



México y Canadá: La agenda pendiente

(Mexico and Canada. The Pending Agenda)

Alex Bugailiskis and Andrés Rozental, eds.

CISAN/Comexi

Mexico City, 2012, 320 pp.

Beyond official rhetoric from Canadian and Mexican authorities who insist on prioritizing above all the two countries' economic relations, the truth is that in recent years, the bilateralism that existed after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect has declined. This has mainly been because of the actions of Canada's Conservative government, which gained control of Parliament in early 2006, the year in which the second National Action Party administration began in Mexico (2006-2012).¹

This contraction in bilateral relations has been part responsibility of the Mexican government due to its limited capacity for positioning its interests in the region. It has combined with a new strategy emanating from Washington, which seeks to put the priority on bilateralism with its two next-door neighbors, Mexico and Canada, to increase its own security after the 9/11 attacks. This has led to a reconfiguration of the dynamics in North America given that bilateral security issues

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have gradually replaced the festive official trilateral discourses of the 1990s and the early twenty-first century.

These new conditions, together with a government in Ottawa that is more interested in emphasizing its "special relationship" with the United States than in diversifying its links to Mexico, have joined with the Mexican government's performance, increasingly questioned because of the growing insecurity in the country, particularly during Felipe Calderón's six-year administration. These factors have configured a new reality in Mexico-Canada relations, analyzed from different standpoints in *México y Canadá: la agenda pendiente* (Mexico and Canada. The Pending Agenda). This work is an extremely current academic exercise focusing on bilateral relations in different, well-identified areas of opportunity.

The book's 26 articles show real concern about the Ottawa and Mexico City governments' strategy of moving ahead separately with their bilateral agendas with the United States. This weakens the trilateral spirit that prevailed when NAFTA came into effect in 1994. In this same order of ideas, the authors agree that the separate dynamic does nothing but weaken the possibilities of coming to regional consensus in the face of a hegemonic United States, which has carved out greater space for furthering its own particular interests.

This circumstance has also meant that Mexico and Canada are gradually drawing apart. The clearest example of this is the creation of a visa requirement in July 2009 for Mexican citizens who want to visit Canada as tourists, a decision that profoundly disturbed the Mexican government, which in turn felt obligated to request a "special" visa for Canadian officials and diplomats seeking entry into Mexico.

Thus, in recent years there has been no significant advance in economic, cultural, or trade relations between the two countries due to their leaders' lack of strategic vision. U.S. academic Robert Pastor deals with this in his article when he says that Prime Minister Stephen Harper decided not to hold the North American Leaders Summit in 2010 despite his commitment at the Guadalajara summit a year before, and that

instead, President Obama met separately with each leader, setting up parallel organizations to deal with key border, environmental, and normative issues.²

What is interesting is that in this same work, other authors like Canadian security specialist and consultant Reid Morden argue that Canada should not be criticized for its prudence about entering into a new metaphoric world and that Mexico continues to be a new friend and partner, and that, beyond trade and leisure, the relationship still has some maturing to do, particularly in the closed world of security.³

These positions make the book a rich, plural piece of material, indispensable for analyzing relations between the two countries, given that, regardless of their leaders' mistakes, for Mexican and Canadian civil societies, the relationship continues to be dynamic because the citizens of the two countries have links of their own. In this sense, Canadian tourists continue to visit Mexico and Mexican citizens continue to visit and migrate to Canada, despite migratory red tape introduced by the Ottawa government in 2012.

Former Canadian ambassador in Mexico, Guillermo E. Rishchynski, points out in his article that although the level of interaction of Canadian and Mexican citizens, as visitors, students, workers, or businesspeople, has grown at unprecedented rates, the two countries are still prisoners of stereotypes, and they have not been able to generate a broader

understanding of how they complement each other and the benefits they can offer each other as true allies.⁴

So, this book could not have appeared at a more opportune moment. Clearly bilateral relations between Mexico and Canada are going through a period of redefinition, and a different party taking office in Mexico in December 2012 may help make them more dynamic. This will be the case as long as that new administration seriously analyzes the mistakes of its predecessors in both domestic and international policy. This will mean that the new Mexican authorities will be able to reorganize Mexico's relations not only with Canada and the United States, but also with the rest of the world. ■■■

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NOTES

¹ The PAN is also a conservative party. [Editor's Note.]

² Robert Pastor, "América del Norte en 2010: dos visiones," Alex Bugailiskis and Andrés Rozental, eds., *México y Canadá: la agenda pendiente* (Mexico City: CISAN/Comexi, 2012), p. 211.

³ Reid Morden, "Seguridad hemisférica: el dilema Canadá-México," Bugailiskis and Rozental, eds., op. cit., p. 249.

⁴ Guillermo E. Rishchynski, "Lecciones aprendidas: seguir adelante," Bugailiskis and Rozental, op. cit., p. 309.

La economía mexicana ante la liberación financiera. Impacto de la entrada de capitales externos en el financiamiento de la producción

(The Mexican Economy and Financial Liberation. The Impact of the External Capital Financing of Production)

Paulo Humberto Leal Villegas

Plaza y Valdés

Mexico City, 2012, 196 pp.

The author of this book, a scholar at the National Autonomous University of Mexico School of Economics, based it on his experience as a teacher and student and several years as a government official both at Mexico's Chamber of Deputies and the federal Ministry of Economy. It is a novel interpretation and study of the Mexican economy, particularly the crisis of the productive sector —what is called the "real econo-

my"—, based on the dynamics of monetary policy and Mexico's financial sector.

The work has four chapters: "Theoretical Framework and International Context"; "Capital Flows and Financial Crisis: From the Debt Crisis to the Banking Crisis"; "Capital Flows and Privatization of the Banks"; and "Capital Flows and Financing the Productive Sector." In the third chapter, he looks at capital flows and bank privatization during the six-year administration of Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), while the last chapter examines capital flows during part of the two following administrations (2000-2010) when the National Action Party was in office. The book has an interesting post-script that, in addition to updating it, taking into consideration the new conditions in the Mexican economy, problematizes and puts forward areas of debate that broaden the issues dealt with in the text. Among these are the financial and produc-