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A Tale of Two Borders: The U.S.-Mexico and U.S.- Canada Lines After 9-11

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The conventional wisdom in recent years has been that “globalization” is about breaking down borders.¹ Indeed, we are often told that growing economic integration and interdependence leads to a retreat of the regulatory state, more open borders, and more harmonious cross-border relations. Prominent free market advocates, such as the Wall Street Journal,² have even pushed to make borders not only more meaningless for the flow of goods and money but also for people, giving substance to the upbeat business school rhetoric of an emerging “borderless world.”³ President Vicente Fox of Mexico epitomized this view at the regional level by entering office promoting a bold vision of an open U.S.-Mexico border, including the free movement of labor, and the creation of a North American community. Such a vision would further deepen an already well-advanced continental integration process: the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico borders are the two busiest land crossings in the world, with cross-border commercial flows accelerating sharply since the launching of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).⁴

Fox’s border-free vision of North America was one of the first casualties of the devastating terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on September 11th, 2001. In both political debates and policy practice, borders are very much back in style. Rather than simply being dismantled in the face of intensifying pressures of economic integration, border controls are being re-tooled and redesigned as part of a new and expanding “war on terrorism.” The immediate U.S. response to the terrorist attacks included a dramatic tightening of border inspections and a toughening of the policy discourse about borders and cross-border flows. The political scramble to “do something” about leaky borders has slowed and complicated North American economic integration. Traditional border issues such as trade and migration are now inescapably evaluated through a security lens. Optimistic talk of opening borders has been replaced by more anxious and somber talk about “security perimeters” and “homeland defense.” Not

¹ A version of this paper appears in Peter Andreas and Thomas Biersteker, eds. The Rebordering of North America: Integration and Exclusion in a New Security Context (New York: Routledge, 2003).

² For years, the Wall Street Journal editorial page advocated a constitutional amendment calling for open borders.

³ This term was popularized by the business consultant Kenichi Ohmae in The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in an International Economy, New York: Harper Business, 1990. After 9-11, Rosabeth Moss Kanter from the Harvard Business School commented that recent years have been “a time of tearing down walls, literally and figuratively. Now I fear we are reconstructing them.” Quoted in Boston Globe 10-3-01.

⁴ U.S.-Mexico trade has more than tripled and U.S.-Canada trade has nearly doubled during the past decade.

surprisingly, politicians from across the political spectrum have been rushing to demonstrate their commitment to securing borders.⁵ At least for the time being, talking about open borders is considered politically impolite. Indeed, the voices for breaking down borders are not only muted but attacked and ostracized by their political opponents.⁶ Terrorism has predictably heightened the American public's awareness of and fears about porous borders: According to a Zogby public opinion survey a few weeks after the terrorist attacks, 72 percent of those polled said better border controls and stricter enforcement of immigration laws would help prevent terrorism.⁷

In this paper I trace the changing practice and politics of North American border controls and analyze the implications of these changes for cross-border relations and continental integration. More than ever, I suggest, North American relations are driven by the politics of border control. I first examine U.S. border control initiatives before 9-11, and argue that these were politically successful policy failures: they succeeded in terms of their symbolic and image effects even while largely failing in terms of their deterrent effects. I then highlight the border-related economic, bureaucratic, and political repercussions of 9-11. I show why the task of border control has become significantly more difficult, cumbersome, and disruptive in the post-9-11 era, with significant ramifications for the North American integration project. I conclude by outlining three possible future border trajectories.

U.S. Border controls before 9-11

The post-9-11 U.S. campaign to secure its borders is in some respects reminiscent of the 1990s when an anti-immigration backlash fueled an unprecedented border crackdown along the U.S.-Mexico line. High-profile enforcement campaigns such as "Operation Gatekeeper" south of San Diego and "Operation Hold-the-Line" in El Paso helped propel a rapid expansion of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Since the early 1990s, the INS budget has more than tripled, making it the fastest growing federal agency. More INS agents are now authorized to carry a gun than any other federal law

⁵ For example, Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO), chairman of the House Immigration Reform Caucus, has emphasized that defense of the country "begins with the defense of our borders." Similarly, Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) says "The fundamental question" is "how are we going to ensure the security of our borders?" See San Antonio Express News 9-19-01.

⁶ Lamar Smith, a member of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration has commented: "I don't think we are going to hear so much talk about open borders. We are going to be far more interested in realistic and practical solutions than in theoretical and utopian views." U.S. land borders, he says, "are too porous and offer an open invitation to those who want to harm us." Quoted in San Antonio Express News 9-19-01. Within hours of the 9-11 attacks, Dan Stein, the president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), stated: "The nation's defense against terrorism has been seriously eroded by the efforts of open-borders advocates, and the innocent victims of today's terrorist attacks have paid the price." Quoted in New York Times, 9-18-01.

⁷ Agencia EFE 9-30-01.

enforcement force. Today there are more Border Patrol agents (the uniformed enforcement wing of the INS) in the San Diego sector alone than there were along the entire 2,000-mile-long southwest border two decades ago. The southern U.S. border was also partly militarized through the “war on drugs,” with the military drafted to play an interdiction support role. At the same time as policymakers were attempting to make the border more secure, they were also making it more business friendly to accommodate the requirements of NAFTA. The seemingly paradoxical end result was the construction of both a borderless economy and a barricaded border.⁸ The border had become both more blurred and more sharply demarcated than ever before.

This pre-9-11 U.S. border enforcement build-up, overwhelmingly focused on drugs and illegal immigration, can be characterized as a politically successful policy failure.⁹ It was a policy failure in that it did not significantly deter the unauthorized flow of drugs and people into the United States. In the case of immigration control, the resident unauthorized immigrant population actually has doubled since 1990, to roughly 8 million people. For the most part, high-profile border enforcement campaigns did more to redirect rather than reduce the flow of unauthorized migrants. In the case of drug control, intensified border interdiction had little effect on curbing drug imports, with the availability of drugs such as cocaine and heroin as high as ever (and at lower prices and higher purity levels). At best, the enforcement crackdown affected the methods and specific locations of drug trafficking across the border, but without a noticeable reduction in the overall supply.

Moreover, the border enforcement campaign was a policy failure not only because it proved to be a poor deterrent, but because it had a number of perverse and counterproductive consequences. For example, the border crackdown fueled the emergence of more skilled and sophisticated transnational migrant smuggling groups, creating a more serious organized crime problem along and across the border. Drug smugglers also responded to law enforcement pressure by integrating more with legitimate cargo, using the NAFTA-encouraged boom in trade to more effectively camouflage their illicit shipments. One negative unintended result was to create closer ties between licit and illicit trade. After years of intensified enforcement, the tasks of drug and immigration control at the border had actually become harder. New law enforcement initiatives were systematically countered by new law evasion techniques. Tragically, this included turning to the use of more remote and dangerous entry points in the deserts and mountains for migrant smuggling, leading to hundreds of migrant deaths every year.¹⁰ An average of two migrants have died per day in the past two years while attempting to cross the border.¹¹

⁸ See Peter Andreas, Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁹ *Ibid.*.

¹⁰ Karl Eschbach et al., “Death at the Border,” International Migration Review 33, no. 2 (1999): 430-54.

¹¹ Migration News September 2002.

These border policy failures and perverse consequences can nevertheless be viewed as politically successful for a variety of reasons. The high visibility of the border campaigns generated substantial political and bureaucratic rewards. For example, even if the overall level of unauthorized immigration did not decline, the border crackdown made key urban entry points *appear* much more “under control.” Illegal crossers were pushed out of sight (into more remote deserts and mountains), and therefore out of the media spotlight and the public’s mind. This, in turn, helped to neutralize political opponents and muffled the substantial anti-illegal immigration backlash that had built up in the early 1990s, especially in places such as southern California. Continued border arrests and seizures also provided border enforcers with ready-made (if highly imperfect and misleading) visible indicators of government progress and commitment to creating a more orderly border. This helped win votes for politicians and secure higher budgets for enforcement bureaucracies. One of the Border Patrol’s biggest problems was adjusting to its fast-paced growth and hiring enough new agents to keep up with Congressionally mandated staffing increases. Importantly, the expected level of deterrence was actually quite modest. Those charged with the task of border drug interdiction, for example, never claimed that they were stopping more than a small percentage of drug shipments. Similarly, even while boasting that the border was more “under control,” the INS acknowledged that the unauthorized immigrant population in the country continued to grow at a rapid pace. What seemed to matter most for politicians and bureaucrats was the high visibility and symbolic value of the border deterrence effort, and that they could point to indicators showing “progress” toward the goal of border security.

Equally important, the U.S. border control offensive was carried out without substantially impeding the enormous (and rapidly growing) volume of legitimate cross-border flows. Each year, some 300 million people, 90 million cars, and 4.3 million trucks cross into the United States from Mexico, reflecting an increasingly integrated and interdependent region. Trade flows between the two nations has more than tripled during the past decade, from \$81 billion in 1993 to \$247 billion in 2000, mostly in products moved across the border by truck.¹² During this mushrooming of trade, border law enforcement never trumped the facilitation of legitimate border crossings. Border wait times for vehicles and pedestrians were, for the most part, manageable and tolerable. Indeed, at some key border crossings, such as at the San Ysidro port of entry south of San Diego, border wait times actually decreased in the 1990s. To accommodate the growth in crossings, ten new ports of entry have been built since the start of NAFTA, bringing the total along the border to 49. In short, even as the U.S.-Mexico border appeared to be a more impressively policed barrier, it also became a busier and more business friendly bridge.

U.S. Border controls after 9-11

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, business as usual at the border has been much less tolerable. In the new and expanding counter-terrorism effort, the expectation of success is significantly higher than in the cases of drug and immigration control—indeed, the deterrence level is expected to be an impossible 100 percent. Yet the mission

¹² San Diego Union Tribune 3 October, 2002.

is clearly far more difficult: if the existing border enforcement apparatus has proven unable to stop multi-ton shipments of drugs and hundreds of thousands of crossings by unauthorized migrants every year, the chances of deterring a few bombs or terrorists is far more remote. Moreover, the handy visible indicators of progress traditionally used for border enforcement work (and which are crucial in the annual process of justifying agency budgets) are not as applicable and available. Counter-terrorism “successes” are less frequent, less visible, and more secretive. In short, border enforcers have been given a harder job, face higher expectations for success, and cannot rely on the same old convenient measures of progress.

Facing intense political pressure and public scrutiny, border strategists have been trying to take the old drug and immigration enforcement infrastructure and quickly adapt it to the counter-terrorism effort. It is an awkward and cumbersome fit. The INS enforcement apparatus was designed to handle millions of migrant workers entering the country in search of employment rather than to detect and deter those few determined individuals who arrive to commit terrorist acts. Counter-terrorism has traditionally been a low priority for the INS. Similarly, the U.S. Customs Service had until September 2001 been focused on drug control, and along the coastlines the U.S. Coast Guard has focused its energies on interdicting drugs and illegal migrants. These already overwhelmed enforcement agencies are now forced to reinvent themselves for the post-9-11 world. But while they face unreasonably high public expectations for success, they are at the same time the recipients of substantial new resources. The FY 2003 budget provides more than a \$2 billion increase in border security funding. This includes a 29 percent increase in the budget of the INS, a 36 percent increase in the inspections budget of the Customs Service, and the largest budget increase in the Coast Guard’s history.

A more radical transformation has been not simply more resources but a consolidation and reorganization of various agencies under a new Department of Homeland Security. The new department brings together parts of many existing departments and agencies, including the Coast Guard, Customs Service, and the INS. This reorganization reflects the growing prominence of law enforcement in national security institutions and missions, and a further blurring of the traditional distinction between internal and external security threats.¹³

Another striking departure from earlier U.S. border control campaigns is that this time much of the political heat from Washington is focused not only on a different worry (terrorism) but also on a border that has long been conveniently kept out of the political spotlight: the U.S.-Canada border. While there has been considerable clandestine cross-border activity along the northern U.S. border,¹⁴ this has largely remained under the

¹³ See Peter Andreas and Richard Price, “From War-fighting to Crime-fighting: Transforming the American National Security State,” International Studies Review, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Fall 2001 (31-52).

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of cross-border crime, see Ruth Jamieson, Nigel South, and Ian Taylor, “Economic Liberalization and Cross-Border Crime: The North American Free

political radar screen as American border anxieties have been directed southward. The United States has historically had the luxury of largely forgetting about its northern border, which Canadians used to complain about, but in retrospect had certain advantages (the only thing worse than no attention is negative attention). The openness of the border, labeled “the world’s longest undefended border,” has traditionally been a source of mutual pride,¹⁵ but is now perceived and treated as a source of vulnerability by the United States. Even though none of the 19 hijackers involved in the September 11th attacks entered across the border and in fact had been issued visas by the United States, some U.S. media reports have depicted Canada as a haven for terrorists who exploit Canada’s liberal refugee and immigration system¹⁶ (Canada, unlike the United States, does not detain asylum seekers, some 10,000 of whom fail to show up for their scheduled hearings every year and simply disappear).¹⁷

Since 9-11, Canada has been receiving a heavy dose of the harsh scrutiny the U.S. usually reserves for Mexico on border-related law enforcement issues. Canada has suddenly found itself in the highly uncomfortable and unfamiliar position of being perceived and treated as a security risk. Barely policed--only 334 agents police the northern border compared to over 9,000 agents assigned to police the U.S.-Mexico border--the U.S.-Canada border is an easy and convenient political target for those who blame lax border controls for the country’s vulnerability to terrorism. The Border Patrol hiring boom during the past decade, which more than doubled the size of the force, was almost exclusively directed at the U.S.-Mexico border. On September 11th there were as many Border Patrol agents in Brownsville, Texas, as there were on the entire U.S.-Canada border.¹⁸ Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) held up a rubber cone at a congressional hearing on northern border security in late 2001 to show what meets foreigners who arrive at some checkpoints after 10pm: “This is America’s security at our border crossings. It is not enough,” he said. “America can’t effectively combat terrorism if it doesn’t control its borders.”¹⁹ Remove the word “terrorism” and put in the words “drug trafficking” or “illegal immigration” and the new discourse of border security is strikingly familiar, mimicking the older discourse that has characterized U.S. border relations with Mexico. In this sense, there has been a Mexicanization of U.S.-Canada border politics.

Trade Area and Canada’s Border with the U.S.A.” (Parts I and II), International Journal of the Sociology of Law (1998), 26, 245-272; 285-319.

¹⁵ The U.S. Ambassador to Canada, Paul Celluci, describes the border as “Main Street North America.” Quoted in Veronica Kitchen, “Canadian-American Border Security After September 11,” unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, Brown University, May 13, 2002, p. 4.

¹⁶ See, for example, the April 28, 2002 60 Minutes segment “North of the Border,” about terrorism and Canada’s immigration and refugee system.

¹⁷ Aristide Zolberg, “Guarding the Gates in a World on the Move,” Social Science Research Council, 2001, available at:

http://www.ssrc.orgsept11/essays/zolberg_text_only.htm

¹⁸ Migration News November 1, 2001.

¹⁹ Quoted in Portland Press Herald (Maine), 10-4-01.

One of the many new measures Congress has pushed through as part of the Patriot Act is a tripling of agents deployed to the northern border. National Guard troops have also been sent to help with patrols and inspections at border posts. The Coast Guard now stops all boats crossing the Great Lakes and escorts gas and oil tankers. As welcome as these deployments may be, given that a far more substantial U.S. law enforcement force along the U.S.-Mexico border has failed to deter hundreds of thousands of illegal border crossings each year, there is little reason to believe that a much smaller force along the far longer northern border can somehow keep out a handful of determined terrorists. Beefing up personnel on the U.S.-Canada border is therefore likely to have little more than a placebo effect (however important that may be for domestic political consumption). The U.S. Customs Service has traditionally been able to inspect only a fraction of total incoming trade, and thus doubling or even tripling the amount of cargo inspected would not significantly enhance security. And even if key border crossing points, such as between Detroit and Windsor (27 percent of U.S.-Canada trade crosses the Ambassador Bridge alone²⁰), could somehow be fully secured, this still leaves thousands of miles of the border essentially wide open. The U.S.-Canada border has commonly been described as a border with many gates and no fences.

While a sustained enforcement crackdown at U.S. land ports of entry may help to reassure and calm a nervous public, in practice it may do more to inhibit legitimate travel and trade than terrorists. Security, in other words, has become a new kind of trade barrier. Indeed, as Stephen Flynn has put it, the U.S. border security response immediately following the September attacks was the equivalent of the world's most powerful country imposing a trade embargo on itself.²¹ More intensive border inspections have had serious economic repercussions along both the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders. After the September 11th attacks, U.S. border inspectors were put on a level 1 Alert, defined as a "sustained, intensive, anti-terrorism operation." The predictable result was a dramatic slowing of cross-border traffic. The United States and Canada conduct \$1.3 billion worth of two-way trade a day, most of which is moved by truck across the border.²² 40,000 commercial shipments and 300,000 people cross the 4,000-mile-long U.S.-Canada border every day. In the days after the attacks, delays for trucks hauling cargo across the border increased from 1-2 minutes to 10-15 hours, stranding parts shipments and perishable goods. For example, trucks were backed up for 36 kilometers at the Ambassador Bridge linking Windsor, Ontario and Detroit. Before 9-11, trucks with pre-clearance could often cross the border in 1-2 minutes.²³ The auto

²⁰ Government Accounting Office, Customs and INS: Information on Inspection, Infrastructure, Traffic Flow, and Secondary Matters at the Detroit Port of Entry, Washington D.C.: April 22, 2002, p. 1.

²¹ See Stephen Flynn, "America the Vulnerable," Foreign Affairs January-February, 2002.

²² A truck crosses the border every 2.5 seconds—adding up to 45,000 trucks a day. See Statement of Principles—Coalition for Secure and Trade-Efficient Borders available at: [wysiwyg://34/http://www.the-alliance.org/coalition/English/home.html](http://www.the-alliance.org/coalition/English/home.html).

²³ Financial Times, 9-17-01; Globe and Mail 3-16-02.

industry was particularly hard hit by the post-9-11 border delays. According to Mark Nantis of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association, “The unplanned production loss resulting from parts shortages cost manufacturing facilities approximately \$1 million to \$1.5 million [Canadian dollars] per hour...” Due to post-9-11 parts shortages, Ford closed an engine plant in Windsor and a vehicle plant in Michigan.²⁴

Massive traffic jams and long delays also characterized the U.S.-Mexico border. Cross-border trade between the United States and Mexico has skyrocketed in the past decade, and most of this trade is transported by truck through the major border ports of entry. The high-intensity border checks following the bombings put a noticeable brake on cross-border flows. In Laredo, Texas, for example, during peak crossing times before the attacks, it took about five minutes for a pedestrian to cross a bridge checkpoint and half an hour for a motorist. Immediately after the attacks, the wait increased up to five hours. Officials counted 2.9 million people entering Laredo from Mexico in September 2001--down from 3.5 million in September 2000.²⁵ Retail sales in U.S. border cities immediately plummeted as Mexican shoppers stayed south of the border. The city of San Diego declared a state of economic emergency due to the business downturn after September 11th. Mexican border towns were similarly shaken by a sharp drop in U.S. visitors (with the notable exception being a rush of U.S. shoppers buying large quantities of Cipro, an antibiotic to treat Anthrax). Cross-border trade, which had been running at about \$670 million, fell by an average of 15 percent in the weeks following the attacks. Most severely affected were electronics, textiles, chemicals, and Mexican factories supplying just-in-time parts to U.S. auto companies.

In short, while the process of North American integration has not been reversed, it has been slowed and complicated by a U.S. law enforcement squeeze on the cross-border transportation arteries that provide its life-blood. While border delays are now not as long as they were immediately following the terrorist attacks, more intensive inspections have continued to have a chilling effect on cross-border exchange. Balancing the twin policy objectives of border facilitation and enforcement has always been an awkward task. But with the terrorism threat placed at the top of an already over-extended border control agenda the balancing act has become far more cumbersome and difficult. Before 9-11, the coping strategy was to stress visible symbolic measures that projected an image of heightened security, while making sure to not substantially slow legitimate cross-border flows. Political tolerance for such a strategy, however, is now much lower. In the current high anxiety climate, those charged with the task of managing borders are expected to prioritize security, even while the sheer magnitude of border crossings limit the degree to which borders can be effectively secured. The increasingly favored coping mechanism has been to emphasize new cargo tracking systems and inspection technologies and innovative traffic management strategies to both ease border congestion

²⁴ Getting Back to Business: Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science, and Technology November, 2001, p. 14.

²⁵ Miguel Conchas, president of the Laredo Chamber of Congress, commented: “If you’re going to delay everybody crossing even by one minute, that, multiplied by thousands is a nightmare...” Quoted in St. Louis Post Dispatch 9-29-01.

and enhance security at the same time. This was clearly articulated in the 30-point “smart border” declaration signed between Canada and the United States in December 2001,²⁶ and partially extended to the U.S.-Mexico border the following Spring.

