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PERCEPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

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IN U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

The Woodrow Wilson Center
and *Letras Libres*

Edited by Andrew Selee

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Growing Closer, Remaining Apart

Andrew Selee

Perceptions matter for international relations. The perceptions that citizens and political leaders in different countries have of each other play a powerful role in shaping diplomatic relations, the environment for business, and the potential for creative civic collaboration across borders. Perceptions, in essence, provide the fabric in which public and private initiatives can be sewn—or can become entangled.

In few relationships are perceptions as important as they are between Mexico and the United States. Over the past fifteen years, the two countries have emerged from a history of distrust and distance to embark on an intense path of political, economic, and social interdependence. The renewed relationship has been driven largely by powerful demographic and economic shifts that have brought the countries closer. Migration, trade and investment flows, transnational cultural influences, and civic networks have led to a degree of awareness and engagement with each other that would have been almost unimaginable fifteen or twenty years ago.

However, increased interdependence, especially in the absence of proactive political and social leadership, can also lead to misunderstanding and frustration. The authors in this volume share a concern that the deep integration taking place between the United States and Mexico has gone far beyond the creativity of political leaders and cultural elites on both sides of the border. In many ways, we remain trapped in old patterns for understanding each other and dealing with each other across the border, even while the underlying circumstances of the relationship have changed dramatically. We argue, therefore, that new strategies are needed to encourage discussion, writing, and knowledge about each other. The future of a more productive U.S.-Mexico relationship lies not only in the implementation of good policies, but also in the encouragement of a broader dialogue between the peoples of the two countries.

The Role of Perceptions in U.S.-Mexico Relations

In traditional conceptions of international relations, perceptions among political and economic elites play an important role in the way that governments deal with foreign policy towards other countries, though public perceptions may shape and constrain leaders' decisions.¹

In the case of Mexico-U.S. relations, the role of public perceptions is even greater than in most bilateral relationships, however—and perhaps more important than in any other relationship that either country has with another. The relationship between the two countries is extremely dense because

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of the rapid social, political, and economic changes that have taken place over the past two decades. Over 25 million people in the United States—roughly eight percent of the U.S. population—now trace their heritage to Mexico, of which nine million are citizens of Mexico, roughly eight percent of Mexico’s population. At the same time, most of Mexico’s trade—roughly 87 percent—is with the United States, while Mexico has become the United States’ second trading partner, at roughly twelve percent of U.S. trade. The border region between the two countries is now home to 9 million people and the border itself has grown in importance with the rise in trade, migration, and concerns about security.² Numerous citizens of both countries have everyday contact with each other through family, neighbors, colleagues, and business associates. This closeness is, of course, greater in the north of Mexico and the southwest of the United States (and California and Chicago), but it is increasingly so elsewhere in both countries. We are no longer distant neighbors, but increasingly interdependent neighbors.

Because of this social and economic interaction, almost all of the issues on the official bilateral agenda between the two countries have also become intermestic—that is, they have both international and domestic components.

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This includes everything from trade, investment, labor, and environmental disputes arising from NAFTA to migration policies and management of the common border. The intermestic nature of the bilateral agenda means that foreign policy between the two countries is no longer the province of experts but a part of the everyday debate among citizens of the two countries. Unlike many other international relationships that enter the public consciousness as crises and controversies arise, the constituent parts of the bilateral U.S.-Mexico relationship—if not always the relationship itself—have become a permanent part of political discussion in the two countries. Public perceptions, therefore, are not mere constraints on government action, but an essential part of the ongoing discussion of policy options.

Equally significant, national government actions are not the only, and perhaps no longer the most important element of bilateral relations between the two countries. Local and state governments at the border are increasingly engaged in creative forms of cross-border collaboration. Hometown associations of Mexican migrants in the United States play an important role in their towns of origin (and vice versa).³ Writers, artists, singers, and movie producers share ideas and influences across the border. Mexican and U.S. businesses collaborate in joint economic ventures and increasingly invest in each others’ countries.⁴ Civil society organizations have ongoing collaborations around environmental, labor, and social issues.⁵ A number of major media organizations in the two countries have agreements to share news stories with each other and some even target a binational audience with their coverage.⁶ Increasingly, there are binational collaborations and channels for

sharing information and resources that do not involve the two national governments, yet shape the understandings that Americans and Mexicans have of each other and create new models for economic, political, and social engagement. The relationship between Mexico and the United States is no longer the province of diplomats alone, but of citizens engaged in a wide variety of activities that affect others across the border. Perceptions, therefore, determine not just the margin that politicians have to maneuver in diplomatic relations, but the contours of the multiple collaborative efforts among firms and organizations across the border.

Perceptions and Misconceptions: This Volume

Although the relationship between the two countries has become increasingly more intense and complex, public perceptions of each other have gone through repeated cycles of euphoria and tension, growing closer for a period and then growing further apart again as circumstances change. Enrique Krauze (chapter 1), observing the “weight the past exerts on human affairs,” notes that this cycle has been repeated continuously throughout history, despite the changing dynamics of the relationship, and that the two countries seem powerless to break out of the cycle. The expectations surrounding the first few months that Presidents Fox and Bush were in office, followed by the tensions between the two countries around 9/11 and the Iraq War, are but the most recent chapter in a longer history of on-again, off-again relations between the two governments and, to some extent, between the two publics. Krauze wonders whether we are “condemned to be distanced neighbors? Will we ever be free of our resentments, prejudices, stereotypes, and ghosts? Can we ever truly understand each other?”

This cycle is built on two distinct axes for Mexicans and Americans. Mexicans, on one hand, vary between seeing the United States as “a promise of opportunity and a premonition of threat” (Jeffrey Davidow, chapter 7). The United States presents an important opportunity for business, education, and cultural exchange, but history offers lessons that make Mexicans cautious of their neighbor’s potential to interfere in internal affairs or overwhelm them. Krauze notes that the history of U.S. behavior in foreign policy throughout much of the twentieth century undermined the intellectual weight of liberal democrats in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America who originally saw the United States as an example to emulate. Americans, on the other hand, tend to vary between having intense interest in Mexico and showing complete disinterest, as U.S. priorities in international affairs change.

Nonetheless, as relations have increased between the two countries, citizens in the two countries have gained increasingly realistic pictures of each other. Jesús Reyes Heróles (chapter 6) notes that survey evidence shows that most Mexicans and Americans have highly pragmatic and generally positive views of each other. Mexicans tend to see the United States in terms of its economic strength and political power. Americans see Mexico in terms of its cultural traits and inequality. Both sets of perceptions, Reyes Heróles observes,

are realistic portrayals of the other country, based on the kind of information that average citizens have access to about the other. Significantly, both sets of perceptions avoid the stereotypes that used to dominate the ways that publics in each country saw the other: corruption and drug trafficking for Mexico and aggressiveness and imperialism for the United States.

Three trends explored in this volume both represent this change in perceptions and have contributed to it. First, the growing presence of Mexicans in the United States and of Americans of Mexican descent is creating new channels for people on both sides of the border to learn about each other and work together. The growth of the Latino community in the United States has caught the attention of business leaders in the United States and led them to focus more on Latin America, including Mexico, and also of Mexican business leaders, who see this as an opportunity to expand their operations in the United States (Fernández Carbajal, chapter 8). It has also helped Americans to become more focused on the western hemisphere rather than primarily across the Atlantic. “America is an East-West country,” Richard Rodriguez (chapter 2) observes. “The idea of the south does not come easy to us.” The presence of so many Americans of Latin American descent is gradually challenging this perspective; however, and emphasizing the role of the south in America’s future. Pete Hamill (chapter 4) documents the way that Mexican immigration to New York City is adding to “the alloy” of the city and making the United States a stronger country.

Secondly, trade and investment have multiplied business relations and raised the profile of each country for the other. Both countries increasingly depend on each other for their sustained growth, and the business communities of the two countries have increasing opportunities to partner and invest in each others’ country. José Antonio Fernández and Brian Dyson (chapter 9) both describe the increased intensity of corporate interactions between the two countries. Fernández highlights the increasing professionalization of Mexican corporations, while Dyson notes that there is “a more balanced relationship” between the two countries since NAFTA was signed. However, Dyson also cautions that increasing economic relations need to be supported by changes in culture and values.

Finally, literature, the arts, and media are transforming—and being transformed by—the increasing interaction between the two countries, although profound gaps remain. Jesús Silva-Herzog Márquez (chapter 5) documents the increasingly nuanced coverage by the media of each other’s country. Similarly, Christopher Domínguez (chapter 3), Pete Hamill, and Enrique Krauze follow the increasing dialogue among literary and artistic communities in the two countries. Nonetheless, Hamill observes that lack of U.S. awareness of Mexican popular culture, while Domínguez notes that Mexican cultural elites are still reticent to engage more fully with the literature developed by writers of Mexican descent in the United States and of Mexican writers on the border. Moreover, few Mexican novelists deal with the neighbor to the north more than as a threat. Domínguez wonders

whether Mexican and American writers can find new ways to address each other, even while preserving the real differences that exist in the cultural heritage of each country.

Although economic, demographic, and cultural processes are driving the two countries closer, they will be unable to deal with the potential benefits of these changes without creative strategies to “build deep knowledge and fundamental understanding” between the two countries (Fernández Carbajal) and to keep the relationship “fresh and competitive” (Dyson). Ultimately, the greater integration and complexity of the relationship will only prove beneficial for citizens of both countries if its potential is harnessed through cooperative policies that promote joint competitiveness, mutual security, and a safe flow of people across the border. If perceptions do increasingly reflect realities, we need strong leadership on both sides of the border capable and willing to engage with each other for mutual benefit and understanding.

Richard Rodriguez argues that we have yet to come to terms with the shared future of North America or to develop a vocabulary for this common region. We recur to old repertoires of behavior towards each other in part because we have not yet developed the semantic or conceptual vocabulary that describes our proximity to one another and our shared destiny as part of the North American region. We have remained trapped in the limited economic conceptions of NAFTA without developing the corresponding political, social, and cultural vision for the future to accompany it.⁷ To this end, Enrique Krauze calls for “a new cultural chapter in NAFTA.” He argues that “For Mexico it would be a lesson, and the best antidote to anti-American sentiments. For the United States it would be a revelation, evidence that Americans can—if they put their minds to it—understand the world and make it a better place to live in.”

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Acknowledgements

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The publication of this volume owes a great deal to several people who were instrumental in bringing it to fruition. Enrique Krauze provided the inspiration for this project, and he and Fernando García of *Letras Libres* were involved in every aspect of its design. In addition to the chapter authors, two

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Notes

1. On the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, see Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992; and Steven Kull and I.M. Destler, *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999.
2. Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *On the Rim of Mexico: Encounters of the Rich and Poor*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.
3. Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Myriam Hazan, *Looking Backward Moving Forward: Mexican Organizations in the U.S. as Agents of Incorporation and Dissociation*, Claremont: The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, 2003.
4. See the chapters in this volume by José Antonio Fernández and Brian Dyson (chapters 8 and 9).
5. See David Brooks and Jonathan Fox, eds., *Cross-Border Dialogues*, La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California San Diego, 2002.
6. See Rossana Fuentes-Beraín, Andrew Selee, and Heidy Servin-Baez, eds., *Writing Beyond Borders: Reporting between Mexico and the United States*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center and *Foreign Affairs en Español*, forthcoming.
7. On this point, see also the chapters by Davidow (7), Fernández Carbajal (8), and Dyson (9).

SECTION 1

The Dynamics of Mexico-U.S. Relations



CHAPTER 1

You and Us

Enrique Krauze

It happened in another age, on September 6, 2001. Relations between Mexico and the United States saw their finest hour. In the first state visit of his presidency, George Bush received Vicente Fox, and proclaimed that Mexico was not only the United States partner and friend but the government's top foreign policy priority. As I watched the fireworks displays over the Potomac, it seemed to me that I was witnessing a rare show of historic prudence and wisdom. Old quarrels aside, a solid relationship with the United States made sense for Mexico, because 90% of its trade and 70% of its investment came from the U.S., and 24 million Mexicans (9 million of them born in Mexico) now lived scattered far and wide across the country, sending more than 10 billion dollars annually to their families in Mexico. Conversely, it was in the United States' interest to help its neighbor prosper because Mexico's growth would create more demand for U.S. exports, stabilize immigration, reinforce stability and democracy, and turn Mexico into an example for the turbulent countries of Latin America. Five days later, that dream and many others dissipated.

On September 11, from the banks of the Hudson, I witnessed another blaze, not pyrotechnic but historic: a human pyre. I realized, as did so many others, that the attack on the twin towers meant the end of one era and the beginning of another, completely unexpected and plagued with uncertainties, but I trusted that the Mexican government would take a stance in keeping with the harmonious spirit of the preceding week. Days passed, and nothing happened. Why did Fox not travel immediately to the site of the tragedy, where, after all, many Mexicans had died? Once back in Mexico, I noted the near total lack of solidarity with the victims: a few candles on the sidewalk in front of the American embassy; a sympathetic but reticent attitude in the press; and that was all. When the war in Afghanistan began, there were only a few anti-American demonstrations in the streets, but in the press angry voices began to be heard denouncing Washington's "genocidal policy," voices that became almost unanimous before and during the war on Iraq. Those of us writers who publicly recommended voting with the United States on the Security Council—not because we shared Bush's sense of timing and unilateral procedures, but in an act of basic realism—were the object of sharp criticism. In the end, of course, the vote was never held, but the damage to the bilateral relationship had been done. Meanwhile, heedless of these circumstances, Bush blindly proclaimed that all countries were "either with us or against us" and unequivocally signaled that the bilateral agenda with Mexico had been moved to last place on his list of priorities. What had happened to the mutual declarations

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of friendship? Why didn't both governments seek diplomatic ways of disagreeing? Then I began to think that my enthusiasm had been premature, and perhaps illusionary, and I asked myself what the historic reasons might be for our new rift. Are we condemned to be distanced neighbors? Will we ever be free of our resentments, prejudices, stereotypes, and ghosts? Can we ever truly understand each other?

We should not be surprised by the weight the past exerts on human affairs. After all, the twenty-first century has begun with a reenactment of the disputes of the eleventh. In the early days of our two nations, there was, as everybody knows, a war that Ulysses S. Grant himself—who, like Lee and Jackson, took part in it—described in his memoirs as “the most unjust.” Not only was Mexico defeated, but it also lost (as the standard textbook read each year by millions of Mexican children recalls) more than half its territory. This war was experienced by victor and vanquished alike as a new conquest of Mexico, a fall of the “halls of Montezuma” that foreshadowed other defeats to come in the twentieth century. In the United States, the war (criticized by Lincoln and Thoreau, applauded by Whitman) has been so thoroughly forgotten in the United States that it has not even received much mention now that a number of writers have recreated the “savage wars of peace” in the Philippines, Central America, and the Caribbean. In Mexico, as a result of this war, the national anthem (first performed in 1854) was written in specific defiance of the United States, as symbolic and belated compensation for its defeat: “and if a foreign enemy should dare / to profane your soil with his step / consider oh beloved fatherland that heaven / gave you a soldier in every son.” Every September 13th there is a commemoration of the sacrifice of the “child heroes” of Chapultepec, who, in a somewhat airbrushed episode, died defending their “fatherland’s soil.” Mexico’s civic liturgy, then, is still freighted with resentment of its neighbor to the north, but it is only that—an official liturgy that is mechanically performed—not an open wound. How to explain, then, the persistence of anti-American sentiment in Mexico?

First of all, by defining its limits. It is necessary to dispel the false idea that Mexicans in general harbor a hatred of North Americans. This simply is not true. If Fox had led a tribute to the victims of September 11, the public would have supported him. The average Mexican thinks that “gringos” are arrogant, and, if asked, would say that they “want to take over the world,” but in daily dealings their attitude is neutral and non-ideological. Mexican culture, which grew out of the mingling of Indians and Spaniards, has always been open, inclusive, and tolerant. That is why Mexicans take what is useful to them from American culture (they wear jeans, listen to CDs, drink Coca Cola, buy *Chevroletos*, watch Hollywood movies, play good *beisbol*, and in some places speak “Spanglish”) but reject what is not useful (fast food, religions with no images and extreme individualism). The proof of this collective attitude—an attitude only shaken by the shameful and unchanging demonstrations of discrimination and racism that Mexicans are subjected to upon crossing the border—may be seen in the millions of migrants whose

opinion need not be solicited in surveys because they express it every day, voting with their feet. But there is a sector of the middle class, with spokespeople in political and intellectual circles, the academy, and the media, who remain anchored in a defensive, resentful nationalism, manifested not as pride or faith or even love for their country, nor as a desire for conquest of the outside world (economic markets, artistic creations, diplomatic triumphs) but by a generic rejection of foreign enemies, *gringos* in particular.

Anti-Americanism in Mexico is rooted in the history of ideas; this is true all over Latin America and is associated with the disappointment suffered by nineteenth century democratic liberals with regard to the United States. It is enough to recall one fact: despite the war of 1847, Mexican democrats not only continued to admire the U.S. but also traveled and even lived here to study your institutions, travel by rail, admire the skyscrapers, elevators, and industries, take refuge from tyrants or conspire against them, and write magnificent books about it all (books totally unknown here, but for a few academics). Then suddenly, in 1898, the god of freedom failed them. This key moment, a kind of “collective consciousness-raising,” was the war with Spain over Cuba, that “splendid little war” (John Hay). The defeat of Spain was also *their* defeat, the defeat of *their* cultural universe. Betrayed by the model nation of democracy and freedom—now become an imperialist power—the liberals of Latin America felt like the Marxists of our time after the fall of the Berlin Wall: they were ideological orphans. At this juncture, they began to develop a continent-wide nationalism of a new stripe, formulated in explicitly anti-North American terms. An example: when, in 1904, the Mexican ambassador in Washington—Federico Gamboa—received a memo instructing all North American embassies, legations, and consulates to use the term “America,” he wrote in his diary: “The beginning of the end! Now comes the plundering of a name that belongs to all of us equally! Tomorrow it will be our lands!” This continent-wide insult was compounded with each island-hopping war undertaken by the Marines in the first two decades of the century.

