

# U.S.-Mexico Forum 2026

REPORT

## Introduction

UC San Diego’s Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies (USMEX) hosted the 2026 U.S.-Mexico Forum on April 19-21 with the goal of fostering deeper collaboration between the two countries and across the North American region.



The 2026 U.S.-Mexico Forum convened at a moment of profound transformation in international affairs. Long-standing assumptions about globalization, economic integration, and geopolitical stability are being reconsidered as the international system undergoes a period of reordering characterized by greater uncertainty, heightened

competition, and the emergence of new centers of influence. Yet this changing landscape also creates opportunities for dialogue, innovation, and renewed cooperation among countries seeking to shape a more resilient and prosperous future.

Against this backdrop, the Forum brought together policymakers, diplomats, business leaders, researchers, and practitioners as moments of transition require spaces where diverse perspectives can converge, allowing ideas to be debated openly through sustained engagement.

This report summarizes the Forum’s dialogues. It is the result of a collaborative process and does not necessarily reflect the views of any individual participant or the institutions with which they are affiliated.

## Acknowledgements

As global dynamics become increasingly uncertain, dialogue is more important than ever for strengthening North American cooperation and preparing for the challenges ahead. In this spirit, we convened the sixth edition of the U.S.-Mexico Forum, and for the first time, brought this conversation to Mexico City.

I am especially grateful to Chancellor Pradeep Khosla for his unwavering commitment to strengthening UC San Diego's relationship with Mexico. His vision of positioning the university as a hub for international dialogue is instrumental in advancing the mission of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to our sponsors, whose continued support makes this Forum possible: Alianza MX, Baker McKenzie, Cerámica Suro, Cross Border Xpress, Facultad de Ingeniería UNAM, Fundación Coppel, Grupo Aeroportuario del Pacífico, Grupo Bimbo, Grupo Enesa, HSBC, International Community Foundation, Palacio de Hierro, Palacio de Minería, Pérez de Acha e Ibarra de Rueda, Pùblika, Saavi Energía, Smart Border Coalition, Tsuru, Universidad Panamericana and Volaris.

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These conversations throughout the Forum reaffirmed that the ties connecting Mexico, the United States, and Canada extend beyond governments and are sustained by shared interests, institutions, businesses, universities, and millions of people whose relationships continue to strengthen North America. I look forward to building on this momentum and provide a space where diverse perspectives come together.

*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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## The Decline of Liberal World Order: What Comes Next?

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was conceived as much more than a trade agreement. In the aftermath of the Cold War, it was viewed as a historic reconciliation project and as the foundation for a new North American community capable of addressing shared economic, political, and security challenges.

As the United States, Mexico, and Canada prepare for future revisions of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), uncertainty has emerged as one of the principal concerns. Political pressures in the United States, particularly growing protectionist sentiment, have complicated the regional environment. While protectionist policies are often presented as mechanisms for job creation, their long-term effectiveness remains uncertain. Maintaining stable rules, extending long-term commitments to regional integration, and avoiding disruptions to successful sectors such as automotive manufacturing and pharmaceuticals will be critical.

The regional debate is increasingly influenced by three major global transformations: the rise of China, the rapid development of artificial intelligence, and the political legacy of Donald Trump. For decades, U.S. foreign policy largely emphasized international partnerships, collective security, economic openness, and the provision of global public goods. More recently, a more transactional and confrontational approach has emerged, contributing to an erosion of trust in the international system. Although political polarization has intensified, the long-term direction of U.S. policy remains uncertain, particularly as future electoral cycles and institutional checks shape the post-Trump political landscape.

*“Economics and diplomacy win-win defined North America. Now it is a zero-sum game.”*

Despite frequent discussions about the decline of U.S. power, economic indicators suggest that the United States will remain one of the world’s dominant powers due to its strengths in technology, artificial intelligence, energy production, agriculture, and innovation. At the same time, other actors, including China, India, the European Union, and a growing number of middle powers, are playing increasingly influential roles in shaping the international order. In this evolving environment, Mexico and Canada must determine how to position themselves not only within North America but also within emerging global networks and institutions.

China presents both a challenge and a necessity for North America. Chinese economic strategy increasingly prioritizes production, exports, security, and the strengthening of state institutions. This model generates substantial trade surpluses that are invested globally and directly affect North American competitiveness. At the same time,

because the United States and China together account for roughly 40 percent of the global economy, cooperation between the two countries remains essential for addressing shared challenges such as climate change and global economic stability.

Artificial intelligence represents another transformative force. Like previous general-purpose technologies such as electricity and the internet, its full economic benefits are likely to emerge only over several decades. Productivity gains depend not only on technological innovation but also on successful adaptation. For Mexico, the ability to capitalize on artificial intelligence will depend heavily on investments in education, human capital, and international collaboration. Understanding how AI reshapes industries and integrating it effectively into economic activities will be essential for maintaining competitiveness.

Unlike previous energy transitions, which largely involved adding new sources of energy, the current transition requires the substitution of existing systems alongside technological innovation. Progress will depend on pragmatic approaches that focus on achievable areas of cooperation rather than attempting to resolve all climate and energy issues simultaneously. Coordination among governments, technological development, and infrastructure investment will be necessary to balance economic growth, energy security, and environmental objectives.

Ultimately, the international system is undergoing profound transformation and is unlikely to return to previous patterns of globalization. North America retains substantial advantages and could continue serving as a pillar of the emerging global order. However, realizing that potential will require each country to address its domestic weaknesses while strengthening regional cooperation.



**In conversation with:**

- Robert B. Zoellick, Former U.S. Trade Representative & World Bank President
- Rafael Fernandez de Castro, Director USMEX | Aaron Feldman Family Chancellor’s Endowed Chair in U.S.-Mexican Studies in Memory of David Feldman

## Energy Transition in North America

Energy security has become one of today’s defining geopolitical challenges. The ongoing conflict involving Iran triggered what may become the largest energy crisis in modern history, with potentially greater consequences than the 1973 oil crisis. Disruptions to oil transportation, damaged production infrastructure, and bottlenecks in global shipping have significantly reduced available supply, while strategic petroleum reserves released by major economies have already been largely depleted. The resulting supply shock is expected to increase energy prices, reduce consumption, and place a disproportionate burden on lower-income countries, potentially leading to recessions across parts of Asia and the developing world.

The current crisis extends beyond immediate disruptions, as its underlying political causes remain unresolved and negotiations have made limited progress. Energy markets continue to respond not only to physical supply conditions but also to expectations regarding diplomatic developments, creating substantial volatility.

*“Natural gas is America’s superpower.”*

These developments have fundamentally reshaped the global understanding of energy security. Whereas recent years emphasized rapid decarbonization, natural gas has re-emerged as a strategic fuel capable of simultaneously supporting energy security, industrial competitiveness, and the energy transition. Clean energy sources remain essential but are not yet sufficiently reliable or affordable to meet rapidly growing electricity demand on their own.

