U.S.-MEXICO FORUM
2024

Report

Introduction

The election of Joseph Biden as U.S. President and the onset of the COVID-19 crisis provided the UC San Diego Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies with an opportunity to lead discussions among experts. These discussions aimed to develop proposals to enhance the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. in five key areas: migration, security and public health, trade and economy, energy and sustainable development, and strategic diplomacy.

With the 2024 presidential elections approaching in both Mexico and the United States, the 2024 U.S.-Mexico Forum was poised to serve as a crucial policy gathering. This year's edition invited scholars, policymakers, and experts to explore the significant impacts of decisions made by presidential candidates on vital issues in both countries.

The primary goal of the U.S.-Mexico Forum is to strengthen cooperation between the two nations and within the North American region. This involves not only identifying potential frictions stemming from their intense and asymmetric relationship but also formulating proposals to address these challenges. Additionally, the Forum aims to highlight the inherent opportunities within the relationship on both national and regional levels.

This report was developed through a collaborative process and does not necessarily reflect the views of any individual or the institutions with which they are affiliated.

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Acknowledgements

The U.S.-Mexico Forum offers a vital platform for understanding, analyzing, and shaping key aspects of bilateral relations. As we face continuous changes and the upcoming 2024 presidential elections in both nations, these exchanges are more crucial than ever.

This initiative, now in its fourth year, owes its longevity to the generous support of our sponsors. I want to express my deepest gratitude to our star sponsors: Cross Border Xpress, Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacífico, LCA Capital, and Sempra, whose contributions have been instrumental in sustaining the Center's activities.

I also wish to recognize the vital support of our silver sponsor, Universidad Panamericana, and our champion sponsors: Baker McKenzie, Bolsa Institucional de Valores, Casa Magoni, Cerámica Suro, Fundación Coppel, Rassini, Saavi, Tijuana Innovadora, and Volaris. Your support has been essential to the Forum's success.

The USMEX Advisory Board has been integral in guiding our policy influence efforts in both Mexico and the U.S. I extend special thanks to the board members who actively participated in the Forum: Aaron Feldman, Alicia Lebrija, Allert Brown-Gort, Andrea Giralt, Andrew Selee, Antonio Ortiz Mena, Ari Hirschhorn, Carlos Laviada, Enrique Hernández Pulido, Gastón Luken Aguilar, Jeffrey Davidow, José Galicot, Julio Portales, Luis Maizel, Magdalena Carral, Manuel Weinberg, and Mariana Cordera.

I am confident that our ongoing collaboration through the Forum's dialogues will continue to strengthen U.S.-Mexico relations by engaging stakeholders from academia, civil society, government, and the private sector. I am proud of our accomplishments thus far and eagerly anticipate maintaining this vital space in the years to come.

Rafael Fernández de Castro
Director, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies
Aaron Feldman Family Chancellor's Endowed Chair in U.S.-Mexican Studies in Memory of David Feldman

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Facing A Challenging New World Together: U.S. and Latin American Perspectives on Global Affairs

Latin America has not been perceived as interested in world problems recently. Any move can thus lead to a profound change in the Americas' landscape, its relationship with other regions, and within itself.

Latin America and the United States share several issues in the international system that need to be addressed jointly. In such talks, one either sits down and discusses these issues or becomes part of the meal. The unraveling volatile multipolar world system presents challenges over which countries in the region have little, if any, control individually. The main challenges identified are climate change, tensions between China and the U.S., the Russian invasion of Ukraine, ally-shoring trends, festering conflicts between nations and groups that have not been solved, democratic decline, challenges to the global economy, and rising inequality from globalization.

These major issues cannot be solved by any one side or country worldwide. As multilateralism becomes increasingly relevant, the Organization of American States and the Inter-American System of Human Rights can be influential if the effort is made.

"The [multilateral] system is only as good as the governments who participate in it want to make it."

However, these multilateral efforts are limited by the strong polarization of opinions among the countries in the region regarding these major challenges and the consequential deterioration of multilateral systems. For instance, climate change has raised conversations about modifying trends in production and consumption, but countries cannot agree on the best ways to tackle it.

