

Mexico-U.S. Relations And the 2006 Presidential Elections

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Mexico-U.S. relations have always been complex. For many years, the traditional bilateral agenda has included substantial issues that speak to the interests linking the two countries like migration, trade, finances, energy, drug trafficking, organized crime and, more recently, human rights and ecology. However, since September 11, 2001, the issue of security, particularly, border security, has permeated all the topics on the agenda to the degree that since then, the United States looks at almost every bilateral matter through the prism of security.

Just like every six years, this year, Mexico is renewing two of its branches of government. July 2, Mexican voters will elect 128 senators, 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies and the head of the executive. Both national and international public opinion are concentrated on the presidential race since the future of the country's internal and external policies will depend to a great extent on who takes office next December 1.

In that context, it is appropriate to ask: Will Mexico's foreign policy toward the United States change in the next six years? In what areas will there be continuity and where will there be change? To answer these questions, this article will review the foreign policy proposals, and particularly those about the United States, made in the action and government programs and internal guidelines of Mexico's main political parties, as well as the electoral platforms those parties' candidates have registered with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE).¹

Five candidates have registered with the IFE to run for the presidency: Felipe Calderón Hinojosa of the governing National Action Party (PAN); Roberto Madrazo Pintado of the "Alliance for Mexico" made up of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico (PVEM); Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of the "Alliance for the Welfare of All," made up of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Labor Party (PT) and the Convergence Party (PC); Patricia Mercado Castro of the Social Democratic and Peasant Alternative Party; and Roberto Campa Cifrián from the New Alliance Party. Only the first three hopefuls have real possibilities of win-

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ning. The other two, as candidates for new parties, aim to maintain their legal registration as political parties.

FELIPE CALDERÓN HINOJOSA (PAN)

The PAN candidate's proposal for foreign policy is found in section five of his electoral platform entitled "Effective Democracy and Responsible Foreign Policy."² The section points to democratic legitimacy as the essence of Mexico's foreign policy. Calderón says that democratic legitimacy has built a new image for Mexico in the world and that, thanks to that, our country increased its presence on the international scene. The PAN's challenge is to consolidate this international position and foster a responsible foreign policy with sustainable human development as its main axis. This implies using diplomacy and trade policy to improve Mexicans' living standards and that this would be reflected in an active foreign policy based on solidarity. Foreign policy should serve to create the well-being Mexicans require and that can also be achieved by other peoples.

With regard to the United States, Calderón centers his proposals in four areas: 1) building a strategic alliance among the nations of North America; 2) migration; 3) multi-lateral issues; and 4) national security. In the first area, he proposes creating and fostering a more prosperous, secure region in North America (proposal 385); creating working groups with the United States to deal with common interests and to expand the existing Partnership for Prosperity and Security (386). With regard to migration, the PAN proposes permanently solving the migratory problem (387) in the framework of shared

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Felipe Calderón Hinojosa.

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responsibility and mutual benefit embodied in international cooperation. The aim would be that migration be legal, ordered, secure and decorous; in addition, the PAN would propose a broad temporary workers program. All of this would be done on the basis of bilateral co-responsibility and attacking the causes of Mexicans leaving for the United States, such as the lack of jobs, backwardness and marginalization. Regarding the impact of remittances in Mexico, Calderón makes three proposals: 1) expanding programs to use remittances as a lever for regional development; 2) facilitating migrants' and their families' access to the financial system to cut the cost of sending remittances and to increase saving habits; and 3) tightening the links among the three levels of government, community associations, migrants and the pri-

vate sector to favor human development projects and providing communities with infrastructure.

In the multilateral sphere, the PAN proposes that Mexico once again become a temporary or permanent member of the UN Security Council (392) and subscribe to all the reforms to the Charter of American States in order to strengthen their development (393). In both cases, Mexico's foreign policy will link up with the United States', which could lead to agreements or disagreements. With regard to national security, Calderón proposes creating hemispheric security accords with the United States (411), and seeking to enforce the current secure borders program (410) to eradicate organized crime on the U.S. border, whether it be drug trafficking, smuggling of persons or goods or terrorism. In brief, for Felipe Calderón, the important issues of the bilateral relationship are national security, development for prosperity, migration and the presence of Mexico in multilateral fora. As is clear, he does not consider all the traditional issues of the bilateral agenda.

