico relations lend themselves to instrumental considerations. Unlike in U.S.-Israeli relations where military security issues prevail, the issues most prominent in the agenda of relations between the U.S. and the ancestral homeland of Mexican-Americans, that is, those that could be expected to engage them in "foreign policy" activities, have a clear domestic dimension. U.S.-Mexico relations are characterized by issues such as trade, immigration and drug

²¹"We the American . . . Hispanics," U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993) cited in Schaefer (1996, 252 and 255).

²²U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990). A few million more Mexicans are estimated to be in the U.S., but are not counted in the U.S. census due, for example, to their undocumented status.

trafficking, which have become closely linked to domestic issues such as employment and public health. Moreover, as Rendón (1988) observes, Latinos in leadership positions are clearly aware of the links between domestic and foreign policy. Increasing economic interdependence and globalization have contributed to the creation of a particular blend of domestic/international issues that make it increasingly difficult to distinguish foreign from domestic policies (Lapid 1987), as the growing integration between the Mexican and the American economies and societies can attest. And, as Watanabe points out, instrumental behavior is the rule in domestic politics where ethnic groups seek "to gain or protect rights, status, privileges, and material self-interests" (1984, 270). It is, therefore, not surprising that Mexican-Americans might view involvement in foreign policy affairs as an instrument for promotion or protection of their domestic self-interest.

The conditions all point in the direction of instrument rather than affective motivations for Mexican-American political involvement in U.S.-Mexico relations. They also support a long-standing argument by Rodolfo de la Garza that the ethnic ties of Mexican-Americans to Mexico are not, by themselves, a significant motivator of their foreign policy activity (1987, 1986, 1983, 1982, and 1980; de la Garza et al 1990; de la Garza et al 1992; and de la Garza and Schmitt 1986).²³ "Mexican Americans may have a peripheral

²³For other sources on Mexican-Americans and U.S. foreign policy, see, for example, Ayón and Anzaldúa (1987); Jose An Gutierrez (1986); Armando Gutierrez (1986); Irene Frazer

interest in helping Mexico, or possibly, in acting against its political regime and in favor of the opposition, but their core concern is their own well-being in the United States" (1983, 410). Their involvement, he argues, can be expected to be "aimed at enhancing the internal social, political, and economic status of Chicanos" (1983, 403). Accordingly, whether or not they become involved depends foremost on how issues and policies affect their own interests, and how they can profit from their actions, rather than on how they affect Mexico (de la Garza 1983).

That Mexican-Americans have so far adopted an instrumental approach vis-a-vis Mexico and U.S.-Mexico relations can be illustrated further. As Esman notes, diaspora members may promote the interests of the homeland in exchange for its help in alleviating their subordinate conditions in the United States (1986). Since at least 1976, Mexican-American leaders have considered the idea of creating a "Mexican lobby" that would do for Mexico what the "Jewish lobby" does for Israel, and which could derive reciprocal benefits for both Mexico and Mexican-Americans.²⁴ In the early

Rothenberg, "Mexican-American Views of U.S. relations with Latin America," Journal of Ethnic Studies 6, no. 1 (Spring 1978), 62-78, and "Chicanos, the Panama Canal Issues and the Reagan Campaign: Reflections from 1976 and Projections for 1980," Journal of Ethnic Studies 7 (Winter 1980), 37-50; Maria de los Angeles Torres, "Latinos and U.S. Policies Toward Latin America: A Case Study of the 1988 Presidential Campaign," Latino Studies Journal 1, no. 3 (September 1990), 3-23; and Roberto E. Villareal, "Ethnic Leadership and American Foreign Policy: The Hispanic Experience," Borderlands Journal 9, no. 1 (Spring 1986), 1-48.

1980's, Mexican-American leaders expressed the expectation "that a closer association with an oil-rich Mexico could further enhance the political gains of the Chicano community in U.S. domestic politics" (Lapid 1987, 10). In 1990, Ceasar Chávez of the United Farm Workers (UFW) negotiated with the Salinas government the provision of medical services--through the Mexican Social Security Institute--in Mexico to the dependents of Mexican migrant workers residing in the U.S. By 1992, Chávez (UFW) reciprocated president Salinas' action by supporting fast track negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement, even though most unions opposed it.²⁵ Moreover, Mexican-American organizations have sought to gain Mexican assistance to increase the political representation of Latinos in the United States. Since the early 1990s, Mexican-American leaders and organizations, such as the Willie C. Velazquez Center (California), requested President Salinas to permit Mexicans living abroad to retain their Mexican citizenship when acquiring a new one.²⁶ The expectation was that Mexican immigrants would thus be more willing to adopt U.S. citizenship and become eligible to vote.