Latin American countries are advantaged regarding natural resources such as water, lithium, and other critical materials. China's or Russia's access to these resources can threaten the U.S. Yet, as the U.S. has been looking elsewhere, China has been making its way through Latin America. Economic moves by China in Latin America in the forms of military expansion, loans, and investment are expected to increase tensions and lack of cooperation within the region.

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In this sense, it is of U.S. interest that American governments come together around a set of principles or agreements. The U.S. needs to incentivize countries in the region to join their side based on good reasoning and a transactional relationship that favors all parties.

Latin American countries, for their part, should seek to use their natural resources as leverage to become self-reliant and gain a position similar to Canada's in world affairs. This is, to be seen as an ally to the U.S., but also as equal partners.

The first step forward is to come together and accept that there are problems that cannot be solved easily or by one single country on its own.

Panelists

- Eli Berman, Research Director for International Security Studies at the UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation and Professor of Economics, UC San Diego
- Roberta Jacobson, former U.S. Ambassador, Dinamica Americas
- Heraldo Muñoz, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile

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Moderator: Amb. Arturo Sarukhan, President, Sarukhan and Associates LLC

Decoding the Path to the Presidency in Mexico and the U.S.

Twin elections in Mexico and the U.S., two neighboring countries with such a symbiotic and complicated relationship, presents a number of challenges that can influence the flux of their global affairs. Presidential elections in both countries in the same year is a critical junction that occurs every twelve years. The current political and global landscape has brought upon a new time of disinterest as well as regression to older ways of thinking.

Mexico's future is considered to be under threat from the democratic backsliding that resulted of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's (AMLO) actions while in office. The democratically elected president has spent his time in office wrecking and abusing his power in several sectors, regressing the country to a more basic and less engaged nation while unapologetically trying to change the Mexican Constitution. He has attempted to capture the State institutions that protect democracy and transparency, using his vast popularity to assume a position of control, while also increasing militarization.

This regression is facilitated by the lack of the population's understanding of the National Electoral Institute (INE) and AMLO's rhetoric to promote distrust of the electoral procedure. Many voters have been put off by AMLO's disregard and attacks against the INE's officials in charge of ensuring the institution's autonomy.

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"Uninterested voters simply feel like their needs will not be met regardless of who they end up voting for."

In the U.S., the two main concerns are the heavy polarization between the two major parties and the increase of uninterested or apolitical voters. Polarization has given rise to political violence, especially against members of Congress. The growing group of uninterested voters is the result of voters not being able to connect with the candidates or the values they are meant to represent, feeling abandoned by candidates and parties.

In both countries, if there is not enough engagement or interest from voters, they might be easily pushed to vote for anyone or not vote at all. This allows otherwise inefficient parties in power to remain in their position or remain in the political landscape.

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The lack of engagement from voters can be swayed by the media and its narrative. However, there are many factors that could sway voters, interested or not, into voting for someone that they would normally not agree with. For instance, the likely win of Claudia Sheinbaum, Morena's presidential candidate who is seen by many as "AMLO's puppet" to continue to further his agenda, might incentivize people to vote for opposition candidates they do not feel represented by because they are afraid to return to the times of "PRI's perfect dictatorship" in which only one party would control the government despite holding elections.

Although the relation between the two countries remains stable, there could be changes based on the results of the upcoming elections, which are not yet evident. Polls can be a good source of information, but they can easily be misleading or biased. Social desirability bias can affect voter responses. As needs and wants can make voters rethink who they will vote for in the upcoming elections, they will look for the candidates that help fulfill those needs and desires while saying that they will vote for someone else.

Candidates and parties must keep in mind what people are looking for: someone who they can trust and who will help their situation and make a better future for the people they represent. Decoding the possible president will not be easy, but with proper information and understanding, the best decisions can be made for the sake of both countries and their relationship.

