

might be more efficient than the present unilateral one (see del Castillo and Vega 1995). Such reforms would result in a “deepening” of the trilateral relationship.

Finally, the NAFTA relationship could be “widened” by the “accession” (inclusion) of additional individual country members or by somehow merging with one or more regional trade blocs.

Widening and/or deepening is likely to be resisted, at least in the short term, because of the strong anti-free trade sentiment that has developed in the United States. During the NAFTA negotiations and approval process, most criticism of the agreement came from labor and environmental groups traditionally associated with the political left. However, in recent years, attributable in part to the instability and recession in Mexico, many conservative groups have joined organized labor and environmentalists in their objections to the NAFTA—and to the World Trade Organization as well—claiming that they threaten “America’s sovereignty.” Their opposition kept free trade initiatives off President Clinton’s agenda throughout the 1996 election year and could delay action in the near term.

Even so, a number of proposals, both official and unofficial, have been advanced that would expand the integration process. These include:

- Repeated (unofficial) appeals to create a North Atlantic Free Trade Zone between NAFTA and the European Union (Nelson 1996) as a way of avoiding growing economic and political tensions between the two groups of nations.
- Building stronger free trade ties between the United States (and NAFTA) and the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation group of seventeen Pacific Rim nations (Stout and Robbins 1996).
- Negotiating the accession of individual countries into the NAFTA; Chile has long been considered the strongest candidate for entry into an expanded NAFTA.
- Negotiating a hemisphere-wide free trade agreement (a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, FTAA) by building on the Enterprise of the Americas Initiative originally introduced by President Bush in 1990 and confirmed by President Clinton at the Summit of the Americas meeting in Miami in 1994. Two follow-up meetings in 1995 (Denver) and 1996 (Cartagena) and the ongoing efforts of several working committees have kept this process very much alive but out of U.S. newspaper headlines.