The Future
— of —
US-Mexico Relations

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

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Recovering the past, creating the future

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FUTURE US-MEXICO RELATIONS: FORESIGHT A FOREWORD

Andy Hines and Peter Bishop

This study, *The Future of US-Mexico Relations*, uses strategic foresight, a new approach to the future appropriate to the changing circumstances of our time. Thinking about the future first appeared in European thought during the Enlightenment when the pace of change, driven by the use of machines, had quickened to the point that ordinary people realized that their lives were different from previous generations. Turning around, so to speak, they expected that their children's lives would be more different still. Thus the twin concepts of social change and the future were born (Bury, 1920).

Change in those days was relatively slow and largely incremental so that the professional disciplines that arose in the 20th century could use extrapolation and linear thinking to forecast and plan for the future. Would that were the case today! Now driven by computers, the internet and other technologies, the pace of change has not only increased, but the frequency and scale of disruptions have increased as well. Some part of the future may be a simple extension of the present, but that assumption has become increasingly suspect and indeed more risky in our world today.

This insight has required a new approach to the future, one that takes into account the increasing uncertainty and complexity of the future. Everyone knows that "you can't predict the future," but they do it anyway because they do not know what else to do. Now this new approach called strategic foresight (aka futures studies) describes the future as a set of plausible alternative scenarios rather than as the single most likely future by assuming that the less likely futures will not occur. This

study, unlike most policy documents, rejects this assumption and describes the future of US-Mexico relations, not in terms of what *will* occur, but rather in terms of what *could* occur.

Thinking contingently is not new, yet the subjunctive form of the verb, in English at least, appears weak. It might occur; then it might not. It doesn't sound as though authors who use this construction have done their homework. "Tell us what you *really* think. Give us your best estimate. Make the call!" That may be what policymakers want, but it is not what they need. Making decisions when the future is certain is easy, but we are all going to have to learn to decide and act contingently in the face of these uncertain futures.

This new approach has gone by many names in the last 70 years—futurology, applied futurism, futures, futures research, futures studies, with foresight being the currently favored term. The field emerged almost simultaneously in the United States and Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s. In the United States, Herman Kahn and the RAND Corporation were helping the US military think about the contingencies of thermonuclear war using an early form of scenario planning. In Europe, intellectuals, shocked and shaken by two wars, started to understand disruption as an inherent part of the future.

Both of these threads broke into public awareness in the 1960s and 70s, itself a time of intense change. The World Futures Society and the World Futures Studies Federation were established as were two graduate programs, one at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the other at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. The US Congress created the Office of Technology Assessment, and Royal Dutch Shell introduced scenario planning to the business community.

Graduates of these programs and other foresight professionals were making their mark even before the creation of the Association of Professional Futurists in 2002, an organization that now includes more than 500 members across the world. Many governments have adopted strategic foresight in service of their policymakers—the Committee for the Future in the Finnish Parliament, the Centre for Strategic Futures in Singapore, and Policy Horizons in Canada. The United States has not established a central foresight capability, but most agencies have foresight units that are associated with the Federal Foresight Community of Interest and/or the Public Sector Foresight Network.

Foresight is thus an increasingly established field despite the fact that many investigations of the future are still predicting the likely future rather than the set of plausible futures. We believe that exploring alternative futures will serve policymakers much better in the long run than the predictive, one-and-done approaches of the past. Fortunately, this study has chosen to accept that the uncertainties of the future relations between Mexico and the United States are so important that they have set aside the temptation to predict its future; instead, they describe the future in terms of alternative scenarios.

The University of Houston's Foresight program developed a method called Framework Foresight to teach its students how to explore the uncertain future (Hines & Bishop, 2013). We shared the essentials of the method with the authors in a workshop at the beginning of the book project to guide and structure their chapters. We focused on three key aspects:

1. *Framing & Scanning:* Outline the topic's categories to explore, identify the relevant trends and issues, and scan for "signals" of change within the topic categories, in order to develop ideas for how the future might be different. Another challenge for our authors and futurists is to think as broadly as possible, and pay attention to what might seem to be weak signals of change. The more diligent we are in considering a wide range of signals, the less likely we are to be surprised by the future. And surprise is something policymakers want to avoid.

2. *Forecasting:* Based on the research and scanning, we then develop scenarios or stories about how these various signals of change might come together into different future outcomes. We start with a baseline future of "present trends" continued with no major disruptions, and then develop alternative scenarios to explore the [almost inevitable] potential disruptions. Most traditional analysis focuses exclusively on the baseline, perhaps exploring a minor tweak to it. But with strategic foresight, the baseline is the starting point rather than the endpoint. We explore how potentially disruptive changes could occur within the topic and the timeframe by describing alternative futures or scenarios.

3. *Implications:* Armed with this landscape of future possibilities, we then identify the potential impacts for policymakers. If this scenario happens, how would it influence trade, immigration policy, etc.? We typically brainstorm a broad range of impacts and synthesize them into a smaller number of strategic and policy issues for the stakeholders to address.

