

## Whatever happened to the North American Security Perimeter?

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Immediately following the 9.11, leaders from Canada, Mexico and the United States began talking about security perimeters, NAFTA +, and the European Union of North America. In early October, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, the then Mexican National Security Advisor said that Mexico was working towards "interdependent security with its NAFTA partners, including more coordinated customs procedures and increased intelligence gathering and sharing". And in early November of 2001, U.S. ambassador to Mexico Jeffery Davidow told the Mexican press that high level binational meetings scheduled for mid-November between Mexican National Security Adviser Aguilar and U.S.

Homeland Security Czar Tom Ridge would focus on ways to create a regional "security bubble" and the possible "harmonization" of customs procedures.<sup>1</sup>

Canada, for its part in 2005 issued a new International Policy Statement (the IPS) which dedicated an entire section to the future role of Canada within the Context of North America. The section, entitled "Revitalizing our North American Partnership" signals a shifting emphasis away from a global approach to foreign policy, to a more regionally based one. To be sure, the section privileges the role of Canada-U.S. relationship. Indeed the document argues that "the bedrock of that

partnership is the Canada-U.S. relationship, built upon more than two centuries of close economic, security and personal ties. Over several generations, Canadians and Americans have intermingled through migration, cross-border work and travel, and the exchange of ideas. Our joint achievements--the world's largest bilateral trading relationship and the world's longest unmilitarized border--are the envy of the world.”<sup>ii</sup>

What was interesting about the document however was the fact that Mexico was mentioned no less than 12 times. Canadian foreign policy seemed to shift shift towards closer cooperation with not only the United States, but with Mexico as well. To quote: “to ensure continued prosperity and security, Canada needs a more expansive partnership with both the United States and Mexico that continues to reflect the unique circumstances of our continent.”<sup>iii</sup> More notably, the IPS stated that “Canada will engage more actively with Mexico, bilaterally and trilaterally, to ensure that the North American Partnership is truly continental in character.”<sup>iv</sup> Finally, the document emphasized that that there must be increase collaboration with both the United States *and* Mexico to protect North American territory and citizens from 21<sup>st</sup> century threats.

Finally, US policy policymakers spoke of the need to improve cooperation with both Canada and Mexico. George Bush argued that prosperity and security go hand-in-hand. And that "we've got a lot of trade with each other and we intend to keep it that way. We've got a lot of crossings of the borders and intend to make our borders more secure and facilitate legal traffic. We've got a lot to do, so we charged our ministers with the task of figuring out how best to keep these relationships vibrant and strong”. Condolleza Rice, speaking as

National Security advisor stated that “thanks to increasing and increased cooperation after September 11th between our Homeland Security Secretary, our efforts to have smart borders, to engage technology and better cooperation, I think we're making progress. But the terrorists are going to keep trying. They're going to keep trying in our southern border. They're going to keep trying in our northern border. And it's just the acknowledgement that we need to make certain that we keep working on this issue.

The apex of this trilateralization frenzy was the signing of the Security and Prosperity Agreement in 2005 in Waco Texas. The leaders declared their desire to “... develop new avenues of cooperation that will make our open societies safer and more secure, our businesses more competitive, and our economies more resilient.” The calls for enhanced cooperation came not only from government circles, but from the private sector as well. For example, The U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations, and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives released a joint report at the time of the signing of the SPP arguing that “the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States should articulate as their long-range goal a common security perimeter for North America,” the report says. “The three governments should strive toward a situation in which a terrorist trying to penetrate our borders will have an equally hard time doing so no matter which country he elects to enter first.

The terrorist attacks would serve as the event that triggered this move towards a more unified North America, but the end result would be three countries bound together not only be economic necessity, but also by a desire to coordinate security,

political and maybe even social policy. Talk of a “Security Perimeter” was abuzz.

The three economic partners signed two Smart Border agreements in 2001 and 2002 (a 32 point plan between Canada and the United States, and a 22 point plan between Mexico and the United States) designed to protect the common borders against perceived threats (namely terrorism) and at the same time to make travel for commerce and people more efficient. Then they agreed in 2005 to establish the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) which would serve as the first step towards North American deep integration.

Yet in 2010, the North American agenda has changed. The SPP has failed and nobody talks about deep integration any more. The “security perimeter” has become taboo language, at least in the case of Canada and Mexico. Finally, the threat of another terrorist attack no longer unites the economic partners. What happened?