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Panelists

- Denise Dresser, Political Analyst and Professor of Political Science, ITAM
- Sergio I. García Ríos, Assistant Professor; Associate Director for Research, Center for the Study of Race and Democracy, The University of Texas at Austin
- Marisa A. Abrajano, Professor of Political Science, UC San Diego
- Ciro Murayama, USMEX Fellow and Professor, UNAM

Moderator: Lila Abed, Acting Director, The Wilson Center Mexico Institute

Economic Horizons: U.S. and Mexican Presidential Candidates' Economic and Trade Policies

Given their proximity and longstanding, mutually beneficial relationship, Mexico and the U.S. have long served as their greatest partners and economic allies. Both countries seek opportunity, and their connection with each other has allowed them to find several new opportunities to become a competitive region in the eyes of other nations.

Mexico recently became the greatest trade partner for the U.S. During the last few years of AMLO's presidency, poverty in Mexico has been reduced, followed by fiscal discipline and evident macroeconomic stability. Effective labor movements within the country resulted in the raising of the minimum wage.

However, the government did not successfully encourage economic growth. There has been little growth, with an increase of only 1%-2% over the last year. Economic policy failed to promote domestic and foreign investment. There was no proper fiscal reaction to the pandemic, which escalated the suffering of many businesses. Energy policy has also led to more inefficient energy provision, affecting production and investment.

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The U.S. economy has been steadily maintained but has faced its fair share of follies over the last few years. The inflation caused by the COVID response and low interest rates have made people feel as though they cannot maintain their past standards of living. This, coupled with shifts in jobs from the energy transition and the U.S.'s competition with China, has led to people believing that they are stuck and unable to move ahead.

People need money for their basic consumption and opportunities to invest that money and grow it. The best tools to help people in both countries are access to education and healthcare. However, for this to work, both countries must understand how their needs and challenges align and intertwine.

"The more people know and are healthy, the more money will be distributed to fulfill their other needs."
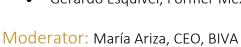
In the case of Mexico, there may be specific proposals on constitutional and legal reforms that may cause uncertainty on economic outcomes if Claudia Sheinbaum comes into power. Changes in the Supreme Court may also affect energy policy and efficiency significantly.

In the U.S., there seems to be a convergence between both parties in terms of economic policy as they seem to propose the return of an aggressive tax policy to promote domestic industry and manufacturing. However, differences are expected to persist in terms of energy and immigration policy.

Candidates and voters alike will need the resources to improve their countries and their own living situations, which can only be achieved by working together. Though the elections results can cause complications between the two countries, there is one thing that both need to fully understand moving forward: that they are linked as partners and neighbors and their needs need to be met when they work together so that they share a mutually beneficial future. Energy security, water security, immigration and stability should be prioritized by both governments jointly.

Panelists

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- Carlos Serrano, Chief Economist Mexico, BBVA
- Gordon Hanson, Peter Wertheim Professor in Urban Policy, Harvard Kennedy School and CCGT Senior Fellow, UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy
- Beatriz Leycegui, Partner, SAI Law and Economics
- Gerardo Esquivel, Former Mexican Central Bank Board member

Moderator: María Ariza, CEO, BIVA

An Energetic Diplomacy? The Near Future of U.S.-Mexico Energy Relations and Climate Change

Energy and infrastructure are among the most important aspects the two countries consider in their bilateral relations. It is also a major point that all presidential candidates touch upon to prove themselves the best option. However, their policy and diplomatic choices are too different to get a proper read on which would be the most effective.

In Mexico, energy provision and infrastructure planning are major differences between the two candidates most likely to win, Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez. While both seek to ensure energy security and innovate in energy transition, Claudia Sheinbaum's strategy focuses on becoming self-sufficient by diversifying domestic energy sources and working directly with the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) to improve distribution. On the other hand, Xóchitl Gálvez is focusing on attracting private investment to the energy and distribution sectors. In this way, the main difference between both proposals is the public vs private dilemma.

"During AMLO's presidency, the energy industry was kept strictly in the public domain, stopping private energy businesses to make leeway into the country."

