

# FOREIGN POLICY AND GOVERNANCE IN MEXICO A CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL DILEMMA<sup>1</sup>

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## **Introduction**

Vicente Fox taking office as the first non-PRI president on December 1, 2000 was a watershed in Mexican politics. On the one hand, it meant the beginning of a transformation of the political regime, which had been dominated by a non-democratic political tradition and a political class without a coherent long-term political project. Mexico was a country with a closed political system, controlled by a one-party regime, and with a relatively authoritarian order. Therefore, a comprehensive political transition was needed to make institutional change and the consolidation of new democratic rules possible. Hence, the new administration was the crystallization of a long struggle to create the essential conditions for turning Mexico into a modern democratic nation. The purpose of this was, in the first place, to secure the values embraced by liberal democracy through modernization, and, secondly, to guarantee that progress within the framework of this broad political development would bring about the climate needed to create the basis for the economic opportunities required to achieve the prosperity postponed for almost three decades.

Within this framework, in the past, both Mexico's domestic political climate and its interaction abroad had been quite rigid. Domestic change in Mexico occurred alongside neo-globalization,<sup>2</sup> particularly taking into account the international community's widespread demand for radical democratic change in Mexican politics, and the final outcome of moving toward the country's democratic renovation. At the same time, the challenge of both political and economic modernization required that Mexico transform the polity and the economy to maintain the balance

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<sup>2</sup> This concept has recently been coined to replace the term "globalization" in order to explain today's economic process, in which the aim is to improve macroeconomic indicators regardless of growing dependency and the widening gap between rich and poor. It is a neoliberal globalization emphasizing privatization, liberalization, free trade and widespread democratization, but using for these goals existing widespread technological innovations and generally disregarding the population's welfare.

between the need for a historic domestic change and the prevailing international reality. To a great extent, this expectation was fulfilled by deepening the domestic political process, placing Mexico in a decisive stage on the path of economic modernization and political progress.

For better or for worse, globalization represented both an opportunity and a challenge for Mexico, since ostensibly the opening and the strengthening of the economy would simultaneously ensure an opening of the political system. Since the end of the 1980s, important actors in the international community had begun a full transformation of its socio-political and economic environment. On the one hand, almost every single country underwent its own process of integration into regional market blocs and the creation of a new normative framework, so much so that almost none of the international actors remained unattached to some form of geopolitical arrangement.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, international society reached a new level of organization and an even more autonomous international civil society emerged, its dynamism enhancing the political presence of a novel and belligerent international citizenry. Mexico was no exception.

In the context of Mexico's progress toward a new democratic order, a wide spectrum of possibilities opened up for the country. One of the most representative fields where this happened was the international sphere, where old risks were apparently in the process of being overcome. The new administration's main statements from December 1 onward—and even before that, when Fox was still a presidential candidate—emphasized the need to equate the opening of the economy and the democratic outcome of the July 2000 elections with citizens' rights. Moreover, its foreign policy clearly stated that Mexico's insertion into the new international reality had to be produced by making respect for human rights a central component of the democratic project.<sup>4</sup> This was one of the avenues for consolidating the democratic legitimacy obtained at the polls. Thus, the defense of human rights was both a trigger and a launching pad for democracy. It was also one of the main steps for enhancing the international legitimacy that the 2000 elections had produced. On the other hand, it embodied a component of an international trend, from which Mexico could not divorce itself.

Contrary to what had happened in the past when old-guard politicians conceived of foreign relations from a conventional perspective, during the Fox administration, foreign policy was intended to be a priority to ensure Mexico's entry into the new cen-

<sup>3</sup> Regional integration processes under the framework of the "new regionalism" entail severe disadvantages that can be accentuated when involving countries of different levels of development. Some of the problems are over-concentrated dependency; lack of reciprocity; high transition and adjustment costs as a result of inadequate liberalization policies; stagnation and a widening development gap; distribution problems; the polarization of inequality; asymmetry in building institutions; conflicts between protectionist and liberalization tendencies; and exclusion costs for non-members. See Wilfred J. Ethier, "The New Regionalism," *The Economic Journal*, vol. 108, no. 449 (July 1998); and Roberto Bouzas, "El 'nuevo regionalismo' y el área de libre comercio de las Américas: un enfoque menos indulgente," *Revista de la CEPAL* 85 (April 2005): 7-18.

<sup>4</sup> Jorge Castañeda, "Mirando al futuro," *Nexos*, vol. 23, no. 288 (December 2001).

ture's globalized order as a dynamic actor capable of presenting itself as a paradigm of modernity. The Mexican president was supposed to know that the current context of both the continental and international order presented a broad spectrum of possibilities for this country. Whereas Mexico's standing within the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) placed it in an even more important position as a potential Latin American litigant than its peers, the competing middle powers of the region, Brazil—and to some extent Venezuela—were overtaking the regional standing that geo-strategically used to belong to the Mexican realm of potentialities.

In this regard, the foreign policy project was designed along two main axes. Owing to strategic considerations, they deserve prior attention since they are indispensable for Mexico to develop an efficient and relevant foreign policy to address the country's real needs. The first is the construction of a strategic relationship with the United States, and the second, the active participation of Mexico in the configuration of the new international system. Jorge G. Castañeda, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2003, once and for all unraveled the official vacillation between principles and interests by stating that what the administration wanted was to ensure the adequate protection and promotion of the country's interests in the contemporary international scenario. Within the most rational and realistic paradigm, Jorge G. Castañeda argued that the two axes were compatible, but above all inseparable because of the extremely concentrated dependence of the asymmetrical bilateral relationship.<sup>5</sup>

And yet, the challenge was misunderstood and greatly confused with another feature of bilateral relations with the United States: namely, the long-standing and allegedly exceptional friendship-led relationship dominating several of the decisions and reactions of the overestimated transitional government. All of this eliminated the possibility of both embracing its domestic momentum of full democratic validation and taking on the responsibility of reshaping the framework under which Mexican foreign policy could have better performed its internationalization. Unfortunately for Fox, this did not happen.

Likewise, Mexico was to be regarded by Canada and the U.S., among other important actors of the industrialized world, as both an effective and a constructive bridge for drawing the lines of the new regional arrangements. Among the most relevant topics on the regional agenda were drug smuggling, migration flows, trade, environmental issues and economic aid. At the same time, the new opening of the international system allowed Mexico to start exploring the possibility of finding other partnerships beyond the scope of its traditional relationships forged throughout history with different actors in the hemisphere. It was about developing closer links with, among others, the countries of the European Union, Asia and the Middle East, such as Japan and Israel. In this context, Mexico would develop new trade relations by signing a number of agreements, all of which will show their real potential for Mexico in the coming years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 on trade agreements signed by Mexico and Appendix 2 on the agreements for mutual promotion and protection of investment it has signed.

For the aforementioned reasons, foreign policy became a powerful instrument of domestic development. A new foreign relations agenda was designed so Mexico could accomplish this international integration process. In this context, the country's democratic legitimacy and, thus, broader room for maneuver posed a four-fold structural challenge: 1) reinforcing the new domestic democratic reality by ensuring that transparent local political processes slated for that year and during the *sexenio* (Mexico's six-year presidential term) strengthened the comprehensive project for political and economic change that ushered Fox into office; 2) as a result, Mexico was very probably going to play a prominent role in international affairs, a vision that never materialized. The effects of this engagement in international politics were going to be at the regional level, the most important goal being the democratic and economic transformation of the Latin American countries. By developing an independent and innovative international policy, Mexico would have the opportunity to become both a bridge for reasonable cooperation and a containing wall against those interests that threaten its own and the hemispheric priorities; 3) consolidating the basis upon which Mexico had already established its relative dominance within the regional sphere, such as its partnership both in NAFTA and the potential new Latin American markets that President Fox announced as priorities for Mexico's new development goals, and, finally, 4) building a predictable foreign policy, whose strategy could primarily, efficiently match objectives, priorities and outcomes that are both understandable and easily identified with.

The election of President Vicente Fox ushered Mexico into a new era. Democratic legitimacy presented a wide range of opportunities and responsibilities. The advantages of a democratic transition in a country as complex as Mexico also represented a myriad of challenges. As was already mentioned, guaranteeing Mexico's success in this process required that both the economic and the political variables coincide—a need that remains to be met. However, the success of the new democratic project depended on the following: *a*) the deepening of a broad democratic transition; *b*) the participation of the majority of political actors in this transformation so that it produced conditions for the emergence of a stable democratic regime; *c*) a strong economy; and *d*) Mexico's active participation in the increasingly challenging globalized arena *vis-à-vis* international economic conditions. These are the challenges I will delve into more deeply theoretically and empirically in this chapter. Most importantly, I would argue that as much as foreign policy represents a window of opportunity within a very incomplete democratic reform process, it has also been an obstacle for accomplishing the democratic government's most cherished domestic goals,<sup>7</sup> to the extent that the intimate link between domestic and foreign policy created a great crisis of legitimacy in both fields.

<sup>7</sup> It was during the Fox administration that the reform of the Mexican state was launched as the ultimate goal of the national project. The key elements for consolidating it are the regime and government, the electoral system, the strengthening of federalism, the judicial branch, the tax system and social guarantees.

## The Foreign Policy Labyrinth

I should begin by stating —and not even Mexico’s principled foreign policy can be exempt from this— that neither foreign policy nor the reality surrounding the strategic decisions taken in defense of national interests is immutable. Foreign policy must sometimes change its programmatic and basic priorities as changes occur in history.

Any modern state must design a foreign policy. This stems from the circumstances. In the first place, as Lenin once observed, the state is not a cloistered island, but a member of a society of states in which it inevitably participates. In the second place, in this society of states, in theory, power should not be centralized but distributed among them, not in equal amounts but equitably. While foreign policy is similar to any other state activity, such as guaranteeing education and health services or ensuring law and order, it differs from them to the extent that the state exercises only imperfect control —if any at all— over the world in which it lives.

According to Roscoe Pound, domestic policy exerts social control through the law. Foreign policy, for its part, consists of the use of political influence to get other states to exercise their executive and legislative power in a way that satisfies the state in question. At the same time that this consideration is necessary in the process of any foreign policy, we cannot underestimate the strength of the unpredictable, of what Fisher once called “the play of the contingent and the unforeseen.”<sup>8</sup> To this, we should add what can only be considered the perverse logic of international events, the tendency for situations to arise that were not only unanticipated but which the states made all their best efforts to avoid.<sup>9</sup>

## Change or Continuity

What foreign policy is not subject to day-to-day pressures that question even its historic alliances, the common interests it professes with friendly states and the sacrifices it can make in the name of accommodating other powers and, in crisis situations, hostile powers? What foreign policy is not subject to important modifications when a place must be found in the world and the regional concert in the context of changing its own local political conditions, and of a world transition of still unsuspected dimensions? The price of foreign policy effectiveness is permanent vigilance against the irremediable changes in world politics. In no other way can a foreign policy be conceived that is at the same time strategic (visionary and long-term), pragmatic and resolute (providing concrete solutions to the needs

<sup>8</sup> H.A.L. Fisher, “Preface”, in *History of Europe* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934).

<sup>9</sup> See José Luis Valdés-Ugalde’s review of the book *La política exterior de México bajo un régimen democrático*, in Rafael Velázquez Flores, coord., *Anuario de la División de Estudios Internacionales y Humanidades* 2 (2002): 203-210.

posed by world events). In that sense, the question of whether a policy must be guided by principles—in my opinion, a relatively weak argument—transcends even the legal and constitutional discussion.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, it is true that foreign policy is an endless dialogue between the *powers of continuity* and the *powers of change*.<sup>11</sup> We have, first of all, the continued existence through the years of the general aspects of the international system in which states live and which, sooner or later, their external behavior will help to configure. Regardless of any Byzantine discussions that may arise, above all in societies like Mexico's that have not yet created solid institutional arrangements to give strength to their economic and political modernization projects, the surprising aspect of states' encounters with the international system in situations of low-level, medium-level or radical crisis, is that through time, we find ourselves adjusting to states' circumstantial requirements. This may be, for example, by practicing a balance of power (when dealing with hegemonic or medium-sized powers) that might counter their ideologies, or by refusing to continue a foreign policy that ignores universal principles on which its own political genesis should be based, not to mention the future of its march toward achieving those two elusive spirits: progress and modernity.<sup>12</sup>

What is more, in this system, geographical space may remain immobile but the geopolitical scenarios of the different states and their geographical relations have enormous mobility; certainly technology, social movements, regime changes and even crises can change the implications of the physical factors and make them transcend the merely physical frontiers, imposing a transnational character on the interaction not only among states but also among nations and societies.

This is the case of the relations that develop in the framework of NAFTA and among European nations, for instance. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that it can be the case of societies and nation-states that have been affected by changes in government and ideology—even revolutionary changes—in which there are no necessarily substantial modifications in the way their foreign policy is conducted. But here, particularly in this chapter, where we are discussing the basic aspects of the not-always-felicitous relationship between domestic and foreign policy, it seems imperative to bring up some of the differences in the functions of ideology in foreign policy: 1) uniting a country psychologically; 2) offering a scale of values so people know what to support and what to reject; 3) furnishing a frame of reference that allows people to become aware of just how disconcerting international reality can become and to justify government efforts to deal with it, even through basic changes in strategy; and 4) providing a prism through which states perceive the international realities their foreign policy must be based on. Without ideology, a country does not precisely die, but it would be relatively rudderless when deciding what to approve or disapprove. Conversely, it can be said that in

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See F.S. Northedge, *The Foreign Policies of the Powers* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968).

<sup>12</sup> Valdés-Ugalde, *Anuario*.

ordinary circumstances, we can expect that rational calculations about national interests and ideological schema go hand in hand; most modern ideologies are extremely malleable, and even more so when confined to “the international.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Changing Foreign Policy Realities and Options**

Thus, how is it that, if everything is fixed and orderly in foreign policy, a government or state of any size can be a free agent or actor in the execution of its international policy? In any case, we can say that, historically, policy makers have found that their options are predetermined at the domestic policy level, yes, but to a much greater extent in international matters, even more than they perceived or rationally calculated before taking office. This does not mean that foreign policy makers do not make mistakes in the course of their rational deliberations, all of which is implicit in the implementation of (foreign) policies and can hardly be fully understood—and is sometimes even underestimated—by most of the public. As a matter of fact, in a democracy, state policies are not exactly fashioned to be understood by a broad public, although they do require a sphere of legitimacy that rests on the institutional organization of an institutionalized government—whether firmly institutionalized or not—that all modern states and societies should have, to allow for subtle conditions for preservation and preventing risks. However, the freedom that does matter in foreign policy questions—and weighs critically in most cases—is the ability to decide among relatively few options. A recurring image for illustrating this reasoning is a card game. Just like in cards, the government’s hand is a result of the circumstances: there is no freedom to play a card that you do not have in your hand; of the cards in your hand, there are always one or perhaps two that are the “right” card to play at that stage of the game. It is the “right” one in the sense that when the game is over and all the hands are face up on the table (and part of the story reconstructed), that card was the right one to play under the circumstances, with the understanding that the player was ready to win the game. The reason the player makes a mistake by not playing the decisive card at the decisive moment can be because of personality, political or religious beliefs or his/her partisan loyalties, or because of a lack of ideally perfect information. But in my opinion, there is no doubt that there is a decisive card, whose identity is not governed by the player’s personal traits, but by the very way the game is going, its rhythm. The game generates a “climate” or “climates” in which concrete policies develop and force decisions that are not always subject to the rigor of consensus: they are decisions that in a democratic environment stem from a legitimate power whose responsibility is to act, first with a sense of commitment to the obligations assumed in the international sphere and, second, that require, of course, a statesman’s vision.

<sup>13</sup> Valdés-Ugalde, *Anuario*.

## **Mexican Foreign Policy Objectives And Times of Transition**

What, then, is foreign policy? What do governments seek from it? In effect, it must be assumed that foreign policy stems from the intimate interaction between the internal and the external. It is a matter of defending interests more than of national interests —interests that are served or interests that must wait to be satisfied; not all interests are satisfied. It is a matter of the representation of interests emblematic of the national ethos. This is, I believe, the basis that motivates the work of a leader in foreign policy: principles are insinuated through political representation, and national interests are fulfilled in the light of a political reality.

In a liberal democracy such as the one Mexico is trying with great difficulties to achieve and consolidate, the debate centers on what interests are defensible and which, if necessary, can be sacrificed. All of this happens in the framework of the implementation of foreign policy. The question is 1) whether some interests are going to be damaged, and 2) which interests they should be. The hierarchy of interests that a government tries to defend or refuses to decline is based on desires, needs and a state's demands in the international order, and on a national consensus that is sufficiently firm so as to support and sustain leaders whose responsibility is to represent the state in international policy.

In the framework of globalization, the state must reorganize itself and therefore also the social relations that constitute it, so that these lost ties of the state community are reconstructed. External sovereignty cannot represent a state before the rest of the states if the state does not recognize itself and define its personality and sense of identity. It must be strong *from within* in order to be able to defend its national interests in an interdependent world, and simultaneously, it must recognize the rights of the rest of the states that make up international society. The current challenge for each national state is to strengthen internal sovereignty.

Recent social phenomena, the transformation of national and international relations and the reorganization of the economy and society undoubtedly show us that in the last 20 years the world has become a different place. To paraphrase Zaki Laïdi, globalization has turned into an important social representation of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>14</sup> Globalization is a socio-political phenomenon related to the end of the Cold War: after the fall of the Soviet Union, it emerged as the triumph of the democratic-liberal model. It has included the universalization of certain ideological, cultural and value models like those identified with the principles of democracy and liberalism. In addition, it is commonly understood as the transition between the reunification of the world and the disappearance of national borders; it is related to processes of regionalization, cultural harmonization and the transformation of the national state.

Globalization and recent political changes bring us face to face with a vast historical and cultural diversity not explicable in the usual way. These changes have

<sup>14</sup> Zaki Laïdi, *Un mundo sin sentido* (Mexico City: FCE, 1997), 11.



generated transformations in all spheres of human relations and in the dynamics of international society, which in turn spur the creation of new theories to explain and make reasonable order out of these new international social configurations.

The nature of the “new world order” is by no means obvious. With the end of the Cold War, political expectations were dashed, as were models that explained the bi-polar order and attempted to sketch its possible future (very often from uniformity, like “real socialism”). What is certain is that the transition from the old bi-polar order to this new order caused disquiet and academic and political uncertainty about whether theoretical elements are still valid or if others need to be incorporated.

After the end of the bi-polar order, all states have redefined their place in the new international configuration. Basic concepts like sovereignty, independence, national interest and national and international security have changed as the objectives they pursue also changed. Formulation and execution of the national foreign policies should therefore be designed accordingly.

### **The Mexican Paradox**

For the first time in the history of Mexico since the Mexican Revolution, foreign policy has acquired great importance and transcendence and has been more closely linked to the success of domestic policy. For the last two presidential terms, Mexico had sought to be present in and participate more in multilateral discussions and negotiations for a simple reason, which, although not the only one, was perhaps a kind of catalyst: the economy became the central focus of Mexican international policy. As the country internationalized, the government had to abandon its “anti-U.S.” stance, opt for cooperation instead of conflict and forge a partnership mainly in economic but also in political terms with the United States and Canada. The partnership-building process required a broader definition of the Mexican foreign policy paradigm and of the national perception of the interests it wanted to pursue as an active international actor. The undeniable fact is that the partnership was a demand that came from the *de facto* integration that has always exceeded the institutional framework of the North American bloc. The most representative —though not very successful— outcome of this new institutionalized interconnectedness is the proposal for creating a sphere of cooperation under the principle of policy unification and coordination to promote regional security and prosperity (the SPP). This partnership can be praised as a successful outcome for U.S. foreign policy that advanced —and up to a certain point imposed— its national interest to protect U.S. citizens, notwithstanding the fact that Mexico or Canada would need to include other elements to defend their security in the region.

Despite the fact that foreign policy has changed in practice, its discussion has been postponed. This is why the legal principles that frame the formulation and execution of Mexico’s foreign policy are becoming more and more incongruous

with time.<sup>15</sup> The aforementioned principles are contained in Article 89 of the Mexican Constitution since the reform of 1988, and refer to the guiding foreign policy principles that the chief executive should implement:<sup>16</sup>

- 1) Non-intervention;
- 2) The self-determination of nations;
- 3) A peaceful solution to controversy;
- 4) The elimination of threats or the use of force in international relations;
- 5) The legal equality of states;
- 6) International cooperation for development; and
- 7) The fight for peace and international security.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, the much sought-after reform should go beyond the debate on principles and strategies and contemplate the broad, effective participation of all actors involved in Mexico's foreign policy-making process (i.e. the president, Congress, political parties, civil society, the private and academic sectors, etc.). What initially was interpreted as a rather generalized consensus could have been more accurately characterized as a lack of interest on the part of other actors and an executive branch monopoly in the field.<sup>18</sup> Only a small governmental elite participated in this decision making, thus rendering the democratic foreign policy process precarious. For example, traditionally, the executive has had greater power over the formulation of foreign policy than the legislature, even though Congress—and exclusively the Senate—is the body that constitutionally should sanction the decisions previously made by the executive branch.<sup>19</sup> This subordination was a direct result of Congress's lack of political independence and the over-concentration of information in the executive branch. To a great extent, it evinced one of the structural problems of the Mexican political regime: that is, the absence of a coherent and consistent balance of power.

As the twentieth century advanced and the international context changed, the incompatibility of those principles became increasingly evident. The Mexican gov-

<sup>15</sup> See Humberto Garza Elizondo, "Los cambios en la política exterior de México, 1989-1994," *Foro Internacional*, no. XXXIV (October-December 1994): 534-544.

<sup>16</sup> These principles are inserted in a multitude of international instruments that Mexico is a part of, having subscribed, approved, ratified and adhered to them: the Charter of the Organization of American States (ratified November 23, 1948) reformed by the Buenos Aires Protocol of 1967, and by the Cartagena of Indias Protocol of 1985; UN General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV) (October 24, 1975) containing the Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. See Edmundo Hernández-Vela Salgado, *Diccionario de política internacional*, 5th ed. (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Alonso Gómez Robledo Verduzco, "Mexican Foreign Policy: its Fundamental Principles", *Mexican Law Review* no. 3 (January-June 2005) IJ-UNAM, at <http://info8.juridicas.unam.mx/cont/3/arc/arc5.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> See Rafael Velázquez Flores, *Factores, bases y fundamentos de la política exterior de México* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> See Articles 73 and 76 of the Mexican Constitution in Secretaría de Gobernación, *Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, 8th edition (Mexico City: SG, 2001), 66-72 and 74-75.

ernment used foreign policy doctrine with increasing discretion to present itself as a relatively weak country that had to resort to the law to defend itself from external intervention. Nevertheless, for a long time, and despite being an anachronism, the principle of non-intervention and the Estrada Doctrine<sup>20</sup> basically made it possible for the Mexican government, through a very intelligent maze of relationships and complicities, to be authoritarian without any international ally being able or wanting to intercede. In some cases, explicit accords were established, like in the case of Cuba, not to intervene in each others' internal affairs in exchange for mutual support to further both countries' authoritarian political models. Mexico's ambivalence, expressed through the so-called "agreement to disagree,"<sup>21</sup> shaped Mexico-U.S. relations for decades, in the sense that it was the only arrangement that allowed a margin of relative independence for Mexico regarding the United States in foreign policy implementation, without endangering Mexico's most important bilateral relationship, and without officially compromising with any of the parties involved. Despite this, Mexico intervened actively in the Central American process in the 1980s and before that, in the Chilean events of 1973. It was a relatively comfortable foreign policy —although at the same time it had two faces— for an authoritarian regime that cautiously used it as a smoke screen to hide the enormous socio-political contradictions inside the country.

In that sense, Mexico's foreign policy, like that of any other country, depends on the international conditions of the state in question, but also on the international historic environment and context. Domestic political conditions have changed gradually in recent years, and, as I already mentioned, the year of democratic alternation in office, beginning in July 2000, was particularly important. Some political actors' attempts to defend a supposed tradition that they think is idealistic, legal and principle-based are surprising, however, and they fight for its continued implementation arguing that continuity is a sign of effectiveness, owing to the apparent status in the international arena that Mexico used to enjoy. Nevertheless, if one of international society's characteristics is dynamism, it is also reasonable to say that foreign policy changes in accordance with international politics, adjusting itself to historical circumstances to be effective.

<sup>20</sup> This doctrine, also known as "the Mexico Doctrine," "the Mexican Doctrine" or even "the Ortiz Rubio Doctrine," basically makes reference to the recognition of states and the assumption of a right to pass judgment critically on the legal capacity of foreign regimes, a right that is detrimental to the sovereignty of other states. Consequently, the Mexican government thereafter confined itself to maintaining or withdrawing its diplomatic representatives, as it deemed appropriate from time to time, without any regard to accepting or not accepting any change of government. This doctrine gives welcome evidence to the important distinction between recognition of a new state and recognition of a new government. See Philip C. Jessup, "The Estrada Doctrine," *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 25, no. 4 (October 1931): 719-723.

<sup>21</sup> Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, "La seguridad mexicana vista por Estados Unidos," in Sergio Aguayo Quezada and Bruce Michael Bagley, comps., *En busca de la seguridad: aproximaciones a la seguridad nacional* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1990), 306.

In a complex, conflictive, permanently changing world, a policy emphasizing tradition and continuity (unchanging principles and objectives) as its most outstanding traits could well be a policy that lags behind and is not very flexible. A policy that does not change and better itself is a rigid, old-fashioned policy that will not march to the rhythm of global change.<sup>22</sup>

Mexico's traditional foreign policy model has changed in practice without this being recognized in discourse or in theory. For that reason, I will mention some of the most noteworthy components of today's Mexican foreign policy:

- 1) Nationalism has been replaced by internationalism;
- 2) Independence has been replaced by interdependence;
- 3) Principles have been replaced by interests;
- 4) Legalism and symbolism have been replaced by pragmatism;
- 5) Idealism has been replaced by realism;
- 6) Being unrelated to domestic policy has been replaced by the effective linkage to domestic policy; and
- 7) Passiveness has been replaced by activity.

The internationalism and activity that Mexico tried to exhibit during the first democratic administration was clear in several efforts to exert international leadership, the climax of which was its period as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2002-2003. Other efforts that presented the new face of its pro-active foreign policy were the launching of the Puebla Panama Plan; the candidacy of Ernesto Derbez, Minister of Foreign Relations, for general secretary of the Organization of American States; the hosting of several international conferences; and the campaign for United Nations reform. Regarding the latter, Mexico pushed an agenda completely motivated by national interests when in April 2004, the president launched the Group of Friends for the Reform of the United Nations, aiming to reach "an integral understanding of the reform process that would allow the United Nations to address the most delicate challenges and threats of each historical cycle, not focusing exclusively on the composition of the Security Council."<sup>23</sup> However, it was Mexico's proposal to enlarge the Security Council that overtly demonstrated its competition with Brazil for the prize of regional leadership.

Mexico tried to make its commitment to multilateralism as clear as possible, as well as the effort to distance itself somewhat from the traditional associations the international community used to take for granted, such as the unspoken agreement

<sup>22</sup> Humberto Garza Elizondo, "Desequilibrios y contradicciones en la política exterior de México," *Foro Internacional*, no. XXIV (April-June 1984): 538.

<sup>23</sup> The counterparts invited were Germany, Algeria, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Spain, Japan, Kenya, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Singapore and Sweden. See Misión Permanente de México ante Naciones Unidas, *Grupo de amigos de la reforma de las Naciones Unidas*, at [http://www.un.int/mexico/index\\_reform.htm](http://www.un.int/mexico/index_reform.htm).

with Cuba during the annual human rights condemnation and the idea of being subordinated to U.S. foreign policy interests —the greatest show of intended distancing was Mexico’s refusal to acquiesce to the Iraq invasion. At the same time, Mexico was advancing its perceived national interests, frequently through very thoughtless pragmatism that could have been mistaken for historic indifference, diplomatic lack of concern and fragmented maneuvers. The pursuit of the “whole enchilada” is the case that best portrays this new foreign policy framework in which interests are prioritized, principles disregarded and policies are randomly adjusted as a simple reaction to contingencies.<sup>24</sup>

The component highlighting the alleged effective linkage to domestic policy must be nuanced: effectiveness depends on the sphere of action, self-evaluation, the domestic and international impact of the recognition of areas of concern and, for some specific cases, the degree of cooperation of the transnational partner. In the fight against drug-trafficking, domestic policy went hand-in-hand with U.S. security demands and the international condemnation of organized crime. In contrast, the migratory issue involved several inconsistencies: first, since domestic policy is still behind in recognizing Mexico’s responsibility for the push factors of migration, and, secondly, there is no migration policy that would finally deal with the impressive incoherence between the abandoned southern border and the overexposed northern border realities. The national human rights deficit that the Mexican government recently has openly condemned in multilateral forums also must not be forgotten.

It is not that Mexico’s foreign policy was not realistic, pragmatic and active or that it did not take into account and act in accordance with specific interests. What should be recognized is exactly the opposite: that is, that it did do all of this, but covertly, always behind a “neutral” and —why not say it?— simulated discourse and as the offspring of a frankly worn out —if not decomposed— post-revolutionary regime. It is time to make what is happening in practice unreservedly legitimate and legal.

Historically, it has been said that there was a contradiction between the principles and interests of Mexican foreign policy, despite this vision expressing a false dichotomy that in turn stems from an erroneous idea of international society (which, by the way, permeates the legislature today): it is believed to be static and that, therefore, it acts in accordance with a pre-established order that has predetermined the social and political roles of the states that make up international society. While it is true that developing countries do not have the same power of negotiation as developed countries, this idea should be rethought to assume that principles and interests are compatible with each other if they are put forward coherently in an interdependent and interconnected world. The use of the law and of principles of doctrine in favor of internal development is not opposed

<sup>24</sup> The “whole enchilada” was the expression coined by former Minister Jorge G. Castañeda to refer to a comprehensive immigration reform, including regularization of illegal Mexican migrants; a guest worker program and an increase in permanent visas. This became the only issue on the table with the U.S., making the foreign policy agenda one of the most heavily dominated by migration ever.

to their defense in international forums through the promotion and proposal of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral initiatives.

Principles of doctrine help as counterweights to the inequalities among states, but are insufficient to fully exercise foreign policy for two reasons: 1) it would be very hard to disagree with them since Mexican foreign policy principles are the same as those of international law, and, therefore, they are general and inflexible; and 2) they can be used to explain and argue a kind of behavior that they can, however, only justify *post-factum*.<sup>25</sup>

It is a good idea to clearly and openly incorporate a dose of realism into the exercise of foreign policy to avert the ambiguity in which Mexico has historically been situated (being in everything and with everyone, but not in favor of or against anything or anybody) and define national interests, and that policy's priorities and objectives. We should clarify that when we talk about realism, we are not referring to the type of policy conceived of as the exercise of power with no ideals or values, using fraud and implemented mercilessly. As Giovanni Sartori says, this is a mistaken conception:

Political realism is not what it is erroneously supposed to be. It is not a kind of self-sufficient policy, something that can agree with or oppose the systems we call democratic, socialist or others. In this continuum, there is no place for political realism for the simple reason that it is only one element, one ingredient of each and every one of the political positions. Every accurately descriptive explanation is a realistic explanation, which is the same as saying that realism only leads us to the antechamber of policy. Policy requires information; it needs to know reality and this is what political realism brings to the mix, but it does so to the benefit of all and not of a single side.<sup>26</sup>

The conviction that the application of international law is fundamental in the development of international policy must be preserved and, what is more, validated in states' domestic policies, and, more specifically in Mexico, imbuing international treaties (such as those referring to human rights) with the weight of the law and enforcing them in society. However, the fact that there are no private political interests often contrary to what is established in international law should not be disregarded, and, precisely for that reason, active participation in multilateral forums must be a constant. Although facts and values —understood as what they are and what they should be— are reciprocally related, we should not forget that they are two independent spheres that complement each other.

<sup>25</sup> See Héctor Manuel Ezeta, *Los principios y los intereses de la política exterior mexicana* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Asuntos Internacionales/Instituto de Estudios Políticos, Económicos y Sociales, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Aspectos de la democracia*, Rafael Castillo Dibildox, trans. (Mexico City: Limusa-Wiley, 1965), 49-50.

We must not make the mistake of using a fact to refute a value or, vice-versa, using a deontology to reject a manifestation of fact.... We must not fall into the mistake of believing that the entire case can be presented in terms of a description of reality or, to the contrary, in terms of value judgments. I mean that to encompass the entire field of politics, we need both facts and ideals.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

Domestic political change cannot be divorced from the changing international process. In the entire world, foreign policies have adapted themselves to the changing times of international reality and, to a great extent, NAFTA shows this. The pre-eminence of the globalized era over these policies has given states no rest. The states, for their part, have gone through an important process of transformation to which they have conformed, more or less rationally, their societies.

What is a historic fact is that in the last two decades, foreign policy issues have had an increasing impact on domestic policy. Domestic policy, foreign policy and international policy are three different moments of a single process. Thus, it is also true that domestic policy generates a great number of the issues and problems that are later transferred to the arena of foreign policy. This is why it is said that domestic and foreign policies are increasingly interrelated, and, in addition to not being really separable, are strategic components of a long-term state policy.

For analysts, but mainly for political actors directly involved in decision making, it is of the utmost importance to understand this unity and its meaning in the defense of national interests. What is more, it is of considerable significance that, regardless of political or ideological differences, legislators and federal officials agree on state strategies, forging a consensus about the steps for carrying out a foreign policy project that was offered to society. All the actors involved are responsible for articulating this project, sorting out their political differences—they are, after all, professional politicians—and achieving a consensus as a point of departure. It is my impression that nowadays, none of the political parties or political actors is sufficiently clear on these ideas. Their legislators' behavior vis-à-vis foreign policy issues gives the impression that they lack a clear vision: both of a national and a foreign policy project. It would seem that they are still moving among the old models of international relations—which up to a certain point is explicable—and the reality I have already described. That is, politicians seem to lack strategic vision. This, on the other hand, stems from the lack of professionalism that has dominated the legislature, partly because of the absence of a professional civic class that can teach them about the country's most important issues, and partly because legislators themselves are novices in the matters they must deal with during their terms. In this sense, it would seem to be even clearer that what is needed is to overcome the three major political parties' conservative resistance to constitutional reform and re-election.<sup>28</sup> Here, and of course in the

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>28</sup> The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN).

consciousness and principles of party doctrine, is where the parties are most backward in assuming responsibility for foreign policy in accordance with the new, already stormy, times that our country has to face. Undoubtedly, this scenario has an impact on the future of Mexico's international relations, and it has also negatively impacted, within the realm of NAFTA, our country's complex bilateral and trilateral relations.

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## Appendix 1

### FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY MEXICO

<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Date Published</i>	<i>Entry into Force</i>
NAFTA	United States and Canada	December 20, 1993	January 1, 1994
G3 FTA	Colombia and Venezuela *	January 9, 1995	January 1, 1995
Mexico-Costa Rica FTA	Costa Rica	January 10, 1995	January 1, 1995
Mexico-Bolivia FTA	Bolivia	January 11, 1995	January 1, 1995
Mexico-Nicaragua FTA	Nicaragua	July 1, 1998	July 1, 1998
Mexico-Chile FTA	Chile	July 28, 1999	August 1, 1999
Mexico-EU FTA	European Union	June 26, 2000	July 1, 2000
Mexico-Israel FTA	Israel	June 28, 2000	July 1, 2000
Mexico-Northern Triangle FTA	El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras	March 14, 2001	March 15, 2001 with El Salvador and Guatemala, and June 1, 2001, with Honduras.
Mexico-European Free Trade Association FTA	Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland	June 29, 2001	July 1, 2001
Mexico-Uruguay FTA	Uruguay	July 14, 2004	July 15, 2004
Mexico-Japan Agreement of Economic Association	Japan	March 31, 2005	April 1, 2005

\* As of November 19, 2006, only Mexico and Colombia participate in the FTA with the G3.

**Source:** Free Trade Agreements signed by Mexico, Vice Ministry for International Commercial Negotiations, Ministry of the Economy, [http://www.economia.gob.mx/work/sneci/negociaciones/ficha\\_publica\\_tlcs.htm](http://www.economia.gob.mx/work/sneci/negociaciones/ficha_publica_tlcs.htm); accessed June 20, 2008.

## Appendix 2

### AGREEMENTS FOR MUTUAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF INVESTMENT SIGNED BY MEXICO

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date Signed</i>	<i>Date Ratified by the Senate</i>	<i>Date Published</i>	<i>Entry into Force</i>
Argentina	November 13, 1996	April 24, 1997	August 28, 1998	July 22, 1998
Australia	August 23, 2005	February 21, 2006	June 12, 2007	July 18, 2007
Austria	June 29, 1998	December 14, 1998	March 23, 2001	March 26, 2001
Belgium-Lux Union	August 27, 1998	December 14, 1998	March 19, 2003	March 20, 2003
China	July 11, 2008	Pending	Pending	Pending
Cuba	May 30, 2001	December 11, 2001	May 3, 2002	March 29, 2002
Czech Republic	April 4, 2002	October 29, 2002	March 25, 2004	March 14, 2004
Denmark	April 13, 2000	April 28, 2000	November 30, 2000	September 23, 2000
Finland	February 22, 1999	April 17, 2000	November 30, 2000	August 21, 2000
France	November 12, 1998	April 17, 2000	November 30, 2000	October 11, 2000
Germany	August 25, 1998	December 14, 1998	March 20, 2001	February 23, 2001
Greece	November 30, 2000	April 26, 2001	October 11, 2002	September 17, 2002
Iceland	June 24, 2005	December 6, 2005	June 6, 2006	April 28, 2006

## Appendix 2

### AGREEMENTS FOR MUTUAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF INVESTMENT SIGNED BY MEXICO (CONTINUE)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date Signed</i>	<i>Date Ratified by the Senate</i>	<i>Date Published</i>	<i>Entry into Force</i>
India	May 21, 2007	December 11, 2007	March 5, 2008	February 23, 2008
Italy	November 24, 1999	April 17, 2000	January 17, 2003	December 4, 2002
Korea	November 14, 2000	April 16, 2002	August 9, 2002	June 28, 2002
Netherlands	May 13, 1998	December 14, 1998	July 10, 2000	October 1, 1999
Panama	October 11, 2005	April 4, 2006	December 19, 2006	December 14, 2006
Portugal	November 11, 1999	April 17, 2000	January 8, 2001	September 4, 2000
Spain	June 22, 1995 October 10, 2006*	November 16, 1995 April 26, 2007*	March 19, 1997 May 19, 2008*	December 18, 1996 April 4, 2008*
Slovakia	October 26, 2007	Pending	Pending	Pending
Sweden	October 3, 2000	April 3, 2001	July 27, 2001	July 1, 2001
Switzerland	July 10, 1995	November 16, 1995	August 20, 1998	March 11, 1996
Trinidad and Tobago	October 3, 2006	March 6, 2007	September 12, 2007	September 16, 2007
United Kingdom	May 12, 2006	April 26, 2007	July 25, 2007	July 25, 2007
Uruguay	June 30, 1999	December 11, 1999	August 9, 2002	July 1, 2002

\* Dates corresponding to the renegotiated agreement.

**Source:** Status of the Agreements for Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investment signed by Mexico, Office of Foreign Investment, Ministry of the Economy, <http://www.economia.gob.mx/?P=1210>, accessed June 25, 2008. Updated January 2009.