

Clinton's Visit to Mexico

There have been 54 U.S. presidential visits to Mexico. President William H. Taft made the first in 1909 to El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez to meet with Porfirio Díaz. A particularly important visit was Franklin D. Roosevelt's meeting

with Manuel Avila Camacho in 1943, in the middle of World War II, when both presidents and their retinues traveled together in Mexican and U.S. railroad cars from Monterrey, Nuevo León, to the border. Catholic President John F. Kennedy and his charming wife Jackie made an

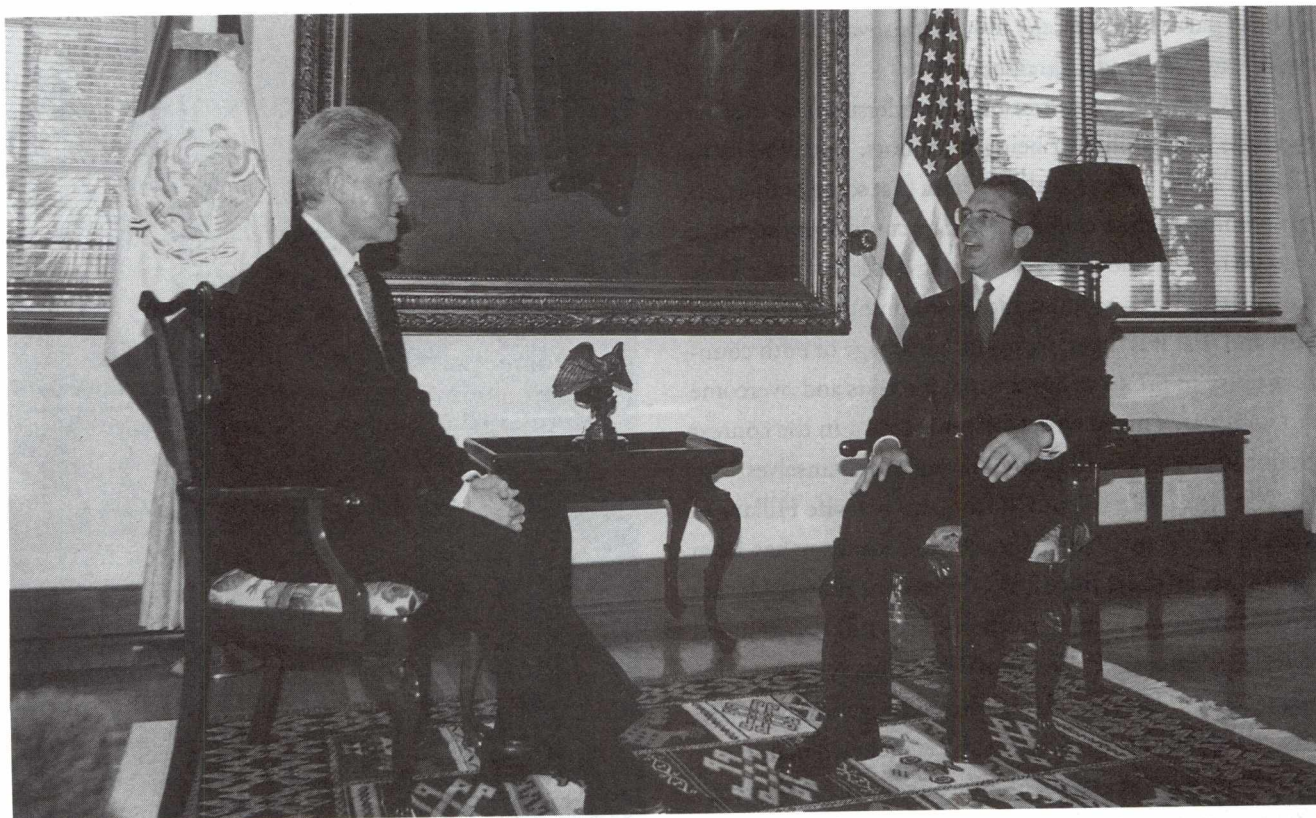


Photo courtesy of The President's Press Office

The Presidents of Mexico and the United States are fostering a relationship based on mutual understanding and conflict resolution.

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unforgettable visit in which Jackie's speech in Spanish won the hearts of the Mexican people, who would later mourn President Kennedy's death. Former President Salinas met 12 times with U.S. presidents around the globe as part of the strategy to win approval for the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The Clinton administration has understood for the first time the inevitability of being neighbors. Both President Clinton and President Zedillo realize that some of their citizens would change neighbors if they could, but they have paid no heed to the empty clamoring of those voices. They have established a relationship based on our being neighbors and that it is therefore to the advantage of both countries to try to promote our mutual interests and overcome our conflicts. This is particularly important in the context of globalization, which shapes the regions themselves.

The visit of President Clinton and his wife Hillary to Mexico was particularly significant because it has been more than 20 years since a U.S. president visited Mexico City. In addition, almost the entire U.S. cabinet attended the XIV Mexico-U.S. Binational Meeting, to go over different aspects of the agenda together seeking solutions when possible and to understand the differences when not.

Sitting down together, one-to-one, is a mutual recognition of your partner's sovereignty, regardless of his spe-

cial role or strength in the global economy. It means approaching the new century with a global outlook.

During the visit, 11 accords were signed and 2 joint statements made about the most sensitive questions on the bilateral agenda, migration and drug trafficking, two problems with no quick solution. In the past, encounters of this sort produced only dissonant monologues from each of our countries. Now, for the first time, however, the level of mutual recriminations has been overcome and a dialogue begun based on agreements that take into account the interests and rights of both nations. For the first time, both countries have the express intention of working together to avoid a sharpening of conflicts in these two very sensitive areas. The declarations are the beginning of the creation of a much-needed framework that can foster new forms of cooperation to deal with these not easily solvable problems. ❧

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