

# RISK, VULNERABILITY AND GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS IN THE 'NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNITY' IN THE WAKE OF 9/11

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## **I: INTRODUCTION**

"The rise of disaster capitalism" proclaims the cover story of the May 2, 2005 issue of *The Nation*. The piece's author, well-known author and activist Naomi Klein, writes of a kind of disaster capitalism that "uses the desperation and fear created by catastrophe to engage in radical social and economic engineering." Her specific focus is the US reconstruction initiatives, in evidence at sites of natural disaster from New Orleans to Aceh and Sri Lanka, or in conflict and post-conflict zones, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Klein documents, reconstruction is profitable business, with lucrative contracts secured by private firms—such as the \$10 billion contracts held by Halliburton in Iraq and Afghanistan—but it is also underpinned by a mandate of deregulation, privatization, and liberalization, reinforced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Human and natural disasters have thus become opportunities for entrenching neoliberal capitalism and liberal democracy in places made vulnerable, for putting a kind of "disaster capitalism" to work. As Condoleezza Rice infamously remarked at her Senate confirmation hearing to be Secretary of State January, 2005, the Asian tsunami as "a wonderful opportunity" that "has paid great dividends for us" and can help bring about peace and security.

Particularly worrisome, however, is, as Klein documents, the move towards *precautionary* disaster capitalism. On August 5, 2004, the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization was created by the George W. Bush administration. Its self-described core mission is "to lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy."<sup>1</sup> Along the lines of

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<sup>1</sup> See the US Department of State website: <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/>. Last accessed February 6, 2006.

the disaster capitalism outlined above, the aim of the Office is not only to provide cost-effective and streamlined reconstruction in disaster scenarios, but also, in the words of Coordinator Carlos Pascual, to change “the very social fabric of a nation” so that it is “democratic and market-oriented” (Klein 2005). What is especially remarkable about this agency, however, is that part of its mandate is to draw up post-conflict plans for almost 25 countries *that are not yet in conflict*. The office “keeps ‘high risk’ countries on a ‘watch list’ and assembles rapid-response teams ready to engage in pre-war planning and to ‘mobilize and deploy quickly’ after a conflict has gone down” (Klein 2005). Hence disaster capitalism is not simply about post-disaster reconstruction, but about the anticipation of and planning for the particular contingencies that will make this kind of disaster capitalism possible.

The anticipatory dimensions of disaster capitalism cohere with the Bush administration’s shift to preemptive and even preventive military and security strategies. In both realms there is an attempt to manage and to moderate contemporary social, economic and political threats based on predictions of the possible disasters that might occur. As Ulrich Beck and others have astutely observed, the contemporary global era is one marked by risk, and in turn risk management. In the incredibly complex world in which we live, expert systems and strategies are increasingly sought to produce knowledge about and hence appear to offer some control of that which is cast as uncontrollable, or to render predictable that which is said to be unpredictable. But as Beck also observes, the information that is generated can also be used to harness particular risk-management strategies precisely by “staging” threats based on that risk: “[t]his is the realm of the ‘might,’ the ‘should,’ and the ‘if...then’ (Beck 2000: 122). Much like Klein’s understanding of disaster capitalism, risk and vulnerability are mobilized to particular ends since “The more threatening the shadows cast by future prospects, the most lasting are the disruptions that can be brought about today through the dramaturgy of risk” (Beck 2000: 100).

Klein makes it clear in her article that it is the vulnerability of at-risk, or potentially at-risk states, in their moments of instability, that makes them open to wholesale change as they search for aid dollars in their newfound positions of “limited sovereignty.” Reconstruction efforts, she argues, are underpinned by a new colonialism with disaster offering the new blank slate, a *terra nullius*, to be “discovered” and then settled (Klein 2005). But the momentum behind disaster capitalism is not just present in third-world reconstruction, but underpins contemporary economic relations between US and its nearest neighbours. This is in evidence perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the unfolding relationship with Canada, the country’s largest trading partner. In the wake of 9/11, the US mantra that “security trumps trade” has signaled that trading as usual across the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel is no longer possible, that a new vision of the region’s economic space is necessary. As I will detail in the remainder of this paper, the new visions that have been presented for Canada-US relations, and the trilateral agreements that have been signed, have used the *opportunity* afforded by the concerns around security risk and vulnerability to push forward the further deregulation, privatization and liberalization of the North American economic space, at the same time that they affirm the importance of security and democracy. In the following section I begin with an examination of the ways that the post-9/11 convergence of security risks and economic vulnerabilities has been harnessed

to towards particular economic and political objectives, not unlike those of disaster capitalism.

