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MEXICAN INTEROCEANIC CORRIDOR: TOWARD A LIKELY SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE REGION IN SOUTHWESTERN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

Mexican Interoceanic Corridor or Tehuantepec's Transisthmian Corridor (along with the Mayan Train) represents one the two largest iconic and challenging Mega Projects implemented in Southwestern Mexico, funded by Mexican Government, in the same so-called “Macrosouth region” or just Macrosouth, here on, (integrated by three economic subregions, namely, South-Pacific, Southern and South-western regions). Despite both projects ultimately aim to foster economic growth in such a region, the former aims to stimulate growth through an increased tourism flow from the wealthy Mayan Riviera zone toward the Gulf of Mexico's long-lagged region by railroad through the Mayan Train recently inaugurated by President Lopez Obrador,vid AMLO(Dec 22, 2023).Although the main focus of our attention here, namely, the Interoceanic Corridor, given its geoeconomic and geo strategic relevance for the country since it is expected to skyrocket Mexican exports and commercial activity through this facility and thus fostering economic growth throughout the Corridor stripe and spread it out throughout its neighboring regions such as those above referred in the coming years given its previlegious geographic location under the global context in which Mexico is currently immersed.

Accordingly, the article aims to assess and highlight the socio economic relevance of the Mexican Corridor megaproject and its likelihood to achieve by this means simultaneously economic growth and people's well-being in this region as an expected consequence of the intensive commercial thorugh its operation and industrial activity generated by the production of ten industrial parks to be implemented along the Corridor (backed by a host of full-fledged refurbished and renewed productive infrastructure around it) such as railway itself and road transport and port facilities along the end lines of the Corridor stripe (and the entire Macroregion) focused on supporting the expected massive commercial flow of merchandise and concomitant export boom back and forth through the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, shortly. Furthermore, all these significant public investments, unlike prior neoliberal investment priorities in the past, these new investments are nurtured upon a framework of a socially inclusive and sustainable strategy tailored by the Mexican government for the Corridor zone to promote simultaneously economic growth and people’s well-being in the Transismithian stripe in the years to come. However, the challenge for the Mexican state, through its policymakers, is to achieve such an equilibrium between economic growth and population well-being in this region under a sustainable environmental context.

Accordingly, in short, the purpose of this article is to explore the likelihood of Mexico attaining the above-referred equilibrium and implementing a socially inclusive strategy within a long-time deprived and lagged region from the rest of the country such as the Transisthmian Corridor stripe and its neighboring regions, such as the South-Pacific and

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Gulf of Mexico, in the foreseeable future along with its likely perspectives and socioeconomic and environmental implications.

Keywords: Socially inclusive development, Sustainable development, Balanced regional development, Development pole.

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Given its historical geostrategic and geo-economic importance, Mexico's Tehuantepec isthmus has been a greedy territory for centuries since colonial times. Ever since Hernan Cortés' "Cartas de Relación" (Third letter) dated (May 15, 1522), to the King of Spain, Charles the Fifth, explored the possibility of a communication route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, according to Maria Carmen Martinez.vid,Martinez, M. María Carmen (Jun23, 2023). Although Cortés's early interest is widely recognized as the first, numerous unsuccessful projects have explored this possibility throughout the XVI-XXI centuries, as identified by some scholars such as Velazquez, Emilia et Al.(2009).

However, by mid-XIX (Dec14, 1854), Mexico signed with the US government the so-called McLane-Ocampo Treaty, which entailed the US that in case of war or another emergency from the latter country, Mexico would allow free passage to US military troops through the Tehuantepec Isthmus as well as through other strategical crossing points through Mexican territory. Fortunately for Mexico, the US Senate did not ratify it, and thus, it was not eventually put into force, vid, Salmerón, Pedro(Ago, 2009).

By 1884, an American engineer, James B. Eads (1884), proposed The Tehuantepec Interoceanic Railway Project, consisting of constructing a transoceanic rail line between Salina Cruz and Coatzacoaldos by a six-track railway with three locomotives pulling ships across the isthmus in about 13 hours. However, the system was designed to carry vessels of up to 10,000 tons into a wheeled cradle. Nevertheless, this project was rejected because the new ships rapidly became heavier. Until at the beginning of last century, President Porfirio Diaz officially inaugurated the current Transismic Railway (Ferrocarril Transismico de Tehuantepec), which started its formal operation in January 1907, vid,Vargas, Martin (2019).

Despite its successful starting operation, which only lasted less than two decades, albeit unfortunately for Mexico, this facility soon started to decline when the Panama Canal was opened in 1914, coupled with the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, which lasted almost two decades and implied a million dead people. From this year on until our time, this railroad activity became virtually irrelevant compared to its first decades of operation.

Finally, last year and after almost barely four years of intense work and fast implementation of the whole project, President Lopez Obrador inaugurated, the so-called “Z-Line”, of the Transismic Raywal system which connects Salina Cruz with Coatzacoalcos ports, vid, AMLO(Dec22, 2023), as already been mentioned.

Accordingly, the corridor is expected to be a faster and cheaper option than the Panamanian Canal (since it will take only 6 hours, to cover the 303 km of this Corridor´s

stripe which besides the referred railroad is backed up by three international airports (Minatitlán, Ixtepec y Huatulco), and a gas pipeline and optic fiber facilities along the corridor) to facilitate industrial expansion and communication.

That is why this interoceanic facility is expected to become an important magnet for investments, with tax incentives, a free trade zone, customs areas, tariff reduct0ions, a single window for procedures, as well as the development of housing areas (urban development programs for its major municipalities) and nature reserves. And capable of moving yearly, by 2050, an estimated 1.4 million containers between the two referred ports and in this way boosting regional growth and jobs in the region, with an expected economic impact of 1.6% of Mexican GDP and 50.0 thousand million US dollars in investments and able to produce about 550 thousand jobs through the commercial and industrial activity once it is reached the full operation of the 10 industrial parks being implemented along the Corridor route, according to some government sources, vid, Apolinar, Héctor (Jan 27, 2024).

