



# The Anatomy of a Relationship:

A Collection of Essays  
on the Evolution of  
U.S.-Mexico  
Cooperation on  
Border  
Management



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## About the Collection

The conventional wisdom among those who study the border is that following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States unilaterally imposed significant additional security requirements on the management of the U.S.-Mexico border, and that the measures taken to meet these requirements have made the border more difficult to cross for not only illicit but also licit traffic, including the trade and travel that is the lifeblood of cross-border communities. There is much truth in this interpretation, but it largely portrays Mexico as a passive receptor of U.S. policy, which could not be further from reality.

Rather, the increasing relevance of transnational non-state actors—terrorist groups, organized crime networks—posing border and national security threats in the region have demanded increased international cooperation to monitor and mitigate the risks. At the same time, the U.S. and Mexican economies have become ever more deeply integrated, causing significant growth in cross-border traffic and placing the efficient management of the U.S.-Mexico border as a first-order national interest for both countries.

The post-2001 border management framework has pushed away from the traditional understanding of the border as a line in the sand and moved toward an approach that seeks to secure and (in the case of licit travel and commerce) facilitate flows. This focus on transnational flows has expanded the geographic scope of what were traditionally border operations and thus required an internationalization of border management, the development of partnerships and cooperative methods of border administration.

Mexico historically took a largely hands-off approach to its northern border, with virtually no entry processing required for the majority of travelers and a limited law enforcement focus on the border itself. After September, 2001, the U.S. sought cooperation from its allies in protecting the homeland, which in the case of Mexico predominately focused on the border. Mexico responded by offering support for U.S. security objectives, but also pressured for the creation of mechanisms to limit the economic and quality of life costs of increased security. More recently, Mexico has reciprocated by pushing for increased U.S. action to stop the southbound flows of weapons trafficking and illicit bulk cash.

At the U.S.-Mexico border, these changes meant that Mexico necessarily and for the first time fully got a seat at the table in discussions of border management. It took several years for the development to be fully institutionalized, but it was achieved through the formal creation of the Executive Steering Committee (with leadership in the White House and Los Pinos) and related binational committees for various aspects of border management in 2010 as part of the 21st Century Border initiative. Similarly, through the Merida Initiative, Mexico and the United States have jointly sought to strengthen public security in the border region, and through the High Level Economic Dialogue aimed to cooperatively strengthen the competitiveness of the regional economy.

Over the past decade and a half, the United States and Mexico have transitioned from largely independent and unconnected approaches to managing the border to the development and implementation of a cooperative framework. With contributions from government officials and other top experts in the field, this collection of essays explores the development of cooperative approaches to the management of the U.S.-Mexico border. The essays will be released individually throughout the fall of 2015 and published as a volume in early 2016.

The Mexico Institute would like to thank each of the contributors for sharing their expertise and experience. They include Assistant Secretary Alan D. Bersin and Michael D. Huston of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Sergio M. Alcocer from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Managing Director Gerónimo Gutiérrez of the North American Development Bank, David A. Shirk from the University of San Diego (and a Wilson Center Global Fellow); Carlos Heredia of El Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas; and Carlos de la Parra of El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

# HOMELAND SECURITY AS A THEORY OF ACTION: THE IMPACT ON U.S./MEXICO BORDER MANAGEMENT

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Alan D. Bersin and Michael D. Huston<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alan D. Bersin is Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Chief Diplomatic Officer, Office of Policy, Department of Homeland Security. He was formerly Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (2010-2011). Michael Huston is the Principal Director for Americas Policy, Office of Policy, Department of Homeland Security. The Authors express their gratitude for the assistance provided by DHS Policy Analyst Marie Chalkley. The views herein are those of the authors and not of the Department of Homeland Security.

## Introduction

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The terrorist attack on 9/11 in effect closed America's borders. The drawbridges were raised, airports and seaports shut down and cross-border traffic at land ports of entry was reduced to a trickle. Defense and security and enforcement became the exclusive orders of the day.

Nowhere else was the impact more devastating than on the U.S./Mexico Border where every person was completely screened and every vehicle thoroughly searched. Wait times could be measured by days not hours and lines stretched on miles beyond sight.<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. reaction generally and particularly on the Southwest Border was understandable, though it remained more instinctive than considered. We had experienced a new vulnerability in our "homeland," a concept that seemed foreign, strange and distant before 9/11. Reflexively we retreated behind our borders and hunkered down behind the boundaries of Fortress America.

