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## Security Inequalities in North America: Reassessing Regional Security Complex Theory

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## **Security Inequalities in North America: Reassessing Regional Security Complex Theory**

### **Abstract**

This article re-evaluates earlier work done by the authors on Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) in North America, using sectoral analysis initially developed by Buzan and Waever, but also adding the variables of institutions, identity, and interests. These variables are assessed qualitatively in the contemporary context on how they currently impress upon the process of securitization within sectoral relations between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The article reviews the movement from bilateral security relations between these states to the development of a trilateral response to regional security challenges post- 9/11. It further addresses the present period and what appears to be a security process derailed by recent political changes and security inequalities, heightened by the election of Donald Trump in 2016. The article argues that while these three states initially evinced a convergence of regional security interests after 9/11, which did create new institutional responses, under the current conditions, divergence in political interests and security inequalities have reduced the explanatory power of RSCT in North America. Relations between states in North American are becoming less characterized by the role of institutions and interests and more by identity politics in the region.

## Introduction

The topic of security inequalities in international relations has been an ongoing discussion within academic communities for many years although the nature of those inequalities has changed.<sup>1</sup> During the Cold War, the focus was on military power as the primary variable in assessing state power, as the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, sought to achieve a comparative advantage in military capabilities over another.<sup>2</sup> The formation of security blocs, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact are evidence of the focus on military power. These military coalitions formed to address perceived security inequalities on each side, such as NATO's comparative advantage in military technological capability compared to the Warsaw Pact's size in number of personnel and weapons systems. Realists such as George Kenan and Hans Morgenthau used the terms containment and balance of power as the policy means by which states achieved security during the Cold War, despite the security inequalities between states.<sup>3</sup>

With the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the New World Order there was less emphasis placed on military power in addressing security inequalities between states and more of a focus on economic power and globalization, as the policy means by which states would achieve security.<sup>4</sup> An anecdotal example of this occurred in 1995, when then US Secretary of Defense William Perry convened the first Defense Ministerial of the Americas in Williamsburg, Virginia. In his effort to gain participation by the states in the Western Hemisphere, then Prime Minister Denzel Douglas of St. Kitts and Nevis, asked if they would be discussing bananas. If not, he would not send

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<sup>1</sup>Fathali Moghaddam, *The New Global Insecurity: How Terrorism, Environmental Collapse, Economic Inequalities, and Resource Shortages Are Changing Our World* (New York: Praeger Security International, 2010); Mohammed Ayoob, "Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations: The Case for Subaltern Realism," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (December 2002): 27-48, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.00263>.

<sup>2</sup> Economic security was also a major variable. See Robert A. Pollard, *Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia Press 1985).

<sup>3</sup>George Kenan, "The Sources of Soviet Power," *Foreign Affairs* 25 no. 4 (July 1947); Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1948).

<sup>4</sup> Andrew HurrellandNgairé Woods. *Inequality, Globalization, and World Politics* (London,: Oxford University Press, 1999). For a more general discussion of complex interdependency see Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 2011).

his Defense Minister, since economic security was the most important concern of this small Caribbean country.<sup>5</sup>

While policy makers struggled to define mutual security concerns in the post-Cold War era, international relations scholars also sought new theoretical understanding of security relationships between states. This meant moving beyond the systemic and state-levels of analysis which dominated much of international relations theory in the past, to discover new approaches and variables to explain state behavior and the new global security dynamic. One such school of thought which emerged was that of constructivism, championed by John Ruggie and Alexander Wendt,<sup>6</sup> which sought to move beyond realist explanations of state behavior based on traditional elements of national power, introducing new variables, such as culture and social understanding.<sup>7</sup>

While the international relations academic community sought new explanatory theories related to state behavior and security inequalities between states in a post-Cold War era, conflict did not go away. Threats, which had once been shaped primarily by superpower conflict and the fear of global nuclear war become more regional and local, with the advent of failed states and intra-state and regional conflict.<sup>8</sup> Conflicts such as Somalia (1993), Bosnia (1995), and Kosovo (1999) reflected the changing dynamics of the fragmentation of state power and military confrontation between rival ethnic

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<sup>5</sup> Personal observations of one of the authors, having attended the DMA in Williamsburg, VA in 1995.

<sup>6</sup>John Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge." *International Organization* 52, no.4a (1998): 855-885; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> These are commonly referred to by the acronym DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic). Alastair Ian Johnston, "Thinking about Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): 32-64, available at: <http://www.fbo3.uni-frankfurt.de/45431264/Johnston-1995-Thinking-aboutStrategic-Culture.pdf>; Peter Katzenstein, ed. *Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Michael Desch, "Culture Clash: Assessing the Importance of Ideas in Security Studies," *International Security* 23, vol. 1 (1998): 141-170, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec.23.1.141>. Roy Koslowski and Freidrich Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): 215-47, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028174>; Vendulka Kubalkova, Nicholas Onuf and Paul Kowert, eds, *International Relations in a Constructed World* (London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998).

<sup>8</sup>Richard Kilroy, Abelardo Rodriguez, and Todd Hataley, *North American Regional Security: A Trilateral Framework?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012)

factions for political power and territory defined what was quickly becoming a New World Disorder.

## Post 9/11 Security in North America

When the terrorist attacks occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001 (9/11), challenges of asymmetrical threats, such as terrorism and transnational criminal activity, confronted the field of international security studies once again. Even though these threats had existed for some time, they took on new significance as non-state actors operationalized traditional means of attacks (airline hijackings and suicide attacks) in ways that had a strategic effect, thus shocking the world. As a result, regional approaches toward security relationships between states and against non-state actors took on new significance, as states placed a greater emphasis on homeland security and the tightening up of their respective boundaries. Old security concepts such as perimeter defense took on new meaning in a post 9/11 world with states, such as the United States and Russia, seeking to expand their respective defenses by pushing security out to neighboring countries (the near abroad in Russia's case or North America for the United States), seeking regional cooperation and support against new threats.<sup>9</sup>

Regionalization of security concerns, which emerged after 9/11, appeared to give support to what Buzan and Waever called Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT).<sup>10</sup> The application of their sectoral analysis in the context of North American security integration appeared particularly prescient given the geopolitical changes of the contemporary security environment and the new threats posed to state security after 9/11.<sup>11</sup> All three countries, Canada, United States and Mexico developed new institutions across sectors (political, economic, military, social, and environmental), which supported securitization. The political leaders embraced shared interests in confronting threats by proposing programs and policies, such as the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP).

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<sup>9</sup>Richard Kilroy, "Perimeter Defense and Regional Security Cooperation in North America: United States, Canada, and Mexico," *Homeland Security Affairs Journal*, (December 2007), available at: <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/138>.

<sup>10</sup>Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup>Kilroy, et al., *North American Regional Security*.

## *Thesis Statement and Argument*

Today, however, there appears to be retrenchment of nationalism and the rise of identity politics emerging in North America, most evident with the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States in 2016. The campaign rhetoric, which focused on immigration as the main security threat to the United States, building a wall between the United States and Mexico, and ending the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is now part of the public policy discourse in Washington, threatening to create new fissures between countries within the region. What developed after 9/11 as an emerging trilateral response to regional security challenges, providing empirical support for RSCT, appears significantly impacted by security inequalities between states and identity politics.

This article reevaluates RSCT in North America, looking at the sectoral analysis provided by Buzan and Waever, but also adding the variables of institutions, identity, and interests. These variables, assessed qualitatively in the contemporary context, reflect how they currently affect the process of securitization in sectoral relations between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The article reviews the movement from bilateral security relations between these states to the development of a trilateral response to regional security challenges post- 9/11. It further addresses the present period and what appears to be a security process derailed by recent political changes and security inequalities, heightened by the election of Donald Trump in 2016. The article argues that while these three states initially evinced a convergence of regional security interests after 9/11, which did create new institutional responses, under the current conditions, divergence in political interests and security inequalities have reduced the explanatory power of RSCT in North America. Relations between states in North America appear less characterized by the role of institutions and interests and more by identity politics in the region.