Notwithstanding, it is important not to overlook the fact that under the current globalization context, the launching of a completely renewed Interoaceanic Corridor called the attention and economic interest of investors which has triggered and given rise to an apparent struggle among diverse hegemonies and economic superpowers to invest their capital into this project since several years ago, vid, Ávila Romero, Agustín (Abr12,2018).

Mainly the US and China, just to mention the two major ones, who are competing to take full advantage of this new strategic facility which represents undoubtedly a cheaper, and faster alternative as an interoceanic crossing point than Panama's Canal. Below we will highlight some comparative advantages of the Mexican corridor vis-a-vis the Panamanian canal. Nonetheless, before proceeding with our discussion, it is essential to have a general geographic idea where the Transisthmian Stripe and the Interoceanic Corridor are located, as shown in Fig.1 below:

Figure 1: Mexico’s Interoceanic Corridor



Source: Mexican government.

The above illustration clearly shows the two connecting ports, Coatzacoalcos and Salina Cruz, on both extreme sides of the Transisthmian stripe, which depicts the isthmus railroad track connection between these two ports. The Northern one on the Atlantic Ocean side, and the Southern one on the Pacific side.

However, Figure 2 below, provides a more comprehensive and strategic geographical view showing simultaneously the Transismic Corridor along with the Mayan Train trail, which runs from the Mayan Peninsula (Mayan Riviera) down to the Gulf of Mexico´s region and its interconnection with the Corridor railway at Coatzacoalcos port in the Gulf of Mexico. Notice as well that both railroads are being immersed in the South-Southwestern region. This situation clearly emphasizes the geoeconomic and geostrategic relevance for the entire country in the coming years once both railroads reach their full operation.

Figure 2: Transisthmian Corridor and the Mayan Train



Source: https://www.google.com.mx/search?q=ruta+transismico+y+tren+maya&sxsrf=AJOqlzXUzMRb0ErGlqA9RYovWkQOSOLw5w%3A1676931432856&source=hp&ei=aPHzY8nDMpLwkPIPtci_0Ak&iflsig=AK50M_UAAAAAY_P_ePBDuptm-L6-_UDiiLOL78YPitsy&oq=ruta+transismico+y+tre+&gs_lcp=Cgdnd3Mtd2l6EAEYADIHCCEQoAEQCjIHCCEQoAEQCjIHCCEQoAEQCjILCCEQFhAeEPEEEB06BQguEIAEOggILhCABBDUAjoLCC4QgAQQxwEQ0QM6BQgAEIAEOggILhDUAhCABDoLCC4QgAQQxwEQrwE6CAgAEIAEEMsBOgoIABCABBAKEMsBOgcIABANEIAEOgkIABAeEA0Q8QQ6CAgAEBYQHhAKOgsIABAIEB4QDRDxBDoJCAAQFhAeEPEEUABY-mtgv4kBaABwAHgAgAHEAYgBmhOSAQQ4LjE1mAEAoAEB&sclient=gws-wiz#imgrc=WCUAQniZnEi9tM&imgdii=JXxeq1evGcE0uM

Thus, the preceding illustration depicts the Corridor stripe and the Mayan Train railway, and its connection with the Mayan Train running from the Mayan Peninsula (Mayan Riviera) at Coatzacoalcos port in the state of Veracruz México (more than 1500 km) in the Gulf of Mexico on the Atlantic Ocean, paralleling showing its interconnection with the Transisthmian Train in Coatzacoalcos and from this port down to Salina Cruz port in the Pacific ocean (309 km). At the same time, along the railroad track, a land road connecting these two ports (“Transisthmian road”).

To get an even closer idea of the Transismic Corridor alone (303 km) and its two connection ports, Salina Cruz on the Pacific side and Coatzacoalcos, on the Atlantic side, we present Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Transisthmian Corridor and the Transisthmian Stripe



Source: https://lacuarta.mx/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/IMG-20230401-WA0058.jpg

Where it can be seen along the train trailway (yellow) and the transisthmian road (in red) connecting the 309 km Corridor route, between Coatzacoalcos and Salina Cruz ports. Which has two deep-sea ports, a railway, highways, three airports (Minatitlán, Ixtepec, and Huatulco), as well as a gas pipeline and an optic fiber network along the transisthmian stripe. With all this productive infrastructure the Corridor is expected to become an important magnet for foreign or domestic investments, with tax incentives, a free trade zone, customs areas, tariff reductions, a one-stop window for paperwork government red tapes, as well as the development of residential areas and protected natural reserves.

TOWARD A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE STRATEGY ON THE CORRIDOR: SOME REFLECTIONS

Notwithstanding all these public investments it comes out paramount at this point to underscore the fact that this project entailed not merely a reshaping, strengthening, and

modernization of the old Isthmus railroad along with a host of productive infrastructure and commercial services and facilities along the Transisthmian stripe, which physically comprises a trail of barely 300 km between Atlantic and Pacific, focused on increasing its commercial and transportation capability and logistics, to facilitate a massive operation of merchandise from port to port.

In addition to a full-fledged reinforcement and reshaping of the old railroad infrastructure and roads throughout the neighboring South-Pacific, Gulf of Mexico, and South Western regions aiming to support a heavy industrial activity around the ten planned industrial parks throughout this Corridor to support the expected intense economic activity and massive cargo and people along the stripe and later on throughout the rest of neighboring regions once this facility reaches its full operation.

However, together with all these mega federal investments focused primarily on the reinforcement of productive infrastructure along the Corridor stripe as previously mentioned, Mexican strategy has also considered the reinforcement of productive and social urban projects around the major Isthmus municipalities, aiming to upgrade people's living standards and well-being conditions based upon a socially inclusive and sustainable regional economic strategy named "Programa de Desarrollo para el Istmo de Tehuantepec" according to official sources, such a Rafael Marin Mollinedo, former General Coordinator of this project, Vid, Marin Molinedo, R. (May 2019). Backed by the Multimodal Logistics Platform derived from current Mexico´s national economic strategy pursued by President Lopez Obrador vid, AMLO(2019). Which aims to implement the "Development Pole" concept along the Corridor stripe connecting two important regions, namely, the South-Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico vid, PODEBIS(Polos de Bienestar,2023).

