

INTRODUCTION

THE STUMBLING BLOCKS AND CONSTRUCTIVE PATHS OF U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

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This book came about after the presentation of a set of lectures entitled “Advanced Seminar Lecture Series on U.S.-Mexico Relations 2005,” where researchers from the UNAM’s Center for Research on North America (CISAN) and from MSU’s Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) had the opportunity to present their findings to CLACS students and MSU faculty. Each of them dealt with either a particular research topic or finding or a novel exploration of different issues that we consider important to analyze in the current scenario of the U.S.-Mexico relationship.

It is important to highlight that this book does not attempt to deal in a linear way with the issues it contains, but rather to provide an open and a provocative forum for exploring and discussing different ideas and perspectives. These essays truly reflect the situation of the stumbling blocks of the U.S.-Mexico relations.

We purposely provided a forum to ensure that each researcher would offer a logic and support for his or her points and then test their assumptions with participating faculty and the audience. When we finished, we decided that the presentations were not only rich in content but in dealing with non-traditional subjects in the relations between the two neighbors. The experience was qualitatively stimulating to the point that it was worth trying to present them in what today is this book.

This effort demonstrates that an increasing number of Mexican and U.S. scholars are committed to building and advancing a constructive path for a better understanding between our two countries. Therefore, the book explores a number of “selected” issues on the U.S.-Mexican agenda. As explained later, priorities in the relationship change because of variations in interests, unexpected events, and political environments. Some of them, like the scientific contribution, may not be on the priority list, but nonetheless are critical topics because of the need to regulate the production of genetically modified organisms. Another non-traditional topic included is the importance of working on each other’s public opinion. Public opinion in each country, what each society thinks of the other, is its lowest point, and governments need to do a better job in educating and informing citizens.

We faced a difficult task in determining what topics would be included both in the lecture series and the book. As editors, we wanted to include every single topic affecting the relationship between the two countries. But space, time, and scarce resources forced us to limit the topics. The authors are well known scholars, media experts, and many of them have participated as consultants or advisors for policy makers. Some of

their contributions are cases placed in a complex interdependent analysis, and others are thorough explanations where theories have not yet been developed.

Over time, the change in topics in the bi-national relationship is clear. The issues in the U.S.-Mexican relationship have revolved around a variation of critical themes derived from each country's natural political economy and the forces of domestic interests of their respective policy agendas. The issues that were a priority in 1994 have a different importance today. For instance, in the mid-1990s, concerns related to trade, environment and labor protection were both nations' top priorities. At the beginning of the 2000s, with the adjustment and dislocation of economic sectors in each country due to the new free trade agreement, tariffs, quotas and subsidies —this included Canada as well— became the top issues on the agenda. And then came September 11, 2001, and the agenda once more changed to place security at the top, with important consequences for almost everything else in bilateral relations. At the beginning of 2009, national security continues to be the main concern, with two additional components: immigration control and border security.

The book can be used in two formats: as a complementary source book for advanced courses on international relations, U.S.-Mexico relations, and North American studies; and as a scholarly resource on selected topics on U.S.-Mexico bilateral relations. A very important caveat to mention is that the authors write about questions that have been significant over the last six years. So, there is no corresponding timeline with a presidential administration in either country. Suffice it to say that in the case of Mexico, it includes the administrations of Presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón; and in the case of the United States, the first and second terms of President George W. Bush.

The Framework of U.S.-Mexico Relations

The relationship of the United States and Mexico has been at the forefront of both countries' foreign relations agendas. At the beginning of the new millennium, this vital, entwined relationship offers new challenges and opportunities. And as neighbors, it encompasses new dynamics that challenge public policy formulation in both nations.

However, any analysis of this relationship must start from the recognition of each country's specific history. The United States and Mexico not only have different origins but very distinct heritages. From colonial times to the process of emancipation as independent nations until modern times, language, religion and cultural differences have stressed misperceptions and reinforced negative attitudes about one another.

