

OUR VOICE

*Nothing is possible without men,
but nothing lasts without institutions.*

JEAN MONNET, 1888-1979

Recently, intense discussions have been taking place in academia —and to a lesser extent also in political circles— in Mexico, Canada and the United States about the North American community. Before centering on how to design concrete political proposals, the debate has first involved, among other issues, the need to define what is understood by “community” and why an initiative of this magnitude should be supported. This is important if we ask ourselves how the integration of a community could be conceived of among three countries that have encountered certain difficulties in defining their bilateral, trilateral and multilateral agendas and priorities. As we have already said in other editorials, Mexico and Canada have put forward some guidelines for beginning the discussion. However, Washington has been unclear about, if not reluctant to accept the feasibility of a community.

The challenge of this kind of a discussion makes it necessary for both academics and politicians to formulate questions before they try to put forward answers about the scope of a project of these dimensions. Above all, it is worthwhile considering that this issue has begun to be discussed in political and academic circles —mainly in Canada and the United States— with the intention of sparking a profound debate in which the different scenarios for building a North American community can be explored. In Mexico, this has been initially put forward in political circles, generating a debate still in its infancy among academics. In political milieus, the issue is beginning to be discussed at the highest level, certainly a new development. The discussion should aim to determine the steps needed to guarantee that if a Community of North America were created, we would have a national and tri-national perspective that would be, if not symmetrical, at least relatively similar.

To this effect, we should keep some historical precedents of our trilateral relations in mind. Even before there was talk of a trade treaty, Mexico began a process of liberalization with its entry into the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade in 1986, followed by one of integration which crystallized with the coming into effect of NAFTA in 1994. Thus, a trade mechanism began to function *de facto* before it was formalized; integration began without being covered formally, something that was later implemented unsatisfactorily. The same thing might be happening in the case of the Community of North America: at the same time that the community is being discussed, it may have begun to function *de facto*. This is why it is important to establish a *moment* in trilateral relations that would prevent an atmosphere wherein the institutional intentions and capabilities to deal with the essence of the matter in a timely, appropriate fashion in the three countries could be overwhelmed.

The following is a list of the central aspects of the discussion that in our opinion should be taken into account in the academic debate and in the application of public policies in Mexico:

1. **The need to define “community.”** It is fundamental to define the concept of “community.” It is a term and a reality that could have three radically different meanings in each of the three countries. In any case, the construction of the Community of North America should be a gradual process of accords, negotiations and agreements in which the parties define common objectives based on their own interests but that encompass the basic proposal of the community.

2. **When should a community be constituted?** About this, two spaces for reflection are proposed: a) the societal agenda and b) the state agenda. Three moments for negotiation are also proposed: a) the short term: gathering consensuses; b) the medium term: the consensus of institutional construction; c) the long term: the consensus of the construction of the community. In this context, we can propose that four types of relationships are possible: Canada-U.S., Canada-Mexico, U.S.-Mexico or an articulated trilateral relationship that would lead to the establishment of solid bases for the construction of a community.
3. **What kind of community should be set up?** A Confederation of North America or a Consortium of North America (the latter implies the strengthening of existing trilateral institutions or creating new ones. There is certain skepticism in the three countries about this.).
4. **How should a community be set up?**
 - First goal: reformulating the concept of national sovereignty with the aim of defining the bases for the defense of the national interest;
 - Create a high level commission to deal with trilateral issues in a preliminary, preparatory fashion to be able to set the agenda and develop a coherent position about the question of “North America”;
 - Discuss among the three countries on an academic and political level what “thinking about the North American Community” means;
 - Give Mexicans even more information about their two partners and about the meaning of integration at all levels;
 - Put forward a strategy for national development through development funds (the so-called social fund);
 - There are six basic issues involved in the community negotiation: trade, energy, borders, the environment, migration and security.
5. **Why a community?**
 - The strategic meaning of community;
 - The political will to create a community;
 - The political and economic viability of a community.
6. **Obstacles to the creation of a community**
 - NAFTA opened up borders to trade and posed the maturation and deepening of the treaty, a task which has not been completely realized;
 - Prior to NAFTA, at the end of the 1980s, the treaty as such was not discussed as “the community” is now being discussed. If we stopped doing so, we would be running a grave risk;
 - The gravest possible of political moments, 9/11, partially postponed the viability of this opening.