In the specific case of Mexico, another distant but decisive event—tragically set in motion by the United States—would seal the fate of liberal democracy: the coup of 1913 against President Francisco I. Madero, perhaps the purest liberal democrat in Latin American history, known in his time as “the apostle of democracy.” The man who plotted Madero’s assassination—you saw that coming—was an ambassador whose name (Henry Lane Wilson) has been forgotten even in his hometown, but not in Mexican textbooks. Wilson ushered General Victoriano Huerta (a Mexican Pinochet) into power. One week after the event, Woodrow Wilson entered the White House declaring that he would not “recognize a government of butchers,” but his good intentions came to nothing. Actually, Wilson was patient and prudent in his dealings

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with Mexico. If he had listened to the oil companies, he would have invaded us. He refused to do so, except in two brief instances: the landing of Marines in Veracruz in 1914 and the “punitive expedition” commanded by Pershing in 1916. The object of the first excursion was to force the exit of Huerta, the dictator, and the second to capture Villa, who months before had attacked the border town of Columbus. But by this time, the Mexicans were unable to differentiate between good Wilson and bad Wilson. Zapata might detest Carranza, but in matters concerning the *gringos*, all were in agreement:

“Anti-Americanism in Mexico is rooted in the history of ideas; this is true all over Latin America and is associated with the disappointment suffered by nineteenth century democratic liberals with regard to the United States.”

“it doesn’t matter whether they send millions of soldiers,” said Eufemio, Zapata’s brother. “We will fight one against two hundred... We don’t have arms or ammunition, but we have breasts to receive bullets.” With all of this in the past, it was understandable that the Constitution of 1917 (still in force) should adopt nationalism as a state ideology, a secular faith.

The liberal democratic alternative had been blocked for Mexico. (Like a comet, it would be 90 years before it appeared again.) Now nationalism reigned, in the form of legislation reclaiming lands, industries, and national resources. This legislation nearly caused President Coolidge to declare war on “Soviet Mexico” in 1927, and President Calles threatened to blow up the country’s oil wells. That same year, Walter Lippman wrote: “the thing that ignorant people call bolshevism in these countries is nothing but nationalism ... and it is a world-wide fever... Nothing would anger Latin Americans more and pose more of a danger to North American security than for Latin America to believe that the United States had adopted a Metternich-like policy intended to consolidate vested interests that threaten its social progress, as they understand it.”

Heeding Lippman’s advice, the United States attempted a “good neighbor” diplomacy in Mexico based on prudence, collaboration, and understanding. It sent ambassador Dwight Morrow, who worked to put the public finances of Mexico in order, and who went so far as to buy a house in Cuernavaca. His successor, Josephus Daniels, had been Secretary of the Navy at the time of the occupation of Veracruz (the Assistant Secretary was Franklin D. Roosevelt) and perhaps that was why he understood the Mexican sensibility. Immersed like Morrow in the culture of Mexico, even going so far as to dress like a Mexican “charro”, this “ambassador in shirtsleeves” implemented the “good neighbor” policy which withstood difficult tests like the oil expropriation of 1938. Thanks to this new diplomacy (and despite the wishes of a large sector of the Mexican middle class, whose sympathies were clearly with Hitler), the Mexican government decreed the country’s entry into the Second World War on the side of the Allies. The whole region (with the exception of Argentina) was enjoying an interlude of Pan-American solidarity, which was fruitful in terms of economic growth and cultural creativity (the Mexican film industry flourished, for example).

But with the arrival of the Cold War, the Latin American governments (including Mexico's) again came to feel—as Lippman had warned—that the United States was subordinating its diplomacy to the commercial interests of big business. And although these governments aligned themselves diplomatically with the United States, a new and more radical wave of anti-Yankeeism—clothed now in revolutionary doctrine—began to rise in the region. Rather than conversion to Marxism, what it fostered was the exacerbation of nationalism, which was further heightened by Washington's increasing support of Latin American dictators (its “sons of bitches”). In 1947, a disillusioned Mexican liberal, Daniel Cosío Villegas, foretold what would happen in the second half of the twentieth century, first in Cuba, and then all over the region: “Latin America will boil with discontent and dare all. Carried away by absolute despair and blazing hatred, its nations, seemingly abject in their submission, will be capable of anything: of sheltering and encouraging the adversaries of the United States, of themselves becoming the fiercest enemies imaginable. And then there will be no way to subdue them, or even frighten them.”

Now that Communism belongs to prehistory and Castro is a museum piece, the United States has forgotten the problems it once grappled within Latin America, from Chile to Nicaragua and El Salvador. It should study them and study its relationship with Mexico, because it might glean lessons from its Latin American experiences for the much more serious predicaments it faces today.

The memory of past affronts weighs heavily in our history. It is what the Hindus would call *karma*. But it is an ideological weight, a weight that only affects the political and intellectual middle classes, and—most importantly—it is only half of the story. The other part of the story, which many professional anti-Americans always fail to mention, has to do with our own responsibility for our daunting problems: our authoritarian, demagogic, and corrupt political systems; our closed and inefficient economy; our expensive, bureaucratic, self-satisfied, and fanaticized educational apparatus. Blaming the big bad wolf *gringo* for these ills is to throw up a smokescreen over reality. And there is yet another part of the story (deliberately never mentioned), which involves contemplating the tangible economic benefits (investments, industry, credits, imports, jobs) that Mexico and Latin America have obtained and continue to obtain thanks to their proximity to the United States. But average Mexicans (peasants, workmen, businessmen), are not moved by ideological passions, nor do they fool themselves in such matters. That is why there was no revolution when the Free Trade Agreement was signed (the person who wanted to start one was a university-educated, post-modern guerrilla, Subcomandante Marcos). On the contrary, the average Mexican took advantage of NAFTA by modernizing the country's economy (in various sectors) and using it as a catalyst for democratic change.

“Maybe I am sick with hatred of the United States. I am Mexican, after all,” says one of Carlos Fuentes' characters in *Where the Air Is Clear*. Fuentes should have revised this statement, making it refer not to all Mexicans but to the sector of the middle class (with its many politicians, ideologues, writers and intel-

lectuals) that has long since turned into myth the conviction that nothing good may be expected of its neighbor to the north. By the same token, the character is correct in speaking of “sickness”—and the sickness in question is schizophrenia. Only a schizophrenic could remain fixated on past affronts and pretend that the border between Mexico and the United States has been the most troubled in history. It is enough to glance at a map of Europe, or of the Middle East, or Asia, to realize how false that is. True, the Río Bravo (or Río Grande) marks the border of two deeply asymmetrical countries, but there are different ways of seeing that inequality. The Mexican who emigrates does not see the border as a scar but as an opportunity (not sought, not desired) for a life

“Only a schizophrenic could remain fixated on past affronts and pretend that the border between Mexico and the United States has been the most troubled in history.”

that he is unfortunately unable to make for himself in his own country. This Mexican is not steered (justifiably or otherwise) by the traumas of history, and in his daily life he has no use or time for myths. And many Mexicans, unencumbered by ideology, think the same way: the farmer that exports avocados, the old peasant who counts on remittances from his children, the working woman from Ciudad Juárez who fears the closing of the *maquiladoras*, or foreign assembly plants, the globalized businessman. All of these people are hurt by the irrational

persistence of the anti-Americanism adopted by the sector of the intellectual and political middle class that thunders against the “damn gringos” every chance it gets, equates Islamic fundamentalism and so called “American fundamentalism,” and decrees that Bush is Hitler, but then immediately afterwards is in and out of the universities, cities, and malls of “Gringoland.” And who is their guru? A *gringo*, no less—an angry gringo: Noam Chomsky.

What can Mexico do? Get over its schizophrenia. Which means many things. Make progress in its convergence with the United States. Fight with intelligence and creativity (not with speeches but with effective information and works of art) the vast ignorance of this country about its neighbor. Refute the harmful stereotypes that (while saving the “pretty señoritas”), depict all Mexicans males as lazy, inherently violent and corrupt. Learn to lobby at the state and federal levels of the American government. And use the growing Hispanic influence in the press and the media. Having made its transition to democracy, Mexico must redefine its old, defensive and demagogic nationalism in positive terms, as many export businesses or companies that compete at a global level (like Cemex, Bimbo, Femsa Panamco, Modelo, and Televisa) have done. There are also many successful Mexicans in the U.S to serve as models for this new brand, not of Nationalism but of Patriotism. This new attitude does not mean sacrificing Mexican culture (which, to judge by its expansion in the United States, is stronger than ever) but rather defending it by making the Mexican economy more efficient and productive. The economy will not be strengthened by clinging to paradigms that allow people to wrap themselves demagogically in the national flag but do not translate into a rational management of the public industries that supposedly “belong to the

nation” and which, in reality, have become the private property of the bureaucrats and unions that manage them. A single example will suffice: despite having deposits of natural gas vast enough to satisfy internal demand and to export, Mexico imports two billion dollars of gas a year. The reason: “to protect ourselves from foreign investors, to shore up our nationalism.” Properly regulated under a modern fiscal plan, these investors would not be owners but licensees, and their investments, construction, and technology would stimulate the national economy. But nothing is done. In the name of sacrosanct nationalism, the natural gas sleeps beneath the subsoil. Meanwhile, who pays those two billion dollars? It is time we admitted it—nationalism once gave the country political cohesion, but it now poses a great cost.

What can the United States do? I’ll venture a concrete suggestion. While our relationship in political and diplomatic spheres has been troubled and sometimes tragic, and while some progress is being made in economic convergence (although with obvious and dangerous inequities as is the case of American subsidies in the agricultural sector), there is an unexplored area of our relationship in which Americans have been particularly generous, and do not even realize it. I refer to culture. Hundreds of films have been made on Mexican subjects in the twentieth century. Many fell into grotesque stereotypes, but many others represented a true effort to understand the social reality and history of Mexico. Attracted by the Mexican Revolution, or Mexico’s landscape, culture, history, people, or by a sense of its natural freedom, many travelers came to Mexico and genuinely involved themselves in Mexican life (in all its glory and misery). For long decades, visiting its countryside and its cities and often staying to live, these creators left rich testimonies in films, stories, novels, popular and classical music, journalism, essays, photographs, letters, travel accounts, paintings, poems, local histories, anthropological essays, archaeological studies. The list of great American authors who wrote serious works about Mexico is impressive, because if all are not included, almost all are: John Reed, Hart Crane, Jack London, Katherine Ann Porter, John Dos Passos, Bruno Traven, Wallace Stevens, John Steinbeck, Tennessee Williams, Kenneth Rexroth, William Carlos Williams, Robert Lowell, Saul Bellow, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Harriet Doer, and many more. In another field, from Prescott on, each period of Mexican history has had a classic historian in the United States. In the annals of literature, the work of women has been especially perceptive and loving. All of these works are forgotten in the United States, and even in Mexico. With all this cultural wealth, it would be wonderful to explore the possibility of promoting documentary and publishing joint projects that would rekindle the great history of cultural love between the United States and Mexico. In short, what we need is a cultural chapter in NAFTA. For

“In short, what we need is a cultural chapter in NAFTA. For Mexico it would be a lesson, and the best antidote to anti-American sentiments. For the United States it would be a revelation, evidence that Americans can—if they put their minds to it—understand the world and make it a better place to live”

Mexico it would be a lesson, and the best antidote to anti-American sentiments. For the United States it would be a revelation, evidence that Americans can—if they put their minds to it—understand the world and make it a better place to live in.

The Dialogue of Democracy

Lee H. Hamilton

As I think back to my early days as member of the International Relations Committee in the House of Representatives, in the 1960s, I cannot remember the word “Mexico” ever coming up. By the time I left the Congress, it was impossible to do business in the area of international relations without considerable attention to Mexico.

The sharp increases in immigration meant that many members of Congress had a large number of Mexican-Americans in their districts. I remember how startled I was to learn for the first time the number of members of the House of Representatives who basically conducted their business in Spanish because the overwhelming proportion of their constituents were Spanish-speaking. I can remember, as a member of Congress, how surprised I was when, in Indiana, probably one of the more insular states in the country, I began to see the flood of Mexican workers coming in to help us harvest the agricultural crops of my state. And I remember how startled I was on a Sunday morning when I learned that the Catholic church in the local community was conducting its masses in Spanish, not in English. So even in my state I began to feel the differences that were coming.

And questions of immigration reform and labor standards now, of course, have come on the agenda. I must have had a hundred meetings on drug enforcement, meeting Mexico attorney generals and Mexican presidents and Mexican prosecutors over a period of time as we talked about how to better enforce the law with respect to drug trafficking. We all know, of course, the North American Free Trade Agreement. We celebrated the tenth anniversary of NAFTA here not too long ago, when we had President Salinas and Prime Minister Mulroney and the first President Bush here.

So all of these things have impressed upon us the importance of this relationship. And that relationship goes far beyond policy matters. Cultural exchanges have accelerated as well. We have all come to understand globalization is about a lot more than trade agreements and commercial arrangements; it is about different populations and traditions interacting with one another and forging a new dynamic reality.

And no doubt, NAFTA and Mexican-U.S. relations have had stresses and strains—after all we do not change perceptions that easily—and a lot of very difficult questions remain on the agenda. But we can be confident that we draw much closer together as we discuss these matters. Successful action on this and many of our shared concerns requires vigorous dialogue. There really is something to the phrase “the dialogue of democracy.” Without that dialogue of democracy, misunderstanding permeates a bilateral relationship and the prospect of more integration becomes more unsettling. Dialogue is the only way to forge a practical consensus on the issues before us.

SECTION 2

Writing About Each Other

The second section of this volume addresses the challenges of representing each other across the shared border. *Georgette Dorn* posed the following question to the chapter writers:

Has recent trade relationship between both countries led to a greater cultural exchange/ understanding between Mexico and the United States?

What image does Mexican literature project about contemporary U.S. literature, and vice versa?

There are significant historical, ethnic, economic, and religious differences between our two countries. What cultural factors do we have in common?

Other neighboring countries with stormy past relationships, such as Germany and France, have overcome their differences. There is a persistent distrust between Mexico and the United States, however. How do we explain this?

Is the border region, which many call MexAmerica, a region in which the peoples of the two countries are melded together, a cultural and literary reality? What image does the border project to its respective metropolitan centers?

The New Geography of North America

Richard Rodriguez

I was born in the United States of Mexican parents. My mother came from the state of Jalisco. My father was from the state of Colima. I am a hybrid. I am a “Mexican American,” as we used to call ourselves, as people used to call us. Since 1972, when Richard Nixon re-invented us, we have become Hispanics—whether or not we are related to Spain; whether or not we are Spanish speaking. (The single criterion for being a Hispanic is that one live in the United States.) There are 38 million Hispanics in the United States; seventy percent of us are related to Mexico. If you were to think of us as a separate country we—Hispanics of the U.S.—would be one of the largest nations of Latin America.

I have a sleep walker’s relationship to Spanish—remembered rooms and streets. I understand it. But I do not respond in waking Spanish for reasons that are hard to explain but have to do with the trauma of childhood, of moving from one language, one room, to another when I was a child, of being scorned in both tongues.

My mother came to the United States as a girl, and she loved Mexico as much as she loved the United States. She loved the food of Mexico. She loved the music, especially. I still hear my mother’s Trio Los Panchos recordings in my dreams, as a kind of haunting. My mother loved Mexican men. She loved Mexican men with very thin mustaches, very much like Gilbert Roland.

My father hated Mexico. He was in some ways more Mexican than my mother was—in his melancholy, in his interest in death—and he had seen the revolution (*La Revolución*) up close, and he had been an orphan in Mexico. He remembered the violence—Mexican killing Mexican—*Viva Mexico!* When my father came to the United States he never intended to go back. In fact, he wanted to go further away, to Australia, and he would have gone to Australia had he not met my mother and married her.

Several years ago I was doing a documentary in Mexico for the BBC. The documentary was about the yearly migration of Mexicans (like butterflies or like whales) between the United States and Mexico. The documentary followed the yearly return of a group of Mexican Americans who now live in Stockton, California, to the village of Jaripo in Michoacán. Before I went to Mexico, I asked my father to show me his village on the map. He looked at the map for a moment and said, “It’s not there.” And I said, “What

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do you mean, it's not there? You cannot have forgotten Mexico. Show me approximately." "I do not remember," he replied. "It is not there."

To grow up Mexican American is to grow up in a zone of ambiguity.

To grow up Mexican American is to grow up in a zone of ambiguity. I remember Mexican relatives who, when we went to Mexico to visit, or when they came to the United States, were alarmed at how little Mexican I was in my demeanor, I suppose. I was becoming a pocho. Their primary complaint was that I was losing the language. So much of the Mexican identity seems to depend upon language. On the other hand, people in the United States were struck by how Mexican we seemed. We Mexicans of California's Central Valley—how unchangeably Mexican we were, as we went back and forth, like butterflies or like whales. Professor Samuel P. Huntington now reiterates the commonplace observation from his citadel of Cambridge, Massachusetts: how Mexican the Mexican American is; how resistant to change.

It is difficult and tiresome to have to spend one's life listening to Mexicans who tell you how American you are, and Americans who tell you how Mexican you are.

I grew up reading American history books that were written in one direction only. They began on the east coast, in Massachusetts or in New York; they began with the story of the Dutch and the British. And they moved west into Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and then across the Great Plains; they moved over the Rockies, down into the Great Salt Lake basin, and they ended up in California. That was the history of America. East to West.

I have very much admired Octavio Paz, the great Mexican writer. I had a very brief correspondence with him at the end of his life when he wrote a letter to me concerning a book I had written about Mexico and the United States—the first letter I had ever received from any Mexican about anything I have ever written.