North America occupies a uniquely advantageous position in this evolving landscape. The United States has become the world’s largest producer and exporter of natural gas, while Canada and Mexico also have abundant energy resources. Together, the region is one of the few in the world capable of meeting its own energy needs while supplying international allies.

Mexico holds a particularly strategic position within the North American energy system. It is the only country able to import U.S. natural gas directly through an extensive cross-border pipeline network at prices far below those prevailing in global liquefied natural gas (LNG) markets. This competitive advantage strengthens Mexico’s manufacturing sector and highlights the importance of protecting the integrated North American energy market during future USMCA negotiations.

Despite abundant energy resources, infrastructure has emerged as the principal constraint on future growth. Expanding pipelines, electricity transmission lines, and energy distribution networks has become increasingly expensive and time-consuming,

with major transmission projects often requiring five to ten years to complete. Border states in northern Mexico are rapidly increasing electricity generation capacity, particularly through natural gas, but continued investment in infrastructure will determine whether the region can fully capitalize on its energy advantages.

Artificial intelligence is expected to accelerate electricity demand dramatically, particularly through the rapid expansion of data centers. After decades of relatively stable electricity demand, power consumption in the United States is now increasing at an unprecedented pace. For technology companies investing in AI infrastructure, access to abundant, reliable, and affordable energy has become more important than the cost of electricity itself.

Mexico's ability to benefit from these opportunities depends heavily on creating a stable and competitive investment environment. Resolving energy-related disputes under the USMCA, strengthening legal certainty, modernizing the national electricity grid, and establishing clear long-term regulatory frameworks will be essential for attracting capital, technology, and world-class operators. Energy investments typically require planning horizons of twenty years or more, making policy stability and investor confidence indispensable. Greater collaboration with the private sector will also be necessary to strengthen Pemex's financial position and expand domestic production capacity.

Ultimately, the emerging consensus is that energy security is defined by the accessibility, reliability, affordability, and sustainability of available energy resources. As global demand continues to rise and geopolitical uncertainty persists, North America possesses an extraordinary opportunity to consolidate itself as the world's leading energy region.



**Speakers**

- Tania Ortiz Mena, President, Sempra Infrastructure
- Carlos Pascual, Senior Vice President, Head of Geopolitics and International Affairs, S&P

**Moderator:** Mauricio del Valle, CEO and Board Member, Saavi Energia

## U.S. Midterm Elections Overview and Latino Political Power

Latinos have become one of the most influential demographic and political forces in the United States. Nearly one in five Americans is Latino and nearly 40 million Mexican Americans live in the country. Despite these realities, Latino voters continue to be treated as a single, homogeneous group whose primary concern is immigration. In practice, Latino political preferences are far more diverse.

Although immigration remains an important issue, it serves largely as a measure of whether political leaders understand the broader contributions and lived experiences of Latino communities. Economic security, wages, inflation, and opportunities for upward mobility consistently rank above immigration as voters' main concerns. Donald Trump expanded Republican support among Latino voters by emphasizing inflation and the cost of living, while many Latino voters simultaneously supported stronger border security but also expected fair and humane treatment of immigrants. This demonstrates that Latino views on immigration are more nuanced than is often portrayed by political parties.

The Latino electorate has become increasingly competitive. Approximately one-third of Latino voters consistently support Democrats, another quarter to one-third identify with Republicans, while roughly one-third remain persuadable and frequently determine electoral outcomes. Many voters who supported Trump in 2024 have become dissatisfied because economic conditions have not improved as expected, while others remain disappointed with both major parties. As a result, Latino voters are likely to play a decisive role in the 2026 midterm elections.

Political parties have been slow to recognize these changes. Democrats can no longer assume automatic Latino support, while Republicans have demonstrated that meaningful gains are possible by addressing economic concerns. At the same time, both parties have often engaged Latino communities only during election campaigns rather than maintaining continuous dialogue. Building lasting relationships, acknowledging Latino contributions, and addressing everyday concerns will be essential if either party hopes to secure long-term political support.

Political representation has improved over time but continues to lag far behind demographic realities. Hispanic representation in Congress, presidential cabinets, diplomatic appointments, and other leadership positions remains disproportionately low considering Latinos' share of the U.S. population.

*“We must stop accepting the options given to us; we must design the options as well.”*

Young Latino voters represent an especially important emerging constituency.

Compared with previous generations, they are less attached to traditional party identities and more likely to evaluate individual candidates based on authenticity, competence, and responsiveness to community concerns. Many continue to believe strongly in the American Dream, seeking leaders who can help create economic opportunities, strengthen families, and expand pathways for social mobility.

The diversity within Latino communities is another critical factor shaping contemporary politics. Latinos are not a monolithic voting bloc but encompass multiple national origins, migration histories, and regional experiences that influence political priorities differently across states. Nevertheless, several common values consistently emerge, including strong commitments to family, hard work, faith, and improving opportunities for future generations. Understanding these shared values while recognizing important differences among Latino subgroups will become increasingly important for political campaigns and public policy.

The growing Latino population also has significant implications for U.S.-Mexico relations. As successive generations integrate into American society while maintaining strong family and cultural ties across borders, Latino communities increasingly influence bilateral perceptions and policy debates. At the same time, participants noted concern over the deterioration of Mexico's public image within the United States and argued that Latino organizations should become more effective in shaping public narratives and responding to political attacks directed toward Mexican communities.



Speakers

- Stephanie Valencia, Co-Founder & CEO, Equis
- Mary Ann Gómez Orta, President and CEO of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI)

**Moderator:** Amb. Nathalie Rayes, Former United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia, Ret. | Distinguished Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council

## The Role of Middle Powers in an Uncertain Multipolar World

The international system is increasingly characterized by uncertainty regarding the norms, institutions, and balances of power that will define the next global order. While some established structures, including regional organizations and multilateral institutions, are expected to endure, there is growing concern that the emerging environment is becoming more transactional, less constrained by international law, and more accepting of the use of force.

The rise of emerging economies and the redistribution of economic and political capabilities have created a more diffuse international system in which power is increasingly dispersed among a larger number of actors. Countries such as Indonesia illustrate this transformation, having expanded their economic and diplomatic influence considerably over recent decades. In this context, some argue that the international system is entering a “middle power moment”.

*“Multipolarity means having multiple options.”*

Middle powers differ considerably in their ambitions and strategies. Some maintain close ties to alliance systems led by major powers, while others prioritize strategic autonomy and seek to diversify their international partnerships. For many countries in the Global South, multipolarity is attractive precisely because it reduces dependence on any single external actor.