It soon became evident that the costs of "hunker down security," i.e. the impact of closing the borders, would deliver an unacceptable, catastrophically self-defeating blow to our economy. The events of 9/11, accordingly, initiated a wrenching turn in the way Americans viewed globalization and the manner in which their government understood and practiced internal security

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<sup>2</sup> See Ken Ellingwood, *Delays Ease at U.S.-Mexican Border: Waits of hours to enter the U.S. after Tuesday's terrorist attacks are reduced, but extra precautions remain*. Los Angeles Times, September 14, 2001; Ken Ellingwood, *Fallout: Post Sept. 11 crackdown chokes northbound traffic, scaring away Mexican customers and leaving many merchants on the U.S. side going bust*, Los Angeles Times, November 26, 2001.

and external defense. Policymakers were compelled to formulate new theories of action and respond to a dramatically altered threat environment. Specifically, policy makers grappled with the challenge of how to secure the homeland in a world that was increasingly borderless. The evolving policy and operational results may be the lasting legacy of September 11, 2001.<sup>3</sup>

This paper examines these developments from the perspective of the relationship between Mexico and the United States and their shared management of a common border. Although the emergence of a U.S. homeland security doctrine has significantly affected all trade and travel to and from the United States, it has had special importance for and a distinctive impact on U.S. - Mexico bilateral relations.

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<sup>3</sup> The 2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (at p. 14) frames the objective of ensuring Homeland Security as "[a] homeland that is safe, secure, and resilient against terrorism and other hazards, where American interests, aspirations, and way of life can thrive." See page 14.

## The Border as a Line That Divided Us

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The 1,969 mile border between Mexico and the United States is the most frequently crossed border in the world. But the border line (“*La Linea*”) was created by war and fixed in 1848 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which ceded half of Mexico’s territory to the United States.<sup>4</sup> The line from its genesis therefore was an official embodiment of contention and friction and for Mexicans a matter of injury and insult. For the next 150 years, with growing economic, military, and political imbalance between the United States and Mexico, the border became the single point of parity. At *La Linea*, sovereignty was asserted most aggressively and asymmetry in the bilateral power relationship was most effectively neutralized by Mexico. Mexico and the United States remained equal at the border as nowhere else in their bilateral relationship as a matter of law and practical operation.

If the Nineteenth Century was a time of armed conflict, the Twentieth Century border was (mostly) demilitarized and bilateral relations were tolerable. However, the United States and Mexico officially were not genuinely collaborative or friendly beyond surface appearances. For decades in the Mexican psyche, the border fed into sovereignty concerns and suspicion of U.S. intentions, while at the same time

representing economic and social opportunity. Similarly, to the U.S. way of thinking, the border was the line between us and our poor and corrupt southern neighbor, through which crossed a steady flow of reliable labor. As border control became a political issue in the United States, followed by an enormous investment of enforcement resources, the border took on additional significance. Increased U.S. border security efforts to limit migration and crime in the border region clashed with the traditional Mexican view of a “right to migrate.”<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the several millions of people (*los fronterizos*) who lived across the line from one another in a “third country” (*el tercer país*) of their own, the border was a location for U.S.-Mexico collision on account of forces and phenomena generated elsewhere. Communities that were once virtually seamless now had a fence that divided them along the international line.

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<sup>4</sup> Officially titled *The Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Limits and Settlement between the United States of America and the Mexican Republic*, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo resulted in the United States extending Texas’ boundaries to the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo, taking ownership of California, and claiming territory that includes all or part of what is today Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

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<sup>5</sup> This perspective is generally held throughout Latin America. Proponents suggest that Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides “the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.” Mexico’s immigration law enshrines this basic principle but also requires exit from Mexico occur through recognized ports of entry. It is worth noting, however, that the UDHR is silent as to a parallel right to enter into other countries.

In short, the United States and Mexico were foreign countries which happened to be neighbors. The border was a no man's land and often a haven for fugitives and outlaws. The borderland itself was a stepchild of national policy in both the Distrito Federal and Washington, D.C. The bilateral relationship often was characterized by finger pointing regarding migration, narcotics, guns and extradition.<sup>6</sup> For both Mexico and the United States, the border was the line in the sand (or on the river) that separated "us" from "them" and both countries, operationally and politically, treated it that way. From the Zimmerman Telegram (1917)<sup>7</sup> through Kiki Camarena (1985)<sup>8</sup> to Proposition 187 (1994),<sup>9</sup> the

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<sup>6</sup> For further discussion see Alan D. Bersin, "El Tercer Pais: Reinventing the U.S.-Mexico Border." 48 *Stanford Law Review* 1413, 1995-1996.

<sup>7</sup> Boghardt, Thomas. *The Zimmerman Telegram: Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America's Entry into World War I* (2012); see also John F. Chalkley. "Zach Lamar Cobb: El Paso Collector of Customs and Intelligence During the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1918." *Southwestern Studies*, No. 103, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique S. "Kiki" Camarena, while undercover in Mexico, was abducted, tortured and murdered. Although suspected responsible individuals were quickly identified and apprehended by Mexican enforcement agencies, the relationship between the United States and Mexico authorities was such that extradition of those suspects never occurred. The political climate that stymied cooperation on this high-profile incident spoke to a relationship between the two countries that was more problematic than either preferred to admit. The release from prison, through court order, in 2013, of Rafael Caro Quintero, a key suspect in the Camarena murder, reflected both the matter's continuing sensitivity as well as the dramatic changes that had taken place in the bilateral relationship. See also, *DEA Observes 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Death of Special Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena*, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, <http://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2010/pr030410p.html>

<sup>9</sup> Proposition 187 was an anti-Mexican immigrant initiative passed by California voters in 1994 but enjoined from taking effect through a federal court ruling that was upheld upon appeal.

official reality, in sum, was some cooperation but much passive/aggressiveness on both sides with the back story one of significant hostility.

## Homeland Security and the Changing Nature and Perception of Borders

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A change in the U.S.-Mexico relationship was built upon a fundamentally new vision of homeland security and borders and a new approach to the way in which both countries defined and managed the line of contention that divided them.

Borders traditionally have been viewed as lines in the sand (and on a map) demarcating the edges of sovereign states (or empires) under the so-called Westphalian system.<sup>10</sup> However, the process of globalization, and the impact of massive transnational flows of labor, capital, people, goods, ideas, images, data and electrons, called this view into question. Seeing borders as the primary line of defense to "keep dangerous people and things out" and away from national territory appeared antiquated and anachronistic. With the events of 9/11, and then in the aftermath of the so-called "Underwear Bomber" on Christmas Day 2009 and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's 2010 Printer Cartridge Plot from Yemen, it became clear that threats to homeland security invariably involve an extraterritorial factor or dimension that larger border walls simply cannot address.<sup>11</sup> The new vision of

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<sup>10</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (2014); see also Leo Gross, *The Peace of Westphalia*, *The American Journal of International Law* 42 (1948).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Mazzetti & Scott Shane, *Evidence Mounts for Taliban Role in Bomb Plot*, *New York Times* (May 5,

homeland security requires enlarging the concept of borders to encompass the intense and often instantaneous “borderless” flows that cross border lines entering and exiting the nation continuously on a 24/7/365 basis.

Rather than a one dimensional view of borders solely as lines between countries, the new border paradigm links jurisdictional lines to the flows of people, goods, ideas, and so forth toward and across them<sup>12</sup>, rendering the border multi-dimensional. The border begins where airplanes take off and where cargo is laden into a ship’s hold, not only at the boundaries of political borders themselves. The task of securing the flows of goods and people toward the homeland therefore must begin abroad. We enlist time and space in support of the mission by identifying high risks and mitigating them as far away geographically from the homeland and as early before arrival at the border as possible.

This new approach has created space for the United States and Mexico to “redefine the border problem” such that previously insurmountable differences and long-held positions could be swept aside in the face of a new set of realities. The key catalyst was the new reality of growing economic interdependence.

