



Before he retired, Gen. David Petraeus was the head of the CIA and a former top commander for the U.S. military in the Middle East. He is broadly considered one of the world's top experts on asymmetric warfare and counter-insurgencies. So it came as a surprise that after his retirement, rather than writing about Iraq, the rise of the Islamic State and broader security concerns in the Middle East, Petraeus's top security concern is Canada and its relationship with Mexico and the United States. Petraeus teamed up with the former president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, to co-chair an independent task force and release a report entitled "North America: Time for a New Focus." The report calls for improving the relationship between the three NAFTA partners and revitalizing efforts to strengthen the overall partnership. Unlike the EU experiment, Petraeus is promoting a North American union based upon respecting the sovereignty of each country, while increasing the benefits of economic and regulatory integration. Petraeus and Zoellick brought this idea to Calgary this week, where they spoke about their vision for North America at an event hosted by the Canada West Foundation alongside the Center for a Secure Free Society, where I am a fellow. North America is home to 500 million people in three vibrant and diverse democracies; more effort, attention, and emphasis should be placed on how this trio can work together to achieve strategic objectives. There is a tremendous opportunity for North America. We are the anchor of stability in an increasingly chaotic and unstable world. One of the main problems in creating closer partnerships in North America is the difficulty in Canada and the United States, two highly developed countries, working and partnering with still developing Mexico. The United States has a strained relationship with Mexico, given a decade-long inability to manage immigration and criminal concerns. Mexicans, reasonably, take any advice from the United States with a bit of skepticism. But Canada is still broadly respected in Mexico, particularly in the private sector. Canada is well suited to play a more involved role in helping Mexico build stronger institutions to promote the rule of law. Mexico is now undergoing extensive reforms in privatizing its energy industry. This presents Canada, one of only a few countries with a large private energy industry, with the opportunity to lend its expertise to Mexico. Similarly, there is always skepticism in Canada about further cooperation with the United States. Canadians are wary of a neighbor that ignores and neglects Canada's concerns and too often allows its domestic politics to stand in the way of good policy. This has been exemplified by the Keystone pipeline delays. This pipeline is incredibly important to energy security and weaning North America off its reliance on Middle Eastern oil. Yet, it is being blocked by Barak Obama, who is ignoring scientific advice, his own State Department, and bipartisan support in both Democratic and Republican parties. Domestic political issues like these are creating real economic and security concerns in North America. And that's exactly why Canada needs to push for improved North American partnerships, where politicians and civil society view North America as a united region, not simply as a dated trade



agreement between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. NAFTA was created at a time when information was limited, before global economic power shifted from Europe to Asia, and before Islamic terrorism was at our doorstep. The world is very different 20 years later. It's time to rethink how North America works. And Canadians are uniquely well suited to the task. Canadians need to engage in the process of creating a new and robust North American relationship, where partnerships thrive both among our people and our governments. After all, a terrorist in Seattle is as much a danger to Vancouver as he is to San Francisco. At the same time, a job created in North Dakota can bring nearly as much economic opportunity to Saskatchewan as it does for South Dakota. As John F. Kennedy said in his remarks to Parliament in 1961, "geography has made us neighbors. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies. Those whom nature hath so joined together, let no man put asunder. What unites us is far greater than what divides us." That still rings true today. The world needs more Canada. It's time for us to start engaging and building a stronger, more united North America. Read the original from [Toronto Sun](#).