From Thick Borders to Shared Governance: Challenges to Building a Sustainable and Secure U.S.-Mexico Border

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S.-Mexico border region has from time immemorial been recognized as region of great economic opportunity. The existence of the border itself actually creates and sustains local, regional, national and even larger-scale economies that are built upon comparative advantages in diverse industries on both sides of the border. In spite of the numerous binational conflicts, deep-rooted cultural anxiety, and changing domestic politics in both the United States and Mexico, recognition of the powerful economic forces of the border region has persisted among a number of key actors and organizations over many decades. And despite the recent reaffirmations of the strategic nature of the binational relationship to both the United States and Mexican federal governments, the understanding of the U.S.-Mexico border region's capacity to produce economic value exists in its most advanced and nuanced form among regional institutions.[1]

Many of these institutions have been in existence for many years. They have outlasted populist, statist, liberal, conservative, inward-looking and globally focused national political economies in both nations. In contrast to the European Union, North America's political landscape is dominated by large federal governments that are largely unwilling to cede sovereignty for broader economic gain. This insistence on sovereignty means that we must rely heavily on North America's borders to be efficient in order to leverage each nation's comparative economic advantage. Therefore, the very nature of the difficult geography of North America's long borders creates a space and a practical need for local and regional actors to create collaborative mechanisms to help grow these comparative advantages. In addition, when we consider the significant distance of the U.S.-Mexico border from the two nation's capitals, we see that the border region's independence, coupled with the great economic opportunity of the region, creates the conditions for a more nuanced and longer term economic outlook among regional actors and institutions.

This paper addresses the challenge of economic development in the U.S.-Mexico border region by exploring the recent economic and institutional history of the two countries and by analyzing recent challenges of the U.S. and Mexico to address shared security and economic issues in the

[1] These institutions include the Border Governors Conference, the Border Legislative Conference, the CANAMEX Corridor Coalition, the North America's Corridor Coalition, the Arizona-Mexico Commission, the Comisión Sonora-Arizona, among many others.

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border region. An additional challenge is to manage the border using practices that are both secure and sustainable[2] by allowing for the efficient flow of trade and legitimate travel.

Two major events in recent history have impacted the border region greatly: the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which greatly expanded economic development in both countries and the September 11 terrorist attacks that were the catalyst for the increased militarization or “thickening” of the border. In less than a decade between the signing of NAFTA in 1994 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, border management practices took a dramatic turn from being thin and permeable for the free flow trade to becoming thick and heavily congested with border security infrastructure and operations. The thickening of the U.S.-Mexico border is the product of increased mobility of unauthorized migration coming from Mexico, illicit drugs and the primacy of national security in Washington after 9/11. Following a “sovereign-centered” approach, Washington has hardened, barricaded, yet militarized the southwest border aiming to deter/deflect the mobility of illegal flows –material and human. However, this “border game” has become a “politically successful policy failure”: in the past several years (with the Great Recession as an exception) illegal flows of migrants coming from Mexico have increased (EMIF, 2007) and Mexico has remained a major platform and production space for sending drugs to the U.S.[3]

The first part of the paper explores the recent economic and institutional history of the two countries by analyzing the evolution and impact of NAFTA on regional trade based on the goals

[2] We acknowledge that the term “sustainable” is regarded as an environmental term that refers to practices for managing and protecting resources for future generations. In this paper, we use the term to describe border management practices that foster cooperation and are shared equally by the two countries, and are not focused exclusively on security but support economic development by promoting efficient trade.

[3] Andreas, Peter. *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*. Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 2000.

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of the treaty to enhance the circulation of goods and to increase wealth, productivity, and efficiency throughout North America.

Recent initiatives undertaken by the two countries to maximize their economic gain in an increasingly competitive yet highly uncertain global economy coupled with the U.S.' reaction to the 9/11 terrorist attacks to secure the border have revealed new challenges for the bilateral relationship including the explosion of drug trafficking and increased illegal flows of goods and people across the border. The paper assesses how the administrations of Presidents Obama and Calderón have finally moved to a "shared governance" approach to border management practices in response to the challenges at border. Reformulated declarations and agreements between the U.S. and Mexico, including the Mérida Initiative highlight a shift into a new paradigm of shared border governance that begins to pave the way to create a more sustainable and secure border.

In the second part of the paper, we assess the challenges for moving into this new shared governance paradigm, shifting from the sovereign-centered paradigm in which management practices are decided and addressed separately by each nation rather than by working amongst cross-border constituencies. We then turn to a discussion of the effects, both positive and negative, that U.S.-Mexico relations have on the transborder region and a discussion of new policies and structures that attempt to reinforce the U.S.-Mexico border region's security and economic development. Given the disproportionate impact that the bilateral relationship has on the border, we believe that one of the key building blocks for the future well-being of the border region, as well as for the two countries, will come from expanding the capacity of established yet weak border region institutions through a more vigorous and ongoing partnership with academic and public policy-focused institutions.

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And finally, the paper aims to build a concept of sustainable security, also known as human security, total sum security, or society security. This concept can be viewed from the North American context as "mutual security," the enhancement of intelligence, communications, and other security operations across the U.S. border into Mexico and Canada to enhance the security of each and all. This broad definition of security should lead not to a thick, sticky, or dense border but to a lean, nimble, and thin border bolstered by a zone of security on either side.

CONTEXT ON SHARED U.S.-MEXICO ECONOMIC HISTORY

Any discussion of economic development and the U.S.-Mexico border region has to be put in the context of an immensely challenging and complex U.S.-Mexico relationship. Our shared history, our almost 2,000 mile-long border and asymmetries in economic, political and institutional stability practically guarantee these challenges and complexities. Political and economic developments in the two countries during the 19th century diverged significantly and established quite distinct patterns of development and economic thinking. During the twentieth century, the United States' postwar ascendency as a global military and economic power saw a development that ran parallel to, but significantly apart from, Mexico's economic, political and social development, underpinned by the "Mexican Miracle."[4]

Yet the two countries' economies continued to grow together slowly during the mid-20th century. This growing economic partnership was supported by U.S. federal water policies in the 1920s, which aided the expansion of the southwestern U.S. agricultural sector; the binational

[4] Postwar state-engineered economic growth in Mexico was founded on economic strategies such as import substitution industrialization (ISI). ISI itself emerged from egalitarian and nationalistic economic concepts that emerged both from the Mexican Revolution as well as a tradition of Latin American economic thinking exemplified by the Argentine economist Raul Prebisch.

temporary worker program known as the Bracero Program, which started in 1942 and lasted 22 years; and the development of Mexico's northern border industrialization program in the 1960s. Yet it wasn't until the rise of technocratic governments in Mexico with the de la Madrid administration (1982-1988)[5] and the growing importance of global trade regimes—underscored by the Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of 1988—that the two countries began to think of their economic relationship as a strategic asset that required a more carefully structured and sustainable partnership.

NAFTA and the Rise of a Business-Friendly Border

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The North American Free Trade Agreement began a new age of collaboration on trade, but as is repeatedly emphasized in this paper, it has been an age full of contradictory tendencies. The relative success or failure of NAFTA has been widely disputed almost since its inception. Part of the reason for this is that the agreement coincided with a complex period of significant economic expansion and realignment in the United States and a period of political democratization, decentralization and relative economic instability in Mexico.

The new trade regime was far from monolithic. NAFTA did not usher in an era of unfettered free trade, something that is next to impossible with the extremely competitive and interest-group dominated politics and mixed economies of the North American democracies. The political discussion over free trade in North America has often been extremely contentious, to put it mildly. For example, divisive debates over free trade dominated the 1988 Canadian elections (Clarke et al, 2009: 225). The passage of NAFTA in 1993 by the U.S. House of Representatives was anything but assured (the measure passed the U.S. Senate with 61 votes, avoiding a filibuster) and the agreement became a campaign issue during the 2008 presidential election. In

[5] See Miguel Angel Centeno's work, *Democracy within Reason: Technocratic Revolution in Mexico* for a comprehensive discussion of the rise of technocratic governance in Mexico.

addition to these rough domestic politics, the U.S. and Mexico have had an ongoing disagreement on a key trade issue, Mexican trucking in the United States. While a detailed discussion of this issue is not possible in this paper, essentially the U.S. has not allowed Mexican trucks to operate beyond a narrow 25-mile wide zone along the border with the exception of a pilot program begun in 2007 and subsequently cancelled by the Obama Administration in 2009. Upon this cancellation, Mexico issued retaliatory tariffs on dozens of U.S. products, targeted to impact specific U.S. Congressional districts throughout the United States.[6]

The Concepts behind NAFTA

The politics that preceded and followed NAFTA were unrelentingly rough, but the U.S. – Mexico borderlands in general were a laboratory for ideas and economic policy. The NAFTA regime, in place since 1994, aimed at building an ideal sort of "borderless economy," the great metaphor dominating the ideology of global markets. Specifically, the idea behind NAFTA was to enhance and empower the circulation of goods and investment in the hands of firms and markets in order to increase wealth, productivity, and efficiency throughout North America and to *discipline state intervention in the economy.* Nonetheless, the building of this circulation regime has had to come to terms with the realities of political enclosures and new and ongoing strategic security imperatives. In fact, we have seen a progressive "securitization" of the Mexico-U.S. border. With increasing unauthorized migration and illegal arms and human trafficking increased, North American territorial borders have become hardened and reinforced by U.S. national security imperatives after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

[6] On January 6, 2011, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced on its website a new concept "for a long haul cross-border Mexican trucking program that prioritizes safety, while satisfying the United States' international obligations." As of this writing, the Obama Administration is in discussions with members of Congress and the government of Mexico on this issue.

