



Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI

(The Foreign Policy of the United States, Canada and Mexico on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century)

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Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI (The Foreign Policy of the United States, Canada and Mexico on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century) is the product of an international seminar on this topic. Specialists from three distinct academic communities share their vision about the international behavior of their nations through the analysis of issues such as discourse and foreign policy planning and action vis-à-vis different regions.

Divided into three sections, the book begins with the United States. Stewart Patrick's article "Unilateralismo y multilateralismo en la política exterior estadounidense" (Unilateralism and Multilateralism in U.S. Foreign Policy) examines the U.S. dilemma in "the quest for equilibrium between unilateralism and multilateralism" in its international action. For Patrick, U.S. decisions are the product of a mixture of unilateral and multilateral strategies that seek to respond to the country's interests, with a predominance of the unilateral. Washington's preference for regimens that accept its dominance explains its propensity toward unilateral practices, which are possible due to 1) the weak-

ening of multilateralism; 2) concern about the loss of sovereignty because of the creation of new international mechanisms like the International Criminal Court; 3) the domestic context in which foreign policy is designed, reflected in the kind of separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches giving the latter broad attributions to brake multilateral cooperation; and 4) the rectification of the country's role as protector and promotor of the world order. Despite a clear inclination toward unilateralism, Patrick says that, in its attempt to balance its international activity, the United States will not seek to decide between multilateral and unilateral actions but rather combine them, or, in any case, apply forms of multilateralism that do not circumscribe it vis-à-vis its counterparts.

With this conceptual framework, the article "Estados Unidos frente a los foros regionales en la Cuenca del Pacífico" (The United States and Pacific Basin Regional Fora), by Carlos Uscanga, refers to U.S. strategies regarding APEC, the Asian-Pacific mechanism for cooperation, observing that foreign-policy makers decide based on geo-strategic interests. In its relationship with APEC, the United States has implemented a three-tiered strategy with unilateral, bilateral and multilateral actions. Thus, the strategy is based on the idea of liberalizing the area's markets with very specific objectives: reducing its chronic deficit with Japan and China through the opening of their markets and discouraging the building of regional systems outside its geo-strategic spheres, thus imposing its hegemonic project in the region.

The book's second section looks at Canadian foreign policy. The concept of "human security" is fundamental for understanding Canada's international behavior. Mark Neufeld, in his "La economía política de la seguridad: el discurso sobre la seguridad en la política exterior canadiense posterior a la guerra fría" (The Political Economy of Security: The Security Discourse in Post-Cold War Canadian Foreign Policy), talks about reformulating the concept of security and how it began to be a central part of Canada's foreign policy discourse. The new concept of security seeks to "explain a radical progressive change in terms of disarmament, economic development and redistribution of wealth, environmental policy and democratization of the process of foreign policy decision making." In fact, it is the latter that is interesting for the theoretical study of the external action of states: the role of different social actors in the design of Canadian foreign policy and how the government appropriated the concept of human security as a mechanism of

ideological legitimization internationally when it proclaimed a new image abroad that reflects the virtues of the political system.

In this same sense, Vilma Petrás's article, "La vocación liberal internacional y el principio de seguridad humana en la política exterior canadiense: una mirada crítica" (The Liberal International Vocation and the Principle of Human Security in Canadian Foreign Policy: A Critical Look), deals with the ideological basis underpinning the reorientation of Canada's foreign policy in recent years: the promotion of liberal, democratic values with the aim of channeling its multilateral vocation. The concept of human security is situated in this framework. Its novelty notwithstanding, the author considers it has some weaknesses if we take into account that it runs the risk of becoming a "catch-all concept" which, in practice, leads to relative ineffectiveness because it does not allow for establishing priorities and carrying out concrete operations.

For his part, David Gamache, in his article "Idealismo pragmático: la política exterior hemisférica de Canadá (Pragmatic Idealism: Canada's Hemispheric Foreign Policy), develops an interesting thesis with regard to the pragmatic character of Canadian foreign policy. This pragmatic idealism, he says, is "a balanced synthesis of the apparently contradictory paradigms of pragmatism and idealism." This combination has been highly fruitful for Canada since it has joined the pragmatism of economic interests with the idealism of society's interests. International trade and human security will be the starting points of the Canadian government's activity in the Western Hemisphere, consolidating Canada as a medium power and contributing to the achievement of its economic and political aims.

