

## ***Obstacles for Security Cooperation in North America***

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### **Introduction**

The literature on International Relations has largely considered North America as a region formed by Canada and the United States, in spite of the fact that from the geographical perspective Mexico is also part of the region. The acknowledgement of Mexico as part of North America is derived from the implementation of NAFTA and the attempt of scholars and decision makers to create a more efficient region. The expectation of a North American Community was based on the assumption that increasing economic interdependence would stimulate the conception of regional institutions and eventually the spillover onto other areas of the trilateral agenda. While the ideas of deeper regional cooperation floated in the air of the three countries, the analysis of regionalism in North America indicates that economic integration remains at the lower level of the Balasian integration (free trade) and the spillover effects have not taken place. In the area of security, threats to stability such as terrorism and organized crime have produced the reinforcement of the bi-lateralization rather than the tri-lateralization. In this regard, this chapter explores the reasons why the North American partners are facing obstacles to develop deeper cooperation in the area of security from a regional perspective. By adopting a Wendtian approach, this chapter argues that in the area of security, a cooperative system has emerged in the US-Canadian relationship while the US-Mexican relationship remains anchored in the logic of an individualistic system. The chapter starts with the overview of the theoretical approach to study security in North America, followed by the analysis of ideas, perceptions, principles and policies in the security of North America.

### **The Fragmented Region: Individualistic and Cooperative Systems**

The study of security in North America has been explored from different theoretical perspectives derived from the study of security in Europe and the transatlantic community. Drawing on such approaches, North America has been defined as a pluralistic security community (Gonzalez and Haggard 1998) in the sense that in North America there are no prospects of conflicts escalating to the use of force among the three countries. From a different

angle, Bow (2010) has argued that to some extent North America has developed some features of a security complex as envisioned by Buzan, namely, a cluster of states which must take one another into account when thinking about their national security. While these approaches have contributed to the understanding of security in North America, they have provided a limited explanatory power due to the characteristics of the region; unlike the European Union or NATO, North America has opted for bilateral strategies to deal with threats and avoided trilateral institutions with collective decision-making power. This trend has been identified as dual-bilateralism (Pastor 2008).

As it will be developed below, the performance of the region reflects two different security systems. Based on the seminal conceptualization of Alexander Wendt (1992) on security systems, security differs "in the extent to which and the manner in which the self is identified cognitively with the other," paving the way to competitive, individualistic and cooperative systems. Two systems prevail in North America. By adapting the model of Wendt, the cooperation between the United States and Canada resembles the cooperative security system in which states identify positively with one another and the parties are able to share and build common institutions, and security of each is perceived as the responsibility of all. On the other hand, the security relationship between the United States and Mexico as well as Canada and Mexico is guided by the rationale of an individualist security system, in which states are ambiguous in the identification with one another, cooperation is limited as a result of distrust and security is perceived as an individual responsibility. The remainder of the paper will address why the three countries have prioritized bilateral cooperation rather than regional cooperation by looking at perceptions, principles and policies in the area of security cooperation. The argument is that, following Wendt, countries can change and form a security system when a transformative process occurs on three different levels: breakdown of consensus, critical examination and new practices. In North America, there is no evidence of breakdown of consensus of the status quo of the security system at the trilateral level, neither between the US or Canada with Mexico, while Canada and the United States were able to develop a cooperative system during the Cold War. These ideas will be explored below.

## **Ideas and Perceptions**

Several scholars have argued that ideas are fundamental to change the orientation of security institutions (Ned Lebow and Groos Stein 1994; Wendt 1991). The idea for a security community for North America has been posed to the regional audience in a wave that lasted from mid-1990s to 2005-6. While think tanks and scholars embraced the viability of the regional community, the governments and elites responded cautiously and unenthusiastically. All in all, the debate in North America has paved the way to the creation of two groups based on the scope of the regional community from a minimalist approach, namely, proposing a superficial adaptation of NAFTA limited to the United States and Canada, to a maximalist mode suggesting a European Union like entity, or a combination of both (Dominguez 2005, 28).

### A) Ideas for a North American Community

In Mexico, for many years, the idea of a North American community was rejected due to the economic disparities between Mexico and the United States and the nationalistic approach of the Mexican foreign policy. In the 1970s, the US government put forward the idea of a North America Common Market; but the Mexican government and the society discarded the proposal since Mexico was embarked in an import-substitution model and was not interested in an open market. However, the idea toward an economic integration with the United States was shaped after the financial crisis at the beginning of the 1980s. Then, the Mexican government was willing to open up foreign trade to reduce the effects of the crisis and promote economic development. The Carlos Salinas administration (1988-1994) then accepted the idea of economic integration with North America and signed NAFTA in 1992. As can be seen, Mexico was willing to create a North American community but only in trade and financial terms. The idea of a North American community in security matters was not considered due to the nationalistic approach of Mexican foreign policy and the Mexican governments distrust towards US authorities.<sup>1</sup> In the economic sphere, some authors have proposed the development of a North American Common Market that can include free movement of people, goods,

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<sup>1</sup> In Mexico, both government and society distrust U.S. authorities because they consider that, in some occasions, Washington has meddled in Mexico's domestic affairs in security matters.

investments and services (Flores and Novelo, 2010), but ideas of a security community in the region are unusual.

When President Vicente Fox came to power in 2000, he was willing to deepen the North America integration process to include free movement of people and the creation of development funds, as it has been done in the European Union. But security was not included in the package. The Fox administration also put forward an immigration agreement between Mexico and the US to regulate the legal status of Mexican migrants. This proposal was known as the NAFTA-plus. However, the idea did not reverberate in the United States and Canada. After the 9-11 attacks, Vicente Fox was disposed to cooperate with the United States in its war against international terrorism. But he did not support President Bush in his initiative to launch a United Nations (UN) attack to Iraq in 2003. By that time, Mexico was part of the UN Security Council, and was not willing to vote in favor of the attack due to the Mexican foreign policy tenets (Non Intervention and Peaceful Resolution on International Controversies) and because the mid-term federal elections were too close. Vicente Fox and his rightist party would have lost votes if he backed up the US intervention in Iraq. This position brought resentment in the Bush administration against Mexico and hampered the possibilities of the construction of a security community after 9-11. However, the bilateral differences were resolved in 2005 when Mexico, the United States and Canada signed the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) to guarantee security cooperation in North America. But the SPP failed due to the lack of interests and incentives when new administrations came into power in Mexico and the United States. President Barack Obama did not show too much interest in the SPP and President Felipe Calderon did not have among his priorities the creation of a security community in North America. Calderon's interests focused on the war against drug trafficking and organized crime and he preferred a bilateral approach through the Merida Initiative, which is a mechanism between Mexico and the United States to cooperate in those issues. Therefore, the idea of a trilateral security community has not been well developed in Mexico in the last years.

In Canada, the debate on the future of North America was triggered by the *Big Idea*, which was proposed by Wendy Dobson (2002). She argues that Canada and Mexico should facilitate U.S security goals, and in return the United States should commit to maintaining open borders even in the aftermath of an attack. Specifically, she recommends the consideration of a "strategic

bargain," a "pragmatic mix of customs-union-like and common market-like proposals plus Canadian initiatives" in areas of strength that are of particular interests for Americans. In the case of the U.S.-Canadian security relationship, Dobson proposed the following: a) investing in the border in order to have a more secure border with fewer obstacles; b) mutual recognition of the security of immigration from third countries; c) energy as part of bilateral security; and d) more active role for Canada on bilateral military defense. Likewise, she suggests Canadians should proceed bilaterally but be open to including Mexico when it makes sense. Contrary to Dobson, Charles Barnett and Hugh Williams (2003) rejected the *Big Idea* approach. They suggest that engaging in high-profile bilateral negotiations may well be a disadvantage for the weaker state, Canada. They urge bilateral process where the issues are addressed in an incremental and pragmatic manner. In this regard, they summarize their approach by focusing on the following areas: a) expanding successful approaches, such as the Smart Border Declaration; b) encouraging security cooperation; c) working towards a common external tariff; and d) identifying mutual interest in international trade negotiations. Along the same lines, in 2003 the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (CCCE) presented a strategy for advancing the Canadian-United States relationship. This strategy, entitled "Security and Prosperity: The Dynamics of a New Canada-United States Partnership in North America" or "Treaty of North America," is based on five interlocking pillars: reinventing the border; maximizing economic efficiencies; building on resource security; sharing in continental and global security; and developing new institutions for managing the bilateral relationship (d'Aquino 2003).

