

OP-ED

## The border is the bridge that connects Los Dos Laredos

By Juan Carlos Mendoza Sánchez  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

In the first quarter of 2019, Mexico became the top trading partner of the United States, overcoming Canada and China. This new reality is a consequence of trade disputes between the US and China, as well as a result of a growing trend of trade between Mexico and the US. In 2017, the commercial exchange between Mexico and the US was \$557 billion. The projections for 2030 suggest a continuous growth in trade through the port of Laredo, which currently crosses more than 40% of the trade between both countries.

The total length of the border between Mexico and the US is about 2,000 miles. The Texas border with Mexico extends for 1,255 miles, or 64% of the total US-Mexico border which connects Texas with Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. Texas is the main trade partner of Mexico. In 2017, trade with Texas reached \$187.5 billion, three times higher than trade between Texas and China, its second commercial partner. According to the Department of Commerce, during the first quarter of 2019, Laredo became the No.1 trade port in the US, surpassing the port of Los Angeles. While Laredo reached \$20.09 billion, Los Angeles followed with \$19.66 billion.

Mexico is the most important trade partner for Texas and Laredo. The border does not divide them, on the contrary, it unites them. On June 3, I attended my first event as Consul General of Mexico in Laredo. The meeting was about border crossing of rail and road transportation within the border of Texas and Mexico. At the meeting, the progress made in previous work meetings was presented, along with advances in the design of the Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan (BTMP). This Master Plan seeks to develop binational multimodal corridors connected by border crossings between Texas and the four border Mexican states.

It is all about solving the problems that affect the growth of trade, the productivity, and competitiveness of the region. Amid the problems, these are some identified: frequent closing of border crossings; lack of infrastructure; exhausting inspections for cross-border cargo; traffic congestion at interstate checkpoints; inadequate hours of operation; and insufficient personnel of CBP to process people and transit options.

The participation of all

the actors involved from both sides of the border with Mexico surely motivates to face the challenges that the growth of bilateral trade represent. Therefore, it is important to have a Master Plan that allows the coordination of binational actions to support the shared prosperity of the Texan-Mexican border region.

More than 5 million jobs in the US rely on trade with Mexico. The establishment of value chains has promoted the integration of two highly complementary economies. On the common border, manufactured parts and products cross between four and eight times before they become finished products. This explains why Mexican exports to the US have 40% of components produced in the US, compared to its second and third commercial partners, Canada and China, which percentage is barely 25% and 4% respectively.

History, culture, and trade connect Los Dos Laredos. It is a common space of prosperity and shared responsibility. The professional baseball team plays on both sides of the border. In two weeks as Consul General of Mexico, I already attended more than six meetings with authorities of both sides of the border. On June 15, I was invited along with my colleague Kathryn Flachsart, Consul General of the US to Nuevo Laredo, to the ceremony of the 171st Anniversary of the foundation of Nuevo Laredo, led by Mayor Enrique Rivas. On June 13, I and other authorities of Los Dos Laredos got together at a reception at the Consulate General of US in Nuevo Laredo to celebrate, in advance, the National Day of the United States of America. This is an example of cross-border consular diplomacy that shows the integration of Los Dos Laredos.

All the previously mentioned facts show that far from being the dividing border, it is a place of shared prosperity that makes possible a daily trade of more than \$1.5 million, a growing regulated crossing of citizens from both countries, and the pivotal point where the integration of both economies is recognized.

For all the above, the border is not the geographical point that divides Mexico from the United States, neither Laredo from Nuevo Laredo, it is the bridge that unites two countries and two border cities that are neighbors, friends, and strategic partners.

Juan Carlos Mendoza Sánchez is the Consul General of Mexico in Laredo, Texas.

OTHER VIEWS



YOUR OPINION

## Saenz: Trade defines Laredo

To the editor:

The U.S.-Mexico border is a treasure. Of course, our community knows the beauty of what blending two cultures fosters. We live it every day and acknowledge and revel in its uniqueness, the beauty of "nuestro" Laredo, "la frontera" with our neighbors to the south.

As a City, our bread and butter depends heavily on international trade, commerce, logistics, transportation, warehousing (cold storage) and distribution; all of which are the wholesome fruits of NAFTA, our economic engine since its inception in 1993. I along with others work hard to publicize and popularize this fact through our country, in Mexico, and across the world. I ask that you, also, help move the conversation about NAFTA, now referred to as US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), TEMEX in Spanish, how it has economically transformed in a positive way our nation, state, region

and, yes, nuestro Laredo, through free, fair and reciprocal trade of goods and services primarily with Mexico.

In recent weeks, Laredo held the No. 1 port status (overall) for the nation. In the last days, Port Laredo fell to the No. 2 U.S. port, but remains and has been the No. 1 land port for many years. Our goal should be to regain the No. 1 overall port status. Much of the credit of Port Laredo's success goes to our friends and partners, private and public, on both sides of the border. To continue our success we must engage through ongoing dialogue and commentary in defining and shaping border issues and concerns. We know each of these issues are important in themselves, divisive at times, and serve to create much political banter; issues, such as: whether Mexico is a good neighbor and partner, the impact of the "wall," Dreamers, DACA, immigration reform, sanctuary cities, re-deployment

of CBP officers, asylum laws, migrant care, tariffs, and USMCA (to name a few). However, our immediate focus must be steadfast on what sustains us, gives us our livelihoods, our identity, and that is international trade, commerce, logistics, transportation, warehousing (cold storage) and distribution. For the moment, we must shift the spotlight away from political banter to hard facts about the benefits of ratifying USMCA. Mexico has recently done so, the US and Canada are pending ratification.