Funds are needed to advance the energy transition in Mexico. Should the energy sector of Mexico remain public, there will only be one energy distributor that will receive all government funding, even if it cannot cover the national energy demand. The intervention of the private sector would introduce investment as a new factor into the equation and unlock the growth opportunities that the energy sector had been lacking. However, for this strategy to work, the government must provide investors with the proper investment incentives.

Both sides must consider the main issue: Pemex, the Mexican state-owned gas company, which has become heavily indebted and requires large public funding to keep operating. Regardless of the energy strategy, it will have to deal with Pemex's debt.

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The U.S. is also looking to diversify its energy transition to fight climate change through the use of new technologies. With the country moving away from fossil fuels and in search of new renewable energy sources, U.S. candidates have been in a competition to reach new technologies rising in the global landscape. However, the country lacks the resources to match the improvements in China, which owns 80% of the world's solar panels and has invested 3 to 5 times more money into Europe for renewable energy than the U.S.

Mexico and the U.S. can complement their current advantages and help each other in their energy transition to increase regional competitiveness against China. While Mexico is able to trade some of its natural resources, the U.S. can collaborate in advancing technology and infrastructure building in Mexico. There is an evident need for collaboration, investment, and policy coherence between both countries. This would, in turn, improve diplomacy between the two countries and help forge a stronger relationship.

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Panelists

- Tania Ortiz Mena, President, Sempra Infrastructure
- Carlos Pascual, Senior Vice President for Global Energy and International Affairs, S&P Global Commodity Insights

Moderator: David Victor, Professor and Peter Cowhey Center on Global Transformation Chair in Innovation and Public Policy, UC San Diego School of Global Policy.

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Escaping the Immigration Conundrum: The U.S. and Mexican Presidential Candidates' Proposals

Migration between Mexico and the U.S. has long been an issue and a strength for both governments. From disputed borders to undocumented migration, the two governments have long understood that this kind of movement benefits both countries but opens issues that must be addressed. As the matter has changed and adapted over the years, presidential candidates have each come up with different, sometimes opposing proposals.

The unprecedented number of people migrating into the U.S. through its southern border has led to a complete collapse of U.S. migrant services. The recent Texas movement against migrants and any services aimed at them have brought upon heavy taxation or denial of such services as a way to keep migrants from going in through the Lone Star State. The usual deportation and catch-and-release tactics are no longer a viable strategy given that most of these migrants are not from Mexico. Their deportation is costly, and they are likely to try to cross the border again if released in Mexico.

For the U.S., immigration is a federal issue that Congress must work on to provide sufficient legal pathways. Immigration laws have not been changed in years, leading to a backlog of people either seeking asylum or wanting to become part of a working force that lets them build a better future for themselves.

"Immigration can be a good thing for the U.S if regulated correctly."

For Mexico, it is a matter that hits closer to home, as many Mexican families have someone in the U.S. Yet, the country has not had a proper migration policy to help regulate flows. The current policy is limited to using the National Guard to oppress migration in the south, an ineffective and corrupt strategy.

Contrary to popular belief, polls show that most U.S. voters are in favor of immigration, but they are concerned about security at the border because they perceive it as uncontrolled, chaotic, and prone to the smuggling of weapons and drugs. Many people believe that providing legal pathways to immigration would be the best way to aid the influx of immigrants and facilitate their integration.

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The polarization between seeking legal pathways and perceiving the situation at the border as a threat is where both of the U.S. presidential candidates stand. The fear and chaos is a strategy that Donald Trump had used in the past and is most likely going to be using in the future should he be elected. Meanwhile, Joe Biden is more open to discussion and collaboration with the Mexican side.

Immigration has not been a topic as touched in Mexico as in the U.S. by presidential candidates given the lack of a migration policy until recently. Xóchitl Gálvez's plan consists of making border checking more humane and lending aid to the migrants that are crossing the border from Mexico into the United States. Claudia Sheinbaum's plan is expected to be continuity, which implies working side by side with the U.S., continue using the National Guard to stop migration from the south, and use this collaboration as leverage in the bilateral relation with the U.S.

