

INFORMATION, NEWS MEDIA AND DIPLOMACY UNDER THE SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA INCREASING COOPERATION IN TURBULENT TIMES

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The Creation of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), touted as an instrument to increase the economic potential of the United States, Canada and Mexico in a secure framework for people and communities, was signed in Waco, Texas, March 23, 2005. Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, Mexican President Vicente Fox, and U.S. President George W. Bush officially launched the agreement at the signing ceremony.

The partnership includes two major policy components: an economic one called “prosperity” that proposes the deepening of trade and the economic interdependence of the three countries. The other is called “security” and is based on measures to improve U.S. safety and security concerns, especially as related to the logistics of its daily interaction with Mexico and Canada. The latter is the result of U.S. security concerns derived from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; the former is the result of open demands by corporations and transportation, industrial and commercial organizations.

In the report prepared for the three countries’ heads of state in June 2005, the agencies responsible for writing the partnership’s rationale described the content and scope of the SPP agenda as “improving the efficiency of the movement of people, goods and services crossing borders while protecting our environment and promoting health and safety for our people.”¹ These impressive goals are supposed to improve the overall well-being of the people of North America.

Public officials in each country have emphasized SPP content as an enhancement of trade proposed by NAFTA and as an instrument to promote prosperity in the three countries. But in examining the content and text of the partnership, the clear rationale for the creation of the SPP is the U.S. security concerns related to terrorism. The increased notion of national security is, clearly, a direct response

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¹ *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. Report to Leaders* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government/Government of Mexico/Government of Canada, June 27, 2005).

to the potential of terrorism and indirectly to the violence generated by organized crime smuggling drugs and immigrants.

The U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada and their security suddenly took on a major role in the national political debate after September 11, 2001. Borders or the concept of “defending borders” became a central theme for the U.S. government, regardless of the fact that all the terrorists responsible for the attacks arrived in the U.S. by air. Political conditions forced the U.S. government to create policies that would be diplomatically manageable with Mexico and Canada. There was no similar precedent in which most of the border interaction became more scrutinized, reexamined and re-regulated, despite the fact that both Canada and Mexico are historically aware that their border with the U.S. is a potential source for problems with their powerful neighbor. Some examples of the complexity include: managing traffic and human flows, administering trade, conciliating environmental regulations and aiding in the case of natural disasters.

In addition, the border with Mexico took another turn under the pressure of a massive political movement to control illegal immigration. Since early 2003, most of the southwestern states pushed for more border controls as this became a highly political issue. During the 2004 presidential campaign President Bush responded to those pressures and made the border a central issue with two major components: terrorism and illegal immigration. In a way, that situated drug smuggling as secondary. The rhetoric increased as the election approached, and the border became “the issue” that helped President Bush get reelected. The conservative support he received accrued political capital with the administration that can create a real problem for Washington, by demanding drastic measures on border control.

While the U.S. border with Mexico had attracted most of the attention, the Canadian border also showed difficulties and future challenges. The new Homeland Security document entry requirements for Canadian citizens crossing the border caused major delays never seen before at inspection stations. Pre-9/11, at the border crossings between Detroit and Windsor, the average weekday crossing time was 10 minutes; by 2006, the time had quadrupled. Trucks that used to wait for one to two hours to cross the border between Ontario and Michigan now spend twice as much at the inspection stations. Interestingly, both issues were covered by the Canadian media, which in turn pressured Ottawa to engage in diplomatic negotiations with the U.S. government.²

The Contents of SPP by Focus And Categories of Collaboration

While the SPP concentrates on security programs, not all measures focus on border areas. The SPP arrived as a policy mixing domestic issues with international

² Barria McKenna, “Lobby to Tackle the Border Crossing Chaos,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), May 24, 2007.

agreements under a new security model led by the U.S. With two major aspects concentrating on security and economic prosperity, the agenda items are ambitious and challenging (see table 1). In the area of security, the agreement included the creation of biometric standards, cooperation of law enforcement and emergency agencies, sharing information and intelligence and the creation of regulations for “trusted travelers and goods.” The trusted travelers concept includes coordination through the NEXUS, FAST and SENTRI programs. Also, the partnership proposes a new coordination model for the prevention of, protection from and response to cross-border terrorism, cross-border health threats (including epidemics and pandemics) and cross-border natural disasters.

