



South Texas' Borderland as Window of Opportunity Manager's Choice

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Are US top officials and regional stakeholders taking a new approach to the perception and the management of the US-Mexico border? Many signs seem to point to some type of change in the border paradigm. Security issues are not necessarily under prioritized or reduced to an accessory topic in this respect. They are still at the foundation of the dominant reflexion and views on the US-Mexico border. The fence is there to stay for some more time, as it is also the case for the inland checkpoints. What's new and refreshing is however the integration of the topic of Economic Development as one of the main tools if not the primary one to generate security. A shift somehow in the perception of security from a hard power to a soft power standpoint. Several facts underpin this development. Among others, the war on drugs since the 1980's is now more and more seen as something else than a success story. The effects of a growing incarceration for a long period of time of a mainly young population for minor offenses to narcotic regulations eventually reached the middle class, destroying lives rather than rescuing them and undermining the perspective of any sustainable economic future for entire families. Furthermore, this tough on drugs strategy turned out to be a very costly business for tax-payers. A relatively similar development occurred on the Mexican side of the border, letting appear that the direct and open war waged against drug cartels and trafficking has had very little success. In the meantime, a significant change in the structure of global trade characterized by the rise of what we now call Emerging Economies has triggered an economic take-off for countries like Mexico and the forecasts are more and more promising. Economic development, in other words, especially in an advantageous context of growth can be an obviously more efficient means to shape security, to contain drug trafficking and to fight poverty. In addition, a new demographic factor has reshuffled the political game, constraining top officials to leave their all too often passive and sometimes even disconnected relation to minorities like Hispanics for instead a more proactive and interested one. Indeed, most of the political analysts now agree that the next major elections in the US can be won or lost mainly because of the Hispanic votes. Although there still will be some remains of the traditional aversion for change in this matter, this puts people running for office in a situation of being "necessarily" more sensitive to this community views and aspirations. And this development is already noticeable. South Texas is about to become a major window of opportunity for businesses looking for valuable incentives and perspectives of development. The region may be less wealthy than some other major areas of the US but it certainly encompasses incomparable potentials for growth, development and prosperity. Both federal and local governments are aware of that and they seem now willing to enter into a new era of sustainable efforts to support its economic boom, which is on the verge of occurring.