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2010),  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/06/nyregion/06bomb.html>; Erika Solomon & Phil Steward, *Al Qaeda Yemen Wing Claims Parcel Plot, UPS Crash*, Reuters (November 5, 2010),  
<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCATRE6A44PU20101105>

<sup>12</sup> This concept is examined in detail in: Alan D. Bersin, “Lines and Flows: The Beginning and End of Borders,” *Brooklyn Journal of International Law*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2012)

## North American Free Trade Agreement / Tratado de Libre Comercio de América Del Norte—A Game Changer

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The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) / Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (TLC) has been an extraordinary catalyst for intensive globalization in North America. U.S./Mexico trade for goods and services has expanded six fold, increasing from \$80 billion annually in 1993 to more than \$500 billion today. This amounts to \$1.3 billion in cross-border trade daily or more than \$1 million dollars a minute. Mexico has become the third largest trading partner of the United States and its second largest export market. Mexico purchases more from the United States than Brazil, Russia, India and China combined and twice as much as China alone. Mexican trade with the United States, imports and exports (\$294.2 billion and \$240.3 billion respectively in 2014)<sup>13</sup>, is greater than our trade with Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom combined. The cross-border economy in the ten contiguous Mexican and U.S. border states amounts to the fourth largest economy in the world.

The movement of people, legally and illegally, between the two countries is equally striking. One in ten individuals living in the United States today is of Mexican origin and approximately ten percent of the people born in Mexico are residing in the United States. Twenty one million U.S. tourists visit Mexico annually and Mexico ranks second in number of visits (14.3 million) to the United States. Bilateral

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<sup>13</sup> From the U.S. Census Bureau, Foreign Trade, see <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c2010.html>



foreign direct investment between the two countries significantly exceeds \$100 billion. More than 6 million jobs in the United States are generated by trade and tourism with Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

The concomitant impact of regionalization through NAFTA/TLC on Mexico has been transformational. Mexico's gross domestic product has doubled from \$510 billion to \$1.178 trillion in 2014. It is the twelfth largest economy in the world today and is expected to become the fifth largest by 2050.<sup>15</sup> By any measure, just under 50 percent of Mexicans are middle class. Life expectancy has increased from 72 to 77 years. The fertility rate has dropped from 3.1 to 2.2 births per woman. Per capita income has doubled from \$8,469 to \$16,734. The poverty rate has dropped from 69 percent to 52 percent.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, and remarkably after 70 years of single party

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<sup>14</sup> These statistical measures are drawn from a presentation prepared by Simon Rosenberg at the New Policy Institute in 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Goldman Sachs, “The N-11: More Than an Acronym,” Global Economics Paper No. 153, March, 2007, available at <http://www.chicagobooth.edu/~media/E60BDCEB6C5245E59B7ADA7C6B1B6F2B.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> William Booth and Nick Miroff, “Despite Economic Progress, Mexico Remains Far From Rich,” *Miami-Herald International Edition*, December 21, 2012; Luis De La Calle and Luis Rubio, *Mexico: A Middle Class Society—Poor No More, Developed Not Yet* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Mexico Institute, 2012); Shannon K. O’Neil, “Mexico Makes It: A Transformed Society, Economy, and Government,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2013; Shannon K. O’Neil, *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States and the Road Ahead* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013)

rule, Mexico has peacefully transitioned its politics into a genuine multiparty democracy with honest elections and a robust assertive civic culture.

The cumulative effect of these flows (and changes) is that the United States and Mexico host an increasingly integrated economy and a shared production platform. Half of all trade between the two is intra-industry, involving multiple border crossings prior to final assembly and sale. This economic and fiscal reality in turn has highlighted fragmented border management as an artifact of history that regionalization/globalization requires transcending. Networks are acknowledged as the organizational route to effective and efficient operation. Collaboration is key. The relevant partnerships reside within the government, with the private (stakeholder) sector and with cross-border authorities in Mexico and the United States. A premium is placed on operational coordination to reduce transaction costs in order to enhance overall regional economic competitiveness; on data harmonization to facilitate information sharing and common risk assessments; on consultation to build a more coherent and efficient border crossing infrastructure; and on coordinated enforcement at and between the ports of entry. This movement from merely bilateral border relations toward genuinely transnational relationships has gained traction in Mexico and the United States. The revised logic of interaction has converted the vicious cycles of the past into virtuous circles of mutual benefit for the future.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The impact of NAFTA on the U.S. and Mexican economies and the importance of our increasingly interconnected economic network is discussed in Alan D. Bersin, “Cross-Border Economies: A Blueprint for North American Competitiveness,”