Canada and Mexico: Two scared mice next to a neurotic elephant²⁷

The need to keep the U.S.-Canada and U.S.-Mexico borders open for business has also placed enormous pressure on Canada and Mexico to beef up their own counter-terrorism efforts. Canada and Mexico are discovering the high price of asymmetric interdependence. While all three North American countries benefit from a close economic relationship, Canada and Mexico are far more reliant on trade with the United States than the other way around, and are therefore much more vulnerable to disruptions in cross-border commercial flows. For example, while about 25 percent of U.S. trade goes to Canada, 87 percent of Canada’s foreign trade is U.S.-bound. Equally important, foreign trade represents a much greater percentage of the Canadian economy than it does of the American economy. Forty percent of Canada’s GDP depends on exports to the United States, while only 2.5 percent of U.S. GDP is tied to exports to Canada.²⁸ The imbalance is even more evident in the U.S.-Mexico trading relationship: almost 90 percent of Mexico’s trade goes to the United States, while only 15 percent of U.S. exports go to Mexico. This structural asymmetry gives Washington significant policy leverage over its immediate neighbors, leaving them with limited space to maneuver. Here the United States largely sets the policy agenda and narrows the room for autonomous policy choices.²⁹ In this precarious context, Canada and Mexico are like two scared mice next to a neurotic elephant. They are more worried about the elephant’s reaction to terrorism than

²⁶ “The U.S.-Canada Smart Border Declaration,” Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, December 12, 2001.

²⁷ I first heard the elephant and mouse analogy to describe U.S.-Mexico relations from Joseph Lapid. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau once described Canada’s relations with the United States as the equivalent of sleeping with an elephant. In March 1969 he said of the United States, “Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.” This comment would seem to be even more relevant today.

²⁸ Public Policy Forum, Canada’s Policy Choices: Managing Our Border with the United States, p. 23.

²⁹ This does not mean to suggest that there is no room to maneuver or that policy choices are simply imposed. Frank Pfetsch and Alice Landau, for example, argue that negotiations in a context of structural asymmetry nevertheless often produce mutually satisfying and beneficial outcomes. See Frank Pfetsch and Alice Landau, “Symmetry and Asymmetry in International Negotiation,” International Organization 5 (2000), 21-42. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye point out that Canada has historically done better in negotiations with the U.S. than one might expect. See Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Power and Interdependence Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989. For an insightful discussion of Canadian leverage in negotiations with the United States, see Kitchen, “Canadian-American Border Security After September 11,” pgs. 16-21.

terrorism itself. In the effort to pragmatically cope with this unstable and unpredictable new policy environment, the two mice are trying to convince the elephant that they are part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the Mexican government detained and questioned hundreds of people of Middle Eastern origin, restricted the entry of citizens from a number of Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries, and provided U.S. authorities with intelligence information on possible suspects based in Mexico. President Fox has proposed a new intelligence gathering law to Congress and has offered to target bank accounts of suspected terrorists. A new security outfit of Israeli- and U.S.-trained border enforcers is reportedly being sent to replace immigration officials in the southern border state of Chiapas. Mexico is also creating a national immigration database, and is upgrading computers and setting up new false document detectors at southern border checkpoints.³⁰ It seems that Mexico has pragmatically accepted that part of the price of being viewed and treated as an insider rather than an outsider is to more intensively police its southern border. Central American neighbors, in turn, complain that a hardening of Mexico's southern border means Mexico is doing Washington's police work. Indeed, Mexico's border enforcement initiatives may be viewed as a "thickening" of the U.S. border, with Mexico becoming a buffer zone.

For Mexico, the new politics of fighting terrorism in some respects resembles the older and more familiar politics of fighting drugs. While Mexico no doubt welcomes less U.S. scrutiny and diplomatic arm-twisting on drug control issues after 9-11, there are heightened pressures and expectations to contribute to U.S. anti-terrorism goals. As in the anti-drug effort, Mexico is expected to demonstrate its resolve and cooperation in meeting U.S. law enforcement objectives. While certainly not uncontroversial in Mexican domestic politics, the new anti-terrorism mission provides a less diplomatically sensitive impetus for cross-border security cooperation than has been the case with drug control. It also provides a more politically palatable rationale for Mexico to cooperate on immigration control (as long as it is directed at non-Mexican nationals³¹). The Fox government is careful to characterize terrorism as a mutual security concern, and in a sharp departure from past official rhetoric, even talks about security as an "interdependent matter."³²

In exchange for greater cooperation on the anti-terrorism front, Mexico wants to assure not only unimpeded commerce across the Rio Grande, but has continued to aggressively push for a migration deal with Washington that would include regularizing the status of some 3.5 million unauthorized Mexican workers in the United States. In the summer of

³⁰ The News (Mexico City), 10-2-01, San Diego Union Tribune 10-7-01.

³¹ Mexico is a popular transit point for illegal entry into the United States, which has included the smuggling of Middle East nationals. For example, prosecution documents at a federal trial in El Paso in October 2001 revealed that one smuggling group had brought in 1,000 Middle Easterners across the border since 1980. New York Times 26 October, 2001.

³² Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, quoted in San Diego Union Tribune, 10-7-01.

2001, the Fox administration had high hopes of reaching a migration agreement, only to have this placed on the political backburner after the terrorist attacks. Even prior to 9-11 this was going to be a tough sell in Washington, with policymakers deeply divided on the issue. The terrorist attacks and subsequent mobilization for the anti-terrorism campaign provided President Bush with a convenient excuse to put negotiations over such a delicate and sensitive issue on hold. Thus, the political momentum that had been building up in Mexico's favor, including a softening of the U.S. immigration debate, was dramatically reversed in the wake of 9-11.

On the Canadian side, Ottawa has taken many measures since September 11th to demonstrate its resolve against terrorism and heightened commitment to border security.³³ It immediately put into place a high state of alert at border crossings, enhanced the levels of security at the country's airports, added \$176 million (\$280 million Canadian dollars) in new funding for detection technologies and personnel to strengthen the security framework,³⁴ initiated new legislation to combat the financing of terrorism, and froze the assets of known terrorist groups.³⁵ 2,000 officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police have been reassigned to border patrol and anti-terrorism work. To counter the image that Canada is lax on immigration controls, the government has introduced a permanent fraud-resistant resident card for new immigrants, increased its detention capacity and deportation activity, and conducted more front-end security screening for refugee claimants.³⁶ Canada has also tightened its visa regime, including requiring Saudi and Malaysian visitors to obtain visas.

For domestic political reasons, Canadian officials are careful to emphasize that these measures do not mean Canada is simply adopting U.S. policies or conforming to pressures from Washington. But the political incentives are obvious: either take strong measures to enhance security or risk a unilateral hardening of the border. A post-9-11 warning by Secretary of State Colin Powell was interpreted by Canadians as a thinly veiled threat: "Some nations need to be more vigilant against terrorism at their borders if

³³ The key piece of Canadian legislation related to 9/11 is the Anti-Terrorism Act (Bill C-36). It came into force on December 24, 2001. It amends the criminal code, the Official Secrets Act, the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering Act) and others. It includes measures to "deter, disable, identify, prosecute, convict and punish terrorists." See "Anti-Terrorism Act Receives Royal Assent" available at: http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/2001/doc_28215.html.

³⁴ The 2001 budget (tabled 10 December 2001) included C\$7.7 billion (U\$4.8 billion) over the next five years for "enhancing security." It includes investment in the military, air security, and border initiatives. The relevant details are in chapter 5 of the budget, available at <http://www.can-am.gc.ca/pdf/bksece.pdf>

³⁵ Towards a Secure and Trade-Efficient Border, Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment, Ottawa, November 2001.

³⁶ See "Canada's Actions Against Terrorism Since September 11th: Background," Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (updated May 2002). Available at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/anti-terrorism/canadaactions-en.asp>

they want their relationship with the U.S. to remain the same.”³⁷ While Canadian officials are wary of talking about creating a “security perimeter”³⁸ (preferring instead the softer, less militaristic term “zone of confidence”), both the government and the business community³⁹ recognize the high stakes and have single-mindedly mobilized around the task of assuring smooth-flowing ports of entry along the border. Their economic survival very much depends on it.⁴⁰

Future border trajectories

Given the current conditions of high uncertainty, it would be premature, indeed reckless, to try to predict the future of borders and border controls in the NAFTA zone. Nevertheless, three potential trajectories can be briefly outlined. At one extreme is a unilateral fortification and hardening of U.S. border defenses (a “fortress America”), with security trumping all other considerations. This radical option runs counter to powerful economic interests, and indeed the business communities in all three North American countries have mobilized since 9-11 to try to avoid precisely this outcome. At the other extreme is multilateral policy harmonization and a “pooling” of sovereignty to build a formal North American security perimeter (a “fortress North America”). Such a path would represent a Europeanization of border controls and thus a qualitative transformation of the continental integration project. As part of the process of dismantling borders within the European Union (EU) and creating a shared economic space of free movement, EU members have built up a common external perimeter through the Schengen Agreement.⁴¹ This includes common visa and asylum policies, a shared information system, and standardized border procedures. Brussels is even contemplating the creation of a joint corps of EU border guards to patrol the outer perimeter.⁴² To “Schengenize” North America’s borders in a similar manner would require a level of formal institutionalization and policy harmonization that is difficult to imagine in the present context, and only sustained shocks, such as multiple large-scale

³⁷ Quoted in Toronto Sun, 9-20-01.