²⁴See Jose Angelez Gutierrez (1986) and Navarro (1989). During a meeting I attended that took place between president Salinas and members of the Mexican-origin community at a Century City Hotel in Los Angeles, on September 30, 1991, some of them restated this disposition to form a "Mexico lobby" "like the Jewish lobby."

²⁵Sergio Munoz, Los Angeles Times, 30 May 1991.

²⁶letters sent to President Salinas in 1991 by Rudy Garcia, Executive Director of the Center and Councilman for the City of Bell Gardens. This request, as well as others, are based on the evidence of low rates of naturalization among eligible Mexican immigrants in the U.S.--lower than all other groups of immigrants--to a large extent because they do not want to lose their rights as Mexican nationals

Not surprisingly the Mexican government eagerly stimulated Mexican-American support for its U.S. trade policy preferences. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, Mexican officials appeared to have realized that the Mexican diaspora could "become . . . a precious resource from which to draw support, both in the domestic and international arena" (Gonzalez Gutierrez 1993, 221). During the pre-negotiation and negotiation processes of NAFTA, Mexican high-ranking officials actively encouraged Mexican-Americans to play a role in U.S.-Mexico relations in favor of Salinas' economic measures. In 1991, President Salinas invited Mexican-Americans "to be the most fervent promoters in the American Union of this trilateral trade agreement."²⁷ These efforts also included the courting of Mexican-American politicians, businessmen, and other prominent members of the community like California Assemblyman Richard G. Polanco and Jose F. Niflo, USHCC President. Among other things, they were invited to meet with Mexican high-ranking officials, including President Salinas, in Mexico City to discuss NAFTA. As mentioned earlier,

²⁷President Salinas' speech was delivered at the 11th Annual Banquet of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) in Chicago on April 10, 1991. Mexico's Secretary of Commerce, Jaime Serra Puche, made a similar statement inviting Mexican-American businessmen to play a role as a natural bridge for business between Mexico and the U.S. during a speech delivered at the "Latino Leaders Conference on the Implications of NAFTA" on October 12, 1991, at Rio Hondo Community College in California.

the Mexican government also initiated a broad effort to court the Mexican-origin population in the U.S. that includes sports, culture, education, business promotion, and social welfare programs, as well as instituted regular contacts with many of the major Mexican-American (or Hispanic) organizations such as the USHCC and the NCLR.²⁸

Another illustration of the instrumental dimension of foreign policy activity in the strategy of political empowerment of some Mexican-American leaders is that, since at least the 1980s, various political and community leaders have been attempting to expand the political activities of the Latino community not only beyond domestic politics but into the realm of foreign affairs in general. Mexican-American leaders, like African-Americans, have sought to expand their areas of concern to issues and policies beyond Mexico ("black countries" in the case of African-Americans), and attempted to become a bridge in the relations between the Third World and the United States (De Conde 1992; Lapid 1987). In 1985, Richardson asserted that Hispanics were becoming more preoccupied with a variety of issues around the globe including trade issues, "hunger and poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa," and defense and nuclear weapons (1985, 38). By 1987, it was all too clear that Mexican-American leaders were concerned with the Central American conflicts.²⁹

²⁸Public statement by Roger Diaz de Cosio of the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated January 24, 1992. For more on these programs see, for example, Garcia-Acevedo (1996) and Gonzalez Gutierrez (1993).

The case of Mexican-Americans and NAFTA is closer to the cases of foreign policy lobbying by African-Americans than of Jewish- or Cuban-Americans.³⁰ To begin with, like Mexican-American interest groups, African-American organizations such as the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition also became involved in the negotiation of NAFTA, although they lobbied against the agreement. Like Mexican-Americans, they also argued that their jobs were at stake, because a significant number of American companies could potentially move to Mexico as a consequence of NAFTA. African-Americans, as per Longmyer, "are disproportionately employed in many industries that have long been hammered by foreign competition" (1985, 14-15). As in the case of Mexican-American businessmen, Lapid observes that the efforts of

²⁹Interview with Antonio Gonzalez, Director of the Latin America Project of the SVRI in Los Angeles, California. Also see González and Nuccio (1988).