While we did not expect the authors to become full-fledged futurists with this limited training, we hoped that they could keep these basic principles in mind as they developed their chapters. As we reviewed them, it was quite striking to see how committed the authors were to following strategic foresight, which is a tribute to Tony, Jesús, and Alfonso as project leaders. Every single author explored their topics using alternative scenarios. That in itself is quite an accomplishment for a group new to strategic foresight. We also saw various references to horizon scanning, era analysis, drivers, baseline and alternatives, and components of the Framework Foresight methodology. Well done!

Readers will be treated to an expansive view of future possibilities. They will not get the all-too-common treatment of the future, in which 90+% of the piece is about the past and present and the last paragraph or two talks about the future. The

authors cover the past and present to provide useful context for the focus on the future. The future gets its due respect. We feel they did a terrific job and we hope you agree!

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INTRODUCTION

Tony Payan, Jesús Velasco, and
Alfonso López de la Osa Escribano

From the beginning of Donald J. Trump's presidential campaign in 2015, US-Mexico relations came under scrutiny. Early on in his campaign for the nomination of the Republican Party to the presidency, Mr. Trump chose Mexico as an important target of his most strident rhetoric. The value of the US-Mexico partnership has continued to be questioned in Washington ever since. This stand by the Trump White House is something that broke with the official position the United States had had toward its southern neighbor for the previous twenty-five years. To be sure, the partnership between the United States and Mexico has always been an uneasy one, but Mr. Trump's rhetoric contrasts starkly with that of his predecessors. President Bush said, for example, on October 7, 1992, that "the United States, Mexico and Canada embark[ed] together in an extraordinary enterprise. We are creating the largest, richest, and most productive market in the entire world . . . NAFTA is an achievement." Trump, to the contrary, said that NAFTA was "the worst trade deal ever signed by the United States." He went on to say that "When Mexico sends its people, they are bringing drugs. They are bringing crime. They are rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."[1] He also promised to build a wall between the two countries—and said that Mexico would pay for it. Mexican politicians, intellectuals, and society, in general, responded by rebuking Mr. Trump's words. His statements were considered prejudiced and even unenlightened. His opinion was deemed outrageous. But Trump's words during his campaign were a harbinger of what was to come, as he won the nomination and then, by a very narrow margin, the presidency. Suddenly,

his promises to build a "big, beautiful wall" and to "deport millions of undocumented workers" did not seem unrealistic. Even so, for some time, many believed that Trump, once in office, would change his tune. But his words and actions in the first years of his presidency have continued to cast a huge doubt on the very idea that Mexico and the United States could at any level be friends and allies. His anti-Mexican rhetoric has continued nearly unabated.

Important political changes have also taken place in Mexico. It is not only that Mr. Trump's statements generated a crisis in the Mexican government, which was at first stunned and then at a loss as to how to deal with its difficult relationship with the White House. It is also that Mexico's government and society had to reconsider the essential character of their binational partnership with the United States. In the beginning, during 2017 and 2018, to counteract Trump's disparagement of Mexico, the Enrique Peña Nieto administration implemented a traditional Mexican approach, deploying personal relationships directly to the White House and seeking to save NAFTA at all costs and then to negotiate its successor agreement, the United States-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement. The Peña Nieto administration's reaction was understandable. Mexico has much at stake in its economic relationship with the United States and the Mexican government believed that cultivating personal relationships with Mr. Trump's advisors was an effective way to prevent further damage to the relationship. Luis Videgaray, at first Mexico's Treasury Secretary and then Foreign Minister, established personal contact with Mr. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. He traveled several times to Washington to meet with Mr. Kushner. Videgaray used his personal relationship with Kushner to conduct Mexican foreign policy with the United States and to soften White House criticism of Mexico. In other words, Mexico developed a "sophisticated strategy" to neutralize Mr. Trump's perceived aversion toward Mexico, hoping that friendship and personal relations would at least moderate Trump's criticism and open a good channel of communication with influential American authorities.

As part of the strategy, and at Mr. Videgaray's initiative, the Mexican government invited Donald J. Trump to Mexico against the wishes of the vast majority of Mexicans. "I don't see how this visit can underpin the Mexican position," declared Enrique Krauze, a well-known Mexican historian, "I hope I am wrong, but I do see how the visit can reinforce the ambiguous, demagogic, populist and fascist position of Trump, the tyrant, in the United States."[2] In a similar vein, Jorge G. Castañeda, former Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs and public intellectual, argued that "Hopefully, Trump will ask forgiveness from all Mexicans. And that Peña Nieto does not have to apologize again to Mexicans for inviting him."[3] Finally, former Mexican First Lady and former candidate to the nomination of the National Action Party (PAN) to the presidency, Margarita Zavala, stated: "Mr. Donald Trump, even if you have been invited, understand that you are not welcome. We Mexicans have dignity and repudiate your hate speech."[4] Nevertheless, on August 31, 2016, Trump

visited Mexico and had a private meeting with Peña Nieto. The visit provoked the strong disapproval of the population. According to *Consulta Mitofsky*, a Mexican polling company, 88.2% of the people surveyed expressed a negative opinion toward the then-Republican candidate after Trump's visit.[5] This animosity was reinforced when Trump, a few hours after finishing his short visit to Mexico, reiterated in Phoenix, Arizona, his anti-immigrant views.[6] Videgaray's strategy appeared to have failed in the very short term—although, given the circumstances, it seems that it succeeded in preventing a complete cancelation of NAFTA. But the relationship has continued to be a difficult one, tempered only because Mr. Andrés Manuel López Obrador's administration has avoided a rhetorical confrontation with Mr. Trump at all costs. At this point, it may be the best solution, given that Mr. Trump's demands often leave little room for compromise. He has an all-or-nothing approach to diplomacy and often requires agreement with its views and interests.