## **Regional Security Complex Theory Explained**

Buzan and Waever define a regional security complex as “a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.”<sup>12</sup> In an earlier work, Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde proposed an approach to security analysis that broke down the whole into five sectors used for security analysis: the military sector, the environmental

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<sup>12</sup>Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Power*, 44.

sector, the economic sector, the societal sector, and the political sector.<sup>13</sup> By using the term securitization, Buzan et al., effectively argued that security was too broad a concept defined purely in military terms alone: it is best viewed across multiple sectors of both the state and society, where the state alone does not hold a monopoly of either power or influence on security. Yet, securitization, as used by Buzan et al., has its critics, who argue that by broadening the definition of security, they have in fact weakened it, to the point that anything can be securitized and thus impact state security.<sup>14</sup> What then is neglected is what states actually do to operationalize security.

Yet, Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde argue that their views on securitization involve three steps, which prevent everything from becoming a security issue: identification of existential threats emergency action and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules.<sup>15</sup> The problem, however, is that not all threats are existential to all states, and therefore states perceive of threats differently, requiring different sets of emergency action and different responses from both public and private sectors. Thus, the sectoral analysis offered by Buzan, Waever and de Wilde do provide a means by which securitization can be disaggregated from the whole to examine specific areas of concern where cooperation or conflict (amity or enmity) can occur between states. In developing RSCT in their later work, Buzan and Waever make the argument that it is in fact these inter-unit relations between states that are most applicable regionally and by examining each sector, a larger picture occurs of what regional security cooperation takes place across borders (or not: thus, desecuritization may occur).

## Other Views on Regional Security Relationships

Buzan and Waever may have developed RSCT, but they are not alone in seeking a theoretical understanding of regional interaction between states regarding security. David Lake and Patrick Morgan suggest security is simply one important variable that drives the development of regional orders, but certainly not the only one.<sup>16</sup> Their idea of regional orders approximates Buzan

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<sup>13</sup>Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998), p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>Amir Lupovici, "The Limits of Securitization Theory: Observational Criticism and the Curious Absence of Israel," *International Studies Review* 16, no. 3 (September 2014): 390-410, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/misr.12150>; Rita Taurek, "Securitization Theory and Securitisation Studies," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9 (2006): 53-61, available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800072>.

<sup>15</sup>Buzan, et al., *Security: A New Framework*, 6.

<sup>16</sup>David Lake and Patrick Morgan, *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

and Waever's security complexes; however, Lake and Morgan take a much more inclusive view of what constitutes a region, whereas Buzan and Waever are much more exclusive, arguing that regions are clearly defined.<sup>17</sup> Lake and Morgan also make the argument that, "Regions behave differently than the international system, thus new approaches and new theories are necessary to fully understand regional security dynamics" and "Regions provide a new dynamic for great powers and therefore traditional foreign policy approaches to regional conflicts may no longer be appropriate. Great power foreign policy must be designed to suit the region."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the idea of security inequalities between a powerful state (United States) and less powerful states (Canada and Mexico) affects the relations between these states, regionally, in North America.

According to Buzan and Waever, North America (comprised of Canada, Mexico, and the United States) would fit their definition of an RSCT since it possesses all four of the criteria necessary:

1. A boundary dividing regional neighbors.
2. Anarchic structure of two or more autonomous units.
3. Polarity defining the distribution of power among units.
4. A socially constructed understanding of amity and enmity among the units.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the security environment and threats that emerged after 9/11, which had a direct impact on the United States, also affected Canada and Mexico, due to their shared borders. As one former Canadian military officer once stated, "if your neighbor's house is on fire, you can sit and watch it burn and hope it doesn't spread to your house, or you can grab a hose and help him put it out, which also protects your home."<sup>20</sup>

## A Regional Security Complex in North America

As a result of the events of 9/11 and the focus placed by the United States on homeland security, both Canada and Mexico took a number of steps across

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<sup>17</sup>Lake and Morgan, 30; Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Power*, 48-50.

<sup>18</sup>Lake and Morgan, *Regional Order*, 6-7.

<sup>19</sup>Buzan and Waever, *Regions and Power*, 53.

<sup>20</sup> This comment was shared at the Kingston Conference on International Security, Ontario, Canada (June 11-12, 2009). Interestingly, a Mexican military officer attending the conference made another comment about increased security cooperation between Canada and Mexico. He stated that Mexico would be open to more security cooperation with Canada; however, there was this large thing in between their two countries (Personal observations of the authors who attended this event).



Buzan, Waever and de Wilde's sectors (military, economic, social, environmental, and political) to increase security cooperation with the United States. Both states recognized that US insecurity influenced the much broader regional context for their collective relations. Most of these actions occurred bilaterally, rather than trilaterally, for example, Canada and the United States or Mexico and the United States. However, in sectors where trilateral relations already existed, the discourse necessarily took on a trilateral dimension. An example of this would be the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, which went into effect in 1994. Yet, NAFTA did not create institutions like those, which emerged in Europe with the formation of the European Union (EU) and a regional governance model. Rather NAFTA was a loose economic governance model which, after 9/11, became more securitized and more reflective of a 'hierarchical sovereignty' (as defined by Lake and Morgan), rather than a 'pooled sovereignty' model of institution building.<sup>21</sup>

## Sectoral Analysis

Within the political sector, a number of institutional changes took place in North America. The largest restructuring of the US government since 1947 occurred in 2002 under the Homeland Security Act, which established the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This new cabinet-level agency, which has grown to over 240,000 members, consolidated a number of federal agencies, which had previously been under other cabinets, such as the US Coast Guard, which had been part of the Department of Transportation.<sup>22</sup> The Department of Homeland Security also included new agencies, such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Canada followed suit in 2003 by creating its own homeland security agency, Public Safety Canada (PSC). Its mission mirrored that of the DHS, "to ensure coordination across all federal departments and agencies responsible for national security and the safety of Canadians. Our mandate is to keep Canadians safe from a range of risks such as natural disasters, crime, and terrorism."<sup>23</sup> Mexico did not create a new political institution to match that of DHS or PSC. Instead, it created a Public Security Department (discontinued in 2013) which focused on internal security issues related to policing and crime. Mexico did not have a national

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<sup>21</sup>Greg Anderson, "Securitization and Sovereignty in Post-9/11 North America," *Review of International Political Economy* 19, no. 5 (2012): 1–31, available at:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2011.600239>.

<sup>22</sup>Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (2016). "About DHS," available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/about-dhs>.

<sup>23</sup>Public Safety Canada (PSC) "About Public Safety Canada," (2016), available at <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/bt/index-en.aspx>.

security strategy before 9/11, and did not create one immediately afterwards during the Fox Administration (2000-2006) which would drive changes in bureaucratic structures focused on security. As a result, Mexico had an incomplete national security law in 2005, lacking a new department, which could address homeland security issues. Although the Fox Administration inaugurated the office of National Security Advisor, this office went unregulated by law and had many political and bureaucratic problems in forming a national security cabinet, or a means by which there was a clear coordination between national security and foreign policy. Thus, after 9/11, “the Mexico government experienced a political, conceptual, and institutional vacuum and was unable to coordinate, plan, and administer resources of the state in order to cooperate effectively with the United States.”<sup>24</sup> In the end, after 2005, the coordination between the United States and Mexico on North American security concerns took place between the Ministry of the Interior and the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>25</sup>

Within the military sector, a similar dynamic occurred with the United States creating a new homeland defense command, US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in 2002, which would coordinate US military support to the federal government in response to threats within North America. USNORTHCOM became the country’s sixth regional command, responsible for the territorial defense of North America, to include Canada and Mexico (as well as the Bahamas, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands), under its Area of Responsibility (AOR).<sup>26</sup> Canada also stood up Canada Command in 2006, which had a similar homeland continental defense mission to USNORTHCOM. Canada and the United States were already part of military alliances, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD). USNORTHCOM took over operational responsibility of NORAD from the old US Space Command, with its new headquarters at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. Again,

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<sup>24</sup>Kilroy, et al., *North American Regional Security*, 109.