## **II: RISK AND VULNERABILITY IN NORTH AMERICA AFTER 9/11**

The terrorist events of 9/11 resonated across North America. For the US, the attacks clearly signaled an unprecedented personal and territorial vulnerability. The administration of George W. Bush has made security a top priority as the government seeks to prevent another such disaster. In Canada, security issues have also been prevalent. But in amongst the concerns for personal and territorial security, has been a particular concern for economic security. Border delays of over 36 hours at several key crossings did not bode well for the nearly \$2 billion CDN that passes across the Canada-US border every day. This trade is particularly important to Canada as 87% of its exports go to US markets, comprising over 35% of Canadian GDP. (Free and open trade with Canada is also important to the US economy, but the proportion of this trade to overall GDP is much less significant.) The delays and confusion at the border in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 were no doubt understandable. But long-term concerns have also been raised by the protectionism and unilateralism of a war-mongering Bush administration with its emphasis on Homeland Security. A longstanding presumption that Canada is open to terrorists because of lax immigration policies has helped fan border insecurities. Moreover, there is an ongoing misconception that the 9/11 terrorists entered the US by way of Canada.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in the last several years, several high ranking US figures—eg Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke, Paul Cellucci—have issued not-so-thinly-veiled threats regarding further border holdups if Canada does not accede to US concerns, whether over security, immigration, the invasion of Iraq, or the decriminalization of marijuana.

In the words of Canadian political scientist Stephen Clarkson, border holdups threaten the just-in-time regional free trade economy, and portend “a monumental *disaster* with an impact no less significant than the destruction of New York’s twin trade towers” (Clarkson 2001: 8, emphasis added; see also SCFAIT 2001a). For many Canadian pundits in business, academic and government, it appeared that the only way to avoid this kind of economic disaster would be to dispel US concerns over Canadian security risks, and that the only way to do this would be to push forward a deeper North American integration. In fact, deeper integration was cast as *inevitable* given Canada’s increasing trading vulnerabilities and the onward march of globalization (Gilbert 2005). While primary concern was with smoothing Canada-US relations, it was recognized that Mexico would also play a part in the geopolitical reconfigurations, even if only after US-Canada relations had been sorted out. Certainly, Mexico appeared equally if not more interested than Canada in moving towards greater economic integration. In Canada, the discussions have revolved around various proposals, and some combination of a customs union or a common market, and less commonly, even a common currency. These were proposals that had

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<sup>2</sup> In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 New York Senator, Hillary Clinton, among others, blamed the porous northern border for enabling the terrorists to enter the U.S. Television programs such as “The West Wing” and “America’s Most Wanted” encouraged the perception that the terrorists had entered the U.S. through Canada (Clarkson 2003: 76). Even as recently as April, 2005, Canadian Ambassador to the US, Frank McKenna, had to ask US House Speaker Newt Gingrich to withdraw comments that he made suggesting that the 9/11 terrorists had entered the US through Canada.

been previously been floated in Canada but lay dormant because of lack of support; now a considerable amount of interest has galvanized them forward. But it has also been quickly recognized that in the post 9/11 moment, economic initiatives alone would not be enough. Canada would have to present the US with a “big idea” that would not only capture US attention, but would draw together economic, security and immigration issues (eg Hart and Dymond 2001; Dobson 2002; Gotlieb 2003; see also Gilbert 2005).<sup>3</sup>

Some cooperation on security and immigration is already in evidence. In particular, a 30-Point Smart Border Action Plan was signed into place by Deputy Prime Minister, John Manley and U.S. Governor Tom Ridge, the U.S. Homeland Security Chief in December, 2001. This action plan focuses on border security, including the tracking of border crossings, and better mechanisms of identification such as iris scanning technology and biometric ID cards for pre-approved travelers. Canada also undertook other domestic measures with an eye to appeasing US concerns. The Anti-Terrorist Act of October 2001 that criminalized terrorist activity and even support of terrorist activity, was certainly introduced for reasons of Canadian domestic security, however, it was also promoted very explicitly as being geared to US concerns. A revised Canadian Immigration Act was further revamped after 9/11 to include anti-terrorists measures, supported by additional funding of nearly \$50 million CDN. Much was also made of the more stringent screening of refugee claimants and increased detention powers. In addition, measures have been taken to synchronize aspects of Canadian and US immigration procedures, and safe third-country agreement was established (Rekai 2002: 14).

