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# **Preventing the American Front: A Transnational Examination of the U.S. Border Patrol, 1908-1924**

By: Thomas Paniagua<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

In a discussion of the relationship between war, force, and legitimizing power, French philosopher Michel Foucault argues that “The role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, language, and even the bodies of individuals.”<sup>2</sup> This supports Foucault’s proposition that politics is a continuation of war by other means, as the formation of government institutions continues the use of force from wartime during peacetime. In the context of the formation of the United States Border Patrol, the continued racialized policing of immigration on the Mexican-American border, as this paper will explain, acts as the continuation of wartime politics.

Currently, the U.S. Border Patrol continues to set record numbers for the amount of detained and deported undocumented immigrants. This paper will examine the formation of the U.S. Border Patrol and its maturation into the massive militarized, use of force in American politics, stemming from national security concerns during the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution and World War I. These national security concerns that troubled the U.S. government enough to form an institutionalized, peace time force are directly tied to the possibility of lost economic profit. The corporate power of American investors influenced government policies and led to the creation of agencies to protect profit. Profit contributes to a country’s economic growth

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<sup>1</sup> As an editor, the author recused themselves from the editing process regarding this article. It received no special treatment and was required to conform to all standard requirements.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, Michel, and François Ewald. " *Society Must Be Defended*": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. Vol. 1. Macmillan, 2003 Page 15-16.

and protects against economic decline, incentivizing the government to protect profit and assist in the expansion of possible markets. Countries in conflict often rely on foreign assistance for aid to keep soldiers and civilians fed and supplied. In exchange when the conflict ends, the newly war-free country gives those investors a positive return. These war-free countries also typically allow those foreign investors to continue operating in their countries, allowing the entry of newer markets. This paper will explore the lead up to the creation of the U.S. Border Patrol as an institutional and material force, operating through racialized policing in service of American investors and profit protection.

The U.S. Border Patrol was formally established in 1924, however, this is only the institutionalization and legitimization of a system that stemmed from the Mexican Revolution and World War I. The security threat along the Mexican-American border during World War I created a panoptic structure that polices immigrants in service of the economic interests of the United States.<sup>3</sup> The national security threat that the Mexican Revolution imposed due to the threat of possible lost profit, led to the institutionalization of militarized policing of the Mexican American border. World War I, a global conflict that lasted from 1914 until 1918 pitted the Center Powers against the Allied Forces, occurred during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1919). The creation of a space that policed immigrants became a watchtower to view Mexico to prevent German, and Central Power intervention during the First World War that American investors believed threatened their possible profit. The United States attempted to prevent German influence during the Mexican Revolution and World War I, by heavily policing and intervening

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<sup>3</sup>A panopticon is a type of institutionalized building and system of control designed by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Michel Foucault uses the panopticon as a metaphor for the modern, disciplined society in his book *Discipline and Punish*, best used for the understanding of the mechanism of power. Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

during the Mexican Revolution through institutionalized, racialized policing, contributing to the formation of the Border Patrol. This paper argues that a combination of racialized policing and German interference is responsible for the formation, militarization, and Anti-Mexican institution of the Border Patrol.

### Historical Context

In the beginning of the twentieth century, American investors profited from the monopolization of Mexican industries like agricultural, railroad, and mining, that led to the creation of company towns.<sup>4</sup> These company towns exploited the peasant and indigenous population by forcing them to live in near feudalistic conditions.<sup>5</sup> The creation of these company towns, and the mass monopolization of these industries extracted profit for American investors. Mexico subjected itself to these foreign investors under the authority of Porfirio Díaz, a Mexican general turned politician who ran the country from 1876 until 1910 serving seven consecutive terms as president. Díaz provided a stable government and opened Mexico to foreign investors to modernize the country, advocating for European immigration to “whiten” the population.<sup>6</sup> He hoped to achieve this whitening of the country by bringing wealthy Europeans into Mexico while simultaneously marginalizing the existing indigenous and mestizo populations. Indigenous populations who protested or rebelled against mistreatment by Díaz’s regime suffered arrest and were sold to Cuba.<sup>7</sup> Díaz’s authoritarianism also terrorized the working class through arbitrary arrests, executions, and exile by actively supporting the exploitations that kept them in abject

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<sup>4</sup> Company towns are places where all stores, schools, hospitals, places of worship and housing are owned and controlled by one company or employer, often paying their workers in currency that would be worthless outside of area, making it impossible for workers to move.