This paper seeks to examine the evolution of North American “deep integration” - specifically trilateral security cooperation – over the last decade. It tries to explain the failure in the ability of the three partners to move beyond simply a trade agreement, when most observers expected the 9.11 attacks to be North America’s coal and steel union. First, the paper will examine the two cooperative security projects that emerged after the terrorist attacks: namely the smart border agreements of 2001 and 2002 and the SPP. Here the paper explains why security cooperation failed from a trilateral perspective. Next the paper looks at the foreign and domestic policies of the three countries and explains why North American security integration failed nationally. The paper concludes by outlining what the future might hold.

## **What is Deep Integration?**

Before proceeding on to the discussion, a quick review of what deep integration or the “security perimeter” seems warranted. The post 9/11 continental security discussions are designed to achieve two interrelated goals. The first of course, is to free the North American continent of terrorists and terrorist organization and to make sure that terrorists hiding in Canada and Mexico are captured and/or not allowed to enter the United States. To achieve this first anti-terrorist objective, a number of proposals have been suggested which include but are not limited to cooperation in information and intelligence gathering; the transfer of technology; the harmonization of immigration policy; jointly manned US-Mexican and US-Canadian border points; as well as the (possible) interoperability of military and public security forces.

The second objective of continental and border security - one that is much more important to Canada and Mexico - is the free flow of legitimate goods and legitimate business and leisure travel. Here policy makers and analysts alike are examining how mechanisms such as pre-clearance fast border lanes and North American travel identity cards can make travel more efficient in a world of ‘just-in-time’ commercial and industrial delivery.

On a more general level, the Conference Board of Canada<sup>v</sup> has argued that North American deep “security” integration can imply some or all of these three elements:

I. The enhancement of border efficiency by exploiting more intelligent methods of processing border examinations. Here, modern technology is used to

electronically or otherwise “pre-seal” a cargo vehicle at its specific point of departure (or at designated non-border pre-clearance locations throughout the continent which would then be easily tracked using transponders and could pass without inspection at specific border crossings). Similarly, people who work across the border and other frequent travelers could receive tamper proof passes that would significantly ease border transit. This most basic form of *continental* security would turn the frontiers between Canada and the United States and Mexico and the United States into “smart” borders.<sup>vi</sup>

II. The second element involves rethinking the way borders are conceived to begin with. Here, Canada, Mexico and the United States law enforcement agencies would work more closely together away from the physical frontiers in order to reduce the need for inspection at the borders themselves. The Conference Board refers to this strategy as moving away from the *Magnot line* of defense mentality, which tends to be static, to a *defense in depth* philosophy, whereby coordination and intelligence exchange would attempt to resolve potential problems before they reach border areas.<sup>vii</sup>

III. A third potential scenario involves the harmonization of immigration and refugee policy, customs clearance, and even national and public security policy in order to remove border inspections altogether. In this *Fortress North America* scenario, Canada and Mexico would forgo their own customs and immigration authorities in favor of some kind of continental authority. “Fortress North America would also include common visa requirements. In other words, both Canada and Mexico would have to adapt their

relevant laws to accommodate US immigration and security requirements.”<sup>viii</sup>

Revealing a bias inherent in this authors thinking, these discussions are very much so in the interests of all three NAFTA countries. The economic benefits for Canada and Mexico are obvious, so much so, that a former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs referred to them as “no-brainers”. Continental and border security will also serve US security interests in that once in place, the US will be able to shift its attention and resources to other parts of the globe. Continental defence thus is a way to keep travel and commerce efficient in the context of heightened security concerns. More importantly however, continental and border security will also deal with perceived security threats emanating from the US’s principle trading partners, Canada and Mexico.

### **The Security and Prosperity Agreement**

The North American Security agenda seemed to be going quite well in March of 2005 when Canada, Mexico and the United States signed the Security and Prosperity Agreement (SPP). At the time, the SPP was to be a trilateral and permanent process designed to enhance cooperation in North America. The agreement was composed of two focus areas. The first, the Prosperity agenda was designed promote economic growth, North American competitiveness, and quality of life. The second “pillar”, the security agenda was to define a common (trilateral) security focus designed to (1) protect North America against common external threats, (2) prevent and respond to threats internal to the region, (3) enhance the efficient transit of goods, services and people across the common borders.