TABLE 1
CATEGORIES AND FOCUS AREAS OF THE
SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA

	<i>Security</i>	<i>Prosperity</i>
Major categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure North America from external threats • Prevent and respond to threats within North America • Further streamline the secure movement of low-risk traffic across shared borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve productivity • Reduce the costs of trade • Enhance the quality of life
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of joint preventive, protective and response actions • Intelligence sharing and screening • Collaborative operations and law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate business operation • Collaboration for business resources (movement of G and P) • Safe food supply and joint controls for environment and health

Source: Developed by the author based on the SSP Report to Leaders. U.S. Government-Government of Mexico-Government of Canada. June 27, 2005.

In the area of economic security, the SPP recommends the creation of trilateral alliances and close collaboration of corporations in the energy, auto, textile and agricultural sectors. Collaboration includes formulas that include expanding current enterprises, the overall increase of productivity and efficiency and expanding sub-sectors for companies based in one of the three countries. Yet, it also provides more demanding policies such as further liberalization of the rules of origin and the harmonization of air navigation systems. In addition, the prosperity section awkwardly recommends policies to protect the environment, especially air and water resources.

TABLE 2
 SPECIFIC AREAS OF COLLABORATION UNDER THE SECURITY AND
 PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA

	<i>Security</i>	<i>Prosperity</i>
Content Areas	• Traveler security	• Manufactured goods, sectoral and regional competitiveness
	• Cargo security	• Movement of goods
	• Bio-protection	• E-commerce and ICT
	• Aviation security	• Financial services
	• Maritime security	• Transportation
	• Law enforcement cooperation	• Energy
	• Intelligence cooperation	• Environment
	• Protection, prevention and response	• Food and agriculture
	• Border facilitation	• Health
	• Science and technology cooperation	
Total Areas	10	9

Source: Developed by the author based on the SSP Report to Leaders. U.S. Government-Government of Mexico-Government of Canada. June 27, 2005.

The SPP proposes a series of areas for programmatic development, and while many measures target the border areas, others have national and regional content, as seen above in table 2. The three countries agreed that to increase “border security,” programs include biometric standards for North America requiring governments to issue complying official documents by 2008. Also, under the security umbrella, there is a concrete law enforcement program that includes information and intelligence sharing and inter-agency cooperation.

A very critical area of cooperation includes the protection from, prevention of and response to emergencies. After many years of marginal progress, the SPP proposes programs and the collaboration of the three governments to control the potentials for cross-border terrorism, cross-border health threats and cross-border natural disasters. This area proposes the open communication and collaboration of federal agencies to respond not only to deliberate threats but to natural or health-related risks.

Sectors included in the SPP considered priorities for the North American regional economy include: food and agriculture, energy, manufacturing (steel and auto), the environment, transportation and the financial sector. For the energy sector, the SPP proposes expanding science and technology in North America, cooperating on nuclear facilities and materials and standardizing rules for regulatory cooperation. In addition, it would also include cooperation to safely trade natural gas and oil and to increase efficiency in the entire sector.

Clearly, this trilateral partnership proposes to speed up the process of integration and the current modes of operation practiced by the three countries since NAFTA came into effect in 1994. The novel component, though, is the new security policy framework. In principle, the SPP offers a call for collective welfare and the improvement of socio-economic conditions of the three societies; however, the content falls short of offering practical alternatives. Given the early stages of the agreement and

its relatively slow advance and progress, it is important to analyze its content and connections with communities and the general public.

North American Economic And Security Interdependence

Economic interdependence in North America is the result of the continuing intertwined forces and actions of the regional economy. As seen in table 3, trade is still the main economic thrust in North America. Despite its inadequacies and missing elements, trade has cemented an economic process that encompasses other social, political, environmental and cultural content. Now, since 9/11, the emerging U.S. Homeland Security policies require adjustments in U.S. interaction with Mexico and Canada with minimal impacts on trade and economic interaction.

TABLE 3
U.S. AND MEXICO TRADE. SELECTED YEARS 1993-2005
(IN MILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS)

	1993	1995	1993- 1995 % change	2000	1995- 2000 % change	2005	2000- 2005 % change
Exports to Mexico	45 295	53 828	18.8	109 610	103.6	121 710	11.04
Imports from Mexico	42 850	66 273	54.7	145 640	119.8	171 125	17.50
Total Trade	88145	120101	36.3	255250	112.5	292835	514.72

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Trade Statistics, 2007.