Relations between these nations have never been easy, probably because Americans and Mexicans both value national pride and patriotism. The former find their identity in power and domination, while the latter reject foreign intervention and discrimination. Their geographical location fits perfectly James N. Rosenau's descrip-

tion of a “distant proximity,” making them a social laboratory for today’s international relations.¹

It is important to recognize that the origins of what makes the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico difficult are still being debated. Whether everything started by the mid-1800s or right after WWII is open for discussion and academic research. What is clear is that in the early 1960s, the relationship began to increase in magnitude and intensity. Flows of goods and people grew significantly during this period making the geographical border area a critical point on the bilateral agenda.² Likewise, this relationship was at the forefront of the new forces of globalization and regionalization.

Their traditional geographical relationship is currently embedded in numerous, complex matrices that go beyond the border itself. These issues are economic, political, social and cultural and offer no simple answers. Moreover, the forging of North America as a regional economic bloc has imposed on both nations fluid and dynamic interactions requiring attention not only from governments but also from their respective societies. The strong, visible repercussions are points of contention that offer opportunities to build on, as in the case of those who advocate eliminating borders and those who support the construction of fences that divide.

The relationship is multifaceted and extensive, as it follows a complex model of interdependence where decisions made on one side of the border have significant and immediate repercussions on the other. From the “official” content of the bilateral agenda, which includes energy, trade and logistics, to the de facto agenda of unprecedented migratory flows, drug smuggling, increasing inequality, disputes over natural resources and an expanding role of transnational NGOs and cultural interaction, the list includes every topic imaginable.

For some time, especially at the beginning of the George W. Bush administration, relations were cordial and promised a very constructive path. However, the 9/11 attacks had an impact on that assumption when most of the attention of the U.S. administration switched from regional issues to Afghanistan and Iraq, while placing national security at the forefront of its foreign policy.

As interactions and day-to-day presence have increased, the psychological and ideological forces of stereotyping regained ground and showed their impact by impeding full mutual understanding.

Following Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński’s interpretation for understanding such forces, there are three ways whereby one culture can approach “others”: 1) by declaring them enemies and thus promoting war; 2) by advocating isola-

¹ Professor James N. Rosenau is renowned for his work on the dynamics of world politics and the overlap of domestic and foreign affairs. He is the author of scores of articles and more than 35 books, including *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change in Continuity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

² Oscar Martinez writes about these benchmarks in the Introduction of the book he edited, *The U.S.-Mexican Borderlands. Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Wilmington, DE: Jaguar Books/ Scholarly Resources, 1996).

tionism and building fences, or 3) by building bridges to the other through communication and dialogue.³

Mexico and the United States have already learned from war and conflict with one another. At the same time, the stage of distrust between them has not been overcome due to the reinforcement of stereotypes and myths. Arrays of ideas of cultural superiority or imaginary threats still reproduce a perception of an ethnocentric reality, where there is no space for recognizing that we are all simultaneously diverse and equally human.

Taking into account that the origins and current implications of free trade (the North American Free Trade Agreement) in Mexico and the U.S. have been intensively explored from an economic, political and public policy perspective, we want to highlight the need for reinforcing the study of the human factor. Deepening the analysis of culture and society appears to be the next step forward for this relationship. Values and traditions are core elements for understanding the way national identities operate, and therefore essential issues for promoting alternative forms of cooperation between U.S. and Mexican societies.

We argue that in order to overcome the stage of self-centered cultures, our countries need to recognize that interacting with one another surpasses the exchange not only of goods and people, but of cultural values. Professor Raymond Rocco reinforces this position by saying that “the levels of interdependence between Mexico and the U.S. brought about by the related processes of globalization, transnationalization and migration require the development of [new] forms of governance.”⁴

A clear example is the increasing number of Mexican immigrants to the United States, as this is not only having a demographic impact on both sides of the border, but has evolved into a model where diverse and contradictory traditions and values result in a “cultural hybrid.”⁵ Through Kapuściński’s, it is possible to interpret that the United States and Mexico have come to mirror each other, due to the undeniable interaction between them.