For Mexico and its people, Trump's election represents one of the lowest points in the bilateral relationship for the past three decades. His campaign and arrival at the White House caused enormous disenchantment amongst Mexicans with the United States and its government and many of us suspect that it may have influenced the direction of the 2018 elections in Mexico, although it was not the only factor. What is true is that the shift in the binational relationship was sudden and radical. Since the late 1980s and especially since the signing of NAFTA, Mexico had transformed itself into one of the most reliable allies of the United States—although there had been some disagreements such as Mexico's stance on war with Iraq at the United Nations Security Council in 2003. But over the last three decades, a long tradition of open anti-Americanism (although in private the Mexican government was very pro-American in the 20th century) had faded to the point that was the country most favored by Mexicans when the Obama administration was in office. This was the result not only of a campaign by the Mexican government to promote a partnership with the United States inside and outside the United States, but also of the significant presence of American popular culture in Mexico and the country's turn to market economics. There had been a strong ideological convergence, even if Mexico remained highly dependent on the US economy. This came crashing down quickly under Trump, however. According to the *Pew Research Center*, by October 1, 2018 only 6% of Mexicans expressed confidence in Trump, and 66% of its citizens believed that "relations [with the U.S.] have gotten worst in the past 12 months."[7] Among the countries examined by the *Pew Research Center,* Mexico conferred the lowest rating to Trump. A central question today is whether this is something that will prevail only during the Trump administration or whether this will affect the relationship well into the future. What will the post-Trump legacy be for the binational relationship? This is a key question in this volume.

The state of Mexican affairs is also riddled with greater uncertainty—adding to the possibility of longer-term damage to the binational relationship. As we men-

tioned, Mexico's current president, Mr. López Obrador, has so far resisted any impulse to engage in a confrontation with Mr. Trump. But his longer-term plans will necessarily clash with the status quo ante, as his economic model is considerably more nationalistic and reliant on establishing a state-led economy in some market sectors in Mexico. But so far Mr. López Obrador is balancing several impulses, as he appears to be doing everything possible to both save NAFTA and wait Mr. Trump out before deploying any political and diplomatic initiatives toward Washington. Interestingly, although Mr. López Obrador expressed strong disapproval of Trump's rhetoric and programs during his own presidential campaign, and he was a critic of Peña Nieto's appeasing attitude, in office he has been almost conciliatory. Indeed, he called Mr. Trump's rhetoric and policies "xenophobic and racist," and averred that the way he talked about Mexico is similar to the way the Nazis talked about the Jews.[8] But that was before he took office. Once in charge, he may have realized the depth and complexity of interests in this binational relationship—at least for now. Institutions, after all, do tend to shape the political behavior of individuals, and López Obrador is not the exception. As President of Mexico, he first has to safeguard and legitimize his plans. Although he has remained popular, there are signs that much of that support is soft, and can shift quickly if he proceeds carelessly to implement his agenda. Moreover, he has endorsed the traditional principles of Mexican foreign policy: equality of nations, self-determination, and peaceful solution of controversies, among others. So, he seems to be trying to figure out what Mexico's final position should be. Some of us think that he might simply be hoping for a change in government in Washington in 2021. What is certain is that his approach to foreign policy is not yet clear. His foreign policy tenets appear to belong squarely in the middle of the 20th century, these are partly set against the background of a difficult US-Mexico relationship, but he also seems to realize that disentangling the vested interests created over the last three decades is nearly impossible. Thus, for Mr. López Obrador confronting Trump is not beneficial and would only exacerbate current tensions. His position vis-à-vis Washington has in fact gone as far as complying with Washington's demands on stemming the flow of Central American migrants—a position that constitutes a complete reversal from his original stand that all migrants were welcomed in Mexico and would transit through Mexico undisturbed. He has deployed the newly created National Guard to apprehend and deport Central American migrants, something Washington has viewed as positive. Pleasing the United States is a way to obtain the approval and sympathy of the American president, diminishing hostilities, and hoping to have a more cordial relationship with its northern neighbor. In that sense, it does not seem that López Obrador's foreign policy toward the United States is any different from Mr. Peña Nieto's. He may, in fact, be helping the reelection of the Republican president by giving him a victory on immigration. He is being criticized at home, however, for appearing to be subordinating

the country to the demands of the United States. But so far, for Mr. López Obrador the price to pay is less than it would be if Mexico confronted the United States.