Panelists

- Theresa Cardinal Brown, Managing Director of immigration and cross-border policy, Bipartisan Policy Center
- Tom Wong, Associate Professor of Political Science and founding Director of the U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC), UC San Diego
- Gustavo Mohar, Founder and CEO, Grupo Atalaya
- Julia Preston, Contributing Writer, The Marshall Project

Moderator: Andrew Selee, President, Migration Policy Institute

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Artifice or Intelligence? The Role of AI in Shaping the Future of North America

The exponential rise in advancements of artificial intelligence (AI) has brought up concerns about its many potential uses, some for nefarious purposes such as distributing credible but false information or replacing people in jobs. Given its potential role in education, politics and news media outlets, AI could sway elections and influence upcoming events in both countries. The issue remains on how to properly use AI to help shape a positive future for North America while also keeping in mind that there are risks from allowing this kind of technology to be freely used by the public and corporations.

"One only needs to look at recent history to see how some countries are accused of using misinformation to influence voters and make up stories that […] ruin the reputation of candidates."

Among the main factors that could be affected by AI is that of politics. Risks in this regard include but are not limited to misinformation, influencing people, and hitting the electoral system to bring about confusion and make the people question the legitimacy of institutions and the democratic process. With AI, there is the fear of candidates being artificially placed in compromising videos or events that could lead to voters being swayed and incited to commit acts that the candidates would not even be aware of. There is also the threat of misinformation being spread based on voter profiling.

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However, this can be avoided by checking the sources from which this misinformation sprung and comparing it with other reliable sources. For all the risks that come from the use of AI, there are also many potential positives, as has been seen in the sectors of education and healthcare.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many educational services and institutions were forced to change their approach toward fulfilling the learning needs of their students, especially those who needed additional assistance. Back when everyone went to the classroom, a teacher could see how a student was struggling and be able to talk to them directly and show them better ways to get the lesson when they were not having much luck on their own. But with the arrival of COVID, things have changed, and AI is being used to create personalized educational curriculums to reach where a normal teacher could not. It also has great potential in translation services, especially needed at universities.

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In healthcare, the use of AI has allowed doctors and scientists to discover cures more efficiently and diagnose patients that are unable to reach a doctor in a safe, presential environment. Like an online scheduled checkup or consultation, doctors use AI software to find the proper treatment for a person in a more personalized manner with the aid of all the medical information at their disposition.

Still, there is a need for regulation. Given AI's versatile uses, its regulation requires the involvement of a vast network of people with diverse backgrounds. Mexico and the U.S. must work together to develop and regulate AI in a way that increases regional competitiveness while avoiding democratic backsliding from misinformation and distrust. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) can be an effective framework to regulate AI jointly.

The 2024 elections will be the first held since the release of Chat GPT. It is to be seen whether or not people will trust the results or if AI will affect the transfer of power.

Panelists
- Thad Kousser, Professor of Political Science, UC San Diego
- Elena Estavillo, former Commissioner, Mexico's Federal Telecommunications Institute and General Director, Centroi
- David Danks, Professor of Data Science & Philosophy and affiliate faculty in Computer Science & Engineering at University of California, San Diego
- Elizabeth Lyons, Associate Professor, UC San Diego

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Moderator: Alejandra Palacios, Senior Fellow, University of Southern California

Decentralizing the Bilateral Relationship: California and Texas

Since California and Texas represent the largest border crossing area between Mexico and the U.S., they often require the aid and management of Mexican consulates. California and Texas have the most Mexican consulates in the U.S., reflecting their highest concentration of Mexican immigrants. These consulates have formed stable and deep relations with each other and with local governments and populations to secure the interests and needs of the Mexican people.

Each consulate has its own goals and mission based on its particular context. The politics of and within California and Texas vary greatly and often determine whether there will be complementarity or clashes with the consulate's goals. In Texas, consulates seek to protect Mexican communities from the recent laws and policies targeted against immigrants. With the rising of taxation and a far stricter anti-immigrant policy, Mexican consulates in Texas have focused on preventing excessive use of force and improving their relations with local businesses to have their support in conversations with local governments.