Trade between the United States and Mexico has increased significantly in the last 10 years. As seen in table 3, in 1993, the year before the formalization of NAFTA, total trade between the two countries came to US\$88 billion. By 2000, trade had increased almost three-fold. And while from 2000 to 2005 trade increased 15 percent, during the decade from 1995 to 2005, it expanded the same three times. The relatively slow growth of 25 percent is chalked up to two factors: the U.S. recession from 2001 to 2003 and the logistical impacts derived from 9/11.

The U.S. Trade Administration reported in 2006 that the country's two main trade partners were Canada and Mexico, representing a total inter-trade volume of US\$866 billion in 2006, or roughly US\$2.4 billion a day.³ Likewise, both for Mexico and Canada, the U.S. is their main commercial partner.

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Statistics (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007). In 2007, for the first time, China became the U.S.'s second largest trade partner followed by Mexico (see U.S. Trade Report: 2008 Trade Policy Agenda and 2007 Annual Report at http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Reports_Publications/2008/2008_Trade_Policy_Agenda/Section_Index.html. Accessed September 2008). However, the volume of trade between Canada and Mexico is primarily cross-border, as opposed to that with China which relies heavily on maritime transportation.

Security interdependence is also evident in the volumes of trade, vehicle traffic and people crossing the U.S. border. No other international border has the volume of traffic that Canada and Mexico share with the United States, as seen in table 4. The official U.S. Department of Transportation report shows the operational difficulties caused by the number of incoming crossings, reported as inspections and verifications of individuals, cargo and vehicles. The total number of trucks that crossed into the U.S. from Canada and Mexico in 2005 was 11.4 million, more than 30 000 every day. The number of passenger vehicles totaled roughly 122 million, or more than 335 000 a day. More than 295 million passengers and pedestrians crossed the U.S. border in 2005, more than 800 thousand individuals a day, regardless of their citizenship.⁴

TABLE 4
NORTH AMERICAN BORDER CROSSINGS
TO THE U.S., 2005 (IN MILLIONS)

	CAN-USA	% of Total	MEX-USA	% of Total
Trucks	6.7	6.7	4.7	1.4
Vehicles	30.3	30.2	91.5	27.9
Pedestrians	0.7	0.7	45.8	14.0
Passengers	62.6	62.4	186.1	56.7
Total inspections	100.3	100.0	328.1	100.0

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Transportation Reports, 2007.

The figures listed in the table reflect two things: first, Canada and Mexico's large-scale social and trade interdependence with the United States; and, second, the logistical challenge this represents for the U.S. government to monitor these flows. Both in crossings from Canada and Mexico, individual inspections (passengers or pedestrians) accounted for almost two-thirds of all inspections in 2005. The second logistical challenge is the number of vehicle crossings into the U.S. on either border in a year, which represents roughly one-third of total inspections. Furthermore, three times more vehicles come from Mexico than from Canada.

The relationship between the United States and its neighbors has deepened in the last 20 years and broadened from simple economic and trade interdependence to other areas of strong, intertwined dynamics, such as: labor, environment, energy, law enforcement, natural resource management, social issues and immigration. And while economic forces need to be maintained and strengthened because of their importance to the economies of each country, security needs are becoming a new variable.⁵ The new security policies, derived from a redefinition of national security in the U.S., pose a paradigm shift for the interaction among

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, Transportation Reports (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007).

⁵ Raúl Benítez-Manaut, *Mexico and the New Challenges of Hemispheric Security* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2004).

the three countries, including not only the traditional human and trade flows; but also new items like biohazards, nuclear energy, health emergencies and the expeditious crossing of “trusted” travelers.

A Regional Sector with Complex Interdependency

The North American automotive industry is the single largest manufacturing sector in the region. It illustrates the importance of sectoral integration, which, if well managed, can be expanded to other regional sectors. Also, the North American auto industry is the single largest sector of trade among the United States, Mexico and Canada. In 2006, the U.S. automotive trade balance with Canada and Mexico was almost US\$153 billion, surpassed only by energy and oil trade.⁶

This sector has recently felt the impact of global competition, which has repercussions in every country. The negative impacts affect employment and revenue and ultimately the well-being of the communities where the industry is located. In Michigan, for instance, in 2006 and 2007, the state had the country’s highest unemployment rate, almost 2 percentage points above the national rate of about 5 percent. According to a report published in 2006 by the Wayne State University Center for Policy Studies, in the last three years Michigan has lost around 170 000 manufacturing jobs, with a drop of 19 percent of the jobs in that sector.

