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A Community or an Identity?**

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**North American Security:
A Community or an Identity?**

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North American Security: A Community or an Identity?

Introduction

North America has become a real region due to reasons of security, economic advantages and political interests, generating the idea of consolidating a North America Community by means of the deepening of NAFTA. The events of 9/11 put pressure on the countries of North America to seek a shared viewpoint about security issues and the regional vision is gradually being acquired. The three countries recognize common problems regarding security and the existence of transnational threats that cannot be treated independently. Security has become an important element of integration; the main question is if North America is building a security community or an identity in security issues after 9/11?

The Theoretical Debate about Security Communities Building: A Community or an Identity?

The classic concept of security¹ centered on the military vision, on the viability and safekeeping (survival) of the State, has evolved, giving rise to a broader concept by incorporating new elements, although the State continues to be the main reference point.² As Buzan indicates, in addition to meaning survival when the existence of the State or a society is threatened, security “has to do with conditions of existence and includes States’ ability to maintain their independent identity, their integrity and functionality against forces seen as hostile.”³ Threats would be defined as anything that undermines the stability, viability and existence of any sphere of security. Besides traditional threats centered on the State (like external military aggression), threats of a transnational character also arise from non-State actors like international organized crime, terrorism, drug and illegal arms traffickers, corruption, money laundering and the links among them.

We know that optimal regional integration implies the consolidation of a common identity in matters of foreign policy, security and the harmonization of the administration

¹ Traditionally, security has been conceived starting from the military-political approach centered on viability and safekeeping (survival) of the State. According to this vision, security by definition "is and should be conceived starting from the State", and this "is and should be conceived starting from security", thus generating an indissoluble dialectic between the State/security. See: Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Japp de Wilde, *Security a New Framework for Analysis*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 37.

² From this perspective, security unfolds in several spheres: the **military**, (related to the offensive and defensive capabilities of States and their perceptions regarding the others’ intentions); the **political**, (referring to State organization, adequate functioning of the institutions and their legitimacy/legality); the **economic**, (related to access to the necessary resources, markets and finances to sustain the welfare of the population and State stability); the **environmental** (sustained development promotion); and the **social** (such as society’s ability to maintain cultural and national elements like language, religion and customs) See: *Ibid*.

³ Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security”, *International Affairs* 67, no. 3 (1991): 432.

of justice. Without a doubt, the transnational nature of the threats and challenges to domestic and international security has generated an ever greater interdependence among states in this matter.

According to Charles Tilly, a community is defined by three characteristics: a) members of a community have shared identities, values and meanings; b) those in a community have many-sided and direct relations; and c) communities exhibit reciprocity (expressing some degree of long-term interest derived from knowledge of those with whom one interacts) and perhaps even altruism (understood as a sense of obligation and responsibility).⁴

A sense of belonging appears to be closely interrelated with membership in a political community that seems to offer protection from external threats.⁵ Identity and security are relational concepts that imply the existence of an “other” against which the notion of a collective self and conditions of insecurity are articulated.⁶ States identify positively with one another so that the security of each is perceived as the responsibility of all. Identity implies a shared view about security, defense and threats and a close sense of cohesion and solidarity.

Deutsch’s reflections are among the first attempts after World War II that consider the possibility of pacific change in international relations. According to Deutsch, “A security community...is a group that has become integrated, where integration is defined as the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with reasonable certainty over a long period of time.” Collective identities are the agents of pacific change, which explains why interdependence and mutual responsibility among the States grow, finally leading to not considering the use of physical violence among them a legitimate mechanism for the resolution of conflicts.⁷

Authors from the European School, like Waever and Buzan, have worked on the idea of security communities, developing the concept of regional security complexes, through which they highlight the importance of the regions in structuring security levels.

The regional security systems theory starts from an assessment guided by political realism of the international system’s anarchic nature and the interdependence among States in security matters. According to this vision, thanks to regional integration, we go from a group of anarchic States to stability when a single actor is constituted in the international system.

⁴ Charles Tilly, *cit.pos.* Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, “A framework for the study of security communities” in *Security Communities*, ed. Adler and Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31.

⁵ M. Clarke, *New Perspectives on Security* (London: Brassey’s, 1993), xi.

⁶ Robert Lipschutz, “Negociating the Boundaries of Difference and Security at the Millenium’s End,” in *On Security*, ed. Lipschutz, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 217.

⁷ Karl W Deutsch, *cit.pos.* Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, “A framework for the study of security communities,” in *Security Communities*, ed. Adler and Barnett (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

According to Buzan, a regional security complex is made up of a group of States "whose main security perceptions and references are interconnected; therefore, they cannot be reasonably analyzed or solved some of them independently from others" and "whose securities are not sufficiently interdependent to render them a kind of subsystem within the general model of international security."⁸

The construction and dynamics of security systems are the result of the interdependence of their members, of the security perception each of them has, of the distribution of power among them and of the friendship-enmity relationships among them.