Likewise, today both countries converge as democratic societies where citizens enjoy freedom of choice. Therefore, the starting point for promoting positive attitudes toward one another is building a new political will that understands that cultural change is unavoidable within globalization trends. Because the stage of caring for one another —Kapuściński’s ultimate goal for different cultures— is not yet foreseeable for the United States and Mexico, our aim is to combat the remains of any frozen conflict by promoting mutual knowledge, respect and dialogue.

³ See Ryszard Kapuściński’s detailed work about the construction of “otherness” in his *Encuentro con el otro* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2007).

⁴ Dr. Raymond Rocco is a professor at UCLA. His fields of expertise include political theory, race relations, ethnicity and politics.

⁵ Kapuściński’s, *Encuentro*, 24-25.

The Extent and Distinctiveness Of U.S.-Mexican Relations

Our two countries have come to acknowledge the presence and importance of these factors: the role and weight of their domestic agendas, the dynamics of local needs and the relevance of working on international agreements. At any given time, the three factors do not have the same influence on policy making. In fact, public policies directed at one country may correspond to all three factors at a given moment, while the other country may respond with a policy that corresponds to one or two of the factors. The difficulty, now and in the future, is to ensure that those policies are compatible with the neighbor's remedies.

The issues that come to the top of U.S.-Mexico agenda continue to be a priority for Mexico and of critical importance for the United States. The areas include three levels of priority: 1) high priority, including border and logistical security, aviation and maritime security, terrorism intelligence-sharing, migration, terrorist and drug financing and banking and military and law enforcement cooperation; 2) mid-level priority, including energy, trade, environmental and natural resource management, health and food safety, manufacturing, economic sector coordination and emergency management; and 3) low priority, including education, scientific cooperation, family reunification, child protection, labor and human rights, regional and social development and cultural exchanges. This list is neither exhaustive nor complete, but illustrates the wide and complex range of issues involved. Each one has a subset of areas and topics that makes them virtually unattainable.

One area that represents a serious point of contention is migration. While immigration policies and controls are polarizing in the United States, Mexicans living in the U.S. resent the immigrant-bashing attitudes displayed in most communities. Regardless of the two countries' interactive labor market, immigration reform remains unresolved. Important sectors of the U.S. economy like agriculture, services, construction and the hospitality industry, where the forces of supply and demand are at full strength, continue to rely on immigrant labor. The situation attracted the full attention of the United States with the recent, unprecedented rallies of thousands of migrants in Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Miami and New York. As immigrants took to the streets, the news media provided prime-time coverage of the conditions, forces and human side of immigration.⁶ Yet, the immigration reform bill, supported by the Bush administration, was a casualty of the polarization and did not get enough support in Congress to become law.

Border security has increased as result of a new domestic U.S. national security policy. As never before, Washington has created new policies to increase Americans' security and communities with extensive law enforcement, intelligence and anti-ter-

⁶ Randal C. Archibold's front-page article reported on the marches. "Immigrants Take to U.S. Streets in Show of Strength", *The New York Times*, May 2, 2006, A1.

rorism measures.⁷ These policies have an impact on the two countries bordering the U.S. since they are the nations with the most active movement of people and goods in the world. As reported by Manuel Chavez in his chapter, U.S. Homeland Security officers on the border with Mexico perform almost one million inspections per day. Measures that are part of the new national security policy seek primarily to deter potential terrorism, but also to control illegal immigration and drug trafficking. The new national security paradigm is non-negotiable; however, the programs and initiatives derived from it can be adjusted by open collaboration.

Likewise, trade and transportation are a combined priority item for both countries. The almost one billion dollars of trade per day is of critical importance for many sectors of both economies, including agriculture, electronics, textiles, transportation, auto-parts, home appliances and oil. The flow of goods and services is also part of the economic interdependence experienced by both countries in the last 20 years. The fully-integrated economic sectors in North America cannot be separated without causing fatal damage to both economies.