The accelerating process of geopolitical realignment has encouraged new forms of cooperation among middle powers. For states closely linked to the United States, including Canada and Mexico, the changing international context has generated debates regarding their identity, strategic priorities, and role within an evolving global order.

Some middle powers aspire to expand their influence and eventually become global powers, while others maintain more limited ambitions and focus on preserving flexibility within existing regional arrangements. India represents an example of a state that combines middle-power characteristics with great-power aspirations, supported by its demographic scale, economic growth, and strategic considerations. Mexico, by contrast, has often pursued a more restrained approach, emphasizing cooperation and pragmatic engagement rather than aspiring to major-power status.

Coalitions of middle powers have historically played meaningful roles in shaping international norms and institutions, particularly when acting collectively. Negotiations surrounding maritime governance, for example, demonstrated the capacity of medium-sized countries from both developed and developing regions to influence the creation of global rules despite resistance from larger powers.

The concept of world order increasingly encompasses not only global institutions but also the interaction among regional orders. Today, many regions possess influential middle powers capable of shaping local norms, institutions, and patterns of interaction. Southeast Asia offers a notable example of this phenomenon. The experience of Southeast Asia highlights the importance of sovereign equality as a foundation for regional cooperation, regardless of size.

In America, these dynamics present distinct challenges and opportunities. Canada remains deeply integrated with the United States in economic and security matters, limiting its strategic autonomy in certain areas while reinforcing its commitment to multilateralism and international cooperation. Mexico’s position is more ambiguous, having opportunities to serve as a bridge between North America and Latin America while also facing constraints associated with geographic proximity to the United States. Brazil appears more inclined toward regional leadership and broader geopolitical ambitions.

In a more competitive and multipolar world, states that cultivate diverse partnerships, avoid excessive dependence, and engage constructively with like-minded countries may be better positioned to shape regional and global outcomes. As the international order continues to evolve, middle powers are likely to play an increasingly important role in determining whether the emerging system becomes more cooperative, fragmented, or contested.



**Speakers**

- Dino Patti Djalal, Former Ambassador of Indonesia to the United States
- Amb. Federico Salas Lotfe, Former Mexican Ambassador to India
- Pierre Alarie, Former Canadian Ambassador to Mexico

**Moderator:** Ana Covarrubias, President, El Colegio de México

## The “Donroe Doctrine:” Potential Impact in the Americas

The Americas are undergoing a profound transformation in the principles that have traditionally sustained hemispheric cooperation. A decade ago, regional summits reflected optimism about deeper integration, democratic governance, and the free movement of people, capital, and goods. Today, however, many of those foundations have weakened as political polarization, declining public trust, and shifting domestic priorities have undermined regional consensus.

Much of this transformation has been shaped by changes in U.S. leadership. While many of the values that historically underpinned inter-American cooperation remain present within American institutions, the current administration has adopted a more unilateral approach to foreign policy. Traditional commitments to multilateral diplomacy and regional partnerships have given way to a narrower focus on issues such as migration, organized crime, energy, and trade, while the willingness of neighboring countries to follow U.S. leadership has steadily eroded.

The current situation cannot be explained solely by developments in the United States. Latin America itself has become increasingly fragmented, lacking a common regional vision and experiencing growing ideological polarization. Democratic backsliding has

*“A bad agreement is better than a good fight.”*

emerged as one of the region’s principal challenges, not through military coups as in previous decades, but through the rise of democratically elected leaders with increasingly illiberal and authoritarian tendencies.

Security has increasingly displaced other priorities within the hemispheric agenda. Whereas previous regional discussions emphasized trade, labor standards, environmental protection, and economic integration, current debates are dominated by migration, organized crime, drug trafficking, and border security. Although these concerns require effective responses, an excessive focus on security risks marginalizing equally important issues such as education, public health, water management, inequality, and long-term economic development. Addressing organized crime requires not only the use of force but also stronger law enforcement institutions and a broader understanding of the structural conditions that sustain criminal networks.

Despite these challenges, important mechanisms for regional dialogue continue to exist. Institutions established over previous decades, including the Summit of the Americas, North American cooperation mechanisms, and other multilateral forums, may have weakened but have not disappeared entirely. Preserving and revitalizing these spaces for dialogue remains essential, particularly at a time when political decision-making has become highly centralized. Civil society, academic institutions,

and non-governmental organizations therefore have an increasingly important role in sustaining hemispheric dialogue.

Democracy in the Americas has evolved beyond the simple organization of free elections. Citizens increasingly expect democratic governments to provide security, economic opportunity, and effective public services. The widespread dissatisfaction throughout the region reflects not necessarily a rejection of democracy itself but rather frustration with governments' limited capacity to meet these expectations. Weak state capacity has contributed to the rise of populist leaders.

Given the high degree of economic and political integration across North America, governments must identify spaces for constructive dialogue while defending their national interests. Mexico's recent engagement with the United States illustrates how sustained negotiation can help manage difficult bilateral relationships without abandoning core principles. Building coalitions with unexpected partners and maintaining open channels of communication may become increasingly important as the international environment grows more uncertain.

Ultimately, the hemisphere faces a broader challenge of rebuilding trust. The liberal international order established after the Second World War remains recoverable, but restoring confidence in institutions and partnerships will require sustained commitment over many years.



**Speakers**

- Luis Guillermo Solís, former President of Costa Rica
- Tom Shannon, Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
- Kori Schake, Senior Fellow and Director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute (AEI)

**Moderator:** Jose Antonio Meade Kuribreña, USMEX Board Chair and Professor Universidad Panamericana

## Mexican Energy Sector Outlook

Mexico's current energy policy is framed as part of a broader transformation initiated in 2018. According to this vision, previous decades left the country with an increasingly fragile energy sector characterized by declining public investment, reduced oil and natural gas production, growing indebtedness of state-owned enterprises, deteriorating refining capacity, and the gradual dismantling of strategic value chains. The current administration argues that reversing these trends requires rebuilding the productive capacity of the State while establishing a new institutional framework capable of guaranteeing energy sovereignty, security, and social justice.

Central elements of this framework include restoring the State's planning role, reinforcing the strategic functions of Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) and the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), creating new legal frameworks for emerging energy sectors such as biofuels and geothermal energy, and establishing a new national regulatory authority. The objective is to provide long-term certainty for both public and private investment while maintaining public leadership over the country's strategic energy resources.

*“Sovereignty, energy security, and energy justice with clear rules.”*

Electricity generation constitutes one of the government's main priorities. The administration launched an ambitious expansion plan that combines new combined-cycle plants, modernization of hydroelectric facilities, renewable energy projects, cogeneration, and expanded electricity storage capacity. By 2030, Mexico aims to add more than 32,000 megawatts of new generating capacity while increasing the share of electricity generated from clean sources from 24 to 38 percent. Regulatory reforms are also intended to facilitate distributed generation, on-site self-consumption, energy storage, and continued operation of the wholesale electricity market under simplified permitting procedures.