With this idea of a medium power, Julián Castro Rea, in his "El siglo XXI, ¿el siglo de Canadá?" (The Twenty-First Century: The Canadian Century?), describes the limitations of a country of this kind in an international context marked by economic and military interests. Considering "soft power" (that based on the export of a particular cultural image) the most important resource of Canadian foreign policy, it has given the country a substantial international projection that, nevertheless, has not been able to substitute for "hard power," which is why the nation will still be subject to existing norms in the international system. Beyond Canada's foreign policy innovations, to a certain extent a reflection of a democratic political system consolidated in the twentieth century, this will probably

not be the Canadian century in terms of its real influence in the molding of the international system.

Janine Brodie, in her “Los gobiernos de América del Norte en el siglo XXI desde una perspectiva canadiense” (North American Governments in the Twenty-First Century from the Canadian Perspective), deals with a central topic in the restructuring of North America: the transformation of the state. From Brodie’s point of view, North America ruthlessly adopted the neoliberal model, causing a progressive weakening of the state and its ability to distribute economic and social goods. The real challenge is to analyze the implications of this transformation both in state structures and in its ability to respond to the demands posed by North American economic integration.

The third section looks at the design of Mexican foreign policy and its impact in different regions, emphasizing the economic aspect and the kinds of links it creates with the world. Antonio Ortiz Mena, in his “La dimensión económica de la política exterior mexicana: retos y disyuntivas” (The Economic Dimension of Mexican Foreign Policy: Challenges and Choices), offers an evaluation of economic relations with Latin America, North America and Europe, observing Mexico’s difficulty in diversifying its links internationally, at the same time that its trade is heavily concentrated with the United States. The author points out that what has transformed the search for greater economic links has been Mexico’s foreign policy agenda on issues such as democracy, the environment, labor questions and migration. For that reason, regarding these new challenges, our country needs to establish the consensus needed around the principles that guide Mexican foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

Sidney Weintraub contributes an essay about Mexico’s difficulties in facing the challenges of economic globalization and integration, among them, the weakness of the domestic market and the lack of skilled workers and technology. Despite these lacks, the country has become forcefully integrated into the U.S. market through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which, according to Weintraub generates greater vulnerability. For that reason it will be necessary to look more deeply into issues such as the convergence of macro-economic indicators and the standardization of some measures distinctive of all processes of integration, like the efficiency of customs mechanisms and transportation, administrative simplification and the reform of the judicial branch.

These recommendations are applicable not only for improving relations with the United States, but also with other regions. In his “La política exterior de México hacia Europa” (Mexican Foreign Policy toward Europe), Alejandro Chanoña looks at the evolution of relations with the European Union (E.U.), pointing to the efforts toward the negotiation of the Global Agreement, which was based on a profound review of the kinds of intergovernmental coordination capable of reversing the negative terms of trade relations with the E.U. in the general framework of the re-connection of foreign policy with economic policy.

In “La política exterior de México frente a APEC” (Mexico’s Foreign Policy vis-à-vis APEC), Cecilia Ramírez deals with the importance of this regional forum for broadening out the country’s kinds of negotiation. Considered a space for economic cooperation, APEC represents an opportunity to link up with the world’s most dynamic region and to turn the forum itself into a real source of diversification.

Juris Lejnieks offers a different focus on Mexico’s participation in the world in his “México y el multilateralismo: una perspectiva canadiense” (Mexico and Multilateralism: A Canadian Perspective). Lejnieks considers our country a medium-sized power, which he understands as one which supports existing international institutions and norms but is sufficiently flexible and influential to change them by cooperating with other countries whose international actions are similar. Thus, Mexico has not lost its autonomy by establishing a complex relationship with the United States in the framework of NAFTA. To the contrary, it has been able to join its economic pragmatism with the development of a multilateral policy that allows it some room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis certain issues on the international agenda, at the same time that it gives it a particular identity on the world scene.

For students of foreign policy and regionalism, *Las políticas exteriores de Estados Unidos, Canadá y México en el umbral del siglo XXI* is a useful tool for approaching current debates about the international behavior of these three countries. Despite the differing depth of the articles, the book helps the reader understand the calculations, priorities, bases and design of these three nations’ foreign policies when faced with a complex network of interactions that form the new maze of links in North America and with the world.

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