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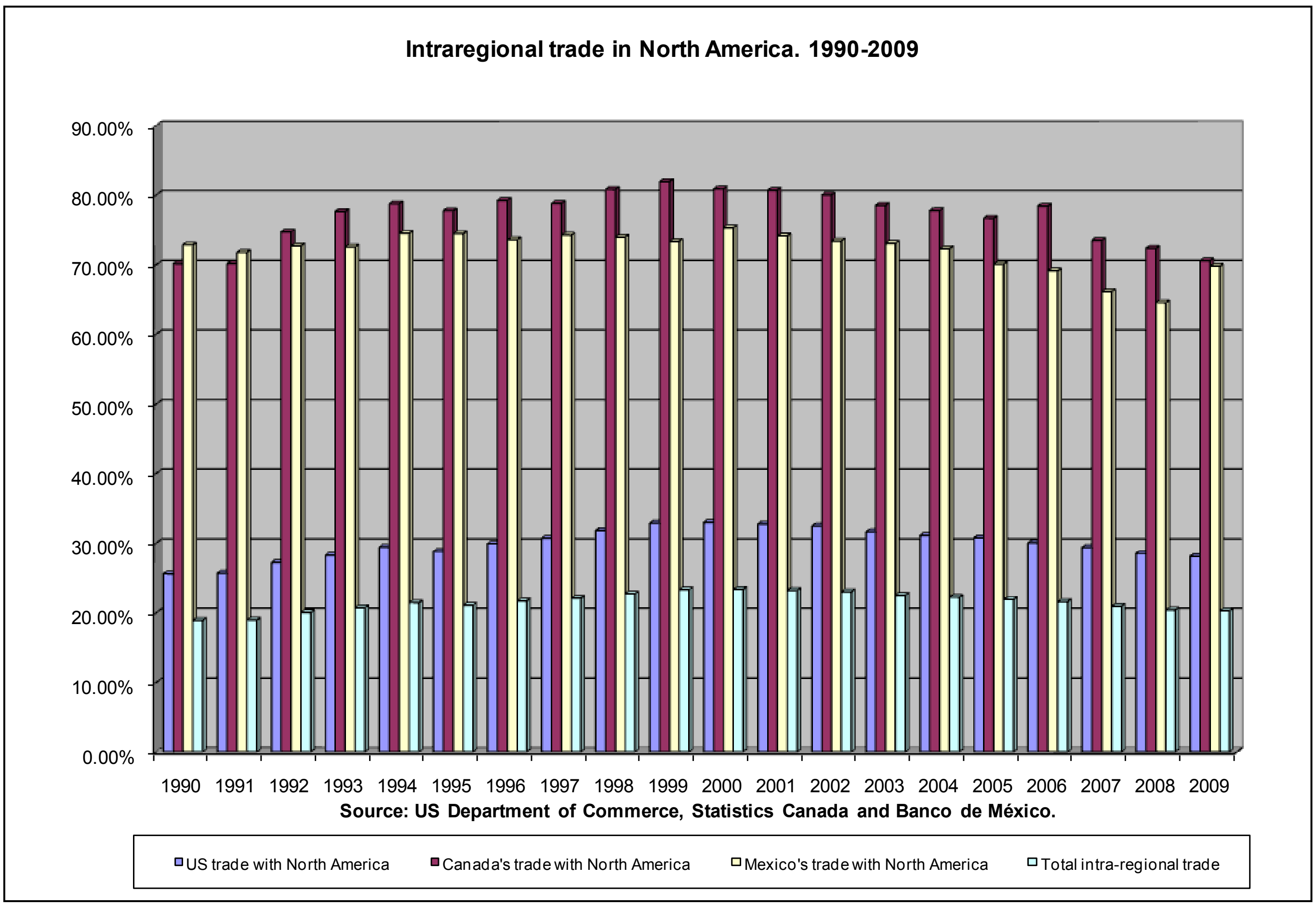
What NAFTA actually built was a sort of "business friendly" border throughout an enlarged "continentalized" market by providing an institutional legalistic regime—with all its norms, values, principles, and disciplines—that covered specific issue-areas. In addition, NAFTA had its own enforcement mechanisms for facilitating the access and circulation of goods—either tangible or non-tangible—throughout Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Thus, NAFTA was not only about trade but was also a myriad of principles and disciplines whose goal was to govern legitimate trade mobility and circulation in North America by constraining state involvement in the economy. The Agreement is an institutional disciplinary device since NAFTA's normative goal is to contain state involvement in trade, finance, and economic activities. NAFTA was thus consistent with the neoliberal wave of economic policies that was crafted in Washington from the beginning of the 1980s to the end of the second Bush Administration. The promotion of so-called "free trade," economic openness, the mobility of investments, and other market-oriented principles were the core values guiding this venture. These principles were explicitly stated in the foreword of the agreement and became the rationale for the foundation of an enhanced mobility area in commodities, services, and financial flows in order to increase efficiency, productivity, and welfare in the economy of each participating country.

Consequently, NAFTA accelerated the concentration of North American commerce at the same time that it set the limits. Figure 1 clearly depicts the evolution of commerce within the NAFTA trilateral region from 1990 to 2010. The corresponding share of NAFTA trade went from 19% shortly after the signing of the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement (1988) to 23.4% in 2000 and declined for some years thereafter. Despite the fact that Canadian and Mexican commerce was already heavily concentrated in North America before the onset of NAFTA, the two countries increased their exchanges in the NAFTA region by ten percentage points. During this period the

United States also increased its commercial participation in the region by six percent. Doubtless, the progressive abatement of barriers to trilateral exchanges, the consolidation of scale economies, the attraction of "gravitational forces," the upsurge of the information economy in the 1990s, and the competitive advantages of each country contributed to this increased regionalization.

Figure 1: Intraregional Trade in North America, 1990-2009



However, the incorporation of China into the global economy, thanks to her entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001—together with the consolidation of the Eurozone—partly explains the reversal of the regionalization process beginning in 2003. As Figure 2 shows, China has become the second most important trading partner of the U.S., having displaced Mexico from this position in 2006.