The rationale behind this strategy entails the concept of "Growth Poles" aimed to combine public and private investments and are specifically built around an already-existing resource (Transisthmian Corridor as an interoceanic commercial facility) along the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, vid, Speakman, John et Al.(2013)

In other words, a growth pole is comprised of multiple simultaneous investments coordinated throughout many sectors to support self-sustaining industrialization in a country, vid, Perroux, Francois(Jul, 1963), but we deem paramount a close supervision and involvement of the State, not just merely a "stakeholder" but "major stakeholder" but to guarantee its socially inclusive impact or at least fostering a sound balance between growth and population's well–being as desirable by Mexican authorities, especially when focused to a strategical but deprived and lagged Mexican region as the Isthmus stripe and not to

repeat the aftermath of Mexican's maquiladora experience in northern Mexico vid, Luis-Pineda, O.(1998) and Luis-Pineda, O.(1998bis).

On this line of thought it is important to underscore that unlike the classical neoliberal profit-oriented strategy adopted by most peripheral economies market-oriented economies, such as Mexico and Latin America, the current Mexican Government has primarily emphasized a socioeconomic and inclusive economic strategy framework throughout this region nurtured from the Mexican national economic strategy (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (PND). In such a way that Tehuantepec's Corridor region abides by this strategy. Accordingly, the above-referred regional strategy focused on the Isthmus stripe called "Programa de Desarrollo para el Corredor Transísmico," according to its former Corridor Project's spokesman and General Director, Rafael Marin Mollinedo, early mentioned as a result of its evident geostrategic relevance for the Transismic Region and Mexico, vid, Circuitotinto.org (Dec7, 2019).

Under such virtue, in addition to the above-referred strengthening of the productive capacity along the Corridor, the referred strategy comprises a full range of social and urban infrastructure focused on upgrading people's living standards in major municipalities along the Transisthmian stripe. Such as

- Strengthening educational infrastructure: schools and universities
- Promotion technological research and development: innovation ecosystem,
- Furnishing energy infrastructure: gas pipelines, oil pipelines, and non-renewable sources.
- Promotion of public health, education, and nutrition programs.
- Strengthening public services infrastructure: water, electricity, energy, drainage, and solid waste treatment.
- Promoting housing infrastructure and urban equipment.
- Fostering agricultural, fishing, and agro-industrial sector infrastructure.

EMPHASIZING PRODUCTIVE PROMOTION AND INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

As already pinpointed, such strategy comprises a wide range of critical aspects of productive, logistics, transportation, communication, and social infrastructure across the entire region, such as strengthening railroads, roads, port facilities, and airports and a refurnishing social infrastructure of the major municipalities along the Transisthmian stripe aimed to attract foreign and domestic investments across the Corridor. Among others:

- Tax exemption for four years of operation

- Wideband internet connection along the stripe
- Energy supply along the isthmus zone: Pipeline gas furnishing from port to port (Coatzacoalcos to Salina Cruz) along the Corridor's stripe.

The rationale behind all these measures results evidently explainable since they will allow the strengthening of the Corridor's productive capacity along this region. Accordingly, the ten planned industrial parks are strategically located along crucial municipalities of Veracruz and Oaxaca across the isthmus stripe. The bottom line of this new productive infrastructure is to cover a range of industrial branches and services, such as high technology, agro-industry, etc. Seeking to add aggregate value to the foreign or domestic inputs and merchandise processed within Mexican territory along the Corridor. Items which can be later reexported as final consumer goods to foreign markets through the Corridor to Europe, the US, Central and South America, and Asia via either the Gulf of Mexico or the Pacific Ocean.

NEARSHORING-OFFSHORE AND OTHER CORRIDOR'S COMPARATIVE AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES OF MEXICO TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Given the Corridor's geostrategic location and its recent launching, this facility has become a mammoth magnet for foreign direct investments, as shown since several years ago, in 2022, by the attraction of 32,447 USdlls from January to September of that year, according to some Mexican government sources, vid Morales, Roberto (Nov22, 2022).

Capital flows which come from the US(39.1%), Canada (9.5%), Spain (7.1%), Argentina (4.9%), and Japan(3.9%), respectively. Although the attraction of foreign investment for the Southwestern region is not new since it has been for a long time in the eyes of the transnational capital, vid, Ávila Romero, Agustín. (2018).

NEARSHORING VS OFFSHORING.

Nearshoring as opposed to offshoring or off-shore production model, entails nowadays an excellent opportunity for Mexico, in particular for the Trans-isthmic corridor, as no doubt can place the country and the Corridor not only as one the essential players in North America but as well as one of the main headquarters of Asian companies. However, according to some business experts, Mexico could lose these advantages if Mexico doesn't make the necessary domestic structural changes, as pointed ouit by some analysts, vid, Reynold, Verónica (Dec 14, 2022).

Notwithstanding, nearshoring despite all the apparent advantages as economic growth and job opportunities, should not be considered a “panacea” by itself because it implies a double-edged sword for Mexico and for most developing economies since, on one edge, fosters economic growth through new investments flowing into a specific region and thus increasing job opportunities for its population.

However there is no guarantee whatsoever that such an economic boom generated from foreign or domestic investments will render social inclusion and better living standards for the labor force and inhabitants of this long-time-ago poor-lagged region withought a decisive state´s involvement to garantee the implementarion a socially inclusive strategy oriented to foster a balanced economic strategy to balance growth and social well-being and not greater wealth polarization within the region and other externalities such as environmental impacts and natural resources depletion as already happens in northern Mexico with the assembly industry along northern US-Mexican border states aquiladora de exportación) as mentioned earlier, vid, Impacto socioeconomico de la Industria Maquiladora de Exportación en México, vid Luis-Pineda, O.(1998bis).