The border between the two countries troubled Paz. He dwelt on the mystery of the border for most of his writing life. I am indebted to Paz, respectful of Paz; at the same time I have always felt that the chapter in *Labyrinth of Solitude* on the pachuco of Los Angeles is the least generous of all his chapters and the least original. The notion that the Mexican American is somehow neither Mexican nor American but trapped between cultures has never seemed to me a satisfactory description of the Mexican Americans I know, who truly belong to the American side of the border, but who have a relationship, if only in memory, if only in taste, if only in the embrace of a relative, to Mexico.

Octavio Paz referred to people in the United States as *norteamericanos*. I knew only too well the sub text for that little description: What else do you call such people? People who have lost their culture. What else do you call people who live in Washington D.C. except *norteamericanos*?

But then one fine day the Mexican president and the Canadian prime minister and the American president met in Texas to sign the North American

Free Trade Agreement. And watching them, I thought, that's interesting. These three countries were acknowledging that they were North Americans.

Mexico is now a North American country. Mexico! What shall he call himself now?

I go to Toronto and people want to know about Mexicans.

In the United States, people call Mexicans "Mexicans," but in Mexico people call Americans "Norteamericanos"—grudging but appropriate. But now that is Mexico's name, too.

What does it mean for Mexico that it is related by landmass to America and to Canada, to the cold, to snow, to the tundra? What does it mean that this relationship may loom as powerfully for Mexico as its relationship to the south, to the tropics, to deserts, to Latin America? Mexico is "in between"; it is both. Talk about my problem as a Mexican American! I think Mexico's identity crisis is only beginning.

Despite all of our differences, despite the enormous barriers that keep us separate as nations and as people, there are two things that I would like to stress that unite us. One, as I have said, is this fact of being North Americans. And the other thing we share in common—the U.S., Mexico, Canada—is that we belong to what used to be called the "New World." We are not British in the United States and Mexicans are not Spaniards.

There was a student disturbance at a high school a few years ago in Dallas, Texas, that was described in the newspapers as a conflict between "Hispanics and Anglos." Reading that, I thought to myself, the British navy is attacking Spanish Armada, all over again.

Have we no ability to describe ourselves without using Europe as our referent? And is my relationship to Mexico broken because I do not speak the language of Spain? Or is there some way I am related to Mexico because I live in the New World, or, indeed, that we are North Americans together?

I do not want to underestimate our differences. I grew up watching cowboy movies, black and white cowboy movies, in which the outlaw's destination was always Mexico. If the outlaw could make it across the Rio Grande, he was safe in a lawless land.

As, indeed, to cross the border in the other direction, for my parents, was also a violation, a freedom. When my father became an American citizen, he did not tell his Mexican friends in San Francisco that he was going to the post office to apply for citizenship (such was the resentment, such was the inhibition of the Mexican in the United States, against becoming officially what we were in fact.) I had aunts and uncles who spent more than fifty years of their lives on this side of the border and never changed their citizenship.

I knew Mexico first as Tijuana. I love Tijuana. There was my mother in the front seat of the car—this was the first time we drove into Mexico—my mother who was Mexico's apologist and guardian, she kept saying to us as we drove

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along the Avenida Revolución: “This is not Mexico.” Well, it sure looked like Mexico to me. There were a lot of Mexicans around, there were a lot of gringos, and they were coming in and out of bars and cantinas and dives of various sorts. It was exactly what the border exposed: the meeting of a U.S. culture that is Protestant and hypocritical with Mexican culture that is Catholic and cynical.

In the 1930s and ’40s, many things that were outlawed in San Diego had currency in Tijuana. Whores, gambling, boxing, drinking. It was the perfect marriage of hypocrisy and cynicism. In the morning, Mexico always blamed the United States for Tijuana, and the United States blamed Mexico for Tijuana.

“But now I think that Mexican Americans are a prophetic people. We are prophetic people in that we will tell Mexico and the United States what both are about to experience within the new geography of “North America,” the complexity of identity, the comic character of it, the changeability of self.”

For years now, I have been asking acquaintances in Baja California for the names of writers in cities like Tijuana, writing about what it means to live in a city that belongs to neither country. There are seven newspapers in Tijuana. Surely there must be writers who are describing this fascinating border culture; writers who are not stuck in Washington, D.C.; writers who are not stuck with the *chilangos* in Mexico City. One young man told me there’s not too much writing in Tijuana, but what Tijuana is really good at is heavy metal music.

For the most part, the Mexican writers we read in the United States are middle aged or more or dead or living in London. We have not heard from a young generation of Mexican writers. We don’t even know their names. We have not read books about what it means to grow up in the Mexico City of Gold’s Gym and Coca Cola, or the Mexico of Cancun.

We have not read, either, what it means to live in Los Angeles as the child of Mexico, but also as an American citizen in the Los Angeles of tofu burritos. We have not yet heard from the kids who call themselves “blaxicans”—part Mexican, part African American—whose relationship is not only with the Anglo culture, but with African American culture and with Mexican culture. Nor have we heard from the Mexican Americans in California who are marrying Koreans and Filipinos and Chinese. We have not yet heard from the children of those marriages. José Vasconcelos would not know what to make of such American children! Los Angeles is today the new chapter of *La Raza Cós mica*.

As America is so obviously browning, something will happen in the United States that will change Latin America. Something that will happen on the American side of the border is that we Americans are going to pay someone of Indian features and dark skin to become the object of our desire on the movie screen and on television. He will revolutionize Latin America, and our Latin desire will become your American desire.

Already coming from the Latin American side of the border is the idea of *la cultura*—because Hispanics are not a racial group. It is very hard for many people in the United States—where identity is traditionally related to blood—

to grasp the idea of Hispanics. They think that Hispanics are these little brown people born in tortillas, and the women all have roses behind their ears, and the men are ineffectual in their jobs, but very good lovers.

People in Latin America speak of mixture, and that is a new idea for the United States. The United States does not traditionally celebrate mixture. The U.S. has always been a black and white society; the U.S. pioneered the idea of the “one drop” theory: If you had one drop of African blood, no matter how light your skin or straight your hair or gothic your nose, you were “black.” One drop!

And now we have this population of people in the United States—Hispanics—who speak of themselves as mestizos or mulattos; they speak of mixture instead of single racial identities. Already young Hispanics are undermining America’s traditional categories, even, in some sense, frightening African Americans, who have come to depend on the notion of “blackness” or otherness as a way of defining themselves.

Now there are Latinos in Los Angeles who want hip hop and who want to participate in the larger culture because *la cultura* is something Latinos are accustomed to sharing and stealing; because mixture is the secret of the recipe. I can cook my culture for you. We can eat it. Then we can wear my culture. Then we can dance to my culture. This idea of *la cultura*—as an exchangeable gift of identity—is going to revolutionize the North. But the idea of the dark lover, I think, is going to revolutionize the South. He will come out of Phoenix, Arizona.

Enrique Krauze has listed the American writers who have written about and lived in Mexico. And they are many. Though I think the more influential writers in America, curiously enough, are British writers who have written about Mexico. I mean Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, D.H. Lawrence, Sybille Bedford, Malcolm Lowry, Frances Calderon de la Barca.

America is an east west country, I remind you. The idea of the South does not come easily to us. The idea of the North does not come easily to us. Now that we are so afraid of terrorists, we are preoccupied by these new borders that we cannot understand or control—the North and the South. Canada and Mexico.

When Americans in the past wanted to test themselves—when Henry James wanted to test himself, he went to Europe, to London, Paris. That is where the American has been accustomed to look for his mirror. We did not venture to test ourselves against the ancient memories of Mexico.

A lot has been said about the diffidence of the intellectual classes of Mexico. The same is true in the United States, especially on the east coast where you will still find an infatuation with England, at a time of an enormous globalization of the American identity.

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The books about Mexico that get published in the United States tend to be written by journalists, and they tend to be about the problem of Mexico—the drugs, criminality, illegal immigration. And the poverty of Mexico! I will tell you, as someone who grew up within American culture, that money is the Protestant measure of all success and the love of God. That the U.S. is neighbor to a poor country leads Americans to the Puritan conclusion: that Mexico is a lesser civilization. Mexico is a problem.

Mexican Americans ended up a puzzle on both sides of the narrative line. When we had been reluctant to give up our ties to Mexico, the United States called us mama's boys. Whereas everything Mexico hated about itself—that it had been invaded, that it had changed and lost, that Mexico had lost its tongue, that Mexico had lost its soul—Mexico hated about the Mexican American. We were Mexico's Mexicans.

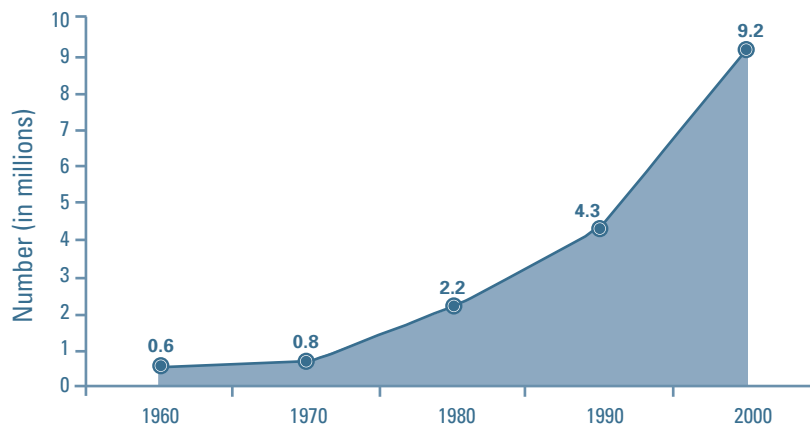
But now I think that Mexican Americans are a prophetic people. We are prophetic people in that we will tell Mexico and the United States what both are about to experience within the new geography of "North America," the complexity of identity, the comic character of it, the changeability of self.

The Mexican Presence in the United States

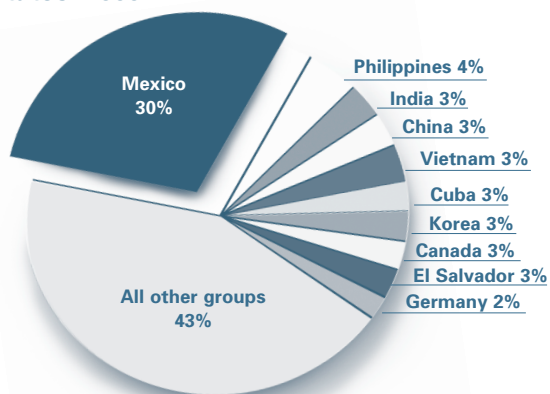
Americans of Hispanic/Latino Origin

	Population	Percentage of U.S. population
Latino/Hispanic origin	35.3 million	12.5%
Mexican ancestry	20.6 million	7.3%
Born in Mexico	9.2 million	3.3%

Foreign born from Mexico in the United States, 1960 to 2000



Percent Distribution of the Foreign Born by Country of Birth, for the United States: 2000



Source: Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau

Charts two and three are taken from Elizabeth M. Grieco, "The Foreign-Born from Mexico in the United States: 1960 to 2000," in Philippa Strum and Andrew Selee, eds., *The Hispanic Challenge?: What We Know About Latino Immigration*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center and Migration Policy Institute, 2004.

Towards a Literary Dialogue Across Borders

Christopher Domínguez

I am a Mexican writer but my mother was born in New York: that is why my name is Christopher. She was part of the generation of youth that left the United States hating their country, hating the politics of those years. Hers was a generation afflicted and anguished by the Vietnam War and when my brother and I were born, my mother said, “I don’t want my sons to speak the language of imperialism.” So I had to learn English at school in Mexico City just like so many other Mexican children. My English is flawed; I feel badly about my poor English since people expect me to be bilingual.

Recently, when I told a friend that I was coming to Washington to talk about the relationship between Mexican and U.S. literature, he said, “Please don’t start talking about Rulfo and Faulkner;” but I think I am going to disobey him. This Rulfo and Faulkner issue has a significance that I would like to develop here, one to which Richard Rodriguez has already alluded in his chapter. There is a zone that I think exists not in geography but rather in the imagination that is the south: the south to the United States and the north to Mexicans; that zone that has to do with what is now sometimes called “Mexamerica.” It is, in effect, a zone of shadow, of darkness, of indefiniteness that is difficult to accept and experience. This common zone—visible in Rulfo as well as in Faulkner—is misery, *caciquismo*, traditional societies caught up in modern projects and ultimately destroyed by them.

As Krauze has pointed out, Mexico has an enormous presence in U.S. literature as a threat, as the exotic, as a place of refuge, as a border that is crossed to enter what English writers called “an infernal paradise,” the moment where all the certainties, false or real, of U.S. civilization are lost. And it is very intriguing how U.S. literature, while rich in allusions to Mexico, also exhibits a powerful denial mechanism of what Mexican culture is all about, particularly as it was described by David Brading many years ago, and particularly of that Catholic civilization, daughter of Carlos V’s empire, founded on ancient Tenochtitlán two hundred years before the Dutch and English puritans came to what is now the United States.

And then there is the problem of the other famous America and this denial mechanism reaches very important extremes. There is a great U.S. poet, one whom I admire greatly, a deeply conservative poet: Allen Tate. This man wrote a lot about the south. He was a convert to Catholicism and to

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Confederate nostalgia and tradition. Allen Tate filled page after page in his attempts to correct what he considered an error in United States history; for Tate, the one missing element that kept southern agrarian society from becoming the Arcadia, the Utopia, was Catholicism. I have searched through reams of text, books of Tate's essays, and the one thing I have never found anywhere is the North American poet's realization that this Catholic world existed and it was Mexico. His writings are based on an absolute denial of the entire Hispanic-Catholic civilization of the southern part of the North American continent. He is not even a writer who says, "I don't want the southern United States to be Catholic like the Mexicans." This is a very interesting and disturbing omission from a writer who devoted virtually all of his writing to reflections on the U.S. south. In this sense, the issue of the pro-slavery south, the Confederate south, the south defeated in the North American War of Secession, is of some symbolic interest to Mexican writers.

Another very sensitive, very painful problem is the oceanic gap between Mexico City's literary culture and the Chicano world, the Mexamerican world, the world of that third country, perhaps, that is said to lie between Mexico and the United States. It is very difficult for us to comprehend the deep-rooted ethnicity displayed by the Chicanos.

Unlike the United States, Mexico is a centralist country in terms of its literary identity and the cultural power generated in Mexico City. We intellectual elites in Mexico City sometimes feel (and this is metaphorical but might be of interest) like a sort of southern pro-slavery aristocracy imbued with European status from a longstanding, active cosmopolitanism that no longer has much to do with the north. And the north does not begin in El Paso or Tijuana; the north begins where Mexico City ends or even where its historic center ends, since its culture tends to be concentrated in the southern part of the capital city. For Mexico City intellectuals, beyond the imaginary line traced by Felix Cuevas Avenue an attractive world opens up, but one that is fundamentally hostile. The belief persists, as Vasconcelos once said, that there is a point in Mexico's geography where the *carne asada* (barbecue) begins and civilization ends.

So there is this sense that northern Mexico, and naturally the United States, form part of a progressive north replete with the circulation of capital and new ideas, but very removed from the longstanding European Hispanic-Catholic tradition to which the culture of Mexico City, or the culture of the cultural elites from the center of the country, is legitimately connected. My experience is symptomatic of this and very typical of Mexicans, especially a *güero* (blond) whose mother was ashamed of being a *gringa*: I started studying French at the tender age of ten and decided that the culture that was accessible to me, that belonged to me, was European culture. My case is very typical of Mexican intellectuals.

Another very sensitive, very painful problem is the oceanic gap between Mexico City's literary culture and the Chicano world, the Mexamerican world, the world of that third country, perhaps, that is said to lie between

Mexico and the United States. It is very difficult for us to comprehend the deep-rooted ethnicity displayed by the Chicanos. The Mexico they experience, that they dream of, that they remember, the one that appears in their novels in English or in Spanish, is extremely foreign to us and on a few occasions even offensive, because the Mexican centralist tradition—of which I am critical, but do not consider entirely insubstantial—is a tradition based on the notion that Mexico City used to be, or was, or should be, an American extension of the European capitals. Being from the Federal District, it is very difficult to assimilate Chicano culture, the border culture, and sometimes it seems profoundly North American to us, because of its identifications, its appeals to symbols such as the Virgin of Guadalupe. Nearly all Mexican imagery is concentrated dramatically in the border area.

To those of us in Mexico City, all of this comes across as U.S. foolishness. The knowledge we Mexico City writers have of the border culture tends to be very poor, very remote, since we prefer to see ourselves in other mirrors, those of New York, Madrid, Paris, or even Lima, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo. I am reminded once again of the figure of the *pachuco* created by Octavio Paz half a century ago in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. The *pachuco* is like a ghost that will not let us sleep, that we do not want to see, that makes us very uncomfortable, perhaps because it is more like us than we think or because it is a total negation of our identity as central Mexicans.

Another very interesting aspect of this dialogue between Mexican and U.S. literature is the sheer volume of stories, poems, and life experiences written by North Americans from the U.S. who have been to Mexico. There is something for virtually all tastes and all sorts of visions. In contrast, the United States has a surprisingly poor image in Mexican literature. The same old topics are there; some fifteen or twenty Mexican novels written during the second half of the twentieth century discuss the threat of the United States. There are novels that describe a U.S. invasion of Mexico in the future, which already has become the past. But there are moments in novels by Carlos Fuentes and José Agustín in which the invasion of the second half of the nineteenth century is repeated and Mexico is invaded. There are other types of more sophisticated invasions in which the United States appears transubstantiated into a sort of Martian force. Or, in Carlos Fuentes' latest novel, *La Silla del Aguila*, it is not an invasion per se, but a communications blockade by the United States in the year 2012. The theme is very simplistic: Mexico as a country under constant military threat. There are other versions, but it is rare for a Mexican writer—and even rarer for the young ones, that is, those born in the latter half of the twentieth century—to choose to place their characters in the United States for any length of time beyond a short stay at some U.S. airport.