By the end of 2007 and the first part of 2008, the auto industry was in a downward spiral of low sales and limited production. GM’s losses in 2007 were US\$38 billion, while Ford’s were close to US\$3 billion.⁷ The number of jobs lost in 2007 is estimated at 36 000, and in 2008, that number is expected to increase significantly. In response, GM announced early in 2008 that it would close some truck and sport utility vehicle plants, including two in the U.S. (Janesville, Wisconsin, and Moraine, Ohio), one in Canada (Oshawa, Ontario) and one in Mexico (Silao, Guanajuato).⁸

Since the regional auto industry depends to a large extent on the North American market, it benefits from concerted trinational policies. Specifically, the SPP considered the North American automobile sector a priority with the creation of the Automotive Partnership Council of North America (APCNA). The council is made up of very representative industry organizations, specifically the Automotive Trade Policy Council, the Automotive Industry Action Group, the Alliance of Auto Manufacturers, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturing Association and the Mexican Automotive Manufacturing Association.

The APCNA strategy focuses on facilitating integration, economic growth and ultimately global competitiveness. APCNA is touted as an instrument of the three governments seeking to be a real partnership of industry and government. While it is

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Statistics.

⁷ Associated Press, November 7, 2007.

⁸ Nick Bunkley, “GM offers more buyouts after \$722 million loss,” *International Herald Tribune, The New York Times* (February 12, 2008).

clear that there is a general agreement on the goals, the differences lie in the remedies and the speed of implementation.

Yet, the design and formulation of common policies is a major challenge. Despite the original target for the formalization of APCNA by September 2005, the announcement of its creation came six months later, in March 2006. By the end of 2007, APCNA was supposed to make public a list of short- and long-term actions to strengthen the auto industry.⁹ The areas of cooperation will include country-specific as well as regional actions.

Currently, some of the areas of cooperation and coordination actually constitute facilitation of trade rather than industrial synchronization. Most measures are additional tariff reductions and some revisions and updates of previous agreements like rules of origin and rules for standardization. The only measure with an industry-wide impact seems to be defined as technological cooperation to re-concentrate research and development in North America.

In the original SPP document, the creation of the Automotive Partnership Council of North America describes narrow but ambitious goals. Four major categories of action were mentioned: regulation, innovation, transportation infrastructure and border facil-

TABLE 5
NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMIC SECTORS UNDER THE SPP (INTEGRATION BY AREA)

	<i>Security</i>	<i>Prosperity</i>
Major categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation infrastructure (supply chain) • Border facilitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ ATM & ACE (Automated Truck Manifest and Automated Commercial Environment) ◦ FAST & C-TPAT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory frameworks • Innovation and technology cooperation
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System to oversee the packaging, sealing and information about movement in North America • U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ moving the border to the place of production • Streamline the secure movement of manufactured goods across shared borders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating business operations • Collaboration for business resources (movement of personnel) • Move to more synchronized standards

Source: Developed by the author based on the SSP Report to Leaders. U.S. Government-Government of Mexico-Government of Canada. June 27, 2005.

⁹ Even by April 2008, the list was still unavailable and the APCNA representation in Washington, D.C. was not firm in setting a possible date for its announcement.

itation. Two of the categories relate to the economic regulatory framework and two relate to security. The proposal, again, was created under the assumption that these categories will increase the automotive sector’s competitiveness.

APCNA’s three major objectives are complex and pose serious challenges for local and state governments: 1) to facilitate integration of the North American auto industry by looking at mechanisms to facilitate competitive advantage and location; 2) to stimulate industry’s economic growth by looking at product and market diversification and special attention to the North American consumer; and 3) to increase global competitiveness by looking at mechanisms mostly from federal, state and local governments to provide incentives for the industry.