In California, consulates navigate a system that tends to be friendlier towards migrants. Regarding border regions, like Tijuana and San Diego, they have focused their efforts on improving sanitation and strengthening communication and networks with partners. Water management of the Colorado River is also a central issue, as well as including some parts of Tijuana in the San Diego School Districts to properly regulate current transborder practices in the education system.

> *"The best way to know your neighbor is to talk to them one on one and see what can be done."*

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Local governments generally support consulates because they perceive this relationship as mutually beneficial, giving them opportunities to improve their cities and the lives of the people living in them through the successful social integration of all. There are topics that can be easily promoted because they help common goals, such as promoting business and commercial collaboration through nearshoring.

Mexican consulates are currently facing three main opportunity areas in their relationship with the state of California. One is to take advantage of any untapped potential markets or allies in positions of power that can help aid Mexican Americans and migrants. Second, consulates must balance their local interests with the federal government's and avoid contradictions. Lastly, they must ensure that anyone in need is

protected by the proper gender and cultural perspectives so that the services provided are adequate and trustworthy, promoting closer relations between consulates and communities.

Panelists
- Roberto Velasco, Chief Officer for North America, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Amb. Alicia G. Kerber-Palma, Consul General of Mexico in San Diego
- Amb. Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez, Consul General of Mexico in Los Angeles
- Pamela Starr, Professor of Practice, University of Southern California
- Amb. Tom Shannon, Senior International Policy Advisor, Arnold & Porter

Moderator: Rafael Fernandez de Castro, Director, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies

Educational Challenges for a More Integrated North America

Higher learning is generally sought to improve one's knowledge and access better opportunities. However, it is not as accessible or affordable as many would hope, limiting the opportunities of many people with the potential and desire to learn due to the lack of funds and other resources. Higher education institutions also face the challenge of their students being targeted by radical political movements and individuals who view them as moldable thinkers.

Binational cooperation to further internationalize higher education can be an effective way to lessen these challenges. Still, Mexico and the U.S. have achieved little progress in this regard due to the lack of funding. Still, there are several areas of opportunity to be seized.

The increasing access to and use of technology in Mexico has made education more generally attainable. The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) has been successful in increasing its number of admitted students yearly, but its budget, student investment, and motivation have stagnated, raising the need to diversify its sources of funding and find better motivations and aid for its students.

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The need to find better motivations for students, who are also present in the U.S., must lead decision makers to rethink the tools and skills considered useful for students to learn in an increasingly globalized world. In this sense, new education strategies should consider at least three aspects: education in advanced technology, a better understanding of the world as global citizens, and the promotion of equity. Successful education strategies would require not only the involvement of university administrators but also faculty and students, especially in terms of inclusion, research, and long-term planning.

"By giving people a reason to study in higher learning institutions, students and teachers will make an impact both locally and globally."

Students are now looking for an education that provides flexibility, understanding, practical experience, innovation opportunities, and applications that impact their local communities and beyond. Such an education would not only provide students with applicable abilities, but it would help universities reach a wider variety of students in terms of age, background, and initial skills.

The key element that can bring all these needs together is the entrepreneurship spirit, accompanied by proper sources of income and funds to facilitate access to education. Those that have the will to move forward and help those that need it will be able to reach the goals of a future with more available higher education through applicable programs and resources.

Panelists

- Arturo Cherbowski, General Director, Universia
- Fernando León, President, CETYS
- William Lee, Coordinator of International Relations and Affairs, UNAM
- Santiago García Álvarez, Chancellor Mexico City, Universidad Panamericana

Moderator: Tamara Cunningham, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Global Initiatives, UC San Diego

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Pathways to Advancing North American Regional Competitiveness Through Reshoring

Competitiveness is aspired to by all countries seeking to thrive in the global market. Governments constantly seek ways to advance their country's competitiveness and exploit its comparative advantages.