The United States has a surprisingly poor image in Mexican literature. The same old topics are there; some fifteen or twenty Mexican novels written during the second half of the twentieth century discuss the threat of the United States.

There is a sort of denial or a gap in which writers, who like most of the world's inhabitants tend to be deeply permeated by United States culture, the world culture, the hegemonic culture, sit down to write and yet the United States does not appear in modern Mexican literature, does not appear in the novel. The Mexican novel has not wanted to take on the United States, except for writers from the border who do go back and forth and whose literature, which is essentially regional in the best sense of the word, tackles border issues.

Can the turbulent relationship between Mexico and the United States improve? Can it become as close as the current relationship between France and Germany after centuries of massacres? I do not know and I would even venture to say that I doubt it. There is no reason to think that rapid economic and linguistic integration will lead to greater cultural uniformity. That is how it is and that is as it should be. The United States should not forget that the principal Latin American capitals—Buenos Aires, Lima, Mexico City—are western. They are an extension, and a criticism, of the west, a rebirth of European culture with all its horrors. Latin America belongs to western culture; its Indo-European languages—Spanish, Portuguese—are spoken there and its basic values essentially relate to western religions and cultures and, with respect to this tradition, the age-old tradition of the empire of Carlos V, repudiated by the orphans of the Latin American republics in the 19th century, should not be forgotten. We are, as Octavio Paz and Arturo Uslar Pietri said, the Extreme West.

The first step, from the standpoint of Mexican writers, is to raise awareness about this enormous gap in our literature; the inability to confront the United States, above and beyond banal anti-Yankee prejudices, as a requirement for dialogue with that other part of the Extreme West that occupies the world beyond the Río Bravo. Denial is a family argument that must be discussed. Each party has to recognize itself as a continuation (and a criticism) of the West.

Writing about each other

Selected U.S. writers who have written about Mexico	
Saul Bellow	Robert Lowell
Hart Crane	Ruben Martinez
Harriet Doer	Catherine Ann Porter
John Dos Passos	Sam Quiñones
Allen Ginsberg	John Reed
Langston Hughes	Richard Rodriguez
Jack Kerouac	Wallace Stevens
Jack London	
Selected Mexican writers who have written about the United States	
José Agustín	Carlos Fuentes
Federico Campbell	Enrique Krauze
Luis Humberto Crosthwaite	Octavio Paz
Christopher Domínguez	José Vasconcelos

CHAPTER 4

Mexican Popular Culture and the Alloy of New York

Pete Hamill

I first went to Mexico in 1956, knowing about three words of Spanish, headed there because I was intoxicated by some of the reading I had done of a writer named Yañez—whose novel *The Edge of the Storm* was a wonderful book—and drawn by the painters. I wanted to be a painter at the time, but I proceeded very quickly to fail out of painting and fall into writing, but I learned some things about Mexico very quickly, since I was there in what later came to be known as the *Época de Oro*—the golden age—which, it certainly was.

I was there when Diego Rivera died, and there was a lot of attention in the newspapers and a procession to bury Diego, and I thought “What a wonderful thing for a country to be roused by the death of an artist.”

It would never happen in New York. But a few months later the place went wild with another death, and I realized the things that really, truly mattered in Mexico. Pedro Infante crashed an airplane, and you saw policemen crying. To see a policeman cry in Mexico City at any time in your life is to be present at some kind of moment of epiphany. It was a wonderful time to be there, and I think often that you cannot understand Mexico without understanding the popular culture. If you walked down the Reforma at 9 o’clock at night, the air was full of Toña La Negra singing Agustín Lara’s music. You had to understand Lara to understand a certain level of life in Mexico.

I think today, for example, you cannot understand Mexico, whether you’re a businessman or a CIA agent or a student, without understanding *Lucha Libre* (wrestling). You have to understand *Lucha Libre* in order to see the function of the mask in Mexican life, which Octavio Paz has written about. The mask exists in Mexican art going back two centuries, and it is key to *Subcomandante Marcos*. The function of the mask is acted out twice a week in Cuernavaca where I have a place, and it is a way of ritualizing violence, hiding real identity, and creating another identity. Unless you understand who *El Santo* was or *Mil Máscaras* or Blue Demon you cannot dig in deeply into Mexican culture.

I think comic strips and cartoonists are also very important. There is an amazing crop right now in Mexico: Magoo, the crazy surrealist cartoonist, Ahumada, and, of course, Trino. I do not believe you can really understand Mexican humor unless you have the patience to read Trino’s comic strip *Policías y ladrones* day after day and really get the joke because the joke is there, and it is wonderfully done and the language is exuberant. He is one of

“You cannot understand Mexico without understanding the popular culture.”

the best writers in Mexico for me. It is there to be used to bring knowledge about what makes people laugh.

I have to disagree with Octavio Paz who said in the 1940s that there was no visible humor in Mexico. It is simply not true. I remember even in 1956 I used to love to walk down to a section that was near a street then called San Juan de la Tran. It is now called Lázaro Cardenas (if in doubt, name the street after a dead president). It was an area of printing presses. I love printing presses—I used to love to look at them as instruments, and there were maybe six or seven shops there. One day I went down there and there was an arrow written on the wall, and it said “*Sigue la flecha*” (follow the arrow), so I followed it, and there was another arrow that said “*Sigue la flecha*,” then another and another. At the corner, there is an arrow that again said “*Sigue la flecha*,” and when I turned around a sign said “*Chinga tu madre!*” I thought, “I love Mexicans.” But that’s what I mean by the humor, the sense that you will say something outrageous. For a long time, until fairly recently, some things were not allowed to be said, but people got them said anyway, no matter what the rules were, no matter how poorly the press acted, there was always a way to say things. Whether you think of that as popular art or simple expression, it told you something about the character of the people, the crazy *chilangos* of Mexico.

It is for that reason that I agree with Enrique Krauze’s comment that there are so many Mexican writers who have not yet been published. I think it is an absolute crime that there is only one book in English by Carlos Monsivaís. Monsivaís has written so intelligently about popular culture, about Agustín Lara and Dolores Del Río and wrestlers, all the way up to the present moment, yet Americans have no access to that, which is the way they would be able to learn more and recognize Mexico not as our second trading partner, not as a problem, but as a country of rich popular life.

Richard Rodriguez has written about the funeral of his mother. It has to do with another great thing that was going on in Mexico at the time. I wouldn’t call it sentimentality but rather nostalgia. Nostalgia is a true, genuine, powerful emotion, not its counterfeit, which is what sentimentality is. The only person I know who has written about this on a level that I enjoy as much as Monsivaís is Luis Miguel. Luis Miguel comes along and does his albums of old standards, as we would call them, which include Lara and many others, and suddenly two generations closed a little gap. The kids finally got to understand what that music was about because it was being sung by somebody who was a star already in another kind of music. It was very much like Linda Ronstadt’s albums of old standards that came out after her long rock and roll career. And I think that was an important thing, for the young to understand the nostalgia of their parents or—in many cases—their grandparents, and

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to understand that there is a place where romance is a legitimate thing. I love Mexican love songs because they are so dramatic. You know, it is life or death—either I have you or I die. But they tell you something, the importance of human emotions and relationships, in a way that no thesis could, in a way no student of Foucault could ever explain it to you. They are about things that are vividly alive, so that when Luis Miguel comes to New York, he sells out at Radio City Music Hall or Madison Square Garden, and the reason is we now have Mexicans in New York.

When I was a kid there were maybe 19 Mexicans in all of New York. The closest Mexican restaurant to where I worked in Manhattan was called, fittingly, The Alamo. They didn't have to fire a shot; just bring Davy Crockett and all those slavers into the Alamo, and they would all die on the spot. It was basically Tex-Mex gruel. Now we have at least 200,000 Mexicans in New York. They are almost all from Puebla. (If you want a cheap place to live, go to Puebla—nobody's there!). They are in Brooklyn and the Bronx and everywhere. There are now three tortilla factories in Brooklyn, manufacturing tortillas for the market among Mexicans and the *gringos* that they are instructing, most of whom are Puerto Ricans. They are adding to what I call in New York "the alloy." And there is no surprise that Mexicans have come in large numbers for the first time in New York and have had no trouble. The reason is it is a city built by immigrants, that there are basic templates there that have allowed newcomers, whether they are Mexican or Chinese or Russian or Dominican to fit into a city; templates that were cut by the Irish, the Jews, the Italians; templates include the sense of welcome and responsibility and a convictions that nobody should have to go through again what our parents and grandparents went through, that the kind of big-otries that affected their lives would not be repeated again.

So I see Mexicans working in all kinds of places. They are not, obviously, picking lettuce in New York. They are helping rebuild buildings. They are working in restaurants. Eighty of them were working in the World Trade Center when it went down. They are working, and as a result of that, bringing something that New York needed desperately, which was a return to the work ethic. They are doing the same thing my parents did when they came from Ireland in the 1920s. They took any job they could get. Careers were something for their children. Memoirs were going to be something for their children. The immigrants are too busy to write memoirs, if they can write at all.

When the Irish first came in the 1850s there were 100,000 Irish in Manhattan who could not speak English. They came from Irish-speaking parts of the West of Ireland. They went from some farm to New York without ever seeing Dublin, as I am sure there are Mexican immigrants who have never been through Mexico City and are now living in Chicago. So we, the older immigrants and their children, have a responsibility to make life better for the people arriving now, not only because they are economically indis-

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pensable, but because they are us. When I see a Mexican woman working at 2 o'clock in the morning somewhere, it's my mother. When I see a Mexican throwing garbage into a truck on Second Avenue after the restaurants close, it is my father. So I have to have that sense of connection in order to understand what a place like New York is. I think California is different because it was basically founded by people from Iowa in the twentieth century, so they had no memory of a European immigration. It had been hammered out of them in the Midwest somewhere. So they were very uncomfortable when they began to see large numbers of Mexicans arriving, particularly during and after the Mexican Revolution. But it is no accident that one of the great sections for Mexican life in Los Angeles is called Boyle Heights. Boyle was an Irishman. Even there you see the templates. There is a Jewish template in poor Los Angeles along Fairfax and other places that Mexicans have been able to inherit. And when I go there, I find that the most interesting part of Los Angeles. If you go to Beverly Hills there are a lot of people walking around trying to find their car, and if you're walking around without a car, you can be locked up and taken away. So New York understands why Mexicans come. I always say to them, "Thank you for coming. *Gracias por venir*. You're making the city better. We're better because you're here, and may your children enjoy it as much as anyone."

The notion of the American Dream always seems to be most imprecise. Dreams are unwilling. The American vision is another thing. The melting pot idea always reminds me of a fondue. I do not want to be part of fondue; I want something stronger. I think what we have ended up with in New York is an alloy. We have those bits and pieces of vapor and metals that combined are stronger than any individual. That is why on September 12th of 2001, New York was an amazing city because everybody, whether you were Mexican or third-generation Irish or Jewish, whether you were white, black, whatever, you were a New Yorker before you were anything else, and nobody ran. Nobody packed their trucks and said, "That's it. I'm going to South Dakota." Nobody did that. The place was better than it ever was, and right now it is better than it ever was because we have one million immigrants, the biggest immigration wave in 100 years. There are now more Mexicans in the United States than there were Mexicans in Mexico in 1940. We have that as an irreversible part of what we are, and we should celebrate because it is not what they are taking from the United States, it is what they are giving to the United States. They are giving their labor, they are giving their energy, their vision, and we should embrace that and build on it.

We could get in forever with a discussion of immigration law and what we should be doing, but I think the very first step is to say that no Mexican with American children will ever be deported, that if someone is in the United States and he or she has children born there and the children are American citizens by virtue of birth, they will never be separated. That is the first step towards legalizing people, who have come here for the same motives my parents had, in order to be able to say, "*Gracias por venir*."

Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, New York City, 1990 and 2000

	1990	%	2000	%
Total	7,322,564	100.0	8,008,278	100.0
White Nonhispanic	3,163,125	43.2	2,801,267	35.0
Black/African American Nonhispanic	1,847,049	25.2	1,962,154	24.5
Asian or Pacific Islander Nonhispanic	489,851	6.7	783,058	9.8
American Indian and Alaska Native	17,871	0.2	17,321	0.2
Other Race Nonhispanic	21,157	0.3	58,775	0.7
Nonhispanic of Two or More Races			225,149	2.8
Hispanic Origin (of any race)	1,783,511	24.4	2,160,554	27.0
Mexican	61,722	0.8	186,872	2.3
Puerto Rican	896,763	12.2	789,172	9.9
Cuban	56,041	0.8	41,123	0.5
Other Hispanic or Latino	768,985	10.5	1,143,387	14.3

Source: Census 2000, U.S. Census Bureau

Democracy and the International Press

Jesús Silva-Herzog Márquez

Perceptions carried in the media can influence politics. In particular, I would argue that the U.S. press has influenced Mexican politics significantly in recent times. The internationalization of Mexican politics allowed the U.S. press to become one of the actors in the transformation of Mexico's political system and the transition to democracy.

Mexico's political system no longer coincides with the boundaries of the Mexican state. The actors that participate in day-to-day politics in Mexico are no longer just those within Mexican territory. By this, I do not mean that outsiders are "interfering" in Mexican politics or that this is outside "intervention," which suggests a malignant and meddling involvement. Rather, I refer to the participation of outside actors in the Mexican political process, recognizing that this is a normal process in democracies in a global world. In this case, the participation of the U.S. press probably helped change Mexican politics in a good way, in a democratic direction.

The way in which the U.S. media has become a part of Mexican politics is an important chapter of Mexico's transition to democracy. In the last years of Mexican authoritarianism, the international press, and particularly the American press, had an extraordinarily important role to play. It offered a channel for information and a voice to express criticism that was difficult to express in Mexico, and it also helped Mexican media to address issues they could not otherwise.

A Spanish journalist once said in the years of Franco that the Caudillo was accountable only to God and to history until he eventually became accountable to the foreign press. A country without institutional channels for public criticism, without an independent parliament, and without a free press nonetheless gave importance to foreign views, particularly in the time in which that regime depended on foreign relations. I would say that with little exaggeration, we could say this about Mexican authoritarianism. A closed political system that was only accountable to the memory of the Revolution and to history became accountable gradually to the foreign press.

I think that the key period when the foreign press played an extraordinarily important role was in the 1990s, and I would say that there were several elements that created this perhaps anomalous relevance of the foreign

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press. First of all, there was a government with problems of legitimacy, a government that came to power amid clouds of suspicion. Secondly, it was also a government that also had as its most ambitious political project the realization of an international treaty, the North American Free Trade Agreement. There was no possibility of hiding between the cactus curtain any more. The Salinas administration was particularly eager to win the support of the American political establishment. Third, I would say that the importance of

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the foreign press was magnified because of the weakness of the Mexican press, which faced an important degree of political control. There were a few small independent journals, but no space for criticism in electronic media.

Finally, the political structure in Mexico was becoming increasingly pluralistic and the emerging political parties and non-governmental organizations understood the importance of creating alliances outside of Mexican territory. The 1990s were not only the time in which Mexican government discovered how to lobby Washington as it negotiated NAFTA; it was also the time in which opposition parties and organizations that there were important allies in the U.S. unions, media, and think tanks. And this made the media an extraordinarily powerful actor in Mexican politics and a force in Mexico's transition to a democratic system.

In previous periods of Mexico's authoritarian regime, if the opposition went to the United States to speak with members of Congress or with the *New York Times* to criticize Mexican politics, this was considered treason at home. In the 1990s, this nationalistic idea that “you clean your dirty laundry at home” was lost.

This proved to be very important, for example, in the electoral process. It certainly contributed to the myth of Vicente Fox in the early 1990s. The annulment of the Guanajuato elections, the rejection of those elections by the Electoral Commission, and the resignation of the governor-elect had a

“I would say that the coverage of Mexico in the American press is highly complex, frequent, and increasingly free of old stereotypes.”

lot to do with the elections being denounced in the United States. Without the *Wall Street Journal* article criticizing the elections as fraudulent, I am not sure if Vicente Fox would have been the local political figure and then the national political figure that he came to be.

I would say that the foreign press also became an involuntary ally of the Mexican press because, as the Mexican press was getting stronger and had more autonomy, the news carried in the American media somehow became legitimate to be covered in Mexican press. For example, once the American press talked about the dealings between the President of Mexico and the businessmen who contributed millions to the finances of the official party, it became legitimate to talk about this in the Mexican press.

The moment of greatest influence of the international and U.S. media in Mexico was during the negotiations over NAFTA. After that, it became

another actor, still important, but not as protagonistic or powerful. The U.S. correspondents from the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Los Angeles Times* are no longer as powerful in Mexican politics as they used to be in the Salinas era, in which they were really bosses of Mexican politics, but they are still very influential in Mexico's politics.

There has been huge criticism of the coverage of Mexico in the American press. It has been said that it is obsessed with only a few issues, such as drug trafficking and corruption. It has also been said that the American press forgets Mexico and it is concentrated in other areas of the world. I would disagree with both claims. I would say that the coverage of Mexico in the American press is highly complex, frequent, and increasingly free of old stereotypes. Clearly the U.S. press is more concentrated in other parts of the world right now, largely in the Islamic world, in the places where the United States has troops, where there are many American soldiers dying each day. But I would say that the accusation that the American press does not pay any attention to Mexico is completely ill-founded. I would argue that the most important issues facing Mexico—the problems of our immature democracy, the drama of illegality and crime in Mexico, the new expressions of Mexico's culture in cinema and society—are, in fact, present in the American media. Perhaps there is no other country in the world that is not in flames that receives so much attention from the American journalistic community.