## The Border as a Matter that Binds Us Together

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Homeland security as an enterprise and theory of action has furnished a solid framework for designing a strong and sustainable economic competitiveness and security relationship between Mexico and the United States. Our bilateral/binational efforts and policies increasingly are guided by what legal scholar Bayless Manning characterized (in the 1970's) as an "intermestic" lens that is simultaneously international and domestic in focus.<sup>18</sup> This perspective recognizes that the distinctions between domestic and international issues become more blurred as a borderless globalization proceeds. Nowhere is this better reflected than in the region along the Mexico/U.S. land border. Remarkable progress has been made and institutionalized such that a return to the unsatisfactory condition that once characterized both bilateral relations and the border is neither feasible nor desirable from the standpoint of either government. Each has come to recognize that the other is critical to domestic citizen security as well as economic prosperity in its own country. The days of rampant institutional mistrust are squarely in the past and the future between Mexico and the United States, as a result, is not what it used to be.<sup>19</sup>

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*William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies: Regional Insights*, 2013 Edition, No. 3 (October)

<sup>18</sup> Bayless Manning, *The Congress, The Executive and Intermestic Affairs: Three Proposals*, 55 *Foreign Affairs* 306, 309 (1977).

<sup>19</sup> A striking illustration of the changing relationship between the United States and Mexico are the recent amendments to Mexico's Firearms and Explosives Law allowing foreign customs and immigration officials to carry officially-issued firearms in Mexico as part of cargo and immigration pre-inspection programs, a step that was unthinkable 10 years ago.

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Viewing borders as both "lines and flows" brings with it dramatic changes in how a government secures the homeland. With respect to the U.S.-Mexico relationship, there are at least five interconnected and overlapping outgrowths of this new paradigm that have been critical in helping usher in a new and unprecedented era of collaboration and coordination:

- (1) *Multi-dimensional borders cannot be secured by a single nation*—because flows cross international boundaries endlessly and often instantaneously, securing those flows requires cross-government coordination. From this perspective, points of entry (airports, seaports and land ports) are the last not the first line of defense for national sovereignties. The homeland security mission is intrinsically transnational. In this sense, securing "the homeland" becomes securing "our homelands" with both the U.S. and Mexican governments having a very significant stake in the degree to which cross-border flows are secure.
- (2) *National and economic security is best achieved through international partnerships*—With the global flow of goods and people serving as a primary variable and key driver for a country's national and economic security and prosperity, each country has an imperative to secure and speed lawful global flow and guard against illicit ones. Enhanced security and facilitation of global flows are best accomplished from a global perspective through close international partnerships.

*“In this sense, securing ‘the homeland’ becomes securing ‘our homelands’ with both the U.S. and Mexican governments having a very significant stake in the degree to which cross-border flows are secure.”*

(3) *Security and facilitation are mutually reinforcing objectives*—Conventional wisdom in the past held that an increase in either security or facilitation came at the cost of the other. The new paradigm recognizes that the more secure a given flow is, the faster it should be permitted to move across international boundaries. Coupling and integrating security and facilitation into a single process provides both a rationale and a desired outcome for collaborative efforts to manage cross-border flows.<sup>20</sup>

(4) *Risk Management is the key ingredient*—Homeland security is functionally accomplished through assessing,

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<sup>20</sup> The old dichotomy between security and trade facilitation is a false one. They are not mutually exclusive variables but rather involve the same process. By identifying high risk and low risk goods and travelers, we effectively can mitigate the threat posed by the former while expediting the movement of the latter without compromising security. Expediting lawful trade and travel is a security regime because it permits us to focus on those persons and goods in the border flow about which there is derogatory information or about which there is inadequate information to make a judgment regarding the degree of risk they embody. Risk management and traffic segmentation programs allow governments to best leverage limited enforcement resources. Meta data (“Big Data”) and analytic targeting are elements essential to this process of risk evaluation and traffic management, as data is converted into useable and actionable information. Information sharing, accordingly, has become critical to the cross-border enterprise.

analyzing, and comparing risk, then prioritizing actions to “maximize the use of ... limited resources.”<sup>21</sup> This risk-based approach de-emphasizes “thick” borders, framing instead an approach that factors in all available information (e.g. origin, route, and destination) and then deploys resources against those risks that pose the greatest threat or about which we know the least. This approach permits us to maximize the potential effect of enforcement resources at any particular level of deployment.