Figure 2: U.S. Total Trade with Main Trading Partners, 1992-2009

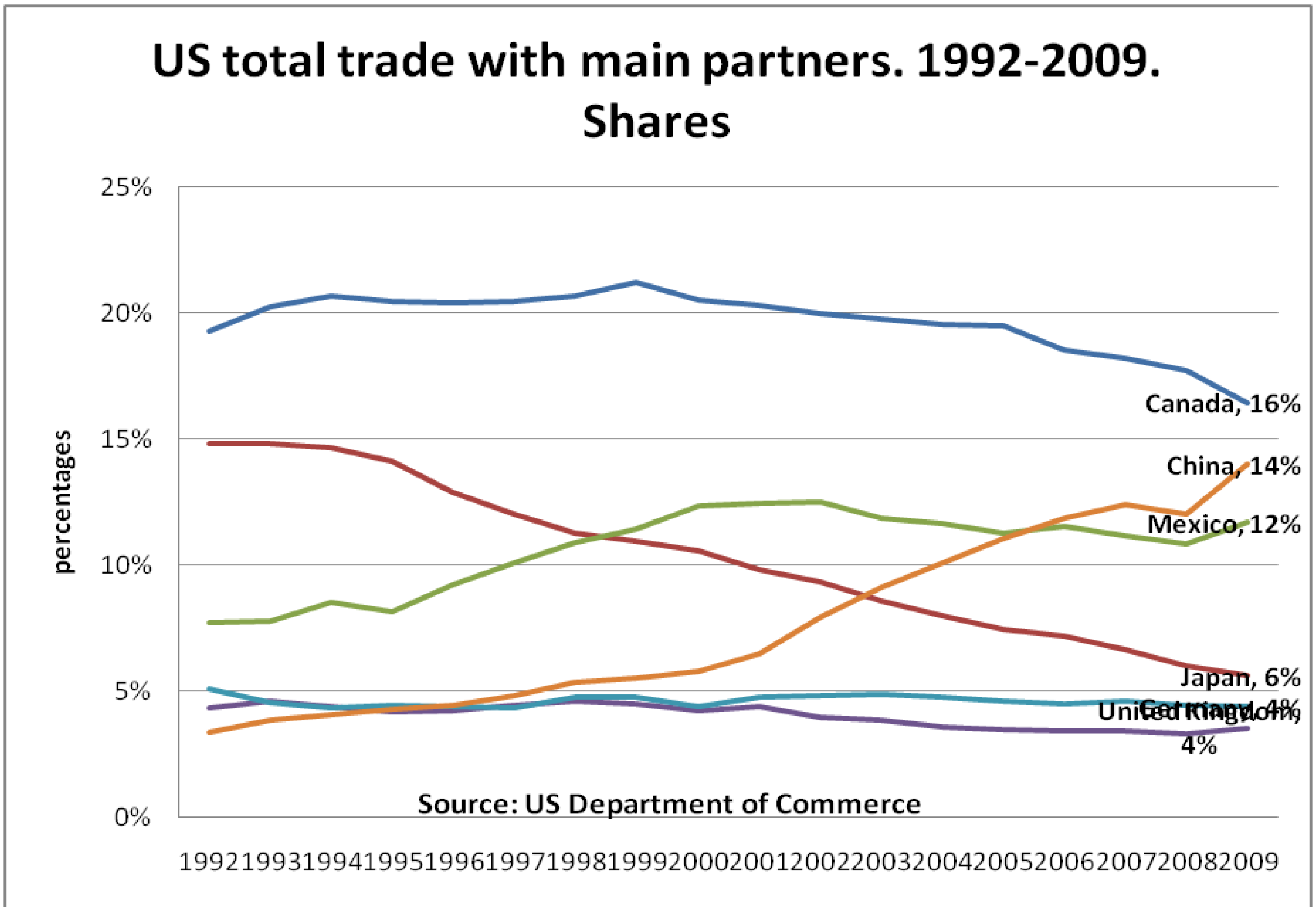
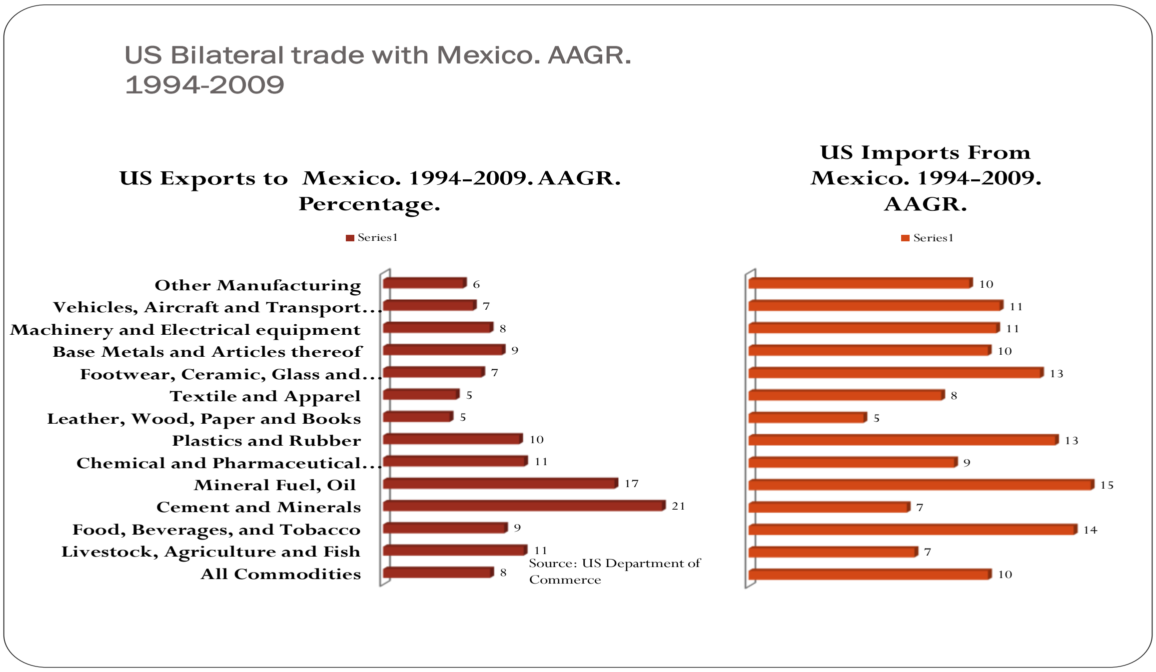


Figure 3 below provides data for the dynamic Mexican sectors and of these sectors' mediocre performance from 1994 to 2009. It is important to note that the data simply depict general trends; there were some externalities and financial shocks that doubtless affected trade transactions between Mexico and its North American partners. For example, the Mexican peso crisis at the end of 1994, which provoked a strong recession the following year, the U.S.

recession at the turn of the century, and the U.S. financial crisis of 2007-2009 were all key externalities that resistively affected the commercial performance of the region.

Figure 3: U.S. Bilateral Trade with Mexico



Nevertheless, Mexico exploited the market opportunities offered by the commercial opening quite effectively. In terms of exports to the U.S., all types of manufacturing (from low to high-tech) increased their market shares. Among high-tech goods, the plastics, pharmaceuticals, aerospace and precision instruments industries are notable for their enhanced market position. Among mid-tech sectors, transportation-related industries —most notably the automobile industry—machinery, food processing and of course petroleum had above-average growth rates. In labor-intensive industries, which are dominated by the assembly industry or “maquila,” the textile and apparel industries grew rapidly until 2000; when intra-regional commerce began to decline. The end of the multi-fiber agreement within the WTO, the enhanced competiveness commercial of China and of other Asian countries mostly explain the competition that Mexico had to confront at the turn of the century within the U.S. textile and apparel markets.

In spite of the abovementioned externalities, the commercial growth between the two countries consolidated a model of *intra*-industry exchange, different from the *inter*-industry model that dominated binational commerce thirty years ago in which Mexico had specialized in the exportation of primary products—petroleum being the most notable example—in exchange for manufactured or capital goods. By 2009, 57% of American imports coming from Mexico were considered to be mid- to high-tech, while 57% of U.S. exports going to Mexico were classified under the same categories.

The original privileges and benefits entailed by NAFTA began to wane once the three members, and especially the big American partner, extended "NAFTA-treatment" to other commercial partners. Conceived as a mechanism for promoting "open regionalism," the three partners widened the scope of preferential access at different speeds and in a non-coordinated manner. Countries with which the United States has signed commercial or free trade agreements compete directly with Mexico.[7]

China also competes against U.S. exports in the Mexican market. Though Mexican exports remain strongly concentrated in the U.S., this is not the case with imports, which have witnessed an important diversification in recent years. As is demonstrated below in Figure 4, from 2001 until 2009, imports to Mexico originating from North America diminished approximately 20%,

[7] A quarter of South Korean exports, for example, are similar to Mexico's. This is also the case with countries of South America, such as Colombia (16. 2% of its exports), Guatemala (14%), Ecuador (14.2%), the Dominican Republic (12.5%), Peru (12.1%), Costa Rica (11%) and Honduras (10.5%) (Zabludovski, 2008). China competes directly with Mexican exports in the American market in key sectors such as auto parts, chemical products, electrical appliances, and textile and clothing (Wise, forthcoming).