Despite all the difficulties and arid areas of binational relations, the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), recently signed by the governments of the U.S., Mexico and Canada (2005), is an instrument that recognizes the importance of collaboration. The federal governments developed a list of areas under security and prosperity to coordinate bilateral and trinational efforts. The security goals seek primarily to control border flows, air and maritime traffic and the overall security of North America. As mentioned above, this area is not only based on the control of terrorism but on drug and illegal immigration targets. The prosperity goals are oriented toward deepening regional economic integration and ensuring that threats do not disrupt the flows of people and goods. Also, prosperity actions seek to better coordinate sectors like energy, steel, transportation, agriculture, sanitation control and the environment.

Examining Selected Issues in the Relationship

Given this complex scenario, this book offers an exploration of a selective set of critical issues facing Mexico and the United States in the years to come. While the issues presented here serve as a basis for understanding this difficult relationship, they are neither complete nor exhaustive. They also provide some policy recommendations and ideas to be explored by policy makers.

Furthermore, as our countries grow closer, our understanding requires learning and knowing more about each other, so this should be done not only in the classroom or in this book, but at home and in our respective communities.

⁷ The newspaper *USA TODAY* published a series of stories with an extensive review of the new U.S. security anti-terror measures and their different implications for citizens' rights. "Intelligence Bill also an Anti-terror Catchall and Legislation Set Stage for Uniform Driver's Licenses," *USA TODAY*. December 16, 2004.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde presents a comprehensive discussion of Mexico's foreign policy and its relationship to governance in his chapter, "Foreign Policy and Governance in Mexico: A Conceptual and Operational Dilemma." He first examines the forces behind foreign policy and the need to connect them with the population's general well-being. He emphasizes the notion that political systems need to make any policy, whether domestic or international, jibe with the population's well-being. All of this is presented in the context of Mexico's policy toward its powerful neighbor, the United States.

Valdés-Ugalde also examines the assumption that any foreign policy draws its main tenets from domestic affairs, and that many countries exceed that relationship, while others do not even include it in their calculations. He provides an example about how former President Fox understood foreign policy as a tool for domestic development and concluded that the plan failed because of misplaced calculations. Valdés also provides a rich discussion of the theoretical framework for understanding global forces and their assessment to formulate realistic foreign policy. He examines the foreign policy challenges Mexico currently faces and provides a fresh view of a positive, realistic and comprehensive approach that can be taken to deal with the difficult relationship with the United States.

The chapter "Mexico-U.S. Security: A Priority for the Bilateral Agenda" by Leonardo Curzio recognizes the importance of national security in the relationship between Mexico and the United States. Curzio examines the context of George W. Bush's *pre-emptive* doctrine that establishes the United States' new military motivations derived from the 9/11 attacks. He discusses Mexico's difficulty in acknowledging the unprecedented, watershed implications of the post-9/11 period in the U.S. security paradigm that banished all previous arrangements.

Curzio elaborates on U.S. Homeland Security's official discourse about the logic of cooperation with Mexico on security matters. He examines the public statements of the highest U.S. federal security official, and then contrasts that with the reactions by Mexican federal officials. He further writes that the new security circumstances mark a turning point in the traditional interactions of Mexico with the U.S. on military and law enforcement cooperation, leading to the creation of the 2005 Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. He notes the inability of Mexican political actors in dealing practically and objectively with these new realities.

Curzio also ponders the daily intersection of forces of integration and security between the two countries. He cites the increasing volumes of trade, visitors, migrants and also dependency on local resources. He concludes by outlining the paradoxical situation that both countries face for coexisting under these new circumstances.

The broader implications of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) is examined by Manuel Chavez in his chapter "Information, News Media and Diplomacy under the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: Increasing Cooperation in Turbulent Times." He examines SPP contents, requirements and commitments and states that the partnership is a new formal arrangement to enhance structural conditions between the U.S., Mexico and Canada. He also shows how the automotive sector, as an integrated manufacturing model in North America, is facing multiple challenges that the SPP acknowledges and attempts to aid.