In this way, regional security systems may be built and may function based on: a) the members' negative vision, where interdependence arises from fear, distrust and rivalry; b) an intermediate position, in which States perceive threats among themselves but reach agreements to reduce security problems amongst themselves and coming from abroad. This model corresponds to the beginnings of European Union construction; and c) a positive vision, in which the states have no expectations or intentions of using force among themselves. This describes the development of security identity in North America.⁹

Adler and Barnett¹⁰ acknowledge that there is great skepticism about political actors being able to share values and standards and to come together in diverse and reciprocal interactions that reflect long-term interests. These authors distinguish between amalgamated security communities, characterized by the political merger of their members, toward which the EU is moving, and pluralistic security communities, in which the states maintain their independence and sovereignty, such as the case of North America.

Also, they distinguish between two ideal types of pluralistic security communities: the "loosely coupled" and the "tightly coupled". While the loosely coupled security community has a minimal definition (a transnational region made up of sovereign States whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change, like NAFTA), the tightly coupled one is more demanding in two respects: a) it has a "mutual aid" society in which collective security system arrangements are made; and b) it possesses a regimen endowed with common supranational and transnational institutions and some form of a collective security system (like in the European case).

To explain how the development of a security community in general affects relations among the member States and in particular their security policies, the authors developed a security community model of evolution in three phases, which I shall use to analyze the development of the security community in North America.

⁸ Barry Buzan, *The European Security Order Recast*, (London: Printer Publishers, 1990), 13-14.

⁹ See: Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Japp de Wilde, *op.cit.*

¹⁰ See: Adler and Barnett, *op. cit.*

a) *Nascent*

The governments do not make an explicit effort to achieve the construction of a security community, but they aspire to coordinate their relations to improve their respective security situation, to reduce their transaction costs and to promote trade and other interactions that benefit both parties. The States involved create organizations and institutions both to strengthen interaction and to create controlling bodies that enable compliance with mutual obligations.

b) *Ascendant*

This phase is characterized by a strengthening of bonding networks, by new institutions and organizations, as well as by the coordination and collaboration of the armed forces of the States cooperating with one another. Mutual trust increases and common identities arise. Both of these help consolidate the expectation of peaceful change and of the development of mutual responsibility.

c) *Mature*

This is a community of States that share a security identity, as well as institutions and mechanisms to defend it. The process is consolidated, as security is perceived increasingly as a common good.

Is NAFTA a Nascent Pluralistic Security Community since 9/11?

North American integration undoubtedly has peculiar characteristics, such as the asymmetry among its members, the clear hegemony of the United States and the preeminence of bilateral relations (United States-Canada/United States-Mexico) over trilateral ones. North America has become a real region due to reasons of security, economic advantages and political interests, generating the idea of consolidating a North American Community by deepening NAFTA.¹¹

The events of 9/11 put pressure on the countries of North America to seek a shared viewpoint, and that regional vision is gradually being acquired. The three countries recognize common problems regarding security and the existence of transnational threats that cannot be treated independently, although it is true they have opted for paused, thematic, practical and immediate work at a bilateral level (United States-Canada/United States-Mexico) encouraged by the United States' immediate needs.

¹¹ Concerning this idea of the emergence of a North American Community, see: Robert A., Pastor, *Toward a North American Community* (Washington: Institute for International Economics, 2001); Helen Milner, "Regional economic cooperation, global markets and domestic politics: a comparison of the NAFTA and the Maastricht Treaty," in *Regionalism and Global Economic Integration*, ed. William Coleman and Geoffrey Hunderhill (UK: Routledge, 1998); John McCormick, *Understanding the European Union*, (UK: Palgrave, 1999) and Alejandro Chanona, "Hacia la construcción de una perspectiva comparada: Unión Europea-TLCAN. Un acercamiento a la teoría liberal intergubernamentalista," in *La Unión Europea y el TLCAN. Integración regional comparada y relaciones mutuas*, ed. Alejandro Chanona, Joaquin Roy and Roberto Dominguez (Mexico: UNAM-Miami University-Citesa), 93-140.

We can argue that in North America, a pluralistic security community, understood as a transnational region formed by sovereign States that maintain expectations of pacific changes, is being developed.¹² The regional security system in North America will be built starting from mutual confidence and interdependence, but it will respond, in principle, to the United States' immediate needs: safeguarding U.S. territory, especially from a potential terrorist attack.

In North America, the differentiated use the United States makes of its hegemony is clear: when dealing with regions like Africa or the Middle East it has favored, and even carried out, actions, unilaterally exercising its military strength, whereas with its North American partners it has successfully moved toward the search for plans to cooperate, generating channels for dialogue in an effort to reach viable agreements. Mexico and Canada have taken advantage of this in negotiations in order to prevent the unilateral measures of U.S. hegemony from affecting vital areas such as trade and personal life, due to the virtual closing of the borders.¹³

Historically, Canada¹⁴ and Mexico¹⁵ have designed their national sovereignty and survival principles without disputing U.S. hegemony, although they tend to remain distant with respect to certain regional or hemisphere questions when their independence is at stake. Mexico and Canada share some positions like the multidimensional concept of security, the promotion of multilateralism or the struggle against antipersonnel land mines.

Canada's North American identity is firmly established, and it clearly recognizes U.S. leadership in the region. For the United States, Canada is a trustworthy partner. Relations between the United States and Canada in security and defense matters have historically been characterized by proximity and cooperation,¹⁶ as demonstrated by the more than 80

¹² Adler and Barnett, *op.cit.* 30.

¹³ However, Mexico-U.S. relations have been under high tension recently. Both Condoleezza Rice's announcement, Tony Garza's letter to the Mexican government and the CIA director's statement about the possibility of political and social instability during the coming presidential campaign have caused a lot of trouble for the Mexican government.

¹⁴ Traditionally Canada has determined its defense strategy taking into account at least five points:

1) Canada defines itself as "non-militarist", preferring peaceful means for solving controversies; 2) Canadian strategy does not develop the classic elements of self-sufficiency in defense matters; 3) The role of the Canadian armed forces is to support internal bodies, that is, the army's objectives are not only military; 4) Canada is aware of the need for strong cooperation with the United States in matters of defense, due to its geographic location; and 5) Canada designs its defense policy without autonomy *vis-à-vis* U.S. defense policy. See: Douglas Murray, "Canada," in *The defense policies of Nations: A Comparative Study*, ed. Douglas Murray and Paul R. Viotti (Washington: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 57-59.

¹⁵ Historically, Mexico's security and defense policies have been nationalist and defensive. Throughout the twentieth century it has developed its foreign policies based on the principles of non-intervention and respect for the sovereignty of States and international law, thus maintaining its diplomatic independence in the international realm and at the same time protecting its *special relation* with the United States.

¹⁶ Historically, Canada has maintained cooperative relations in security matters with its southern neighbor. Mechanisms like the North America Defense Treaty, the Bilateral Consultant Group on Cooperation against Terrorism, the Terrorist Interception Program of both countries (TIP), the United States and Canada Forum on Trans-Border Crime, the groups directed by the immigration service and customs known as Border Vision and the information exchange agreements between the United States Drug Control Administration and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

agreements about defense that the two countries have signed (although they maintain some differences such as the position on Cuba and the conception of human security, one of the principal axes of Canadian foreign policy).

What is more ambiguous is Mexico's North American identity. This country has been part of the North America concept only for the last decade, an identity ratified with the signing of NAFTA. At present, no matter what issue we analyze within the context of Mexico-U.S. relations, national security predominates in relation to all the matters of high politics.

In security matters, the most complete representation of the construction of a North American bloc is seen in the smart border agreements. They go far beyond the technical aspects that supposedly support them and imply collaboration in intelligence and migration policies that guarantee security in the territorial proximity of the United States, which enables it to project its military power to the rest of the world.

A Shared North American Point of View about Security and Threats?

Although there is no shared vision of the North American countries on security and the threats to security, we can find minimum agreements in the matter, derived from the United States' immediate needs, such as the importance of border security and the struggle against transnational organized crime (terrorism, drug and arms trafficking).

Mexico and Canada share a multidimensional vision of security. In the case of Mexico, according to the 2000-2006 National Development Plan, "The main objectives of national security are to ensure the protection and conservation of the collective interest, avoiding as far as possible or minimizing any risk or threat to the physical integrity of the population and to institutions."

Ratifying the multidimensional vision of security, the National Development Plan points out that "the real threats to institutions and national security are poverty and inequality, the vulnerability of the population faced with natural disasters, environmental destruction, criminality, organized crime and illegal drug trafficking....At present the Mexican State is not aware of any risks to its sovereignty as a result of external threats of the traditional type."

Faced with this, the U.S. hegemonic vision appears and, using political realism to read the international system, sustains that the construction of worldwide security and the defense of the liberal order rests on the exercise of power and military might, preferring coercion and unilateralism.¹⁷

are proof of this close cooperation. The Bilateral Consultation Group for Antiterrorist Cooperation has coordinated efforts in the struggle against terrorism. The establishment of the Ad-Hoc Committee of Ministers in Public Security and Anti-terrorism, presided over by Minister of Foreign Affairs John Manley, and the approval of the Antiterrorist Act, in September and December 2001, respectively, were clear signs of the Canadian commitment to the antiterrorist struggle.

¹⁷ Political realism is based on the existence of a structurally anarchic (Hobbesian) international system, where survival is one of the main objectives of all States: the struggle for power and the use of force are key elements of the

After the events of 9/11, the United States initiated a new security doctrine that for the first time centers its attention on the security and defense of its territory (*homeland security* and *homeland defense*), restructuring its domestic and international systems to deal with non-conventional threats to its security, specifically terrorism. Homeland security implies the prevention, prediction of, elimination and defense against any aggression to the territory, sovereignty, population and infrastructure of the United States, as well as the management of crises and other national emergencies, which the new National Territory Security Office will be in charge of.