TABLE 6
 MAJOR GOALS OF THE AUTOMOTIVE PARTNERSHIP
 COUNCIL OF NORTH AMERICA (APCNA)

	<i>Integration of the Auto Industry</i>	<i>Economic Growth of the Industry</i>	<i>Increase of Global Competitiveness</i>
Themes on the action list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared production • Location • Rules of origin • Logistics • Harmonization of standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and development • Market diversification and differentiation • Training and skills building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives • Removal or further reduction of tariffs • Logistics (fast and secure supply] chain)

Source: Developed by the author based on the SSP Report to Leaders. U.S. Government-Government of Mexico- Government of Canada. June 27, 2008.

APCNA working groups are finalizing the council’s action lists. But it is still unclear when the document will become public and no deadline has yet been set. Moreover, not much has been public or covered by the media about this critical and strategic initiative. This is a serious problem with the SPP: information about the council’s actions has not been shared with the public, and the potential for creating positive public opinion is slim. Public support may be limited if local governments, workers and communities are kept out of the loop.

For this industry, the movement of products across borders is fundamental. Auto makers and suppliers are embedded in the new security practices imposed on logistics in North America. Measures being explored include monitoring production sites within each country. As mentioned by the U.S. Chief Officer of the Port of Detroit last year, these are “policies that move the border where the product is packaged.”¹⁰ With that premise, new programs are emerging like the one creat-

¹⁰ Presentation by U.S. Customs and Border Protection Director Bruce Farmer at the “Beyond Borders Workshop on North American Logistics,” Canadian Studies Center, Bowling Green State University, Ohio. June 2, 2007.

ed by Canada and the U.S. to improve security, transportation time and clearance in the supply chain. The program is called FAST (Free and Secure Trade) and includes a registry called C-TPAT (Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism). This program is also being negotiated with the Mexican government to harmonize its supply chain system with those of both Canada and the United States.

As this example shows in the case of the automobile sector, industries fully integrated in North America require significant operational changes not only on border areas but at their manufacturing, processing and shipping locations. The impacts on states and provinces need to be carefully assessed to prepare adequate local responses. In other words, state governments and legislatures need to be prepared for a major policy reformulation.

The SPP, the News Media, Public Opinion and Diplomacy

Public support is a required component of the Security and Prosperity Partnership. The careful cultivation of public opinion needs to be incorporated at two levels: one, on the level of transparency and access to information required for any policy design and another regarding accountable proposals clear to all. If those more likely to be affected, such as border communities and their respective local governments, are not informed, the model is likely to fail. Moreover, the press and news media need to receive timely briefings and to have access to information so readers and viewers form a collective public sphere that understands the purposes of the new policies.

The press, especially in the U.S., has published a limited number of stories about areas of prosperity; and more about security because of the increasing waves of violence near the U.S.-Mexico border. This type of coverage has impacted negatively on Mexico's image in the U.S. and has influenced the formulation of severe, divisive policies between the two countries. Information about the formalization of important bi-national programs on energy, environment, transportation and manufacturing is not placed in the context of cooperation, making the flow of information distorted and incomplete. A similar but less damaging pattern exists in news coverage related to Canada.

Of all the news published by Canadian, Mexican and U.S. newspapers from 2005 to 2007, Canada exhibits stronger coverage of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. This affirmation comes after examining news stories and editorials published by national elite newspapers in each country in February, March and April of each year. The first year, a significant number of stories related to SPP were printed in the three countries. But, since the SPP was signed in March 2005, the number of articles dropped by more than 10 percent per year, representing a total decline of almost 35 percent.

As table 7 shows, of all the news published about the SPP, almost half the articles were printed in Canada, followed by Mexico with one-third. In the United States the

coverage of SPP, its implications, contents and processes made up close to one-fifth of the total stories published about North America. In fact, in the U.S. after 2005, the coverage declined by 30 percentage points each year.

TABLE 7
NEWS COVERAGE OF THE SECURITY AND PROSPERITY
PARTNERSHIP OF NORTH AMERICA

	2005	% of Total	2006	% of Total	2007	% of Total
Canada	67	46	54	45	42	44
U.S.	32	22	23	19	18	19
Mexico	46	32	42	35	35	37
Total	145		119		95	

News data bases consulted: FACTIVA, Lexis-Nexis, FIRSTSEARCH, plus the archives of the following newspapers: Canada: *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* and *Ottawa Citizen*; U.S.: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*; and Mexico: *El Universal*, *El Financiero* and *La Jornada*.