<sup>5</sup> Becker, Marc, *Twentieth-Century Latin American Revolution*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2017), 37-41

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

poverty. When combined, these oppressions led to revolution. Díaz crushed revolutionary sentiment and criticism through heavy policing in order to keep American investors interested in Mexican industries.

The outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 created revolutionaries that faced racial and authoritarian violence from both the governments of Mexico and the United States. Díaz had been so successful in censoring and terrorizing the working population that company owners operating in Mexico saw “no signs” of revolution before the official outbreak.<sup>8</sup> The self-censorship of the working class led many revolutionaries to migrate to the United States to flee the Díaz regime’s brutal crackdown. Complicating matters, as depicted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* the majority of educated Americans believed “bandits” and “criminals” were responsible for the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, further criminalizing revolutionary thoughts in the American imagination.<sup>9</sup> American officials labeled Mexican rebels as “ignorant Cholos,” reflecting their perception of the revolutionaries as foolish and uneducated for rebelling against the beneficial Díaz regime.<sup>10</sup> The profit of American investors became an unquestionable benefit, and the authoritarianism and exploitation was dismissed, with the American press positioning revolutionaries as emotional children who irrationally lashed out at Díaz.<sup>11</sup> This shared ideology between the United States and the Mexican government promoted racial

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<sup>8</sup> “MEXICAN REVOLUTION A JOKE, SAYS THOMSEN: SEATTLE CAPITALIST RETURNS FROM THE LAND OF DIAZ AND DECLARES THAT BANDITS CAUSED THE ROW,” January 12, 1911, *San Francisco Chronicle*, California Digital Newspaper Collection (Hereafter CDNC).

<sup>9</sup> “RED LEADERS RECRUIT HERE: SEND MANY IGNORANT CHOLOS DOWN TO MEXICO; THREE HUNDRED REPORTED ON THEIR WAY NOW; REVOLUTION IS DEAD, BUT THE ANARCHISTS PERSIST,” November 27, 1910, *Los Angeles Times*, (1886-1922), CDNC.

<sup>10</sup> “HOW WE PULL DIAZ’S CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ACT AS AGENTS OF MEXICO, AND EVEN KIDNAP LIBERALS TO AID DIAZ’S POLITICAL FORTUNES.” August 7, 1910, *New York Times*, (1857-1922), CDNC.

<sup>11</sup> “RED LEADERS RECRUIT HERE: SEND MANY IGNORANT CHOLOS DOWN TO MEXICO; THREE HUNDRED REPORTED ON THEIR WAY NOW; REVOLUTION IS DEAD, BUT THE ANARCHISTS PERSIST.” November 27, 1910, *Los Angeles Time*, (1886-1922), CDNC.

violence that criminalized brown skinned revolutionaries. This criminalization led to the first deportation of “enemies” by private detective agencies, likely to face capital punishment when they returned to the sovereignty of Díaz.<sup>12</sup> The Díaz regime created a refugee workforce of Mexican revolutionaries, who most likely had negative feelings toward the U.S. for their support of Diaz, that diversified American workplaces. With an ingrained paranoia of possible revolutionary sympathizers led to the racial purification of the workforce that targeted Mexican workers, which would later become a formal institutionalized function of the Border Patrol targeting Mexican workers for deportation.<sup>13</sup>

The outbreak of World War I and the German threat to the United States became a turning point that would formally institutionalize the Border Patrol. American investors shifted their focus away from Mexico and focused more on war profiteering from the carnage of World War I. American investors from 1914 until 1917 lent over 2 billion dollars to the Allied forces, despite the country being officially neutral until 1917. These investments incentivized the United States support of an Allied victory. The massive economic support quickly resupplied Allied troops in the European theater, driving the Central Powers’ need to disrupt this aid to harm the Allied Forces. The German threat was Germany’s active attempt of disrupting U.S. efforts of resupplying Europe, using unrestricted submarine warfare to prevent supplies from reaching Europe, and establishing a Mexican government that was friendly to the Central Powers. Any Mexican government formed due to the support of Germany would most likely have been friendly to the Central Powers, it became Germany’s mission to influence the outcome of the Mexican revolution. Mexico also declared neutrality during the outbreak of the First World War,

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<sup>12</sup> “RED LEADERS RECRUIT HERE.”

<sup>13</sup> Hernández, Kelly Lytle. *Migra!: A history of the US border patrol*. (University of California Press, 2010).

however the Mexican government maintained a close relationship with Germany. Mexican officials allowed German businesses and officials to continue their operations within the country during World War I. With German officials allowed to travel freely, they threatened U.S. economic growth and security by convincing Mexican revolutionaries to harass the United States by creating a new American front.

Bringing the destruction of World War I to the American homeland disrupted the United States' economic prosperity, namely by preventing it from providing goods or services to the Allied Forces. Opening an American front would lead the United States to prioritize conflicts closer to its southern border, leaving the Allied Forces with less aid. Before entering the First World War, the United States enjoyed the economic benefit of assisting the Allied Forces from a safe distance that prevented the likelihood of invasion. The creation of an American Front would have endangered the economic profit and physical safety of the United States. It is from this desire to prevent German influence and establish a Mexican government willing to protect American economic interests that led to the militarization of the border and the creation of the Border Patrol.

Language used to describe Mexicans fleeing the conflict as enemies to wage war against the U.S. is still present in the U.S. Border Patrol histories to date. For example, the Texas Rangers is noted by the Border Patrol as “the first immigration Border Patrolman [*sic*],” as occasionally during the 1910s patrolled the entire Mexican-American border for the movement of suspected “enemies”.<sup>14</sup> Formally founded in 1835 as a call-to-arms group that patrolled the border and officially disbanded during the post-Civil War Reconstruction, the Texas Rangers

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<sup>14</sup> “Border Patrol History,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Accessed December 14, 2019,

claimed to maintain law and order during the Mexican Revolution. Hundreds of new special Texas Rangers appointed by the State worked with American soldiers to patrol the entire Southern Border. At the border, obscure and nebulous definitions of their power allowed the Texas Rangers to police the region through arbitrary arrests, suspending court proceedings, and sentencing many to death, if not outright lynching them on sight.<sup>15</sup> For example, the Canales investigation, a 1919 legislative hearing to “investigate the activities and necessity for a continuance of the force,” reviewed the criminal activities committed by the Texas Rangers. The investigation uncovered that around 300 to 5,000 people, mainly Hispanic, had been unjustly killed by Rangers from 1910 to 1919.<sup>16</sup> This revealed the racial profiling and ethnically motivated violence against Mexicans from Texas Rangers.

The Canales investigation was not an isolated incident of Anti-Mexican violence perpetrated by the Texas Rangers. In 1918 in the town of Porvenir, Texas Rangers unlawfully searched the homes of villages suspected of committing border raids, illegally confiscating two weapons and detaining three Hispanic men. The Texas Rangers later physically separated the Mexican men from their families, and then ten Rangers, eight U. S. Army Cavalry, and four local Anglo-American ranchers massacred those fifteen Mexican men.<sup>17</sup> The remaining Mexican villagers fled back to Mexico and settled in Pilares, Chihuahua where they buried the dead.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. Border Patrol would learn from the Texas Rangers, using their pervasive power to illegal search and confiscate private property. The Border Patrol today also uses physical force in order

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<sup>15</sup> Martinez, Monica Muñoz, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas*, (Harvard University Press, 2018), 30-170.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Houston Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*. (University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 435.

