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Iryna Bochar

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine

The Role of the Individual in the North American Security System

This commentary focuses on “human security” concept implementation as well as on the participation of the individual in the decision-making process at the highest political level and at the level of cross-border interactions in North America. Dual emphasis on the problem of the individual contributes to efficiently identifying the issues, which are relevant to different population strata. It also helps to find the best solutions for regional problems. As a result, the qualitative social changes within the North American system are visible. That leads to regional space consolidation as well as to the harmonization of relations in the region.

North American Security Agenda

North America is characterized by intense regional cooperation in various spheres (economic, political, humanitarian, etc.), which over the years have existed between Canada, Mexico and the United States. This is because of the opportunities within the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), due to the extended competence of the administrative units of the regional countries in their implementation of cross-border cooperation, as well as due to political will at the highest level and good understanding of the need to implement new initiatives and to deepen cooperation between countries.

Securitization processes in North American security are impacted by objective historical and material conditions. United by a common geographical space and related by common mechanisms of regional cooperation, Canada, Mexico and the United States are moving towards the same threat perceptions and finding ways to effectively overcome them. This process is characterized by dialogue at the highest political level in the form of political consultation and individual meetings of the leaders on the objective threats existing in the region and the need for urgent action to address them.

The security component in regional cooperation as an independent phenomenon in North America is considered from the beginning of the 2000s. The main forms of this process were the inclusion of the security component into a framework within NAFTA, implementation of the Security and Prosperity Partnership in the region, discussions of security initiatives at the Inter-American Summits and passing them onto the agenda of the Organization of American States (OAS).

The reason for the growing attention to security issues within regional cooperation is the existing stable basis for cooperation on security matters: economic mechanisms, established traditional procedures for cross-border cooperation, and sustainable humanitarian ties between the countries. The catalyst in this process was the actualization of new threats, including the 9/11 developments that showed the vulnerability of regional players to terrorist groups.

Another reason for deeper regional security cooperation was the growing role of new actors. On the one hand, new actors help to make accurate decisions for solving the regional security problems, because even new actors pay attention at the national and international levels to the problems that often find themselves overlooked by the highest state leadership. On the other hand, the openness and low formalization of new actors make them a potential source of threat, because acts of organized crime, including drug trafficking or terrorism, can be made through such organizations.

Human Security Concept

To overcome new threats (organized crime, terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking, natural disasters), the region of North America is gradually looking for new approaches to the foreign and security policy implementation. The issue of new challenges correlates with a new security dimension – “human security”. The solution of these problems directly affects the lives of everyone.

At the regulatory level the countries have differently fixed the concept of “human security”. For example, in the major foreign policy documents of the U.S., the “human security” concept is not directly spelled out. However, the U.S. foreign policy includes *de facto* key points of the “human security” concept: the defense of human rights, development and prosperity. It is foreseen in the key spheres of U.S. foreign policy (Policy Issues), as well as in the sections relating to security issues (Arms Control and Security) and Democracy and Global Affairs (Democracy and Global Affairs). The development and prosperity were outlined in the 2007–2012 Strategic Plan (Part IV, Strategic Plan).

In turn, Canada is one of the first countries which included the “human security” concept in its foreign policy. The Canadian government defines it as a socially-oriented approach to foreign policy, aimed at citizen protection from violence, human rights, safety or life attacks. However, “human security” does not replace national security. On the contrary, due to the Canadian understanding these concepts are interrelated. The “spirit” of Canadian security policy is not only to

protect themselves from threats, but also to show an example to other countries on how to focus on non-conflicts, peace and prosperity establishment, as well as on the security of Canadians all over the world. This is stated in the 1995 Security concept of Canada.

Mexico in its foreign policy does not pay special attention to the “human security” concept as a holistic approach. However, the priority issues for Mexico have a direct impact on the relationships building with neighboring countries. In particular, these issues include the necessity for economic development and the reality of low living standards, the problem of drug trafficking and organized crime, terrorism, cyber crime etc. The cross-border nature of these threats creates instability and directly affects the development of joint actions to overcome the dangers. The persistence of such problems in Mexico will not guarantee the security of citizens within the North American region.