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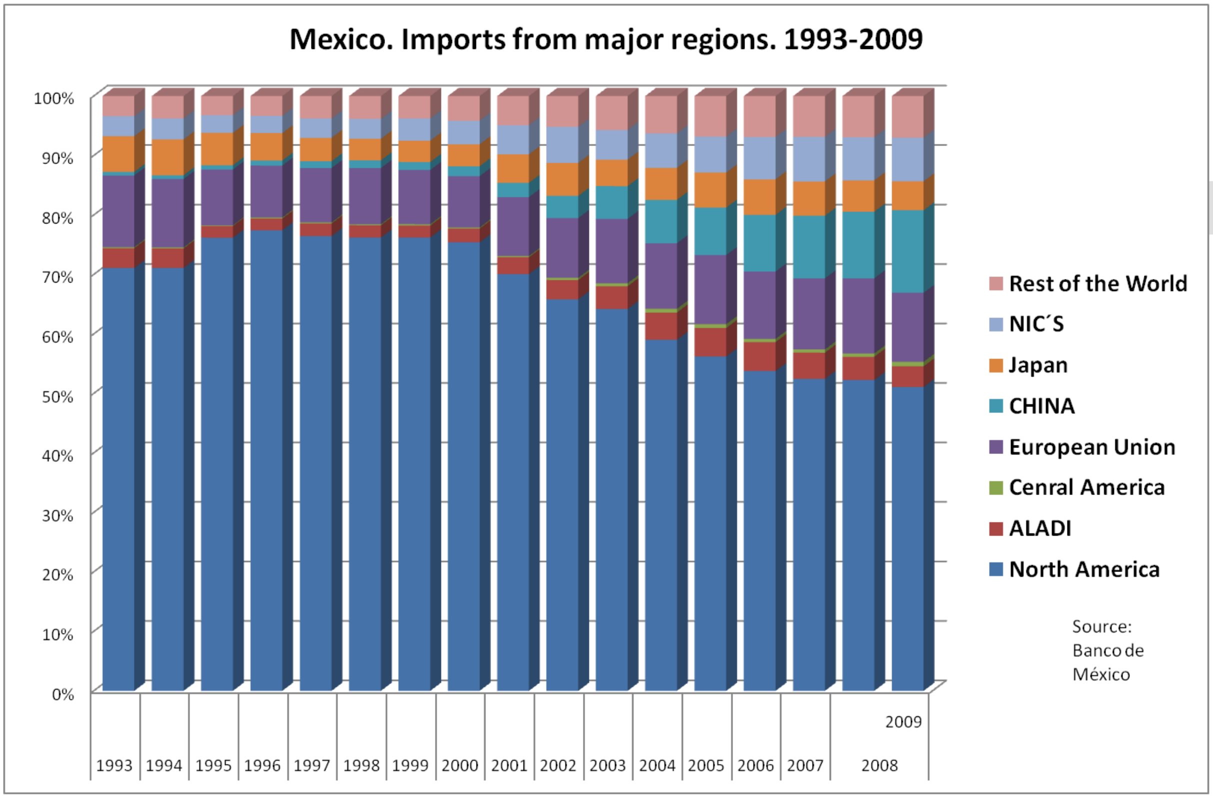
falling from 70% of the total to 50%. China thus increased its share to the detriment of North America, going from 1% of Mexican imports in 1994 to 14% in 2009. The impact of Chinese commerce in North America needs still to be assessed in combination with its strategies of investment and relocation in the region.

Figure 4: Mexico: Imports from Major Regions, 1993-2009



We have seen that trade between the United States and Mexico evolved from more domestically oriented models of economic growth into a model that emphasized the two countries' comparative advantages. This evolution took place in the context of a highly contentious, ongoing debate over trade and the relative distribution of the benefits of trade. In addition, the NAFTA, while controversial, happened in an era of increasing global trade in general. The growth of North American intra-continental trade peaked in 2000 and was met by the entrance of

China into the global market as well as the U.S.' engagement of other trading partners. In addition to these megatrends and externalities, the terrorist attacks of 2001, caused an enormous policy shift with respect to how the United States managed its national security affairs and, by extension, its shared border with Mexico.

The governance of a barricaded border

Mobility and confinement do not comprise contradictory models of circulation in North America. European societies have debated and acknowledged since the 17th century that the more freedom of movement is enhanced for attaining either economic or political purposes, the more territorial challenges, threats, and risks proliferate. Mobility and threat are the two facts that any modern circulation regime must confront in order to achieve specific outcomes[8].

In the case of North America, illegal migration and the activities of organized crime were—prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and the Pentagon—*the* major challenges to deal with in the new era of enhanced mobility. Unauthorized migration coming from Mexico, though tolerated for decades, has traditionally been perceived by the United States as a breach of its own migratory laws and hence a violation to its sovereign right to decide who enters and circulates within its territory (Torpey 1997). Though the crafting of NAFTA was nested in a trilateral debate stressing the complementarities and interdependence of the three economies, migration issues remained a strictly sovereignty-centered policy area for the three countries. In this sense, Washington never felt obliged to discuss or consult on migration issues with its southern neighbor.

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[8] Michel Foucault (2004) developed this idea for explaining state formation in Europe during the XVI and XVII centuries.

The enforcement of this sovereignty-based right was already evident along the Mexico-U. S. border before and after the signing of NAFTA. While NAFTA created the possibilities of building a business-friendly border between the two countries, the growth of illegal trade—mainly illicit drugs—and unauthorized migration, fueled in part by the burgeoning of a "borderless economy," have periodically reinforced the political dynamic the U.S. for increasing enforcement at the ports of entry[9] and border more severely since the beginning of NAFTA.

The barricading of the southwest border became a "politically successful policy failure," as Peter Andreas has stated (Andreas 2003) because it failed to deter illegal migrants, while offering an endless amount of policy failures for the public discussion about the border. During the second half of the 1990s, the amount of unauthorized migrants grew. Strategies such as Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego or Operation Hold the Line, implemented in El Paso, just rerouted migrants and smugglers to more difficult-to-access areas, such as the Arizona desert, sea routes, tunnels, etc.

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While NAFTA promised to create job opportunities in Mexico as a means of curbing mid- to long-term illegal migration, the statistical estimates show the opposite effect. The agreement actually provoked the acceleration of cross-border human mobility within North America. Since the last amnesty granted by the U.S. government in 1986, illegal Mexican migration sharply increased during the 1990s and jumped once again to the top of the bilateral agenda when Mexican President Vicente Fox (2000-2006) asked for a new guest worker program as a means to formalize the *de facto* labor market between the two countries. As of the end of 2008, the

[9] A port of entry is any designated place at which a CBP officer is authorized to accept entries of merchandise to collect duties, and to enforce the various provisions of the customs and navigation laws.

overall unauthorized population in the United States was estimated at between 11.5 and 12 million people, with 6.2 million, of Mexican origin (Passel and Cohn, 2008: ii).

By contrast, this migratory deterrence strategy seemed to be somewhat of a political success. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) became better funded and reinforced, some border residents perceived their cities becoming more secure, and the federal government sent at least a symbolic message that it was concerned and doing something to curb the entry of illegal aliens, which raised support from specific constituencies.[10]

Besides the (albeit problematic) domestic political gains triggered by the deterrence of illegal mobility, the barricaded border also has yielded economic gains and "rents" for "market" or "private" actors operating on both sides of the line. The most evident of these gains is in the labor side of illicit markets. Unauthorized workers provide for a sort of subsidy in specific U.S. industries and activities. Wage differentials and the dynamism of the U.S. economy—with the exception of the U.S. financial crisis of the past two years—continue to attract and assimilate the new cohorts of illegal migrants—the so-called "pull factors." The *de facto* labor market that operates between Mexico and the U.S. must be regulated under the market mechanism—and ceased to be framed under the deterrence-sovereignty-centered paradigm. This makes sense because the structuring of this cross-border market is grounded on the functionality of social networks, ensuring, as in the space of NAFTA commodity flows, the mobility of workers.

This sovereignty-centered border-deterrence regime works in a similar way in drug trafficking, though much more complex than the one enhancing migratory flows. The entrance of narcotics and illegal drugs into the U.S. is organized under a networked economy of production,

[10] For an interesting background on Mexico-U.S. border politics, see Andreas, 2000.

distribution, and consumption that effectively parallels the continental flows built upon the global legal activities of multi-national corporations. These organizations operate against sanctioned legal architectures and government authorities—both at the subnational or national levels—still maintain the monopoly of prohibition and consequently of law enforcement. Thus the types of state policies and instruments used to enforce the law and the opaque, fragmented, “unveiled” or secret-strategic information scattered among participants distort “criminalized” global markets. The result is a serious and perverse effect on the operation of these markets: the more effective government authorities become at law enforcement, the higher the incentives in the supply chain for relocating production, substitution, and distribution networks. Furthermore, public policy in the U.S. has failed for almost a century (criminalization of the commerce and consumption of narcotic substances began in 1914) to cope with increased domestic consumption and has instead focused on abating this illegal trade at the border (Astorga 2003).