The modernization of transmission and distribution infrastructure forms another key component of the strategy. Hundreds of transmission projects and tens of thousands of distribution upgrades are planned to expand grid coverage and improve reliability throughout the country. These investments are intended to support universal electricity access while providing the infrastructure necessary for continued industrial growth and greater integration of renewable energy sources.

In the hydrocarbons sector, policy focuses on strengthening Pemex's finances while stabilizing domestic production. The government has reduced the company's debt, improved its financial balance, and increased payments to suppliers. Production targets

seek to maintain crude oil output at approximately 1.8 million barrels per day while expanding refining capacity to increase the production of higher value-added petroleum products. Additional efforts include raising natural gas production, evaluating the responsible development of unconventional gas resources through expert technical assessments, and expanding mixed public-private exploration and production projects.

The government also seeks to recover Mexico's petrochemical and fertilizer industries as complementary sources of revenue for Pemex while contributing to broader national development objectives. Investments in petrochemical complexes and fertilizer production are intended to achieve self-sufficiency in urea by 2030, generate export surpluses, and support agricultural productivity through increased domestic fertilizer availability. These initiatives are part of the broader "Plan México," which emphasizes rebuilding the country's productive industrial base.

Energy transition remains a central pillar of the strategy, supported by both environmental and economic considerations. Alongside significant investments in renewable electricity generation, the government is promoting geothermal energy, electricity storage technologies, and cogeneration projects while exploring opportunities to convert abandoned oil wells into geothermal facilities.

Energy is presented as a social right rather than a market privilege, justifying the renewed public role of state-owned enterprises. Rural electrification programs, including solar rooftop systems and efficient cooking technologies for underserved communities, seek to achieve universal household access to electricity by 2030 while reducing regional inequalities in energy access.

**In conversation with:**

- Luz Elena Gonzalez Escobar, Secretary, Mexico's Ministry of Energy
- Mariana Cordera, USMEX Board Member



## Mexico-China Relations Outlook

Rather than emphasizing electoral competition, the Chinese political system prioritizes social stability, economic development, and national cohesion while maintaining clearly defined boundaries concerning territorial integrity and the authority of the Communist Party. The Chinese constitution refers to the country as a "people's democratic dictatorship." Given China's size, long historical continuity, and relative isolation from the West until the nineteenth century, many argue that applying conventional Western political categories may provide only a limited understanding of its institutions and policymaking processes.

China has developed an extensive consultative system designed to collect opinions, grievances, and policy recommendations from different sectors of society. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and its local counterparts operate throughout provinces, municipalities, communities, and state-owned enterprises, creating channels through which citizens and organizations can communicate concerns and influence policy discussions. At the same time, tensions remain regarding the scope of political openness, dissent, and participation.

China's economic model combines strong state leadership with intense market competition. Government policies provide strategic direction, incentives, and support for targeted industries, while domestic firms compete vigorously with one another. This approach has been evident in the country's technological transformation. In 2015, China launched the "Made in China 2025" initiative to accelerate the transition from a low-cost manufacturing economy toward one driven by advanced technologies and innovation. Within a decade, China had dramatically expanded its scientific and technological capabilities, graduating more doctoral students in science and engineering than the United States and establishing global leadership positions in sectors such as solar panels, electric vehicles, batteries, and drones.

*"North America should not unite to turn its back on China, but to benefit from what it offers."*

China's technological progress is frequently attributed to a combination of cultural and institutional factors, including high levels of discipline, strong savings rates, substantial investments in education, and a highly competitive meritocratic system. Inspired in part by longstanding Confucian traditions, educational and professional advancement is strongly tied to performance in competitive examinations. The national university entrance examination remains a defining feature of this system, generating intense competition among students and institutions. Similar competitive dynamics characterize many industries, where numerous firms compete aggressively, consolidate, or exit the market, leaving only the most efficient and innovative companies prepared to compete internationally. State subsidies and industrial policies reinforce this

environment, helping firms achieve scale and technological sophistication.

The growing importance of China has significant implications for North America as it has become an indispensable economic partner for all three countries, serving as a major supplier of intermediate goods, components, and advanced technologies while also viewing North America as one of the world's most attractive markets.

Rather than treating China solely as a competitor, North America should seek to strengthen internal integration while maintaining openness toward the most dynamic sectors of the global economy. A more coordinated North American region could leverage its economic strengths while engaging constructively with China's technological and industrial capabilities. The objective would not be to isolate China but to position North America more effectively within global value chains and benefit from emerging opportunities in innovation and advanced manufacturing.

Mexico's recent trade and industrial policies reflect this approach. Tariffs imposed on certain imports have been justified not as instruments of economic closure but as mechanisms to address persistent trade imbalances and encourage a transition from simple buyer-seller relationships toward deeper productive partnerships. The broader objective is to move up global value chains, attract investment that transfers technology and technical capabilities, and strengthen domestic industrial development. In this vision, foreign investment is expected to contribute not only capital but also knowledge, innovation, and greater integration into higher value-added activities, while preserving Mexico's longstanding commitment to economic openness.



**In conversation with:**

- Amb. Jesus Seade, Embassy of Mexico in China
- Barbara Pickering, Head of Business Management and Corporate Governance Mexico and LAM, HSBC

## The Panda in the Room: China's Global Ambitions

China perceives the current international context as a period of transition characterized by uncertainty, competition, and opportunity. From this perspective, the post-Cold War order, defined by the predominance of a single power supported by international institutions, is coming to an end, while a new global arrangement has yet to emerge. This transitional phase is seen not only as a source of instability but also as an opportunity for China to expand its influence and advance long-term national objectives.

*“China does not seek to replace the United States; it seeks to displace it.”*

China has developed a comprehensive international strategy aimed at consolidating its position as a leading economic, manufacturing, technological, and military power. However, its ambitions are frequently portrayed in Beijing not

as an effort to establish global domination, but as a means of securing autonomy, reducing vulnerability to external pressure, and creating an international environment for growth, innovation, and prosperity. Chinese leaders seek greater international acceptance of their political model and aspire for their system of governance to be regarded as a legitimate alternative to liberal democratic capitalism. China's development model is often presented as rooted in a distinct civilizational tradition that combines elements of socialism, nationalism, and longstanding cultural practices, particularly those associated with Confucian values and historical continuity.

Latin America occupies an important position within China's broader global strategy. Geopolitically, Beijing seeks to reduce diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, several of whose historical partners are in Latin America and the Caribbean, while also expanding its influence in a region traditionally associated with U.S. predominance. Economically, China views Latin America as a source of agricultural products, critical minerals, and other strategic resources that complement its industrial and technological priorities. Chinese activities in the region have become more sophisticated over time, emphasizing long-term investments in sectors such as electric vehicles, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, processing industries, and digital surveillance technologies.