However, the U.S. press does reflect another element of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Mexico and that is the asymmetry between the two countries. Although Mexican cabinet secretaries are deeply sensitive to the way their work might be reflected in the American press, I doubt that Secretary Rumsfeld is worried about articles in *La Jornada* or *Proceso* or *Reforma*.

I would agree with Enrique Krauze's comment, however, that the perception of the United States in Mexico's press is still very much marked by the memory of resentment. I would argue, nonetheless, that this has changed significantly in recent years and there is a more complex perception of the United States. There are an increasing number of Mexican scholars, journalists, and opinion-makers who have a complex idea of the United States and that are able to avoid the stereotypes and the historical notion of the enemy.

Nonetheless, Mexico's intellectual community is still marked by a sense of resentment towards the United States. One U.S. Ambassador asked, "Why is it that all of the opinion articles in Mexico's press have to start their analysis of bilateral relations with a reference to 1847? Why does everyone have to put that in the first place?" And I think that is true. It is reflected, for example, in the absence of an intelligent debate on the meaning of September 11th for the United States. It is evident in the absence of an intelligent debate in Mexico's press and academic community of the meaning of

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the Iraq war. I am not suggesting that Mexico's reaction should have been one of immediate support, but it should have been one of intelligent analysis. There were good reasons for opposing the war in Iraq, Michael Walzer has said, and there were bad reasons for opposing the war. I think that the reasons published in the Mexican press were basically very bad reasons—reasons that had to do with that culture and memory of resentment.

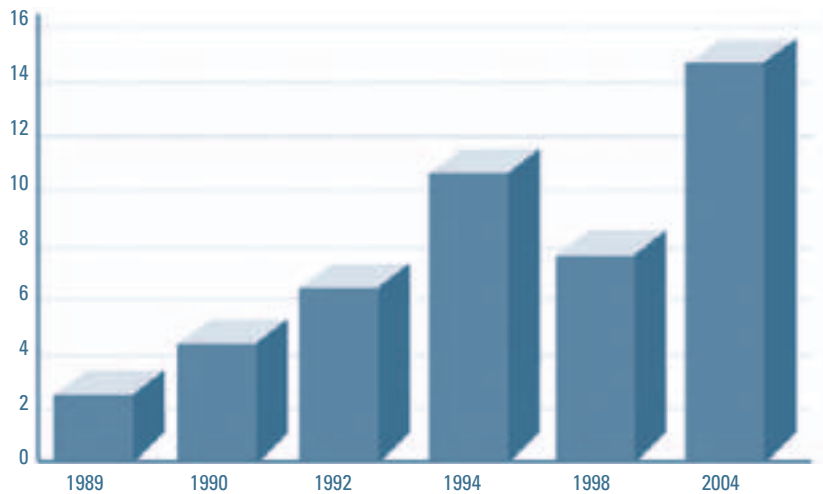
“Perhaps there is no other country in the world that is not in flames that receives so much attention from the American journalistic community.”

I agree with that impression of the schizophrenia of our intellectual community; a country that is more and more dependent on the United States, a country that has, through the money that the Mexican-American or Mexican workers send home, is still oriented by the idea that the United States is ultimately the enemy and the menace.

And I agree that what we need is to follow the advice of Daniel Cosío Villegas, the advice of doing research on the United States, of understanding the United States, and of leaving behind the culture of prejudice and resentment for a more balanced, complex, and realistic understanding.

Cross-Border Journalism

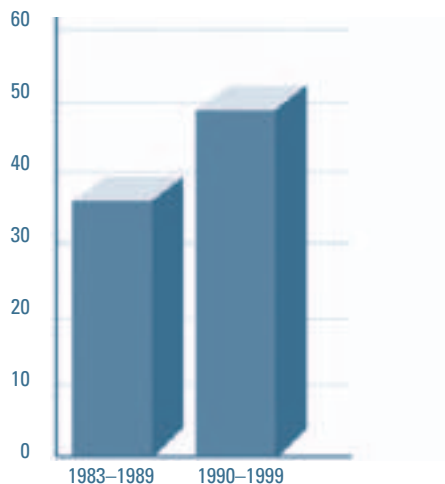
Mexican Correspondents in Washington D.C.



■ Number of press representatives

Source: Dolia Estévez, "Los medios en la relación binacional México-Estados Unidos," in Rafael Fernández de Castro, editor, *México en el Mundo: Los Desafíos para México en 2001*, Mexico City: ITAM and Asociación Mexicana de Cultura, 2001.

Number of American Media Representatives in Mexico City



■ Number of press representatives

Source: Press Office, U.S. Embassy in Mexico. Figures are Approximate.

SECTION 3

Working With Each Other

Javier Treviño coordinated this section on the challenges of working together in politics and business, and posed a series of questions to the contributors:

Has NAFTA changed our mutual perceptions over the past 10 years? And, if so, in what way? In particular, has NAFTA brought us closer and allowed us to understand each other better or has it been a disruptive element that has added new challenges to the relationship?

Are we able to work more easily with each other, both in government and in business than 10 years ago? How do different perceptions in Mexico and the U.S. about each country affect the way in which we work together at the governmental and private levels?

Are the bureaucratic and entrepreneurial cultures in both countries really converging or are they still fundamentally different?

How do we overcome the barriers that prevent a closer working relationship between our two countries? And what can we do to foster a more accurate perception of what Mexico and the U.S. truly stand for in order to work better together?

CHAPTER 6

Changing Perceptions

Jesús Reyes Heróles

The working relationship between the United States and Mexico is one of the most complex bilateral partnerships in the world. It is driven by conflicting impulses, bad historical memories, the insurmountable fact of geographical proximity, an impressive cooperative network, both fear and trust.

Approaching the relationship from the viewpoint of perceptions and misconceptions puts us at the core of the intricacies of the bond that joins both countries. The issue of perceptions brings the human nature of the relationship between the two nations to the center stage of the discussion.

A methodological clarification is needed before proceeding. In what follows, the word “perception” refers to a mental representation based on incomplete information and derived more from sensory information than from systematic thought. Therefore a perception may not be precise, but it might produce an enlightening image.

In this context, a misconception is a not fully accurate mental representation that results from an examination or evaluation of an issue. The source of the error can be the information used and/or a faulty analytic process. However, both perceptions and misconceptions form the dominant portion of common knowledge in any country.

The aim of my comments is to explore the role of this kind of imperfect knowledge in the working relationship between the governments of Mexico and United States.

The Importance of Perceptions When Working Together

Perceptions about other countries are important because they create the space where working together becomes possible. The issues to be addressed, the nature of the approach to deal with them, the set of solutions to be considered, the modalities of joint work, even the language of diplomatic exchanges are determined by the interaction of the perceptions and misconceptions of the majority of the population in both nations.

In every democracy, politicians and government officials constantly face restrictions imposed by “public opinion,” which eventually becomes the electorate and, by casting its vote, defines the frontier of the possible on public policy issues. Expressions of the political jargon like “this is not the time” or “public opinion is not ready for that” become instant assessments of the limits that perceptions levy on joint work. In modern societies, other sectors also face limitations determined by larger groups, be they con-

“Perceptions about other countries are important because they create the space where working together becomes possible.”

stituencies, shareholders, or organized interests groups. Hence perceptions matter and become a key determinant of the possibilities for working together.

This does not mean that those who lead the countries cannot change the margin for action. Frequently, but certainly not always, the members of the elite have more accurate perceptions and fewer misconceptions than public opinion at large. After all, that is their role, because they are supposed to gather sound knowledge about the other country.

How far are elites willing to go against some perceptions? The recent history of the U.S.-Mexico relationship provides prime examples of leaders swimming against the current. NAFTA would not exist if Presidents Carlos Salinas and George H. Bush, as well as Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, had not taken the lead on this issue. Many distinguished members of the business community also did their part to make NAFTA happen.

Take another example: the Mexican economy and the international financial system would not be what they are today if men like President William J. Clinton and Secretary Robert Rubin had not acted as true leaders in putting together the financial package to support Mexico in 1995.¹

So perceptions do matter, but they are not unmovable obstacles. Their influence in shaping collaborative work by the two countries depends, at least partially, on the attitudes and will of elites.

Perceptions About Two Significantly Different Countries

Although it sounds cliché, it is still an unavoidable fact that Mexico and the United States are vastly different countries, with substantial economic, social, political and cultural differences. This is why their common border has been portrayed as the one where North meets South. This also explains the scope and complexity of their bilateral agenda. These differences are not imaginary but very real, here are a few examples:

- GDP per capita: Mexicans have an income of about one sixth that of US citizens.
- Average schooling: 14 years in U.S. and 7.2 in Mexico.
- Income of the poorest 20% of the families: 5.4% of total income in the U.S. and only 3.1% in Mexico.
- Daily salary of a cleaning lady: US: \$80; Mexico: \$12.
- Divorces per 1,000 population: US: 4.6; Mexico: 0.5.
- Average household: US: 2.5 persons; Mexico: 4.3 persons.
- Age of marriage: 29 and 26 years for men and women in the United States, but 25 and 22 in Mexico.
- Number of national political parties: US: 2; Mexico: 6.

The cultural differences are too many to be reviewed here. The visions and traits inherited from our differing colonial experiences are significantly distinct, deeply rooted in each society and will only converge very slowly.

These differences are a defining issue of the bilateral relationship and obviously play a significant role in shaping the modalities of working together. The word frequently used to depict this unique characteristic of the neighborhood is “asymmetries,” which introduces a myriad of particular features when working together.

How do the perceptions in each country capture these differences? According to a recent poll of Ekos, taken during the last quarter of 2003, Americans were asked about the first *image* that comes to their mind when thinking of Mexico, to which they answered:²

Poverty	30%
Vacations/resorts	13%
Migrants/border crossing	8%
Heat/climate	7%
Culture/history	7%
Food	6%
Positive friendly people	5%
Competitor in labor market	5%
Stereotypes (e.g. “sombrero”)	4%
Other	11%
DK/NR	5%

The dominant perception about Mexico is quite accurate, and highlights poverty. Furthermore, if culture/history is added to food, a topic clearly interwoven with culture and traditions, the cultural dimension becomes the second essential image of Mexico, only matched by the successful positioning of Mexican tourist spots in the mind of Americans. It is interesting to note that corruption/crime did not receive significant attention.

When asked to express a *favorable or unfavorable* opinion about Mexico, 45% of Americans have a favorable opinion, 26% neutral and 24% unfavorable (5% DK/NR). As a point of comparison, when the same question was asked about Canada, only 10% had an unfavorable opinion, a relatively small difference if the relationships are placed in a historical perspective.

The Ekos survey reports that the image that Americans have on average about Mexico is that the country is different from the United States (73%), poor (73%), traditional (65%), unjust (47%), dangerous (52%) and divided (43%). Like it or not, it cannot be said that this depiction has no correspondence with reality.

On the other side of the border, when Mexicans were presented with the same question about the United States, the first images that came to their minds were:

Money/work/security:	26%
Progress/Power/industry:	7%
Terrorism/war:	7%
Migrants/immigration:	7%

National symbols (e.g. flag)	6%
Cities	2%
Beautiful country	2%
Other:	15%
DK/NR	27%

The dominant perception of Mexicans about the United States has to do with money, work and security. If the second image, that of progress/power/industry, is added to the first, a third of those interviewed coincided in pointing out the power of the United States economy as its main characteristic. This perception is also fully consistent with reality.

Other recent empirical evidence ratifies what opinion polls have been pointing out for years now. The majority of Mexicans have a positive perception about the United States, centered on the strength of its economy. There are clear indicators that this majority has a kind of “admiration” for the US economy, including the hardworking traits of its population. This positive perception has advanced over the last 10 to 15 years. However, consistently about a quarter of Mexicans express an unfavorable opinion of the United States.

Towards the end of 2003, the unflattering opinions increased to 28%, under the stress of the war in Iraq.

In regard to the *image* that Mexicans have of the U.S., the Ekos survey reports that they consider it prosperous (81%), modern (77%), united (48%), dangerous (47%), different from Mexico (46%) and unequal (44%). Again, prosperity and modernity, two positive characteristics, are the dominant images about the U.S. in Mexico.

It is interesting to note that concepts like *aggressive/bully* were not applied by Mexicans to describe the United States, as nationals of other countries did, and that corruption and drug trafficking were not applied by Americans to depict Mexico, as was the case in the recent past.

In both countries perceptions about each other do reflect basic realities. Stereotypes do not dominate the image. Mexico is poor, traditional and unjust, while the United States is prosperous, modern and united. It should not come to any surprise that Americans consider Mexico different (73%) and Mexicans consider the United States different from Mexico (46%), though less intensely so. Realities do shape perceptions.

Building Perceptions: The Role of the Media

The number of Mexicans who have ever been in the United States and of Americans that have visited Mexico represent only relatively small fractions of the total populations. Therefore, the perceptions about each other are mainly based on indirect information, provided to a large extent by the media and, less so, by others who have had the experience of visiting the other country. The media is primarily responsible for transmitting views about each other to the population at large.

“When two countries as asymmetric as the United States and Mexico are also partners, good reciprocal images are in the best interest of each other.”

Both Americans and Mexicans rely on the electronic media, especially television, as their prime source of information. Even when fully independent, the content and spin of media coverage is subject to influence. Actually, most sectors and interest groups devote a significant amount of their time and resources trying to modify the content or to change the spin of news. The Mexican and U.S. governments are no exception to this. Hence, perceptions and misconceptions cannot be considered a fully exogenous factor when analyzing their impact on the bilateral relationship. Washington, D.C. is well recognized as spin city and capital of information leaks. Mexico City is steadily learning from that tradition.

The Mexico-U.S. relationship provides many good examples of this phenomenon. Consider two consecutive periods: the years immediately preceding the election of July 2000, when President Fox was elected, and the first two years of the Fox Administration (2001 and 2002). The coverage by the U.S. media of Mexican issues changed drastically. The balance of topics moved away from those considered uncomfortable for Mexico, like drug trafficking, towards others that had a positive flair, like democratic change. We all witnessed the profound transformation in the coverage of Mexican affairs within only a week after the 2000 election. The President of Mexico had not even changed and the country was already radically different through the media prism. Mexico had passed the litmus test of party alternation in the Presidency and thus entered the club of “fully” democratic nations.

“Enough understanding and trust have been built to allow for an increase in joint action. That effort has to start with a reality check, where Americans recognize that NAFTA will not be enough and Mexicans face the fact that internal change and performance have not been enough.”

Working Together to Change Perceptions

Perceptions reflect reality and are partially shaped by the media. The only way to change them is acting simultaneously on realities and on the media (selection, coverage, and spin).

Let us begin with the easier part. Relevant actors on both sides of the border have been devoting more and more time to deal with the media, frequently in coordinated fashion but with limited results, given that developments on the reality front have not been enough to back arguments presented to journalists. The lesson is clear: perceptions cannot be modified if reality supports them.

When two countries as asymmetric as the United States and Mexico are also partners, good reciprocal images are in the best interest of each other. Hence, the U.S. government should try to protect the image of Mexico in its territory, and vice versa.

But that does not take care of the difficult task: changing reality. The essential feature of the reality of our two countries is that there are differences. For at least the last decade, we have been working together to close many of the existing gaps. For our relationship to be stable, Mexico faces the task of

becoming prosperous. Convergence of incomes, wages, schooling, infrastructure, and the social safety net is absolutely essential for Mexico to remain as a peaceful, stable, reliable and possibly friendly neighbor of the United States. NAFTA was the first step in that direction. It has yielded reasonably positive results. But now something else is needed. Mexico is not growing, nor going ahead with the structural reforms that it requires to remain competitive in the global economy, nor is it making satisfactory progress in reducing social inequalities. If that does not change, Mexico will continue to be perceived in the United States as a poor, traditional and unjust country. No actions on the media front would be sufficient to counter those facts.

Perceptions Do Change

In December of 2003 the U.S. government tightened its security and, based on intelligence reports, asked Mexico to do likewise. Concerns that specific flights of Mexican airlines had been targeted by terrorists led to beefed up security in airports, precisely during the December holiday season, creating unprecedented inconveniences to travellers. Immigration and FBI agents took part in those operatives in Mexican territory and the local media made this its leading story for over a week.

Despite all this, in general Mexicans faced this event with remarkable ease. A GEA poll of January 8, 2004 gives interesting clues about attitudes on this issue.³ Two thirds of those polled approved the cooperation of the Mexican government with that of the United States, even if that meant inconveniences for travellers. Despite the fact that 60% considered the presence of U.S. agents in Mexican airports a violation of the country's sovereignty, the population was evenly split (47% each) in its opinion about whether Mexico should cooperate with the United States, even if that meant a violation of national sovereignty.

This degree of acceptance of Mexicans on such a sensitive issue indicates how much the resistance of Mexicans to working more closely with the United States in a variety of issues has diminished, including security. NAFTA, the election of July 2000 and other factors contributed significantly to change this attitude. This clearly proves that when working together perceptions can be changed.

By Way of Conclusion

Conventional wisdom dictates that Mexico and the United States are and will always remain distant neighbors, a bear and a porcupine constantly at odds, with only a limited friendship. However the real perceptions that the majority of Americans and Mexicans hold about each other do not confirm that vision. Gradually, enough understanding and trust have been built to allow for an increase in joint action. That effort has to start with a reality check, where Americans recognize that NAFTA will not be enough and Mexicans face the fact that internal change and performance have not been enough.

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Notes

1. For an insightful account of this episode see Rubin (2003).
2. Cited in Public Policy Forum (2003).
3. GEA-ISA national phone poll of January 8th, 2004.