Yet there were rumblings from the US that even while progress had been made by Canada to address US concerns, enough had not yet been done (Krauss 2002: A8), a sentiment echoed by the Canadian business community. Hence the many “big idea” proposals sought still further cooperation on immigration and security issues, alongside the harmonization of economic policies, especially with regards to shared custom rates. Energy security, it was suggested, would be an invaluable negotiating tool for Canada given that it is the largest energy supplier to the US. Indeed, even before 9/11 President Bush had made it clear that he was interested in further securing North American energy supplies—an agenda that has only increased since the invasion of Iraq (Doern and Gattinger 2002: 77; CCCE 2004: 10). Dangling the promise of better access to Canadian energy—particularly in moments of energy insecurity—was presented as giving Canada some leverage in the negotiations. Yet none of the “big idea” proposals promote political process as a mechanism for dealing with the negotiations. Little in the way of political infrastructure is introduced, much in keeping with the already-limited forms of governance in the NAFTA region and a presumed aversion to shared political structures on the part of the US. What decision-making would take place, such as around the harmonization of economic policies, was to be market-driven, while immigration and security integration would be subsumed under existent jurisdictions.

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<sup>3</sup> Many of the proposals use the phrase “big idea” to advance their program, a phrase which itself has loaded connotations. President George Bush Sr. used it in his 1991 State of the Union address to characterize the New World Order that he was promoting: “What is at stake is more than one small country; it is a big idea: a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind—peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law. Such is a world worthy of our struggle and worthy of our children’s future”  
<http://www.geocities.com/americanpresidencynet/1991.htm>.

Thus, as long-time advocates of deeper North American integration Robert Pastor optimistically observed, “Sept. 11 was not only a tragedy, it was an opportunity to rethink the relationships between the three countries of North America and to accelerate the process of integration” (Pastor cited in Baxter 2001: A1). Or, as Stephen Clarkson put it with a more biting tone, “the United States catastrophe [is] an opportunity to trot out their nostrums for completing the unfinished job of continental union” (Clarkson 2001: 9). For economic integrationists, the Ground Zero created by 9/11 created just the kind of opportunity that Condoleezza Rice associated with the Asian tsunami, and with the economic reconstruction that Naomi Klein associates with disaster capitalism. Neoliberalization and deeper North American integration were presented as the only way forward to minimize Canadian economic vulnerabilities at the border, to prevent economic disaster but also to minimize US fears about mobility across the border with Canada. In this sense, North American integration is not unlike other discourses of globalization and neoliberalism that frame “homogenization, leveling out, and convergence” as the only way forward, as the only option (Peck and Tickell 2002: 382). Paradoxically then, the Canadian response to US unilateralism and protectionism has been to imagine a future in which the two countries would become even more closely interconnected, and perhaps then interdependent. Moreover, as I will detail in the following section, as with disaster capitalism, the disaster of 9/11 was used to draw together issues of “peace, democracy and a market economy” and to push forward certain neoliberal concepts of what the achievement of peace, democracy and a market economy would entail. These interrelated concerns are clearly manifest in the *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America* recently negotiated by the leaders of the US, Canada and Mexico. And yet, as I discuss in the following section, this agreement has also shifted North American relations in yet another direction.

### **III: MITIGATING RISK IN THE NORTH AMERICAN FORTRESS**

*The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America* (SPP) agreement was signed by US President George W. Bush, Mexican President Vicente Fox, and Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin on March 23, 2005 after a morning of meetings between the leaders, culminating in lunch at Bush’s Texas ranch. Although brief and bare in details, the SPP was not simply an empty wish-list, but established Ministerial-led consultative groups to report back on achievable goals within a 90-day framework. (The first report was issued June 27, 2005.<sup>4</sup>) Hence there is some heft and weight to this agreement. Its main agenda is to ensure that the region is safe and secure, that businesses are competitive, and that economies are resilient (SPP 2005: 1). Moreover, as I will detail below, there is an additional concern for the quality of life of the region’s populations that renders this document quite unlike earlier trilateral agreements. The main impetus behind the SPP is clearly the ongoing border and security risks associated with terrorist activity. There is,

