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## My Research at CISAN-UNAM

I have been a fulltime researcher, professor, and academic since 1983, when I entered the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE) Institute of United States Studies (IIEU), where I worked until 1987. I was the then-IIEU-director Luis Maira’s research assistant. My experience at the CIDE’s IIEU was the spark that ignited my commitment to studying a master’s in political sociology and a doctorate in international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. And it also led me to later fully dedicate myself to an academic career.

I returned from the United Kingdom, a researcher repatriated by the National Council for Science and Technology (Conacyt). Then, I joined the Center for Research on North America (CISAN) thanks to the good offices, generosity, and trust of Mónica Vereá and Silvia Núñez, estimable colleagues and worthy former directors of the center. Since 1994, I have been honored to be a member of the center’s faculty as a full-time researcher, committed to the UNAM’s three substantive activities: teaching, research, and dissemination.

As a political scientist and internationalist, and both a theoretical and empirical scholar of the international, I have been firmly convinced of the strategic importance of studying the United States. This conviction has been the basis for my teaching and research for the last 25 years of uninterrupted work. I am certain that the study of this country and Canada from a Mexican perspective can help to reach a full understanding of the problems we face in the framework of this three-fold relationship and of the opportunities we have before us, with the idea of meeting Mexico’s challenge of well-being, security, and modernization. Carrying out this task from academia and from the CISAN has been a judicious decision by the UNAM, which I believe has had an important impact—sometimes more, sometimes less—on decision makers. But, above all, we have been able to create close working relationships with sister institutions in Mexico and around the world, which have given birth to projects and collaborations on topics of great importance in North America. Building international networks for carrying out regional studies—in this case North America—has been a strategic mission for the CISAN.

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very competitive and superior in several aspects with regard to others like China or the European Union, and involved in a large part of the world's affairs and events. The United States is the host country of the headquarters of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, ergo, the most active spaces of the world's politics and economy are based there. After 1945, Washington became the broker of the world system. Like never before, a single country would exercise world hegemony, which it would dispute with its Cold War rival, the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the United States took sole responsibility for supporting the reconstruction of Europe, and for a long period, the total domination of the seven continents (Antarctica, North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania). Although that has changed now, since the United States is in relative decline vis-à-vis its counterparts, Washington continues to be a dominant actor in the global system.

My academic mission has been the study of the power of the U.S. hegemon in the context of foreign policy. Thus, based on different theories of international relations, I have drawn up a balance sheet of the U.S. historic presence in Latin America, particularly in the context of the Cold War. This was the basis for my book *Estados Unidos. Intervención y poder mesiánico: la guerra fría en Guatemala, 1954* (The United States, Intervention and Messianic Power: The Cold War in Guatemala, 1954) (2004), which was reprinted in 2005. This study required understanding the globalizing process and its enormous socio-political, economic, and cultural complexity, in order to be able to evaluate the existing relationship of forces that separates or brings closer the international system's most important actors. It also required understanding the functioning of the international bodies created to achieve and preserve the world balance of power. I analyzed the latter in the work *El multilateralismo, la reforma de la onu y los desafíos del siglo XXI* (Multilateralism, UN Reform, and the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century) (2007) and in other

texts on this issue, published in books and peer-reviewed journals.

Since 9/11, we have experienced a process of global securitization, which has subjected the great issues of the multilateral agenda such as migration, trade, borders, labor markets, and human rights, to the strategy of defense at all costs. This involves the United States and its allies as well as its rivals. After the Al Qaeda attacks against the United States, I dedicated my work to trying to explain the problems of conflict and war in the international system. In this research, I highlighted the importance of identifying and differentiating the non-state actors from state actors, and how the former can achieve the destabilization of entire government systems. From that concern emerged the book *Globalidad y conflicto. Estados Unidos y la crisis de septiembre* (Globality and Conflict: The United States and the Crisis of September) (2005), which, like the previous one, was reprinted in 2007.