Chavez argues that the SPP seeks to deepen and strengthen the already developed economic systems that make the countries regionally interdependent with strong contents of 9/11 U.S. national security concerns. He also points out that information given to the general public about the SPP has been confusing and contradictory, creating a hostile public environment, especially in the United States. And he states that the North American regional agenda depends on active engagement by the three governments to provide and use information and institution building particularly in areas that interact with each other on daily basis. He describes the premises of the SPP, placing them in the context of how the media have presented it to the general public, contrasting at the same time the coverage in each country. His results show that (dis)information has hindered its potentiality and makes a strong case for the use of a sophisticated model of public diplomacy to actively incorporate the news media.

The article by Silvia Núñez-García, "Emerging Influences in Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Relations," attempts to explore the feasibility of recognizing the formation of new elites at the transnational level. Her starting point is the increasing interaction between Mexican and U.S. societies, giving way to unprecedented activities affecting individual and collective behavior.

The basic premise of her analysis is the recognition that the formation of their traditional elites has been different, due to particular histories and cultural backgrounds.

Nevertheless, Núñez seeks to stimulate a debate on the current potential of highly visible transnational actors (Mexican-American social activists and Mexican-American entrepreneurs) who are key players in a new social fabric. In this context in which the driving force behind power can be either politics or the economy, these transnational elites could pave the way to its construction. Addressing the role of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, she illustrates the relevance of institutional arrangements for forging new influential actors on the transnational level.

Elaine Levine's article "Mexican Migration to the United States," describes migration between Mexico and the U.S. as commonplace ever since the two countries redefined their border in 1848. Her chapter discusses the characteristics and most recent changes in this process and highlights the factors determining its continued growth. In discussing these issues, she sheds light on how and why the immigration debate has become so controversial in the U.S. today.

Levine explains that over the years economic conditions in both countries greatly facilitated—and in fact propitiated—a large increase in undocumented migration. The persistent wage differential between the two countries makes jobs that are undesirable for many native-born U.S. workers attractive to Mexicans. Migration provides not only an escape valve for workers the Mexican economy cannot absorb, but also generates foreign exchange and income flows from the remittances those workers send back home. Further, she mentions that nativist sentiments and xenophobic attitudes make immigration policy a highly sensitive issue in the U.S. Moreover, recent immigration legislation and border controls designed

to keep unauthorized migrants out have caused the opposite effect by prompting those who manage to enter the U.S. to stay for longer periods of time, giving rise to more permanent settlement.

Monica Gambrell's chapter, "The 'Maquiladorization' of the Mexican Manufacturing Industry under NAFTA," analyses the process whereby manufacturing wages have been reduced to the level paid in the maquiladora industry. Her objective is to determine the extent to which economic liberalization has operated to the detriment of industrial workers and the development of manufacturing in Mexico. To do this, she carefully separates the impact that the two major economic crises have had on wages from that which can fairly be attributed to free trade, focusing on GATT and NAFTA. This industry-wide comparison is then split into the different branches of industry to increase the number of comparisons between general manufacturing and maquiladoras. She detects three types of responses to free trade: branches of manufacturing that cut their wages exactly to the maquiladora level; branches that fall even further below this level; and branches that have been able to maintain their wages significantly above this minimum. The author examines the structural and political reasons behind these different wage policies and, based on that, makes policy recommendations.

In Edit Antal's chapter, "The United States and Mexico in the Face of Scientific Uncertainty: Regulating Genetically Modified Organisms," the author takes a comprehensive look at the challenges for Mexico and the United States of the two countries' discordant regulations. She includes an analysis based on the differences between the decision-making process, regulations, institutions and actors in the two countries.

By crossing elements from political economy, participatory democracy and comparative public policy studies, Antal differentiates U.S. deregulation strategy for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) with that of Mexico, which seeks to protect its unique, world-class biodiversity. Her article analyses the profit-oriented trend promoted by the U.S. in accordance with policies favoring GMOs by means of advancing science and technology. On the other hand, by focusing on the case of corn, Mexico's ancient cultural symbol, Antal develops her argument about NAFTA's impact on Mexican peasants, who are defending their right to oppose the unfair competition created by GMOs and publicly denouncing the risks to their cultural traditions and the environment, in the absence of scientifically proven security standards.