Public Opinion on Foreign Policy

Percentage who say the following should be a “very important” goal of their country’s foreign policy			
	Mexico		U.S.
Protecting the interests of Mexicans in other countries	88%	Protecting the jobs of American workers	78%
Promoting the sale of Mexican products in other countries	85%	Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons	73%
Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States	83%	Combating international terrorism	71%
Combating international terrorism	78%	Securing adequate supplies of energy	69%
Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons	77%	Stopping the flow of illegal drugs into the United States	63%
Promoting and defending human rights in other countries	71%	Controlling and reducing illegal immigration	59%
Helping to improve the standard of living of less developed countries	66%	Maintain superior military power worldwide	50%
Strengthening the United Nations	60%	Improving the global environment	47%
Bringing Mexico’s disputes with other countries to international tribunals	60%	Combating world hunger	43%
Helping bring democracy to other countries	55%	Strengthening the United Nations	38%
		Protecting the interests of American business abroad	32%
		Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression	18%
		Helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations	18%
		Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations	14%

Source: Guadalupe González, Susan Minushkin, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Catherine Hug, eds., *Global Views 2004: Comparing Mexican and American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, Mexico City: CIDE, Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales, and the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2004.

Towards a New Vision for North America

Jeffrey Davidow

There are several points about the U.S.-Mexico relationship that may seem commonplace and common sense, but it is important to restate these elements because sometimes in our conversations we immediately go off on tangents without building the necessary foundation.

The first thing to recognize is that at the working level and in terms of government and business interaction, the relations between the two countries are remarkably good and quite fluid. No two countries in the world probably have more business to do with each other on a daily basis than do the United States and Mexico. Within government, there are many ways in which business is conducted. A great deal is done informally, in the sense that it is part of the ongoing, constant relationship between government departments in the two countries. It is quite common for a cabinet minister in Mexico or an undersecretary or a director general to pick up the phone and talk to his or her counterpart in the United States. This takes place on a constant basis and provides a significant challenge for ambassadors—like Jesús Reyes Heróles and me—as we try to run embassies because the officials in question do not always share their conversations with the ambassadors.

“No two countries in the world probably have more business to do with each other on a daily basis than do the United States and Mexico.”

In addition to this constant, informal back and forth, in which the respective embassies often do not participate, over the years and particularly since NAFTA came into being, a number of structures have been created to promote more formal relationships. The famous Binational Commission, which actually pre-dates NAFTA and which has brought together cabinet members of the two countries once a year for the last 20 years, is perhaps the highest expression of this. The Binational Commission meetings, for any of you who have had the misfortune to attend them, are horribly tedious and quite frequently boring. Nevertheless, the fact that ten cabinet ministers from each side get together for a day or two is important. Even more important is the fact that the respective bureaucracies know two or three months before the meeting that they have to get something done so their ministers look good. The whole search for “deliverables” is very important. This bureaucratic effort should not be deprecated because it helps move along the relationships between the governments.

Despite the informal communication and the formal structures, there are significant impediments to fluid binational relations. But I think it is impor-

tant to recognize that the impediments, the obstacles, and the problems really take place within a context that is generally free-flowing, usually easy, and marked by a lot of formal and informal mechanisms which have grown up over the years and particularly over the last decade.

What are some of the impediments to greater levels of communication or greater levels of integration or convergence, depending on how one wants to look at these things? It seems to me that there are cultural, political, and structural problems. And they are intertwined. It is hard to separate culture from politics and politics from structure. But let me try to point out a few issues. There is a common perception both in the United States and in Mexico that the Mexican attitude toward the United States is one of love/hate. Sometimes Mexico loves the United States; sometimes Mexico hates the United States. Usually, it does both at the same time. I disagree. In point of fact I do not

“Most Americans do not spend a lot of time thinking about Mexico. Most American politicians are totally uninterested in Mexican reactions to U.S. activities or to the collateral damage that it can bring to Mexico.”

think there is a whole lot of love and I do not think there is a whole lot of hate. To the contrary, what exists is a general ambivalence about the United States. An attraction as well as a repulsion; a promise of opportunity and a premonition of threat. The opportunities are multiple: for doing business, for emulating democracy, for educating one's children; to imbibe American culture—both high and popular. There is this sense of attraction, of opportunity. Yet, at the same time there is also a significant foreboding. Will American culture become dominant? You cannot go through the last few days of October and the first few days of November in Mexico without reading the same story in the press every year about the encroachment of Halloween on *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead).

There is a concern about the loss of identity; a preoccupation that the great weight of the American economy will overwhelm Mexico; while at the same time the opportunity is there and recognized.

So this ambivalence, which is often held by the same people at the same time or different times on the same day, makes for a cultural attitude towards the United States that is complex to say the least. There is a general tendency, especially in times of stress, to focus more on threat than on opportunity. I like to compare Mexican attitudes to Canadian attitudes. In point of fact, I think there are probably stronger feelings—love and hate—in Canada towards the United States than there are in Mexico. At the same time, the general attitude vis-à-vis threat and opportunity is that Canadians generally see the United States as an opportunity. “The United States needs to import natural gas? Well, we'll sell it to them. Charge them a lot of money. Why not?” That's why Canada makes 10 billion dollars a year selling gas to the United States. And at the same time Mexico turns around and buys 2 billion dollars worth from the United States. In Canada the general attitude is let us take advantage of the relationship with the United States. While in Mexico there is a greater preoccupation with the threat that the closeness of the United States presents and this attitude often impedes closer cooperation and rational economic decisions.

In terms of American attitudes, which are equally complex, there is a general disregard for Mexico. Most Americans do not spend a lot of time thinking about Mexico. Most American politicians are totally uninterested in Mexican reactions to U.S. activities or to the collateral damage that it can bring to Mexico, for example, through congressional action on particular issues. So there is a generalized lack of concern, lack of interest. The United States can be quite damaging to Mexico, though the damage is usually inadvertent rather than inflicted with malicious intent.

On the political front these cultural attitudes are influential. Because the population of both countries do not understand the complexity of the relationship and do not value the enormity of that which is good in the relationship, single issues can hijack the entire bilateral discussion. For many years the United States thought only one issue was important with Mexico. For most of the 1990s it was narcotics. It did not matter that NAFTA was doubling and tripling trade. It did not matter that more Mexican students were coming to the United States. It did not matter that annual investment by American companies in Mexico had gone up by 400 percent a year. All that was irrelevant. In the political context there was only one issue, narcotics. And it hijacked the relationship. The whole certification process became an annual drama in both countries. With the end of certification and with the election of Fox, narcotics has largely disappeared as that dominant issue, although in reality the situation on the ground has not improved dramatically.

Unfortunately, another single issue replaced it, this time on the Mexican side: migration. So the unrelenting focus during the first year or more of the Fox Administration—and continuing until today—on the issue of migration tends to cloud all the other elements of the relationship. This over-emphasis on one theme responds to strong domestic political concerns. These are sensitive and important issues. One should not underestimate them. But the concentration on the narcotics issue then, the migration issue now, makes it difficult to deal with the full panoply of issues in the relationship. We will always be potential victims of relationship-kidnapping. This is unfortunate, but it is the way our political systems work.

I mentioned earlier the structural mechanisms that allow for better communication, and they do exist though they are not generally understood. One of the problems in the relationship today was the fact that both countries changed administrations in the year 2000. As a result, a very intricate web of commissions, subcommissions, committees, conduits and channels that had developed during the 1990s under the Clinton Administration and under the Presidencies of Carlos Salinas and Ernesto Zedillo were not fully understood or appreciated by either of the new governments. For instance, the High Level Contact Group on narcotics served a very important symbolic purpose. Structurally it was also important because it brought together all of the agen-

“Because the population of both countries do not understand the complexity of the relationship and do not value the enormity of that which is good in the relationship, single issues can hijack the entire bilateral discussion.”

cies of the two governments dealing with narcotics issues. It, and other similar mechanisms, largely dissipated after the two new administrations came in. In fact, it is easy for people new to government to look at the system that existed and say, “Do we really need another damn committee meeting? Do we have to travel? Do we have to do this?” Yes, you do. You really do. That is what you get paid for when you are in government. A large part of being in government is being bored much of the time. And if you do not like it, or if you finally get fed up, you can retire and go to California.

Other elements of the structural relationship are not functioning. Yet, there is not enough political will to change them. For instance, the whole question of NAFTA trade disputes, which are supposed to be resolved through established mechanisms, is being subverted because neither government is actually interested in using the mechanism to resolve problems. Rather, they use the mechanism to take a problem off the front page and put it some place else where they can forget about it for a while. Similarly, the International Boundary and Waters Commission, which has existed for many years and should be doing a great deal of work on the water issue, is generally helpless in this kind of conflict. Many other structural elements of the relationship have also not kept pace with the realities of the 20th century, much less the 21st century. They are weak. They should be strengthened.

“To change political and cultural attitudes and to give new strength to structure in the relationship, what is needed is a new vision for North America.”

To change political and cultural attitudes and to give new strength to structure in the relationship, what is needed is a new vision for North America. I do not know where North America is going to be in 20 or 30 years. If you ask me if it is going to look like the European Union, I would say probably not. But unless we have leaders who espouse a vision that says, in effect, “We don’t know what we’re going to look like in 20 or 30 years, but we are going to be even more intertwined and thus governments, to the degree possible, should work to bring us closer together.” This would be a major development and might replace Mexico’s unhealthy and constant worrying about the threat of U.S. domination and compel the U.S. to be less disrespectful or disregarding of Mexico. As we move in this direction, it would not be wise to think of North America without factoring in Central America, which in many ways culturally and economically has much in common with some parts of Mexico.

Finally, it is hard to have a conversation about U.S.-Mexican relations without somebody bringing up the term asymmetry. It is the favorite word of all Mexican political scientists and economists and is meant to convey the unequal power wielded by the two countries. Of course, there are asymmetries; however, I happen to think that the asymmetries have worked almost entirely to the benefit of Mexico for most of the recent relationship with the United States.

Mexico has played upon its very weakness to extract from the United States great benefits. Contrary to the public perception in Mexico of a rather

aggressive, assertive, difficult United States, I think the United States has generally dealt with Mexico with what we call kid gloves, with very soft *gantes*. Why? Because the United States has generally been concerned most with maintaining political and economic stability in Mexico. Open confrontation or criticism of Mexico could promote a certain amount of doubt in Mexico that ultimately would not be to the U.S. advantage. And Mexican governments have understood this and have frequently entered into negotiations with a gun figuratively pointed at their own head, saying, “If you really push us, we’ll commit suicide.” And we say, “No, please don’t. You’ll get blood on the carpet and it will be very difficult and embarrassing.”

I think that this period in our relationship is drawing to a close. I believe that one of the little noticed results of the 2000 election is that Mexico is no longer perceived by most Americans as a quasi-democracy or an unstable political system, but rather as just another democratic country with whom we can engage in negotiations without the kind of concerns about stability and upsetting a delicate and fragile environment. As we look ahead, the special relationship that Mexico and the United States have shared, with the concept of asymmetry quite frankly to the benefit of Mexico, will dissipate, and there will be a much more equal relationship that will, in some ways, be more difficult to manage for both countries.

The Economics of North America

Population and GDP in North America

	Population as a % of North American Total	GDP as a % of North American Total
Mexico	24%	4%
United States	69%	90%
Canada	7%	6%

Trade in North America

	% Exports to North America	% Imports from North America
Mexico	86.0%	62.0%
United States	36.2%	29.5%
Canada	86.4%	70.0%

Inequality: Distribution of Income by Quintiles in North America

	First Quintile (poorest 20%)	Second Quintile	Third Quintile	Fourth Quintile	Fifth Quintile (wealthiest 20%)
Mexico	3.6%	7.2%	11.8%	19.2%	58.2%
United States	5.2%	10.5%	15.6%	22.4%	46.4%
Canada	7.5%	12.9%	17.2%	23.0%	39.3%

Source: GDP, population, and inequality statistics from a presentation by Isabel Studer at the Woodrow Wilson Center Seminar on North American Community, June 2002. Trade statistics from Robert A. Pastor, *Towards a North American Community: Lessons from the Old World for the New*, Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 2001, p. 7. Trade figures are for 1999.

Deep Knowledge and Fundamental Understanding

José Antonio Fernández Carbajal

Throughout history we have come up with many ways to classify and separate the nations that make up the American continent. Based on geography we can talk about North, Central, and South America. Based on language, we distinguish between Latin American and Anglo American countries. As we often do, we attempt to categorize those qualities that set us apart rather than those that we have in common. So while all who are born on this continent are American by definition, that is not how the world has come to interpret the word “American.” This is a symptom of a relationship that has not been developed with balance, with mutual trust, or with a long-term horizon.

So how do we build a relationship based on trust? I believe two main ingredients are required. We require both a *deep knowledge* of each other and a *fundamental understanding* of each other.

Let us examine knowledge first. We usually gain knowledge through our own interest in its pursuit or by random contact. In the case of our nations, it falls somewhere in between. Mexico has never been able to afford ignoring or losing sight of its powerful neighbor to the north. For instance, nearly 85 percent of the country’s exports today are headed to the United States. Which is also the source of two thirds of foreign investment that finds its way into Mexico. On the other hand, the United States has historically varied in its degree of emphasis on the region, often following short-term factors such as the search for the Hispanic vote in an upcoming election or responding to a developing geopolitical threat. Mexico can go from being the center of attention to being largely ignored in a very short time.

While the events of these past two years have been unique and have forced the United States to substantially reorient its attention, we will continue to share this continent and our border. As a result, the relationship between our countries should be viewed as a permanent project. The way in which we communicate often denotes a lack of mutual knowledge. For example, a few months back last year, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives publicly conditioned the analysis of an immigration agreement with Mexico on the opening of the Mexican oil industry to foreign investment. While we will not attempt to pass judgment on the merits of such an idea, the very form in which the

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“It takes trust to gain trust. It also takes time and respect and congruity. It takes walking the talk. Too often in the past our nations’ leaders have failed to walk the talk.”

statement was made and disseminated to the media was enough to alienate Mexican public opinion rendering the proposal dead on arrival. Still the general perception of the United States remains positive in the region. But some surveys show a growing percentage of Mexicans disapproving of recent U.S. policies. Polls show dissatisfaction with the United States growing from 18 percent to 25 percent of the population in the last two years.

In addition to knowledge, we also need understanding, and in order to really understand one another, we must try to look through each other’s eyes, to step into each other’s shoes. Profound understanding cannot be achieved without knowledge. And it requires both a historical framework and the willingness to build a partnership for the long-term that incorporates our differences as well as our commonalities.

Nowhere are these differences and commonalities more apparent and more relevant to the United States than within its own borders. Through one of the largest migration waves in the history, a combination of geography, history, and the human aspiration to a better life has made Hispanics the largest minority in the United States, and they are growing fast. Today, roughly one in eight people in the United States are Latino. At the current growth rate in 20 years it will be one in four. So understanding and capitalizing on Latin American culture, in general, and Mexican culture, in particular, are now a necessity for the United States and a critical element of domestic policy.

Addressing the concerns of the Hispanics in the United States is also a sound business decision. U.S. Latinos spend an estimated \$350 billion annually in goods and services in the United States. In addition, even the people from Mexico that oppose U.S. policies come and buy and live and study in the United States. So there is a lot of spending in the United States from Latin Americans and Mexicans.

Moreover, south of the border there are over 300 million potential consumers from Latin America. Despite this, the GDP of the entire Latin American region—about \$1.5 trillion—barely exceeds the GDP of California, with Mexico contributing almost half of that GDP or slightly less than the GDP of Texas. As you can see, the potential for GDP growth is significant across the region. Average per capita GDP stands under \$4,000 in Latin America versus almost \$30,000 in the United States. Similarly, the levels of penetration of any industry from per capita beer consumption—which I am quite familiar with—to telephone lines, computers, or consumer banking services, are quite low by international standards. But the demographic possibilities are extraordinary. With 36 percent of the population under the age of 18, a country like Mexico sees over one million young people reach their productive prime ten times more often than the United States. Opportunities are enormous for the business community.

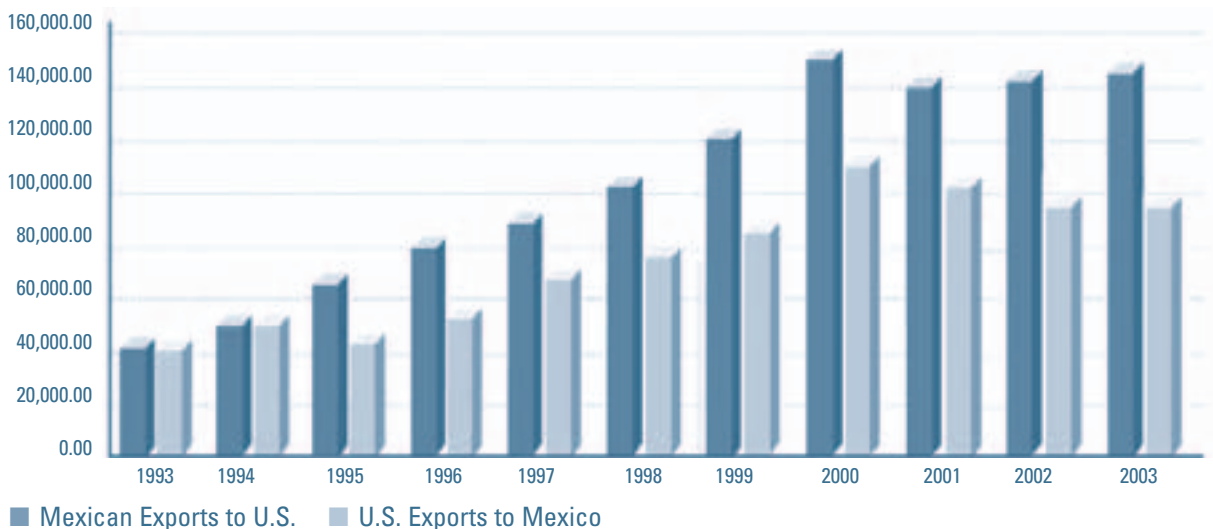
Another key factor in any relationship is trust. It takes trust to gain trust. It also takes time and respect and congruity. It takes walking the talk. Too often in the past our nations' leaders have failed to walk the talk. However, it is much easier to develop this trust when there are strong commonalities of principles.