<sup>25</sup>Interview of one of the authors with the former Minister of the Interior, Santiago Creel Miranda, Mexico, City, August 12, 2015. Mexico produced a National Security Program document under the Calderon administration (2006-2012) and later under Peña Nieto (2012-2018). The latest is the “National Security Program 2014-2018: A multidimensional policy for Mexico in the 21st century,” available at: [http://dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5342824&fecha=30/04/2014](http://dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5342824&fecha=30/04/2014). The problem is that Mexico does not yet have a doctrinal conception of national security beyond the *sexenio* (6-year term) of the administration in office.

<sup>26</sup> “About NORTHCOM,” (n.d.), available at: <http://www.northcom.mil/About-USNORTHCOM/>; The other five regional commands include: US Central Command (Middle East); US Southern Command (Central/South America and Caribbean); US Africa Command (Continental Africa); US European Command (Eurasia, to include Russia); and US Pacific Command (rest of Asia, China, and the western Pacific).

Mexico did not follow suit, initially, under the Fox administration, despite NORTHCOM's efforts to involve Mexican military personnel in both NORAD and NORTHCOM structures. This would later change under the Calderon administration. Thus, using Buzan's terms, while there was amity between the United States and Canadian militaries before and after 9/11, the enmity that existed between the United States and Mexican militaries remained after 9/11, although this did vary by institutions.<sup>27</sup>

Within the economic sector, the NAFTA framework provided the institutional context by which the three countries addressed security concerns. The impact of 9/11, where all commercial airline traffic into and out of the United States was completely stopped on that day, had a spillover effect on Canada and Mexico as flights from overseas were diverted to airports in these countries. Events on 9/11 also affected commercial vehicular traffic across land borders, which had the effect of creating significant back-ups of finished goods, agricultural products, and supply parts. There were even discussions between government officials on how each country would respond to the threat of a terrorist incident at a critical border-crossing site, or the spillover effects of a bioterrorism incident or pandemic on each country's health systems.<sup>28</sup> Having the consultation mechanisms in place with NAFTA, as well as institutional structures, which facilitated trade and commerce between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, allowed for a discussion of new security concerns raised by the events of 9/11 within the economic sector with the goal to increase security without creating severe restrictions on trade and commerce. Examples of security measures in the economic sector after 9/11 included such program as the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT); Free and Secure Trade (FAST); and NEXUS.<sup>29</sup>

Securitization within the environmental sector includes issues such as water rights, climate change, and health issues among others. The United States has

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<sup>27</sup> As one anecdotal example, during a presentation in Mexico City in 2009, the authors a Mexican Army officer confronted the authors. He was upset with USNORTHCOM's patch, worn on US military uniforms, which showed the US eagle sitting on top of Mexico, Canada, and the United States. He also questioned that stationing of the US 1st Armored Division in El Paso, Texas, after its drawdown from Europe, arguing that it was there as an invasion force. While the Mexican Army has always been more nationalistic, the Mexican Navy has been more cooperative in working with its North American counterparts. In fact, the Mexican Navy provided a liaison officer to USNORTHCOM headquarters years before the Army finally sent its own liaison officer.

<sup>28</sup> An example was a conference held in San Antonio, Texas in November 2006, with the theme "Catastrophic Terrorism at the Border, Preparing for and Responding to Disasters in North America," sponsored by US Northern Command which included government, military, and academic officials from all three countries.

<sup>29</sup> Kilroy, et al., *North American Regional Security*, 114.

bilateral treaties with Mexico and Canada with regard to shared waterways and access to water resources. The International Boundary Waters Treaty between the United States and Canada has been in existence since 1909, creating an International Joint Commission (IJC) to oversee shared water resources along the border.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the International Boundary and Water Commission exist to regulate binational water resources between Mexico and the United States, based on a treaty negotiated in 1944.<sup>31</sup> More recently, concerns over the impact of climate change, particularly in the Arctic region caused the United States, Canada, and other Arctic countries to confront a changing geographic and environmental landscape due to the melting polar ice cap and increased access to fishing, minerals, as well as commercial transit in this region.<sup>32</sup> Pandemic flu, such as the swine flu epidemic in 2009 and other communicable diseases such as the Zika virus in 2016 affect countries in North America and throughout the Western Hemisphere. Information sharing between Mexico, the United States, and Canada help prevent the spread of these infectious diseases, along with the actions of local communities working across the border to address shortcoming in their public health infrastructure.<sup>33</sup>

The societal sector incorporates identity issues, which have a security dimension at the sub-state level.<sup>34</sup> Examples would include migration, Diasporas, and conflict between various ethnic groups or cultures. States, which share common borders, will always face some degree of social stress related to immigration policies, work and transit issues, economic and political interaction, and other cross-border dynamics.<sup>35</sup> For the United States, Mexico, and Canada, the rise in international criminal gangs, engaging in drug and human trafficking, arms trafficking, and illegal trade and smuggling, have taken on new social implications since 9/11, due to fears of

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<sup>30</sup> International Joint Commission (IJC), "Role of the IJC," (2016), available at: [http://www.ijc.org/en/Role\\_of\\_the\\_Commission](http://www.ijc.org/en/Role_of_the_Commission).

<sup>31</sup> Nicole T. Carter, Clare Ribando Seelke, and Daniel T. Shedd, U.S.-Mexico Water Sharing: Background and Recent Developments, Report No. R43312 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service January 2015): available at: <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=762038>.

<sup>32</sup> James Kraska and Betsy Baker, *Emerging Security Issues in the Arctic*, (Center for a New American Security, March 2014), available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/178414/CNAS\\_EmergingArcticSecurityChallenges\\_policybrief.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/178414/CNAS_EmergingArcticSecurityChallenges_policybrief.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Kraska and Baker; One example shared at the conference was the cooperation between public health officials in Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico to confront pandemics which could impact their border communities. As early as 2006, meetings were taking place to discuss how these two cities would address their public health needs and ability to share resources to address such a threat.

<sup>34</sup> Buzan, et al., *Security: A New Framework*, 119.

<sup>35</sup> Thus, the development of border studies as its own academic discipline.

terrorist groups taking advantage of these criminal networks, as well as migrant Diasporas, to gain access to their respective countries.<sup>36</sup> Cultural and identity issues also affected the desire on the part of USNORTHCOM to expand its bilateral security relationship with Canada in NORAD to include Mexico in new formal security relationships, which went beyond air defense, to maritime and land-based military institutions. Language differences, intelligence-sharing agreements, and a difference in military cultures and organizational structures made such efforts difficult, if not impossible to overcome.<sup>37</sup>

Yet in 2011, a new conference organized by the Mexican Navy's Center for Advanced Naval Studies (War College), evinced a new sense of cooperation between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The new NORTHCOM commander, Admiral James Winnefield, Jr. arrived in Mexico City with a more conciliatory tone and approach toward military-to-military cooperation in the context of the North American region as a whole. He went further than did his predecessors in advocating more structural cooperation with Mexico and Canada referring to shared interests along their common borders with the United States, particularly in dealing with common threats such as organized crime and natural disasters. The Mexican government and military officials positively received his message; however, the Mexican Army remained skeptical.<sup>38</sup> Four years later, a conference organized by US Special Operations Command North (SOCNORTH) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, brought together Canadian, Mexican, and US military and civilian personnel to discuss trilateral cooperation amongst Special Operations Forces (SOF) to

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<sup>36</sup> A number of news articles in the *Washington Times*, *International Business Journal*, *Judicial Watch*, and other media raised the fears of terrorists taking advantage of the porous border with Mexico and Canada to enter the United States, possibly as Syrian refugees. See Stephan Dinan, "Agents nab Pakistanis with Terrorist Connections Crossing U.S. Border," *Washington Times*, (December 30, 2015), available at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/dec/30/pakistanis-terrorist-connections-nabbed-us-border/?page=all>; However, for years, the Department of Homeland Security argued that such fears were overstated, and that no terrorists had been identified crossing the border. After the San Bernardino, CA terrorist attack in December 2015 where the suspects had ties to ISIS, more scrutiny has been placed on migration, both legal and illegal.