The content of the coverage has some similarities. For the most part, Canadian coverage reflects the new regulations and border controls that are more restrictive and demanding of Canadians than in the past. Passport requirements for Canadians entering the U.S., for instance, are a security regulation that affected many commuters and business and regular travelers. Other news dealt with trade, energy and general program cooperation with the U.S. and Mexico. U.S. news focused mostly (85 percent) on security and border controls and only a few articles delved into energy and manufacturing collaboration. Mexico's content was similar to Canada's: border controls affecting local communities received more attention, followed by general trade and transportation issues. Agriculture was the sector that received the most attention from the Mexican press. Security and migration together were the main focus (80 percent) of all stories published in the three countries. Only a small 20 percent looked at areas of prosperity, as defined by the SPP.

Its programs, initiatives and overall coverage, however, receive minimal attention, taking into consideration the importance of the partnership. The national newspapers published news stemming from presidential activities. Two situations seem to explain this: one is the increasing coverage of illegal migration to the U.S. and the probable legal reforms to address the problems of almost 11 million illegal workers and their families. And the other is related to the border policies themselves, particularly as related to the monumental increase of law enforcement to defend the border and the building of the fence. The "border" as an issue is a response to the perceived threat of terrorism and defending borders is an ideological statement. In fact, the border with Mexico—and to a certain degree with Canada—is touted as a back door to terrorism and an open gate to illegal immigration and drugs.

Moreover, the media has contributed to the disinformation about the partnership by ignoring topics that illustrate significant collaboration between the United States and its neighbors. Some of the missing topics include the coverage and follow up of the annual meeting of ten U.S.-Mexico-border governors, investments by the North

American Development Bank in urban infrastructure, educational mobility programs and the good neighbor environmental board, as well as the collaboration of the Great Lakes Commission. The press largely under-reports conferences, workshops and official meetings sponsored by the Canada-U.S. and Mexico-U.S. legislative binational commissions, except in Canada and Mexico.

For instance, the Twenty-Fifth Border Governors Conference on September 27-28, 2007 in Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, where the governors announced emergency response plans for the U.S.-Mexico border, got little media attention. Of the 22 Associated Press wire reports sent during the conference, only 3 made it to national papers and not necessarily on the proposed prevention, preparation and response measures, but on the governors' agreement to join forces to reduce methanol trafficking.

In the analysis of news flows, it is clear that one topic is unifying Americans regardless of their origin, income, religion, education or party affiliation: undocumented immigration. There is a consensus like never before about the need to deter and control immigration not only in the Southwest but in all areas of the country. Areas with traditionally low influxes of migrants, like the Southeast and all the way to the Great Lakes region, began to be polarized about the divergent policies to control migration. The unintended consequences of this process have caused an openly negative attitude toward migrants and Mexico. Very little is being said about migrants' contributions to the U.S. economy, the type of jobs they do and their interdependent relationship with labor markets in the service, hospitality and agricultural sectors.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, information has increased, but so has ideological disinformation. The distortion has eroded good will among the three countries. Each country's government needs to work on each other's public opinion; this is one of the goals of public diplomacy, and journalism and the news media are the tools. By the end of 2007, given its deteriorating public image in the U.S., Mexico clearly needs this the most. The generalized negative opinion of Mexico is eroding the small but important support the current administration has for proposing significant changes in the relationship. While the public image of a vibrant and integrated North America is the responsibility of each country within its own borders, there is little doubt that they all need to influence and persuade their neighbors.

Risks and Opportunities of the SPP

As mentioned in the previous section, one important actor for building public opinion is the news media. As expected, the U.S. border press pays close attention to transportation, border controls and security issues; but the influential national media only minimally covers regional or tri-national issues unless they are conflict-based. The media keeps influencing our notions of each other, while Mexican and Canadian newspapers spend more time on U.S.-related news, which U.S. newspapers do not do. Specifically, U.S. news coverage of Mexico comes in sensationalist waves rather than informing the public to be able to understand interdependent issues that will only be solved by the actions of the two neighbors.