Despite the plethora of rhetoric produced by ongoing border issues and the economic uncertainty and challenges they pose, Port Laredo continues to grow annually. Last year alone, we grew by 8% in trade processing. Port Laredo alone handles over \$230 billion in trade value out of the entire US-Mexico trade value of over \$670 billion, which is more than one third of US-Mexico trade. Our local un-

employment rate is unprecedented, at historical lows between 3.5 to 4 percent.

Only we can shape the conversation that defines our city. I ask all leaders and citizens of Laredo to unite in our goal of reclaiming the Number One port status by getting informed and moving the conversation about Laredo to what we excel at and depend on: on international trade, commerce, logistics, transportation, warehousing (cold storage) and distribution. Better yet on the benefits of USMCA, and all its derivatives, the significant value it provides to us and many others in terms of: affordable goods and services to consumers, thousands of jobs in our state and the millions in our country. If we do not engage others and tell our story, the political banter on border issues will define us. We can't let that happen. That is my calling; that is our mission!

Viva Nuestro Laredo!  
Sincerely,  
Mayor Pete Saenz

COMMENTARY

## Trump will never be held accountable for his treatment of women

By Alyssa Rosenberg  
WASHINGTON POST

I've been swallowing down the gorge rising in my throat since I read advice columnist E. Jean Carroll's shattering account of violence she encountered at the hands of what she describes as "hideous men," among them one who "grew up to be the president of the United States" - and who she says attacked her in a dressing room at the Bergdorf Goodman department store in Manhattan 25 years ago.

It isn't so much that this is the first time I've read allegations by a woman against President Donald Trump. After all, almost two dozen women had accused him of sexual misconduct before Carroll's decision to come forward. Harry Hurt III, who wrote a biography of Trump, reported that Trump's first wife, Ivana, had alleged in a deposition in their divorce case that Trump raped her and pulled out a clump of her hair in an act of vengeance for a disappointing cosmetic procedure.

Rather, it's that until the moment I read this excerpt from Carroll's new memoir - in which she says Trump attacked her on a shopping trip, a scenario that evokes

the furniture-shopping gambit Trump himself described using as a seduction technique in the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape - I'm not sure I acknowledged to myself what I believe to be true. Nothing will happen to hold Trump accountable for his alleged treatment of women, not during his presidency and not after.

The reality-distortion field that Trump emits, and that his most ardent supporters have embraced, provides him with a grant of immunity so powerful that it has come to seem irrevocable and impenetrable. Of course I haven't wanted to say this out loud. The only possible response is despair.

Perhaps it's strange that I should arrive at this conviction at a moment when so many other powerful men have finally been taken to task for their predatory impulses. Harvey Weinstein, John Lasseter, Les Moonves and Roger Ailes were all dethroned from their entertainment empires. Apparently, after centuries of disbelief, former holdouts are finally able to accept that just about anyone is capable of monstrosity.

But with every bad man who gets the jail sentence he deserves or loses a position of public trust to which he

was manifestly unsuited, Trump's presence in the Oval Office puts the lie to the hopeful idea that we've arrived in a new era.

Carroll, like plenty of other people, seems to hold on to the idea that there must be something, surely, that can eventually puncture Trump's reputation and the bond he's forged with many in his base.

"His admirers can't get enough of hearing that he's rich enough, lusty enough, and powerful enough to be sued by and to pay off every splashy porn star or Playboy Playmate who 'comes forward,' so I can't imagine how ecstatic the poor saps will be to hear their favorite Walking Phallus got it on with an old lady in the world's most prestigious department store," Carroll writes in one of the bitterly piquant sentences that give the piece its power. The level of detail, and the fact that two friends she told about the encounter at the time confirm her memories of their conversations, make Carroll's recollection horribly credible.

But the moment I read this line in her story, I thought that Carroll had it wrong. Trump's most ardent supporters won't find this story horrifying, be-

cause they won't believe it at all. If they do accept any part of it, they'll insist that the encounter was consensual; that Carroll was a pathetic 52-year-old woman throwing herself at a "good-looking," slightly younger gazillionaire; that any contact Trump had with her was some sort of sexual philanthropy.

This is what makes Trump different from the other powerful men who have fallen since #MeToo became a global movement: He has convinced too many people to invest too deeply in him and to view him as the sole source of truth for him to be disgraced and banished.

Even if he was never tried on criminal charges, and even though he remains firmly ensconced in the global elite, Bill Clinton was at least tried on impeachment hearings stemming from that alleged misconduct. Trump never will be, not in the Senate. Not in any other venue.

And as long as that's true, Trump's legacy will be proof that when you're a star, the world does let you do it. Even if women like E. Jean Carroll fight back, even if millions of us read their stories and find them credible, you can do anything.

LETTERS POLICY

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