The new U.S. military doctrine is not based on nuclear threats but rather on a measure of the military capacity to prevent and react against any unexpected threat or attack. In this doctrine, what the United States accepts is the new nature of its enemies. Terrorists are not afraid of nuclear dissuasion; as a result, the country has developed new forms and more effective means of dissuading.¹⁸

The United States has identified terrorism as the main threat against its security, together with the traditional transnational threats such as organized crime and drug trafficking. The United States has insisted at international meetings that issues like poverty, pandemics and the environment, among others, are not part of the security agenda, due to the fact that they “debase” the concept of security.

Nevertheless, Mexico’s case is special. In addition to the primary U.S. concern about security on the border with Mexico and the porosity of the country’s southern border, the United States is also worried about the country’s internal security and stability. As Dziedzic points out, “Mexico has become a point of contention for various geo-social or transnational problems¹⁹ that do not respect national borders...That is why Mexico is – and shall continue being– fundamental for the success of the great United States strategy.”²⁰

The security agenda for Mexico designed by the Bush administration includes: a) traffic in immigrants; b) widespread corruption (which would potentially allow terrorist groups to set up in Mexico); c) organized crime (drug trafficking, kidnapping, thefts); d)

international system. The international system’s organizational principle is sovereignty; the States’ first concern should be their security, and this should be guaranteed by means of political power and military force. Likewise, in a multi-polar system, States’ security can be maintained more effectively by means of alliances and balances of power, thus opening up the possibility for cooperation.

¹⁸ The new strategy contained in the Unified Command Plan is based on the awareness of all the weak points in the U.S. defense system, such as the lack of a defense system against ballistic missiles, which constitutes in itself an initiative for the development of weapons of mass destruction and the means to start them. See: Donald H. Rumsfeld, “The transformation of the armed forces,” *Foreign Affairs in Spanish*, (Summer 2002):148-149.

¹⁹ Dziedzic understands “geo-social” problems as the new transnational threats to security. They include international organized crime, terrorist groups, environmental pollution and the massive flow of refugees and disease. See: Michael Dziedzic, “Mexico and the great strategy of the United States: geo-strategic basis for security and prosperity,” in *Las seguridades de México y Estados Unidos en un momento de transición*, cords. Sergio Aguayo and John Bailey (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1997), 85-114.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 86.

the lack of maritime control on Mexico's borders; e) the possibility of a terrorist attack on strategic points in Mexico, especially the oil wells.²¹

Toward a North American Security Perimeter: Borders and Cooperation as Key Issues

Smart Borders: The First Step for the Security Community in North America

The borders are key areas for U. S. security. In both cases, United States-Mexico and United States-Canada, priorities are different. Whereas in the United States-Canada relationship, drug trafficking has dominated the agenda, in the case of the U.S.-Mexico border, together with drugs, migration is a bi-national security matter.

NAFTA has increased illegal trans-border interactions; this may be attributed to trade itself and to deficiencies in U.S. drug detection policies along the Mexican border. The debate between trade liberalization and more policing was made more flexible in order to not restrict trade growth on the border.

The numbers speak for themselves: during 2002, 78 percent of a total of 253 million pedestrian crossings through the 55 ports of entry into Mexico took place on the border with the United States. Approximately 89 million private vehicles and 4.5 million trucks crossed that border, and 98 percent of bilateral trade, close to U.S.\$300 billion worth, took place there. In addition, there is the phenomenon of undocumented immigration of Mexican workers. The most recent estimates calculate that each year approximately 380,000 Mexicans, half of whom have no documents, travel to the United States, either to stay permanently or temporarily. All this confirms the fact that this is the border with the most crossings in the world.²² According to the most recent estimates, these undocumented immigrants send their families in Mexico approximately U.S.\$15 billion a year, a sum that constitutes the country's second source of foreign currency, exceeding non-oil exports and foreign direct investment.

Throughout the twentieth century, border relations between the United States and Canada have been characterized by cooperation, which has increased since NAFTA came into effect.²³

²¹ Raúl Benítez Manaut and Georgina Sánchez, "Progress and limits of the participation of Mexico in hemispheric security at the beginning of the twenty-first century," *Security and Defense Studies Review* 4, (2004), Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies http://www.ndu.edu/chds/journal/PDF/2004/Benitez-Sanchez_article-edited.pdf.

²² Santiago Creel, "Immigration and security between Mexico and the United States", *Foreign Affairs in Spanish* 4, no. 2 (2004).