<sup>17</sup> Francisco Arturo Rosales, *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Struggle for Civil Rights*, (Arte Público Press, 2000), 71-72.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Dart, “Life and Death on the Border: Effects of Century-Old Murders Still Felt in Texas,” January 22, 2016, *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media.



to separate people from their families and community. This also contributes to the obscure power of the Border Patrol through suspicion, as “power should be visible and invisible.” The fact that anything could be considered suspicious for the U.S. Border Patrol is a testament to the obscure nature of their power.<sup>19</sup> Brown bodies are not aware of what actions render them suspicious, though the Border Patrol has full authority to use that power of suspicion in the execution of their duties.

Despite the special Texas Rangers disbanding in 1919, the policing apparatus provided the foundation for the Border Patrol. The United States portrayed the Texas Rangers as noble heroes, systematically upholding the violence the Texas Rangers performed through discourses of gallant men fighting against the savagery of Mexican residents and refugees. Military intervention from the United States would not only police the movement of Mexicans but would also be the force that would respond to any German threats. The Mexican Revolution replaced the direct violence of the Texas Rangers with the systemic violence of a standing army on the Southern border. With the historical context of the Mexican Revolution, World War I, and the Texas Rangers established, I will review relevant literature that influenced the creation of this paper.

### **Literature Review**

The historical literature on the construction of the border as a place for policing began with Friedrich Katz’s book *The Secret War in Mexico*, which contextualizes the construction of the Mexican-American border with the outbreak of World War I. Katz’s book relates to this

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

paper by discussing German influence in Mexico and the United States' response of militarization the Southern border. As the United States maintained its isolationist policy, it had economically benefited from supporting the Allied Forces with aid. A great relationship between Mexico and Germany before and during the revolution, along with Mexico's neutrality, allowed German businesses to operate in the region. Katz argues that the military intervention of the United States in the Mexican Revolution to prevent German from threatening America became a secret war.<sup>20</sup> This work leaves off and does not build upon the United States' militarization of the border that is racialized and later construct the Border Patrol, which this paper addresses.

The environmental history of natural barriers has shown that they can be used in the service of controlling immigration for the continued separation and alienation between the United States and Mexico. C.J. Alvarez's book *Border Land, Border Water: A History of Construction of the US-Mexico Divide* discusses the history of division between the United States and Mexico through construction projects. Alvarez dedicated a whole chapter to the Mexican Revolution, *The Border and the Mexican Revolution*, and its relation to construction projects that separated the two countries.<sup>21</sup> This chapter also leads into multiple other chapters that discuss the policing of waterways and rivers against Mexicans. Alvarez traces the construction projects that creates physical and national barriers that serve as surveillance infrastructure for police that control the idea of immigration. Alvarez argues that policing the Southern border controls immigrations by alienating both countries from each other.<sup>22</sup> This paper

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<sup>20</sup> Friedrich, Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution*, (University of Chicago Press, 1981),

<sup>21</sup> C. J. Alvarez, *Border Land, Border Water: A History of Construction on the US-Mexico Divide*, (University of Texas Press, 2019), 53-94.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

takes this idea of surveillance infrastructure and barriers combined with Michel Foucault's idea of a panopticon.

A key tendency of a Panopticon is the institutionalization of violence, an examination of the institutionalized racial violence of pre-border patrol tactics is important in understanding how violence is legitimized. Monica Muñoz Martinez's *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* discusses social memory and the racialized violence of Texas Rangers on Mexican refugees during the Mexican Revolution. During their patrols of the southern border, Texas Rangers were guilty of promoting a violent agenda against Mexicans, committing countless human rights offenses, such as carrying out mass executions, unwarranted arrests, murders, and sentencing Mexicans accused of crimes to lynching without trial. Martinez argues that the perception of 'noble' Texas Rangers as a force that upheld civilization against savagery is largely due to the discrimination of Mexicans.<sup>23</sup> However, my research will examine the actions of the Texas Rangers and their racialized policing and association with the military also on patrol along the Southern border that become institutionalized in the Border Patrol.

