

# Reviews

## **México y Estados Unidos: un reto a la interdependencia económica**

(Mexico and the United States  
A Challenge for Economic Interdependence)

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Colegio de Economistas de Sonora, A.C.  
Mexico City, 1997, 535 pp.

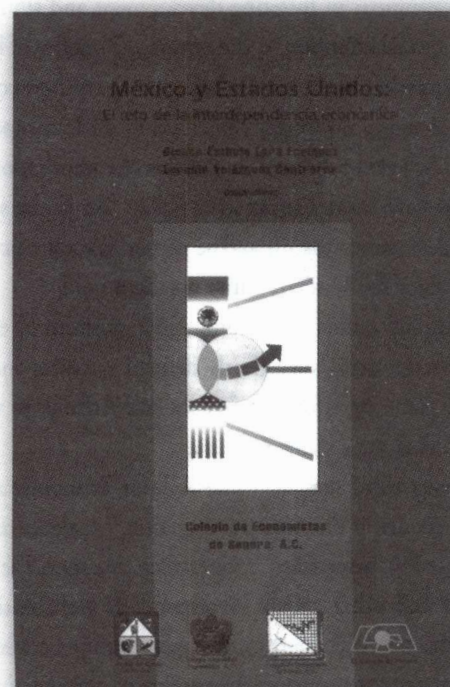
This book is the result of the First International Conference on Economics entitled “Mexico and the United States, A Challenge for Economic Interdependence.” The gathering’s aim was to analyze the impact of NAFTA-driven increasing economic integration and economic developmental trends in northwestern Mexico and southwestern United States. The basic premise was that in the current context of globalization, interdependence becomes particularly important due to the differentiated impact it can have on various regions and sectors of the economy. Since a great deal of literature dealing with the process of integration already exists, why is it advisable to read this book? For the following reasons:

1. It attempts to integrate theoretical focuses about the globalization process (which the authors call “worldization”) and the regional integration between Mexico and the United States, particularly that of Sonora and Arizona. This is not a simple exercise given the different levels of analysis it requires.

2. The book truly makes a contribution because it includes field research, its information is up to date and some of its authors are local decision-makers who shed an interesting light on the question from a hands-on perspective.

3. It includes several theoretical chapters about globalization, economic integration and the new role of the state, of interest to those who follow the new trends in world economics. It also attempts —with differing degrees of success— to bring these theoretical contributions down to concrete levels of analysis to understand what is really going on, particularly the situation in the state of Sonora.

4. It emphasizes important questions like the fact that comparative advantages (understood as given conditions) are insufficient today to guarantee an internationally competitive position. Today’s economic leadership is concentrated in dynamic comparative advantages (innovation and clusters), elements of



international competitiveness. In that sense, different states' quest for complementary clusters in specific economic niches, especially between Sonora and Arizona, are highlighted.

The book is organized in three sections. The first part, "Economic Globalization and Productive Integration," looks at the challenges posed by globalization including the new strategies in international trade and the development possibilities for regional economies. Among other interesting topics, this section also deals with environmental regulations and concepts used to analyze local industrialization, including learning processes and levels of specialization in production.

The second part, "Strategies of Regional Trans-border Development and the Impact of NAFTA," discusses sectoral and regional questions from the perspective of the trade opening. The section begins with what is basically a theoretical chapter analyzing the changes in the world's economic structure and the strategic relationships of city-regions as a response to the new trends in the economy. This chapter explains that technological changes have led to important developments in the geographical distribution of economic activity and employment patterns, which in turn require governmental innovation, both in supporting new organizational structures and in making its traditional functions jibe with the changing situation. The section deals with concepts like "border development without borders," or "trans-border development." It emphasizes the role of local government in fostering development and simultaneously pays special attention to the notion of "quality of life" in economic growth. On the basis of recognizing the new competitiveness paradigm, no longer cemented in static comparative advantages (given conditions), it analyzes the implications this change may have for designing local policy, like in the state of Sonora, and the tactics that should be part of an economic development strategy for Mexico's entire northern border.

Other studies evaluate the competitive position of each of the border states using very clearly defined variables and look at regional planning efforts in Sonora and Arizona as well as the evolution of their trade.

The book's third section, "The Role of Economic Agents and Social Actors in Economic Integration," analyzes regional strategies used by companies, businessmen, the state, the financial system and other agents to respond to globalization. It evaluates the new dynamic in the relationship between the state and private companies in the context of globalization and

regionalization, as well as how internationalization is beginning to redefine the roles of these actors under the umbrella of the theoretical legitimacy of neoliberalism. Applying these notions to the concrete regional level, this section of the book attempts to answer questions like what role regional economic groups are playing. Among other things, it shows that while local actors continue to seek close relations with those in power to make their businesses dynamic, outside actors ask only for good conditions for setting up business and do all the rest themselves. Outstanding among the latter are entrepreneurs from the large international corporations in the mining, maquila and auto industries, simultaneously protagonists and authors of integration with the U.S. market.

What could be improved in this book, in my opinion, are the chapters on the Mexican economy, which contribute little to the main topic and could even have been omitted. However, the book is worth the effort put into it. ■■■

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