²³ The Canadian government has promoted a considerable number of initiatives in matters of border relations with the U. S., among which is the 1995 Agreement between Canada and the United States on Our Shared Border. In this initiative, both countries committed themselves to work together to achieve the protection against illegal and irregular border activities, to facilitate the transit of goods and persons and to promote international trade. Other measures include the 1997 Border Vision initiative and the 1999 United States-Canada Association, through which both governments created a bi-national mechanism to study common border problems to harmonize policies and actions with respect to the border and increase efficiency in crossings of persons and merchandise and in environmental protection. In addition, corporate, trade and company associations will form a regional business coalition named "Americans for Better Borders." See: Jimena Jiménez, Christina Gabriel and Laura Macdonald, *The politics of the*

After the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Canadian government questioned its ability to face a similar situation, recognizing the need for greater cooperation with its southern neighbor, not only for safe, proper functioning at the border, but for establishing concrete actions against any possible terrorist act. Just like in the Mexican case, the closing of the border and the exhaustive security measures implemented afterward by the United States had a great economic impact, due to the fact that border crossings were delayed up to 18 hours. Consequently, more than 50 companies from various sectors formed the Coalition for Safe and Efficient Borders in Trade, declaring at the same time full support for the Canadian government to go ahead with the necessary coordination and cooperation measures with the United States to guarantee border security.²⁴

In the case of Mexico, the 1991 establishment of the Border Linking Mechanism did not imply the development of a long-term vision about border management between both countries. Designing border measures as answers to immediate problems and the limited scope of the mechanisms have been constants. In fact, the trans-border initiatives or cooperation policies between Mexico and the United States have traditionally been conceived as part of the international policies of border states, which have been developing informally for several years. An example of this is the relationship between Tijuana, Baja California and San Isidro, California, where their authorities have established ample cooperative actions that range from operations to prevent sailors from returning intoxicated to the United States, to contingency plans to prevent possible attacks with chemical or biological weapons.²⁵

The encouragement for creating common border security stemmed from the necessities and guidelines marked by U.S. hegemony after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Before its North American partners, the United States has accepted the impossibility of unilaterally facing threats to the security of its territory, and has decided to encourage cooperation and concretizing agreements in the matter.

From the Bush administration's perspective, security on the border "must be guided by the principles of co-responsibility, respect to sovereignty, compliance with constitutional restrictions and protection of human rights and of private life." For his government, the fact that land borders have the type of infrastructure and administration systems that facilitate and guarantee the sustained integration of the economic region in North America has become "a vital necessity".

North American Security Perimeter: Convergence or Divergence in Border Control Policies (Paper presented at the International Studies Association, Oregon, 2003).

²⁴ See: Perrin Beatty "Canada in North America: Isolation or Integration?" in *The Future of North American Integration. Beyond NAFTA*, ed. Peter Hakim and Robert E. Litan, (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 43-50.

²⁵ José María Ramos, *Seguridad nacional y frontera en el contexto internacional y bilateral* (Paper presented at the XV Social Sciences International Meeting, The Sociopolitical Dimension of Globalization in Latin America, Mexico, 2001)

According to Tom Ridge, “in the future the border will be protected through international cooperation to increase the participation of intelligence information and face more efficiently the threats presented by terrorism, organized crime, the illegal traffic of immigrants and narcotics, pests and agricultural diseases, as well as the destruction of natural resources.”²⁶ Consequently, in 2003, approximately U.S.\$11 billion were assigned to increase border security, U.S.\$2.2 billion more than in 2002.

The construction of the so-called smart borders is North America’s most complete immediate institutional response to the threats to its security. By standardizing control procedures, smart borders can contain common threats, with which both public security and economic security will be mutually reinforced.

The smart borders initiative is developed through five principles: reinvent the border; extend economic efficiency; build security resources; share continental and global security; and develop twenty-first-century institutions.

The agreement to create a smart border with Mexico was signed March 21, 2002. Unlike the agreement with Canada (which includes 30 specific actions under four general headings: a) ensure the transit of persons; b) ensure the transit of goods; c) develop safe infrastructure; and d) coordinate and exchange information to reach these objectives), the action plan for the border between Mexico and the United States only includes 22 actions under three general headings: a) ensure the transit of persons; b) ensure the transit of goods; and c) develop safe infrastructure.

For Canada, actions aimed at the creation of the smart border appear to strengthen the cooperation that already existed with its southern neighbor in this matter. Nevertheless, former Prime Minister Chrétien discarded the idea of a security perimeter, arguing that its creation “requires a degree of harmonization of policies, particularly in the area of migration, and the refugees who might infringe Canadian sovereignty.”²⁷

The smart border between Mexico and the United States is on its way to becoming a reality. To date, a Bilateral Coordinating Committee has been established, an orientation framework has been agreed on for the protection of infrastructure and sectoral working groups on energy, telecommunications, transportation, dams, public health and agriculture have been set up. Mexico’s General Administration of Customs and the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection created three specialized working groups (on borders, law enforcement and technology and customs procedures), which meet every three months and whose main purpose is to improve the application of Indicator Technology of the Situation of Visitors and Immigrants to the United States (US VISIT) program for the control of entries and exits from the United States as of December 31, 2003.

²⁶ Tom Ridge “Two countries, one mission” , *Foreign Affairs in Spanish* 4, no. 2 (2004).

²⁷ Jiménez, *op.cit.*

To guarantee the transit of goods along the U.S.-Mexican border the Fast and Safe Trade (FAST) program,²⁸ designed by the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) was extended to the El Paso border between Mexico and the United States as of December 4, 2003.