Well-being under a balanced and socially inclusive economy should be translated not only in terms of economic growth in the region and more job opportunities for people with more competitive wages and better social and urban conditions for major municipalities along the Transismic stripe, to begin with, as expected by the federal government’s strategy, without neglecting the implementation of sustainable, productive exploitation of the region's vast natural resources and full respect of local population’s rich cultural wealth and idiosyncrasy from foreign or domestic investors, vid AMLO-PND(2019).

In this regard, the Mexican State should implement severe public policies to prevent or minimize the onslaught of real estate speculators and all kinds of land predators near the Corridor’s trail from Veracruz to Salina Cruz and the rest of the railways in the Southwestern region seeking at all cost monopolizing private property or water resources from poor families living aside the Corridor at starving levels to deprive them from these valuable resources for pennies, vid, Santos Celdo(Ago, 2023).

Rather, organize these people via collective productive cooperatives or support local MSE (medium and small enterprises) through federal funding to enable them to export their products or merchandise within the rest of Mexico or abroad, taking full advantage of the Corridor facilities and thus enhancing their living standards vis a vis the Corridor´s economic boom (through a socially inclusive regional strategy) as already conceived by the federal government.

Under this context, it is utmost important for Mexico not to repeat the bitter experience of the off-shore productive experience in a developing economy, such as the case of the Assembly industry (the so-called Maquiladora industry) in Northern Mexico, where Mexican government (in neoliberal times) irresponsibly fostered foreign investment aimed to industrialize this region throughout a stripe of more than 3,000 km along the US-Mexico border, allocating assembly plants, of mostly American-owned capital conveniently throughout its major US-Mexico's border municipalities (such as Tijuana, Mexicali, Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales, Matamoros, etc.) to stimulate US economy 'competitiveness' in the world market during the Cold War period, taking full advantage of his southern poor neighbor comparative advantages such as Mexican cheap labor force and close vicinity to US market along with a host of other facilities granted by Mexican authorities such as tax exemptions and an 'ad hoc' regulatory system to facilitate its operation in Mexican territory with marginal integration to Mexican domestic industry and no technological transference to Mexico.

All of these facilities were granted under the acquiescence of Mexico´s government, with the illusion of foreign currency and job generation in the Northern region. However, the resulting outcome of such a policy was growth (cheap formal jobs and foreign currency). Still, it featured a lack of a socially inclusive strategy from the Mexican government around major maquiladoras's municipalities since its operation has been functioning as a virtual industrial enclave into Mexican territory, inflicting around people and border towns a host of externalities through time vid, Luis-Pineda, O.(1998).

Recapping, the Mexican assembly industry experience, it is an important lesson for Mexico and should be carefully considered all the capital flows into the region from the maquila industry, although undoubtedly contributed to fostering an economic boom along Mexico's Northern states (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas) through formal jobs and foreign currency inflows for Mexico. These have been achieved at a very high socioeconomic and environmental cost and other myriad externalities for such a region and Mexico.

However, it is worthwhile mentioning some additional consequences of this strategy, such as the aggravation of the pre-existing unbalanced, socially exclusive, and unsustainable development in the country, as well as the exacerbation of the North-South socio-economic asymmetry in Mexico. Like the existence of a dual economy in the country since a long time ago, as recognized by some scholars, as Manuel Gollás, vid, Gollás, Manuel (1982). That explain our concern to strive for a socially inclusive strategy for Mexico

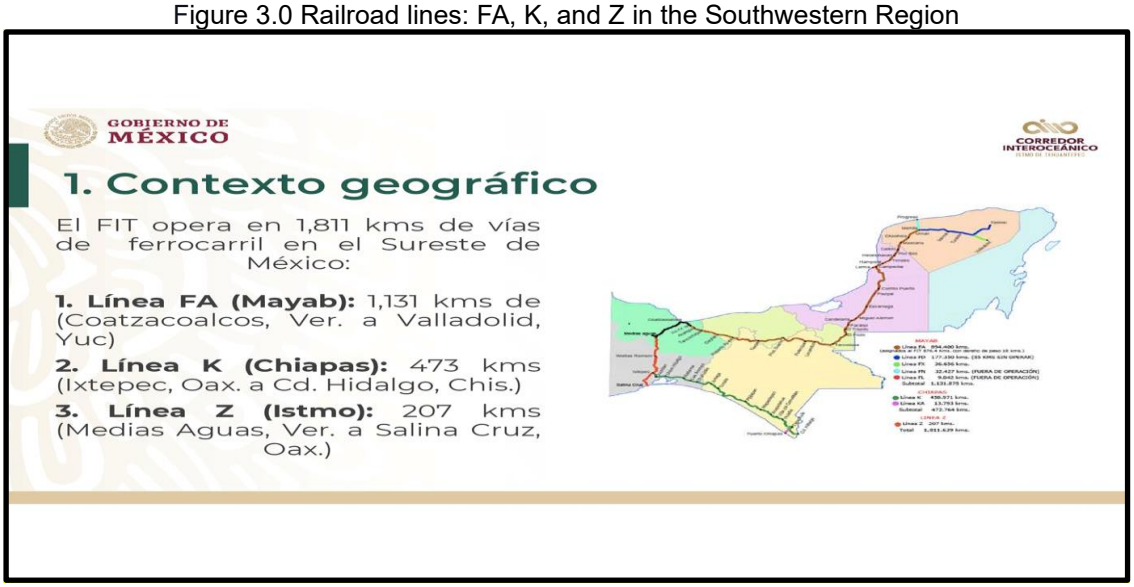
in the years to come which entailed a fully reorientation of such economy model prevailing in the neoliberal time, vid Luis-Pineda, O.(2008).

EXPANDING THE RAILROAD INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM OF THE CORRIDOR THROUGH THE CONNECTION TO THE MAYAN TRAIN ROUTE AND THE ISTHMUS RAILWAY TO CENTRAL AMERICA.

With an evident intention from the current Mexican government to expand the Corridor's railroad capabilities to facilitate the expected unprecedented cargo and passenger and massive traffic among the three economic regions, South-Pacific, Southern, and Gulf of Mexico, the government is implementing the operation of a total of three railroad lines through these regions which are described as follows:

1) Z-line(Isthmus line): Backbone or initial route, from Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz, to Salina Cruz, Oaxaca.
2) FA-line (Mayab line): It seeks to connect Coatzacoalcos to Palenque, Chiapas, along the Mayan Train route. And from this place to connect Mérida in Yucatan, in the Southwestern region. Total trail distance of 1,131 km. The longest one. But the FA-line from Coatzacoalcos to Palenque, 310 km has just been inaugurated by President AMLO, vid, CNMX. MX(Sep13, 2024). This line becomes actually an extension branch of the Transisthmian railway starting from Salina Cruz port and crossing four states, namely, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Tabasco and Chiapas. Connecting in this case Coatzacoalcos port to Palenque, Chiapas.
3) K-line (Chiapas line): It goes from Ixtepec in Oaxaca state on the isthmus stripe near Salina Cruz to Cd. Hidalgo in the state of Chiapas. Border town near Guatemala. The line is intended to serve as a connecting railway for both cargo and passengers from Guatemala and Central America into Mexico through the Corridor´backbone railway. (Trail distance of 473 km). Still pending to be inaugurated by Mexican government.

Figure 3.0 Railroad lines: FA, K, and Z in the Southwestern Region



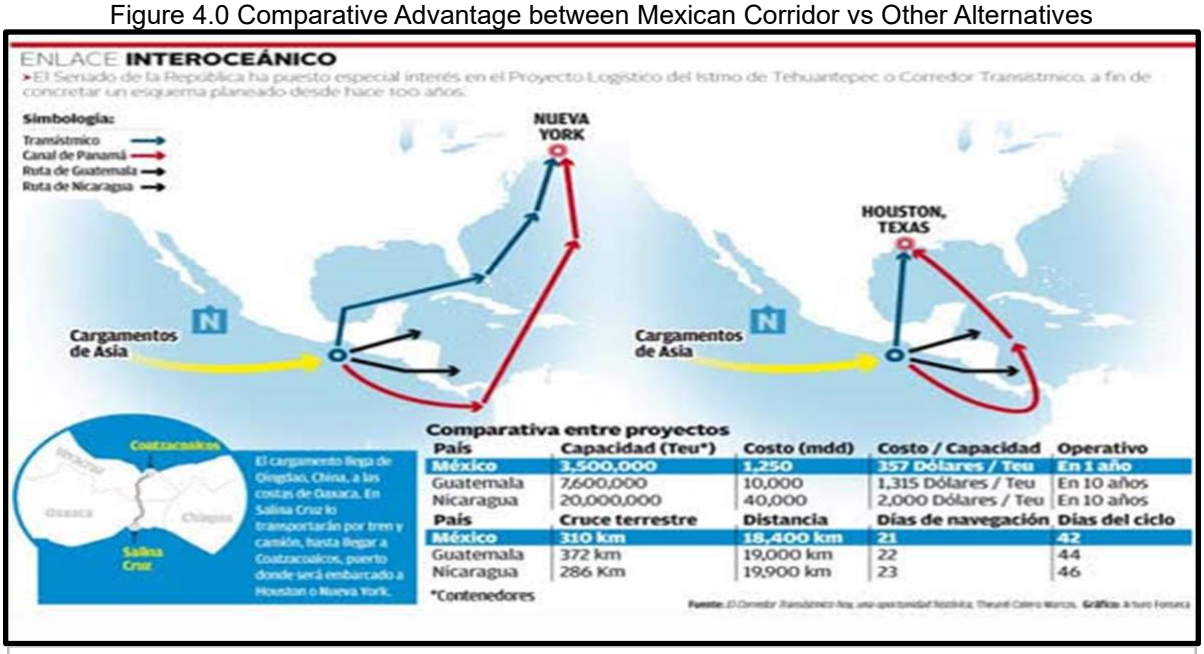
Source: https://amf.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2.%20Infraestructura%20de%20transportes%20para%20el%20Istmo%20y%20el%20Sureste%20%28CIIT%29.pdf

The bottom line of all of these infrastructure investments from Mexico is evidently focused on supporting a massive flow of freight and people throughout the above-mentioned regions through these new railway lines in the coming years. With all this new and refurbished infrastructure, it is intended to facilitate the interconnection and interaction among the following three economic regions: South-Pacific (Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Chiapas), Southeast (Yucatán, Quintana Roo, and Campeche), and the Gulf of Mexico (Tabasco, Veracruz, and Tamaulipas). That will be seamlessly interconnected and reached through the Isthmus Corridor, which will become the backbone railway connector among all of them and the natural exit gate to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in the near future.

CORRIDOR COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE VIS-A-VIS PANAMÁ CANAL AND OTHER NEARBY INTEROCEANIC PROJECTS

Firstly, to illustrate the Corridor advantages vis a vis alternatives nearby connecting facilities between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans such Panamá Canal, Guatemala y Nicaragua routes) to major world markets it results in convenient to have a glance to Figure 4 below:

Figure 4.0 Comparative Advantage between Mexican Corridor vs Other Alternatives



Fuente: Legiscomex digital Enlace: https://www.legiscomex.com/documentos/mexico-corredor-transistmico-virginia-perez-actualizacion

As can be easily seen from the precedent chart, which shows a summary of statistical indicators comparing the other interoceanic crossing alternatives versus the Mexican Corridor. At first glance, there are better competitive advantages for the Mexican Corridor in freight costs (Mill.Us$dls), cost/capacity ($/Teu), land crossing distance (km) between the Atlantic and Pacific, and navigation time (days). Altogether, these indicators show better competitive advantages for the Mexican Corridor against its competitors toward nearby world markets, such as the US's East Coast, etc.