Interestingly, Mr. López Obrador has continued a policy of fostering personal relationships with the Trump administration. In March 2019, he met with Jared Kushner in the house of Bernardo Gómez, a prominent Mexican businessman.[9] Later, after criticizing the Mexican government for not stopping the arrival of Central American migrants in Mexican territory, Mr. Trump threatened to impose a 5% tariff on imports from Mexico beginning on June 10, 2019. If Mexico did not comply with American demands, the tariffs would gradually increase by up to 25%. Immediately Mr. López Obrador sent a delegation to Washington, DC to negotiate with the American authorities. Despite the fact that imposing tariffs when there is a trade agreement in place is a violation of the law, Mexico accepted the US program "Remain in Mexico," although not explicitly, on June 7, 2019. The main effect or purpose of this program is that asylum seekers coming to the United States will wait in Mexico for the American authorities' resolution of their case before entering into the United States. Mexico will serve as a *Safe Third Country* and will detain people upon arrival from the Northern Triangle, Haiti, Venezuela, and Africa. As already mentioned, Mr. López Obrador deployed the National Guard not only to its northern border, but also to its southern border, and expanded a program to offer humanitarian visas to Central Americans to stay in Mexico.[10] Mexican performance would be evaluated by the United States after forty-five days of implementation of the program. Until now, Trump has been very happy with Mexico's cooperation to stop Central American migrants. Although for the purposes of this book, the results of these negotiations are less important, the big question is whether this way of dealing with bilateral issues will leave a legacy that will endure. In our estimation, it is clear that institutions that deal with binational problems are not being built and relying on personal relationships and pressure point diplomacy will undermine future channels for negotiations and postpone the important task of building institutions that can last beyond the will and whims of a sitting president.

Thus, in many ways, the binational relationship is in a worse place than it has been for the last two and a half decades—relying on diplomatic and political threats and lopsided negotiations, void of formal institutions and channels to find common solutions, and dependent on personal relationships. The two key issues of the moment, trade and immigration, are clear examples of this approach. Mexican immigration policy toward Central American migrants is evaluated, judged, authorized, or rejected by the United States. There was no coordinated binational effort to get the USMCA ratified. And border security is choking trade at the border and increasing the transactional costs of doing business. Both Mr. Trump and Mr. López Obrador are risking the extinction of whatever mechanisms Mexico and the United States had established to deal with one of the most complicated bilateral relationships for both countries. Interestingly, and significant, is the fact that the United

States remained without a US ambassador in Mexico from May 2018 to August 2019. It is evident as well that there is no overall agenda. Both countries are strongly relying on the compartmentalization of their foreign policy toward each other—dealing with one issue at a time and with tactics that are not conducive to creating a secure and prosperous long-term partnership. Each part of this very complex and diverse relationship is essentially being evaluated separately. Intermixing issues has generated confusion and difficulties in properly managing problems, and was considered not to serve Mexican interests. Now migration, trade, and, to a certain extent, security are interconnected. Mexico has to be certified by the United States and it can be punished for non-compliance with American demands.

A key issue in the way both countries are dealing with their relationship is the longer-term impact that this may have on mutual public opinion—an important foundation for building institutions for governing relations on crucial binational issues. Mr. Trump is relying heavily on stoking anti-Mexican sentiments in his political base, as evidenced by the mass shooting in El Paso, Texas on August 3, 2019. Mr. López Obrador's foreign policy toward the United States is also and in many ways in direct contrast to how Mexicans now view the United States. *Pew Hispanic Center* polls show that Mexican public opinion regarding Mr. Trump continues to be quite negative and has not changed substantially. On June 4, 2019, the Mexican newspaper *El Financiero* published a survey conducted after Mr. Trump's threat to impose tariffs on Mexico on account of the immigration issue. In that poll, 84% of Mexicans considered that the country must remain united and support Mr. López Obrador. In that same survey, 86% of Mexicans had a bad or very bad opinion of Trump. Clearly, this helps Mr. López Obrador capitalize on a poor opinion of Mr. Trump, but it does not guarantee that most Mexicans will support Mr. López Obrador for a long time, if he continues to cave in every time Mr. Trump threatens Mexico. That is drawn from the fact that the population has different opinions regarding López Obrador's response to Trump's pressure, with 37% considering it a firm response, 35% thinking that the response was too tepid or insufficient, and 28% were not sure. These numbers are more revealing if we consider that 66% of the population approves the work that López Obrador is doing overall. In summary, Mexicans continue to have a very negative opinion of Trump and it could bleed into a poor opinion of the United States over time. They support their president in a time of crisis—which is often the case in many countries—but are evenly divided in the way that López Obrador is responding to Trump's pressure.[11]

More than three years into the Trump administration and a full year into the López Obrador administration, the bilateral relationship continues in crisis mode. We expect this to last while Mr. Trump remains in office, especially because he has demonstrated that the way he has dealt with Mexico is his preferred modus operandi in foreign affairs and there are no signs that he will change his tactics radically. The way that US-Mexico relations have been affected since the beginning of the

Trump campaign will also persist while Mr. López Obrador remains in office. The latter has a vision of Mexico that will likely clash with US designs, particularly full access to Mexico's consumer market while restricting Mexico's access to the US market as much as possible and while Mr. Trump displaces the responsibility for controlling immigration to Mexico's actions toward Central America. There is hardly any talk of co-responsibility on the issues, as there had been under the Obama administration when Mrs. Clinton was the Secretary of State. Mr. Trump's recent threats regarding the war on drugs are also adding to his style of dealing with foreign policy issues. One could say that if this way of dealing with binational issues prevails over the next few years, the damage to the binational relationship will become structural and shifts to reconstitute a strategic partnership will take good leadership and creative and innovate institutional solutions, which are not easy to come by at the same time. Broader issues like global warming or climate change, which the two countries need to deal with together, will only complicate existing plans to share natural resources, especially water, and to deal with environmental problems. These problems are not new and both countries have dealt with them in the past, but this time, they come with leadership that views the issues quite differently and key political, cultural, and demographic changes that add to the buildup of animosity. These changes are fundamental to the traditional features of American identity, with a deep social, political, economic, and cultural polarization of the United States which is likely to make it into the binational relationship as American anxieties could result in greater isolationism.