The SPP established a number of working groups which would implement the SPP by consulting with stakeholders, set goals and implement dates and also make reports. Moreover, to facilitate coordination between the three countries, three executive watch-dogs were set up to monitor the progress of the different working groups composed of 9 Ministers/Secretaries. The prosperity working groups were the Manufacture Goods and Sectoral and Regional Competitiveness Working Group, E-Commerce & ICT Working Group, Energy Working Group, Transportation Working Group, Food & Agriculture Working Group, Environment Working Group, Financial Services Working Group, Business Facilitation Working Group, Movement of Goods Working Group, Health, and Immigration. While the security working groups were Traveller Security Working Group, Aviation Security Working Group, Maritime Security Working Group, Law enforcement Working Group, Intelligence Cooperation Working Group, Bio-Protection Working Group, Emergency Management Working Group and Science and Technology Working Group.

Leaders of the three countries met six times over the four year life span of the agreement. Ambitious in design, the SPP was referred to as NAFTA +, NAFTA armoured, deep integration, and even the European Union of North America (cite missing). Yet in retrospect not much was accomplished and by August of 2009, the project was officially terminated. Unceremoniously, the SPP website was updated to say: "The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) is no longer an active initiative. There will not be any updates to this site."

The reason for its demise is not clear, and no official statement has been released

by any government. But most observers agree that the central reason for the death of the SPP was a change in government in Washington (it was, after all, a George Bush initiative) and a desire on the part of all three countries to shift the focus of North American integration away from terrorism. Yet it is important to note that other than the continuation of the yearly meeting between the three leaders, little discussion as to what will replace the SPP has taken place.

### **Canada and North America**

To be fair, Canadian decision makers were, from the get go, apprehensive about the idea of a security perimeter. One official explanation for this reticence had to do with Canadian sovereignty. The Chrétien administration began to argue that a common continental defence would adversely affect the right of self-determination of Canadians and their elected officials. The former Canadian Prime Minister Chrétien remained opposed to doing anything in a dramatic way. In declaratory fashion, Chrétien was reluctant to acknowledge that anything about the relationship was in the process of changing arguing "we have an excellent relationship with [the U.S.] at this time. There are very few problems."<sup>ix</sup> In operational terms, any notion of a grand vision in terms of re-thinking the relationship was played down. The focus was on ways the two countries could work more closely together to loosen cross-border controls, such as by streamlining and modernizing Canadian and U.S. customs procedures, and routine forms of trade facilitation. In institutional terms, the management of the Canadian-U.S. relationship was left to an ad hoc and open-ended process.

Further, any notion of a North American security perimeter was rejected in favour of a series of incremental and piecemeal measures with the focus on the more efficient management of the Canada-U.S. border. This does not suggest that the perimeter concept failed to find converts. In addition to the push by many voices in the U.S. (including the American ambassador to Canada, Paul Celucci), and other select U.S. policy makers, the logic of the perimeter had been pushed most vigorously in Canada not by the defence establishment but by prominent members of the economic elite most notably by Thomas d'Aquino, the head of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, Perrin Beatty (the President and CEO of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters), Paul Tellier (CEO of Canadian National Railway) and representatives of the Truckers' Association.<sup>x</sup>

Any explicit endorsement of the phrase security perimeter was rejected by key elements of the Liberal government. One problem is that by its tone the concept of a perimeter in the North American context privileges security over economic/commercial matters since it goes hand-in-hand with the reconfiguration in American thinking of homeland security, missile defence and the revamping of NORAD and the Northern Command. As such it conditions (and legitimizes) a shift in perception – in conceptual terms – that sees the Canada-U.S. relationship deepening through a realist self help model rather than through the vantage point of complex interdependence.

A second problem had to do with the extent or scope of the perimeter. Even the question of where the perimeter starts or ends around North America was contested, containing as it does land, sea and air components together with an exclusive

economic zone. A third concerns the image of Canadian foreign policy emanating from this change in focus. Any privileging of the perimeter concept necessitates a clear (and decisive) choice for Canada as to whether the country is either in or out – not only in terms of some forms of domestic harmonization but also in terms of Canada's role/status in the world. To concentrate on a perimeter sends out a signal depicting an "us and them" view of the world. Even if it is a workable project does Canada want to be seen as being increasingly locked in geographically to a "North American" bloc or even fortress?