<sup>37</sup> In 2010, a conference hosted by the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. brought together senior military leaders from the United States, Canada, and Mexico, to discuss increased security cooperation between the three countries. The commander of US Northern Command, Air Force General Victor Renuart tried to convince his colleagues of the need for further integration and cooperation under USNORTHCOM's leadership; however, he received a rather cool reception (Personal observation of the authors who organized this conference).

<sup>38</sup> Personal observation of one author who was responsible for organizing this conference.

confront the growing threat of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) within North America.<sup>39</sup>

The sectoral approach offered by Buzan, Weaver, and de Wilde and later expanded upon by Buzan and Weaver in developing RSCT, does provide a useful theoretical lens and typology for addressing securitization both internally within states and externally within regions. The addition of the variables of identity, institutions, and interests provides an increased understanding of how states within regions securitize issues differently and why certain sectors have more or less salience in understanding RSCT's value in explaining security inequalities.<sup>40</sup>

### Operationalizing RSCT in North America

After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Canada and the United States redefined their security relationship, building on existing treaties and institutions. In December 2002, both countries formed a Bi-National Working Group (BWG) to explore areas of security cooperation that would extend beyond the current NORAD institutional structure (focused on air defense) to include both a maritime and terrestrial defense component. The BWG also addressed issues such as “enhanced intelligence and information sharing, interagency cooperation, better situational awareness, and border security.”<sup>41</sup>

As mentioned previously in this article, despite efforts by the United States to reach out to Mexico and create more formal security cooperation ties between the two nations' militaries, Mexico did not initially reciprocate. The Mexican Navy did agree to send a liaison officer to USNORTHCOM headquarters; however, the Mexican Army did not.<sup>42</sup> One of the reasons for the lack of cooperation was the different threat perceptions at the time. For the United

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<sup>39</sup> William Mendel and Peter McCabe, *SOF Role in Combating Transnational Organized Crime* (McDill AFB, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2016).

<sup>40</sup> Kilroy, et al., *North American Regional Security*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Kilroy, et al., *North American Regional Security*, 111; What many people do not know is that on 9/11, the operational commander of NORAD was Canadian General Rick Findley, the Battle Commander at the Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center, since the US NORAD Commander, Air Force General Ralph Eberhart, was at Peterson AFB Colorado Springs, Colorado (personal conversations of one of the authors with Bilateral Working Group members).

<sup>42</sup> There is one Mexican Army representative now. Under Calderon and Peña Nieto military to military cooperation has increased greatly. See CG. DEM Almirante José Santiago Valdés Álvarez, Secretaría de Marina-Armada de México, Jefe del Estado Mayor “Límites y alcances de la cooperación military en América del Norte,” in Abelardo Rodríguez (coordinador) *Agendas Comunes y Diferencias en la seguridad de América del Norte, ¿de dóndevenimos?, ¿dóndeestamos?y ¿a dóndequeremosir?* (Centro de EstudiosSuperioresNavales de la Armada de México, Universidad de Guadalajara, 2012).

States, the threat was terrorism. For Mexico, the principal threat was organized crime. Thus, the United States looked to expand its security perimeter to prevent terrorists from attacking the homeland from without, while Mexico was more concerned with internal security, looking at the criminal threat within the country. These two divergent views on what constituted the main threat to each country were further exacerbated by the United States placing most of its emphasis on using the military to fight a Global War on Terrorism, rather than pursuing a criminal justice model to counter terrorism. Such a model would have placed more emphasis on law enforcement cooperation between police agencies rather than militaries.<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, Canada and Mexico did increase ties in law enforcement cooperation due to a shared security problem: organized crime and tourism. Through the efforts of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), working with both federal and state police forces in Mexico, both countries overcame an impasse in jurisdiction issues to allow for the sharing of law enforcement sensitive information and cooperation in criminal investigations involving Canadian citizens who were victims of criminal violence in Mexico.<sup>44</sup> Mexican government officials also expressed interest in having RCMP assistance with developing a community-policing model, as well as support in their attempts to make the legal process in Mexico more transparent.<sup>45</sup>

## Security and Prosperity Partnership

A major development in creating a trilateral security relationship in North America occurred in March 2005, when the leaders of Canada (Paul Martin), Mexico (Vicente Fox), and the United States (George W. Bush) met in Waco, Texas to sign an agreement called the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP). Although officially called the North American Leaders' Summit, the initial meeting in Waco (primarily being pushed by George W. Bush), came to

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<sup>43</sup> Jason Rinehart, "Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 5, (November 2010): 31-47, available at:

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/122/html>. The Mexican military has had more of an internal security role, which it uses to augment police forces in responding to internal threats; whereas both the United States and Mexican have legal restrictions on the use of the military domestically.

<sup>44</sup> Jeff Sallot, "RCMP to Join Investigation, Mexico says," *The Globe and Mail*, March 4, 2006, available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/rcmp-to-join-investigation-mexico-says/article18157565/>.

<sup>45</sup> The authors attended a meeting, which took place in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico in 2009, where the state attorney general from Chihuahua voiced these concerns to an RCMP official. Mexico was beginning to experiment with the use of oral testimony in its legal procedures, which would be a significant change in transparency of its jurisprudence and court system.

be called the Three Amigos summit by the press, due to the emphasis placed on the meeting as a gathering of friends rather than competitors.<sup>46</sup> Canadians and Americans alike viewed SPP skeptically, believing it was a cover for ushering in a North American Union, under a shroud of secrecy.<sup>47</sup> Ironically, Canadians viewed it as a loss of sovereignty to the United States, while American citizens viewed it as a loss of sovereignty to Mexico, and Mexico as well viewed it as a loss of sovereignty to both nations.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, the SPP did seek to address some of the security inequalities between states in North America by creating a governing structure, which would allow all three countries to have a seat at the table to discuss issues related to the SPP's main five main agenda items.

1. Creation of a North American Competitiveness Council
2. Advancing cooperation on avian and pandemic influenza
3. North American Energy Security Initiative
4. North American Emergency Management
5. Smart, Secure Borders.<sup>49</sup>

Both Martin and Fox recognized that Bush's main goal for the SPP was to provide a unified North American security agenda focused on the threat of international terrorism. Canada and Mexico, while focused on the prosperity aspects of the SPP, realized that their economic relations with the United States needed to address United States insecurity since 9/11. By emphasizing areas of cooperation that would promote common border security issues, infrastructure protection (particularly in energy), and emergency response, the SPP did address some of the main threats to North America from terrorism. The working groups created to address such issues also had a prosperity dimension since they also addressed regulatory cooperation to promote economic growth and improve quality of life for citizens on both

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<sup>46</sup> Subsequent meetings between new leaders of each country become much more contentious over differences in trade policies, in particular. Bruce Cheadle, "Three Amigos summit not so chummy: Harper, Obama Spar Over Trilateral Trade," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 3, 2012), available at: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/canada/three-amigos-summit-not-so-chummy-145886435.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Laura Carlson, *Extending NAFTA's Reach*, (Petrolia, CA: Center for International Policy, 2007). Available at: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2007/08/25/extending-nafta-s-reach/>.

<sup>48</sup> Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), "Security and Prosperity Partnership: Myths and Facts," (2007). Available at: [http://www.spp.gov/myths\\_vs\\_facts.asp](http://www.spp.gov/myths_vs_facts.asp).

<sup>49</sup>Sourcewatch, "Security and Prosperity Partnership," (2005), Available at: [http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Security\\_and\\_Prosperty\\_Partnership\\_of\\_North\\_America](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Security_and_Prosperty_Partnership_of_North_America).



sides of shared borders. Thus, in the end, the SPP reflected a recognition that all three countries were part of a shared security complex. The securitization of issues across multiple sectors (political, economic, environmental, social, and military) needed to be addressed in some comprehensive framework, which did address the interests of all three states, and not the agenda of just one dominant state.