And one such commonality of paramount importance is the growing presence of democracy across the continent and in Mexico, in particular. With varying degrees of development, and with all its complexities and growing pains, democracy is clearly and steadily transforming the region. Recently Mexico took yet another step in its path to a mature democracy when a generally orderly election process took place for the entire lower house of Congress as well as a myriad of local and state officials. It is a far cry from the day of one-party dominance and often very questionable elections. There is ample evidence from throughout the world of a powerful relationship between democracy, economic growth, and peaceful international relations.

Finally, while our public institutions continue to gain credibility, private corporations in the region and in Mexico are doing the same in their own areas of endeavor. In agreement with the global pursuit of enhanced disclosure and improved corporate governance, several major Mexican corporations are leading the way in developing and implementing policies that, together with a more robust legal framework, increasingly merit the trust of international investors.

In conclusion, I always tell my friends in the United States that your neighbor is at the door. He is young, eager, and willing to learn and work hard in peace. In the past when you have welcomed him into your home or you have chosen to visit his, he has proven to be a quick study, a good friend, and a very strong ally. He will do so again. And he will always be your neighbor.

Trade between Mexico and the United States



Note: Figures in millions of dollars.

Sources: Mexican Secretaría de Economía, NAFTAWorks, available at www.naftaworks.org; U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Foreign Trade Statistics, available at www.census.gov.

CHAPTER 9

Closer but Still Different

Brian Dyson

As a preface to my comments, I would say that half of my working life has been spent in Latin America and the other half based in the United States, but for a worldwide business. I mention this because obviously experience colors my perception.

Today's discussion reminds me of the philosopher Jorge Santayana who said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. If anything vivifies that philosophy, it is the recent history we have seen unfolding between Mexico and the United States and the lost opportunities.

To the fundamental question of has NAFTA brought us closer together? I would say, yes. To the corollary point, has it also introduced new challenges? I would say, you bet—and watch out.

Why has NAFTA brought us closer together? I think the general rule is the more we trade, the more we grow together. But this must be supported by, or even led by changes in popular culture and values. It is essential to understand that the two are connected. That openness and ability to trade and conduct commerce must be anchored in a corollary growth in the mutual understanding of culture and values. Any time that you have a disconnect between trade and cultural understanding, it is likely that this will undermine trade relations.

Although I want to focus on the last ten or fifteen years, I would like to add a footnote, a personal footnote, by doubling the timeframe and going back 30 years. Thirty years ago during the Presidency of Luis Echeverría, and if you contrast that period with today in terms of business and commercial relationships, to me it is night and day. At that time, Mexican business seemed very closed and withdrawn with regard to the bilateral relationship, perhaps even with selective hostility to certain areas of foreign business.

If we fast-forward now to the NAFTA years, I think there has been a marked change. More than anything I see that there is a more balanced relationship, a less unequal relationship. During the 1990s and into the beginning of this century I have seen evidence in Mexico of greater pride and confidence and conviviality with the northern neighbor—a sense of familiarity even. There now seems to be a pervasive feeling in Mexico that it is acceptable to welcome that which is foreign, precisely because Mexicans are more secure in their own beliefs and traditions. Let me try and illustrate this with a small example.

I think the general rule is the more we trade, the more we grow together. But this must be supported by, or even led by changes in popular culture and values. It is essential to understand that the two are connected.

It is something that I call the “Tequila effect.” I don’t mean the *Tequilazo* of 1994, rather I am referring to something from a marketing point of view. I was fascinated by how various Mexican companies have marketed refined Tequila to the world and especially to the United States, with great brand names and advertising flair. What was most important about this was not so much the product—which I did sample—as the concept, because to me it was emblematic of an opening to the world. It was showcasing a Mexican tradition in the international arena. The French have fine cognacs; the British have whiskey; Cubans their cigars; but Mexicans, too, have something to show the world. I thought that this was a product of something genuine, a change, a new direction. You could make the same analogy with regard to Mexican *telenovelas*, or soap operas, which appear around the world.

“You have to keep rejuvenating the relationship. It does not thrive in a vacuum. Other countries notice changes and they will want to compete. And, therefore, you have to keep these relationships like NAFTA fresh and competitive. Otherwise, they’re going to show their age.”

I do not know whether these changes have emerged from NAFTA or whether cultural changes preceded and led to NAFTA. If you go back fifteen years from today, you go back to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, when there was a huge wind of change throughout the world. It especially affected Latin America in the sense of a new openness to entrepreneurialism and free trade, and diminished the intellectual nihilism that held Latin America hostage on many fronts.

However, I am concerned about the future. With arrangements like NAFTA, which has really permitted a blossoming between the two countries, you have to keep rejuvenating the relationship. It does not thrive in a vacuum. Other countries notice changes and they will want to compete. And, therefore, you have to keep these relationships like NAFTA fresh and competitive. Otherwise, they’re going to show their age. I remarked that Mexico has lived through a period of greater *convivencia*—of openness and engagement with the world—but I am now feeling a slight drift in the other direction, a bit of a withdrawal. It is not that the pendulum will swing back completely, but it is going to adjust itself a little. And I would be disappointed if that does happen. I hope I am wrong.

To the broader question of perceptions and misconceptions, there is no denying that there is a definite level of distrust between Mexicans and Americans... but I would also say there is distrust amongst many neighboring countries all around the world. I am Argentine and I grew up with a vague distrust towards some countries, but it is all relative. These tensions are there and you understand them and you work with them. As regards the Mexico–U.S. relationship, we cannot ignore historical differences, the unequal dimensions of the relationship, and some of the negative consequences of sharing a border.

Now I would like to comment on how distrust and misperceptions manifest themselves in business relationships. I had to work quite hard on surfac-

ing these differences because, having worked on both sides of the fence, I usually take a lot of these instances as givens, as part of the normal business landscape. Thus I had to regress to an earlier age when I first experienced these perceptions. So, for whatever it is worth, here are some of the things that I think Mexicans feel about doing business with Americans and vice-versa.

In a business context, Mexicans often feel that Americans are given to arrogance, bluntness, and a lack of sensitivity—that they are strictly business, nothing more and nothing less. I think they also feel that Americans are very short-term in their focus, and that they are not open to building relationships for the long-term, not sufficiently cognizant of the importance of this. Finally they often feel that Americans do not give enough weight to cultural issues. To give you an example, I am involved in a corporation that builds and manages hospitals in Mexico. In one case, an American expert in healthcare visited one of the hospitals in Mexico and suggested the introduction of a fertility clinic, which is standard procedure in many U.S. hospitals, without realizing that this was quite culturally offensive to his Mexican colleagues. Fortunately, this was resolved because the Americans were sensitive to the reaction—but it is an example of how misunderstandings start.

On the other hand, a U.S. businessman looking at doing business in Mexico may regard the Mexican business landscape as more corrupt (I use the word “more,” because I do not think any American would be so chauvinistic as to say there is no business corruption in this country). But they believe that there is more corruption and more difficulties with situational ethics. I also think that Americans often feel that business in Mexico is less sophisticated, somewhat inferior, and more bureaucratic.

Finally, one of the things that needs to be recognized, as Richard Rodriguez has mentioned, is that the United States sees itself in primarily east/west terms. If you analyze airline flights and flows of people, it is east/west for the United States, not so much north/south. And, yet for Mexico, the colossus of the north represents 85 percent of foreign trade; whereas, for the U.S. it is only 12 percent. This is a reality; there is a difference in focus.

Another common area that leads to misunderstandings is the difference in law as it affects business. Latin America uses the Napoleonic code; the United States uses case law. What Mexicans often fail to recognize is that intent can be binding—what is spoken, or say a handshake agreement—even if it is not written. This in turn can lead to oral discovery in the absence of signed contracts. Something else that fascinates me is how Americans in practice assume that Mexicans are more similar than they are. When Americans negotiate abroad whether in Africa, the Middle East, Russia, Japan, or China, they may encounter situations they do not understand and then think, “Well, these people are different, difficult, complex, maybe even weird” and we must make allowances. Those same sets of contractual negotiating differences, when they

Americans in practice assume that Mexicans are more similar than they are. The differences between Mexicans and Americans can be deceptive.

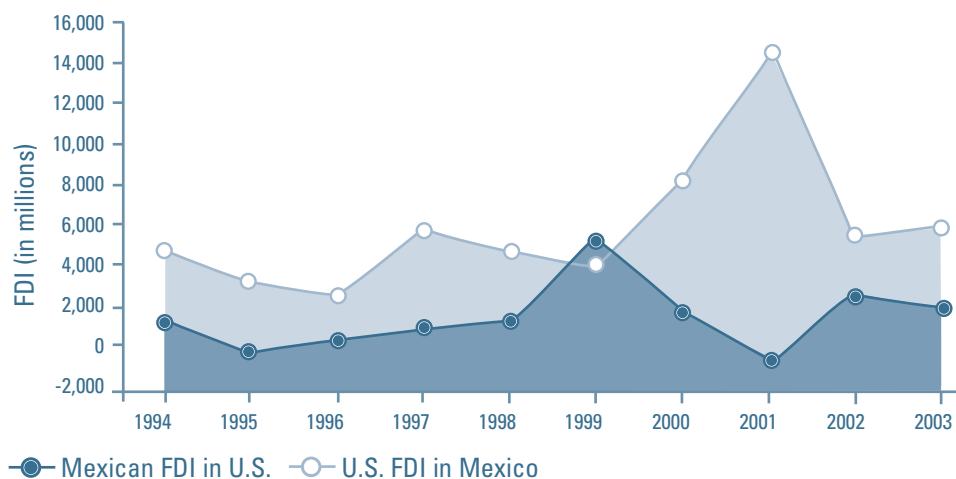
happen with Mexico, tend to be viewed as evidence of dishonesty. So where say, an American may view a Japanese practice as strange, or bizarre, the same position for a Mexican could be seen as conniving, or underhanded. You can almost hear the American thinking, "... they should be like us." The differences between Mexicans and Americans can be deceptive.

One substantive difference is that Mexicans attach a much greater significance to control positions. Control is viewed as protection, often to the detriment of the fiduciary interests of minorities—something that is true in all of Latin America. Often I feel that for Mexican businesses power is more important than results. Again, this tendency may have cultural roots: that is, that many Mexican corporations have evolved from family businesses, with the implied need to preserve control. For the future, it will be important to recognize that a more collaborative system—a sharing of power—may bring greater prosperity.

From my point of view, none of these differences that I have pointed out are in any way insurmountable. In fact, they are all really part of the game. As regards to solutions, it is very important to force open processes and debate, to make sure you get all issues on the table. The common complaint is that once you get up from the table, things start to change; but if you are disciplined, that should not happen. I think a healthy skepticism on both sides is not a bad idea; as the common phrase has it, "Trust, but verify." And, of course, there needs to be considerable respect for culture on both sides.

I want to conclude by saying that I have, in business practice, very little sympathy for people on either side of the border or anywhere in Latin America who complain too much about these differences in doing business. I believe that any businessman of any country should know that they are really being paid to understand the environment, and I do not think that it is difficult for anybody from America, who is trying to do business in Mexico, to be diligent about understanding the environment, the culture, and the values, and to transact a satisfactory negotiation. The same applies the other way around. Now, obviously, if there were less hang-ups and distrust and misperceptions, you could move faster. But that is the way it is both here and around the world. I think you only have yourself to blame if you do a bad deal.

Foreign Direct Investment



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, International Economic Accounts.

Exports to Mexico by U.S. State

State	2003	2004
Texas	\$41,561,359,398	\$45,707,391,485
California	\$14,871,836,372	\$17,239,378,536
Michigan	\$4,006,425,809	\$4,173,115,968
Arizona	\$3,229,461,524	\$3,794,137,782
Indiana	\$2,105,232,986	\$2,543,045,942
Illinois	\$2,152,722,025	\$2,417,219,773
Ohio	\$2,101,867,431	\$2,410,231,583
New York	\$1,704,739,558	\$2,167,982,874
Louisiana	\$1,776,102,030	\$1,948,559,906
Florida	\$1,814,458,344	\$1,795,016,816
Tennessee	\$1,475,631,270	\$1,790,533,618
North Carolina	\$1,463,759,069	\$1,582,138,624
Georgia	\$1,163,241,050	\$1,495,069,577
Pennsylvania	\$1,112,059,240	\$1,198,613,967
New Jersey	\$830,801,249	\$1,139,693,820
Wisconsin	\$788,032,717	\$1,064,413,517

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Trade and Industry Information, International Trade Administration TradeStats Express Data, 2003–2004, <http://tse.export.gov>

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Roots of Misperceptions

Pamela Starr

As I first listened to the conference presentations on which this volume is based, three themes recurred throughout the day. First, there seems to be agreement that Mexico and the United States are no longer “distant neighbors,” as Enrique Krauze has observed. The essays in this volume bear witness to this fact: One was penned by an author who is a child of Mexicans yet is truly American, another by an author who is a child of an American yet is truly Mexican. We see the operation of this dynamic in the formal and informal ties that have developed during the last 20 years across the border, most particularly political ties but also economic and social ties. We see it in media coverage, as discussed by Jesus Silva Herzog Marquez, and in the cultural influences that easily and regularly cross the border—everything from Americans drinking Corona beer to Mexicans watching American movies. Mexicans clearly note the Americanization of aspects of their culture, but there is also a gradual Mexicanization of American culture. For example, one of my nephew’s favorite bands, Molotov, is composed of both Americans and Mexicans, but plays a version of hard rock that is truly Mexican. And we see it in the deepening of trade relations, although I would argue that trade is not the most prominent component in the increasing closeness that has developed across the border in recent years. Across the board, there has been a coming together between Mexico and the United States, between their distinct national cultures, that did not exist twenty years ago.

The second thing that jumps out from the essays in this volume, however, is that despite the fact that we are no longer “distant neighbors” we still have enormous cultural differences. The bilateral relationship remains dominated by two different sets of cultural traditions that interact with increasing regularity. This inevitably generates misperceptions.

The foundation of this problem is not the perceptions, per se. Perceptions are a useful shorthand employed by the human brain. If we can interpret the behavior of others through the lens of our own experiences, their actions are easier for us to comprehend and predict. Problems emerge when these perceptions, founded on our own personal and hence cultural experiences, erroneously predict the behavior of individuals from cultures other than our own. Our challenge is to try to avoid misperceptions by understanding better the cultural context within which citizens of other cultures operate. Pete Hamill has correctly pointed out that art, music, and humor are reflections of culture,

“Misperceptions between cultures are thus born of our tendency to not understand the origins of our differences and hence to see the “unusual” behavior of others as wrong somehow.”

of who we are on each side of the border, and hence useful tools to help us to reflect on what we share and where we differ.

The third and final theme that emerges from this collection of essays is the need to ask ourselves “What is the origin of these differences?,” because until we understand the basis of these differences we cannot hope to find a common ground that will enable more effective communication and understanding. José Antonio Fernández has correctly noted that we need to have a deeper understanding of one another. I very much like his phraseology of our needing to walk in each other’s shoes, “to walk the walk” of the other, because in order to walk the walk in another’s shoes we must understand the nature of those shoes and for what purpose they were made. If I were to put on hiking boots and attempt to tap dance, it is clear that I

would not have much success, a reality that is equally true in reverse. This suggests that we must understand the way in which our neighbors walk—their shared national experiences—and the shoes that help them move forward in this fashion—their national culture. Only once we understand the origins of another culture can we understand its operation and how it differs from our own.

The essence of our cultural differences is thus very simple: Culture is nothing more than the behavioral expression of the shared experiences of a given group of people. Whether the consequence of geographic,

political, economic, and/or social realities, our shared experiences shape us and our expectations of how others will behave, and hence influence the way we interact with others. Culture is a lens through which we interpret the intentions of others and thus provides a shortcut to interacting effectively with individuals we do not know. In short, I know the way you will behave because, having the same experiences as mine, you will act more or less as I do. Problems emerge when we extrapolate in this way beyond those who share our national experiences. Since humans naturally tend to view everyone else through their particular cultural lens, we assume that others will behave the way we do. When they do not, it seems odd, inexplicable, perverse, distorted, and ultimately inferior. Misperceptions between cultures are thus born of our tendency to not understand the origins of our differences and hence to see the “unusual” behavior of others as wrong somehow.

In thinking about the U.S.–Mexico bilateral relationship, we need to consider explicitly the origins of our different cultural characteristics and address openly how these differences produce misperceptions. Brian Dyson discusses the differences in business relationships on each side of the border and he notes that Mexicans are deceptively different from Americans. My Mexican colleagues undoubtedly think I am deceptively different from Mexicans. On both sides of the border, we see our friends and associates as being much like ourselves. When we are comfortable interacting with another, we assume that

“Misperceptions between cultures are thus born of our tendency to not understand the origins of our differences and hence to see the “unusual” behavior of others as wrong somehow.”

they must be like us. When they behave differently, it is odd. It is out of place. It shouldn't be this way. It feels as if something is wrong.

The forces of globalization have been particularly profound across the U.S.-Mexico border and as a consequence we have been brought into closer contact with one another. As a result of these increased interactions, we are deceptively more comfortable with one another. American businessmen who work with Mexican businessmen educated in American universities, or in the elite Mexican universities populated by American professors, for example, find it initially easy to work with such colleagues. There is a common language that creates the sense that they are alike. But with time, once these deceptive surface commonalities are scratched, it becomes clear that Mexican colleagues are indeed Mexican and that American colleagues are American, and hence odd, inexplicable, and potentially second-rate.