Efforts by the United States to reduce China's presence in the Western Hemisphere have intensified since the first Trump administration. However, such efforts have produced mixed results. International security narratives promoted by Washington often differ from the concerns that dominate policy debates in Latin America, where issues such as organized crime and domestic insecurity are frequently more salient.

The evolving strategic competition between the United States and China is increasingly viewed as a defining feature of contemporary international politics. Nevertheless, the relationship remains characterized by fluctuations. Periods of diplomatic engagement and commercial accommodation coexist with intensifying competition in areas such as advanced technologies and influence in third regions.

China's relationship with Russia illustrates another dimension of its approach to global affairs. Although the two countries avoid formally describing their partnership as an alliance, they often coordinate policies and share broad objectives, particularly regarding the promotion of a more multipolar international order. Nevertheless, China appears reluctant to formalize an alliance structure that could impose economic or reputational costs, preferring instead a pragmatic and transactional partnership.

Chinese policymakers seek to establish leadership throughout entire value chains. Given the scale of China's economy and industrial base, many analysts argue that the United States alone may find it difficult to compete effectively across sectors, providing an additional strategic rationale for deeper North American cooperation. Canada remains significantly integrated with the Chinese economy in several sectors, while Mexico's industrial profile makes it more directly competitive with Chinese manufacturing.



**Speakers**

- Joseph Torigian, Associate Professor, SIS | Global Inquiry, American University
- Natalia Cote-Muñoz, Co-Founder & CEO, Vantage Point Strategies
- Evan Medeiros, Penner Family Chair in Asian Studies and the Cling Family Senior Fellow in US-China Relations, Georgetown University

**Moderator:** Javier Tello, Journalist

## The Blue Economy: Achieving Marine Prosperity

Climate change, energy security, shifting hegemonies, and economic transformations are unfolding simultaneously, creating what many describe as a true change of era. In this context, environmental issues have become deeply intertwined with questions of economic resilience, industrial policy, and international cooperation.

Energy transitions occupy a central place in these debates. Recent disruptions to global supply chains and concerns regarding maritime chokepoints have highlighted the vulnerabilities associated with continued dependence on fossil fuels. Events affecting strategic corridors such as the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil and gas supplies transit, underscore the extent to which energy security remains exposed to geopolitical tensions. These developments have renewed discussions regarding the need for countries to diversify their energy matrices, accelerate the deployment of renewable energy sources, improve energy efficiency, and explore alternative technologies, including nuclear energy.

China has emerged as an important actor in this transition through its substantial investments in renewable energy technologies and clean industrial sectors. At the same time, climate change continues to impose growing pressures on governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reconsider prevailing patterns of production and consumption.

Businesses are increasingly recognized as key stakeholders in addressing environmental challenges. Circular economy initiatives, sustainable production systems, and innovative technological solutions are gaining prominence as mechanisms to reconcile economic growth with environmental protection. Waste management illustrates the scale of this challenge. Countries generating large volumes of solid waste face opportunities not only to increase recycling rates but also to recover energy from residual materials and create new productive activities linked to resource reuse.

*“We can no longer afford to emit CO<sub>2</sub> without limits.”*

Mexico’s environmental agenda increasingly intersects with industrial and economic policy objectives. Environmental authorities work alongside energy and economic agencies to identify sectors where emissions reductions can be most effectively achieved while simultaneously strengthening domestic production capabilities. Transportation represents a particularly important area, given its substantial contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Greater coordination among government agencies, investors, and local communities is essential for balancing economic growth with conservation priorities, particularly in sectors such as mining, tourism, and real estate development.

Environmental cooperation has also become an important dimension of North American relations. Despite broader geopolitical uncertainties, collaboration between Mexico and the United States in environmental matters has remained constructive. Recent bilateral initiatives include agreements to improve water quality, strengthen ecosystem conservation, and protect emblematic species that traverse national boundaries.

Mexico’s extensive ecosystems, marine environments, and protected natural areas represent both ecological assets and opportunities for sustainable tourism and regional development. International commitments to expand protected areas by 2030 have encouraged discussions regarding innovative conservation mechanisms, including biological corridors and voluntary conservation schemes. Large-scale restoration projects targeting some of Mexico’s most important river systems show that rivers should no longer function as repositories for untreated waste.

Public entities should be subject to the same standards and accountability mechanisms applied to private companies. In cases involving environmental damage, remediation and compensation measures are considered necessary components of responsible governance.



**In conversation with:**

- Alicia Bárcena, Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources
- Agustín Coppel, CEO, Grupo Coppel

## Immigration Landscape in the U.S.

Migrants arrive under distinct circumstances shaped by economic conditions, violence, family aspirations, and structural inequalities in their countries of origin. Yet contemporary political discourse often reduces these experiences to broad stereotypes, overlooking the human dimension of migration and the individual trajectories that define migrant communities.

Reports of increasingly aggressive immigration enforcement practices, including detentions carried out by heavily armed agents, raids near schools, workplaces, and immigration courts, and the detention of parents of U.S.-citizen children, have generated widespread anxiety within immigrant communities. Families have adopted precautionary measures, including limiting mobility, avoiding public spaces, and developing emergency plans in case of detention.

These dynamics have produced broader social consequences extending beyond legal status. Educational attainment, community participation, and children's emotional well-being are increasingly affected by an environment in which migrants are often socially invisible and politically marginalized. Churches, traditionally viewed as safe spaces, have experienced declining attendance as many families seek to minimize exposure. Family separation remains a significant humanitarian concern.

*“The real solution is not to look for the next Dolores Huerta, but to recognize the thousands of Dolores Huertas that already exist and give them their place.”*

At the same time, prevailing narratives frequently underestimate migrants' contributions to American society even though they contribute more in taxes and economic activity than they receive in public benefits, while filling labor shortages in sectors that struggle to attract native-born workers. Demographic trends suggest that the United States will increasingly face labor shortages associated with population aging. Confronting misinformation and challenging misleading portrayals of migrants remains essential to improving public understanding of immigration.

While the United States continues to maintain competitive elections and institutional checks, increasingly restrictive voting measures, the concentration of political authority, and rhetoric perceived as exclusionary toward immigrant communities are concerning.

Civil society organizations, local advocacy groups, and informal community networks have emerged as important mechanisms of support and protection. Neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations, migrant shelters, and digital communication

networks increasingly share information regarding immigration enforcement activities, provide legal assistance, and help families navigate uncertain circumstances. Technological tools, including community-developed applications and informal alert systems, have become part of broader strategies aimed at enhancing collective resilience and mutual aid.

While Mexican consular services continue to provide assistance and local support mechanisms remain active, public diplomatic responses often reflect a delicate balance between defending Mexican citizens in the United States and avoiding bilateral tensions that could affect broader security and sovereignty concerns.

