

Trans-Border Institute

Event Summary: Media Roundtable

January 31, 2013

On Thursday, January 31, 2013, the Trans-Border Institute hosted its annual Media Roundtable at the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. The panel discussion featured Roderic Camp, a professor of the Pacific Rim at Claremont McKenna College and author of over 30 published books and reports on Mexican security, and four distinguished guest: Emily Edmonds-Poli, Octavio Rodriguez, Denise Ducheny, and Kristin Moran

After TBI Director David Shirk introduced the event, Roderic Camp, a Mexican expert, gave a presentation on how Mexico was previously managed under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) in the 70 years it ruled before losing power to the National Action Party (Partido de Accion Nacional, PAN) in 2000. With the return of the PRI to presidential power in 2012 under President Enrique Peña Nieto, Camp discussed three main issues that the new administration must address to strengthen its rule of law: human rights in Mexico, the role of the Catholic Church and its involvement in politics, and the shared distribution of power among the branches of government so the president does not control all.

Emily Edmonds, USD professor of Political Science and TBI senior analyst of U.S.-Mexican relations, focused her discussion on the top of U.S.-Mexican Relations under the PRI with its return to power. She argued that the relationship between the United States and Mexico had strengthened in the recent pass, noting that the two countries had come to a better sense of understanding one another as the Mexican culture is now more readily accepted in the United States. She also pointed to a decrease in tension among security forces in both countries, and the increase in bi-national cooperation and collaboration on security-related issues. After briefly discussing President Obama's immigration reform, Edmonds added that the U.S.-Mexican relationship is like a marriage as it requires both sacrifice and willingness to listen and cooperate by both sides.

Octavio Rodriguez, TBI's security and rule of law program coordinator, followed with his discussion on drug-related violence in Mexico under former President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012). Rodriguez shared data and statistics found in TBI's upcoming report, "Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2012," noting that violence in Mexico has shifted geographically and become less concentrated. Nevertheless, Rodriguez continued, violence in Mexico has either leveled off or declined somewhat in 2012, depending on the source of information.

Denise Moreno Ducheny, TBI's senior analyst of sustainable economic development and former California state senator, spoke on the importance of reinvigorating U.S.-Mexican relations and educating public officials, emphasizing the need to educate public officials, journalists, and the public at large on the realities of border crossings in order for cooperative relationships to flourish among border regions. She also focused her discussion on the importance of having U.S. policymakers recognize that the Mexican workforce is an asset, and that technical capabilities in the region are modernizing. Gone are

the days, she said, when the United States looked to its distant Chinese neighbor for technical and labor assistance because its southern neighbor is fully capable of taking on such a role.

Kristin Moran, USD professor and chair of communications and TBI assistant director of programming, concluded the panel discussion with her insight on the fundamental role that journalism plays in building transparency within developing countries. She stressed the importance of educating journalists and public officials to strengthen transparency, and the vital role they play in this process.

Camp concluded the event after the other panelists had spoken by discussing the economic dimension between Mexico and the United States. The growing employment opportunities in Mexico (stemming from U.S. investment and Mexican innovation) means that many of the problems the country is plagued with, such as vast income inequality, poverty, the drug war, and low standards of living, can gradually be minimized as the economy grows and unemployment decreases.