Contrary to minimalist approaches to integration in North America, in a very comprehensive proposal, Robert Pastor (2001) presents the North American Community. Considering the pros and cons of European integration, the North American Community would emphasize institutional development at the regional level as well as the creation of compensatory mechanisms to reduce the gap between Mexico and its two NAFTA partners. In this regard, three institutions could be created. Unlike the European Commission, a North American Commission should be "lean and advisory, made up of just 15 distinguished individuals, five from each country." Likewise, a single North American Inter-Parliamentary Group would merge the bilateral inter-parliamentary groups with a problem solving approach. The third institution would be a Permanent Court on Trade and Investment, which would "permit the accumulation of precedent." Along with

these institutions, a North American Customs Union and a North American Customs and Immigration Force would contribute to enhance trade exchanges and security. Perhaps one of the most important features of this proposal is the North American Investment Fund that would invest \$200 billion in infrastructure over the next decade on the condition that Mexico increases its tax revenues from 11 to 16 percent of its GDP.

## B) Perceptions of Threats

Perceptions of threats are one of the main variables that form security policies. The information available from the public opinion surveys of the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations from 2004 to 2010 indicates that two threats have been permanently ranked among the five top places within the United States: international terrorism and the possibility of unfriendly countries becoming nuclear powers. The US dependence on foreign oil/disruption of energy supply was ranked among the top five priorities in 2006, 2008 and 2010, while violent Islamist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan was salient in 2008 and 2010 and Iran's nuclear program was included as the third threat in 2010.

While the main perceptions of threats in the United States stem from global sources and hence reflect the global role of the United States, two critical threats related to the North American region and more precisely to Mexico have also been included in the survey: drug-related violence and instability in Mexico was ranked eleventh in 2010 and large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the US was ranked fifth in 2004, fourth in 2006 and sixth in 2008.

In the case of Mexico, according to the "Mexico, the Americas, and the World 2010" survey, the main threats for national security are drug-trafficking and organized crime, which ranked as the number 1 threat in 2010, with 82% of respondents identifying them as a 'grave threat' (Gonzalez, 2011, p. 59). This perception has been consistent over the four editions of the survey (2004, 2006, 2008, and 2010): In 2004, 'Drug Trafficking' was ranked as the number 1 threat (89%); in 2006, 'Drug Trafficking' was once again ranked number 1 (93%); in 2008, 'Drug-trafficking and organized crime' was ranked number 1 (79%). Therefore, Mexicans perceive domestic issues as the greatest threats rather than global problems. Thus, Mexicans are more concerned over issues that affect daily life. As for global menaces, Mexicans rank weapons trafficking (76% - rank 5 in 2010), nuclear weapons (72% - rank 8 in 2010) and international

terrorism (72% - rank 8 in 2010) as an intermediate threat. In a regional context, Mexicans are less worried about border conflicts (rank 11 in 2010), territorial disputes (rank 11 in 2010), and instability in neighboring countries (rank 12 in 2010).