Similar to what prevails in informal labor markets, U.S. authorities have prioritized a sovereignty-centered law enforcement approach at the ports of entry in order to confine or deflect the flows of narcotics. By contrast, closing the U.S. entrance to narcotics has the perverse effect of increasing the quantity of illegal trafficking; the incentives for new traffickers increases and the the supply and distribution chains adapt. In criminalized markets, trafficking organizations have the power to set prices. However, depending on how effectively they dislocate the value chain of the narcotics industry, in illegal markets state authorities, control the price of narcotics. This explains the paradox that the better the government deflects the different supply chains of the narcotics industry, the better the incentives for new traffickers to enter the business.

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This paradox has prevailed for almost a century at the U.S.-Mexico border, and has been politically managed through what Peter Andreas has called “border games.” That is, these games have been played through changing tactics whose ultimate goal was not the suppression of the mobility of drugs, but the political staging, dramatization, and exploitation of major “victories,” i.e. seizures of major drug cargoes or the capture or fall and incarceration—or physical elimination—of drug barons (Andreas 2000). However, as long as illegal drug consumption kept growing, the business remained sound—though risky—and with strong incentives to new traffickers each time government agencies accomplished major seizures controlled by powerful transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), or captured a warlord or drug baron.

9/11 and a New Era of Anxiety in North America

The attacks against the World Trade Center in New York and against the Pentagon in September 2001 were a watershed moment for the world and for U.S. interests, policies, and politics. A new sense of physical vulnerability spread throughout U.S. society and institutions. In this new era of war, territorial borders became a fragile front against an enemy not confined to a specific state or population. The very concept of threat changed from nuclear or military imbalances to terrorism. Once the threat of terror and terrorists became associated with the challenges managed under the mechanisms of border games, U.S. authorities developed a more comprehensive strategy to address the new notions of risks and threat. Consequently, the nation’s War on Drugs was subsumed into the War on Terror. While the goal of the first war was to deter illegal flows, the second war is betting on prevention, on keeping the risk of terrorist attacks at bay, or on preemptive action. Thus the political impetus for the expansion of North American intraregional trade, a cornerstone for a transformed U.S.-Mexico relationship in the 1990s, absorbed a crippling blow from the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States. This

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apprehension was fed by the U.S. federal government's clearly inadequate response to terrorist operations in the months leading up to 9/11 as outlined in the 9/11 Commission Report; a long history of relatively weak interdiction efforts at the U.S.' immense, difficult to defend land borders with Canada and Mexico; and a significant increase in migration from Mexico and other Latin American countries during the economic boom of the late 1990s. All of these elements were arguments for a totally reconfigured and enhanced security regime at the U.S.-Mexico border run by a new superagency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, a collection of 22 different and diverse federal agencies. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 thus brought about the largest reconfiguration of the U.S. federal government since World War II.

Interestingly, since the launching of the North American Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) in 2005 to the onset of the Mérida Initiative in 2007, Mexico and the U.S. have attempted to move from a strictly sovereignty-based paradigm of border governance to a "shared governance" approach. The two countries are still defining the mechanisms and institutional settings of shared governance, which is discussed in more detail below. This approach includes at least the stated aim of including input from regional institutions, many of which have made plain their dissatisfaction with the impact of the current border security regime upon border communities. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that the expanding U.S.-Mexico relationship had been made more complex over security concerns post-9/11. It is in this context of dominance of security concerns that the current binational conversation and debate over trade and issues of economic development takes place.

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The election of Felipe Calderón in 2006 began an era in U.S.-Mexico relations that has largely been defined by a preoccupation in both countries over the conflicts with and between transnational criminal organizations in Mexico, violence associated with this conflict and the possibility for related violence occurring (or "spilling over") in the United States. Since 2006, the Calderón Administration's vigorous prosecution of transnational criminal organizations has been one factor in a nationwide spike in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico. As of this writing, official Mexican government figures put the total number of drug-trafficking related murders in the past five years at over 34,000, though these figures differ from non-government estimates such as those of *Reforma* newspaper (Duran et al 2010: 4). Even for a country accustomed to a certain amount of drug trafficking-related violence, this is an astounding figure.

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The 2008 election of Barack Obama has also defined this new era in U.S.-Mexico relations. This election signaled the end (or the proposed end) of a highly criticized foreign policy. While principal emphasis was placed upon shifts in policy affecting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the spike in violence in Mexico was of deep concern to both political appointees as well as career bureaucrats within the U.S. federal government, particularly the military.[11] In what is perhaps the most significant policy shift with respect to Mexico and security issues in North America, the election of Barack Obama has introduced the new binational concept of "shared responsibility"

[11] The JOE 2008, in a section on Weak and Failing States, pointed to Pakistan and Mexico as worst case scenarios for possible failed states. "The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police, and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels. How that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state. Any descent by Mexico into chaos would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone."

by the U.S. and Mexico for illicit crossborder flows of arms, cash, precursor chemicals, migrants and narcotics.

From a broad global perspective, this new definition and implementation of the U.S.-Mexico relationship around co-responsibility fits into the U.S.' perspective of enhanced multilateral cooperation and with Mexico's growing prominence on the world stage with other emerging powers.[12] The new definition of the relationship is also profoundly affected by the 2007-2009 recession, which has highlighted the importance of exports to reconstructing and reinvigorating both the U.S. and Mexican economies. Mexico's economy experienced a significant contraction in 2008 parallel to that of the U.S. economy. The collapse of the U.S. automotive industry hit the Mexican automotive industry particularly hard, although in reality, we are talking about a *North American* automotive industry, as joint production processes are very well established with the major U.S. automakers' advanced operations in Canada and Mexico. Mexico's economic recovery preceded the rebound of the U.S. economy and it has expanded in parallel fashion, though international competitiveness indices show Mexico's position slipping somewhat globally (World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index, 222). The question of Mexico's competitiveness is one of intense debate within Mexican policy circles.

The Reformulation of the Mérida Initiative

High-level officials from both the Obama and Calderón administrations held extensive discussions on security and economic development during 2009. At the heart of this conversation were multiple anxieties. These included a widely held assumption on the part of a number of high-profile economists that the U.S. would need to reindustrialize its economy to avoid an overdependence on financial sector innovation that had caused economic catastrophe in 2007

[12] Mexico's successful hosting of the 2010 global climate talks in Cancún is perhaps the most illustrative example of this enhanced role.

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with the collapse of the subprime mortgage market. In addition, an increasingly dire security situation in Mexico worried U.S. and Mexican officials, who viewed the Bush Administration – era Mérida Initiative largely as a policy failure. The proposed reindustrialization of the United States implied an increased reliance upon North American trade. Specifically at stake here was securing North America's trade corridors, which had played such a prominent role in the late-1990s economic expansion in the United States. The March 29, 2010 Joint Statement of the Merida Initiative High-Level Consultative Group on Bilateral Cooperation against Transnational Organized Crime in Mexico City outlined four pillars of a reformulated Mérida Initiative including: Disrupt Capacity of Organized Crime to Operate, Strengthen Rule of Law Institutions, Build and Operate a 21st Century Border, Build Strong and Resilient Communities in Both Countries.[13] This reformulation was notable for its emphasis on economic development, and particularly the need for greater trade facilitation. The third pillar, "Build a 21st Century Border," emphasized technological fixes, enhanced border infrastructure, and professionalization programs for border law enforcement officials. One of the notable innovations of this new binational policy area is the federal 21st Century Borders Executive Steering Committee (see Figure 8 below, which gives an overview of current U.S. government efforts to improve interagency cooperation on new border policy). While the new interagency structure is an example of executive-branch driven government innovations, the success of these types of initiatives is often determined by inter- and intra-agency dynamics and the whims of congressional oversight committees rather than objective analysis based on broadly accepted evaluation criteria.