Thus, Canada attempted to stick to the status quo. Unenthusiastic about explicit or implicit modes of trilateralism, Canada preferred to deal with the U.S. strictly on a one-to-one basis. By design, therefore, it chose to differentiate itself (both in terms of issues and solutions) from Mexico. While this stance could be justified on technical grounds (the two-speed approach), it also underscored important symbolic/political factors, which depicted Mexico not so much as partner but as a complicating ingredient in the neighbourhood.

Indeed, as of the writing of this paper, Canada still does not really have a trilateral North American Security agenda. Indeed, as far as North America is concerned, the agenda now looks more to the North to the Arctic than south to the shared border with the United States (even less so with Mexico).

### **Mexico and North America**

Mexico took steps to politically demonstrate its solidarity with the United States following the terrorist attacks. For example, in October of 2001, Fox stated that Mexico "considers the struggle against

terrorism to be part of the commitment of Mexico with Canada and the United States to build within the framework of the North American free trade agreement a shared space of development, well being and integral security.”<sup>xi</sup> Later that year, Jorge Castañeda, the then foreign minister, said “Mexico would favour a continental approach to border security issues, extending a North American partnership that already operates at a trade level.”<sup>xii</sup> In the same speech, Castañeda signalled that the Mexican government would prefer to take perimeter security “as far as possible, but that depends on the Canadians and the Americans.”<sup>xiii</sup>

The Mexican government saw continental and border security as offering multiple opportunities in the areas of trade, security, migration and even social development. Similar to Canadian concerns, Mexico worried that enhanced security at the border would hurt free and open trade between the United States and Mexico. However, although open and free trade was Mexico’s immediate concern in enhancing security cooperation, a possible migration deal designed to regulate rather than criminalize was not far from the minds of Mexican decision makers at the time. The hope on the part of Mexican decision makers was that by giving the Americans what they want in security terms there would be positive spill-over effects in other areas of concern to Mexico.

However, Mexico soon found itself incapable of keeping up with the changes occurring in North America as a result of the terrorist attacks. cannot keep up, either politically or operationally with the changes accruing in North America. Taking the twin border agreements signed late 2001 between Canada and the United States and early 2002 between Mexico and the United States as an

example, first and foremost, it goes without saying that the Canada-U.S. version is much more comprehensive in nature. Those areas of the Canada-US border agreement which focus on harmonization and cooperation - such as pre-clearance, joint training and exercises, integrated intelligence, and The Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETS)<sup>xiv</sup> - simply do not appear in the Mexican-US version of the agreement.

A further three interrelated factors combined to limit the ability of Mexico to fulfill the promises made by President Fox immediately after 9.11. The first obstacle is the *capacity* of the Mexican government to respond to the perceived threat. Beyond the fact that Mexico is a developing nation and by definition has less capacity than its other two North American partners, the US driven criminalization of certain transactions (narcotics and labor markets) has radically altered the nature of corruption in Mexico and has also magnified the size of this problem, weakening in turn the institutional capacity of the state. The criminalization of these transactions rests at the heart of the problem of corruption and ultimately explains the difficulties recurrently faced in US-Mexico efforts at law enforcement cooperation.

Corruption in Mexico is now and fundamentally driven by the drug trade, and the drug trade is in turn propelled by a widely promoted and enforced US policy: that of conceptualizing the drug trade a threat to US national security. This has essentially externalized and placed the burden of the drug trade on other states such as Mexico and Colombia, when in fact, it should also be viewed as an internal public health consumption problem. Moreover, the price of drugs has increased dramatically because of this externalization policy which in turn has made it a highly profitable

endeavour for those willing to participate in the illicit market, further contributing to the corruption problem. Indeed, it is estimated that at least 250 thousand Mexicans are involved in the drug trade with profits approaching 5 billion dollars annually.<sup>xv</sup>

Second, the last six years of President Fox's administration were characterized by intense political infighting between different ministries. In other words, intense interagency competition existed at the crucial moment when Mexico was deciding how it would pursue North American security cooperation. Combined with the fact that the Mexican Congress was (and still is) deeply divided, led to a situation where the country's leaders simply could make any decisions of a substantial manner. The implications of this problem were fairly obvious: much of the decision-making structure of the state was heavily permeated by this personal and institutional competition. For all intents and purposes, it would not be inaccurate to state that this fragmentation has led to a situation where President Fox essentially muddled through his presidency.

