Mexico and the United States: Cooperative Approaches to Shared Human Security

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Biographical Sketch

Dr. Donald Klingner is a Distinguished Professor and MPA Program Director in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. He was elected President (2008-2009) of ASPA and a Fellow (2007) of NAPA. Co-author: Public Personnel Management (6th edition Pearson 2010, also published in Spanish and Chinese); co-editor: Using the ‘Narcotrafico’ Threat to Build Public Administration Capacity between the US and Mexico (Taylor & Francis 2014, also published in Spanish). Fulbright Senior Scholar in Central America (1994), visiting professor at UNAM, Mexico (1999-2003), and consultant to the UN, the WB and the IADB on public management capacity-building. He was on the faculty at IUPUI (1974-1980) and Florida International University (1980-2001). Prior to earning his PhD in Public Administration from the University of Southern California in 1974, he worked for the US government’s central personnel agency (US Civil Service Commission, now US OPM) from 1968-1973.
Introduction:


2. These issues are best understood in the context of underlying trends and events, and from both countries’ perspectives.

3. Because they can best be resolved cooperatively, these issues also represent an opportunity too good to waste to build government trust – political and administrative – between both countries.

4. Each country should focus on a cooperative national security agenda involving state, local, regional and federal governments, businesses, NGOs and the media.

5. This agenda will be the focus of an international symposium on “Mexico and the US: Cooperative Approaches to Shared Human Security” sponsored by the School of Public Affairs, University of Colorado Colorado Springs, on May 5, 2015.
1. Mexico and the US: Shared Policy Issues

a. Drug Trafficking and TCOs:

- 1990 – present: Economic growth and integration, marked by the signing of NAFTA in 1994, has vastly expanded transportation and commerce between Mexico and the US.

- As US drug control efforts in Florida and the Caribbean drove trafficking into Central America and Mexico, the same factors that aided legitimate economic interests also benefitted the illicit economy.

- Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) use superior logistics, finance, and vertical and horizontal integration to effectively extend economic development into illegal activities such as drug smuggling and human trafficking.
b. Human Migration:

- At least 60,000 undocumented Central American child refugees entered the US via Mexico in 2014.

- This diaspora is both an immediate regional humanitarian crisis and an ongoing international social justice issue.

- It is driven by endemic poverty, machismo and domestic abuse, gang violence, corruption, lack of economic opportunity, and deep-seated discrimination against indigenous peoples.

- It is inadvertently made worse by treating gang members as juveniles, and deporting them back to Central America.

- Migrants or refugees may cross most borders in Central America using only national identity cards; passports and visas are required to enter Mexico; few qualify for these.
c. Governments are unable to secure borders or maintain public order and safety in much of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador) and parts of Mexico (Chiapas and Oaxaca on the southern border with Guatemala, transportation routes along the Pacific and the Caribbean coasts, and urban areas along the northern border with the US).

d. Given limited government capacity, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) with annual profits that rival Google or Microsoft form “shadow governments” that use violence, extortion, kidnapping, rape and murder to maximize profits, compete with each other and control human trafficking and the transshipment of drugs from South America through Central America and Mexico.
e. In Mexico: the drug trafficking and child refugee crises are “vicious cycles” that highlight fundamental weaknesses in Mexico’s historical political culture:

- The weakness of local compared to national government, the weakness of civilian government compared to the armed forces, and civil society’s limited ability (vigilantes?) to confront either authoritarian governments or TCOs.

- Efforts to combat TCOs often also undermine advances in democracy, including developing transparent and credible electoral politics, creating a functional and politically divided legislative branch, reforming the judiciary and reducing judicial “impunity” for elites), decentralizing federal-state relations, and treating citizens as owners of government rather than as its subjects.
f. In the US, the security of its southern border has been the top priority of US foreign policy with Mexico since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001:

- The Mérida Initiative (2007) is the main mechanism for bilateral cooperation against drug trafficking and TCOs, using US funds, equipment, training & communications.

- The Obama administration has initiated some changes in US policies toward Mexico (more flexible transportation and commerce), and continued many existing policies (immigration, border security and drug control).

- A broader discussion of US-Mexico relations is not a top US priority – neither presidential candidate even mentioned Mexico in any of their 2012 pre-electoral debates.
2. **Context**

a. **A Complex History of Conflict and Cooperation:**

- When US and Mexican interests have coincided, there have been cooperative bilateral policies and programs.
- When their perceptions and objectives have diverged, their relationship has tended toward conflict.

b. **Why?**

- Multiple governmental and non-governmental entities, each with entrenched interests, set the agenda between Mexico and the US.
- It is difficult to change current policies without examining stakeholders’ attitudes and underlying constraints.
c. In the US:

- Mexico is viewed as both a “friendly neighbor” and a foreign country; Mexican-Americans are viewed at least partly as “the other” (“foreigners” who are not like “us”).

- Perceptions of Mexico and Mexicans tend to reflect the perceived negative consequences of Mexican immigration – legal and illegal – on US state and local education, public health and criminal justice systems.

- While most Americans would grant that US economic growth requires a ready supply of immigrant labor, many also favor stricter controls on immigration to keep out those who might take jobs from native-born Americans, and to deport those who are in the US illegally.
d. In Mexico:

- The US is generally admired and envied for its wealth and economic opportunity, and mistrusted for its history of dominance and prejudice against Mexico and Mexicans.

- As evidence, Mexicans note that:
  - The US has often invaded Mexico (1836, 1848, and 1914)
  - The US built “the wall” between the US and Mexico after 9/11 even though all the participants in these terrorist attacks entered the US from Canada, not Mexico
  - US immigration policies toward Mexico are incoherent and unjust.
  - The US generally has downplayed its Hispanic roots (Albuquerque, Santa Fe and St. Augustine) in favor of its Anglo-Saxon origins (Jamestown and Plymouth Rock)
  - Many day-to-day issues frustrate (border crossings, business operations, money transfers, and even genetically-modified corn).
For over 200 years, much of the southwest US (Texas until 1836; Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and California until 1848) was part of Mexico.

Until recently, Mexicans, Mexican-Americans and native Americans moved freely back and forth across the Río Grande/Río Bravo “border.”

Mexicans view migration to the US from the perspective of their own domestic concerns for public safety, social and economic development, and its effects on rural family and social structure.

Mexican President Porfirio Díaz (1877-1881, 1884-1911) once said, “Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States.”
3. These Crises Are an Opportunity too Good to Waste to Build Political and Administrative Capacity between the US and Mexico

a. How to Build Sustainable Binational Networks:

- Learn the other country’s language, culture and institutions.
- Focus on long-term relationships, not short-term contracts.
- Develop effective research- and practice partnerships based on reciprocal professional respect and personal trust.
- Strengthen networks: it’s much easier to do things if you don’t insist on controlling networks or getting individual credit (personal or institutional) for their accomplishments.
- Fund sponsored research by focusing on deliverables.
b. Emphasize long-term strategic interests and objectives shared by the US and Mexico:

- The US is Mexico’s largest trading partner and foreign investor; Mexico is the US’s third largest trading partner (after Canada and China) and the second largest foreign supplier of oil to the US.

- The US faces a shortage of younger workers as its birth rate declines and the “baby boom” generation retires, while Mexico has a “demographic bonus” of workers.

- NAFTA (1994) has succeeded in promoting the movement of goods, services, and finances across North America; freer movement of labor would potentially create an integrated economic powerhouse capable of competing with China and the European Union.
c. Frame current “intermestic” policy crises (like TCOs, drug trafficking and human migration) as opportunities as well as threats when preparing conference presentations, book proposals and grant requests. The movement of Central American refugees across Mexico into the US, or the threat to Mexico and the US posed by drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), are opportunities to conduct needed cross-national research and to build effective governance networks among elected and appointed officials and public administrators in both countries.
d. Case Study: The “Perfect Storm” Research Project:

*Origin:* Building on the Binational Consortium for Public Administration Education (1996-2003), it began with a March 2012 ASPA pre-conference workshop sponsored by ASPA’s International Chapter and the Section on Certified Public Management, and a March 2012 conference at BUAP (Puebla, Mexico) on policy recommendations for the 2012-2018 Mexican Presidential administration.

*Outcome:* It has resulted in two books co-edited by Donald Klingner and Roberto Moreno (of UNAM and UAEMex), simultaneous publication in the US in English and Mexico City in Spanish, for an intended audience of academics, students and policy-makers.
20 Contributing Authors: 15 chapters by contributing Mexican, Canadian and US experts (academics, practitioners and appointed officials).

Objective: Place drug trafficking and TCOs in the context of underlying issues and perceptions –

Mexico: democracy and citizenship, economic development, employment and competitiveness, social policy (education, health and poverty), political and electoral reform, intergovernmental relations, social equity, public safety and the administration of justice

US: national defense, immigration, economic development, social equity, law enforcement and the “War on Drugs.”

e. Use incentives built into the Mexican national higher education performance appraisal system (SNI) to promote international publications and conference presentations by Mexican research scholars.

f. Build transnational research networks:

- Use cooperative research to tie knowledge management to networked institutional effectiveness; maintain face-to-face relationships through virtual networks and social media.

- Strengthen networks of schools, public administration institutes and professional associations across both countries.

- Build ASPA’s “good governance worldwide” website (2012) http://www.aspaonline.org/global/index.html and other social media tools that provide virtual support for professional public administration and public service.
4. A Suggested Binational Policy Agenda

a. Concerted action by governments, businesses, civic organizations and the media in Mexico and the US is needed to address issues in 6 key policy areas:

- Public security and protection
- Facilitation of transportation and legitimate commerce
- Economic development
- Water management
- Environmental protection
- Migration
b. Develop a shared vision of the US – Mexico border as something that unites as well as divides, promoting mutual benefits and transforming border management from contention and frustration to cooperation:

- Draft laws that allow public administrators to work together on the issues that underlie TCOs, drug and human trafficking.
- Develop an economic strategy that promotes legitimate commerce and strengthens local institutions by imposing fewer national restrictions on border area communities.
- Practice intelligent and comprehensive water management and environmental protection.
- Develop binational administrative procedures that effectively regulate migration, public safety and other ongoing human security concerns.
c. Each country should initiate some concrete political and administrative reforms:

- The US should adopt policies that realistically address the situation faced by undocumented Mexicans in the US, and future flows of legal immigrants from Mexico.

- The US should allow the level of future migrations to the US to be flexible and strategic, reflecting current economic conditions and demands for labor.

- The US must allocate sufficient resources to consulates and the Department of Homeland Security’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to handle this flow.

- Once these reforms are in place, Mexico must ensure that those persons who enter the US from Mexico do so at designated crossing points and with required documents.
d. To take advantage of the border area as a focus of economic and social development, the US must confront its paradoxical perception of Mexico and Mexicans as both neighbors and foreigners by developing a plan (national, regional, state and local) for the full integration into US society of those Mexicans to whom it grants permanent residency status as a result of immigration reforms.

e. To decrease the poverty, lack of opportunity and violence in Chiapas, Oaxaca and other areas, Mexico must work to integrate the indigenous peoples that are paradoxically both a source of national identity and objects of discrimination into Mexican society.
f. Each country (especially the US) must re-examine federal and state drug laws, policies and enforcement practices:

- There are 3 options: complicity, confrontation, or a change in basic approaches to regulating drug use.

- Each strategy has pros and cons; both countries have thus far favored the second, with mixed results at best.
  - In Mexico, complicity in the 1980s and 1990s plus corruption resulted in TCOs “capturing” local government in many areas. President Calderon’s (2006-2012) use of the military against cartels resulted in at least 120,000 deaths and disappearances.

- In the US, the “War on Drugs” (1971-present) has increased incarceration rates but not reduced drug supply or demand.

- Greater focus on money laundering, to include jail time for bankers, can combat TCOs as well as terrorist networks.
UCCS will sponsor a symposium on “Mexico and the United States: Cooperative Approaches to Shared Human Security.” This event will:

- Invite experts from the US and Mexico to discuss current shared US and Mexican policy concerns in the context of underlying trends and events.
- Develop an agenda by which Colorado, the US and Mexico can work on these human security issues cooperatively.
- Place this agenda in the context of NAFTA and the US DoD by including the Consul General of Mexico (Denver), the Colorado Director of Economic Development and International Trade, and the US Northern Command.
Thank you for Your Interest – Questions and Comments?

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