Despite the good intentions of the SPP, there were still some identity issues, which proved hard to overcome. The working groups themselves were dissimilar with each country's participants reflecting diverse interests and agendas. Some of the participants in each country's bureaucracy also voiced skepticism about whether they were pursuing common interests over parochial ones.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, those outside of the government voiced concern over the transparency of the negotiations, "criticizing the secretive and exclusionary nature of discussions, and the apparent privileging of business interests through the creation of the North America Competitiveness Council (NACC)."<sup>51</sup> Supporters of the SPP even had reservations based on the decision-making model adopted by the SPP, arguing that

"the SPP has been a failure in two important respects: its limited transparency has fueled conspiracy theories that hold the SPP is a plot to reduce national sovereignty in each country; and it has failed to allay public concerns, mainly in the U.S., that NAFTA has hurt U.S. [sic] prosperity more than it has helped—despite the ample economic data which provides evidence to the contrary."<sup>52</sup>

Less than six months after signing the SPP in Waco, Texas, a major hurricane affected the Gulf Coast of the United States in August 2005, causing significant loss of life and property damage primarily in Mississippi and Louisiana. The city of New Orleans alone suffered 1800 casualties and \$110 billion in damages.<sup>53</sup> Critics assailed the Department of Homeland Security and its subordinate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for

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<sup>50</sup> Personal conversations of one of the authors with working group members involved in the SPP process.

<sup>51</sup> Kilroy, et al., *North American Regional Security*, 130.

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Sands, *A Vote for Change and U.S. Strategy for North American Integration*, (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute 2008), available at: [http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/PNA\\_NA\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_1\\_A\\_Vote\\_for\\_Change.pdf](http://www.hudson.org/files/publications/PNA_NA_Policy_Brief_1_A_Vote_for_Change.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> Hurricane Katrina Relief, "FAQs," (2011), available at: <http://www.hurricanekatrinarelief.com/index.html>.

their poor response to the natural disaster.<sup>54</sup> One of the reasons they were ill prepared to respond to this environmental threat, was due to the stand-up of DHS and the implementation of new programs, such as the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management system, which were primarily a response to the threat of terrorism following 9/11.<sup>55</sup> The lack of communication and coordination of relief efforts at the local, state, and federal levels exposed serious flaws in the ability of the United States to respond to a natural disaster of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina. Compounding the problem was the impact of Hurricane Rita, less than 30 days later, which impacted almost the same Gulf states; however, this time the oil-refining areas of Texas bore the brunt of the damage. The result was a significant effect on a part of the United States, which “produced approximately 29 percent of all domestic oil production and 47 percent of the nation's 17 million barrels a day refining capacity.”<sup>56</sup>

Since Emergency Management was one of the five main agenda items of the SPP, the United States, Canada, and Mexico were already beginning to coordinate efforts on how each country could contribute to a trilateral response to disasters in North America (albeit the initial focus was on terrorist-created disasters). Yet, institutional mechanisms to operationalize responses were beginning to be put in place between the militaries of each country, such that the Canadian navy even sent ships to support search and rescue and relief and recovery operations before the Canadian government authorized the mission.<sup>57</sup> Even the Mexican Navy and Army responded by providing personnel and equipment to south Texas to support many of the displaced persons from New Orleans. Mexican President Vicente Fox stated, “these humanitarian missions reflect the Mexican people's feelings of solidarity with the US population.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Mike Ahlers, “Report: Criticism of FEMA's Katrina response deserved.” *CNN*, April 14, 2006, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/04/14/fema.ig/>.

<sup>55</sup> See Richard J. Kilroy, Jr., ed. *Threats to Homeland Security: An All-Hazards Perspective* (Hoboken: J. Wiley and Sons, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Charles Herman, “Katrina's Economic Impact: One Year Later.” *ABC News*, August 25, 2006, available at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/HurricaneKatrina/story?id=2348619&page=1>.

<sup>57</sup> Personal conversations of one of the authors with Canadian military personnel.

<sup>58</sup> Vicente Fox, “President Fox Sends New Message about Disaster Caused by Hurricane Katrina,” *Presidency of the Republic*, (September 5, 2005), available at:

<http://fox.presidencia.gob.mx/en/activities/speeches/?contenido=20654&pagina=1>.

Yet, despite Mexico's willingness to provide support, it was much more difficult to coordinate the actual movement of Mexican military personnel and equipment into the United States, than it was to accommodate Canada's efforts. For example, Mexican military medical personnel were initially not given permission to provide medical support, as well as food products brought into the United States to be used by Mexican military field feeding teams were not cleared through customs (Personal conversations of

When the Three Amigos met in Guadalajara, Mexico in 2009, each country had new elected leaders Felipe Calderon (Mexico), Stephen Harper (Canada), and Barack Obama (United States). As a result, the original five agenda items of the SPP changed to three:

1. Common Prosperity: Increase trade not restrict it; Legal migration; Clean energy
2. Common Safety and Security: H1N1 cooperation; Defeat drug cartels; Control flow of arms
3. Common Values: Peace; Democracy; Human rights.<sup>59</sup>

Mexico's drug wars and the rise of criminal gang violence dominated the security dimension of the meeting. The United States wanted Mexico's support in providing more stringent drug trafficking measures to reduce the flow of drugs into the United States. Mexico wanted the United States to stem the flow of arms into Mexico. Canada was also experiencing the effects of the growing problem of transnational crime in the hemisphere. Despite the Obama administration's continued support for the Merida Initiative, begun by George W. Bush, there was a pessimistic tone to the meeting.<sup>60</sup> The positive results of trilateral security cooperation fostered by the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina had given way to a more harsh reality that each country faced its own problems that could best be resolved internally or at a minimum, bilaterally. Thus, in 2010, the North American Leaders' Summit was cancelled. Instead, Prime Minister Harper and President Obama met in 2011 and agreed to a new bilateral security policy titled, "Beyond the Border," focusing on security and economic cooperation between Canada and the United States.<sup>61</sup> This bilateral agreement signaled that the Security and

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one of the authors with US NORTHCOM personnel responsible for coordinating with Mexican military units).

<sup>59</sup> White House, "Joint Statement by North American Leaders," Guadalajara, Mexico, (August 2009), available at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Joint-statement-by-North-American-leaders/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-statement-by-North-American-leaders/).

<sup>60</sup> The Merida Initiative was a US \$1.5 billion support package to Mexico over three years, to fight the growing threat of drug trafficking organizations. Critics of the program called it Plan Mexico, a reference to US. Plan Colombia counterdrug policy in Colombia, which involved a direct US military intervention.

<sup>61</sup> Border Action Plan, "Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness," Government of Canada, (February 4, 2011), available at: <http://www.borderactionplan-plandactionfrontalier.gc.ca/psec-scep/declaration-declaration.aspx?lang=eng>.

Prosperity Partnership, begun in 2005, was dead, although members of the Mexican Foreign Service argued that there was never a funeral.<sup>62</sup>

## The Merida Initiative and Military Cooperation

The United States and Mexico continued to develop stronger security ties, funneling Merida Initiative funding primarily toward improved Mexican military capabilities, to include enhanced intelligence sharing between the two countries, coordinated out of the US Embassy in Mexico City. However, as Mexico's military took a more visible role in combating drug trafficking organizations, so too did the human rights record of the military come under greater scrutiny. United States military leaders had been warned about the possible danger of drawing closer to the Mexican military, not only due to the historical antagonism that existed between the two countries, but also due to the extent that the Mexican military had its own problems with corruption and ties to drug trafficking.<sup>63</sup> Despite such warnings the US military, under US Northern Command's leadership, engaged in a number of direct and indirect support missions to help train and equip the Mexican military to combat drug trafficking organizations, to include intelligence sharing. The Mexican military, primarily the Marines, have had the most success in capturing or killing key leaders of Mexico's drug cartels, to include the head of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín (El Chapo) Guzmán Loera.<sup>64</sup> However, whatever success the military achieved in combating the drug cartels, was offset by the negative publicity surrounding the human rights violations perpetrated primarily by the Mexican Army and Federal Police Forces. The most egregious case remains unresolved, where 43 college students in Ayotzinapa died in 2014, reportedly murdered by drug cartels. Yet, evidence implicates a government cover-up and Mexican security forces complicity in the crime.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Personal observations based on interviews conducted by one of the authors with Mexican foreign service members.