Still, migrant communities continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, solidarity, and organizational capacity. Rather than relying on singular charismatic figures, community empowerment increasingly depends on recognizing and supporting numerous local leaders working collectively to defend migrant rights and strengthen social cohesion.



**In conversation with:**

- Jorge Ramos, Mexican Journalist and Writer
- Elsa Morales-Roth, Chair of the Board, International Community Foundation

## USMCA Revision Outlook

The upcoming USMCA review process differs from previous negotiations because it takes place within a transformed global trade environment. While earlier agreements were designed under assumptions of increasing liberalization and expanding free trade, current discussions are unfolding amid a profound shift in U.S. trade strategy and a broader reconfiguration of the international economic order.

Contemporary U.S. policy increasingly prioritizes strategic competition, industrial policy, and supply chain security over traditional free trade principles. Rather than pursuing universal tariff reduction, the current approach envisions differentiated economic relationships organized through concentric trade circles, with North America occupying a privileged position relative to other regions.

This changing paradigm suggests that the objective of North American negotiations is no longer the restoration of a tariff-free global economy, but rather securing the most favorable treatment possible within a more protectionist international environment. Mexico's primary goal should therefore be preserving and strengthening its preferential access to the U.S. market, maintaining tariff advantages relative to the rest of the world, and reinforcing the logic of regional integration despite the diminished enthusiasm within certain sectors of U.S. politics.

Mexico is a complementary partner for the United States, contributing resilience, efficiency, and competitiveness to regional production networks. Integrated supply chains have generated substantial economic benefits, supported employment creation, and diversified Mexico's industrial base. Maintaining these complementarities is essential to ensure that North America remains competitive in relation to China's expanding industrial and technological capabilities.

*“Mexico did its homework in terms of integration, but the rules of the game have changed.”*

One of the central issues in current negotiations concerns rules of origin and efforts to prevent transshipment practices, whereby products manufactured elsewhere enter the North American market through intermediate countries in order to benefit from preferential treatment. Strengthening supply chains, preserving the integrity of regional production systems, and preventing circumvention of trade rules are priorities shared across the region.

Canada is an indispensable partner economically and strategically. Supply chains extending across all three countries continue to constitute one of North America's greatest competitive advantages. Although Mexico historically concentrated the overwhelming majority of its exports in the United States market, the changing global

trade landscape has revived interest in diversification strategies. Expanding commercial ties with Canada and other partners is increasingly viewed as a necessary complement to maintaining strong North American integration rather than an alternative to it.

The changing international environment demands a higher-level national conversation regarding Mexico's economic strategy. While Mexico successfully adapted to the rules governing globalization over the last thirty years, the rules themselves are now evolving. The country faces the challenge of preserving the gains achieved through integration while responding pragmatically to emerging geopolitical realities and a more fragmented global trading system.



**In conversation with:**

- Luis Rosendo Gutierrez, Undersecretary for Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economy

## Bridges Over Borders: The U.S.-Mexico Partnership in Practice

The CaliBaja region represents one of the most dynamic and integrated cross-border spaces in the world. Stretching across the metropolitan areas of San Diego and the five principal municipalities of Baja California, the region experiences approximately half a million legal crossings every day. Unlike most international borders, where the larger and more economically dominant city is located on one side, the San Diego-Tijuana corridor is characterized by a highly asymmetrical yet complementary relationship in which San Diego serves as the larger economic center while Tijuana increasingly functions as a residential, educational, and industrial hub. Rising housing costs in Southern California have further reinforced these patterns, with thousands of workers residing in Tijuana while participating daily in San Diego's labor market.

The region's high degree of interdependence has enabled the development of innovative cross-border initiatives designed to improve mobility, efficiency, and regional competitiveness. Programs such as SENTRI and Global Entry, which originated in the Otay Mesa area several decades ago, have served as precursors to newer initiatives aimed at facilitating secure and expedited crossings.

The CaliBaja region is unique due to its profound social and economic complementarity. It is one of the few border regions where migration patterns increasingly flow toward the Mexican side, as many individuals born in the United States or employed in San Diego choose to reside in Tijuana while maintaining professional and educational ties across the border. This dynamic has fostered a growing recognition among local governments, universities, businesses, and civic organizations that sustained cooperation is necessary to support the region's shared prosperity.

The Cross Border Xpress (CBX) is a significant example of this collaborative approach. Since its opening a decade ago, CBX has served more than 30 million users

*“Efficiency is not incompatible with security or economic growth.”*

and transformed the role of the Tijuana International Airport within regional transportation networks. The project has become a major economic catalyst for both Baja California and Southern California, while also demonstrating that public-private partnerships can successfully address longstanding border management challenges. Over time, CBX has gained the trust of authorities in both countries and has become an important contributor to border-related revenues and mobility systems.

Beyond its economic impact, CBX illustrates how technological innovation can reconcile security, efficiency, and economic growth. New initiatives associated with expedited processing systems continue to expand access to additional categories of travelers, reflecting a broader understanding that facilitating legal mobility enhances regional

competitiveness without compromising security objectives.

Educational cooperation has also become an increasingly important dimension of regional integration. In response to changing political conditions and growing concerns regarding cross-border mobility, academic institutions from both countries established the CaliBaja Higher Education Consortium in late 2025. Seventeen universities and colleges signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at deepening collaboration, strengthening institutional partnerships, and expanding opportunities for students within the region. One of the consortium's first initiatives involved advocating for the Coordinated Access Program (CAP), an expedited crossing mechanism specifically tailored to university students, many of whom spend several hours each day waiting at ports of entry. Pilot programs involving regional institutions seek to significantly improve students' quality of life and access to educational opportunities.

CaliBaja is resilient, capable of generating practical solutions to shared challenges through cooperation among governments, businesses, academic institutions, and civil society organizations. The success of initiatives such as CAP could eventually lead to their extension beyond students to include business communities and, potentially, the general public. These efforts reflect a broader understanding that the U.S.-Mexico relationship increasingly depends on sustained collaboration at the local and regional levels.



Speakers

- Jorge Goytortua, CEO, Cross Border Xpress
- Joaquin Luken, Executive Director, Smart Border Coalition

## Renegotiating USMCA in a Geopolitically-Charged Context

The upcoming review of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is taking place amid a period of significant uncertainty. Rather than representing a traditional treaty renewal process, the review reflects broader structural transformations in U.S. trade policy, global geopolitics, and evolving conceptions of economic security. Although a complete reopening of the agreement appears unlikely, there is growing expectation that the process may evolve into a more permanent mechanism of periodic reassessment, potentially involving annual reviews rather than automatic extensions.