The Future of the Relationship Signs of Optimism?

We believe that the future of the relationship rests on three possible scenarios: a pessimistic one marked by the Bush administration's abandonment of Latin America and, especially of Mexico. A second, frankly optimistic scenario, supported by U.S. and Mexican economic sectors including chambers of commerce and industry. And a third one, somewhere in between, where the parties realize that they share too much in both their economies and their territorial space, to afford to lose it.

The gloomy scenario is based on domestic ideological forces in either country pushing for retrenchment and isolationism. If these forces continue expanding they will make conditions more difficult to manage. Retraction and unilateral actions will damage the relationship and the spirit of collaboration. The optimist scenario is the one forged by the intensity of economic forces, continuing academic exchanges, the persistent social and cultural exchange between the two countries and the large number of U.S. citizens living in Mexico.⁸ The third alternative is a plain working scenario that seeks to manage the substantial, profound content of the relationship. This pragmatic scenario focuses on the existing realities that will continue to subsist in the years to come.

Active stumbling blocks are nativism, ethnocentrism and the seemingly endless plain discrimination evident all over the United States. Hate crimes against Latinos in the U.S. FBI report. In fact, 819 people were victimized in anti-Latino hate crimes in 2006.⁹ Samuel Huntington's incendiary comments in his book *Who Are We? The Challenges of Americas' National Identity* are close to being doctrine and catechism for demagogic TV and radio commentators like CNN's Lou Dobbs, FOX's Bill O'Reilly and radio-talk-show host Rush Limbaugh. Unfortunately for Mexico and the United States, these destructive forces seem to be in the lead at this time.

Some binational efforts deserve a chance to succeed, like the Annual U.S.-Mexico Border Governors' Conference, the efforts of the North American Development Bank and the Binational Environmental and Health Commission. The conference of governors seems to attract enough media and political attention to impact regional and national policies, but little progress is shown after the meetings. Likewise, both governments need to embark more aggressively on public diplomacy. The role of public diplomacy needs to be understood as an instrument to facilitate understanding, mutual respect and cooperation. This type of diplomacy needs to be reconsidered and implemented as a permanent feature of the binational relationship.

Citizens of both nations also play an important role in exercising public diplomacy. Examples of this are the many organized communities along the U.S.-Mexico borders that have proven successful in understanding one another. By identifying an objective, such as the preservation of the environment, they have learned to focus on common problems. Communication is therefore the core strategy in developing a new era of bilateral collaboration.

Lastly, the use of the media by diplomats is necessary for forging and influencing proper information about each country's culture and decisions. Many top-level federal officials in Washington do not agree with this view, and they do little to reduce misinformation and disinformation. This in turn can be interpreted as being neutral about them. The same happens with Mexican diplomats in the U.S. capital who are

⁸ According to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Charles Shapiro, more Americans live in Mexico than in any other country in the world. The group includes retirees, executive and corporate staff and their families, entrepreneurs, investors, academics and students. Source: 25th Workshop for Journalists and Editors on Latin America and the Caribbean held in Miami, Florida, May 4, 2007.

⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Report 2006* (Washington, D.C.: FBI, 2006).

popular because of their absence in the broadcast and print media. The new reality requires each country's officials to shift from neutrality to commitment. The successor to the Bush administration will need to be effective in creating policies toward Mexico, without causing any major confrontations with the United States' third largest trade partner. The intensity of interaction between the two countries is undeniable and requires the full attention of national, state and local governments.

In an era of declining trustworthiness, we hope this book will shed light and provide ideas about the two countries' challenges and new ways for interacting. It is a step toward continuing the dialogue, and ultimately, we would rather approach reality as a promising adventure and not an insoluble dilemma. We invite our readers to review and examine each chapter as a way to stimulate the bilateral debate, as well as to build a constructive path for overcoming the current stumbling blocks.