This book is an effort by academics from Mexico and the United States to go beyond current turbulence emanating from both Washington DC and Mexico City. It seeks to evaluate the possible scenarios that Mexico and the United States will face over the next two to two and a half decades. We do understand that it is impossible to predict the future, but there are methodologies that can help us read past trends, identify key drivers, and cast those drivers into the future anticipating potential values to derive different scenarios. Strategic foresight, an ever more developed method for doing just this, is what is called for in this volume. Based on a workshop on how to use this tool, we invited some of the best thinkers of the binational relationship to think way ahead. The workshop took place some two years ago, when the Trump administration was new and before the López Obrador administration came into office, although there were already signs that he would become president of Mexico. This was an assignment to study sixteen of the most relevant topics to bilateral relations. Most of the themes in this book are explored by two scholars, one from Mexico and the other from the United States—some exceptions are chapters on trade, health, and renewable energy. We hope that having an author from each country will balance the chapters and offer a more comprehensive analysis, as each author is uniquely qualified to view the issue not just through different drivers and

over time but also from different geographic positions. Every chapter highlights three or more possible scenarios: a baseline—also known as a continuity—an optimistic and a pessimistic as well as the implications that each scenario may have for both countries and their relationship. History and political science informed the analysis in each chapter. In this sense, contributors were invited to study the historical tendencies of each country's recent past—as far as they considered it pertinent, and the antecedents and evolution of each subject to expose possible conditions that the bilateral relationship will face past our current moment and into the future. Indeed, history became an obligated foundation for each chapter, as did the descriptive statistics of each issue up to the moment of analysis. The task then was to draw on the same timeline the potential curve lines of the future and for authors to venture what they believe is most likely to occur. The authors were then asked to lay out the most *desirable* scenario and make some recommendations on how to elicit it. Indeed, this is the normative component of this exercise, and we are pleased with the result. Most authors achieved this goal and the book overall tells the reader where we are likely to find ourselves. We leave the final judgment, however, to the reader—to consider all the conclusions and to imagine a likely future.

Beyond the historical foundation of this book, we also let politics be the second and somewhat more superficial foundation for this exercise. Politics is the bedrock that allows us to evaluate upcoming social orders—and today we may be experiencing politics in a way unique to our time and unique to our leaderships. Many of our references are, nearly by necessity, about our current presidents and their political penchants and preferences. We cannot cast the future without understanding what legacy these unique figures will leave for us over the next two to two and a half decades. These two tracks, history and politics, and a strategic foresight methodology, combined with the expertise of the authors are what guided the analytical framework that cinches all the chapters in this book. Indeed, our analysis follows the *Strategic Foresight Methodology* created by Andy Hines and Peter Bishop. This methodology allowed editors and contributors to have a common ground, to structure their research, and give coherence to the book. Again, to make predictions is often difficult in social sciences. We have only to recall how public opinion specialists failed to forecast the 2016 presidential election. But we are confident that we are operating with a methodology that is sufficiently flexible so as not to tell us what the future will be but what the future is likely to be, with possible outcomes on different timelines. Thus, more than predicting, we present likely scenarios if certain conditions are met. As Hines and Bishop sustain in the foreword of this book "describe the future of US-Mexico relations, not in terms of what will occur, but rather as what could occur." To achieve this goal, we try, as Peter Smith and Ana Covarrubias expressed in their chapter, "to identify key variables that are likely to influence the future of the bilateral relationship" and that depends on our ability to predict more or less what our future will be, our ability to plan for it and to encourage the right atti-

tudes our leaders to take us into a better tomorrow. The United States and Mexico, after all, will always be neighbors and there is hardly anything worse than a bad relationship with a neighbor.

Some Basic Ideas about the Book

Historically, US-Mexico relations have been characterized not just by a complicated historical and political foundation, with key structural issues that the two countries can hardly change, but also by some defining issues and concepts that make up the relationship between both countries. These basic notions tend to be somewhat stable or, better said, change only gradually, and are not substantially affected by who occupies the presidency or what party runs congress in Mexico or the United States. To cast the shadow of the future, it behooves us to find these more stable, longer-term drivers. Some of these features constitute the ground upon which the bilateral relationship moves. These concepts are: 1) power asymmetry; 2) interdependence; 3) intermestic—increasingly domestic politics; 4) high complexity or multilayered issues occurring simultaneously; and 5) a cycle of stability and periodic crises, which force a revision of the status quo, generally in favor of permanence and only in extreme cases in favor of change. Several elements of this structural relationship have been present during the presidency of Donald J. Trump in the United States and the administrations of Enrique Peña Nieto and Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico. Some of these, however, have been heightened during the last three years and some of them have come close to what could be defined as a crisis—manufactured, if you will, but crisis nonetheless.