From the perspective of Washington, the review is closely linked to efforts aimed at strengthening domestic manufacturing capacity, reducing trade deficits, and reshoring industrial production. The United States appears less interested in reopening the core architecture of the agreement and more focused on adjusting its implementation through side agreements, protocols, and sector-specific arrangements. Existing trade instruments, including tariffs imposed under national security and trade enforcement provisions, are likely to remain central components of U.S. economic strategy.

*“The USMCA will remain a trade agreement, but it may no longer be a free trade agreement.”*

Despite these challenges, the trilateral nature of the agreement is expected to endure. Bilateral discussions between the United States and its partners do not necessarily signal a departure from the trilateral framework. Canada reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining and renewing the agreement, while emphasizing that efforts to diversify trade relationships should not be interpreted as diminished support for North American integration. Diversification strategies have become a rational response to changing global conditions rather than evidence of disengagement from regional cooperation.

Mexico has had a comparatively favorable position within the current international environment. Mexican manufacturing has become deeply embedded within American production systems and serves as a critical component of industrial competitiveness. Labor market realities in the United States further reinforce this interdependence, as many sectors increasingly rely on production networks that span the border. Although uncertainty remains regarding the future application of tariffs, Mexico continues to enjoy a privileged position relative to many other trading partners.

Assumptions of tariff-free trade can no longer be taken for granted. Governments and firms alike must prepare for scenarios involving moderate tariff levels and more complex regulatory environments. Such conditions strengthen the case for maintaining diversified export markets, including deeper commercial engagement with Canada and the European Union, while preserving North America's central role in Mexico's economic

strategy. Businesses operating in the region may increasingly need to internalize the costs associated with a less predictable trade environment and adapt investment decisions accordingly.

Mexican business organizations have developed a more permanent presence in Washington and now engage continuously with policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders in the United States. This sustained interaction has allowed the private sector to become more directly involved in shaping trade discussions and supporting government negotiations. Greater coordination between industry associations and public officials has contributed to a more proactive and institutionalized approach to economic diplomacy.

The review process cannot be analyzed in isolation from broader geopolitical developments. Tensions involving China, uncertainty in the Middle East, inflationary pressures, and the approaching U.S. midterm elections all influence the strategic context in which negotiations are unfolding. International instability could encourage policymakers to seek greater certainty through a timely agreement, while domestic political calculations may delay substantive decisions, particularly if concessions are perceived to generate political costs in key electoral constituencies.

Speakers

- Juan Carlos Baker Pineda, CEO and Founding Partner, Ansley Consultores Internacionales and Professor Universidad Panamericana
- Eugenio Madero, Chairman/CEO, Rassini
- Meredith Lilly, Nonresident Scholar at the Claudio X. Gonzalez Center for the U.S. and Mexico
- Pamela K. Starr, Professor at Practice, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Southern California



**Moderator:** Claudia Ruiz Massieu, Congresswoman

## University of California System Collaborations in Mexico

Institutional collaboration is important in strengthening North American competitiveness through sustained investment in research, education, and leadership development. Alianza MX represents the consolidation of a longstanding tradition of collaboration between the University of California system and Mexico, bringing together complementary initiatives into a unified platform that serves as a bridge between the two countries.

Alianza MX builds upon decades of engagement through initiatives such as UC MEXUS and Casa de la Universidad de California in Mexico City. UC MEXUS has long supported collaborative research and academic exchange, while Casa California provides a permanent institutional presence in Mexico's capital, strategically located near the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The facility has become an important venue for fostering academic partnerships, hosting dozens of conferences, supporting more than sixty graduate student research visits, and facilitating collaboration with Mexican universities that have collectively mobilized significant resources to expand joint research activities.

As a University of California system-wide initiative, Alianza MX seeks to strengthen binational partnerships by advancing knowledge on issues of shared importance, serving as a resource for decision makers, and preparing the next generation of leaders. The initiative finances collaborative research projects and academic mobility programs, supports engagement with stakeholders across government, industry, and civil society, and hosts activities that strengthen long-term institutional cooperation. By providing matching funds for joint research, expanding opportunities for young scholars, and creating spaces for collaboration beyond academia, the initiative seeks to translate scientific knowledge into practical solutions with broader societal impact.

*“Create spaces for new generations to rebuild recently lost institutions.”*

The breadth of Alianza MX's activities reflects the diversity of challenges facing the region. Collaborative projects have addressed topics ranging from water management in agriculture and zero-emission vehicles to innovation ecosystems, sustainable development monitoring, and cultural initiatives. These partnerships demonstrate how academic institutions can generate knowledge while simultaneously engaging public agencies, private industry, and local communities in addressing complex cross-border issues.

Student mobility and talent development constitute a central pillar. Over the past four years, nearly 800 students have participated in academic exchanges and research

experiences in Mexico through a wide range of programs, including field research, technical training, internships, and faculty-led courses. These opportunities extend well beyond Mexico City to regions such as Yucatán and Sonora, exposing students to diverse research environments while strengthening cultural connections and academic confidence. Particular emphasis is placed on expanding opportunities for students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds.

Universities possess tremendous potential to generate scientific breakthroughs, but sustained innovation depends on robust institutional infrastructure and stable funding. As traditional research funding sources have become more constrained in both Mexico and the United States, partnerships have become increasingly important for expanding research capacity, supporting postdoctoral scholars, and facilitating the transfer of new technologies beyond university laboratories into broader innovation ecosystems.

Recent efforts to renew institutional dialogue with Mexico's science authorities further illustrate the commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation. New collaboration agreements seek to strengthen research partnerships, increase academic exchanges, and deepen long-term institutional engagement. Collectively, these initiatives reflect a broader vision in which higher education institutions serve not only as centers of knowledge production but also as strategic platforms for strengthening North American integration, fostering innovation, and preparing the region's future leaders.



Speakers

- Aaron Melaas, Associate Director for Research and Innovation, AlianzaMX
- Andrea Galvan Velez, Associate Director of Academic Exchange and Continuing Education, AlianzaMX

## Without Borders: The Power of Binational Soccer

Soccer has become an important driver of economic activity, regional integration, and cross-border collaboration in North America. The 2026 FIFA World Cup, jointly hosted by Mexico, the United States and Canada, represents the largest tournament in the competition's history, expanding to 48 participating nations. The combination of North America's economic scale and the global popularity of soccer is expected to generate the largest economic cycle in FIFA's history, significantly surpassing previous tournaments in both commercial activity and audience reach.

Soccer reinvests nearly all of its revenues into infrastructure, player development, and competition, creating a strong relationship between financial investment and sporting performance. FIFA's continued expansion of international competitions, including the Club World Cup and future youth tournaments, reflects an effort to broaden participation while strengthening the global development of the sport.

North America has become one of the world's largest soccer markets, combining economic integration with a rapidly expanding fan base. Mexico has a distinctive position within this regional ecosystem, serving as host of the opening match and becoming the first country to host the World Cup for a fourth time when previous editions of the women's tournament are also considered.

