

## Foreword

*Norteamérica, Revista Académica* is the first academic journal of its kind to undertake a systematic study of North America. Over the last two decades, the three countries of North America—Canada, the United States and Mexico—have reduced some of the barriers separating each country from the other, and as a result, today, “North America” is more than just a geographical expression. And yet our understanding of this largest free trade area in the world in terms of its economy and territory is inadequate, and the differences that continue to separate the countries often seem more formidable than the shared interests. That is why among other reasons we are launching this journal.

The National Autonomous University of Mexico’s Center for Research on North America (CISAN) has been studying the phenomenon as has American University’s Center for North American Studies (CNAS), since the 1980s. Over time, the need for such a journal has increased. Although the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), now 12 years old, began as a very promising space for regional integration, today, it seems to have encountered serious limitations consistent with its original shortcomings, among which are its precarious institutionality and some of its political and socio-cultural impacts.

Many had hoped that deeper integration among the three countries would lead to trilateral approaches and institutions, but this has not occurred. Some believe that this is due to “September 11<sup>th</sup>” and Washington’s national security response; others attribute it to historical inertia, the lack of leadership, and the reluctance of some to go further in the integration process. Whatever the reason, the potential tri-national relationship has not developed; the true relationships remain asymmetrical and dual-bilateral—U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico. We hope this journal will contribute to build the consciousness and the academic proposals towards the fulfillment of North America’s expectations.

*Norteamérica, Revista Académica* appears in Mexico thanks to the leadership of CISAN and the support of CNAS. We believe it is essential to understand the different

approaches about the issues, the culture, and the politics of North America. We compare our effort in each issue to that of Minerva's Owl in Hegel: to write in a calm and rigorous manner, yet remain alert to new events affecting the region. Sometimes, these events unfold at dizzying speed, so much so that theory often lags and even when the events are fully understood, their context changes. Our mission is to become the main academic publication to offer scientific explanations of the complex dynamic of North American reality. We intend to do this with seriousness and timeliness by calling on the best minds and most renowned specialists.

The journal also aims to recruit articles from many disciplinary perspectives and to analyze them in the context of other political, economic, and cultural trends. *Norteamérica*, however, will not limit itself solely to North America. Even as we look inside the region, we also want to understand how the region relates to globalization and other forces and trends in the world as well as how each of the countries relate to the rest of the world. That is why we will create a very special place for fostering comparative studies within the region and with other regions.

Our journal will be plural and open to contributions from scholars from different institutions, nations and disciplines. We want to encourage scientific discussion and intellectual debate as undeniable tools for the advance of knowledge. We will seek proposals and contributions that reflect the theoretical diversity of today's social sciences. At the same time, we will insist on the highest standards of scholarship.

The journal is divided into sections that address the North American reality from different angles. "Essays" aim to delve into some of the larger issues at stake in North America. The purpose of "Contemporary Issues" is to provide up-to-date, innovative analyses of events and the phenomena affecting regional dynamics. Last, "Reflections" offers an opportunity to consider North America from a non strictly academic perspective.

We want to be a vehicle for the international academic community to present its research and views on the complexity and diversity of North America. Our editorial and advisory boards are committed to achieving this great challenge. We strongly believe that this journal will not only offer the analysis needed to consider North American approaches to continental and global problems, but it should also awaken the people of our three countries to the opportunities that could come to all of them through a new framework of cooperation and a new appreciation of how we differ and what we share.

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