The process of common values development is to be observed in North America. This process is long-term and requires not only resources from the partner that dominates the other nations in their capacities (incl. financial), but also the political will and readiness of regional societies to adopt common “rules of the game”. The countries in the region have a common history, similar political structure, structure of society and also belong to the Christian world. This, despite different levels of economic and social development, contributes to a compromise on common positions creating the standards for regional cooperation, even in the difficult issues of national and regional security. So, very gradually, the countries in their policies are moving to develop multinational agreements based on shared perceptions of justice.

Thus, one could argue that existing common values and a common vision of security problems in North American countries contribute to the process of creating a stable and cohesive security system in North America. This is a prerequisite for the regional community formation that will operate on the basis of “human security”. However, at this stage it is too early to talk about the versatility of such a concept.

Decision-Making Process

North America is characterized by an asymmetric type of relations between actors as well as by structural influence from the U.S. on the context of regional security system. The dominant state has more opportunities to follow its domestic principles, and thus to carry internal models in the form of practical projects or new ideas to the regional level. This directly affects the decision-making system as well as policy implementation by the other regional states. Canada and Mexico have lower ambitions and fewer resources, which makes it easier to adapt to the new forms of cooperation in the region.

Multilateral Level

In North America, there is a tendency for region creation as a single player, which is able to take consolidated decisions on security issues. This trend is positive due to the potential outcome to achieve common regional solutions on the principles of “human security”. This trend is also seen in practical terms – in the practical implementation of monitoring, education and information projects on current security issues. However, at the political level, this trend appears quite weak due to the lack of clear institutional framework in the region and the process of taking joint decisions only on the results of national positions.

A characteristic feature of North American states is an anti-institutional position. It is not profitable for the countries to create regional integration institutions. Instead, all the actors aim to preserve autonomy in taking decisions on the implementation of regional policy. The main technical tool for the regional agreement is the Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), which not only holds Inter-American summits, but also cares about the formal procedure of inter-state agreements registration.

The role of NGOs

The security component in North American regional policy contributed to the diversification process of the regional cooperation mechanisms. Official intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms at the highest political level (the traditional signature of interstate agreements, state visits, Inter-American Forums etc.) as well as at the level of official institutions, which are working in the field of security, are complemented by the activities of NGOs.

NGOs in the field of “human security” have their own features: some organizations are operating under global projects, others are a part of national programs. Each organization focuses on a separate aspect of human security. For example, the activities of the Canadian organization “One Sky”, which works in partnership with the Canadian Consortium on Human Security and the Canadian Environmental Network, focuses on personal human development within social change. The issue of human protection against organized crime on a global and regional level lies within the activities of the Human Security Centre, which is an independent research center. Development issues, as part of “human security”, are on the agenda of such “think tanks” as the International Development Research Centre, the Canadian Consortium on Human Security (CCHS) etc. This organization was established by academics in December 2001 to support strategic research and creates a platform for information sharing, analysis, and dialogue between the representatives of non-governmental organizations, academics, research institutions, domestic and international “think tanks”, between the government and TNCs involved in policy development and dealing with “human security”.

A feature of the U.S. non-governmental organizations is the fact that they are not dealing exclusively with the whole “human security” concept, but only with some issues. For example, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which deals with global and regional development, is a national program funded by the Department of State (2009 – 875 thousand dollars; 2010 – 1 105 thousand dollars; 2011 – 12 799 thousand dollars). The Human Trafficking Awareness Partnership deals with illegal migration and focuses on disseminating knowledge about human trafficking as one of the tools for ensuring “human security”. The activity of the U.S. research centers is mostly focused on the “homeland security” issues. Even such “giants” as the RAND Corporation does not have a separate section on “human security”.

Notable in Mexico is the work of non-governmental organizations like the North American Research Center UNAM-Mexico, “Collective Safety Analysis of Democracy” (CASEDE), which in its activities also deals with the question of “human security”.