As illustrated by the work of Peter Smith and Ana Covarrubias in this book, power asymmetry and fundamental dissimilarity are permanent features of US-Mexico relations. Power asymmetry and a fundamental dissimilarity between the two nations is, in fact, a reality that permeates all the chapters of this book and constitutes a significant advantage of the United States over Mexico. This difference between both countries is manifest in their economic development, income, technological advancement, and so on. Jesus Canas and Alberto Ponce show in their chapter that per capita income in the United States is currently $59,537 while in Mexico it is only $18,149. That significant difference is not the only example. It can be repeated on many issues and at many different levels. And as long as that disparity remains, fundamental convergence, a prerequisite for a new relationship and stronger cooperation, will remain elusive. On military terms as well the United States is the most powerful country in the world—with armed forces and martial technology never seen in the history of mankind. Mexico, on the other hand, has a much smaller force, precarious military equipment, less able soldiers, and a fundamental isolationist attitude that leads it to stay away from international armed conflicts. Both countries also have disparate levels of democratic development. Interestingly, there is mounting evidence that the United States is a less-than-perfect

democracy, and Mexico's own democratic practices are now under assault by the more autocratic proclivities of Mr. López Obrador. But even so, Mexico's democracy is far from consolidated, even as the US level of democracy is under scrutiny. Also, in the United States the rule of law prevails for the most part, while in Mexico, it does not. Impunity levels in Mexico reach nearly 95% of all crimes, and its administration of justice institutions are somewhat in disarray. This remains, in fact, one of the main challenges for the López Obrador's administration—to advance the effective implementation of the rule of law. This, however, is seen as something that Mr. López Obrador, precisely because of who he is and the way he thinks, will not be able to accomplish. His approach to justice is too personalistic and he is too suspicious of institutions to make a difference today. But he may leave a complicated legacy—one that will only postpone the need to create such institutions. As Nathan Jones and Samuel González Ruiz argue in their article, to have good cooperation with the United States in matters of public safety and security, "Mexico must focus on the implementation of the rule of law so that it can have the deepest possible interactions with the US public safety institutions." Improving Mexico's rule of law would certainly help to reduce the power of organized crime, illegal drug trafficking gangs, corrupt politicians and bureaucrats, and reduce violence in both societies—something that has long been a fundamental goal of the binational relationship, but which gets more complicated to achieve as the Trump and López Obrador administrations have shown. In many ways, these issues, when it comes to the bilateral relationship, may look like domestic problems but they are intimately interrelated—more akin to intermestic issues.

Thus, to understand future lines, it is important to note that, based on these structural issues, the United States can exercise a constant and persistent influence over Mexico by forcing Mexican authorities to do something that originally they would not consider doing or do not want to do.[12] Interestingly, asymmetry, as expressed in America's influence over Mexico, has been evident during the Trump administration—and it is likely to continue, as long as Mexico cannot break its cycles of poverty and inequality and its weak rule of law. Trump's threats to withdraw the United States from NAFTA and to impose tariffs on Mexico, if the country did not control the arrival of Central American immigrants to US territory, were only two examples, but that kind of pressure could easily be transferred to many other issues. The result, however, is that Mexico could become pricklier in its relations with the United States—as it did in the middle of the 20th century—and more isolationist and less cooperative than in the past three decades. In both of those cases, Mexico responded immediately by negotiating, and, to a significant degree, by complying with the demands of the American authorities. But that is not guaranteed forever. Moreover, the López Obrador administration's compliance toward Trump's demands can be seen in Mexico as submissive behavior, pleasing the United States and evading any possible confrontation, and may erode public trust in the

future of the relationship. As Jorge G. Castañeda has asserted, "López Obrador made a conscious decision to avoid any conflict with the government of Donald J. Trump," but it has also drawn enormous criticism among the intellectual class and the opposition. As everybody expected, Mr. Trump praised Mexico for its good behavior, but has also used Mexican "solidarity" with his goals for political purposes: "Now, with our new deal, Mexico is doing more for the USA on Illegal Immigration than the Democrats . . . In fact, the Democrats are doing NOTHING, they want Open Borders, which means illegal Immigration, Drugs and Crime."[13] López Obrador is reinforcing Trump's view of the border and helping him solidify his base. In other words, Mexico is contributing to Trump's reelection in 2020. This is not lost on most Mexicans. And this back and forth shows that the good political will which accumulated over many years may also run out.

Now, it has long been acknowledged by many intellectuals and opinion-makers that Mexico has an *interdependent* relationship with the United States. While this may be true to a large extent, and it can be shown in the trade statistics, for example, this interdependence may not withstand the test of time—or actions by current administrations and may leave a difficult task of rebuilding the relationship in the future. In that sense, one could also ask the question: Who depends more on whom? This "asymmetric interdependence,"[14] as the late Carlos Rico used to call it, will not disappear in the next twenty or thirty years. The relationship between Texas and Mexico is a good example of this interdependence. As W. Michael Cox and Richard Alm maintain in their chapter: "In 2016, Mexico exported more to Texas than any state or country. The same goes for imports. On both the export and import sides, Texas trades more with Mexico than with any other country or *state*, including neighbors Louisiana and Oklahoma." According to the Perryman Group, a Texas-based economic analysis firm, a 5% tariff on Mexican products will produce a loss to the Texas economy of $11.9 billion in GDP "and nearly $7.1 billion in income each year as well as 117,335 jobs." At the national level, the same firm estimates that the direct cost of those tariffs could be as much as "$28.1 billion each year, and when multiplier effects are considered, the net losses to the U.S. economy include an estimate of $41.5 billion in gross domestic product and $24.6 billion in income each year. The overall job loss would be about 406,000."[15] This massive economic relationship is currently being menaced by an approach to dealing with bilateral issues that is not conducive to the institutionalized management that is in the interest of both nations. The authors were, therefore, given the opportunity to consider current events and their impact on the future timeline, but also to go beyond the moment. The analysis, they were told, should be a combination of current decisions and their impact on the future as well as the deeper structural variables that are likely to persist over time. Surely the future is affected by both.

And trade and economics are not the only issues at stake affected by current approaches to the binational relationship from both Washington DC and Mexico City

and the broader structural variables that affect them. There are many other themes that are also covered in this volume. To a significant degree, the US-Mexico relationship is intermestic—interrelated in ways that ordinary citizens can hardly imagine. As Eva M. Moya, Silvia M. Chávez-Baray, and Peter J. Hotez argue, "managing the US-Mexico border is particularly challenging given the intense mix of international and domestic policy issues." Although this intermestic feature is important to the bilateral interaction, international affairs are changing rapidly. Today domestic politics are playing an increasing role in themes traditionally related to foreign policy. Topics such as immigration, drugs, security, health, or water sharing are driven by the domestic politics of each country, but are deeply entrenched in the relations between the two neighbors. Many of the authors of this book argue that the future of the bilateral relationship will be shaped, to a significant degree, by the decisions made inside of each country. We concur. Yet, the tendency to favor domestic politics, structurally mandated by the concept of sovereignty, provokes disagreements and difficulties in establishing binational cooperation. According to Abelardo Rodríguez and Richard J. Kilroy during the last twenty years in Mexico, "the armed forces and intelligence apparatuses have been deployed on internal threats, mainly on public safety," such as drug trafficking organizations. But that has created both opportunities for binational cooperation and also tense moments, fraught with disagreement over the use of the armed forces in Mexico. During the Felipe Calderón administration, for example, fighting drug trafficking became one of the main priorities. The United States both encouraged that and underpinned it with broad financial support. However, the deployment of the military to confront drug trafficking was too controversial in Mexico, where many asked why it was not accepted in the United States but it was acceptable in Mexico. Thus, as Rodríguez and Kilroy sustain "a key challenge for the analysis offered in this chapter is that security and defense do have different meanings and are viewed differently by the United States and Mexico." In a similar vein, the health systems of both countries are substantially different. As Alfonso López de la Osa maintains in his contribution Mexico and the United States have different health systems because they are "based on different legal traditions." Although integration of both health systems would be an ideal scenario, and we are slowly moving in that direction, what will prevail in the next twenty years is the status quo with some mobility and integration along the border. Chapter by chapter, this book draws out the complexity of domestic decision making and how it ultimately rubs up against the binational relationship. Lastly, we asked the authors to project that to the future and to seek a glimpse of how the two countries can make the future better.

The multiplicity of the levels of interaction and the array of issues make the relationship extremely complicated as well, and the future difficult to predict and manage. Indeed, complexity is a central characteristic of US-Mexico relations. The relationship covers many topics—trade, water, border security, health, drugs, immigration, oil, commerce, and so on—and engages multiple actors, such as the presi-

dent, congress, courts, states, political parties, interest groups, lobbying groups, think tanks, international organizations, NGOs, and humanitarian associations, among others, which complicates the responsiveness of the American and Mexican governments. Thus as Stephen Mumme, Irasema Coronado, and Edmundo Molina Pérez clearly show in their chapter, environmental protection at the border involves the participation of binational regional workgroups and multiregional policies that govern all the actors on the several sub-topics such as air, water, dangerous, and solid wastes, among others.

To manage the bilateral relationship is complex, especially in the United States where the system is more open than the one in Mexico. Many of the organizations that shape bilateral relations, such as NGOs, claim a high degree of autonomy and do not see the potential of integration as necessary to affect the implementation of domestic and foreign policy within the national State. Immigration clearly illustrates this problem, with the participation of political parties, congress, the president, the courts, Catholic, protestant, and non-denomination churches, Hispanic organizations, labor unions, and humanitarian associations. Several groups oppose the official immigration policy of the United States. Thus a couple of organizations have sued President Trump considering that his restrictive asylum policy violates the Immigration and Nationality Act.[16] More than three hundred sanctuary cities do not fully cooperate with immigration authorities.[17] Protestant and Catholic churches have openly expressed their opposition to Trump's immigration policy.[18] Therefore the president has difficulties in reaching a consensus and often finds strong opposition to the implementation of his immigration policy.

Furthermore, political actors that were irrelevant fifty or sixty years ago are now playing a very important role in international affairs. This is the case of subnational entities that follow their own foreign policy and often establish important partnerships with other Mexican states. As Samuel Lucas McMillan and Jorge A. Schiavon sustain in their chapter, states are increasingly participating "in world politics and in shaping the binational relationship." In their view, the "expected future will be one in which sub-state officials are likely to engage in international affairs and do so to" protect their interest.

Finally, US-Mexico relations are characterized by a cycle of stability and periodic crises, in which the routine is more prevalent than crises, but occasionally crises erupt and oblige the parties to review the status quo. Habitually, the bilateral relationship operates within the boundaries that give it some stability: people cross the border every day, both legally and without documents, trade is carried out routinely, tourists spend time in both countries, students enroll in Mexican and US universities, an increasing number of Mexican high-skilled workers are employed in the United States, more Americans live in Mexico than in any other country, etc. On a regular basis, those activities do not capture the attention of high-ranking officials and do not alter the relative harmony of the bilateral relationship. However, under

certain circumstances the relationship can face a profound crisis, substantially modifying the regular state of affairs. The closing of the border in 1969 by the Richard Nixon administration, the abduction and killing of DEA agent Enrique Camarena Salazar in 1985, and Trump's current zero-tolerance policy on immigration and his threats to impose tariffs on Mexican products are only three cases. These crises are periodic and generally subside in favor of the status quo, as we mentioned, but occasionally do give rise to greater cooperation. Only rarely is the status quo revised based on the visionary leadership of both countries and without the necessity arising from crises—such was the case in the early 1990s when President Salinas and President Bush negotiated and set in place the North American Free Trade Agreement. Authors in this book were encouraged to think about these punctuated moments in the binational relationship and anticipate whether they could mean something to the binational relationship in the coming future.

The importance for the bilateral relationship for both countries frequently helps to quickly overcome crises. However, we argue that the peculiarities of the present crisis—under the Trump-López Obrador presidencies—differ from previous cases. The current crisis was not triggered by a specific event, such as the closure of the border, or the assassination of a DEA agent, but by a president and an administration that often threatens Mexico and frequently takes a position contrary to Mexican interests. In many ways, one could say that it is the opposite of, say, the Bush presidency. The worrisome part is that it may leave a legacy in the relationship, a legacy that may be difficult to revert. Therefore, we consider that this crisis is more like a structural crisis than a momentary crisis and that its legacy will be more permanent. It can intensify at any moment and for any reason and then complicate other areas of the relationship. It can be manipulated by the American president very easily, partly thanks to the profound asymmetry between the two countries. It can be detonated by issues that are not necessarily controversial but which can help Trump politically. Trump's behavior and his views of Mexico are driven by his political and personal interests—none of which are conducive to building permanent, solid institutions to manage the relationship into the future. For Trump hitting Mexico has very little political cost, so Mexico is an excellent *piñata*. Mexico's own weakness and the perceived interests of the current leadership make it even more vulnerable in the short term. During this presidential election season, it is expected that Mexico will be a country often criticized and used by Trump for his political gains.

An exercise on future scenarios cannot be complete, however, without a good understanding of how the two countries are changing within—culturally, politically, and demographically. Culture, domestic politics (as already suggested), and demography matter quite a bit, especially in the US-Mexico binational relationship as the two countries have long been intertwined, especially culturally and demographically. The United States and Mexico are changing and they are changing rapidly. The United States is a highly polarized society, and as Tony Payan and Daniel Tichenor illus-

trate in this volume, in a couple of decades the white population will be a minority in the United States and people of Mexican-descent will have an increased presence. This has triggered animosity toward Mexicans. The younger generation, which will be more politically active in a few years, will likely be more liberal. They currently support the liberalization of drugs, abortion, gay rights, and other similar topics and will likely continue to do so. The cultural transformations that have happened in the United States since the 1960s have generated a cultural and political backlash. The struggle between those in favor of political change and those against it is shaking American society. We are in a transitional period, in the movement toward a new reality and a new paradigm. In this period, Mexico and the United States will face a very tense relationship independently of who occupies the White House.

Mexico is also changing. In the 21st century, different administrations have been unable to end corruption, violence, and drug trafficking. These problems have worsened, affecting the society and pervading national and local governments. The Mexican economy has grown very modestly, and experts consider that it will be in a recession soon; and with 55% of the population working in the informal sector, it is possible that immigration will rise again. Likewise, as Joy Langston and Jesús Velasco maintain in their contribution to this volume, Mexico will face serious political problems. The stable three-party system which characterized Mexican politics during the last thirty years is ending. Today, people do not believe in the traditional parties, and the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA), Mr. López Obrador's party, is popular but also highly authoritarian in its makeup and maintains a controversial relationship with other institutions and a degree of submission to the US president. If López Obrador and MORENA fulfill their campaign promises, it is quite possible that MORENA will become the new PRI—the party that governed Mexico for seventy years in the 20th century. However, if they fail, protests and even chaos will prevail in Mexico. The domestic politics of both countries make us think that the future of the bilateral relationship will be marked, in the words of Octavio Paz, by a *cloudy time*.

In the end, this book offers the reader a peek into the future. It is imperfect, as any work trying to guess what the future may be. But the knowledge behind each chapter is deep; the drivers were carefully chosen; the attempt to understand what the next years will bring for all us is more important than ever. The challenges that both countries face domestically, in the binational relationship, and on the world stage are enormous, and without the work of smart people who can anticipate scenarios and make solid policy recommendations to elicit a better future we would probably be in a worse position. We hope the reader enjoys the volume and separating the more valuable parts, he or she can look ahead and advocate for a better North America.

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