[13] U.S. Embassy in Mexico fact sheet. http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/eng/merida/emerida_factsheet_fourpillarscooperation.html

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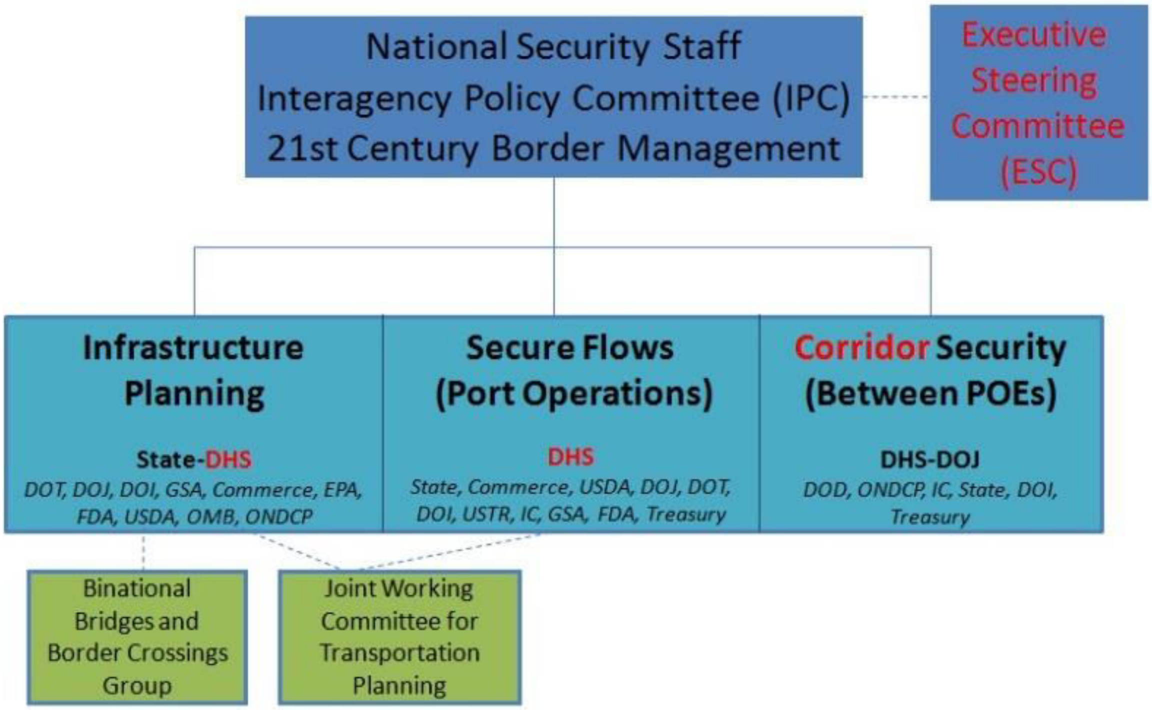
Figure 5. Washington Interagency Structure[14]



BUILDING 21ST CENTURY BORDERS

A Renewed Commitment to U.S.-Mexico Trade during Difficult Economic Times

The year 2010 saw unprecedented levels of stated commitments between the U.S. and Mexico. The Obama Administration committed to a shared responsibility with Mexico to address key areas related to security and combating the escalating violence of the drug cartels in Mexico. In a joint declaration released on May 19, 2010, "Concerning Twenty-First Century Border Management," the U.S. and Mexico committed "to strengthen cooperation" in the areas of economic competitiveness, facilitating lawful travel and curtailing illegal migration, sharing

[14] From U.S. State Department presentation.

information, and countering transnational criminal organizations. Areas of collaboration that are emphasized in the declaration focus primarily on improving security and creating efficient flows of goods and legitimate travel related to trade. Declaration highlights include areas such as; standardizing data collection on traded products; expanding trusted shipper or trusted traveler programs like FAST and SENTRI; and standardizing ports of entry planning, design, priorities for investment, operation, and staffing.

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In order to implement these goals, the declaration stated that an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) made up of senior-level federal officials from both countries would be created. The declaration notes that each country will develop a “mutually accepted action plan” that will meet the goals of twenty first century border management. The ESC is also charged with identifying working groups and calling upon existing border region groups to implement (but not to formulate) the action plan. The Inaugural Meeting of the U.S.-Mexico Executive Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Declaration on XXI Century Border Management took place in December 2010. The group adopted an Action Plan and a Joint Declaration for the Prevention of Border Violence (Embassy of Mexico 2010).

While the Twenty-First Century Border Management declaration represents the remarkable levels of understanding and coordination between the two countries, it is not a binational treaty that has equal enforcement power in both countries. Rather, it is an agreement to seek common goals that requires the dual oversight and commitment from the governments of both countries to ensure that the goals of the declaration are enacted. And despite the efforts to create a new task force and an action plan that will develop these goals, there is no word about the costly investment in infrastructure required by both countries to meet the complex demands of joint border management. This will require increased attention to, engagement with and funding for both the trade and institutional infrastructure in the border region.

A Renewed Focus on the Infrastructure that Facilitates Trade

Many of the priorities to create a twenty first century border highlighted in the declaration are related to expediting legitimate movement of goods and people across the border. This emphasis indicates a renewed commitment to economic development if not a major shift in U.S.-Mexico foreign policy from security-dominated discussions. Economic competitiveness through increased trade between the U.S. and Mexico, as well as between North America and the rest of world depends on the ability to expedite and secure traded goods. And even though "security and competitiveness are two sides of the same coin,"[15]each requiring equal planning and investment to ensure efficient and safe trade across the border, the U.S. and Mexico are just beginning to prioritize these two areas together. The implementation of NAFTA increased trade dramatically between the U.S. and Mexico with an increase of 90% between the years of 1994 and 2001 and $260 billion in traded goods. While exports from the U.S. to Mexico have grown by 223% and exports from Mexico to the U.S. have grown by 396% between the years 1993 to 2008, the number of ports of entry on the U.S.-Mexico border have grown by only 10%. [16]

Although the 1990s saw enormous expansion and creation of new bridges and ports of entry, there was a decade-long lull in construction efforts, with *no* international bridges built between the U.S. and Mexico from 2000-2010 to improve the infrastructure required to facilitate the

[15] Sean Carlos Cázares Ahearne. Deputy Director for Border Affairs of the Foreign Ministry of Mexico (SRE). Presentation at the Arizona's Latino Politics and International Relations event, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Oct. 15, 2010.
[16] The U.S.-Mexico Border has 46 operational land ports of entry (POEs) (two are closed) and one ferry crossing.

enormous amounts of people, vehicles and goods crossing the border. Starting in 2003 with the creation of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) under the new authority of the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. began to focus the majority of its attention at the border on preventing terrorists and weapons of mass destruction from entering the U.S.

U.S. federal border security legislation enacted since 2003[17] has increased documentation requirements at ports of entry and slowed travel across the U.S.-Mexico border. The increase of required documents for both commercial and non-commercial traffic to cross the border has created a need for new technologies such as the electronic system for travel authorization to process the paperwork and scan for high-risk individuals or containers. Most POEs are not equipped to handle the dramatic increase in population, traffic volumes, and law enforcement activities. Many were built 40-50 years ago and have outdated infrastructure, making it difficult to integrate the new inspection and technological requirements. Furthermore, the transportation network of highway and rail systems leading up to the crossings has failed to keep up with the rate of growth of travel and commerce. The congestion of increased traffic through the POEs compounded with the infrastructure problems has made border wait times grow by anywhere from 45 minutes to several hours.[18] Both countries need to address the delays, congestion, and safety issues the new CBP initiatives and security requirements create for all border communities[19].

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[17] One example is the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 that includes the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative requiring all individuals entering the U.S. to present a document that denotes citizenship and identity.
[18] In the case of the Lukeville POE in Arizona, U.S. passengers waited as long as seven hours in their vehicles to cross the border after the 2007 Memorial Day weekend travel to Puerto Peñasco in Sonora, Mexico.
[19] Luis Ramírez, "Vision 2015: Arizona's International Port of Entry System." Presentation at the Arizona's Latino Politics and International Relations event, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. Oct. 15, 2010.

As the U.S. adopted increased requirements at the POEs, post 9/11, there was a void of a coherent and shared dialog with Mexico about the infrastructure needs for the ports, as well as the highway and rail system corridors. Mexico adjusted to the changes in border security operations and requirements of the U.S. much more slowly than its North American partner Canada, which was ready to adopt the Canadian initiative of a 30-point Smart Border Agreement with the U.S. within months after 9/11. While the U.S. and Canada have an established history of facilitating security and defense that dates back to the Ogdensburg Agreement of 1940, "in the case of Mexico," writes Raúl Benítez Manaut and Carlos Rodríguez Ulloa, "there has been no link between trade and security" [20](26). Canada has integrated U.S. border security requirements and procedures into its own security operations and thus has maintained a strong trade and bilateral relationship with the U.S. Presently Canada is the biggest customer and the top exporting partner for 34 U.S. states[21], whereas Mexico is still focused domestically on the process of establishing a clear definition of security, strengthening its public institutions, and battling a severe war with Mexican drug cartels (Benítez and Rodríguez 37). As Duncan Wood notes, Mexico has had to adjust the way it addresses national security along the northern border to "[accommodate] U.S. concerns without sacrificing the privileged status" as a NAFTA trading partner, which "has been a delicate balance to maintain since September 2001 (9/11) (11).22″ [23]" It is remarkable to note that even with the difficult security situation, Mexico is the top trading partner for 16 U.S. states.