A classic example of this muddling through is the case of Mexico's National Security strategy after the 2000 general election. When President Fox came into office, he tried to formalize the national security agenda of the country. He did this by creating the nation's first National Security Presidential Advisor. The move signalled an attempt to develop a coherent national security doctrine that rationalizes the different agencies that are in charge of intelligence: which at last count include the Center for Intelligence and National Security (CISEN), Naval Intelligence, Army Intelligence, The Attorney's General's office (PGR), The Federal Preventative Police (PFP) and finally, the Federal Investigative Agency (AFI).

The president's policy failed because the National Security advisor chosen, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser was extremely unpopular with the above agencies (he had previously been a Senator from a left leaning party). Indeed, Zinser's access to the intelligence community was purposely limited not only by CISEN (who didn't want him there because they saw him as a direct threat) but also by other intelligence agencies. Ultimately, The National Security Adviser left for a diplomatic post in New York and more significantly, the President decided that no replacement was needed. In an ironic yet telling decision, Fox decided to formally name himself his own national security advisor. This decision was telling because Fox did not wish to appoint another individual that might create further problems. Thus, political infighting between the above noted agencies as well as Fox's disinterest in the subject essentially doomed real restructuring of national security doctrine and intelligence services. The net effect of the national security advisor fiasco was that no clear mandate for Mexico's intelligence agencies was created.

If Mexican officials have a hard time dealing with one another, the situation along the Northern border is even worse. Few, if any mechanisms for cooperation and communication exist between the authorities of both countries: both Mexican and U.S. official have deeply entrenched trust issues. Little communication and information sharing exists between the two sides. "U.S. law enforcement officials often find themselves in frustrating situations, unable to deal with the inefficiency that often characterizes Mexican officials, while Mexican authorities are overly sensitive to U.S. unilateralism, and lack the technical expertise to foment the kinds of cooperative mechanisms that exist along the Canada-U.S. border. The end effect is that no "security confidence" exists along the U.S.-



Mexican border, and as argued by David Shirk “bi-national cooperation is typically focused on reducing cross border interagency irritants and misunderstandings rather than on coordinated operations, and while occasionally stronger at the local level of inter-agency cooperation – tends to vary from place to place and time to time.”<sup>xvi</sup>

The final obstacle is the use of nationalism and sovereignty by Mexican political actors in order to pursue their own personal agendas. The recently signed bilateral Merida Initiative serves as an indicative example. The plan provides for US assistance to Mexico to fight drug cartels. “While President Felipe Calderon’s government has pursued US assistance, opposition politicians have argued the aid package would violate Mexico’s sovereignty and polls show most Mexicans oppose the help. Calderon’s political opponents have railed against the aid package, many to make political hay”<sup>xvii</sup>

The final nail in the coffin for Mexico’s plan for a trilateral North American security arrangement was the failure to obtain a migration deal from the United States. This long sought objective probably died as early as 2001, even before the 9.11 attacks. Mexico’s president at the time proposed the so-called “whole enchilada”, or a comprehensive expansion of NAFTA to include a social and political agenda that went far beyond the economics of North American cooperation. The plan was viewed as overly ambitious by Washington at the time and probably politically impossible given the mood in congress (Davidow). By 2007 and however, the ambitious plan officially failed when the US Senate decided that there would no longer be any further debate on a comprehensive migration agreement.

More recently, the economic crisis in the United States has all but destroyed any idea that the Obama administration will be able to implement a comprehensive overhaul of immigration policy. Indeed, it seems as though the US position with respect to immigration has hardened under the Obama administration. Obama has increased to border patrol budget from 1.4 billion dollars annually to 1.6 billion dollars. Moreover, Obama has ordered that construction of the so-called “virtual” border be sped up.

### **The United States and North America**

What is noteworthy that even in the case of the United States foreign policy priorities have changed. Although North America remains important, other concerns have come to the forefront: No longer is the US administration pushing for a coherent North American security agenda. It was primarily the fault of the US that the SPP failed. Barack Obama saw the process as heavily influenced by the policy preferences of the previous Bush administration, and the democrat wanted an abrupt shift in foreign policy orientation. The war against terror would remain a priority, but the focus of that campaign would be in Afghanistan and to a lesser extent, Iraq. Attempting to “repair” the damage done to US international prestige under the Bush administration would also become a central foreign policy objective. North America and the Western Hemisphere would have to wait under a new Barack Obama administration.