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<sup>4</sup> The report details progress- to-date—an agreement on electronic commerce, liberalization of rules of origin for certain goods, etc.—as well as concrete proposals, such as the development of a trilateral Regulatory Cooperation Framework by 2007. Notably, the Ministers involved from each country are high-ranking officials, such as Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Homeland Security, and Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State. See the Government of Canada website: <http://www.fac-aec.gc.ca/spp/SPP-report.PDF>

however, also an eye to the global economy, and the looming vulnerability of the North American economic region in light of increasing competitiveness of China and India.

The SPP builds upon but expands a series of earlier bilateral agreements signed between Canada, Mexico and the US. In November 2004, upon President George W. Bush's first state visit to Canada, a more limited joint statement, the *New Partnership of North America*, was signed between the two countries, which not only dealt with common security, prosperity and quality of life concerns, but affirmed the trope of "partnership" as a way of understanding state-to-state relations. Already the previous month, Canada and Mexico had signed a parallel joint statement, "A commitment to our common future," to affirm shared goals and values, to build economic development, and to promote public and private sector dialogue—although notably, with no shared border between them, security issues are barely mentioned. The market-orientation of this agreement, however, resonates quite closely with an even earlier joint agreement between the US and Mexico, struck in the halcyon days before 9/11, when then US President Bill Clinton and Mexican President Vicente Fox set out a "Partnership for Prosperity" that would "harness the power of the private sector to foster an environment in which no Mexican feels compelled to leave his home for lack of jobs or opportunity." This partnership also emphasizes the importance of social well being, particularly for Mexicans, although the intent is to reduce the migration of impoverished Mexicans into the US, as is clear from the citation here. As the SPP remarks, these bilateral agreements provided templates for the new trilateral partnership, and for drawing together a tripartite formulation of security, prosperity and quality of life matters (SPP 2005: 5).

Thus at the heart of the SPP is a concern to promote security and prosperity in the region. A wide range of initiatives are presented to draw the economic region more tightly together: eg more cross-border cooperation in some sectors, especially autos and steel; the harmonization of external tariffs; regulatory cooperation in energy, trade, financial services, and technology; and more regulatory compatibility for goods and services, especially around standards, testing, and certification. The SPP also includes a number of initiatives that speak to greater cooperation on border policies, particularly around pre-clearance programs and biometrics. Underpinning these objectives is a rhetoric of "partnership" that not only signals the increasing congruence with private sector discourse, but also a growing emphasis on the role of the private sector in solving the problems that have been identified.<sup>5</sup> While the SPP is littered with terms such as "cooperation," "collaboration," "coordination," and "common approaches," underlying this terminology is an agenda of *harmonization*, not only in terms of the economy—eg around regulations and standards in statistics, motor carrier and rail safety—but also with respect to security and immigration matters, such as US-Canada agreement on visa waiver countries (SPP 2005: 5). As Andrew Barry has written vis-à-vis the thrust towards harmonization in Europe, harmonization ensures that governance unfolds from the voluntarist and "autonomous economic actions of its subjects" rather than the creation of

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<sup>5</sup> The private sector also played a significant role in making recommendations that found their way into the SPP. For example, in October 2004, the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America (ITFFNA) was struck, with the blessing of all three governments, to consider future continental relations. The ITFFNA was led by former government officials all now in the private sector, and vice-chaired by leading figures in private sector think tanks. Both the preliminary and final reports of the ITFFNA spoke directly to the SPP process (see ITFFNA 2005).

a governing transnational state (Barry 1993: 315). What is being presented is a market-oriented approach that relies on sector-to-sector negotiations rather than an overarching political structure. This bespeaks a political rationality that does not seek to impose the will of the state or the regional alliance, but to govern through consent and complicity in ways that will maximize business interests.