The NAFTA Security Perimeter

Although the smart borders strategy is the first step in the creation of the security community in North America, it must be pointed out that these are bilateral agreements, centered on the legal flows of merchandise and persons, and their main objective is to standardize procedures and promote the security of both U.S. land borders. This explains the importance of the agreements reached at the Waco Summit and of the recommendations by the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America, both oriented toward the creation of a North American security perimeter that transcends the idea of smart borders, and the definitive push for the process of construction of the security community.

At the March 2005 Waco summit, the three countries' heads of state signed the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, which includes the creation of a security perimeter to combat internal and external threats to security. This will also enable the implementation of a common model of response to emergencies that will guarantee the protection of the region's infrastructure and ensure efficiency in moving goods and persons.

Also, based on the principle that our security and prosperity are mutually dependent and complementary, the North American leaders committed to work to develop a common approach to security.

The idea of the North American security perimeter is also present in the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America's Chairmen's statement, released before the Waco meeting. According to the Independent Task Force, it is necessary to create an Action Plan for the North American Borders, through further agreements on the smart borders, and to include elements such as the joint inspection of container vehicles entering North American ports, the creation of a common approach in the international negotiations related to global movement of people, cargo and vessels, as well as the harmonization of: a) visa and asylum policies; b) the procedures of identification and

²⁸ As of September 2002, the FAST lanes operate at five points of entry on the border between the United States and Canada: Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan; Buffalo and Champlain, New York; and Blaine, Washington. To be eligible for the FAST lane, manufacturers, importers and transportation companies must participate in another program of the CBP against terrorism, the Customs-Trade Association against Terrorism (C-TPAT), according to which companies develop and implement security plans to improve security operations. Truck drivers must submit information that will enable CBP officers to evaluate if the applicant represents any danger. The approved applicants receive a FAST Commercial Driver Identification Card. The FAST has additional security characteristics on the U.S.-Mexico border. Manufacturers and transportation company drivers who participate in the FAST between the United States and Mexico are required to use high security mechanical seals on all of the containers or trailers going to the United States. Customs and Border Protection shall continue examining these deliveries with X-rays, dogs and other equipment to guarantee the integrity of the FAST program. The CBP also expects the additional security to improve their continuous efforts to intercept drugs along the border.

tracking of persons, goods and vehicles (identified by biometric characteristics); and c) tracking procedures and monitoring of exits and of imports and exports; as well as the sharing of transit information.²⁹

The proposal also points out the importance of extending cooperation to the area of law enforcement and to matters related to defense. However, at least in the short term, trilateral agreements are not likely to be signed in these matters, given Canada's ambiguous position on the subject and, above all, due to the impossibility of Mexico's accepting participation in measures such as the creation of a trinational intelligence center on threats, joint training of police forces or participation in a trinational defense force.

As an example, we have Mexico and Canada's reactions to the establishment of a Northern Command (NORTHCOM) within the framework of restructuring North American security and defense policies.

In Mexico, the executive, Congress and the army itself refused any Mexican participation in NORTHCOM. For the Mexican military, this is normal procedure and does not involve the country's military sovereignty. Given tradition in the matter of foreign policy and internal conditions, it is clear that, for the time being, Mexico will not risk participating in any security system involving direct armed forces participation. Military and security collaboration with the United States will continue to happen in the fight against drug trafficking and cooperation, but it will not mean, at least in the short term, greater participation in international missions, which would be limited to humanitarian assistance in case of disasters and to nearby areas.³⁰

Therefore, today, the armed forces continue their struggle against drug trafficking and organized crime, terrorism and illegal trafficking in arms and persons, besides helping to solve "the insufficiencies in the poorest areas of our country, where support is needed in social, educational and health areas."³¹

But Canada's reaction was ambiguous. In principle, Canada defined the command as an internal U.S. policy; however, the government announced it would begin a series of consultations with its southern neighbor in this matter. The North American Air Space

²⁹ Independent Task Force on the Future of North America, *Creating a North American Community*, Chairmen's Statement (2005).

³⁰ For decades, the Mexican armed forces have systematically helped countries affected by hurricanes, earthquakes, storms and forest fires. Mexico's Senate has authorized the military to leave the country for humanitarian missions. Solidarity work beyond Mexico's borders has been clear in recent years in the support given to several Latin American countries: "In 1996, help was given to Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Cuba, struck by hurricanes, and to Ecuador after an earthquake. In 1998, support was given to Bolivia when it was hit by an earthquake and to the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador due to hurricanes; in 1999, help was given to Colombia because of an earthquake and to Venezuela due to intense rain; and to the Republic of Guatemala, from April 28 to May 4, 2001, to put out forest fires on ecological reserves in the Department of Petén. In addition to that, the Ministry of the Navy helped Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador in 1998 after the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch. See Marcos Pablo Moloeznik "Presente y Futuro del papel de las Fuerzas Armadas Mexicanas, Aproximación al debate sobre el rol del instrumento militar en la democracia," in *Security and Defense Studies Review* 1, (2001):108. <http://www3.ndu.edu/chds/Journal/PDF/moloeznik.pdf>.