Not only has there been a shift in US foreign policy orientation away from North America to more global issues, there has been an important shift away from foreign policy in general towards a more inward looking agenda. The reason for the shift away from foreign to domestic policy is

obvious: the economic crisis. Suffering from the worst economic crisis since the great depression, the health of the national economy became a priority for US public opinion and therefore the democratic administration. Once again, this does not mean that terrorism dropped off the public opinion radar, rather, the perception that it should be an immediate policy objective (as was the case between 2001 and 2005) dwindled in the minds of US voters. In fact, recent polls (to cite) suggest that the top priorities for US voters are the Economy, the war in Afghanistan, and Health Care in that order. In sum, it goes without saying that North American “deep integration” is very low in the priorities of the Obama administration.

### **The nature of North American Security cooperation**

Both Canada and Mexico signed border agreements with the United States (Canada in late 2001 and Mexico in early 2002). Both agreements outline bilateral mechanisms with regards to border infrastructure in order to secure the flow of goods and people. The agreements also placed special emphasis on the twin principles of coordination and information sharing as critical components of a secure common border.<sup>xviii</sup> Yet what was noteworthy for a number of observers was the fact that there were two separate agreements – one between Canada and the United States and another between Mexico and the United States – as opposed to one “North American” smart border agreement. The reason for this is Canadian policy-maker reticence to work with Mexico.

It goes without saying that the Canada-U.S. version is much more comprehensive in nature. Those areas of the

Canada-US border agreement which focus on harmonization and cooperation - such as pre-clearance, joint training and exercises, integrated intelligence, and The Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETS)<sup>xix</sup> - simply do not appear in the Mexican-US version of the agreement.

Another, more important reason for Canada’s shift in policy -- at least for the purposes of this paper -- had to do with the prospects of Mexico participating in the Perimeter. Bloc Quebecois Member of parliament Stephane Bergeron recognized this when he argued that what seems to bother the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs about the idea of continental security is that it would involve Mexico. He then went on to highlight that Canada has everything to gain in seeing the discussions go from bilateral to multilateral because Mexico is a partner of Canada within the context of NAFTA. In a quick and somewhat abrupt response, the then foreign minister stated that Canada and Mexico do not share any borders. What Manley was trying to convey at the time was that the issues facing Canada and the United States are essentially the efficient flow of legitimate goods and travelers within the context of heightened US security concerns. On the other hand, the US-Mexican border is far more complex, characterized not only by a high level of trade, but also by the existence of illegal migration, drug trafficking and corruption. The negotiation of a trilateral security mechanism would require much more time and the introduction of a third actor – from a Canadian perspective – would unnecessarily delay the entire process or possibly stall it completely. Moreover, “smart border” technology at the Canada-US border has been in place for a while, predating the terrorist attacks by a number of years. The same is not the case along the Mexican-US border.

Security in North America has been and appears as though it will continue to follow this two track mechanism. Canada and the United States will continue to develop a long standing bilateral security relationship which begins in North America, but extends to other parts of the world such as in Afghanistan. While, simultaneously, Mexico and the United States will finally start to work more closely together on security issues beginning with the Merida Initiative.

There is a long tradition of bilateral cooperation between Canada and the United States in matters of continental security. Beginning with World War II, Canada and the United States worked together to assure the defense of North America. In 1940 for example, Prime Minister King and President Roosevelt signed the Ogdensburg Agreement, which, institutionalized security cooperation in the event of an attack against the North American continent. The most important bilateral defense treaty between the United States and Canada is the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). Created in 1957, the NORAD Center is located in Colorado and is jointly manned by US and Canadian forces. The center provides early warning of missile and air attack. More importantly NORAD defends North American air sovereignty and is also responsible for providing air defense in the event of an attack.

With respect to the Canada-US relationship, first and foremost, the Harper administration has extended Canada's military presence in Afghanistan until at least 2011, overturning the previous Liberal governments promise to bring the troops back home by the beginning of 2007. Canada presently has 2200 troops in Afghanistan, engaged primarily in combat

missions along side U.S. and other NATO troops.

With specific reference to North American, and in light of the North Korean nuclear tests, Harper's government has reopened the national debate on whether or not Canada will participate in the U.S. ballistic missile defence program, once again, something that the previous Liberal governments had rejected as not being in the country's national interest. If the Harper government decides that Canada will participate in missile defence -- and it looks increasingly as though it will -- this will require a renegotiation of the bilateral Canada-U.S. North American Air Defence (NORAD) treaty established in 1958.