ROBERTO MADRAZO PINTADO
(ALLIANCE FOR MEXICO)

The PRI-PVEM coalition candidate's foreign policy is described in section three of his electoral platform, entitled "The Government We Want," particularly

in points 3.1, “Sovereign Nation and International Policy” and 3.2, “National Security.”³ According to Madrazo, the defense of national sovereignty is the basis for foreign policy, and international policy is the strategic tool for preserving that sovereignty, strengthening the country’s international presence and promoting Mexico’s interests abroad.

On that basis, the Alliance for Mexico proposes five areas for bilateral relations: 1) maintaining a good relationship with the United States; 2) border development; 3) multilateral and international policy; 4) migratory policy; and 5) national security. About the first point, Roberto Madrazo offers to maintain respectful, equitable relations with the United States (proposal 729); to come to an agreement with the U.S. on a foreign policy and regional security agenda in which both nations gradually and by consensus decide on issues of mutual interest and articulate their actions (731); to establish effective mechanisms for coordination that facilitate agreements and results to solve common problems (775); and to strengthen the operational capability of the North American Development Bank by geographically extending its mandate (776). In this sphere, he also seeks to tighten links of solidarity with the Mexican and Hispanic communities residing in the United States (732). With regard to border development, the Alliance for Mexico will seek social, eco-

nom, cultural and ecological development of border areas, and provide them with the legal instruments needed to effectively enforce respect for human rights in the region (733).

With regard to multilateral and international policy, Madrazo proposes strengthening and democratizing international bodies and condemns the imposition of the will of some nations (754), particularly members of the UN Security Council (761). He will seek to renovate international bodies (734); foster an integral multilateral economic cooperation system (735) to overcome underdevelopment and advance an effective system for achieving world peace and security (736); promote respect and protection for human rights (764); strengthen international cooperation in the struggle against terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms



Roberto Madrazo Pintado.

of organized crime (765); bolster the use of preventive diplomacy in the management, contention and resolution of conflicts and encourage greater participation of multilateral mechanisms to achieve disarmament, including nuclear disarmament and the control of all types of weapons (769). To carry out all these proposals a very intense dialogue with the U.S. government will be needed.

With regard to migratory policy, the Alliance for Mexico thinks it is important to propose to the United States:

- a) signing a migratory agreement that recognizes the value of Mexican migrants’s work for the U.S. economy and seeks to regularize their migratory status with full respect for their labor rights (752);
- b) that migration be mutually beneficial for Mexico and the United States, with absolute respect for Mexican migrants’ human rights (743);
- c) strengthening the legal and institutional framework for combatting the traffic in persons and promoting accords around this issue with the United States (753); and demand that the United States’ actions obey the law, international law and respect the human rights of our countrymen and women who try to cross our northern border (779).

Outstanding among the institutional actions that Mexico must take regarding migrants are:

- a) increasing resources and capabilities of Mexican consulates in the United States so they can offer better service to our compatriots and defend their rights (748);
- b) developing government strategies that can serve Mexican migrants

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- abroad in a coordinated, comprehensive way (742);
- c) furthering the coordination of migration-related activities by Mexico's border states in order to create a mechanism for dialogue with U.S. border states (751);
- d) championing an active policy to support those Mexicans who want to repatriate (749); and
- e) improving the system for sending and receiving remittances, promoting ways to reduce transfer costs (745). However, Madrazo makes no proposal to eliminate the causes of Mexican migration to the United States.

The Alliance for Mexico's platform summarizes the issue of national security in the following points:

- a) designing a broader national security and defense agenda as the basis for international cooperation and the exchange of strategic information with intelligence services, particularly those of NAFTA (783);
- b) fulfilling security responsibilities according to existing bilateral border agreements (777);
- c) considering drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism, money laundering and human rights violations the main threats to national security (778); and
- d) guaranteeing the security of strategic facilities throughout our national territory. To that end, the security agenda must include information about the facilities that could be a target for attack (784); the alliance also proposes professionalizing intelligence services and involving personnel designated for this task solely in national security activities (786).

In summary, Roberto Madrazo's position on institutional relations with the United States focuses on border development, multilateral and international policy, migration and national security.