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[20] Raúl Benítez Manaut and Carlos Rodríguez Ulloa. "Homeland Security in North America: from NAFTA to the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America." Jordi Díez, ed. *Canadian and Mexican Security in the New North America: Challenges and Prospects*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. p.25-38.
[21] World Institute for Strategic Economic Research (WISER): Canada's export ranking (February 28, 2010).
[22] Duncan Wood. "Sharing the Wealth?: Economic Development, Competing Visions and the Future of NAFTA." Jordi Díez, ed. *Canadian and Mexican Security in the New North America: Challenges and Prospects*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. p.11-24.
[23] Duncan Wood. "Sharing the Wealth?: Economic Development, Competing Visions and the Future of NAFTA." Jordi Díez, ed. *Canadian and Mexican Security in the New North America: Challenges and Prospects*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006. p.11-24.

U.S. Security Investments in the Border Region

U.S. priorities for increasing security in the border region have also been apparent in U.S. foreign aid to Mexico, which has historically been small in comparison to aid to dozens of other countries. Driven by the Mérida Initiative, U.S. foreign aid to Mexico has focused on curbing transnational criminal organizations, as well as drug trafficking and other illicit activities that threaten national security. The U.S. has appropriated $1.15 billion in aid to Mexico from 2008 to 2010 through Merida, which is still well below the financial commitment the U.S. makes to other countries around the world including Bolivia which has only 9% of the population of Mexico[24]. The USAID Mexico website notes that the Mexico mission received $28 million for fiscal year 2010. U.S. federal domestic financial commitments to the southwest border have focused heavily on border security operations and key CBP programs. Total direct congressional appropriations to CBP for FY10 were $10.1 billion, with $7.1 billion of the budget funding border security operations and only $0.32 billion on construction-related activities. Ownership and operations of the current infrastructure and land around the POEs are also challenges to improving facilities. There is a lack of coherent control and direction for POEs as multiple agencies are involved in owning and operating them. In both the U.S. and Mexico, a combination of federal, state, regional and local agencies play a role in constructing, operating, and owning POEs. In the U.S. alone as many as 19 agencies may be involved in the process of creating a new and operational POE that have to collaborate with one another, while at the same time engaging their counterpart agencies in Mexico so that the Mexican side of the port will be operational at the same time the U.S. side is ready to open. From the presidential permit to establish a POE that is often issued from the U.S. Department of State; to the allocation of resources and funding that may come

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[24] 2007 data on U.S. Foreign Economic and Military Aid from the U.S. Census Bureau.

from federal, state, and local agencies including departments of transportation; to the operation of the POE that involves CBP, departments of motor vehicles and public safety, there are many challenges surrounding construction of new or renovation of existing POEs.

Furthermore, improvements made to the POE on the north/U.S. side of the border need to be mirrored on the south/Mexican side in order for processing of trade and travel to be improved. Binational partnerships between all levels of government are essential for facilitating new POE projects on the border. A significant amount of collaboration and lobbying to the federal governments of both countries is required to make progress, as Congress, the State Department, and CBP all set their own standards for priority projects on the border, regardless of true infrastructure needs for improving efficiency and safety simultaneously.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH KEY SUBNATIONAL ACTORS IN AN ERA OF BINATIONAL UNCERTAINTY

The complexity of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico is becoming increasingly defined by events at their common international border. Slightly more than 72 percent of the bilateral trade occurs through the land-ports of entry (POE) mentioned in the previous section, especially ports such as Laredo, Otay Mesa, and Nogales Mariposa. In addition, more than 177 million people and 96 million automobiles go back and forth across the land POE on an annual basis, a dynamic which is under increasing scrutiny in virtue of the securitization already mentioned. The security concerns have prompted waiting lines at border crossings at POE to extreme levels, with multiple studies already completed showing staggering economic costs and job losses. The security concerns have also engendered a 700 mile-long physical barrier made up of roads, walls, and fences to stop all cross/border migration, including that of wildlife. The overall effect of this new era has been referred to as a *thickening of the border*, which may be the single most important factor that has prompted a transborder, regional push to engage in what were formerly almost exclusively federal issues.

By and large, the transborder region states bear a disproportionate part of the burden that follows the intense binational relationship. Urban infrastructure, air quality, and a plethora of social issues impact border cities unlike any other place in either country. It goes without saying then that the border states hold a higher stake in the outcome of the current approach to security and prosperity engineered by both federal governments after 9/11/2001. On top of that, if we consider the figures mentioned above that show a significant increase in trade over the course of the last decade with a non-significant increase in infrastructure, it's no surprise that current bottlenecking of POE and city streets in border towns, as well as exacerbating social effects given the increasing crossborder disparities[25] would force a regional awakening of sorts to take place.

For many years, the natural setting for resolving many of the issues and details of U.S.-Mexico relations that required high-level attention was the annual meeting of the Binational Commission (BNC). This unique forum was a type of cabinet-level summit headed by the U.S. Department of State and Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Relations. Presidents Jimmy Carter and José López Portillo began the process, but it was Ronald Reagan and López Portillo who in 1981 finally formalized an annual meeting that would alternate between Mexico City and Washington, DC. The event became a premier stage for pushing forward bilateral policy and reaching agreements that needed the spark of public awareness; it also became a photo opportunity that began

[25] As an aftereffect of the aggravated concerns over security, deportations of un-documented migrants have increased and have turned Mexican border towns into the recipients of an added population of homeless and jobless. Moreover, according to DHS sources, almost half of the nearly 400 thousand deported in the last year had criminal records. For details, please see *Deportations hit a record high*, NY Times, October 6, 2010. Julia Preston; http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/07/us/07immig.html.

dwindling in content and impact until it became outdated. It may have been that cross-border coordination no longer required the high profile stage, or perhaps the issues of such a complex neighborhood as the U.S. and Mexico outgrew the mechanism. Whatever the reason, the last BNC meeting took place in Washington, DC in March of 2006, just prior to the end of President Fox's administration.

Regional Stakeholdership Meets Shared Responsibility

As of this writing, only two visits have occurred between the U.S. and Mexican presidents as Heads of State, since President Calderón reached office in Mexico. As a number of observers have remarked, the era heralded as one of *shared responsibility* has notably lacked a proper dialogue mechanism or forum, even in the midst of increased cooperation. By virtue of Mexico's increasing democratization of state gubernatorial races, as well as the newly found alternation in the presidency, the Border Governors Conference has reached a higher level of prominence than ever before. By 2003 the Border Governors Conference (BGC) was ready to convene federal officials and to become more efficacious in following up on border matters discussed in its annual meetings and joint declarations. By 2005, the BGC decided that a Technical Secretariat would help them to improve follow up on their joint declarations, and in 2008 they approved an initiative for a third party to develop a ten-state, region-wide master plan for a more competitive and sustainable development.

Unveiled in 2009, during the XXVII Border Governors Conference in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, the *Strategic Guidelines for the Competitive and Sustainable Development of the U.S.-Mexico Transborder Region* is an ambitious strategy that looks to the year 2030 to accomplish a vision of an improved U.S.-Mexico border region. Strategies focus on creating a region that is more competitive driven by a knowledge-based economy and innovation; more sustainable r based on green technology, renewable energy, and binational institutions with an expanded mandate for funding development; more cooperative through information exchange to solve security issues; and more livable by investing in cities and increasing minimum education requirements. The greater prominence of the BGC is also aided by the recognition of both federal governments that the Strategic Guidelines (or *Plan Indicativo*, as it is called in Spanish) is not just a good idea, but a document that reflects political consensus among the ten border states. As the specific weight of the border becomes greater within U.S.-Mexico relations, the BGC is also a natural forum for the real and substantive issues that are spiraling to the top of the list within U.S.-Mexico issues. The *Strategic Guidelines/Plan Indicativo* covers 80 strategies altogether, divided into the four strategic areas of competitiveness, sustainability, security and quality of life. Enhancing cross border mobility without diminishing security measures, greening the border, stronger institutions, and logistical and knowledge based corridors are at the top of the list.

The coalition of stakeholders that has thrust the region to the center of the bilateral discussion is not only the ten border governors, but also the Border Legislative Conference, a younger unit but one that meets more regularly than the border governors, federal agencies such as U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Mexico's Foreign Ministry (*Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*), as well as key academic institutions, universities and think tanks[26] devoted to U.S.-Mexico relations and the border.