The Anti-Mexican politics that continues the United States' war against brown immigrants after World War I and using brown bodies in the institutionalization of the Southern border. Kelly Lytle Hernández's book *Migra! A History of the US border Patrol* at first seems to be out of place, as it discusses a fully formed Border Patrol that operated during the 1930s and 1940s. However, it shows a direct connection of the racialized policing from Texas Rangers and the Border Patrol. Hernández argues that the Border Patrol view themselves as guardians of immigrants, but in reality, target Mexican workers creating a racial purification in the American

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<sup>23</sup> Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You*.

workforce. With the authority to abstractly arrest workers and abstract use of violence that had military capabilities. During World War II the Border Patrol had transformed and expanded its personnel.<sup>24</sup> I intend to show a pattern of militarization along the Southern border, brought on by the fears of war and continuing to this day, harms immigrants and American brown bodies. My paper will make that connection of wartime politics that feared the loss of economic profit and increasingly racialized policing is responsible for the continuation of Border politics.

### **Argument**

The Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz created an authoritarian government that encouraged foreign investment, which resulted in the mass monopolization of Mexican industries by Americans and prompted the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution. The collapse of Díaz's regime created a power vacuum that had various revolutionary factions fighting to fill the void.<sup>25</sup> The intense multi-factional fighting created a massive refugee crisis, with Mexicans fleeing to the United States to escape violence. The United States reacted to this immigration crisis with a military occupation of the Southern border, with troops like the Eighteenth Infantry and Fourth Cavalry, being sent "to prevent Mexicans from passing to and fro" in 1912.<sup>26</sup> The fear of revolutionary violence spilling over into the United States and threatening the profits made from the Díaz regime and the pre-World War I Allied forces justified the use of military personnel as a type of pre-border patrol.

Despite the United States' official neutrality, it held a beneficial economic position of isolation from the direct fighting taking place in Europe while also being able to support the

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<sup>24</sup> Hernández, *Migra!*.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Becker, *Twentieth-Century Latin American Revolutions*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2017), 35-41.

<sup>26</sup> "MEXICAN WAR NOW NEAR THE BORDER: FEDERALS AND REBELS CLASH AT POINT JUST SOUTH OF BOUNDARY," May 21, 1912, *San Francisco Chronicle*, CDNC.

British with aid. The Central Powers, especially Germany, saw the Mexican Revolution as an opportunity to disrupt American aid. Germany interfered in the Mexican Revolution, supporting both revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries with the hope of creating an American front. The prevention of German involvement and protection of American profits during the Mexican Revolution became the guiding light for American intervention during the First World War. Despite the negativity the United States later faced during its various interventions in the Mexican Revolution, the various images of “ignorant Cholos” reinforced the notion that Mexicans were unable to provide a stable government.<sup>27</sup> A weak Mexican government would be unable to dissuade German influence and serve U.S. interests. As a result, the byproduct of the United States’ prevention and protection of profits was the intensification of anti-Mexican sentiment.

The United States’ intervention in Mexico began with General Victoriano Huerta and his counter-revolutionaries encouraging German intervention. Huerta, a military officer who served under Díaz, had grown frustrated by the infighting between radical revolutionaries and simply wanted to return to the days of Díaz. This also meant the restoration of previous established relationships with foreign powers like Germany. The Germans supported Huerta’s military coup by providing weapons and aid to Huerta’s forces. The United States in order to prevent German interference, sent troops to Veracruz to prevent weapons from reaching the counter-revolutionaries in 1915. After Huerta’s defeat by rebel forces, he fled to the United States, where he quickly began working on rebuilding his forces and armory. Despite revolutionary forces demanding the extradition of Huerta, the United States believed itself better able to punish

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<sup>27</sup> “RED LEADERS RECRUIT HERE.”

Huerta.<sup>28</sup> This choice stemmed from the American state's belief that Mexicans were unable to handle domestic issues and create stable law and order, and therefore needed the United States. Later Huerta would be arrested under charges of conspiracy, as he attempted to negotiate with German spies in hopes of inviting the German Navy into Mexico.<sup>29</sup> Huerta, kept in a U.S. prison until his death in 1916 never faced justice in a Mexican court.