In the case of Canada, five issues have been the most important during the period 1993-2010. In 2010 the ranking was the following: environment (16%); starvation (16%); war (14%); economy (14%); and terrorism (6%). (Environics Institute 2010). According to the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, public perceptions have changed greatly regarding threats to the vital interests of Canada. "Climate change now dominates the agenda, while terrorism and potential epidemics have almost disappeared from Canadians' radar screen" (Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2010). Roughly 50% of Canadians deem that climate change is a critical threat to the vital interests of the country in the next 10 years (49% in 2010 vs. 52% in 2004). Therefore, climate change has become the most important threat in the views of Canadians. On the other hand, almost a quarter of Canadian public (28% in 2010 vs. 49% in 2004) now consider international terrorism as a vital threat, which represents a figure below the one registered in 2004. In the case of migration, the concern over the number of immigrants and refugees has grown since 2004 (27% in 2010 vs. 21% in 2004).

As it can be observed, there is a significant difference in perceptions among the three countries in North America: Mexicans perceived organized crime as the main threat, the United States reflects its threats as result of their global role, while Canadians are focused on more soft security issues, such as climate change. This difference in perceptions makes it more difficult to construct a security community in the North American region. The United States government and society are more interested in international terrorism and global threats. Therefore, they would push for deeper security schemes in the region. Mexico and Canada would resist creating a security community based exclusively in global "hard" security issues and would press to include "soft" and local security issues, such as organized crime and climate change. A trilateral negotiation among the three countries would be highly difficult and to reach a consensus on security issues in the region would be equally complicated.

## **Principles of action**

The perceptions of security priorities in the three countries correspond to the principles enacted in the guiding documents on security. In the case of the United States, the evaluation of the US strategies towards Mexico and Canada entail two distinct approaches. The 2010 *National Security Strategy* identifies weapons of mass destruction and far-reaching networks of hatred and violence, and hence terrorism, as the main threats for the United States. While the NSC identifies North America as a region and advocates to "change the way we think about our shared borders, in order to secure and expedite the lawful and legitimate flow of people and goods while interdicting transnational threat that threaten our open societies" (47), the document continues and differentiates the approach of security to both neighboring countries: "With Canada, our security cooperation includes our defense of North America and our efforts through NATO overseas... With Mexico, in addition to trade cooperation, we are working together to identify and interdict threats at the earliest opportunity, even before they reach North America. Stability and security in Mexico are indispensable to building a strong economic partnership, fighting the illicit drug and arms trade, and promoting sound immigration policy" (White House 2010, 47).

Another fundamental document that enshrines the differentiation of Mexico and Canada in the perspective of the United States is the 2011 *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: Addressing Converging Threats to National Security*. While there are no specific references to North America, Canada is mentioned within the actions of sharing of criminal intelligence and enhanced cooperation with groups such as the "Quintet of Attorneys-General" and the "Strategic Alliance Group" established with the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. However, the approach to Mexico is quite different. First and foremost, the document underscores the historic campaign of the Mexican Government against transnational crime organizations. Later, the Strategy acknowledges that indeed the demand for illicit drugs, both in the United States and abroad, fuels the power, impunity, and violence of criminal organizations around the globe and that Mexican DTOs are escalating their violence to consolidate their market share within the Western Hemisphere, protect their operations in Mexico, and expand their reach into the United States. It also describes the links between criminal networks and illicit arms dealers and the fact that the US Federal law enforcement



agencies have intercepted large numbers of weapons or related items being smuggled to China, Russia, Mexico, the Philippines, Somalia, Turkmenistan, and Yemen in 2010 alone. Finally, the document states that TOC in Mexico makes the U.S. border more vulnerable because it creates and maintains illicit corridors for border crossings that can be employed by other secondary criminal or terrorist actors or organizations.