New actors, due to their contact with state authorities, have significantly increased the opportunities for regional cooperation on “human security” issues. On the one hand, these relationships are marked through the government donation to the NGOs, like the Human Security Centre, which is funded by the Government of Canada. On the other hand, the contribution of new actors is important because the non-governmental organization represents the interests of vulnerable groups in society, which in turn have very limited access to the decision-making system on security issues. For example, the Canadian Peace building Coordinating Committee (CPCC) has such a structure, which allows access for the Canadian Foreign Ministry to the NGOs’ researches and policy recommendations on a number of topical issues (incl. “human security” issues). This creates a dialogue between different representatives on the “human security” issues and contributes to public education, increases the human resource capacity for the implementation of the “human security” projects, and generates new approaches for solving human security problems.

Cooperation between the countries (incl. providing financial, technical and humanitarian assistance) is playing a significantly beneficial role for the region. The mechanism of financial aid works in cooperation between state and non-governmental organizations: the availability of financial resources, as well as political will in the U.S. and Canada, allows the direct funds within the USAID and CIDA to be used for the development of Mexico. An interesting fact is that the U.S. provides financial assistance to Mexico, but does not provide such assistance to Canada. The tools in this case are the political, infrastructural and humanitarian programs and projects. The main recipients of financial assistance are the NGOs, which in practice are implementing appropriate projects. Through the Merida initiative (Merida Mexico) American aid (planned budget – \$1.9 billion) is provided to neighboring countries for combating transnational organized crime. The existing level of cooperation between countries and new processes in North America suggest the beginning of the process of creating a regional security community. The

humanitarian dimension of international cooperation, which includes the targeted financial assistance of donor organizations for Mexican social development (military training, education of police and community representatives etc.) promotes the development of common standards in the region and makes the regional security system more homogeneous.

Individual Role

In this regard very notable is the role of the individual as a new actor in international relations. A traditional mechanism in the form of high level meetings and summits is effective and fundamental. Because even the highest political leadership determines the agenda and takes the final decision on further cooperation. Thus, in particular, is the case during the Inter-American Forum, where the country leaders have the opportunity to meet and to discuss current issues in different formats (both at the multilateral level and personally). A good example of such a mechanism is also negotiation between Barack Obama and Steven Harper, concerning the restoring of the North-American Security and Prosperity Partnership.

Important are the political statements of state leaders, which are the most efficient in case of being the answer to the prominent events in the community. These policy statements *de jure* represent the general solution of public management, however, *de facto* cause greater resonance in society, rather than intensify the process of resolving the security problems. An example of this was the situation in the United States after the tragic shooting of 20 students and 9 teachers of Newtown, Connecticut. The U.S. President Barack Obama's reaction to this emergency has demonstrated the need for greater attention to the problem of gun violence. In his speech Obama calls to another dimension of organized crime – everyday gun violence, not only for the U.S., but also for the whole region. The role of the state was demonstrated in another way; its inaction on this issue can be considered as a threat to public safety. According to Obama, it is possible to overcome this threat by law enforcement, the creation of a special commission which will provide relevant reports and recommendations, as well as by law harmonization at the international and system level. At the international level very efficient are the Heads of State meeting before the Commission activity and the process of new legislation implementation at the national level.

The traditional mechanism in the form of political statements is efficient not only in paying attention to the actual problem or threat, but also because it immediately offers a mechanism for security problems resolving. Very important in this mechanism is the information component. The ability to deliver state position quickly to the people through traditional and new media intensifies the process of overcoming the threat both at the executive level as well as at the level of civil society and various social groups.

It is well known that influential statesmen who have already completed their careers, people with a bright political past, businessmen, philanthropists and

benefactors are those who can influence the situation or the position of certain groups during a crisis, emergency or draw attention to certain problems, threats, as well as the need to address them.

A striking example of this influence is the work of Bill Clinton. Specifically, in August 2005, Bill Clinton together with President George Bush was one of the initiators of nationwide fundraiser to overcome the effects of Hurricane Katrina. This was a special fund for victims of Hurricane Katrina, which brought on the whole more than \$100 million from more than 60 thousand citizens, NGOs, firms and foreign governments in the form of donations. Part of the money (\$30 million) was sent to 34 institutions of higher education in the region, particularly to New Orleans University, Tulane University and Loyola University New Orleans, because the renewal of the universities constitutes a key strategic regeneration area. The rest of the money (\$40 million) has been sent for local community renewal, at the state and federal level. Approximately \$20 million was sent to religious organizations, which have helped the victims during restoration work after the hurricane.

