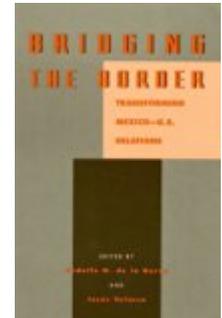




Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Jesus Velasco, eds.. *Bridging the Border: Transforming Mexico-US Relations*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997. 208 pp. \$26.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8476-8438-0.



Reviewed by Stephen R. Niblo

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An addition to the rapidly growing literature on relation between the United States and Mexico, *Bridging the Border: Transforming Mexico-US Relations* is a collection of nine essays that, with the exception of the first, concentrates on the last two decades.

The volume begins with a thoughtful article by Alan Knight, "Dealing with the American Political System: An Historical Overview 1910 -1995." Focusing his discussion upon four topics, he analyses: salience (how important Mexico has been to U.S. policy makers); congruence, (the degree to which Mexican policies have moved in tandem with U.S. hopes, prejudices and expectations); U.S. attitudes toward Mexico in different periods; and the role of key figures in the history of U.S.-Mexican relations. In a complex and subtle analysis, Knight focuses upon the decade of the 1940s as a great divide between the crises and confrontations of the revolutionary period and the closer relationship since World War II. As a short analytical overview of U.S.-Mexican relations, it raises some excellent issues, perhaps the

most intriguing being the frequently parallel movement of U.S. and Mexican policies.

Jorge Chabat's article "Mexico's Foreign Policy after NAFTA: The Tools of Interdependence" is an exploration of the foreign policy of the Salinas de Gortari government within the context of an analysis of interdependence, a concept that he asserts was important enough to be at the heart of "... Mexico's second postwar foreign policy." Focusing upon the public relations campaigns surrounding the battle over NAFTA, Chabat explores Mexico's thirty million dollar campaign to influence U.S. public opinion, U.S. investors, Mexican-Americans in the United States and high U.S. governmental officials. The review of the Salinas de Gortari years probably is more useful than the theoretical analysis of interdependence.

In "Decentralized Diplomacy: The Role of Consular Offices in Mexico's Relations with its Diaspora" Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez describes the growing role of the forty consular offices in dealing with Mexican-American people in the United States. Lifting their profile from merely stamping visas and approving trade shipments, the Salinas

de Gortari government began to promote educational and cultural links with Mexico emigrants. Certainly this chapter provides important background to what seem to be emerging as a "hot" issues between Mexico and the United States—the possibility of Mexicans living in the United States voting in Mexican elections and the Mexican offer to train bi-lingual teachers for U.S. schools. The tremendous growth of Mexican immigration to the United States provides the background to Mexico's efforts to gain influence among the people of this diaspora.

Rodolfo O. de la Garza contributed "Foreign Policy Comes Home: The Domestic Consequences of the Program for Mexican Communities Living in Foreign Countries." This is a study of that program, PMCLFC as it is known in Mexico, and its emergence in the wake of NAFTA. Arguing that the program is more important than usually acknowledged, de la Garza argues that attempts to forge links between Mexicans and Mexican-American people reflects, among other things, the growing power and influence of their community in the United States. Dual citizenship rights, the right to own property, special importation privileges, and even the right to vote in Mexican elections are proposals that were at least partially associated with the conscious effort to develop an ethnic lobby in the United States.

The effort of the Mexican governments over the past fifteen years to influence the U.S. government, think tanks, and even financial institutions in Washington D.C. is the focus of two articles in the collection: Todd A. Eisenstadt, "The Rise of the Mexico Lobby in Washington: Even Further from God, and Even Closer to the United States"; and Jesus Velasco, "Selling Ideas, Buying Influence: Mexico and American Think Tanks in the Promotion of NAFTA." Eisenstadt does a splendid job of describing and quantifying the scope of the effort to lobby in the United States; he even enumerates President Clinton's fifty-one offers of many "particularistic benefits" for lawmakers who would

support NAFTA, of which nineteen were accepted. Similarly, Velasco approached the "marriage" of politics and money from the perspective of the think tanks and their influence on policy. As such, these are important contributions to the practice of politics in the 1990s, for better or worse.

There are also several short articles: Victor M. Godinez, "The Negotiation between the Mexican Government and the U.S. Financial Community: A New Interpretation"; Edward J. Williams, "Discord in U.S.-Mexican Labor Relations and the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation"; and Jorge I. Domínguez' summary of the volume, "Mexico's New Foreign Policy; States, Societies, and Institutions." Overall, this is a very good collection of essays on the dramatic changes in Mexico's foreign policy over the past fifteen years. It successfully explores state policies and the impact of the migration of the Mexican people.

The surprising aspect of the study, with the exception of Victor M. Godinez's short article, is how little impact the severe economic and financial crises of recent decades had upon the thinking of the contributors to this collection. The crushing impact of financial turmoil on living standards of the Mexican people as well as the role of the United States in these events deserved serious analysis in a volume of this nature.

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