Soccer also serves as a platform for cross-border integration. San Diego and Tijuana is a binational region where clubs, academies, and player development systems increasingly operate across the border. The collaboration between San Diego FC and Club Tijuana seeks to strengthen youth development while expanding opportunities for players on both sides of the border. Daily cross-border movement among academy players, joint events, and long-term investment in player development illustrate how sports can reinforce ties between neighboring communities.

*“The sport shows that there are no borders; binationality benefits both countries.”*

Binational talent has become an increasingly important component of professional soccer in both countries. Mexican American players are joining Liga MX clubs in greater numbers, while Mexican teams have expanded their recruitment of dual-national athletes. At the same time, players developed in Mexico and the United States increasingly represent either national team, reflecting the growing integration of player development systems. This trend has also strengthened the pathway for players seeking opportunities in European leagues.

Women's soccer has experienced sustained growth in investment, audience size, sponsorship, and player transfers. Liga MX Femenil has expanded rapidly during its first

decade, supported by greater media exposure, growing attendance, and stronger commercial partnerships. Collaboration with clubs and leagues in the United States has contributed to player mobility and the development of new competitions, while the 2031 FIFA Women's World Cup will provide another opportunity for regional cooperation.

Commercial integration has also expanded through competitions such as the Leagues Cup, which brings together clubs from Liga MX and Major League Soccer in an official tournament. The competition has created new opportunities for sponsorship, broadcasting, ticket sales, and fan engagement while increasing interaction between clubs from both countries. Similar cooperation has strengthened the commercial relationship between the Mexican and American soccer industries more broadly.

The evolution of soccer reflects broader patterns of North American integration. The increasing participation of binational athletes, the expansion of cross-border competitions, and growing collaboration among clubs demonstrate how shared regional interests can strengthen connections between Mexico, the United States, and Canada while creating new opportunities for economic growth and talent development.



**Speakers**

- Alejandra Frausto, Mexico City's Secretary of Tourism
- Mikel Arriola, Commissioner President, FMF
- Fernanda Sainz, Marketing Director, Caliente Interactive
- Joaquín Escoto, Former EVP San Diego FC

**Moderator:** Ana Paula Ordorica, Journalist

## Mexico - Canada Relations in a Changing World

The Mexico-Canada bilateral relationship has expanded steadily since establishing diplomatic relations more than eight decades ago. Trade in goods and services has increased significantly during this period, surpassing US\$100 billion annually, while Canadian investment in Mexico continues to grow. Although the relationship remains smaller than each country's economic ties with the United States, recent disruptions to global supply chains and the changing geopolitical environment have reinforced the need to deepen bilateral cooperation and diversify commercial partnerships within North America.

Both governments are seeking to elevate the bilateral relationship through stronger political engagement and a more structured institutional framework. Recent high-level meetings, including exchanges between the Mexican and Canadian heads of government, led to the adoption of a comprehensive strategic partnership and the Mexico-Canada Action Plan. The plan provides a framework for sustained cooperation through four priority pillars and promotes more consistent engagement across ministries and government agencies.

Economic cooperation remains at the core of the bilateral agenda. Both countries are working to expand trade, increase investment, and identify new opportunities in sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, information and communications technology, clean technologies, energy, creative industries, artificial intelligence, agribusiness, mining, and automotive production. Canadian companies continue to play an important role in sectors such as mining, energy infrastructure, and logistics, while business organizations are working alongside governments to strengthen supply chains and promote new investment opportunities.

*“We are finally looking deeply into the bilateral relationship after decades.”*

The institutional framework established through the Action Plan has also expanded cooperation in areas beyond trade. Current initiatives include evaluating options for direct maritime connectivity between Mexico and Canada, promoting joint research and innovation, strengthening environmental cooperation in protected natural areas, and expanding dialogue with Indigenous communities. Both governments have also launched a new bilateral security mechanism to improve coordination between security agencies in response to the growing presence of criminal organizations across borders.

Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program continues to provide legal pathways for Mexican workers to meet labor shortages while maintaining strong ties with their communities in Mexico. The model is an example of circular labor mobility that could be expanded to additional sectors facing temporary workforce shortages, allowing both

countries to respond to economic needs without encouraging permanent migration.

Unlike previous bilateral initiatives, the Mexico-Canada Action Plan incorporates regular monitoring mechanisms intended to ensure that commitments are translated into concrete actions. The framework is designed to evolve over time, allowing both governments to incorporate new priorities and adapt cooperation as conditions change.

Despite this progress, the bilateral relationship continues to receive less public attention than each country's ties with the United States. Geographic proximity to the United States has historically concentrated political, economic, and media attention on the trilateral relationship, limiting awareness of the opportunities that exist directly between Mexico and Canada. Increasing the visibility of bilateral cooperation and demonstrating tangible results are important priorities for sustaining political and public support.



**Speakers**

- Amb. Cameron MacKay, Ambassador of Canada in Mexico
- Cristina Planter Riebeling, Acting Undersecretary for North America, Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Carla Bustillos, General Director, Canadian Chamber of Commerce Mexico

**Moderator:** Dionisio Perez Jacome, VP Corporate Development & Sustainability, Volaris

## The Jeffrey Davidow Good Neighbor Award

The Jeffrey Davidow Good Neighbor Award honors individuals who have made significant contributions to fostering mutual understanding between Mexico and the United States. This year, the award was presented to **Daniel Servitje**, for his outstanding leadership in advancing economic integration between Mexico and the United States through the private sector. As a visionary business leader, he has fostered cross-border trade, investment, and collaboration, strengthening bilateral economic ties and creating opportunities on both sides of the border.

Daniel Servitje was born in Mexico City. He earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Universidad Iberoamericana and a Master of Business Administration from Stanford University. He served as CEO of Grupo Bimbo from 1997 to 2024, when he assumed the role of Executive Chair.



Grupo Bimbo has become a global player in the food industry, with products that have become household names for consumers in 39 countries around the world. Its more than 153,000 employees consider Daniel an accessible, action-oriented, and market-driven leader.

Under Servitje's leadership, Grupo Bimbo has also become an important example of how Mexican companies can contribute to the economic and social fabric of the United States while maintaining strong ties to their communities in Mexico. Through its extensive operations, investment, and job creation across both countries, the company has strengthened commercial interdependence and demonstrated the growing integration of North American supply chains. At the same time, Grupo Bimbo has promoted initiatives focused on sustainability, employee well-being, and community development, reinforcing the idea that economic success and social responsibility can advance together in ways that benefit communities on both sides of the border.

Daniel Servitje currently serves on the boards of Starbucks Corporation, Latin America Conservation Council, Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad, A.C., and Aura Solar.

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