Although Bill Clinton, who remains a prominent figure not only in America, but also globally, has a range of initiatives, his Clinton Global Initiative holds annual high-level meetings as well as implements specific practical projects. This activity drew public attention to the problems of poverty, human security and related development needs and improving people's lives. In the form of individual activity the North American Society receives an additional mechanism to draw attention of the regional and international community to the need to address and to solve those problems.

Equally important is the work of individual active actors, who draw attention to problems in the region by their actions and urge they be dealt with. For example, such kind of work is the activity of Mexican writer and journalist Anabel Hernandez, who is risking her life investigating the facts of corruption, drugs trafficking, organized crime and abuse of power in Mexican policy. In her books *Drug traffickers* (2010), *Drug state: Mexican drug-lords and their Godfathers*, *Mexico on Fire* (2012) she exposes the links between organized crime and people in high positions in the government (civil servants, police, military, business representatives), and analyzes the evolution of drug production and drug trafficking in Mexico since the 1970s, describes the process of converting Mexico into the epicenter of mega-cartels activations in Latin America and one of the most dangerous places on the planet. For such work A. Hernandez was awarded in 2012 the "Golden Pen of Freedom". Participation and key notes at the ceremony in Kiev, like other international events and presentations, have become *de facto* a demonstration to the international community that this is not only a problem in Mexico, something that has been known in the world for a long time, but a danger to the lives of every person who attempts to break or act to prevent the criminal system in the country.

Visible Social Changes

As a result of the processes occurring in the system of political decision-making at various levels, there are gradually beginning to appear changes in the societies of the region, which are increasingly gravitating toward human-centrism and the desire to ensure the safety of each person, regardless of social status, opportunities and living conditions. However, it is very easy to see these changes. This is due to the level of political, economic and social development of the region. For example, a very striking figure is the percentage of citizens who are below the poverty line: in 2011 in the United States this number was 15,1%, Canada – 9,4% and in Mexico – up to 51,3% of the total population. Therefore, taking into account the correlation between the level of life and safety of citizens, different countries need to take a different way to harmonize the internal processes and at the same level to implement the principles of “security of the person”. Obviously, in this respect, Mexico will have to overcome more obstacles than Canada or the United States. In particular, the country will have to surmount the problem of drug cartels, total corruption in the government and the security forces, improve social standards for the population. This will allow Mexico to reach the same level of dialogue with Washington and Ottawa, and social changes in the country and, in the future, in the region will become apparent. Some examples of action are noticed in Mexico. This applies not only to the large-scale reform program initiated by President V. Fox and extended by his successor F. Calderon in the fight against poverty, corruption and drug trafficking. A national program is extremely important, as a political decision creates a favorable environment for really combating the problem.

And as far as Canada and the United States are concerned, the governments of these countries should also overcome other problems at the appropriate level in order to demonstrate the results of using the concept of “personal security”. This applies to deficiencies in the channels of communication between the public sector and government agencies. The activities of the Canadian Consortium on Security of the individual (Canadian Consortium on Human Security) focuses on long-term research that is not always possible to give tactical advice to political authorities of the country. Despite the limited channels of communication access to a public sector, decision-making system for security should also be expanded. This can be achieved by fixing one / several “think tanks”, which are working on providing comprehensive consultations on security matters.

To the work on the safety issues of lower groups of people, for example minorities or ingenious people, new actors are involved not very active. The exception is a joint Canadian-American expedition to the Arctic, which also involved the work of the indigenous population. Such a mechanism has been very successful as locals (ingenious peoples) know the geographical and natural features of the area, allowing one to do research and forecasts more precisely. Encouraging local people to work on such projects through training programs and mechanisms for providing financial support will have a positive outcome for local communities.