As it is, the U.S. Mexico transborder region, the ten states which include California, Baja California, Arizona, Sonora, Chihuahua, New Mexico, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Texas and Tamaulipas, is already the fourth largest economy in the world, larger than Germany, France or

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[26] Currently, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, The Mexico Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and Arizona State Univesity's North American Center for Transborder Studies comprise an alliance known as the Border Research Partnership/Alianza para Estudios Transfronterizos.

the U.K., with a little over 86 million residents and capturing more than 25 percent GDP of both countries. The complementarities of its population (Mexico young; U.S. aging), its industrial niche (Mexico engineering and technical skills; U.S. financial; R&D); and its manufacturing specialty (Mexico, manual; U.S. mechanical) make the U.S.-Mexico transborder region a unique region with significant comparative advantage. But the current difficulties of their disparities must be overcome, in what is currently regarded as the challenge of *catching up* before its related problems catch up with the strategy.

CONCLUSION: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION IN U.S.-MEXICO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development despite a highly securitized border *can* be achieved.

No comprehensive discussion of economic development in the U.S. – Mexico border region can occur outside a consideration of how security issues have dominated the borderlands. Tension has always existed between trade and security and only through looking at the history of that tension and the evolution of securitization, as this paper has attempted, can one understand where we are now, what the options are, and where we are moving next. And as we have argued in this paper, the exhaustion of the North American Free Trade Agreement in the face of significant megatrends and watershed events has emphasized the need for a more significant role for regional actors. The two federal governments continue to struggle with truly significant events and trends that affect the U.S-Mexico border region and absolutely need regional actors as true partners to effect needed change in the areas of security and economic development.

As we look at the creation of the U.S. federal government's integrated homeland defense bureaucracy, the development of extensive border infrastructure, expansion of security policy,

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the additional troops on the border including the National Guard, one observes steady movement towards a balkanized U.S. or fortress America. There is a significant lack of commensurate consideration of the needs for the border to remain permeable to legitimate flows, especially to trade and secondly to the concerns of the North American neighbors and the effect on bilateral diplomacy.

This is not to say that significant threats and risk across the borders do not exist. While irregular economic migration does not seem to be related to terrorism, the nexus of drug trafficking with human trafficking and potentially terrorist smuggling causes much concern with law enforcement agencies.

The concept of sustainable security, also known as human security, total sum security, or society security, can be viewed from the North American context as "mutual security," the enhancement of intelligence, communications, and other security operations across the U.S. border into Mexico and Canada to enhance the security of each and all. This paper has argued that this broad definition of security leads not to a thick, sticky, or dense border but to a lean, nimble, and thin border bolstered by a zone of security on either side.

What facilitates economic development while accommodating more secure borders? We offer several key recommendations:

1. Shared responsibility, technology, intelligence, and training.

Problems arise when one country works in isolation from the other and when the solution to the problem is used in isolation of other solutions, or when one level of government acts independent of the other levels of government. Decisions will be made less comprehensively and applied incompletely. For example, as we have attempted to demonstrate in this paper, the failure of the

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federal governments to invest in border transportation and environmental infrastructure has cost both nations and placed a heavy toll on the borderlands. Similarly, the exchange of information and intelligence will need to become the mode of operation for law enforcement along the border, and will be enabled to the extent that security agencies further develop trust across the international boundary.

2. Shared Governance Includes Regional and Local Actors

When President Obama talks about whole of government and this paper discusses shared governance, we hope he implies and we clearly intend that it includes actors at the state, tribal, municipal, and local level who bring important perspectives to decision-making about what was traditionally a federal issue. Fortunately, many sophisticated regional border organizations already exist, including the Border Governors Conference, the Border Legislative Council, the Border County Commissioners Council, the Conference of Western Attorneys General, and the Paso del Norte Group, to name a few. As an example, the Strategic Guidelines document approved by the ten border governors recommends that community needs be merged with law enforcement priorities, suggesting that "larger U.S. security interests should dovetail, when possible, with the public safety concerns of local communities."

3. Move Security away from the Border

Myriad methods exist to move security operations away from the overburdened infrastructure at the ports of entry. The irony remains, as we enter the second decade of the third millennium,that trade across borders can be made more secure with technology. Security at borders could conceivably include single E-windows for filing all documentation (truck, cargo, driver, agricultural, etc.) for both nations, joint booths, cyber booths, and other uses of technology can enhance both security and development. Secure corridors are suggested by others such as the

Border Legislative Conference. In addition, the movement towards “internal ports” is an encouraging sign towards moving the borders away from the borders. But most of these decisions are made at the federal level, without much local input.

4. Harmonize Perspectives

For too long the perspectives of the Mexican and U.S. governments have been far too divergent and local insights have not been adequately accommodated nor innovations implemented.

How can the two nations expect alignment of policies, activities, infrastructure, or resources when their priorities are so different? When one ranks terrorism first and the other last? When neither identifies the money laundering behind the other threats as a top concern?

Figure 6: Transnational Priorities

United States	**Mexico**
Terrorism	Drug Trafficking
Drug Trafficking	Arms Trafficking
Migration	Money Laundering
Arms Trafficking	Migration
Money Laundering	Terrorism

Source: Gustavo Mohar, CISEN

There is a disconnect between how we on the ground view trade efficiency and how those in the federal government create security policies. Often the policies did not and still do not match realities in the borderlands. This disconnect exists as well when we follow the money as it is allocated to security versus trade at the border. The number of agents *between* the ports of entry has increased significantly while the number of customs and port officers has only doubled in the last 10 years.

Regional and local organizations often know the border better than decision-makers in the capitals. Except for an ineffective and reactive Border Liaison Mechanism process, little is heard by the federal government directly from regional and local actors.

The *joint* development of secure border infrastructure, policies, and procedures has been disappointing. While there have been noted success on the northern border with such programs as Ship Rider, where the U.S. and Canada place law enforcement officers and their authority on ships of the other nation, efforts to develop shared joint booths and joint border management authorities have been frustrated by sovereignty (GAO and see below).

Conduct Joint Risk Assessment

Except for an annual threat assessment done by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, few crossborder threat, vulnerability, or risk assessments have been routinely completed or updated. Our own assessment of the progress shows lumpy progress and even regression on some issues. Perhaps most notable is attention to the actual and virtual border fence or wall while dams remain in a state of disrepair even though assessed as unsafe.

Risk assessment is conducted separately by each of the governments, often removing common threat assessment and vulnerability assessment from actual risk assessment. Examples of joint risk assessments have aged without being updated. The U.S. Department of Energy soon after 9/11 conducted electrical reliability assessments of generators and transmission in Mexico that assured U.S. electrical security. Other examples seem to be classified or nonexistent.

5. Bring the Border to the Capitals

What the securitization of the border failed to accomplish was to bring the border perspective, priorities, and proposals sufficiently enough to the attention of the federal capitals to incorporate that local input. Perhaps the most important opportunity for the border now is membership on the 21st Century Border Executive Steering Committee, development of joint master plans for the 21st century border interagency policy committee (IPC), and development of common criteria for prioritization of port projects.

Too many times the border has suffered when the federal governments have promoted a program that lasted only as long as the administration. To security trumping trade, Canada answered with "smart trumps security" and urged signing of a Smart Border Accord soon after 9/11. Mexico was slower in negotiating a Secure Border Agreement and there is little correlation between the two (see below) and little follow up accounting or progress reporting. President Bush proposed security and prosperity partnership which met for four years of his administration. It was replaced by President Obama with the North American Leaders Summit which met once in Guadalajara in 2009.   What the border needs is permanent, constructive, and comprehensive advice from the border to the federal governments.

The challenges is that the borderlands need to expand in breadth as contraband interdiction security is applied more in zones and layers than merely proximate to the border and as security screenings are moved away from the borders to the farms, factories and foreign origins. At the same time, borders are often where other phenomena – free trade agreements, heightened security awareness, narco-insurgency, irregular migration - are manifest. These have increased public and private sector interest in what is imposed upon them by outsiders either for security or economic development reasons.

The differing priorities, emerging role, and potentially significant actions of regional jurisdictions at international ports and border will persist as another wrinkle in the overall

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intermestic challenge and to the application of governance. These disparate interests can cause implementation of any one solution by any one actor to diverge from interests of others or even most others unless a long-term, systemic vision and mutual interest articulation can be achieved.

The example presented herein of Strategic Guidelines, developed by regional actors, complete with short and mid-term mechanisms to achieve some of the goals, is essential but unfortunately unique. It is historic as a strategic plan but remains only a plan and that of regional actors. Regardless, the authors believe the rallying of all – public and private; subnational, federal, and international; academic, advocacy and NGO – is possible if they can recognize each other's vision, agree on a few common objectives, and move forward together.

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