The SPP hence seems to cohere well with the economic and security initiatives sought by Canadian business interests. But the scope of the SPP is also considerably more expansive. Namely, its third spoke is quality of life, in addition to the concerns for prosperity and security. Along these lines, the SPP advocates collaboration in higher education, science and technology; joint environmental programs and the protection of biodiversity; and the coordination of health initiatives, eg around infectious diseases and a safe food supply. The attention to health matters in the agreement is particularly strong with recommendations for greater coordination on the surveillance, prevention and control of the spread of infectious diseases such as a pandemic influenza outbreak (SPP 2005: 7; 2005: 51–52). There are even recommendations for health promotion, education, disease prevention and research on and among indigenous peoples (SPP 2005: 7). Some initiatives in this area are set out in the Ministerial reports in June, 2005 including the creation of a Canada-US website on Suicide Prevention and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and the coordination of a workshop on substance abuse.

The scope of issues presented in the SPP is thus broad, even if some of the proposed ways of dealing with these issues, such as the information website on aboriginal health, are clearly minor undertakings. Indeed, these initiatives deal only with the symptoms of aboriginal disenfranchisement rather than structural causes. What is remarkable, however, is that their inclusion here effectively demonstrates that the SPP signals a new concern, *at the trilateral level*, with optimizing the living conditions of the region's population, of a concern with their "quality of life." The SPP thus moves beyond economic liberalization into the realm of biopolitics, that is, a concern for the lives and bodies of the population. Inasmuch, the partnership manifests examples of, *at the transnational level*, a particular form of governmentality, or a regime of government, which is usually associated with the western, liberal nation-state. States have interiorized themselves into the lives of their populations, staking their claims to govern in terms of their ability to secure the "the health, welfare, prosperity and happiness of the population" (Dean 1999: 19). Indeed, in the SPP there are numerous instances of both speaking to and speaking for the continental population. In its short text, the SPP contains nearly a dozen allusions to "the people," and to their being "protected," "responded to," "invested in" and the promotion of their "full potential" by attending to their health, safety and education concerns. Moreover, these concerns for citizen quality of life are buttressed and justified in terms of a "shared belief in freedom, economic opportunity, and strong democratic values and institutions" across the three countries (SPP 2005: 1). Within the SPP there is thus the same ethos of governing or managing the people that has hitherto been associated with nation-states, albeit here reconfigured in terms of a trilateral agreement.

It is clear that within the region, ideas of citizenship and territoriality are being reworked, as a new kind of dance is being played out between nation-states, citizens and transnational obligations (cf Walters 2004). Effectively, the SPP moves the North American region much more into the realm of an EU-style social/economic/political

entity. The Treaty of Rome that signed into place the European Community in 1957 not only set out economic principles, but also included a concern for order, security, public health, safety, and the security of the population—issues that have resurfaced and have been reinforced in recent years in the EU (Walters and Haahr 2004: 56, 60). With the SPP we see this same breadth of concern. Unlike the EU, however, in North America there is little desire for creating new forms of political infrastructure, or the kind of the “vast supernational bureaucracy” that is associated with the EU (Manley et al 2005: 8). The SPP is much more clearly a product of the neoliberalist era. The coordination and harmonization of economic policies and sectors detailed above is effectively a mechanism for fast-tracking deregulation, privatization and liberalization across the North American *partnership*.

But why does the SPP push for this kind of economic liberalization, and what links are drawn between prosperity, security and quality of life? It is with this question that the relationship between this document and the underlying principles of disaster capitalism become more clear. For contained within the SPP is a clear agenda to draw Mexico more tightly into the North American fold, for there is a sense that the security and prosperity of the region as a whole depends on Mexico gaining greater parity with the US and Canada (a narrowing that was anticipated, but unrealized, under NAFTA). The importance of Mexico is clearly set out by the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America (ITFFNA) that was struck in October 2004, with the blessing of all three governments. This Task Force was charged with identifying areas of concern in the region, and its findings have informed the process behind the SPP (see footnote 5). As the ITFFNA makes blatantly clear, development in Mexico is for the benefit of the region: “Improvements in human capital and physical infrastructure in Mexico, particularly in the center and south of the country, would knit these regions more firmly into the North American economy and are in the economic and security interests of all three countries” (ITFFNA 2005: 5). Hence there is a strong developmentalist ethos that infuses the SPP and the ITFFNA that is directed towards Mexico. State aid will be made available, although made conditional upon regulatory and banking reform and government transparency, alongside a market-driven agenda of foreign investment and infrastructure development with, for example, the creation of a North American Investment Fund.<sup>6</sup>

