

Isabel Studer and Talia Contreras, *Mexico and Canada: The Path to a Strategic Partnership*

Canada and Mexico have the opportunity to build a strategic partnership that contributes to the creation of a safer, more prosperous North America. Although the bilateral relationship has certainly progressed over the last 15 years, it lacks a sense of mutual cooperation that favors the interests of the region as a whole. What's more, it would appear that Canada and Mexico have systematically avoided such a strategy, thereby diminishing the importance of their bilateral ties. According to Studer and Contreras, several factors are generally listed as impediments to a more solid trilateral agenda, the main ones being asymmetries between the three countries, particularly between Mexico and its northern neighbors, and failure on the part of the two more developed partners to balance the scales. And since a safer, more prosperous, more competitive North America depends on closing these regional gaps, it is in the interests of all three countries to cooperate in this area. That said, the current situation—a superpower occupied with multiple global affairs and distracted by a polarized political environment on the home front—requires that the smaller partners seize the initiative. Studer and Contreras believe Canada can actively contribute to Mexico's development, while continuing to serve its own interests and those of the region. The challenge resides in finding new ways of exploiting their complementary facets to form an authentic strategic partnership that constitutes a "win-win" strategy for North America. The shoring up of regional industries; projects to boost the competitiveness of the

region's workforce; coordinated actions to address the issues of energy security and climate change; a common framework to tackle security concerns like terrorism and drug trafficking; and the strengthening of Mexico's democratic capacities. These are just a few of the areas in which the strategic interests of Mexico and Canada coincide and on which a partnership that benefits each country and the region as a whole could be built.

José Manuel Quijano, *Mercosur: Looking to the Past and the Future*

In this article, José Manuel Quijano takes us back to how the southern common market of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay (Mercosur) was formed and discusses the main strengths and weaknesses of this political and economic mechanism. There are, he says, two external factors vital to the future of regional integration: the resumption of talks with the European Union (EU) and the path the relationship of Mercosur member countries with China takes. In the first part of his article, the author analyzes a set of initiatives that raised expectations of a transformation within Mercosur at the turn of the century —progress toward a customs union, the Trade in Services Protocol, programs for the integration of production, the handling of asymmetries, new institutions and the admission of Venezuela as a full member of the community. Many of these proposals have already been or are in the process of being implemented and most of them are judged favorably by Quijano, with the occasional exception. The second part of the essay deals with Mercosur negotiations with the EU, which were reinitiated in 2010 and which have continued in 2011. A good agreement, he says, must necessarily be beneficial to both parties and in the case of Mercosur, those benefits are

linked to balanced sectorial growth and the diversification of exports to include not just primary products, but an increasing variety of industrial goods and technology oriented services. An agreement tailored to meet the needs of both parties would not repeat the traditional central-peripheral relationship pattern and, if entered into on an equal footing, could bring Mercosur closer to carving out a niche on the international arena alongside the major actors, thereby reverting current trends that are pigeonholing the country as a supplier of raw materials to industrial hubs. What is suggested here is a “new type of agreement”, an ambitious undertaking that seeks a rapprochement between two regions that have historically enjoyed deep-seated ties and that stand to gain from a well-structured treaty that veers away from the traditional free-trade agreement, one in which reciprocity takes pride of place and that tackles “new issues” like intellectual property, government purchases and negative-list services, much like a WTO-plus-type agreement. Quijano concludes by commenting on the strength and international appeal of China, which accounts for a large slice of total Mercosur exports and the vast majority of Brazil’s. A cursory look at Mercosur’s exports reveals that China purchases neither capital nor consumer goods from the region, but almost exclusively food and raw materials. In this sense, it is contributing to the rapid “primarization” of the bloc’s exports and creating a problem all four member countries will have to address sooner rather than later.

Gabriel Terrés C., *Public Diplomacy 2.0: A Virtual Proposal for a Real World*

The Internet has become a platform for information sharing and collaboration, a meeting point for a global community

whose interaction creates content for user-centered applications. These so-called Web 2.0 applications have evolved into a mass social experiment that has a direct impact on the daily lives of millions of people, regardless of their nationality or geographic location. Social networking and similar Web 2.0 technologies have made it possible to create, reach out to and be a part of entire communities of voters, consumers, activists, etcetera, and this is what has made them such an invaluable tool for civil society, corporations and government, who have ventured into a brave new virtual world to further their real-world interests.

In terms of foreign policy, Web 2.0 applications allow chancelleries to better exert their influence on other governments and influence their decisions and actions by mobilizing citizens or groups close to power nuclei, in addition to facilitating direct dialog with individuals and target audiences.

In this essay, Gabriel Terrés mentions certain countries that have discovered way of incorporating Web 2.0 applications into their diplomatic practices. Progress in this area, he argues, has created a fertile “virtual field” for chancelleries to forge online connections with a wide range of sectors in countries all over the world, just as civil society and the private sector have been doing. Like every innovation, these applications are not risk free, he admits, but chancelleries should not use this as an excuse to sit expectantly on the sidelines while other government agencies take the plunge and experiment with innovative online projects. Following a brief discussion of the possibilities of these applications and their social, economic and political impact, the author refers to the transition from telegraphic to cyber diplomacy and concludes with the issue of public diplomacy 2.0.

Fabián Herrera León, *Luis Sánchez Pontón, League of Nations Correspondent in Mexico (1933-1942)*

Luis Sánchez Pontón's appointment as correspondent to the League of Nations in Mexico in July 1933 was initially intended to strengthen ties that had been late in forming due to the Mexican Revolution. Drawing on his personal and official connections, Sánchez Pontón's work promoting the League's interests in Mexico, where he interceded before the government on the behalf of Geneva, has largely gone unnoticed by academics. In this article, Fabián Herrera analyzes Mexico's cooperation with the League of Nations in a new light, drawing on fresh evidence that serves to counterbalance the more researched Geneva aspect with the less-documented Mexican version of the relationship. The author talks about the facilities the Mexican authorities afforded this "representative" of the League of Nations and how they treated him, with particular emphasis on Sánchez Pontón's duties and the type of information he furnished Geneva with on a regular basis.