Reshoring and nearshoring are desirable strategies for becoming a more competitive global player. These strategies refer to the relocation of production and manufacturing chains to the country of origin or nearby/neighboring allies that pursue similar goals of economic growth in the world market, as has happened with the relocation of U.S. production chains to Canada and Mexico to face its competition with China through increased regional integration. All parties must be convinced of the benefits of consolidating these strategies.

The economic relationship between Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. has strengthened over the past few years. Coherent sanctions and bills have been negotiated and passed in the three countries to ensure fair trade and a stable regional partnership. For instance, the U.S. designed its Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act as incentives to maintain these supply chains within the region through considerations of fair trade and mutual benefits.

There are factors that must be negotiated constantly for the regional partnership to work. All three countries have agreed to work together and support each other to maximize their profits and ensure market stability. Resources and funding must be respected and treated fairly, ensuring that each country does its part from a position of good faith. And finally, Canada and Mexico must receive equal treatment from the U.S. These conditions are key to maintaining the interest of collaboration among the three parties.

While many advances have been made in mutual understanding and support to promote regional competitiveness, matters are pending to be addressed. Mexico has long suffered from a lack of discipline in its industrial policy when evaluating the

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"There's also always this danger in the North American
relationship that we fracture into two bilateral relationships, the U.S.-Mexico relationship and the U.S.-Canada relationship."

efficiency of subsidies and regulating domestic industries. The region also needs better incentives for investment in industries and nearshoring.

The competition between China and the U.S. has brought upon a pivotal moment for regional integration. There are three points that the three countries need to work out in order for this junction to properly be maintained and sustained. Regulations need to be coherent and, thus, negotiated upon the three countries. All parties should have a say on the use of resources and investment. And stronger trilateral processes of coordination and cooperation around national security concerns for new technologies should be developed.

Panelists
- Luz María de la Mora, Non-resident Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council
- Richard Kiy, President, Institute of the Americas
- Meredith Lilly, Associate Professor and Simon Reisman Chair in International Economic Policy, Carleton University

Moderator: Caroline Freund, Dean, UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy

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Beyond Borders: Future Paths for Security Policies

Security has been a main concern among the populations of Mexico and the U.S., making it a central theme in the presidential campaigns of both countries.

Mexico's security and policing measures during AMLO's term have been partially effective. While the government reports a successful reduction in the number of homicides, these numbers also report an increase in other crimes, especially in disappearances, which has raised questions on whether homicides have indeed decreased or were just categorized differently. Policing has been increasingly militarized, limiting the improvement of actual police forces, which are heavily corrupt and underfunded. Political violence and interference from organized crime have been rising. Local governments in Mexico are not prepared to face the current crime levels, and the divisions between federal and local jurisdictions remain unclear.

The government continues to prioritize militarizing public security over strengthening the police. President AMLO is appointing the military more new responsibilities that it can handle but that it welcomes as they represent more political power.

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The two main presidential candidates in Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez, seem well-intended but have not been able to propose a coherent enough security strategy. They have not explained how they will help local enforcement or deal with the increased militarization.

In the U.S., security concerns revolve around drug use, bringing special attention to drug traffic at the border with Mexico. Cocaine and heroin have long been the drugs most commonly smuggled across the border into the U.S. Still, fentanyl has taken the most attention recently due to its lethality and portability.

"With the two countries going after both sides of the security issue, there is a chance for a more open cooperation."

Alternatives can still be implemented to reduce insecurity on both sides of the border. On the one hand, Mexico must improve its rule of law and accountability. On the other hand, the U.S. must make further efforts to dismantle money laundering networks and tackle arms trafficking into Mexico.

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Panelists

- Celina Realuyo, Professor of Practice, William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University
- John Feeley, Executive Director, Center for Media Integrity of the Americas; Former U.S. Ambassador to Panama
- David Shirk, Professor, Political Science and International Relations, University of San Diego
- Sandra Ley, Coordinator of the Security Program, Mexico Evalúa

Moderator: Cecilia Farfan, Senior Fellow, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies

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Who Will Be Mexico's First Female President, and What Will It Mean?