In a review of the Mexican national security strategies, there are two important official documents: The *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan [NDP]) and the *Programa Nacional de Seguridad Pública 2008-2012* (National Program of Public Security 2008-2012 [NPPS]). In this case, the government strategy also corresponds to the perception of the Mexican public opinion. That is, Mexican authorities focuses on domestic issues rather than regional or global matters. Both the NDP and the NPPS have a nationalistic perspective. For example, the NPPS does not even mention the region of North America, nor the United States or Canada. According to this document, Mexico's national security policy is based on the following goals: to prevent criminal activities, to openly combat crime, to consolidate the rule of law, to improve technology to fight against organized crime, to professionalize police corporations, and to reform the institutions in charge in combating crime. The NDP emphasizes the same goals, but it includes international cooperation in the security policy. The document establishes that the Mexican government has to promote international cooperation to face organized crime, but this has to be carried out under the principles of "defense of sovereignty, territorial integrity and legal equality of States." The NDP neither refers to North America as a region, nor does it establish particular strategies towards Canada or the United States. Therefore, the NDP does not consider Mexico as part of the North American region. It only mentions the northern neighbor when setting goals and strategies on border matters, particularly in the exchange of information for border security. As can be seen, Mexico's policy against potential threats is based on a local vision and does not emphasize regional cooperation.

In the case of Canada, a report titled *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy* was released in 2004 and served as the "first-ever policy of its kind" (Public Safety Canada 2011) to outline Canada's core national security interests and design a plan to face the security threats deemed most serious. The report was reassessed in 2005 through the publishing of *Securing an Open Society: One Year Later*, where

the government of Canada reinforced the notion that the country's security policy revolves around three core interests: protecting Canada and the safety and security of Canadians; ensuring Canada is not a base for threats to its allies; and contributing to international security (Privy Council Office 2004).

The report, which enshrines Canada's National Security Policy, has focused on six key areas: intelligence, emergency planning, public health emergencies, transportation security, border security and international security. While the first four of these priorities are of a mostly domestic nature, border security and international security are priorities that relate to Canada's role in the regional and international arena. With regards to border security, the Canadian government highlights the importance of Canada-US border programs, such as the Smart Border Declaration and the Free and Secure Trade program (FAST). The report expresses the country's interest in developing a next-generation borders agenda with both Mexico and the US, building on the success of the Smart Border Declaration. Conversely, Canada shies away from its regional neighbors in the international security arena, where it highlights its participation in the UN and NATO. Regarding international security, the highest priority is placed on three key points: international terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and failed and failing states and intra- and interstate conflict. In its 2005 update report, Canada named as one of its priorities the revitalization of its North American partnership with Mexico and the United States "by enhancing security and promoting prosperity" (Privy Council Office 2005, 48). It set out to work together to establish "a common approach to security to protect North America from external threats, prevent and respond to threats within North America, and further streamline the secure and efficient movement of legitimate, low-risk traffic across our shared borders" (49).

## **Policies**

Perceptions and principles aim to be transformed into policies that influence the behavior of the actors. The security policies of cooperation have been focused on two main areas: military and border policies.

A) United States-Canada

Security military cooperation between the United States and Canada can be traced back to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in 1957, which is located in Colorado Springs. The NORAD commander is chosen by and is responsible to the Canadian Prime Minister and the US President. As a result of the 9-11 attacks, NORAD was incorporated in the US Northern Command (NORTHCOM) mission to dissuade, prevent and confront threats directed to the United States. The cooperation between NORAD and NORTHCOM has in fact provided the incentives for closer military cooperation between both countries to protect not only the air, but also the coastal and territorial space (Hristoulas 2010). Canada also deployed military presence in Afghanistan alongside the US and other NATO troops.

With regard to border cooperation, after the 9/11 events, the United States and Canada negotiated a formula to maintain the intensive trade exchange and also to protect the border. On 12 December 2001, both countries signed the 32-point Smart Border Declaration. The cooperation has evolved in a more constructive way and both countries created the Integrated Border Enforcement Team (IBET), which consists of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency, the US Border Patrol, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the US Coast Guard. As of February 2012, there were 24 IBET units that play a critical role in maintaining the integrity and security of bilateral borders by assisting in national security investigations and combating organized crime and other criminal activity. On several occasions, the RCMP and the US Coast Guard have collaborated on a special marine security project known as "Shiprider," targeting cross-border criminal activity on our shared waters. The Shiprider pilots were a tremendous success and negotiations are underway to create a permanent Shiprider program (RCMP 2010)