³¹ Presidency of the Republic, *National Development Plan* (Mexico, 2000), 127.

Defense Command (NORAD) has served as a framework for surveillance of air routes in the United States and Canada through the Noble Eagle Operation, which keeps armed airplanes alert for irregular patrolling to identify and intercept suspect flights.³² However, at the same time, former Prime Minister Chrétien discarded the idea of a security perimeter, arguing that its creation "requires a degree of harmonization of policies, especially in the area of immigration and refugees, which might infringe on Canadian sovereignty."

Finally, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin denied any participation of Canada in the U.S. ballistic missile defense program, thus putting an end to two years of internal discussions on the issue. However, he confirmed Canada's commitment to promoting regional cooperation in security matters, by strengthening borders, reinforcing sovereignty in the Arctic and Canada's participation in NORAD.³³

Undocumented Immigration and Drug Trafficking on the Mexico-United States Agenda: The Ghost of Unilateralism

We must also take into consideration the fact that smart border agreements are intended to guarantee the legal transit of persons and goods, as well as the development of the adequate infrastructure along both U.S. borders. Consequently, although it is an important step for the creation of a security perimeter in North America, the great pending task will continue to be dealing with the issue of the immigration of Mexican workers ("illegal" for United States, "undocumented" for Mexico) in which the tendency is that unilateral U.S. actions on cooperation and understanding will prevail.

Without a doubt, the United States and Mexico will have to design an ambitious border agenda, which must include migrants, smugglers of people ("polleros"), smugglers of goods, organized crime, water supply and environmental protection. After the events of September 11, 2001 most analysts were optimistic in considering that, in exchange for an immigration agreement, Mexico could be totally cooperative in seeking effective border security.³⁴

However, despite the fact that the United States considers illegal migration one of the threats to its security, the struggle against terrorism and practical actions concerning border security subordinated a possible immigration agreement with Mexico. On the

³² Between September 2001 and March 2003 there were 27,000 flights to dissuade, prevent and defend themselves against potential terrorist attacks besides consolidating interagency cooperation and carrying out Plan of North America air surveillance, meaning a greater coordination of the North American Air Force-Surveillance Council. Also, an agreement to establish a Bi-national Planning Group for two years was signed. In this framework NORAD has conducted a series of exercise training flights in coordination with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration throughout the United States and Canada. Northcom. General Ralph Eberhart, *Statement before the House Armed Service Committee United States House of Representatives*, March 13, 2003. <http://armedservice.house.gov/openingstat...leases/108thcongress/03-03-13eberhart.ht>

³³ BBC World, "Canadá dice no al sistema antimisiles"; BBC World, February, 25, 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr//hi/spanish/international/newsid_4296000/4296439.stm

³⁴ John Bailey, "México visto desde fuera: nueva arquitectura antiterrorista," *Reforma*, July 3, 2002.

contrary, Tom Ridge has publicly stated that “undocumented aliens are as dangerous to the United States as terrorists, drug dealers or weapons of mass destruction.”³⁵

The latent concern regarding the possibility that Islamic terrorists may enter the United States from Mexico became stronger in August 2004 after the arrest of Farida Goolam Mohamed Ahmed. According to more recent data, between September 1, 2003 and August 2, 2004, the Border Patrol arrested 57,633 non-Mexican immigrants and, since 9/11, has arrested 700 immigrants related to terrorist groups.³⁶

U.S. attention is still focused on the porosity of the border and, independently of the Agreement on Smart Borders, it is unilaterally promoting its own border security agenda by strengthening border controls, which may even lead to the exclusion or marginalization of its North American partners’ interests. That is the reason for the importance that Mexico and Canada place on the reinforcement of the dialogue and cooperation with the United States.

There are numerous examples of strengthening of border controls and of anti-migrant actions, such as:

- Greater control along the border with Mexico, the clearest example of which is the Arizona Border Control (ABC), an operation that aims to strengthen border surveillance, with a budget of half a million dollars per week. The project includes the use of Predator-type spy planes, an increase of 400 Border Patrol agents, the establishment of a special camp on the Tohono Indian reservation to concentrate undocumented migrants and a voluntary repatriation program.

The strengthening of controls on the Mexican border includes Border Patrol use of rubber bullets and mustard gas against the migrants, apparently agreed within the framework of the 2001 Action Plan for Border Security, which has recently been the subject of numerous debates within Mexico.

- The announcement made by former Attorney General Ashcroft concerning the possibility of detaining any undocumented migrant "for security reasons" indefinitely.
- The control and even non-recognition of the Mexican consular registry, an identification document that over 1,200,000 Mexicans in the United States have.
- The unilateral deportation of undocumented workers detained in Arizona (even chaining their hands and feet) within the framework of the Lateral Repatriation Program and staging raids in areas where a large number of undocumented aliens live, such as California.

³⁵ Alberto Nájjar, “Los migrantes contra Bush,” *La Jornada*, August 8, 2004.