<sup>63</sup> As one example, in 1995, President Clinton tapped the Commander of US Southern Command, General Barry McCaffrey, to become his new Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). McCaffrey travelled with Secretary of Defense, and William Perry to meet with Mexican counterparts, to include Mexico's drug czar, General Jose Gutierrez Rebollo. Despite a briefing by his staff on corruption and collusion of the Mexican military with drug trafficking, General McCaffrey called General Rebollo "someone he could do business with." Less than a year after than meeting, General Rebollo was arrested on drug trafficking charges (Direct personal involvement of one of the authors with General McCaffrey and his staff at US Southern Command).

<sup>64</sup> Azam Ahmed, "How El Chapo Was Finally Captured, Again." *New York Times*, January 16, 2016, available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/world/americas/mexico-el-chapo-sinaloa-sean-penn.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/world/americas/mexico-el-chapo-sinaloa-sean-penn.html?_r=0).

<sup>65</sup> Ed Vulliamy, "One Year Ago, 43 Mexican Students Were Killed. Still, There are no Answers for Their Families." *The Guardian*, September 19, 2015, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/20/mexico-43-killed-students->; See

The movement from a trilateral framework for security cooperation in North America to a series of bilateral relationships, in and of itself, would not necessarily discredit the application of RSCT. The sectoral analysis offered by Buzan and Waever still has explanatory value in understanding how the process of securitization can take place in different spheres of influence. For example, the environmental security cooperation that took place between Canada, Mexico, and the United States during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was also evident in 2009, when the swine flu pandemic affected Mexico. There was a high level of communication and cooperation between health organizations in efforts to control and contain the spread of the disease.<sup>66</sup> Yet, the other variables of Identity, Interests, and Institutions do take on increased significance in understanding the limitations of RCST in understanding the changes that have taken place more recently in North America, particularly in the political and social sectors. Also, these variables can help explain the security inequalities, which continue to shape relations between states, particularly within specific geographic regions, such as North America, to include its geographic and environmental context, for example, shared airspace, oceans, borders, proximity, and threats).

## New Dynamics in Security Relations in North America and RSCT

On June 29, 2016, the Three Amigos met once again, this time in Ottawa, Canada, at the North American Leader's Summit, to discuss ways in which the three countries can increase cooperation on issues of interest to the three countries. Concerning Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde's sectoral analysis, the economic sector dominated the discussions, as noted in a statement prior to the meeting by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada,

“I look forward to meeting with President Obama and President Peña Nieto to make real progress on the challenges we collectively face—whether how we can expand trade between our nations, build

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also Fernando Camacho y César Arellano, “Ante ‘falta de resultados’, padres de los 43 realizan plantón indefinido en la PGR,” *La Jornada*, April 4, 2017, available at: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2017/04/21/politica/005n1pol>.

<sup>66</sup> Information presented by panelists from the United States, Canada, and Mexico during a panel titled, “Public Safety and Health Cooperation,” at a conference titled, *Trilateral Security in North America: New Dimensions and Approaches*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC (March 12, 2010).

competitive clean growth economies, or create real help for middle-class families.”<sup>67</sup>

At the Summit the three leaders agreed to pursue “economic competitiveness; expand our efforts on climate change, clean energy, and the environment; solidify our regional and global cooperation; and strengthen our security and defense.”<sup>68</sup> Much of the focus by President Obama was on gaining support for his climate change and environmental initiatives, particularly focused on clean energy. One of the few tangible agreements reached at the Summit was an Action Plan to promote this agenda.<sup>69</sup>

Security was included at the Summit, with topics on the agenda, such as: Central American violence, corruption, and migration; drug, arms, and human trafficking; trusted traveler and border security; health security; and regional concerns such as supporting the peace process in Colombia and peacekeeping efforts in Haiti. Another security concern on the agenda, which crossed multiple sectors, was cooperation in cyberspace. This was particularly evident in the discussions regarding energy security and the recognition that all three countries’ growing interconnectivity with the North American power grid posed an area of increased vulnerability to all three countries. As stated in the Action Plan, “Our three countries are committed to deepened electric reliability cooperation to strengthen the security and resilience of an increasingly integrated North American electricity grid against the growing threats presented by cyber-attacks and severe weather events.”<sup>70</sup>

Although Action Plans, and other shared agendas which come out meetings such as the North American Leader’s Summit rarely produce concrete policy decisions or institutional structures, the fact that the Summit did take place was, in itself, a significant event given some of the contentious issues impacting the three countries. Canada was scheduled to host the meeting in 2015; however, it was cancelled due to a contentious issue over Canadian visa

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<sup>67</sup> Prime Minister of Canada, “North American Leaders to Meet in Ottawa in June 2016,” May 4, 2016, available at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/05/04/north-american-leaders-meet-ottawa-june-2016>.

<sup>68</sup> White House, “FACT SHEET: United States Key Deliverables for the 2016 North American Leaders’ Summit,” news release, June 19, 2016, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/29/fact-sheet-united-states-key-deliverables-2016-north-american-leaders>.

<sup>69</sup> White House, “North American Climate, Clean Energy, and Environment Partnership Action Plan,” news release, June 19, 2016, available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/29/north-american-climate-clean-energy-and-environment-partnership-action>.

<sup>70</sup> White House, “North American Climate.”

requirements for Mexican travelers (due to the high number of Mexicans arriving in Canada requesting refugee status), as well as a fallout between Canada and the United States over the failed Keystone XL Pipeline contract.<sup>71</sup> With the change in leadership in Canada from the conservative party of Stephen Harper, to the liberal party of Justin Trudeau, Canada was seeking to reengage with both the United States and Mexico in a trilateral forum to discuss shared North American issues, but not to recreate the Security and Prosperity Partnership. Trudeau made it clear during a visit to Washington, D.C. in March 2016 that he viewed the U.S.-Canadian security relationship as a special bilateral alliance, which allowed for increased cooperation on border security and intelligence sharing.<sup>72</sup> This position echoes earlier sentiments voiced by Canadian military personnel who did not want to water down the unique Canadian-United States security relationship in order to bring Mexico into the NORAD structure or even the 5-eyes intelligence partnership.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> From 2005 until 2008, the number of Mexican citizens traveling to Canada and requesting refugee status has tripled, from 3,400 to over 9,400. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2009), “Backgrounder—The Visa Requirement for Mexico,” available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2009/2009-07-13.asp>. The Keystone XL Pipeline was a proposed oil pipeline that would allow Canadian oil to transit the United States to oil refining sites in Texas along the Gulf Coast. Environmental groups opposed it and the proposed legislation authorizing the agreement was eventually vetoed by President Obama. Coral Davenport, “Citing Climate Change, President Obama Rejects Keystone XL Pipeline,” *New York Times*, November 6, 2015, available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/07/us/obama-expected-to-reject-construction-of-keystone-xl-oil-pipeline.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/07/us/obama-expected-to-reject-construction-of-keystone-xl-oil-pipeline.html?_r=0).

<sup>72</sup> John Paul Tasker and Rosemary Barton, “Trudeau, Obama to Announce Expansion of Border Pre-Clearance Program,” *CBC News*, March 9, 2016, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/trudeau-obama-precleanance-1.3484339>.

<sup>73</sup> Five eyes refers to the 5 English-speaking countries of Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Under Air Force General Gene Renuart, USNORTHCOM sought to integrate Mexican military personnel into the NORAD structure, and expand the air defense agreement of NORAD into Maritime and Land-based defense agreements. Canada balked at any agreement that would bring Mexico in as an equal partner (Personal conversations of one of the authors with Canadian military personnel); Christian Leuprecht makes the argument that Canada and the United States have the most solid relationship in defense on earth, although, in the case of Canada, the United States and Mexico, the latter lacks a common regional strategic concept in North America since World War II; This is correct on defense issues, Mexico is introverted and mainly dedicated to internal security. Historically, Mexico has seen and external defense only in case of a war and more recently with Hurricane Katrina. See Christian Leuprecht, “Complejidades al generar un equilibrio de seguridad trilateral en América del Norte: Acercamiento de las culturas en las relaciones civiles-militares” in Abelardo Rodríguez Sumano, *Agendas Comunes y diferencias en la seguridad de América del Norte, ¿de dónde venimos?, ¿dónde estamos? y, ¿a dónde queremos ir?* (Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales de la Armada de México-Universidad de Guadalajara, 2012, pp.331-342).