NORAD monitors and tracks human made objects in both countries' airspace. It is also tasked with the prevention of attacks on North American targets by airplanes, missiles or space vehicles. The NORAD commander is chosen by and is responsible to both the Canadian Prime Minister as the US President. NORAD is located at the Peterson Air Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The 9.11 attacks produced a structural change in NORAD's organization. The terrorist attacks resulted in NORAD being incorporated in the US Northern Command (NORTHCOM). NORTHCOM's mission is to dissuade, prevent, and confront threats directed against the United States, its territories and interests within its area of responsibility. This includes airspace, land and maritime assets as well as the continental United States, Alaska, Canada, Mexico and waters extending out to 500 nautical miles such as the Gulf of Mexico. Canada's role within NORTHCOM is to assist in the defence of airspace as stipulated in NORAD. It is important to note that

NORTHCOM is not considered a threat to Canadian sovereignty. Indeed, because NORAD is now part of NORTHCOM, most observers agree that any renegotiation of the treaty will eventually result in closer military cooperation between the two countries not only with respect to air, but also coastal and territorial defence. According to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs web site, "...the (Canadian) government will further develop Canada-U.S. cooperation in other areas, involving other departments, including cooperation on maritime security..., and with regard to border issues."

Canada and the United States had also implemented the *Integrated Border Enforcement Team Program* (IBETS) along 23 points along the US-Canadian border. This bi-national program permits 5 security agencies to exchange information and to work together on a daily basis with local, state and provincial authorities. These agencies cooperate on matters such as national security, organized crime and other crimes committed along the Canada-US border. The agencies involved in the IBETS include the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)*, the *Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA)*, *US Customs and Border Protection*, the *US Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement* and the *US Coast Guard*.

Canada has also located four Integrated National Security Enforcement Teams (INSETS) in the urban centers of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Ottawa. The INSETS increase Canada's ability to collect, share and analyse intelligence gathered by different Canadian security agencies. The INSETS include the RCMP, the CBSA, *Citizenship & Immigration Canada (CIC)*, el *Canadian Security*

*Intelligence Service (CSIS)* and other local and provincial authorities.

On the other hand, the history of bilateral security between Mexico and the United States can be characterized as conflictive to say the least. Little communication and information sharing existed between the two sides. U.S. law enforcement officials often found themselves in frustrating situations, unable to deal with the inefficiency and corruption that often characterized Mexican officials, while Mexican authorities were overly sensitive to U.S. unilateralism, and lacked the technical expertise to foment deeper cooperative mechanisms. The end effect was that no "security confidence" existed between Mexican and U.S. authorities and bi-national cooperation was typically focused on reducing irritants and misunderstandings rather than on coordinated operations.<sup>xx</sup>

The Merida Initiative is considered a turning point in bilateral US –Mexico relations. It is the first time the US has provided such a substantial sum of military and police assistance to Mexico (prior to the Merida Initiative, Mexico would receive an average of 30 million dollars in assistance from the US through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement agency) Moreover, the level of cooperation between Mexican and US authorities, specifically in the area of training, is unprecedented. Indeed, more than as assistance package, the Merida Initiative (MI) should be seen as a central element in a broader strategy of growing cooperation between the United States and Mexico to address a shared threat presented by organized crime (cite here). Along similar lines, others have argued that the MI "can serve as an important element in building

confidence and cooperation between the two countries.” (cite here).

The agreement is designed to provide Mexico the sum of 1.4 billion dollars over a three year period beginning in 2008. The initiative provides assistance in equipment, technology, and training for Mexico without a significant U.S. military footprint in the country. 40% of the money will be used to purchase fixed and rotary wing aircraft designed to facilitate interdiction and rapid response. The rest is for inspection equipment.

The package is unique for several reasons. First, it seeks to place the problems of organized crime, drug trafficking, and the violence associated with both in a multi-national context. Unlike past experiences, when countries blamed each other for not doing enough to stop consumption, production or trafficking of illegal drugs, the MI recognizes that each country must share in the responsibility for dealing with the serious public security and public health problems associated with illegal drugs, and the best approach is to deal with these in a cooperative manner.