It is only when Mexico becomes better able to govern itself and its citizens, when those citizens have rights and responsibilities on par with elsewhere in the partnership, that only then will Mexico be an effective and responsible—albeit not necessarily equal—*partner* in protecting the economic and social security of the region. The alternative—not doing anything—is characterized as more “unauthorized migration...corruption, drug trafficking, violence, and human suffering” (ITFFNA 2005: 5). This resonates with the health initiatives for Aboriginal peoples discussed earlier—and the attention to disorders such as fetal alcohol syndrome, substance abuse and suicide—and a parallel mandate for internal development across the nation-states to deal with their more vulnerable populations. As the Annex to the Ministerial report makes explicit, internal development is required so that “In the long run, healthier indigenous

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<sup>6</sup> As Cristina Rojas reminds us, foreign aid and then foreign development have been, since the Cold War, the most effective non-military mechanisms used to for international geo-political influence, geared first towards economic and then population improvement, and used especially by the US (Rojas 2004: 100–101).

peoples and communities will be able to more fully participate in the social, economic and cultural life of North America” (Annex 2005: 56).

The internal and international welfarist approaches to development are not simply presented as philanthropic endeavours, but as being in the best interest of *all* citizens of North America. And this attempt to at once individualize and totalize its recommendations (cf Gordon 1991: 26), so that they speak both to the interests of each citizen but also the citizenry of the region as a whole, reinforces still further that there is an emergent trilateral political rationality that seeks to govern across the regional economic space by both speaking to and speaking for the region’s population. But it is not simply that economic dividends will spread across the populations in a reverse kind of trickle-up scenario. To bring marginalized peoples into the center of the North American project also helps mitigate security concerns in that by maximizing their potential, investing in them and turning them into productive citizens, they will be much better able to govern themselves as optimizing and optimal citizens. They will become, to use the Foucauldian terminology, “homo economicus” (Rose 2000: 162; Dean 1999: 168). And it is this ultra-rational, capitalist citizen, caught in this web of efficiency, who poses the least threat to the continental economic space. Or, as Ulrich Beck has put it in slightly different terms, “The suicide bomber is the most radical contrast to the *homo oeconomicus*. He is both economically and morally completely uninhibited, and for this reason, a bearer of absolute cruelty” (Beck 2002: 8). Underlying the SPP is a mandate to incorporate the disenfranchised enough into the polity to obviate the possibilities for figures such as the ‘radical’ suicide bomber from forming.

#### **IV: CONCLUSIONS**

What I have sought to do in this paper is to identify the coherences between the disaster capitalism described by Naomi Klein and the shifting dimensions of the North American economic space. The economic and security vulnerabilities in post-9/11 era have made it possible to propose much more extensive forms of economic cooperation and harmonization than those that govern the free trade arrangements under NAFTA. Indeed, the terrorist attacks have been used as an *opportunity* for pushing ahead on the neoliberalization of the region’s economy and to push for continental integration. While there is a perception, even expectation that everything changes in the face of disaster, this is clearly not the case (see also Clarke 2003). Surely change is one intrinsic aspect of disaster—it would hardly be a disaster if all remained the same. But what I suggest in this paper is that disaster can lead to programs and policies that reinforce tendencies that were already in place. Or, with respect to the North American region, the disaster of 9/11 has been used to mobilize particular interests precisely because of the climate of risk and vulnerability that has ensued. Thus, when examining the aftermath of disasters, it is important to take account of what has changed, but also what remains the same—or to put it somewhat differently, to understand what the discourses around the unfolding disasters and disaster management make both possible and impossible.

Also, with respect to the disaster of 9/11, the ensuing security risks and vulnerabilities have been exploited to triangulate and make interdependent the same concepts of “peace, democracy and a market economy” that are set out in the mandate of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. This triangulation is

most forcefully evoked on the first page of the SPP where the agreement and its future accomplishments “will reflect our shared belief in freedom, economic opportunity, and strong democratic values and institutions” (SPP 2005: 1; emphasis added). It is precisely by appealing to these concepts, and by implicitly countering them to terrorism, that it has been possible to push through and rationalize more neoliberal economic objectives in the North American *partnership* and to implement tighter security controls and more border cooperation. The result is perhaps not quite the “radical social and economic engineering” that Klein associates with some forms of disaster capitalism, but the shifts portend to be no less important even if they are more incremental.

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