Increased attention to the “security identity” is seen in the implementation of cross-border cooperation in view of the security for ordinary citizens when crossing the border, cross-border supplies to businesses as well as the working conditions of border services, including the police. Signing the Agreement of the “smart” borders between the United States and Canada (US-Canada Smart Border Declaration) contributed to the implementation of cross-border trade between the two countries under the simplified procedure by establishing modern, innovative equipment to prevent, identify and overcome operational cross-border threats. Agreement of the “smart” borders between the United States and Canada is an example of a mechanism that creates trust (a trust-generating mechanism) between countries.

The existence of the simplified procedure and openness of the US-Canadian border indicates the high level of trust that exists between the countries. This, unfortunately, cannot be said about cross-border cooperation between the United States and Mexico, despite the fact that such co-operation is also highly dynamic with regard to trade exchanges. However, the situation is complicated by the presence of new threats (drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption etc.) that penetrate to, and through Mexico, the entire region of North America. Thus, specific circumstances present at the international borders of countries are developing new approaches to cooperation mechanisms and thus allow one to provide an increased qualitative level of security at the borders.

The gradual application of mechanisms that exist on the border between Canada and the U.S., and the introduction of innovative safety devices on the troubled US-Mexico border will increase the level of confidence, coherence and homogeneity in the region. However, taking into account new challenges and the threats of organized crime, illegal migration and human trafficking, drug trafficking, as well as the strong influence of global interdependence and the set of unresolved regional issues present, at this stage it is too early to talk about North America as a “region-without-borders”.

Conclusions

Due to the isolation of the security component and the development of appropriate mechanisms for regional security cooperation in North America, the region is able to respond effectively to the new challenges and threats and to ensure the security of the individual.

The process of diversification of regional cooperation mechanisms allows us to introduce new players contributing to the harmonization of the internal environment of the system and increases the effectiveness of security processes within the system. The lack of institutional arrangements in North America reveals the process of developing a collective agreement in the region based on a common vision and the implementation of national interests. Countries operate in narrow limits and this makes the role of standards more important than the role of structures.

This process corresponds, on the one hand, to expressions of the concept of “personal security” in the region, where the main focus is on human security in different dimensions. On the other hand, the objectives of the strategic importance of the region are to develop an effective mechanism for communication between elements of security decision-making and the effective management of security processes in the region. One of the instruments for reaching both issues are government programs of humanitarian inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, which are aimed at cooperation among politicians, journalists and the inter-community and are able to maintain and consolidate within shared values and ideas.

At the same time, the role of social innovation as a mechanism to simplify daily operations and actions during routine operations and emergencies is important. This applies not only to improved cross-border security, but also to the process of identifying sources of new threats and to implement effective steps to overcome them. Moreover, social innovations as a key factor for sharing very fast and broadly information on the actual security trends, incl. human security dimension, are playing critical role in creating regional security system in North America based on common values, as well as common understanding of threats, issues and regional security tasks.

Performing these tasks is possible due to a number of objective reasons. Countries in the region have a common history and similar political structure, structure of society, and all belong to the Christian world. This, despite the different levels of economic and social development, contributes to a compromise in the development of common positions on the standards of regional cooperation, even in the challenging issues of national and regional security. Then, very gradually the country’s policies are moving their production to multinational agreements based on shared perceptions of justice.

The role of individual has substantially increased in regional security agenda-setting. Traditional high level meetings, bilateral countries’ top-leadership negotiation within international summits, as well as policy statements with strong information and media component, are supplemented with activity of prominent and well-known persons (former politicians, social activists, journalists etc.). The activities of individual actors are addressed on combating new security challenges (trans-border and organized crime, drugs and human traffic etc.), which changes the balance of power in North American security system for the benefit of new actors.

The entire set of interactions between actors is important in view of the development dynamics within the regional system. The presence in North America of not only formal cooperative arrangements, but real projects that embody both an understanding and common principles declared by the governments in the region, suggests the manifestation of a critical level of interactions, which have resulted in the process of sealing the space within the regional system. The synergy effect achieved through joint efforts and an ongoing effective operation of system components can lead the processes of growth (fostering growth) in the region and bring it to a new level of cooperation on a global scale.