Since it is now inevitable that this issue be part of the trilateral agenda, these and other elements will have to be taken into consideration and discussed in coming issues of *Voices of Mexico* to be able to think as clearly as possible about how far our three countries would want and would be able to go. However, we should recognize that at least for Mexico, this will be an arduous exercise considering that Washington has not responded very favorably about many topics on the bilateral agenda that are part of the integration process. This would have to change if we hope to achieve a relationship of true cooperation and reciprocity.

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The topic of the community of North America is anchored in Mexico’s bilateral and trilateral relations with the other countries of the region. In this issue of *Voices of Mexico*, we include an interview with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorge G. Castañeda about the fundamental issues of our bilateral agendas with the United States and Canada, such as migration, security, borders, trade and culture. He also deals with more general topics linked to the new strategies of Mexican foreign policy, which has sought —without a doubt, successfully— to play a more active role than in the past, a role that truly has an impact on changes in the international order in light of phenomena like globalization and September 11. A good example of this new

philosophy of Mexico's foreign policy is its favorable performance in the U.N. Security Council, where it has been a member since the beginning of the year, a balance sheet of which Castañeda presents in his interview.

For Mexico, the community of North America also implies thinking about its recent experiences in international trade, the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, the successes and failures of integration in the region through NAFTA, and about the need and importance of diversifying trade through other treaties like the one signed with the European Union. Alejandro Chanona and Antonio Ortiz Mena, two of Mexico's most widely recognized specialists on these topics, present articles in this issue.

Thinking about a community of North America also implies dealing with the inequalities and asymmetries of the countries that would integrate with each other. In our "Society" section, we present articles about two social problems that have undoubtedly been a hindrance to our development and international competitiveness and that Mexico must overcome in the medium term: poverty and the no less thorny problem of inequality, on this occasion with regard to businesses, their access to credit and growth.

The North American community also presupposes recognizing the growing economic and political importance of the population of Mexican origin in the United States. That is why we present a panorama of the Hispanic market in the U.S. West, with a look at its buying power and specific weight in the region's economy. We also include a contribution about the interaction between Canada's provincial and federal governments in oil exports to the United States in the context of NAFTA.

The centrality of the U.S. economy for Mexico and its resulting dependence is not new, but neither has it been completely constant, as historian Sandra Kuntz Ficker demonstrates in her article about Mexico-U.S. trade from the end of the nineteenth century to 1948.

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This year is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest artistic geniuses of the twentieth century: Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo. *Voices of Mexico* could not remain on the sidelines of the national homage that is being paid to him, and therefore we include in this issue a photographic portfolio with some of his best work in order to disseminate it to the U.S. and Canadian public.

We have dedicated "The Splendor of Mexico" to some aspects of the vast historical, cultural and artistic wealth of the state of Veracruz. One article deals with the little-studied but undoubtedly influential civilization of the Huastecs; another looks at the cultural and architectural achievements of El Tajín and its Teotihuacan influences; yet another examines the ecological, cultural, economic and nutritional importance of vanilla, a typical Veracruz product. Our "Museums" section presents one of the state's most interesting institutions, the Xalapa Anthropology Museum.

In this issue, we are inaugurating the section "Science and Technology," through which we aim to disseminate some of our university's and our country's important contributions to the world of science. The section's debut article is by UNAM researcher Ricardo Rosales, who has made important discoveries in the quest for a vaccine to treat cervical cancer.

Graciela Martínez Zalce has contributed an article about the rise of literature written by women in Mexico, including the work of Vizania Amezcua and Susana Pagano, fragments of whose novels we have also translated and included in this issue. Lastly, we have dedicated our "In Memoriam" section to remembering another great Mexican photographer, Mariana Yampolsky. From our pages, we wish to thank her for her sensitivity in portraying rural, indigenous Mexico. We are sure her work will endure.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde