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A North American Method to the 5G Madness:

Conclusions from the 5G Beyond Borders Workshop



This series is a product of the 2020 5G Beyond Borders Workshop organized by:





Acknowledgments

This policy brief is a contribution to a workshop focusing on the future of 5G in North America. [The 5G Beyond Borders](#) workshop, organized by the Wilson Center, the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), and Tecnológico de Monterrey, aimed to discuss how strategic cooperation at the North American level can directly shape the future of 5G and lay the groundwork for expanded North American competitiveness in a range of emerging technologies. One primary goal of the workshop was to help lay the foundations for a broader North American Technology Trust.

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A paramount example is the recently passed [Cyber Incident Response Act](#) (H.R. 1168). If signed into law by the President, it will task the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to come up with guidelines



3. Promoting Continental Collaboration through Trilateral Forums

Finally, North America needs more mechanisms for cross-border collaboration, with each country at a very different stage of 5G development and deployment. The same may be said when comparing North America with global 5G efforts. Take, for instance, Canada, whose 4G LTE network is still faster than South Korea's 5G network [▲](#). But while Canada's 4G LTE network might boast higher speeds, it also bears the most expensive bandwidth costs.

It is worthwhile to mention that the 5G advertised today by carriers is not the 5G that is promised by the scientific and technical community. The GSMA forecasts that [▼](#), Latin America will have a 65 percent adoption rate of 4G and only an 8 percent adoption rate of 5G. While Mexico will still outpace the Latin American average in 2025 with a projected 5G adoption rate of 12 percent, other countries are already beginning the conversation on 6G. South Korea anticipates launching a [▶▶](#), with 6G becoming commercially available between 2028 and 2030. This figure demonstrates three things: 1) Not all cellular networks are created equal; 2) The true potential of 5G has yet to be realized; and 3) Different 5G goals will be achieved at different speeds, often aligning with regional or national priorities.

Although no North American country is particularly behind in terms of 5G development and deployment efforts, it can be said that neither the US, nor Mexico, nor Canada are moving forward congruously or harmoniously with one another. Rather, the US, Mexico, and Canada are making progress on 5G in idiosyncratic ways, which can pose challenges to standardization and collective benefit in the future. Collaboration on a set of North American standards for 5G could help achieve a better-coordinated strategy across the continent. Thankfully, the sole purpose of regional coordination bodies is to successfully implement and integrate the country-specific standardization strategies in a coordinated way. Regional coordination bodies such as the Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT), Comisión Interamericana de Telecomunicaciones (CITEL), and the Council for Harmonization of Electrotechnical Standardization of the Nations of the Americas (CANENA) will be essential forums for dialogue and promoting interoperable standards among stakeholders.

To learn more, read the three policy briefs which served as the foundation for the [▶▶▶](#) workshop discussions:

1. [Baa... 5G: The Security of the U.S.](#)
By Melissa K. Griffith

This policy brief first provides an overview of the promise of 5G—its potential benefits, how it differs from past generations of cellular networks, and its current state of deployment in the US—and offers an examination of the risks of 5G—both intrinsic to the technology itself and the national security implications of untrusted vendors in the supply chain. The policy brief then identifies the three largest strains on current US 5G security efforts and provides key policy considerations to mitigate these risks.

2. [Saa... 5G Identity](#)
By Michel Girard

This policy brief explores the value and opportunity for governments and industry in North America to adopt common standards covering 5G networks and IoT connected devices as a condition for an optimized



North American 5G manufacturing ecosystem. Developing a 5G technology roadmap will be instrumental to setting standards priorities and identifying gaps in standardization for 5G infrastructure to meet stringent security, health and safety guidelines. The policy brief suggests coordination across North American government and industry.



About the Project: 5G Beyond Borders

The [5G Beyond Borders](#) project explores how the U.S., Canada, and Mexico can work together to maximize the benefits of 5G and related technology through informed policy solutions. The project offers an overview of the landscape of 5G technology around the globe, while also focusing on the impact of 5G on North American business, and smart manufacturing. Cross-border collaboration between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico is essential to a secure transition. 5G Beyond Borders explores not only 5G security, but how North American cooperation can reduce risks, maximize economic gains, and ensure an efficient 5G rollout.

Workshop Partners

The [Wilson Center](#) was chartered by Congress in 1968 as the official memorial to President Woodrow Wilson. It serves as the nation's key non-partisan policy forum for tackling global issues through independent research and open dialogue to inform actionable ideas for the policy community. The workshop is part of the Wilson Center's [5G Beyond Borders](#) project, which is a larger collaboration between the Wilson Center's Mexico Institute, Canada Institute, and



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