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Abstract

North America and the “Three Noes”

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Since the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, an awkward nexus of security and economics has been the primary driver of North American governance. This nexus emerged as a pragmatic response to the poisonous politics of economic integration that ensued after 1994 and the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In 2005, the three NAFTA countries launched the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), aimed at reinvigorating the North American agenda to reflect the realities of security and economics. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has become the main focal point for policies affecting America's borders as the department's mandate has overwhelmed economic considerations and the policy approach has converged around security and law enforcement. Prospects for a new integration project will remain dim for the foreseeable future. However, the paralysis generated by the security-economics nexus has created new governance space in North America that complements the broad evolution of federal politics in all three NAFTA countries, particularly where proposals for reform of the Department of Homeland Security are concerned.