Secondly, but not least important, is the fact that Mexico is subscribed to the USMCA Treaty (United States-Mexico-Canada) and the fact that it represents the first US trade partner to surpass China and Canada as a trade partner under such a treaty. As such, the Corridor becomes of utmost relevance for Mexico since it will speed up and facilitate its trade toward both the Atlantic and Pacific US coasts, as well as its interconnection with the US Southern border through the traditional Mexico-US railway system, which now will be reinforced by the trade with Asia and Europe via the Corridor.

Thirdly, and lastly, in front of the unfortunate current clogging occurring through the Panamanian Canal, given that the canal is drying and its crossing becomes extremely difficult and costly, which altogether implies a substantial delay and expensive for the massive ship traffic between the two oceans.

Thus, the Mexican Corridor becomes the best option among all the transoceanic crossing alternatives located in America. Given the fact that the Panamian Canal's current drying out and concomitant long awaiting crossing time for cargo ships using it and its

losing comparative advantage as a crossing facility between Atlantic and Pacific oceans which altogether becomes an unmissable opportunity for Mexico,Vid, Vanguardia(Feb23,2024).

Therefore the Mexican canal becomes right now of utmost important given that around 6% of the global flow of cargo crosses through the Panamian Canal, making the Mexican canal an unbeatable alternative, vid, AFP(Ago,2023). And it is expected to move 1.4 million containers per year, and expected to become a cheaper and faster alternative than the Panamanian Canal, according to Forbes, vid, Forbes(nov9,2022).

SOCIAL PEACE CLIMATE BACKED BY IN SITU NAVY SURVEILLANCE ALONG THE CORRIDOR STRIPE

To guarantee a climate of social peace and seamless operation in the Corridor area, the Mexican government, and thus facilitate productive and commercial operations along the Corridor, the current Lopez-Obrador administration has wisely decided to hand over its operation control to the Mexican Navy from the ports administration, highways, and industrial parks. Through this mechanism, it is expected that productive and commercial operations across the corridor and region take place and are accomplished by the provisions of the aforementioned official strategy and minimize deviations temptations from people in charge of its operation and the official strategy implementation from its objectives.

The rationale behind this decision is based on Mexico's historical background, already mentioned above. But also for currently having a president like never before in history, a nationalist government that emphatically endeavors and is beein committed to eradicate corruption from the public system and enhencing well-being for the vast majority of Mexicans with President Lopez Obrador´s slogan “primero los pobres” (“poor people first”).

Thus combatting long time abuses and corruption practices committed by past administrations (Salinas, Zedillo, DelaMadrid For, Calderon, Peña Nieto). Who irresponsibly granted concessions at large of most important state-owned enterprises (oil, gas, energy, railroads, mine industry, etc). Particularly, Mexican railroad system to a US-Multinational Kansas railroad during President Ernesto Zedillo’s administration following the “IMF recommendations” nurtured from the Washington Consensus´hegemonic policies (“recipes”), vid ElMostrador(Oct11, 2004), which disastrously impacted Mexican economy, featuring anti-development policies for the country. Recipes which inconceivably were repeated and implemented in most major Latin American countries, as pointed out by other scholars such as Martínez, Rangel Rubi et al., Vid. Martínez Rangel, Rubi et al(2012).

For instance the concession for a section of the trans-isthmic railway of barely 100 km (from Cosoleacaque to Medias Aguas in the state of Veracruz) to a Mexican company "Grupo México", allied to transnational capital, who recently attempted to hinder the completion of this Corridor but eventually accepted (under strong political pressure) to sign an agreement with Mexican government to release this short trail of the Transismic railroad, vid Contralinea(Jun1, 23).

Thus enabling Mexican authorities to proceed with the completion of the Corridor, despite strong opposition from this powerful industrial enterprise which incidentally was one of the major owners of the entire Mexican railway system thanks to large concessions graTnted by past corrupt regimes who ruled Mexico. But to have an idea of how important is the current Mexican railway system distributed throughout the Macrosouth region, we depict the following illustration which depict the three railway system in this macroregion.



Fuente: Infobae
Enlace: https://www.infobae.com/mexico/2023/01/17/gobierno-de-amlo-inicio-operaciones-de-seguridad-donde-correra-el-tren-transistmico-el-ultimo-megaproyecto/?outputType=amp-

As we can easily observe from the above chart, which shows a host of square stations painted in “green” representing checkpoints stations in charge of navy personnel supervising the “in situ” operation of the four lines Z, FA, K, and Dos Bocas refinery railway. All of them located in the Southwestern region where it is reported the traveling distance between two connecting stations in kilometers along with the number of navy supervising

personnel assigned to each line, according to its priority and distance, for instance, the Z-line (307 km, Coatzacoalcos-Salina Cruz, 1,827 personnel), FA-line(328 Km, Coatzacoalcos-Palenque, 720 personnel), K-line (1,455 km, Ixtepec- Cd. Hidalgo, 1,455 personnel) and Dos Bocas Refinery-Ramón Ayala (95 Km, 360 personnel).

The rationale of this close and “in situ” supervision is evidently to guarantee a peaceful operation climate for the commercial flow and industry operation along the four railroad lines for the coming years in such a way as to facilitate a smooth operation not only along the Trans-isthmic Corridor but through the rest of the megaprojects currently implemented the Southwestern region, such the Mayan Train and Dos Bocas refinery, among other important projects taking place in this region, to be accomplished according to the expected official strategy and minimize deviations from the objectives set either by corruption, violence or social unrest.

Furthermore, this measure seeks likewise to contribute to tempering the migration onslaught problem coming from Central and South America who ordinarily crosses the Corridor's region on their long journey to the Northern border Mexican states and the United States in search of the so-called "American dream" who utilize the "Beast train" coming from Guatemala’s border into Mexican territory. Unfortunately, many of these people, who easily mimic the local population, remain instead in the Isthmus stripe and other places across the entire Southwestern region, looking for jobs or a way of living with socioeconomic and urban implications among its major municipalities, Vid, Wolf,Sonja (coord)(2020).