B) United States-Mexico

In the case of military cooperation between Mexico and the United States, the former has been quite reluctant to cooperate in order to preserve national sovereignty. The Merida Initiative (MI) was a turning point, because for the first time the US provided military and police assistance to Mexico. The MI represents a symbolic mechanism in U.S. -Mexican cooperation against criminal organizations. In qualitative terms, MI implies a change of perception in the bilateral relationship. On one

hand, the US government acknowledges that the US has a co-responsibility in the violence that has spurred in Mexico due to the high levels of drug consumption in the United States. On the other hand, Mexican government also recognizes that the country needs the help of its northern neighbor to fight against organized crime. Thirty years ago, it would be difficult for the Mexican government to resort to US help in security matters. In quantitative terms, MI does not represent a significant amount of cash since the U.S. government only compromises 1.2 billion dollars for three years (2007-2010). This amount is low compared to Mexican needs. However, the MI is an important advancement in terms of bilateral cooperation, but not in a regional perspective since Canada is not included.

Despite the progress made by the MI, some US authorities do not trust Mexican peers due to the high levels of corruption in Mexican police institutions. The distrust has triggered two realities. First of all, it is very difficult to construct a regional security community when there is this level of distrust. Secondly, the US government has also implemented cautious and unilateral policies towards Mexico in security matters. For example, the US government carried out unilateral operations such as "Casa Blanca" in 1998 and recently "Fast and Furious." The latter was a covert operation to identify Mexican bank authorities that were involved in the laundering of money coming from drug cartels. The US government imprisoned several Mexicans and the Mexican government protested, arguing that the sovereignty had been violated because the US authorities did not inform Mexico about the operation. Casa Blanca also brought distrust of Mexican officials to cooperate with the United States in security matters. "Fast and Furious" was also a covert operation in which U.S. authorities smuggled weapons into Mexican territory to identify organizations that were selling arms illegally. Again, the US did not inform Mexico about the operation and there was protest for the unilateral actions.

In the case of border cooperation between the US and Mexico, on 22 March 2002 both countries signed the Border Partnership. In 2006, amidst rising crime on the Southwest border, ICE and CBP worked with other Federal, State, local, and foreign partners to establish the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST), designed to attack TOC networks that exploit our borders and threaten the American public. Since then, this initiative has grown to 21 BESTs arrayed along the Southwest and Northern borders as well as at major seaports. These BESTs have seized more than 36,000 pounds of cocaine, 550 pounds of heroin,

485,000 pounds of marijuana, 4,300 weapons, \$68 million, and led to the arrests of 5,910 individuals. The U.S.-Mexico 21st Century Border Action Plan agreements on law enforcement cooperation still seek to finalize it.

### C) Mexico-Canada

A number of authors have argued that there is not a trilateral relationship in terms of security matters in North America (Gabriel and Macdonald, 2007, Andreas 2003, Hristoulas, and Roussel 2007, Clarkson, 2007). They argue that there are two bilateral relationships: Canada and the United States and the United States and Mexico. In both cases, Washington exerts pressure over Mexico and Canada so its security interests prevail in both bilateral relationships. Therefore, it is difficult to construct a real regional security community due to the two bilateral relationships.

Indeed, there are few bilateral actions between Mexico and Canada in security issues. Before NAFTA was implemented, security relations between Mexico and Canada were marginal. There were some differences due to the nationalistic views of each country (Benitez and Hristoulas 2012). However, after NAFTA, Canada and Mexico were open to widening their ties in several issues, including security. After the 9-11 events, both countries were willing to cooperate with the United States in its efforts against international terrorism. However, Mexico and Canada opposed to backing up the United States in 2003 in the United Nations when Washington was trying to form an international coalition to attack Iraq. Both Mexico and Canada projected national foreign policies in this topic. The reluctance of Mexico and Canada in the United Nations is also a sign that nationalistic views impede the construction of a security community in North America.