³⁶ Associated Press, “Incidente cuestiona la seguridad de la frontera”, August 6, 2004 and David Aponte, “EU: se evitó cruce de 700 presuntos terroristas,” *El Universal*, April 5, 2005.

- House of Representatives passage of the Real ID Act, which argues security reasons to limit political asylum; modifies a series of uses of the Consular Registration (such as making it insufficient for applying for a driver's license and requiring proof of legal residency); authorizes the construction of a 5.5 km. extension of the San Diego security wall (making it a total of 22.4 km long); and requires that the Department of Homeland Security develops and implements a pilot program to identify and test land surveillance technologies in Tucson, Arizona.

For Mexican authorities, the way to face the challenge of illegal immigration between both countries lies in a guest workers' agreement. However, in the short term, the possibility of signing an agreement of this kind seems remote, while actions against immigrants to strengthen U.S. safety measures will continue to increase.

On the other hand, drug trafficking, and especially the wave of violence that has broken out in the last few weeks in Mexican border states, is the other difficult issue in the Mexico-U.S. relationship. Drug trafficking, on the bilateral agenda since the 1980s, seems to be reaching a point that requires the renewal of cooperative efforts by both countries to combat it.

As I have mentioned before, Mexico's internal stability is a security issue for our northern neighbor. Consequently, the United States government has made public announcements regarding the violence generated by drug traffickers, in order to "protect" its citizens who travel to Mexico.

Thus, on January 26, the State Department issued an announcement alerting its citizens to the insecurity along the border with Mexico.³⁷ Later, the U.S. ambassador to Mexico sent a letter pointing to the increase in violence in the border cities and Mexican authorities' inability to stop it.³⁸

In view of U.S. announcements and the possibility of having Mexico return to the list of countries which the United States submits to the process of "anti-drug certification", the Mexican government has responded by adhering to its foreign policy tradition, demanding from its North American partner respect and non-intervention in the internal matters of the country. However, if this reaction from the Mexican government is not accompanied by a negotiating strategy, it is very likely that the cooperation between both countries will be subordinated and threatened by U.S. unilateralism.

Unfortunately, the disagreements between both governments seem to be prevailing over encouragement for new cooperative actions. Mexico should benefit from U.S.

³⁷According to the State Department, 27 U.S. citizens have been kidnapped, two were murdered and 11 are still missing.

³⁸Among other things, Ambassador Garza said that, "Although violence in border cities is not new, the fight among groups of drug traffickers is increasing and has resulted in drastic increases of murder and kidnapping, posing a threat to the integrity of U.S. citizens." He also expressed his concern regarding "the local police forces' inability to combat the drug lords. Kidnapping and violence in general will have a negative effect on tourism and trade along our borders, which are both vital for the region's prosperity." And he denounced impunity, saying, "The criminals have an impressive arsenal of weapons, since they know that it is not very likely that they will be caught and punished."

concern about the security along its northern border and the country's general stability by proposing new cooperation programs. President Fox's government has the possibility of opening negotiations with our northern neighbor, resulting in the contribution of resources and technology, not only to combat drug trafficking, but also to shore up attention to other priority issues for our country, like social exclusion and unemployment, which tend to foster insecurity.

Conclusions

The events of the 11 of September of 2001 started the building of the security community in North America, the security is the main issue of the integration: the three North American countries have recognized that is a necessary condition for the economic development. Beyond an identity, a community is in the making.

The conformation of North America on the basis of security matters is increasing and the framework for a trilateral convergence is there. Although it is in its initial stage, the recognition of the North American security community shifts the problem to the definition, conformation and implementation of these policies, putting them in their correct context. At the end of the day, even though the construction of an identity is debatable, the building of a community is unavoidable.

Reality is proving that national interests and threats go beyond our borders, thus expanding the effects of national security to the space of regional security. The projection of a regional North American bloc in international politics is far from being a fact. However, what is happening is that a regional bloc is coming into being with political progress in the coordination and articulation of actions, although under U.S. hegemony.

The security community, in the sense of a common identity and an automatic identification of common threats in relations among the North American countries, is far from being explicit. In addition to the historic heritage, Mexico is trapped in a definition of foreign policy and security; there are differences inherent to the asymmetry among the countries, which for economic reasons, such as migration and work, foster various opposing forms of nationalism that show the divergence of national interests.

Cooperation of all kinds will deepen among the three nations of North America. And, once more, Canada will continue to be ahead in deepening cooperation in military matters. In the meantime, Mexico will try to safeguard U.S. security by stepping up its efforts to organize smart borders to make sure that it honors its interest in supporting its neighbor, as well as by maintaining internal stability and a minimum agreement among the country's political forces. Currently, however, disagreements tend to prevail over agreements. Nevertheless, one of the highlights of Mexico-U.S. relations is that Mexico's economic, political and social stability is a priority for the United States, a situation which, besides requiring increased cooperation on border security matters, opens an important window of opportunity for negotiations with the Mexican government, including the issues of the multidimensional security agenda such as the fight against poverty, diseases and the environmental deterioration.