A BRIEF OUTLOOK ON GLOBAL, DOMESTIC, AND SOUTHWESTERN REGION ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND PERSPECTIVES ON MEXICAN CORRIDOR

Before concluding this paper, it is worthwhile mentioning some critical socioeconomic remarks from the world, domestic and Southwestern region.

Amidst an economically troubled world, affected on one side by the recent Covid pandemic and its dramatic implications on death tolls and concomitant recession at the world level derived by highly indebted countries attempting to struggle against the Covid and reactivation of their damaged economies, for instance, Latin America, Vid,CEPAL(Jun, 2022). Along with other macroeconomic impacts of Covid-19 at the world level, Vid, Warwick McKibbin et. Al.(May, 2021).

Later on, the global struggle to minimize the effect of the oil and gas shortage and other agro-commodities as fertilizers (supply commodity chains) derived from the Russian-Ucranian war and which affected both developed and peripheral economies, as pointed out

since 2022 by some scholars like Ruth Edam and Divine Forchar, given Russia major leadership in such critical commodities, affecting not only to US, Canada, UK, and European countries who punished Russia and were affected by its counter reaction offensive generated inflation, supply chains disruption impacting the world over, vid, Endam, Ruth et Al.(Mar25,2022).

Under such global scenario, the Mexican economy has successfully so far come out from both woes with positive economic results as opposed to most Latin American countries, thanks to the domestic strategy adopted by President Lopez-Obrador, far from IMF recipes, throughout the country during the last five years, oriented, primarily on strengthening the domestic market and socially inclusive context through significant mega investments in productive infrastructure throughout the nation. As is shown by the recent drop of 8.9 million people who leave poverty by 2022, from the 55.7 poor million existing in 2020 to 46.8 million reported by 2022, among other important social achievements, and the extreme poverty dropped from 10.8 to 9.1 million people,Vid, Headtopics(Ago11, 2023).

On the other hand, the Mexican GDP annual rate will reach by the end of the current year an estimated 4% and is expected to attain a similar figure by 2024, according to the Mexican government. There have also been a host of social measures implemented to increase people's aggregate demand in the country, such as an 88% increase in minimum wage in Mexico during the current administration. And thus increasing people's purchasing power for the first time in modern Mexico,vid,TradingEconomics(2024)

Altogether, Mexican economy evolution has been observing an increasing trend, during the last five years, despite a drop of 8% during 2020 due to the pandemic recession, Vid, Mexicocomovamos (Jul31, 2023). Despite many people in Mexico and abroad believing that the country would be incapable of recovering from past pandemic effects. Such as the famous Moody firm, vid Moodys (Sep1, 2023). Now they are discussing of a new "Mexico´s economic take-off," vid, Paez, Alejandro et Al.(Ago18, 23).

In respect to the rest of Latin American countries, Mexican economy performance shows positive outlook so far in 2023. Given its solid behavior, Mexico's leadership is now hoping that a robust economy will prove vital against the likely worsening of conditions, as it. With growth rates through April 2023, comfortably in positive territory, the country's performance thus far in 2023 has been somewhat of a surprise, having repeatedly defied economists' expectations with its sheer resilience and positive data releases. Given this solid performance, moreover, Mexico's leadership is now hoping that a robust economy will prove vital against the likely worsening of conditions, as it anticipates "rolling up its sleeves to withstand the spillover effects from the slowdown" (even a potential US recession), as

pointed out by Valerie Hernández, a financial analyst from Internationalbanker.com,Vid, Hernandez, Valerie (Ago9, 2023).

MEXICAN CORRIDOR AND SOUTHWESTERN REGION´S PERSPECTIVES

As regard to the Shouwestern region situation, it is been recognized from long time ago that is a “rich region (blessed by its vast natural resources) but unfortunately “immersed into poverty” as pointed out by Ernesto Correa, vid,Correa, E.(Ago3, 2014). Region wich also has permanently “lagged behind” from North and Center regions as pinpointed by some scholars like Fariza, Ignacio, vid Fariza, Ignacio (Sep15, 2017).

As well as it has been far away from a socially inclusive framework for a long time ago although striving for a betterment of its socioeconomic conditions as recognized by Roberto Candelas, vid, Candelas, Roberto (2018) to unexpectable embrace mammoth public investments such as the Corridor, Mayan Train, and Dos Bocas refinery already been inaugurated by Lopez Obrador since two years ago, vid,AMLO (Jul1,2022)

Such mega investments on productive infrastructure are already producing an unprecedented economic boom into the Macrosouth subregions. As shown by the behavior of their subregions such as Tabasco, Campeche, and Oaxaca, with one time lagged economies now are growing at a faster rate than even the wealthiest Northern states such as Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Sonora Vid, Comovamos (Jul, 2023).

Lastly, given the expected massive job creation through the Corridor for the near future, the entire Corridor is expected to become and “employment wall” for the immigration coming into Mexico from Central and South America. Vid,Hernández,Julio(Jun30,2022).

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To begin with, we must bare in mind that this analysis offers a preliminary overview of a very complex situation which involves a socioeconomic deprived and lagged region based on circumstances and elements that are currently being developed without neglecting its historical background. Under this premise, we can advance the following preliminary conclusions:

- Firstly, it is been expected an economic boom along the involved municipalities where the Transismic Corridor crosses. A bonanza, which will no doubt permeate throughout the entire South-Pacific South and Gulf regions for their close geographical vicinity and economic interdependence.
- Secondly, the forthcoming increasing cargo and passengers traffic between the two multimentioned ports will entail concomitant economic growth and greater job

opportunities for local population by the increasing volume of merchandise movement between such ports along the Corridor stripe.