Jeffrey Davidow draws the obvious conclusion that the deeper the degree of cross-border interaction, the greater the opportunity for misunderstanding. This is not inevitably a bad thing, however. Unless we interact and get to know one another, we can not hope to understand better the roots of our differences and thereby overcome them. But in the process of overcoming them, there will be a lot of room for misperception. We will inevitably be blind-sided from time to time by the other. It is going to be a long and bumpy road, but unless we consciously embark on this journey we will never truly cease to be "distant neighbors".

“The deeper the degree of cross-border interaction, the greater the opportunity for misunderstanding. This is not inevitably a bad thing, however. Unless we interact and get to know one another, we can not hope to understand better the roots of our differences and thereby overcome them.”

AGENDA

PERCEPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

A Joint Conference of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Mexico Institute and *Letras Libres* Magazine
February 27, 2004

WELCOME 9:00

Joseph S. Tulchin, Director,
Latin American Program, Wilson Center



KEYNOTE ADDRESS 9:30

Enrique Krauze, Author and Director,
Letras Libres Magazine



FIRST PANEL: WRITING ABOUT EACH OTHER 10:30

Richard Rodriguez, Author & Editor,
Pacific News Service

Christopher Domínguez, Author and
Contributing Editor, *Letras Libres*

Pete Hamill, Author and Staff Writer, *New Yorker*

Jesús Silva-Herzog Márquez, Professor,
ITAM and Columnist, *Reforma*

Georgette Dorn, Chief of the Hispanic Division;
Library of Congress (Moderator)



LUNCH 12:30

Remarks by **Lee H. Hamilton**, President,
Wilson Center, and **Enrique Krauze**

Roger Wallace, Co-Chair, Mexico Institute
Advisory Board (Moderator)

AGENDA

SECOND PANEL: WORKING WITH EACH OTHER **2:30**

Jesús Reyes Heróles, former Mexican Ambassador to the U.S. and President, Structura/GEA

Jeffrey Davidow, former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and President, Institute of the Americas

José Antonio Fernández, Chair and CEO, FEMSA

Brian Dyson, former President, Coca-Cola and President, Chatham International Corp.

Javier Treviño, Vice President, CEMEX (Moderator)

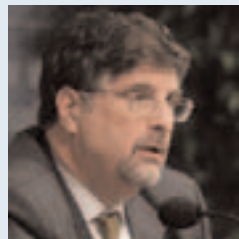
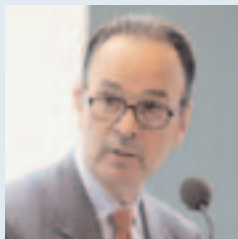
CONCLUSIONS **4:30**

Enrique Krauze

Joseph S. Tulchin

Pamela Starr, Visiting Scholar, CSIS

RECEPTION **5:00**



BIOGRAPHIES

JEFFREY DAVIDOW Ambassador Jeffrey Davidow assumed the presidency of the Institute of the Americas on June 1, 2003. Upon completion of 34 years in the State Department, he retired as America's highest ranking diplomat, one of only three people to hold the personal rank of Career Ambassador.

During his Foreign Service career, Ambassador Davidow focused much of his efforts on improving relations with Latin America. He served in increasingly senior positions in the U.S. embassies in Guatemala, Chile, and Venezuela, and then later returned to Venezuela as ambassador from 1993–1996. From 1996 to 1998, he was the State Department's chief policy maker for the hemisphere, serving in the position of Assistant Secretary of State. He then served as ambassador to Mexico from 1998 to 2002. Initially appointed to that position by President Clinton, he was asked to remain in his post for an additional 18 months by President Bush.

Early in his Foreign Service career, he served as a congressional staff aide in a program organized by the American Political Science Association. In that capacity, he organized in 1979 the first congressional hearings on the possibility of establishing a free trade area for North America. On another occasion, he spent an academic year at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs where he wrote a book, later published by Harvard, on negotiation. After leaving Mexico in September 2002, he returned to Harvard to become a Visiting Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government and the David Rockefeller center for Latin American Studies. During the 2002–03 academic year, he worked extensively with undergraduate and graduate students and wrote a book on U.S.-Mexican relations. *El Oso y El Puercoespín: The United States and Mexico* was published in Mexico by Casa Editorial Grijalbo and in English by Markus Weiner Publishers.

Ambassador Davidow graduated from the University of Massachusetts (BA, 1965) and the University of Minnesota (MA 1967). He also did postgraduate work in India (1968) on a Fulbright travel grant. He holds an honorary doctor of laws from the University of Massachusetts (2002). He has been married since 1969 to the former Joan Labuzoski.

CHRISTOPHER DOMINGUEZ MICHAEL Literary critic, essayist, cultural historian and novelist, Domínguez Michael began publishing book reviews and political articles at the age of 18, in the Mexican magazines *Territorios*, *El Machete* and *Nexos*, as well as in the newspaper *unomásuno*. Between 1983 and 1990, he published weekly reviews in *Proceso* magazine and formed a part of

the Board of Editors at the Mexican magazines *El Buscón* (1982–1986) and *La Gaceta del Fondo de Cultura Económica* (1987–2000). He is the author of more than a thousand reviews and newspaper articles published throughout Mexican and Latin American magazines.

Domínguez Michael was Vice Director of the Mexican magazines *Casa del Tiempo* (1984–1986) and *La Orquesta* (1986–1988). He is currently a member of the Board of Editors of the cultural supplement *El Ángel* of the *Reforma* newspaper. From 1989 to its closing edition in 1998, Domínguez Michael formed a part of the Editing Board of *Vuelta*, founded and directed by Octavio Paz, Nobel Prize in Literature. In the opinion of Octavio Paz, “Christopher Domínguez Michael is the continuation of one of the most important traditions in the history of Mexican literature, the dialogue with the western letters.” He is currently a member of the Board of Editors of *Letras Libres*, the publication that substituted *Vuelta*.

Between 1987 and 1992, he was editor and Secretary of the Editorial Committees at the Fondo de Cultura Económica publishing house, as well as Chief of the Editorial Department of the Metropolitan Autonomous University (1984–1986). He has been a Fellow of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (1986), of the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, as an artistic creator (1991–1992) and as an essayist of the Octavio Paz Foundation (2000–2001). Between 1993 and 2000, Domínguez Michael was an active member of the Sistema Nacional de Creadores of the Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes. In 1998, he received a scholarship as an essayist, within the Program Grammar for Memory of the Rockefeller Foundation/Universidad Iberoamericana for Cultural History. He was on the Committee of Judges of the Rockefeller/Bancomer–Mexico/USA Scholarship (1998–1999).

Christopher Domínguez Michael is the author of numerous books including: *Antología de la Narrativa Mexicana del Siglo XX* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1989 and 1991; second revised edition, 1996); *William Pescador* (Novel, ERA, México, 1997), Semifinalist of the Premio Herralde de Novela, Barcelona, 1993; *Servidumbre y grandeza de la vida literaria* (Essays, Joaquín Mortiz, 1998) and *La sabiduría sin promesa; Vida y letras del siglo XX* (Essays, Joaquín Mortiz, México, 2001).

GEORGETTE DORN Georgette Dorn has served as the Chief of the Hispanic Division at the Library of Congress since 1994. Previously, Dr. Dorn was the Specialist in Hispanic Culture and curator of the Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape in the Hispanic Division since 1969. Included in her duties were serving as head of reference service and as curator of the Archive of Hispanic Literature. Georgette Dorn has played a principal role in organizing symposia, lectures, concerts, and other programs with members of the diplomatic community, officials of foreign governments, members of Congress and their staffs, and academics and scholars in the field of Luso-Hispanic studies.

In addition to her work in the Hispanic Division, Dr. Dorn has served as a professorial lecturer in the History Department and at the Center of Latin American Studies at Georgetown University and she has also lectured frequently for the Foreign Service Institute. She has published *The Archive of Hispanic Literature on Tape: A Descriptive Guide* (1974) with Francisco Aguilera and a facsimile translation of *The Indian Tribes of Texas* (1971) by Jose Francisco Ruiz (1971). She is associate editor of *The Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, which will be published in four volumes (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995). She is the author of many articles on the history and culture of Latin America, most recently "Expresiones de Literatura Chicana" in Ideas '92 from the University of Miami and a chapter in *Sarmiento and His Argentina* (1993), as well as many annotated bibliographies.

Her book reviews have been published in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, *The Americas*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Hispanica*, and *Inter-American Review of Bibliography*. She has held nationally elected offices on the executive boards of the American Historical Association, the Conference on Latin American History, the American Catholic Historical Association, the Latin American Studies Association, the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies, and as president of the Inter-American Council of Washington. She is a member of the editorial boards of *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History* and *Letras de Buenos Aires*, and is a contributing editor to *The Handbook of Latin American Studies*.

Dr. Dorn, who grew up in Spain and Argentina, was educated at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and Creighton University in Omaha, where she earned a bachelor's degree in government, and at Boston College where she earned a master's degree in history. She earned a Ph.D. in history from Georgetown University in 1981.

BRIAN G. DYSON Brian G. Dyson is President of Chatham International Corporation and recently retired as Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of The Coca-Cola Company. He joined The Coca-Cola Company in Venezuela in 1959, and worked for many years in South America, the Caribbean and Mexico. In 1978 he was named president of Coca-Cola USA, the Company's U.S. soft drink division. In 1983 he was named president of Coca-Cola North America, with responsibility for the Company's entire North America portfolio.

In 1986 Mr. Dyson was named president and CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE) and in 1991 he was named Vice Chairman of CCE. He retired from the Coca-Cola system in 1994, but remained active as a consultant to the Company. In August of 2001 he came out of retirement and accepted the position of Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of The Coca-Cola Company.

He earned his Bachelor's Degree from Facultad de Ciencias Económicas in Buenos Aires. He later attended Harvard Business School. An author of short stories, in 1996 he published a novel, *Pepper in the Blood*.

JOSÉ ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ José Antonio Fernández is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of FEMSA, Mexico's largest beverage company and one of the leading Latin American beverage companies. FEMSA's principal operating divisions are FEMSA Cerveza, which produces and distributes widely recognized brands of beer, and Coca-Cola FEMSA, one of two "anchor bottlers" in Latin America for The Coca Cola Company. In December 2002, FEMSA acquired Panamco, becoming the largest Coca-Cola bottling company in the world outside the United States. In addition, Mr. Fernández is a board member of several important Mexican companies, including Grupo Financiero BBVA-Bancomer, Grupo Cydsa, Grupo Bimbo, Industrias Penoles, and Grupo Industrial Saltillo. Additionally, Mr. Fernández currently serves as Co-Chair of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Mexico Institute Advisory Board.

Prior to his current position, Mr. Fernandez worked as Sales Vice President of Cervecería Cuauhtémoc from 1991 to 1993 and Chief Operating Officer of FEMSA from 1993 to 1994. From 1976 to 1991, Mr. Fernandez worked in a series of management positions at various companies: Project Evaluation Manager, Gamesa, Sales Manager, Dreis & Krump, President, Cuprum, Planning Vice President, Grupo Visa (1988–1989), and President, Cadena Commercial Oxxo (1989–1991).

Mr. Fernández also serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM). Mr. Fernández has been Senior Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering at ITESM since 1990 and regularly teaches graduate and undergraduate courses.

Mr. Fernández received his M.B.A. from Monterrey Tec in 1978 and his B.A. in Industrial and Systems Engineering in 1976.

PETE HAMILL Pete Hamill is a veteran journalist and novelist. He is the author of 16 books, including *Diego Rivera* and the best-selling *A Drinking Life*. His nine novels include *Snow in August* and *Forever*, both of which were New York Times bestsellers.

Hamill is the eldest son of Irish immigrant parents. After service in the U.S. Navy, he attended Mexico City College in 1956–57, as a student on the G.I. Bill. He began his journalistic career in 1960. He has covered wars in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Lebanon and Northern Ireland, as well as the domestic disturbances in American cities in the 1960s. In addition to his many years as a columnist, he has served as editor-in-chief of both the *New York Post* and the *New York Daily News*. He has two daughters. He and his wife, writer Fukiko Aoki, divide their time between New York City and Cuernavaca, Mexico.

ENRIQUE KRAUZE Enrique Krauze is founder and Editor in Chief of *Letras Libres* magazine. In 1991 he also founded *Editorial Clío*, holding since then the position of Director. Prior to these positions, he Became Assistant Editor of *Vuelta* magazine in 1977, and in 1981 took charge as Vice-Editor, where he served until December 1996.

Historian and essayist, as a writer, he has cultivated several genres: Biography, History, Essay, and Interview. Some of his most recent publications include: *Daniel Cosío Villegas. Una biografía intelectual* (Fondo de Cultura Económica and Tusquets, 2001), *Tarea política* (2000), *Mexicanos eminentes* (1999), the anthology *La historia cuenta* (1998), *La presidencia imperial* (1997), *Tiempo contado* (1996) *Siglo de caudillos* (1993), *Textos heréticos* (1992). Harper Collins published his work on the History of Mexico in 1997 under the title: *Mexico: Biography of Power*.

He is also author of documentaries and television series about Mexican History: *Biografía del poder* (1987), *Mexico* (PBS, 1988), *El vuelo del aguila* (1994), *México: siglo XX* (1998–2000) and *México: nuevo siglo* (2001). He was awarded the Premio Comillas de Biografía in Spain (1993). In 1990 he became a member of the Mexican Academy of History.

Mr Krauze obtained a Ph.D. in History from El Colegio de México (1974) and graduated as an Industrial Engineer from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (1969).

LEE H. HAMILTON Lee H. Hamilton is president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and director of The Center on Congress at Indiana University.

Prior to becoming director of the Woodrow Wilson Center in 1999, Hamilton served for 34 years in Congress representing Indiana's Ninth District.

During his tenure in Congress, he served as chairman and ranking member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs (now the Committee on International Relations), chaired the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East from the early 1970s until 1993, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran. Hamilton also served as chair of the Joint Economic Committee, working to promote long-term economic growth and development. As chairman of the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress and a member of the House Standards of Official Conduct Committee, he was a primary draftsman of several House ethics reforms.

Since leaving the House, Mr. Hamilton has served as a commissioner on the influential United States Commission on National Security in the 21st Century (the Hart-Rudman Commission), and was co-chair with former Senator Howard Baker of the Baker-Hamilton Commission to Investigate Certain Security Issues at Los Alamos. He is currently a member of the President's Homeland Security Advisory Council, and in December, he was named Vice-Chair of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission).

Mr. Hamilton is a graduate of DePauw University and Indiana University law school, as well as the recipient of numerous honorary degrees and national awards for public service. Before his election to Congress, he practiced law in Chicago and Columbus, Indiana.

JESÚS F. REYES-HEROLES Jesús Reyes-Heroles is Co-Founder and Executive President of Grupo de Economistas y Asociados (GEA), a consulting firm that has become the first independent organization dedicated to political and economic analysis.

He was Mexican Ambassador to the United States from October 1997–November 2000. Previously he was Secretary of Energy in the Cabinet of President Ernesto Zedillo. In this capacity he was President of the Board of several businesses such as Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE) and Luz y Fuerza del Centro (LyFC). In December 1994 he was nominated Director General of the Banco Nacional de Obras y Servicios Públicos (BANOBRAS), the development bank for infrastructure.

From 1993–94, Ambassador Reyes-Heroles was member of the Mexican “Grupo de Personas Eminentes” of the APEC, whose purpose was to form the conceptual mark for the commercial liberalization of the Cuenca del Pacífico, in support of the heads of state. From 1989–90 he was Chief Advisor to the Secretary of Foreign Relations of Mexico and from 1983–88 he served as Director General of Rural Planning. He has been professor of Economics at the Instituto Nacional de Administración Pública (ITAM), and several other universities.

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RICHARD RODRIGUEZ Richard Rodriguez is an essayist and a journalist. His first book, published in 1982, *Hunger for Memory*, an intellectual memoir of his bi-lingual, working-class childhood, continues to be widely read in American high schools and colleges. His second book, *Days of Obligation*, “a philosophical travel book” about the mental landscape separating the United States and Mexico, was a runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize in 1993. More recently, *Brown: the Last Discovery of America*, an appraisal of U.S. notions of race was one of five finalists for the National Book Critics Award. Rodriguez has worked for two decades at the Pacific News Service in San Francisco, as an associate editor. And he has appeared as an essayist on “The News Hour with Jim Lehrer” on PBS for well over a decade. He is currently working on a book about religion after September 2001.

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He studied law at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and Political Science at Columbia University in New York.

PAMELA K. STARR Pamela K. Starr is a professor of international studies and Latin American political economy at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) and was a Mexico Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, through a joint program with the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations. She was also a visiting fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

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JAVIER TREVIÑO As the Corporate Communications Vice President of CEMEX since March 2001, Javier Treviño brings more than a decade of high-level government, communication and international experience. CEMEX is a leading global producer and marketer of cement and ready-mix products, with operations concentrated in the world’s most dynamic cement markets across four continents.

Mr. Treviño has also served in a number of top public posts in the Zedillo administration, including three years as Under-Secretary for International Cooperation in the Foreign Ministry and two years as Deputy Secretary for Administration at the Treasury Department. He also was appointed adviser on international relations in Ernesto Zedillo’s successful presidential campaign and also joined the 2000 presidential campaign as Senior Advisor to Francisco Labastida. Prior to these positions, in 1993, Treviño became a close adviser to then-Secretary of Social Development Luis Donaldo Colosio in

1993, and joined Colosio's presidential campaign team later that year as strategy adviser and speechwriter.

From 1989 to 1993, Treviño was posted to the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., where he served as Spokesman and Minister for Press and Public Affairs during the period of negotiations that led to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Treviño began his public service career in 1987 as director of planning in Mexico's Education Department and later worked as a special adviser to the Press Secretary for the President of Mexico.

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