³⁰For more on the foreign policy activities of African-Americans see, for example, Chidozie F. Ogene, Interest Groups and the Shaping of Foreign Policy: Four Case Studies of United States African Policy, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983); Ronald W. Walters, "African American Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy Toward South Africa," Ethnic Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy, ed. Mohammed Ahrari (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); Martin Weil, "Can the Blacks Do for Africa What the Jews Did for Israel?" Foreign Policy, no. 15 (Summer 1974), 132-42; Herschelle Sullivan Chanllenor, "the Influence of Black Americans on U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Africa," Ethnicity and U.S. Foreign Policy, 2nd. ed. Abdul Aziz Said (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981); Martin Weil, "Can the Blacks Do for Africa What the Jews Did for Israel?" Foreign Policy No. 15 (Summer 1974): 108-32; and DeConde (1992).

African-American leaders to expand their foreign policy horizons beyond "black" countries and issues are, among other things, guided by the expectation that this role will eventually translate into "new opportunities for black businessmen in the field of international trade relations" (1987, 10).

Furthermore, Lapid suggests that "American blacks have exploited the global consensus against racism and the achievements of the African-Asian struggle for equality as an important resource in their domestic political struggles,..." (1987, 10). Likewise, Edmondson (1986) argues that African-Americans are compelled into action by both instrumental and affective factors, and that their foreign policy interests are significantly tied to their domestic concerns. "Afro-American international systemic outreach has been dictated not only by a concern with the African homeland but also for reasons of domestic self-interest." A significant stimulus behind the efforts of African-Americans to fight apartheid in Africa was the expectation of "spill-over effects on the American racial scene" (Edmondson 1986, 191). Involvement in the politics of foreign policy-making for underprivileged groups like Americans of Mexican or African descent is not necessarily a distraction from the pursuit of domestic goals, but a tool to promote them. External activities facilitate domestic advancement.

V. CONCLUSIONS

I have argued here that the main concern of the Mexican-American organizations which actively participated in the negotiations of NAFTA was, as Zavala puts it, to ensure gains and prevent losses that directly and tangibly affected their well-being and their community's in the United States (1996, 2). Their active participation as interest groups in the negotiation process of NAFTA represented an effort to enhance their own domestic position, not altruistic support of Mexico's interests out of ethnic loyalty. Ethnicity was a factor in the participation of Mexican-American organizations to the extent that it made them more sensitive to NAFTA as an issue, but the perception that the trade agreement affected them directly and significantly was ultimately more important.

This paper identifies four important analytical and political considerations that distinguish the foreign policy behavior of Mexican-Americans and, more generally, that motivate ethnic foreign policy behavior. First, Mexican-American organizations, like Jewish- and Cuban-American interest groups, have the willingness and the capacity to actively participate in the formulation of U.S. policy vis-à-vis the ancestral homeland. Second, the motivations of the Mexican-American interest groups discussed here differ substantially from the Jewish-American model. Instead, Mexican-American foreign policy activity more closely resembles that of African-Americans. Third, this analysis dispels the conventional view suggested in much

of the literature on interest groups and foreign policy that general ethnic interest group behavior on foreign affairs is definable solely or principally in terms of non-economic interests. Actually, Mexican-American interest groups do not seem to be very different analytically and politically from other non-ethnic interest groups concerned with business or labor issues which became involved in NAFTA negotiations--they all pursued their own interests. A final note is that the fact that Mexican-American organizations actively participated in a foreign policy issue such as NAFTA in the way they did is of great significance. Prior to NAFTA, Mexican-American activities concerning Mexico had been circumscribed mainly to attempts to influence the direction of U.S. immigration policy--characterized more by its domestic dimension--especially vis-à-vis the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which fundamentally affected Mexican immigrants.³¹ Their involvement in NAFTA emphasizes the notion that Mexican-Americans are likely to participate in U.S.-Mexico relations whenever there are issues that concern them directly and significantly. Instrumental considerations are likely to predominate because of the nature of the bilateral agenda and the historical relationship of Mexican-Americans and Mexico. This does not mean, however, that a turn of events might not induce Mexican-Americans to try to influence U.S. policy on behalf, or against, the Mexican regime's interest, for example, concerning the issues of drug trafficking control or Mexico's process of democratization.

³¹For more on this involvement see Ayún and Anzaldúa (1987).

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