(5) *The principles of co-responsibility and joint border management are central*—In the same way that traditional borders neutralized asymmetry, the recognition and acknowledgement of global flows, similarly levels the international playing field. These global flows become a “commons” of sorts because the international community is equally invested in the secure and speedy movement of lawful global flows and the detection and interdiction of dangerous and/or criminally-generated cargo. Effective management requires cooperation and is built on the premise of joint responsibility exercised initially bilaterally and ultimately through multilateral accords.

This new approach combined with the geographic proximity of the two countries and emergence of a North American trade bloc, as a result of NAFTA/TLC, materially altered the political calculus of Mexico and the United States. To be sure, the creation of DHS and an unprecedented focus on the U.S.-Mexico border generated internal,

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<sup>21</sup> See page 15 of the 2014 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, accessible at <http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2014-qhsr-final-508.pdf>.

practical challenges in both countries. Indeed the “homeland security perspective” provided not only a new and viable framework for collaboration, but also an imperative for it that has been undeniable. For the first time in our bilateral history, borders are viewed primarily as opportunities for coordination and cooperation rather than defensive perimeters and occasions for conflict. They have become locations for problem solving rather than finger pointing. The focus has shifted decisively from a “border line” stretching east to west that separates us, to the enormous flows north to south and south to north which link us and are shaping our nations as they unite our countries.

## A New Relationship in Pursuit of a Twenty-First Century Border

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The concerted reshaping of the U.S./Mexico bilateral relationship, begun through the Merida Initiative in 2006, was deepened and institutionalized by *The Twenty-First Century Border Management Declaration* in 2010 and the creation of the U.S./Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue in 2013. These developments substantially recast the strategic partnership between the U.S. and Mexico as one based on the assumption of shared responsibility and the joint management of common issues. The homeland security doctrines of risk management and traffic segmentation have emerged to govern our shared approach to securing and expediting lawful flows of persons and goods across the common border, to mitigate threats that could disrupt the system and to confront illicit markets that use and exploit the system. The focus of the new border risk management regime is to deconstruct beforehand, through advance data sharing, the flows that cross sovereign

borders rather than wait to interact with people and goods for the first time at official ports of entry.

This new approach is embodied within the Twenty-First Century Border framework and in a series of bilateral arrangements entered into by the Department of Homeland Security and the *Secretaria de Gobernacion* (Secretariat of Government, or SEGOB) and *Secretaria de Hacienda y Credito Publico* (Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit, or SHCP). These arrangements provide for concrete plans, programs and initiatives that implement the overall vision and the significant policy changes it requires. Sustained by regular engagement at senior levels of government and a framework for reporting and accountability, the reinvented bilateral relationship includes: coordinated patrolling of the U.S./Mexico border; the development of mutually recognized “trusted trader and traveler” programs; information sharing and the conduct of joint targeting against airline and (much) cargo manifest data; the conduct of joint investigations to interdict and disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations; the integration and harmonization of manifest data requirements; cooperation regarding repatriation and migration management; consultation regarding law enforcement use of force at the border; and the development of shared priorities and common public private partnership approaches to border infrastructure development. The support of the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (Secretariat of External Relations or SRE) and the U.S. Department of State has mediated the transformation.

DHS’s success in engaging Mexican counterparts is attributable to the missions and goals of DHS dovetailing with Mexican security and economic priorities. The missions and goals draw on the relative

strengths of Mexican counterparts and reframe issues (like border security) in such a way that no longer triggers sovereignty concerns or other sensitivities that previously stymied the relationship. And even in areas where some tension remains—for instance the politics surrounding unlawful migration—successes in other areas have created good will that can then be leveraged to overcome thorny issues when they arise. As the case of Mexico demonstrates, “homeland security” as an enterprise and theory of action has proven to be a solid foundation for building mutually beneficial and sustainable economic competitiveness and security relationships.

