

Preface

The first issue of *Norteamérica, Academic Journal*, entitled *North America Today: Outstanding Issues* invites the reader to rigorous reflection about some of the region's central problems. Today, academic debates about the area turn to a great degree around the processes of integration. However, they also touch on important issues for understanding some specific dimensions of the construction of the region. To respond to the different perspectives about these questions, the "Essays" section analyzes various theoretical problems in different national academic spheres. The "Contemporary Issues" section looks at comparative studies about integration in North America.

In "Essays" we include different issues of great interest for North America. We offer a penetrating, novel review of Canadian academic literature about Canadian-U.S. relations in recent decades as well as of the most recent studies about the place Canada occupies in North America, which begin to analyze the case of Mexico. The theoretical importance of Laura Macdonald's article is to show that the "nationalist" and "continentalist" positions that have permeated the discussion up until now in academia and in the sphere of public policy decision-making are insufficient to explain the new processes of North American integration. To this end, the author looks at recent efforts by Canadian academics to transcend this dichotomy and puts forward both the need for new empirical research and for a consistent quest for new theoretical paradigms.

Our point of departure is the idea that the United States plays a pivotal role in North America and that therefore we must think of the characteristics of the state to understand the logic of leadership in regional security. An article by José Luis Orozco reflects theoretically and philosophically, questioning the existence of "reason of state" in the history of the United States. He explains why it has historically had a state with a great "totalitarian, realistic capability" despite reiterated efforts by its politicians and academics to divorce themselves from those practices. The central thesis of his essay is that the "America" of federalists and republicans is more

an imperial prolongation of Europe than a colony and a substitute for the “reason of state” that was already in crisis in eighteenth-century Europe. As a result, he emphasizes that the United States’ current response to terrorist aggression is in tune with the profit motive and the expansion of its national and international interests which are projected in a new national security strategy, whose global reach goes beyond any imaginable reason of state.

Lastly, in this same section we look at studies about race, gender and class in the United States and their importance for explaining the political and cultural dynamics of U.S. society. Margaret L. Andersen does a thorough review of the most important contributions to this issue with the aim of polemicizing and rigorously explaining how these analyses correspond to the historic changes in the United States. The article’s originality lies in reviewing the paradigm of “intersectionality”, proper to the most recent feminist academic studies about race and gender inequality in the United States and counterposing it to the beliefs of the dominant groups about the “ideologies of neutrality and dependence” about class, race and gender. To conclude, the author offers a thought-provoking proposal about new lines of research and discusses the implications of the “intersectionality” focus for the study of racial and gender stereotypes.

In the sections “Contemporary Issues” and “Special Contribution” we find an interesting selection of contributions on the topics of the economic and political integration of North America and the emerging phenomenon of security as an agenda that permeates and even marks the new ways forward for the region. Alejandro Chanona examines the limitations of the debate between the realist and liberal theories of international security for interpreting current processes. He uses the recent theory of security communities to explain the interdependence of the security of states as the priority of regional integration policies. Based on this theory, the author analyzes the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the March 11, 2004 attack in Madrid and the July 7 and 21, 2004 attacks in London. He makes an important contribution through a comparative study of how both the North American and European Union agendas are becoming “securitized” as part of the different patterns of integration. Based on this, he discusses the possibility of creating identities, values, perceived risks and common actions.

Undoubtedly, energy has become a strategic issue of the first magnitude as Rosío Vargas and Víctor Rodríguez-Padilla show by questioning both conventional theories about North American integration as a model of symmetrical interdependence and the energy paradigm based on oil and gas. They analyze the references to energy in the Security and Prosperity Partnership for North America according to the new U.S. foreign policy priorities and the prominence of security issues as the cross-cutting theme of U.S.-Mexican relations. This study’s importance lies in its

critical vision of the partnership and its implicit objectives for the United States. In the same vein, the authors emphasize the conditions of profound asymmetry in which Mexico is integrating and reflect about the difficulties for putting into practice a trilateral alternative model for renewable energy and new technologies.

Another new problem presented by Imtiaz Hussain in this issue is the viability of North American political integration in light of the transborder effects of U.S., Canadian and Mexican elections. The author carries out broad empirical research subject to rigorous theoretical interpretation in which he shows how this regional case study in general satisfies the theoretical principles of neo-functionalism and security communities. He explains the greater impact of the U.S. elections on Canada and Mexico than vice versa, the deepening of the asymmetry in favor of the U.S. and the attempt to promote a process of "North Americanization". He also makes a keenly-honed prospective analysis of the six political and economic conditions that the integration of North America will depend on. He decisively concludes that asymmetry will become the most conflictive regional issue by favoring interdependence over integration.