- As a result of the two above events, it is expected an increase in economic activity along the Corridor and a concomitant boom around major municipalities where the Transisthmian Corridor crosses. Which in turn is likely to spread throughout the rest of the neighboring regions as the South-Pacific (Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas) and the Gulf of Mexico's region(Veracruz, Tamaulipas, and Tabasco) by their close geographical proximity and economic interdependence.

In social matters, and along with the economic bonanza it is easily to foresee some social implications associated with the unexpected bonanza along major municipalities:

- The traditional lack of urban infrastructure and basic services, such water supply, energy, housing, and other basic services, such as school, hospital services, food supply, will be unable to cope with the incoming population lured by high job demand along the Corridor, impacting not only major municipalities but as well small villages located around them. Population will be expected to grow from people coming from other places outside the Southwestern region such from Center and Northern Mexico as well from Guatemala and Central America, as already is being happening.
- Another social externality which cannot overlooked here is the fact that given the Corridor geostrategic location, has also been profited by drug trafficking cartels and local gangs for their criminal activities along the stripe, are now also been lured by its new economic bonanza and might exacerbate their activity and produce generate more social insecurity for local residents in the region, and even endangered the whole megaproject in the coming years, if not prevented and severely curtailed by Mexican state,vid, CFR.org Editors(Aug5,2024).
- In short, as a result of the sudden economic bonanza, there is expected a rising people inflow into the region lured by such bonanza wich rapidly exceed the Corridor's economic and social absorptive capacity and thus generating social and urban stress and chaos among its major municipalities in the short and medium run. And thus creating "ghettos" all around such major municipalities along with a host of socioeconomic externalities and generating, if not restricted by Mexico, an uneven socially non-inclusive regional development along with another socioeconomic externalities.

In environmental matters, and concomitant to the economic bonanza we also foresee some environmental implications around the region's major municipalities:

- As a consequence of the forthcoming rapid population increase versus limited urban infrastructure and drainage capacities, waste disposal, increasing energy demand and water treatment facilities in the region. Water and energy shortage is expected as well as pollution problems among major municipalities since current rivers and other water resources are expected not to be sufficient to cope with the expected increase demand not only for the rising residential demand but also from the increasing industrial activity around the 10 industrial parks being implemented along the Corridor stripe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the previous conclusions, we deem of utmost importance to advance some reflections and recommendations aimed at contributing to reinforce the spirit that drives the inclusive development strategy implicit in the economic strategy conceived for the Transismic Corridor for the coming years:

- Under the fact that the region is its rich cultural heritage and focused their attention on the looting of the exploitation of its natural resources and take advantage of its comparative advantages and such as gold, silver and its wind wealth such as Iberdrola made by a Spanish company As almost the old Transismico railway and the wind industry but that have been socially exclusive because they have not translated into better well-being for the isthmus population.
- However, the new investments will generate an income for the region's population, both for the producers of goods and services in the region and for the regional workforce participating in this production process.
- The prevailing economic asymmetry between the North and South puts Mexican workers from the South at a great disadvantage with respect to labor hands costs in the US and Canada. In the absence of severe socioeconomic policy protecting domestic labor hand, they will be overexploited by foreign and domestic private investors alike, taking advantage of their poverty and unemployment, as already has happened in Northern Mexico with export maquiladora industry case from mostly US capital-owned "maquiladoras" under the off-shore production model.
- Under a region immersed in social conflicts derived from the past but also spurred on by the overlooking of post-revolutionary and neoliberal governments who have ignored it rich cultural heritage and barely focused their attention on plundering and

over-exploitation of its natural resources and taking advantage of its comparative advantages and such as gold, silver and its wind wealth such as the case Iberdrola (a Spanish TNT, Iberdrola, who build an Eolic energy enterprise located in La Ventosa largest Eolic Plant in Mexico with fully disregard to local people's well-being under the neoliberal acquiescence during those years, and thus creating a socially non-inclusive project with no benefits for the region´s poor people who owned this lands since the benefits accrued for this foreign firm never spilled over lands owner and isthmus population´s well-being, as cheap energy and job opportunities, for instance.

v. Although the expected new investments from current Mexican government are expected to generate an economic boom in the region's population, from both producers of goods and services in the region, as well as for the regional workforce participating in this production process.
vi. The economic asymmetry between the North and South puts workers from the South at a disadvantage. That they will be overexploited by foreign investors, as happened in the north of the country with the export maquiladora industry (assembly industry) office-shore production
vii. The challenge for Mexico in the years to come is to ensure that the implementation of the strategy designed for this region is not delayed by the interests of investors, both domestic and foreign, and ignore the growth and well-being of the majority of the population that has remained behind for centuries and I consider that it is time that they are taken into account. Here are some pertinent recommendations:
viii. In order not to repeat the aftermath's Maquiladora experience and prevent labor overexplotation from incoming investors entering the region. It is highly recommended, to liberate labor price within the Transismic stripe so that foreign investors pay at least wage levels similar or close to those prevailing in developed economies with similar labor qualifications and thus increase regional aggregate demand and the regional's population purchasing power and living standards vis a vis the expected higher living costs associated to the new investments entering now into the region, with the price rise increase in food, shelter, energy, water, all kind of basic services as a result of a higher industrial and services demand around the region's major municipalities.
ix. Lasty but not least, organize and prioritize financial support for local producers (SME) through financial packages designed by Mexican authorities in order to

enable them to sell their domestic products and services not only within the region but take advantage of the Corridor facility to export them abroad.

Bottom line is not only to foster local production for domestic consumption but to generate added value into them and promoting productive chains among SME's to boost an economic growth and bonanza withing the Corridor stripe but to facilitate the achievement of a "multiplier effect" from the federal investment already being made from Mexico into this region which also would positively impact or reach the isthmus's neighboring states, such as Guerrero, Chiapas and Veracruz. Without overlooking the opportunity to productively chain the regional domestic SME output to the large enterprises to be located at the Isthmus Corridor stripe as potential input suppliers (and not to repeat the aftermath Maquiladora Assembly experience on this regard of lack of official support and technological transference to Mexican SME located around the American Assembly industry in northern Mexico).

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