In my research, I have emphasized the observation of what has been called "The New American Century." This is a process built on noteworthy domestic political stability in order to make it possible to arrive at a position of dominance. The stellar moment in this evolution actually happened in the past century: a generation ago, the United States led the world with confidence in what supposedly would be a millennium of peace, prosperity, freedom, and a profound sense of community. What we are witnessing today, however, is a foreign policy disaster, led by an irrational, completely unpredictable leadership. The dysfunctionality of the Trump administration's foreign policy is evident from Russia to Venezuela, from North Korea to China, and from Europe to Australia: no rationality exists at all. When Trump took office, the quality of democracy collapsed and, together with this systemic phenomenon, the quality of U.S. international policy also plummeted. In the words of Fareed Zakaria, "Under the Trump Administration, the United States seems to have lost interest, indeed lost faith, in the ideas and purpose that animated its international presence for three-quarters of a century."<sup>1</sup>

What happened is that with the arrival of Trump's autocratic power, the traditional spaces that the Washington establishment had maintained for decades were twisted out of shape, fracturing the institutional spaces the country had for creating consensus. Trump violently took over the Republican Party and the U.S. state. And no-

body in that party has dared confront the biggest enemy of democracy the United States and the world have ever had. The GOP's behavior during the impeachment process is a sample of the absence of democratic republicanism, previously one of the United States' historic crowning glories.

My commitment at the CISAN has included being its director between 2001 and 2009. Important events took place in U.S. history, and therefore in the North American sub-region, in that period, events that had an impact on the world and the CISAN's agenda. The 9/11 attacks were one, and Barack Obama's election as president is another. On September 11, 2001, the Al Qaeda terrorist organization destroyed the Twin Towers and damaged part of the Pentagon. Time stopped, and the future dissolved in the hands of millions of U.S. Americans. That inevitable, unexpected, brutal, tragic future was brought into the present under the clear skies of that New York morning when American Airlines Flight 11 smashed into the ninety-fourth floor of the north tower of the World Trade Center, only 20 minutes before United Airlines flight 175 did the same between floors 78 and 87 of the south tower, at a speed of more than 600 kilometers an hour with almost full tanks of jet fuel, more than 25 000 liters. Literally two bombs, unique in kind and use: commercial airplanes full of passengers aimed against a civilian population just as innocent as their victims and direct targets, carefully conceived as deadly charges whose objective was to demolish both buildings and fulfill an ambition originally planned—though frustrated—on February 26, 1993 by Ramzi Yousef, an Islamic terrorist of Pakistani origin.

This terrible event was the beginning of a radical change in life in the United States. The perfect society in the perfect nation was penetrated by an external threat: "We have lost our innocence," is perhaps the most representative of the many thoughts expressed on the very day of the attacks that indicate what they meant for U.S. Americans. If we review the huge amount of literature about the attacks, full of testimonies by chroniclers or ordinary citizens, the fact that after September 11, U.S. Americans were more afraid of losing control than of dying is what really stands out. Their stupefaction fundamentally arose out of the idea that they had been submerged in an apocalyptic future, which, though the mass media and literary fiction and the cinema had already masterfully depicted it in the country's iconographic culture, society itself was

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not prepared to face in *such a real world* as the one they were confronted with so decidedly on that day. And, just as this changed the United States, it also changed Mexicans and Canadians. It changed the entire world. And, of course, it had an impact on our research agenda.

Obama's election in 2008 was also a very important change. He took office as what Collin Powell called a transformational president. His was an unprecedented election: the first representative of an ethnic minority would now govern from the White House in a developed country. A mulatto, Obama opted to present himself as an Afro-American candidate and beat by a huge margin the Republican Party and an outgoing president exhausted by their foolish exercise of republican governance. George W. Bush had broken all existing democratic protocols and etiquette in U.S. political life—as we would see from 2016 on, we only needed Trump to confirm that even more vileness was lacking. He used surveillance tactics typical of the worst times of the Cold War and the McCarthy era and invaded Iraq, shattering the regional relationship of forces, mainly in relation to Iran. The Obama presidency promised a return to the golden mean of democratic liberalism—later destroyed by Donald Trump.

These are only some of the events that have marked me as a CISAN researcher. And there are more to come. How can Trump be defeated? In time. In these years, including the time as director, I have witnessed how an institution strategic for both the UNAM and for Mexico like the CISAN has evolved enormously, and how it has been able to respond to the huge challenges that the international and regional situation poses. Long life to the CISAN and congratulations to all its members for being part of this great project! **MM**

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Notes

1 Fareed Zakaria, "The Self-Destruction of American Power. Washington Squandered the Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2019, pp. 10-16.