Under the heading of security, natural resources, transportation, migration, trade, energy and, ultimately, development come topics the U.S. needs to address as common problems with both its neighbors. Security is a matter of concern not only for the United States; proximity makes it an issue for both its neighbors. To deepen interaction within North America, economic interests are as important as local political concerns. How each society and its culture will emerge from this readjustment of interests remains to be seen. However, regardless of the format adopted, a new regional form of integration is being forged.¹¹

The evidence shows that as economic interdependence grows, concerns about cooperation and sovereignty increase. Mexico participated in the NAFTA agreement in asymmetric conditions that, together with a parochial ideological setting and governmental incapacity, makes its role more complicated. The best example for Mexico, though, is to examine the Canadian experience, rich in dealing and working with the U.S. and having a more pragmatic and realistic approach to their relationship. Mexico needs to learn from Canada's institutional and lobbying actions to influence the U.S., which provide practical approaches on how the two countries solve common problems. This is particularly important in maintaining bi-national organizations, fostering local agencies' input to solve common problems, educating populations on common issues and promoting accountability and access to information.

Another important issue to demystify is the role of the U.S. administration in many political decisions and policy issues. Most media in Mexico do a poor job of differentiating the administration's role (the executive branch) and Congress's (the legislative branch) in policy formulation. The tendency is to place most of the responsibility on the president, rather than on congresspersons and senators with narrow agendas.¹² For instance, the recent decision to build a fence between the two countries can be traced more to the pressures of conservative constituencies on members of Congress than on the administration's internal policy decisions. New measures to control illegal immigration also come from Congress rather than from the administration. In fact, the last comprehensive immigration bill that included temporary worker provisions and the regularization of millions of undocumented immigrants was strongly supported by the Bush administration but did not get enough support in Congress to pass. To illustrate Congress's power—and independence—many Democrats and a vast majority of members of the president's own political party (the Republicans) did not support the measure and ultimately killed the bill.¹³

Despite its good intentions, the new North American agenda needs to add more than just trade and economic collaboration. The new form requires a drastic help-

¹¹ Manuel Chávez Márquez, "Dinámicas de integración y seguridad. Población, desarrollo y recursos naturales en las políticas públicas de México-Estados Unidos," in Alfonso Cortés, Scout Whiteford and Manuel Chávez, comps., *Población, agua y desarrollo en la frontera México-Estados Unidos* (Tijuana, Baja California: Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2005).

¹² Robert Pastor and Rafael Fernández de Castro, eds., *The Controversial Pivot. The U.S. Congress and North America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998).

¹³ Brian Naylor, "Senate Abandons Immigration Bill," *Morning Edition NPR*, June 8, 2007.

ing hand to address the quality of life, including food safety, natural resources, employment and health. As important as the content is, prompt information sharing and dissemination will play an important role to inform the citizenry on the SPP's scope.¹⁴

Mexican, Canadian and U.S., citizens share not only a space but an economic system, both of which frame their daily lives. This complex interactive system requires constant fine-tuning to operate and the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America offers a mechanism for doing that. The paradox is to maintain economic vitality while ensuring that citizens of both countries live in a secure environment.

Under these conditions, the first challenge for the SPP is to increase the collective prosperity of the citizens of North America, as agreed by the three governments. Also, the U.S. needs to acknowledge that the trilateral relationship goes beyond solely economic and trade purposes. The well-being and prosperity of citizens in the three countries are essential.

The second challenge is to seek pragmatic formulas that give local needs a more prominent role in the new regulations imposed by U.S. Homeland Security. The North American governments need to recognize that local municipalities and border states are points of interaction every day and that these jurisdictions will continue to interact in the years to come. Also, local capacity to respond to logistical and security demands will require investment and resources that need to be funded by the central governments.

A last challenge is to increase public understanding of trinational policies that aim to improve general conditions in North America. The creation of security and economic programs must be shared widely, including information about SPP goals and programs. For the partnership to be successful, it needs to offer a clear view of how prosperity is going to be achieved and how the benefits will be shared.

One of SPP's direct beneficiaries is undoubtedly the North American regional economy. The partnership needs to better coordinate economic sectors that are already integrated or are in the process of regional consolidation. The SPP acknowledges priority sectors like energy, steel, automotive, transportation, banking and financial services and agriculture, but it needs to add other social sectors like education, health and infrastructure. Whether each national economy is capable of benefiting its citizens is one of the major questions the SPP needs to address to fulfill the promise of prosperity "for all citizens living in North America" as stated in the official document signed by the three heads of state.

¹⁴ Emily Heard, ed., *Toward a North American Community. A Conference Report* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2002).

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