## The US Presidential Election and Identity Politics

As special, as the Canada–US relationship is the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in November 2016 has ruffled more than a few feathers in the bilateral cap. Anti-immigration rhetoric in the United States has resulted in a flow of migrants north bound into Canada never seen before. Migrants arriving at the border have told officials that fear of being deported from the United States has motivated them to make the trek, in some cases in dangerous winter conditions, to Canada.<sup>74</sup> On the economic front challenges to the Canadian softwood, lumber industry has recently resulted in a substantial increase on tariffs on softwood lumber crossing from Canada to the United States.<sup>75</sup> As well, a challenge launched by Boeing against Canadian plane manufacturer Bombardier will likely result in a change the way business is done in that sector.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, Prime Minister Trudeau clearly stated his position that he will defend Canadian interests first.

Finally, in a major speech on June 6, 2017, Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs roundly rejected the nationalistic view touted south of the Canadian border. In its stead, she stated that Canada would assume a major leadership role in the world.<sup>77</sup> Canada’s commitment to assume command of NATO troops in Latvia is one such example of Canada’s new global role.

Prior to Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto’s arrival in Canada, there was still some residual effects of the Edward Snowden revelations, regarding the National Security Agency’s intelligence collection programs, which targeted world leaders, to include the Mexican president.<sup>78</sup> When these reports first surfaced in 2013, it led to a breakdown in trust between Mexican and US intelligence agencies, which had been cooperating on counterdrug operations.

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<sup>74</sup> Allan Woods, “Illegal Border Crossings into Canada Continue to Rise,” *The Toronto Star*, April 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/04/19/illegal-border-crossings-into-canada-continue-to-rise.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Panetta and Ross Marowits, “Trump Slaps 20% Tariff on Canadian Lumber,” *The Toronto Sun*, April 24, 2017, available at: <http://www.torontosun.com/2017/04/24/trump-slaps-20-tariff-on-canadian-lumber>.

<sup>76</sup> Ross Marowits, “Boeing to Trump: End Bombardier’s Illegal, Unfair Business Practices,” *The Huffington Post*, April 28, 2017, available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/04/28/boeing-bombardier-dumping\\_n\\_16308688.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/04/28/boeing-bombardier-dumping_n_16308688.html).

<sup>77</sup> Kathleen Harris, “Freeland Rejects Trump’s Nationalist Policies, says Canada Will Step up to Lead on World Stage,” *CBC News*, June 6, 2017, available at: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/freeland-foreign-policy-speech-1.4147672>.

<sup>78</sup> Glenn Greenwald, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).



Because of the Merida Initiative begun under the George W. Bush and Felipe Calderón administrations, intelligence fusion centers had been set up in Mexico, to include the US Embassy in Mexico City, as an unprecedented means by which Mexican and US intelligence agencies could share information to target Mexican drug kingpins, like Joaquín Guzmán Loera.<sup>79</sup> United States intelligence and security cooperation with Mexico included the presence of U.S.-piloted drones and military advisors in Mexico, providing intelligence support to Mexican military and law enforcement agencies targeting Mexican drug cartels. When Peña Nieto came into power in Mexico in 2012, and his new national security team learned of the extent of the United States presence in Mexico, the new Mexican administration scaled back its cooperation with US intelligence agencies, taking a more traditional hardline in United States-Mexican security relations.<sup>80</sup> They also cancelled seminars at the trilateral level and excluded personal and academic exchanges between Mexican academics who had relationships with US government officials. The Mexican government also went so far as to further restrict intelligence sharing between the militaries of the two countries, limiting intelligence cooperation to only those agreements exclusively under control of the Secretary of the Interior (Gobernación). Despite these official statements coming from the Mexican government, the actual military-to-military contact between Mexico and the United States actually became stronger under Peña Nieto. Thus, the security cooperation transformed. It was not cancelled.

A small expression of amity between Mexico and the United States occurred after the second escape of Joaquín Guzmán Loera from Mexican prisons in 2015. The United States had been pushing for Guzmán's extradition to stand trial in the United States, rather than Mexico, due to corruption of Mexico's judicial system, ever since his capture in 2014 (with the help of US intelligence support). President Peña Nieto appeared more open to the possibility of extraditing Guzmán to the United States to stand trial after his

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Evans, "NSA Staffed U.S.-Only Intelligence 'Fusion Center' in Mexico City," *NSA Archives*, November 14, 2013, available at: <https://unredacted.com/2013/11/14/nsa-staffed-u-s-only-intelligence-fusion-center-in-mexico-city/> <https://unredacted.com/2013/11/14/nsa-staffed-u-s-only-intelligence-fusion-center-in-mexico-city/>.

<sup>80</sup> Dana Priest, "U.S. Role at Crossroads in Mexico's Intelligence War on the Cartels," *Washington Post*, April 27, 2013, available at: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/us-role-at-a-crossroads-in-mexicos-intelligence-war-on-the-cartels/2013/04/27/b578b3ba-a3b3-11e2-be47-b44febad3a8\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/us-role-at-a-crossroads-in-mexicos-intelligence-war-on-the-cartels/2013/04/27/b578b3ba-a3b3-11e2-be47-b44febad3a8_story.html).

recapture in January 2016, as long as the United States would ensure he would not receive the death penalty.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the success of the kingpin strategy in Mexico and United States support in helping Mexico capture the leaders of most of Mexico's most powerful drug cartels, there is no evidence that drug trafficking to the United States has decreased, or that the security situation in Mexican has improved. In fact, some evidence points to an increase in drug-related violence and homicides in Mexico since Peña Nieto's administration came to power in 2012.<sup>82</sup> Sources in Mexico state that the number of assassinations per day has increased to 57, a 300 per cent increase since 2012.<sup>83</sup> Mexico continues to insist that drug-related violence is simply a matter of supply and demand, and until the United States does something to curb the demand for drugs, there is little Mexico can do to decrease the supply.<sup>84</sup> This has led former Mexican president Vicente Fox to come out in favor of decriminalizing drug use in Mexico, which he feels would help end the drug war and violence.<sup>85</sup> Although individual states in the United States have legalized marijuana, there is no national consensus to change the nation's current counterdrug policies and legalize drug use.

The latest enmity to emerge in U.S.-Mexican relations has come from the November 2016 presidential election of Republican nominee Donald Trump, who used the politics of identity to target undocumented immigration and the insecurity of the U.S.-Mexican border. Threatening to "build a great wall along the southern border....And Mexico will pay for the wall," Trump's campaign elevated hostility toward Mexico and Mexican immigrants living in

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<sup>81</sup> This stipulation was due to the fact that there is no death penalty in Mexico since 2005. Australian Broadcasting Company, "El Chapo: Mexico to Extradite Drug Boss Joaquin Guzman to US After Death Penalty Deal," *ABC News*, May 21, 2016, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-21/drug-lord-joaquin-el-chapo-guzman-to-be-extradited-to-us/7434234>.

<sup>82</sup> Anna Yukhananov, "Murder rates climb in Mexico, While Other Crimes Fall," *Reuters*, January 21, 2016, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-crime-idUSKCN0V005C>.

<sup>83</sup> See Arturo Angel, "El año más violento del sexenio: los homicidios dolosos aumentan en 24 estados," *Animal Politico*, December 2016, available at: <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2016/12/homicidios-violencia-mexico-2016/>.

<sup>84</sup> Informally, Mexican officials have admitted that this is not just a problem caused by United States demand, but also related to Mexico's endemic corruption and impunity; Personal interviews by one of the authors with security advisors to former presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderon, and President Enrique Peña Nieto.