## Our Combined Future is North America

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This paper has analyzed the ways in which a fundamentally different view of the border, fostered by the development of a homeland security theory of action, has provided the foundation upon which the United States and Mexico could redefine their previously acrimonious and unproductive bilateral relationship. Moreover, it suggests that the homeland security perspective can be a catalyst in the further development of the North American economic and security perimeter. Indeed, *The Twenty-First Century Border Declaration*, is mirrored in U.S./Canada relations by the *Beyond the Border Declaration* of President Obama and Prime Minister Harper in 2011, followed by an Action Plan a year later, that embodies many programs similar to those initiated between the United States and Mexico.

North America has emerged as an economic and security powerhouse in its own right, consisting of a half billion people and 25 percent of global GDP. Trilateral commerce has increased 265 percent since

the start of NAFTA, reaching a record level of \$1.1 trillion dollars in 2013. The clear dynamic is for current parallel bilateral approaches (U.S./Canada, Mexico/U.S. and Canada/Mexico) to be superseded in part, as appropriate, over time<sup>22</sup> by trinational conceptions and tripartite associations. Advancement to this next level of progress requires further integration of production and commercial platforms (as contrasted with the shared sovereignty approach of the European Union); and recent North American Leaders Summit agendas appear to be moving in this direction with all deliberate speed. This integration holds out in addition the promise of furnishing a viable framework for Mexico, Canada and the United States to address their continental and perimeter security as well as the problems of security and economic development that exist in Central America’s Northern Triangle countries.<sup>23</sup> The Homeland Security principles that have revolutionized security and trade relationships in North America will both mediate and accelerate this expansion of integration and better position the North American community to compete successfully in the world market. Although the American Century may indeed be drawing to a close, it appears to be doing so in the context of a North American Century that is just beginning.

*“Although the American Century may indeed be drawing to a close, it appears to be doing so in the context of a North American Century that is just beginning.”*

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<sup>22</sup> Shannon K. O’Neil et al, *North America: Time for a New Focus*, Council on Foreign Relations Task Force Report (2014)

<sup>23</sup> Avoiding the consequences of not doing so offers a powerful incentive to begin this work of a generation or more (as it has unfolded in Mexico) although the long-term benefits of integrating Central America (and the island countries of the Caribbean) economically into North America are self-evident.

## **About the Authors**

### **Alan D. Bersin**

Alan Bersin serves as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Chief Diplomatic Officer for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Policy. In those capacities, Bersin oversees DHS's international engagement, serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary on all matters pertaining to international affairs, and is responsible for leading the Department's strategic planning and policy formulation functions. Between 2012 and 2015, Bersin served a Vice President of INTERPOL for the Americas Region and was a member of the INTERPOL Executive Committee. Previously, Mr. Bersin served as Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection where he oversaw the operations of CBP's 58,000-employee work force and managed an operating budget of more than \$11 million geared to protecting the nation's borders from all threats while expediting lawful trade and travel. Between 1998 and 2006, Mr. Bersin was Superintendent of Public Education in San Diego and then served as California's Secretary of Education in the administration of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and as a member of the California State Board of Education. Prior to this service, he was appointed by President Bill Clinton as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of California. Mr. Bersin served as U.S. Attorney for nearly five years and as the Attorney General's Southwest Border Representative responsible for coordinating federal law enforcement from South Texas to Southern California. Mr. Bersin is married to the Honorable Lisa Foster and the proud and happy father of three daughters.

### **Michael Huston**

Mr. Huston is the Principal Director for the Americas within the Office of Policy where he has a hand in DHS policy matters affecting the entire Western Hemisphere; oversees and assists in the development of international policy, security, and border related matters; manages international engagements; develops, reviews, negotiates and executes Department-level arrangements; and works directly with domestic interagency partners on matters of DHS interest. Previously he was the Director, Mexican Affairs for the DHS Office of International Affairs (OIA) where he coordinated DHS' engagement with the Government of Mexico. Before his time as a civil servant, Mr. Huston, among other things, taught English at a local high school and worked in the newspaper industry. Mr. Huston holds Bachelor's degrees in English and Sociology and a Master's degree in International Affairs. Mr. Huston is married with four children.