Lastly, to close the series of articles directly related to North American integration, Robert Pastor's special contribution lucidly evaluates the results of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), drawing some lessons from the European experience, defining the North American agenda for its second decade and proposing the creation of a North American Community. He points out that the priority is reducing the economic disparities that divide Mexico from the other two NAFTA countries and proposes the development of a new strategy in which the three governments establish a North American Investment Fund, a security area similar to Europe's, the strengthening of the economic area and the creation of trilateral institutions. Pastor states that the only way of making this proposal possible is that the three governments transcend dual bilateralism and their traditional national sovereignty interests to forge a community in which each country agrees to contribute to the achievement of common objectives similar to those shown by the European model.

In the "Reflections" section we present a mix of brief articles, critiques and current events. Like other international bodies in today's moment of unilateral world leadership and global uncertainty, the Organization of American States (OAS) is going through a crisis that opens up new possibilities for its restructuring. In the "Interviews" subsection, José Miguel Insulza, the OAS's distinguished secretary general, offers a razor-sharp view of the overall situation of the organization he heads. He emphasizes the problem of insufficient financing and points to the need for governments to increase their contributions in accordance with the rising cost of living and to insure timely, regular, tri-annual payments to cover operating expenses.

Insulza also urges the establishment of the following priorities in accordance with the situation in the hemisphere: *a)* expanding the concept of democracy to include human rights and economic and social development; *b)* broadening out the themes of peace and security; and *c)* promoting integral development with greater attention to the small economies. Finally, he states that the Free Trade Area of the Americas requires new political impetus and an open discussion based on the conviction that the market and the state should be combined in development strategy.

In “Critical Notes”, we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-2005) by demonstrating how relevant his work is today, particularly his philosophical reflections about the hierarchy of the democratic ideas of freedom and personal independence as the basis for making equality possible in a society. In that context, Ignacio Díaz de la Serna puts forward the concept of individualism, understood as an “erroneous judgment” about the meaning of freedom, and describes the fantasies that its unlimited exercise produces. Its importance lies in demonstrating how Tocqueville’s thinking sketches an exact, perturbing portrait of today’s democratic societies. In these countries, individualism has led citizens to isolation and a taste for comfort, negating any possibility of social action and reducing to a minimum the exercise of their political freedom.

In the same subsection we deal with the recurrence of temporary workers programs in U.S. immigration policy, their importance in relations with Mexico and the diplomatic disagreements they have caused between both countries. Carlos Enrique Tapia takes a critical look at the Bracero Program, the H-2 Program and Bush’s 2004 initiative to demonstrate that they have been partial answers to the problem of undocumented immigration because they are the reflection of an instrumental, short-term vision. According to Tapia, the Bush initiative is a good example because it excludes very debatable issues like the legalization of Mexican immigration, amnesty, employers’ responsibility to their employees and the guarantee of fringe benefits. In fact, its aim is to reduce unauthorized immigration and make border controls stricter.

In “Bibliographical Notes”, we offer looks at the United States and Canada. Neo-conservatism’s economic, political and value-based strategies in the United States and its domestic and external impact have become the focus of world attention. Adrián Villanueva Delgado has the merit of comparing three very different conceptions of this phenomenon expressed in books by Nathan Sharansky, a former Israeli government official and ex-coordinator of the Jewish Diaspora; the Hudson Institute’s Irwin Stelzer; and *The Economist* editors John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge. Villanueva states that a veritable neo-conservative revolution is currently underway, important because it has become the frame of reference for foreign policy strategies, which have radicalized unilateralism and fostered preventive policy *vis-à-vis* the “threats” to national and international security.

Another very important theme of the current debate touched on in this subsection is the Francophone narrative and, above all, multi-culturalism in Canadian society. Claudia Lucotti and Laura López Morales comment on three books about the “narrativity” in contemporary Quebecois literature. Its importance lies in the theoretical study that ranges from the composition of an anthology to women’s “narrativity”, essays and theater. They also analyze two books about multi-culturalism as a trait of identity and literary creation as a contribution to the modification of identity itself. The authors’ contribution lies in showing how identity, whether literary or racial, dominates the thinking of Canadian essayists.

Our first issue of *Norteamérica* concludes with the subsection “Chronology”, presenting the most important national, bi-national and tri-national events in the region from January to December 2005, created using the main newspapers of the United States and Mexico as well as Canada’s most important dailies and informational services. Argentino F. Mendoza Chan and Socorro García González have detailed a review of events that is indispensable for anyone interested in regional dynamics: they deal with electoral processes, governability and legislative cooperation; integration and trade policies and diplomacy; immigration laws, policies, actions, controls and studies; the Minutemen, the death of migrants and repatriation; remittances, security, organized crime and drug trafficking; and regional issues, natural resources and Latinos. The chronology incorporates “After the Close of This Edition”, which cites the December passage of the immigration bill presented by James Sensenbrenner, representative from Wisconsin and chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and the reaction that led to the joint statement by the January 2006 Ministerial Meeting of the Mesoamerican Countries, putting the bill center stage in the polemic among government officials and scholars of relations between the United States and Mexico.

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