After 9-11 and in the light of the violence in Mexico, Canada and Mexico have established some forms of cooperation in the fight against crime organization. For Canada, the violence derived from drug trafficking and the supply of drugs represent a threat for national security. Therefore, Canada has implemented with Mexico programs to exchange information in this topic and to train police forces (Morden, 2012). However, Canada implemented in 2009 a visa program for Mexicans who travel to Canada. The measure hurt the bilateral relationship and obstructed widened security cooperation between Mexico and Canada. This nationalistic vision of Canada has also impeded a

deeper integration for a trilateral security community in North America.

#### D) Trilateral

At the trilateral level, the three countries signed the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) in 2005. However, by early 2012, there was a consensus that the SPP failed to deliver specific policies due to the lack of interests and incentives to develop a broader scheme (Hristoulas 2010). While the SPP developed working groups in the area of prosperity, the area of security was practically absent. There was also strong criticism in the three countries against the SPP. In Canada, the right wing New Democrats party censured openly the SPP since they considered it as a liberal initiative that attacked Canada's sovereignty. They claimed that it was their victory when, in August 2009, the SPP website was updated to say: "The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) is no longer an active initiative." (NDP, 2009). In the US, there is also a conservative movement that opposed further integration with Mexico at all levels. For example, they deem that illegal migrants represent a threat to US national security. Therefore, they would oppose to a deeper integration that includes the free movement of people in the region. In Mexico, there are also nationalistic and leftist groups that are against a broader integration with the United States because they consider the US to be violating Mexico's sovereignty regarding security issues.

The change in the presidential administrations in the United States and in Mexico was also a factor that explains the failure of SPP. When Barack Obama came into power, there was little interest in Washington to deepen SPP. Due to the economic crisis that stemmed in the US, Obama focused his attention in the domestic economy and a deeper integration with Mexico and Canada was put on the back burner. In Mexico, there was also a change of presidential administration. President Felipe Calderon put little interest in the partnership as well. At the beginning of his government, he was very cautious towards the United States. For example, he "de-migrated" the bilateral agenda since previously, Fox had emphasized the migrant agreement. Besides, Calderon did not travel officially to the US in his first year of administration (Fox had several meetings with Bush in his first year) and canceled the Binational Commission, a high level cabinet mechanism to address key issues in the bilateral agenda. Based on Calderon's suggestion, Washington changed the US Ambassador to Mexico in 2011, arguing that he did not trust the

one in charge. These actions reflect some kind of anti-US feeling from President Calderon; but he also projected a pragmatic view towards the US. Calderon was more interested in the Merida Initiative because it would provide funds to his number one priority; the war against organized crime. Calderon's personal perceptions towards the US also buried SPP.

The failure of SPP is an example of the difficulty in creating a trilateral security community in North America. As can be seen, there are not enough incentives in the three countries to develop a deeper integration in the region in security matters. There are more obstacles to reach this goal, such as opposition in conservative and nationalistic sectors and mutual distrust, particularly between Mexico and the United States.

### **Conclusion**

Due to different ideas, perceptions, principles of actions, and policy in the three countries, a security community in North America is difficult to construct. Up to now, we can say that there are two security communities in the region: Canada-United States and Mexico-United States. The first one has been more developed, but the second one has several obstacles. Conservative standpoints in the US political system and the distrust that the US government has in Mexican institutions that are in charge of security issues will stand as major obstacles for the construction of a broader cooperation scheme between the US and Mexico. On the other hand, a nationalistic Mexican foreign policy stand and the Mexican distrust against the US authorities will also obstruct the creation of a security community in the near future. Therefore, a trilateral system would be very difficult to reach.

It is important that the three countries increase security cooperation since all threats affect the three countries. They need to overcome differences in ideas and perceptions and work more coordinately to address mutual problems. For the sake of the three societies, each government needs to cooperate in a mandatory way. However, in the near future we will not see a well-shaped security community in North America. It is very likely that integration will continue to focus on trade and financial topics, and other topics, such as migration, will not be included in the regional agenda.

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