Second, while there have been instances of cooperation between Mexico and the United States in the past, the MI marks the first time Mexico has asked for US assistance to strengthen its institutional capacity to respond to organized crime. In the past, cooperation between both countries has been largely limited to equipment and training for specialized units of Mexico’s police and military. The MI goes beyond this to include training and administrative help for Mexico’s civilian law enforcement agencies and justice sector.

## **Final Thoughts**

The smart border agreements signed in 2001 and 2002 are indicative of the nature of North American security cooperation. Security relations in North America are likely to continue being disjointed and bilateral in nature.

The North American security “perimeter” seemed to be an option when there was at least a minimal perception of a common security interest – namely, immediately following 9.11. The ten years since the attacks have shown that common perception has dissipated. Some, such as Robert Pastor (and others – find them) have lamented this development, arguing that the three North American partners have lost a golden opportunity to turn NAFTA into something more than a trade agreement.

The findings presented in this paper suggest that there is no inherent reason for the three North American partners to cooperate in a more enhanced manner, particularly in the area of security. As argued, the three countries have very different security concerns. Canada’s security North American security focus does not go south of the Rio Grande, and to a great extent the country’s decision makers are preoccupied with the war in Afghanistan.

Mexico believed that the trilateralization of the war against terror would lead to other benefits, such as North American “deep” integration, but given the failure of that project for reasons discussed above, Mexico has reenergized its bilateral security relationship with the United States within the context of the Merida Initiative process.

Probably the country with the least “North American” focus today is the United States. To the North, it worries about the potential terrorist threat coming from

Canada's generous refugee and immigration laws. To the south, it worries about drugs and illegal immigrants in that order.

When combined there are a multitude of security interests in the region with little potential for overlap. The business of North American security cooperation is therefore, unlikely to evolve beyond the present status quo.

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<sup>i</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/ips/ips-overview4-en.asp>, 10 June, 2006.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>v</sup> "Border choices: Balancing the need for trade and security", in *The Conference Board of Canada*, 2001, pp. 3-5.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/pubs/borderchoices.10.01.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>ix</sup> Quoted in William Wallace, "PM seeks freer trade in Americas," *Toronto Star*, June 30, 1999.

<sup>x</sup> For instant appraisals see for example, Bertrand Marotte, "Tellier calls for debate on closer economic ties," *Globe and Mail*, December 15, 2001. For later perspectives see Perrin Beatty, "Canada in North America; Isolation or Integration?", in Peter Hakim and Robert E. Litan eds., *The Future of North American Integration*. Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 2002: 31-72; Canadian Council of Chief Executives, Security and

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Prosperity: The Dynamics of a new Canada-United States Partnership in North America. Ottawa: January, 2003.

<sup>xi</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>xii</sup> "Mexico would support shift to security perimeter with U.S. and Canada", in *The Canadian Press*, February 2, 2002.  
[www.cp.org/english/hp.htm](http://www.cp.org/english/hp.htm).

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>xiv</sup> According to Royal Canadian Mounted Police web page, [http://www.rcmp.ca/security/ibets\\_e.htm](http://www.rcmp.ca/security/ibets_e.htm), the IBETS program "is a multi-faceted law enforcement initiative comprised of both Canadian and American partners. This bi-national partnership enables the five core law enforcement partners involved in IBETS to share information and work together daily with other local, state and provincial enforcement agencies on issues relating to national security, organized crime and other criminality transiting the Canada/US border between the Ports of Entry (POE)."

<sup>xv</sup> Sergio Aguayo, *El Almanaque de Mexico: 2008*, Aguilar, Mexico D.F. 2008.

<sup>xvi</sup> David Shirk. 2002. *Law Enforcement and Public Security Challenges in the US-Mexican Border Region*.

<sup>xvii</sup> Jeremy Schwartz, "U.S. Plan for Drug War Has Some in Mexico Worried"  
[www.coxwashington.com](http://www.coxwashington.com) Sunday, October 14, 2007.

<sup>xviii</sup> "Security and Opportunity at the U.S.-Canada Border", *White House web site*, June 28, 2002 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020628.html>.

<sup>xix</sup> According to Royal Canadian Mounted Police web page, [http://www.rcmp.ca/security/ibets\\_e.htm](http://www.rcmp.ca/security/ibets_e.htm), the IBETS program "is a multi-faceted law enforcement initiative comprised of both

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<sup>xx</sup> David Shirk. 2002. *Law Enforcement and Public Security Challenges in the US-Mexican Border Region*.