³⁸ For an analysis of why Canada has so far shied away from embracing a formal, broadly institutionalized “security perimeter” as a solution, see Veronica Kitchen, “Canadian-American Border Security After September 11,” unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, Brown University, May 13, 2002.

³⁹ Represented, for example, by the Coalition for Secure and Trade-Efficient Borders.

⁴⁰ As one scholar from Canada puts it, “Frontier or border issues have become the core of the main game of Canada-U.S. relations.” Presentation by Andrew F. Cooper at conference on “Homeland Security,” Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, May 23-24, 2002.

⁴¹ For a more detailed overview, see Malcolm Anderson, “The Transformation of Border Controls: A European Precedent?” in Peter Andreas and Timothy Snyder, eds. The Wall Around the West: State Borders and Immigration Controls in North America and Europe (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

⁴² Associated Press, 5-7-02.

terrorist incidents, would create the political will necessary to push in this direction.⁴³ Interestingly, Mexico has been the biggest proponent of this approach to North American security, with Canada being the most resistant. Based on current trends, the most likely scenario fall somewhere in the middle, neither a “fortress America” nor a full-scale, institutionalized “fortress North America” project, but rather a series of incremental, piecemeal initiatives, involving a mixture of enhanced cross-border security coordination and collaboration, partial and uneven policy convergence, and innovative new inspection methods and technologies that increasingly extend beyond the ports of entry (“smart borders”).⁴⁴ This may eventually develop into a less formal, less bureaucratized, quasi-continental security perimeter that selectively borrows from the European model.

The particular direction taken will obviously depend to a great extent on the location, method, timing, intensity, and frequency of any future terrorist incidents. It is important to note that while the hijackings on 9-11 were not directly linked to the U.S.-Mexico or U.S.-Canada borders, they nevertheless had dramatic and long-lasting border ripple effects. A more directly border-related incident, such as terrorists entering the country across the U.S.-Mexico or U.S.-Canada borders, or a bomb exploding that had been smuggled through a border port of entry, would likely generate far more intensive calls for hardening borders. If sustained, a high-intensity border crackdown could potentially stall and even derail the continental economic integration process. There is nothing automatic about the policy reaction to any future attacks, however. The politics of the policy response matter as much as any actual attack. Beyond the actual levels of destruction and disruption that such future terrorist events may cause, U.S. images and perceptions of its NAFTA partners will be crucial. Amongst the many political choices will be whether (and to what extent) American policymakers point an accusatory finger northward and/or southward. Post-9-11 Canadian and Mexican policy initiatives should be viewed as trust- and confidence-building measures designed to inhibit such a response.

Final thoughts

At first glance, the post-9-11 “war on terrorism” appears to perpetuate a decades-old cyclical pattern in which the pendulum of policy priorities swings back and forth between security and economic concerns. At the height of the Cold War in the 1960s, security issues reigned supreme. In the 1970s, economic matters overshadowed security, with “interdependence” the favorite buzzword of the decade. In the 1980s, geopolitical tensions sharpened, giving security primacy once again. In the post-Cold War 1990s, the threat of large-scale interstate warfare declined and “globalization” became the popular theme. Now, in the first decade of the 21st century, it seems that security is back with a vengeance. Yet this time, the primary security threat is not the traditional concern of interstate military conflict but rather transnational terrorism, a distinct form of organized

⁴³ Before 9-11, Robert Pastor outlined a grand vision for North America, which would even include a common currency called the “Amero.” See Robert Pastor, Toward a North American Community, Washington D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 2001.

⁴⁴ While many of the “smart border” initiatives predate 9-11, these have been accelerated and gained greater political support in the new security context.

violence orchestrated primarily by non-state actors. Thus, borders are being fortified not against state-sponsored military invaders but against transnational law evaders. The awkward policy dilemma is that these clandestine actors use the same cross-border transportation and communications networks that are the arteries of a highly integrated and interdependent economy. Squeezing these arteries in an effort to filter out the bad from the good can have profound economic repercussions. And nowhere is this more evident than in North America, where the imperatives of security and those of economic integration appear to be on a collision course. While this collision cannot be fully averted, how it is cushioned and managed will significantly determine the future of North American integration and cross-border relations. This means that the traditionally divorced debates about economic integration, on the one hand, and security, on the other, must now be fully joined.