Other revolutionary figures like Pancho Villa had the support of the United States until his involvement with Germany. Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionary general and provisional governor of the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, had taken up arms against Díaz and Huerta. Villa had constantly fought against counter-revolutionaries and provided funding for the Mexican Revolution. The relationship between Villa and the United States became so severely damaged, due to German involvement, that it led to a U.S. invasion. This U.S. "expedition" meant to capture Villa but would also contribute to the creation of the Border Patrol by militarizing the Mexican-American border, providing an easier staging area for invasion or counterattack from Mexican Revolutionaries.

The U.S. justification of the militarization of the Mexican-American border came with Villa's infamous 1916 Columbus raid. In an attempt to prevent Villa from possible creating an American front, a standby army patrolled the Southern border in case of invasion or in order to invade. The Mexican-American border had been subject to numerous raids by Pancho Villa, who sought supplies for the Mexican Revolution. However, the famous raid of the small border town

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<sup>28</sup> "EXTRADITION IS DEMANDED: HUERTA ACCUSED OF MADERO ASSASSINATION; CHARGES FILED WITH UNITED STATES DECLARE FORMER PRESIDENT WITH FELIX DIAZ AND OTHERS ARE GUILTY OF MURDER AND THEIR RETURN TO MEXICO IS ASKED," July 4, 1915, *Los Angeles Times*, CDNC.

<sup>29</sup> "OROZCO'S PLOT RECALLED: MEXICAN ONCE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN HIRED TO GERMANY TO START BACKFIRE REVOLUTION," December 7, 1925, *Los Angeles Times*, CDNC.

of Columbus, New Mexico in 1916 differed because it resulted in a US ‘expedition’ into Mexico. A key difference between this Columbus raid and other border raids by Villa was Germany’s involvement. Germany had continuously offered Villa weapons and monetary aid to incentivize an invasion of the United States in the hopes of diminishing the supplies sent to the Allied Forces. The town of Columbus had nearly half a million dollars of German currency and documents that proved German contacts had placed the money in the bank. Villa’s closest advisors and representatives had personal ties to Germany and encouraged Villa to provoke the United States.<sup>30</sup> Germany hoped that by arranging the raid, Villa would feel obligated to commit to an invasion of the United States. Villa’s Columbus raid appeared to the United States as if Villa had finally taken Germany up on their continuous offers of invasion.<sup>31</sup> The United States sent an expedition to capture Villa and prevent further raids, an action that would inspire the creation of a militarized Border Patrol to make future interventions easier. The occupation force only left Mexico after the newly installed Mexican President Venustiano Carranza threatened to retaliate, which would have created the American front the U.S. so desperately wanted to avoid.

The only success the expedition had was strengthening anti-Mexican sentiment, as Pershing complained to his family that the President imposed too many restrictions that prevented him from his “intention of eating the Mexicans raw.”<sup>32</sup> The desire of returning U.S. soldiers to destroy the ‘enemy’ strengthened their hatred felt towards Mexicans.<sup>33</sup> For example, some of these veterans assigned to patrol the border after their return expressed their frustration

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<sup>30</sup> Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico*, 280-187.

<sup>31</sup> James A. Sandos, “German Involvement in Northern Mexico, 1915-1916: A New Look at the Columbus Raid,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1970): 70.

<sup>32</sup> Kennedy Hickman, “Chasing Pancho Villa: The US Punitive Expedition.” ThoughtCo. Accessed July 1, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth West, *Santa Fe: 400 Years, 400 Questions: Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the Founding of Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1610*. (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2012), 147.

to soldiers that occupied the region.<sup>34</sup> Labeling Mexicans as enemies degrades them, as military training goes to great lengths to dehumanize the enemy. Soldiers often find it necessary to refer to their opponents as animals or somehow ‘other,’ as compassion towards the enemy makes it more difficult to carry out their duties. The military desensitizes their personnel, and when soldiers are denied the ability to destroy their enemy, that hatred may not have a release and can continue for many years.<sup>35</sup> After the Pershing expedition and World War I, the border was patrolled by unsatisfied military personnel, policing the movement of a once believed ‘enemy.’

Similar events occurred during the fall of 1918, when German military advisers traveled to Mexico, with the intention of having Mexican federal soldiers transport weapons across the border and attack the small town of Nogales, Arizona. After the United States received information that German advisors had been sent down to Mexico to assist in the raid the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment intervened. The conflict killed an estimated 30 to 130 Mexican troops and resulted in the capture of the majority of the German advisors.<sup>36</sup> Similar to Villa’s ‘expedition,’ the United States invaded Mexico to prevent further border raids from Mexican bandits. This institutional militarization of the Mexican American border, replaced the Texas Ranger’s use of force, justifying any potential violence.

However, the Mexican Revolution would end, the border violence that justified militarization had ended but the institution remained, the Panoptic tower stands policing the border to secure U.S. investors. Carranza helped draft the 1917 Mexican Constitution, which typically marks the end of the Mexican Revolution, despite various factions continuing to fight

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<sup>34</sup> West, *Santa Fe*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> David Grossman, *On Killing: the Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1996).

<sup>36</sup> John H. Nankivell, and Quintard Taylor. *Buffalo Soldier Regiment: History of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry, 1869-1926*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 145.



against the newly established government. Fighting only eased after the assassination of the revolutionary figure Emiliano Zapata in 1919, after which the majority of the fighting ended the following year. The relatively stable Mexican government allowed the United States to establish the Border Patrol in 1924, four years after fighting from the Mexican Revolution had died down. The United States witnessed the fall of the Díaz regime, and despite the support given, could no longer trust any Mexican government. The Mexican Revolution provided an opportunity for Europeans to possibly interfere with American profits, and therefore, the reliability of the Mexican state to protect the border would always be in question. This laid the groundwork for the development of a regular standing army on the Mexican-American border. The scars and memory of the Revolution became the foundation for the development of the Border Patrol, becoming the policy current members enforce. Essentially, the war and its troops never left the border, as the Border Patrol is one of the most militarized government units.

The United States eventually joined the First World War as Germany publicly threatened their profit by targeting American ships that delivered aid to the Allied Forces and by sending the Zimmerman Telegram. The Zimmerman Telegram was a secret diplomatic communication issued by the German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann in January 1917, proposing a military alliance between German and Mexico to attack the United States. The Zimmerman Telegram differed from Germany's previous interventions in the Mexican Revolution, by informing the Mexican government of the unrestricted submarine warfare ahead of time and promising "generous financial support and an understanding on [German's] part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona."<sup>37</sup> This provided public

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<sup>37</sup> "Transcript of Zimmerman Telegram (1917)." *Our Documents*, National Archives & Records Administration,

collaboration between the Mexican and German governments, solidifying the belief that Mexico was, in fact, an enemy. This stood as public confirmation of Mexico and Germany's collaboration, and along with Germany's use of Submarine warfare against American ships, justified America's entrance into the war as a threat to America's economic growth.

Labeling Mexicans as violent criminals has been a historical constant since the beginning of these conflicts, but an organization meant to police the movement of people crossing the border was the most recent result of this rhetoric. The rights of brown immigrants were worth nothing in comparison to the goal of protecting profits and American land. The Border Patrol, institutionalized after the Mexican Revolution and World War I, is the physical manifestation of anti-Mexican sentiment. Viewing Mexicans as a continuous threat just south of America's border, the United States felt the need to police movement to prevent "terrorists" from entering.<sup>38</sup> This laid the seeds for the full policing potential of the U.S. Border Patrol, with current methods and tactics informed by past military actions along the border.

The full potential of the U.S. Border Patrol lay in the creation of a panoptic structure, that legitimized the policing power conducted by the Texas Rangers. The pervasive power of this panoptic structure allows the expansion of unlawful searches and seizure of private property, violating the rights of brown-skinned peoples. This legitimization of the Mexican-American border policing replaces the direct violence of Texas Rangers and military personnel to a more structural institutional system that can regulate the movement of brown bodies. The obscurity of the Border Patrol comes from the power to be "visible and invisible."<sup>39</sup> The visibility of power allows Border Patrol personnel to use physical force the border under the excuse of suspicion.

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<sup>38</sup> "Border Patrol Overview," U.S. Customs and Border Protection,

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

The invisibility of power transforms any action of immigrants into a suspicious action, because there is no clarity of what the Border Patrol will perceive as dangerous. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that reasonable suspicion, includes “such factors as the mode of dress and haircut,” which amounts to racial profiling, a testament to the obscure power of the Border Patrol.<sup>40</sup> The institutionalization of this power creates systematic violence, as immigration courts don’t provide legal representation and pressures judges to make rulings. The legal institutions have upheld and affirmed the actions of the Border Patrol as “Suspicious actions” allow the Border Patrol to legitimize and structure the suspension of rights and possible deportation.<sup>41</sup> This structure has been for the protection of American profit that Mexican revolutionaries and European conflict threatened.

### **Conclusion**

Understanding border policing is important in contextualizing the foundational creation of the Border Patrol that is still operating and has the legal authority to continue its anti-Mexican harassment. The Border Zone is a 100-mile zone within every land or land port of the United States, covering around two-thirds of the population.<sup>42</sup> The United States established military like checkpoints along the Border Zone and racially decimates against brown skinned individuals. With the Border Zone the Border Patrol has the pervasive power of detainment, seizure of private property, and unwarranted vehicle searches, regardless of citizenship status. Refusing to cooperate or being unable to produce papers proving citizenship status results in detainment, despite no law requiring the carrying of citizenship status existing. The lack of

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<sup>40</sup> Kevin R. Johnson, "How Racial Profiling in America Became the Law of the Land: *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* and *Whren v. United States* and the Need for Truly Rebellious Lawyering," (June 22, 2009), *Georgetown Law Journal*, UC Davis Legal Studies Research Paper No. 174, 1005.

<sup>41</sup> “Border Rights.” December 15, 2015, American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona,

<sup>42</sup> “The Constitution in the 100-Mile Border Zone.” American Civil Liberties Union, June 21, 2018.

typical American juridical practices and the abundance of martial infringements on rights along the Border Zone demonstrates the continuation of lessons learned through force during the early twentieth century, with devastating impact on Mexican and Mexican American individuals and communities.

The Mexican Revolution was a complex series of shifting alliances caused by the actions of Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz, who provided a stable government at the price of foreign investors monopolizing Mexican land. The United States and Díaz shared similar views concerning the dehumanization of non-white Mexicans, making an easy alliance to punish and police those individuals. Working with the United States, Díaz was able to punish critics and revolutionary figures. The removal of Díaz created a power vacuum that the United States feared Germany would fill, thus Mexico became a potential staging area for the creation of American front during World War I. This resulted in the intensification of anti-Mexican sentiment, as the United States began a military occupation of the Mexican American border. The transition of Texas Rangers and police to military personnel in the creation of the Border Patrol shows the troops never really left the border, they simply changed uniforms.

In an attempt to prevent German influence in the Mexican Revolution, the United States had to institutionalize its anti-Mexican sentiment. Originally, anti-indigenous and anti-Mestizo policing for Díaz's approval strengthened the relationship between the two countries, as both had benefited from the involvement of each other. The United States monopolized Mexican industry and was able to extract resources from the region while also punishing Mexicans that crossed the border. After the outbreak of the First World War, the United States' view of Mexicans as idiotic and incapable of preventing German interference in the Revolution threatened the economic position of the United States. President Wilson felt it was the responsibility of the United States

to prevent Germany from influencing the Revolution, disregarding the autonomy or Revolutionary process of the Mexicans.

The combination of military personnel and Texas Rangers policing the movements of brown bodies to prevent German interference in the border regions of the Southwest United States. This military style policing led to the formation of a Panoptic structure that is the U.S. Border Patrol. The United States' attempt to prevent German influence in Mexico to protect economic profit resulted in the fascistic foundations of the Border Patrol. The U.S. Mexican border became one of the heaviest militarized borders between two countries at peace.<sup>43</sup> The Border Patrol is fundamentally rooted in the anti-Mexican sentiment shared by various American officials that conducted similar duties as the future Border Patrol. Border politics have been a continuation of an Anti-Mexican war, as Mexicans entering the United States are still perceived to be national security risk.

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<sup>43</sup> "U.S.-Mexico border Militarization." American Friends Service Committee, November 20, 2017.

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