The upcoming elections in Mexico will be the first in which two women are in line to become the first female president of a North American country, representing a historic moment for democracy and female representation. It might also mean that the expectations and scrutiny will be higher during the presidency of whoever is elected, especially in terms of female rights and policies directed towards women.

Their participation in the presidential race is expected to help normalize and bring more women into positions of power. Mexico has progressed in terms of female rights and fair treatment in the workplace and at home for women, but their involvement in positions of power and authority remains unequal. Female presidential candidates can help inspire more women to pursue these positions.

"Although both candidates have remained ambiguous in their stance on feminism, their election can be beneficial for women through other channels."

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However, the election of a female president may also come with challenges. With the most vivid and present picture of women in power being that of motherhood, some people may expect a female president to be a caring figure too soft to make certain decisions while in office. At the same time, if female presidents do not show a caring soft side to the people, then their femininity is brought into question. This has happened before to women in power and has led to them receiving nicknames that reflect the hard, cold nature of their personality or actions, such as referring to Margaret Thatcher as the "Ice Woman" or the famous "Iron Lady" because of her "ruthlessness and cold exterior".

The outcome of the elections will achieve an important marker in women's history. Still, the two female candidates, Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez, will have to face different challenges based on their proposals, ideologies, and policies. In any case, the first female president in Mexico will need to show that they are representative of all by being down to earth and showing restraint when required to stop the institutional erosion that has taken place in Mexico over the last six years. If she wins, Claudia Sheinbaum will need to prove that she is not a puppet of Morena and AMLO, while Xóchitl Gálvez will need to prove that she can effectively represent all parties in her coalition.

Both candidates have been keeping their particular agendas close to their chests, leaving much to speculation. But they have been open on how they are different from each other. Claudia Sheinbaum seeks to build a country with a great shared wealth and equality between men and women regardless of their background. Xóchitl Gálvez seeks to decrease polarization between the masses. Their goals are admirable as of this moment, but their strategies do not appear to be sound. Only time will tell if the national polarization finds reconciliation.

Panelists

- Kathleen Bruhn, Professor Political Science, UC Santa Barbara
- Diana Alarcón González, Chief Advisor and International Affairs Coordinator for Claudia Sheinbaum
- Leonardo Curzio, Researcher, CISAN-UNAM
- Javier Tello, Political Analyst

Moderator: Catheryn Camacho, Associate Director, UC San Diego Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies

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The Jeffrey Davidow Good Neighbor Award

The 2024 Jeffrey Davidow Good Neighbor Award was presented to Laura Díez Barroso Azcárraga and Carlos Laviada Ocejo in recognition of their exceptional contributions to U.S.-Mexico mobility in the Tijuana-San Diego region. Their initiatives with Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacífico and Cross Border Xpress have revitalized the area by enhancing connectivity between Mexico and California.

Laura Díez Barroso Azcárraga, a prominent businesswoman both in Mexico and internationally, began her career in media and magazine publishing. In 2006, she and a group of investors acquired a controlling stake in Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacífico (GAP), which operates fourteen airports in Mexico and Jamaica. As Chairwoman of GAP, she established Fundación GAP to support the education and well-being of the company's employees, families, and communities.

Carlos Laviada Ocejo entered the business world through Mexico's burgeoning auto parts and car dealership industries in the early 1970s. Later, he became a leading real estate investor in Mexico and the U.S. In the 2000s, he co-founded LCA Capital, a family office and investment firm that played a pivotal role in several companies, including the successful public offerings of GAP. In 2006, Mr. Laviada was one of the visionaries and key investors behind the development and construction of the Cross Border Xpress (CBX).

The CBX is an innovative transborder project and a symbol of binational collaboration and innovation between Mexico and the U.S. Serving over 4 million passengers annually, it acts as a secondary international airport for San Diego. It represents a significant private investment in public infrastructure and serves as an economic engine for the Tijuana-San Diego region.

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Thank you!