<sup>85</sup> Fergus Hodgson, "Vicente Fox Stumps to Legalize All Drugs Worldwide," *Panam Post*, February 16, 2015, available at: <https://panampost.com/fergus-hodgson/2015/02/16/vicente-fox-stumps-to-legalize-all-drugs-worldwide/>.

the United States (both documented and undocumented) throughout the campaign. Since his election, Trump still views Mexico as a security threat to the United States, making such pronouncements that the United States should have invaded Mexico in 2003, rather than Iraq.<sup>86</sup> In 2016, Mexican president Peña Nieto responded to the possibility of a Trump presidency as a serious threat to Mexico, having a damaging effect on U.S.-Mexican relations.<sup>87</sup> In addition to immigration, Trump's campaign rhetoric also targeted U.S.-Mexican economic relations, particularly noting NAFTA, blaming Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton's husband, former President Bill Clinton who Trump says, "signed NAFTA, which destroyed this country economically, I will tell you. You look at New York state (sic), you look all over New England, you look at Pennsylvania, NAFTA was a disaster, (sic) her husband signed it. And it was a disaster for this country."<sup>88</sup>

While, for Mexico, Trump is the national security threat and his administration is informing Mexico that he wants to end up with a new vision of North America. Trump also has revived an old Mexican nationalism and has challenged so dramatically the national conscience and identity in terms of its interdependent relationship at least since the end of the Mexican-America War of 1847. Today more than ever before, the Mexican Armed Forces, particularly the Army, is more nationalistic and more concerned over United States intentions toward Mexico.

On July 20, 2016, after the Ottawa Summit, President Obama and President Peña Nieto met for bilateral talks in Washington, DC. The focus of their

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<sup>86</sup> Los Angeles Times Staff, "Transcript: Donald Trump's full immigration speech, annotated," *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 2016, available at <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-donald-trump-immigration-speech-transcript-20160831-snap-htmlstory.html>; Greg Richter, "Report: Trump Says US Should Have Invaded Mexico," *Newsmax*, July 12, 2015, available at: <http://www.newsmax.com/Headline/trump-invade-mexico-iran/2015/07/12/id/654637/#ixzz4BmAmX5WY>.

<sup>87</sup> Deena Zaru, "Mexican President: Donald Trump Damaging US-Mexico Relations," CNN, March 8, 2016, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/07/politics/donald-trump-mexican-president-enrique-pea-nieto/>.

<sup>88</sup> Nick Gillespie, "Donald Trump Says NAFTA 'Destroyed' America. Yeah, No," *Reason.com*, April 16, 2016, available at: <http://reason.com/blog/2016/04/27/donald-trump-says-nafta-destroyed-america>; President George H.W. Bush negotiated NAFTA and had the support of the Republicans in Congress. Clinton had to gain democratic support in Congress for NAFTA despite opposition from environmental groups and trade unions. Clinton did get Congress to pass NAFTA and sign it into law and the implementation date was January 1, 1994. In the 2008 presidential election, both democratic candidates, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama derided NAFTA, playing to voters in rust-belt states that were most effected by job losses to Mexico which they attributed to NAFTA.

meeting was to try to diffuse the negative rhetoric coming from the Trump campaign toward Mexico, and emphasize the importance of the bilateral ties between the two nations, particularly with regard to economic cooperation. One area highlighted in the meeting was the High Level Economic Dialog (HLED) established in 2013, where cabinet-level officials of each country have been meeting regularly to discuss ways to increase economic integration between the two countries.<sup>89</sup> Both Obama and Peña Nieto wanted the HLED to continue after January 20, 2017, when the expected new Democratic US president, Hillary Clinton, assumed office. She was part of that dialog as Secretary of State and would likely continue the HLED under her term.

Since Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2017, there have been no further HLED discussions. In fact, President Peña Nieto cancelled a state visit to the United States scheduled for February due to the continued rift over Trump's promise to build a border wall and have Mexico pay for it.<sup>90</sup> The Trump administration continues to insist on renegotiating NAFTA with both Canada and Mexico, to correct the perceived unfair trade practices which Trump claims make the United States the big loser in the North American trade relationship.<sup>91</sup>

In reaction to Trump's rhetoric, the debates have been dramatic: from confrontation to silence. For example, former leftist presidential candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas has raised centuries-old claims of a recuperation of Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. Jorge G. Castañeda, former Minister of Foreign Relations, has argued that Mexico should finish its cooperation with the United States on confronting drug cartels, border security, and terrorism. While Mexican government officials and President Peña Nieto remain quiet and extremely cautious about the new White House, Mexico is experiencing three major challenges internally: a weak presidency; extreme violence related to organized crime; and much uncertainty about the country's relationship with the United States under Trump's administration.

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<sup>89</sup> Earl Anthony Wayne and Sergio M. Alcocer, "Building Prosperity and Security with Mexico," *Forbes*, July 20, 2016, available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/themexicoinstitute/2016/07/20/building-prosperity-and-security-with-mexico/2/#10ed73d277b2>.

<sup>90</sup> Daniella Diaz, "Mexican President Cancels Meeting with Trump," *CNN*, January 27, 2017, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/25/politics/mexico-president-donald-trump-enrique-pena-nieto-border-wall/>.

<sup>91</sup> Julie Hirschfield and Alan Rappeport, "After Calling Nafta 'Worst Trade Deal,' Trump Appears to Soften Stance," *New York Times*, March 30, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/30/business/nafta-trade-deal-trump.html>.

## Conclusion

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 created the conditions upon which the nations of North America (Canada, Mexico, and the United States) appeared to be building a North American security complex by creating institutions, sharing interests, and overcoming identity issues, which divided the three countries. It was the insecurity of the dominant regional power, the United States, which fostered an increased dialog and engagement that went beyond traditional security issues to include social, economic, political, and environmental concerns. The process of securitization across these various sectors, described by Buzan and Waever in Regional Security Complex Theory, provided an explanatory value in understanding how these three countries could develop institutions, based on shared interests to face the security threats posed in a post 9/11 world. Even those barriers formed by identity, which had traditionally extended beyond borders which created enmity between states, appeared to be weakening. The region appeared to be closer to living out what Robert Pastor called “The North American Idea,” where he envisioned a constructed future for the region with a new continental identity.<sup>92</sup> That argument today appears almost dead or at least on life support.

Today, there is a retrenchment of interests along national lines, where the countries pursue security relations either unilaterally or at best bilaterally in North America. Venues (like the North American Leaders Summits) which previously offered opportunities for trilateral engagement on security issues no longer carry a sense of urgency or even promise for any substantive change in cooperation in any sector, even economic cooperation.<sup>93</sup> United States President Donald Trump has elevated the politics of identity to new levels in the United States with his populist rhetoric, which continues after the election campaign. His relationship with a Republican-controlled Congress is tenuous at best and his administration continues to face both Congressional and independent inquiries into its relationship with Russian officials before the election. While some members of Congress have gone so far as to call for Trump impeachment, at a minimum the allegations of wrongdoing will

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<sup>92</sup> Robert A. Pastor, *The North American Idea: Vision for a Continental Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>93</sup>Although there are still low-level, less publicized contacts that continue to evince security cooperation in the military sector. For example, there is continuing dialog between Special Operations Forces, the latest being a conference sponsored by the Joint Special Operations University in Tampa, Florida in June 2017, focused on “Combating Transregional Terrorism.”

continue to affect the legitimacy and credibility of the American presidency.<sup>94</sup> Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto faces his own domestic political crises, which also limit his ability to propose any new security initiatives in the last year of his administration. Only Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau appears to have any real political stake in the outcome of a new North American Leaders Summit, which he could parley into some domestic advantage, particularly on economic or energy policies.

While Regional Security Complex Theory argues that among the members of a Security Complex a group of countries or just two neighbor countries can develop converge toward threats or divergence like in the case of North and South Korea. In North America, what initially appeared to be a convergence of interests, particularly with regard to security and threats after 9/11, now appears to be diverging due to the role of identity politics. The questions are for how long, is it a permanent trend, or is it just the beginning of a new era in North American relationships?

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<sup>94</sup> Steven Shepard, "Poll: Support for Trump Impeachment Rises," *Politico*, May 31, 2017, available at: <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/31/trump-impeach-polling-238947>.