ANDRÉS MANUEL LÓPEZ OBRADOR
(ALLIANCE FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL)

The foreign policy position of the PRD-PT-Convergence coalition, the Alliance for the Welfare of All, is found in section six of its electoral platform entitled "Globality, Regional Blocs and Our National Project."⁴ According to Andrés Manuel López Obrador, global interdependence is the driving force behind international relations and Mexico must counter the negative effects of the global economy like increasing inequality



Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

among regions and countries, the destruction of the environment and prevailing speculation by financial capital. In this sense, globalization should not limit national sovereignty and, as a result, Mexico's foreign policy should promote and support multilateral initiatives for peace, democracy, the respect for human rights and equitable, inclusive, sustainable development.

As a result, foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the United States centers on five points: 1) a state policy; 2) the economy 3) migration; 4) security; and 5) multilateral and international policy. The first item means practicing an authentic state foreign policy involving the three branches of government with clear aims, redefining their jurisdictions and introducing new mechanisms like the ratification of the Minister of Foreign Relations by Congress or the creation of the National Foreign Policy Council (proposal 305). López Obrador also proposes that foreign economic policy should further the strategy of sustainable and socially inclusionary and equitable development (282).

The Alliance for the Welfare of All thinks linking our country to the U.S. economy has shown its limitations as a solution to economic stagnation and that therefore Mexico should make a priority of its relations with Latin America and seek a mature, respectful, equitable relationship with the United States based on preparing a common agenda that neither confronts the two

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governments nor implies subordinating one to the other. The idea is a policy of regional co-responsibility emphasizing economic re-ordering. The main proposals in this sense are:

- a) evaluating the existing free trade agreements in light of the principles of equitable economic conditions, the creation of compensatory funds, the free circulation of labor and job protection (280);
- b) reviewing NAFTA's agricultural chapter and implementing programs to deal with problems in the countryside and to encourage regional development (294); and
- c) broadening out the activities of the Bank of North America in order to provide the compensatory funds needed by the regions of the country affected by NAFTA (295).

With regard to migration, López Obrador deems it important to:

- a) design an accord with the United States that recognizes the positive aspects of migration, promoting amnesty, legalization and documentation of all Mexican immigrants (296);
- b) put an end to abuses of Mexican migrants by U.S. authorities; and
- c) demand an end to border surveillance by private citizens (297).

The platform also establishes responsibilities toward Mexicans abroad, most of whom live in the United States. It proposes creating a law to protect migrants (308); promoting representation of Mexican migrants in Mexico's Congress (309); designing a scholarship program for the children of migrants in order to enroll them in Mexico's higher education system (311);

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and encouraging small and medium-sized Mexican-American businesspersons and establishing trans-border professional associations (312).

Regarding security, the Alliance for the Welfare of All underlines the importance of reformulating the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America in terms of the defense and sovereignty of the interests of the Mexican state and of guaranteeing the non-subordination of Mexican security policy to that of the United States (298).

With regard to multilateral and international policy, Andrés Manuel López Obrador proposes developing a foreign policy consistent with national needs and fostering the multilateral solution of international problems like the arms race, organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, the conservation of the environment, pandemics and migration (304); rejecting any military intervention outside UN norms (275); furthering a comprehensive reform of the United Nations system and that of multilateral economic bodies like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. He also says that the Economic and Social Council should become an Economic Security Council in charge of comprehensively coordinating its agencies' work. In addition, he proposes strengthening the International Criminal Court (276). López Obrador also underlines the need to regulate international capital flows through a tax on

financial activity and the importance of establishing international trade rules to compensate for the differences among nations (279).

FINAL COMMENTS

Clearly, bilateral relations with the United States is a central issue for all three candidates. However, the three both agree and disagree about proposals about how to deal with this relationship for the next six years. Seen as a whole, we can say that the issues on the traditional bilateral agenda are included in their electoral platforms, although each candidate deals with each one differently. Generally speaking, the three candidates fundamentally agree on their perception that foreign policy should serve to develop our country to the benefit of our population. This would imply changing certain practices that would not necessarily lead to a clash with Washington.

Undoubtedly, the central agreement is on migration, security and multilateral and international policies. In that sense, the three candidates propose a migratory accord between the two countries based on bilateral co-responsibility (shared benefits) that would allow for regularizing the status of undocumented migrants in the United States.

Border security and security linked to prosperity are also points of agreement. The intensive use of multilateral

bodies to resolve conflicts and the democratization of international bodies is also a common concern that could lead to differences with the United States.

From the point of view of continuity or change in relations with the United States, neither Felipe Calderón nor Roberto Madrazo bet on radical change. However, Andrés Manuel López Obrador's foreign policy proposals linked to economic and social issues differ substantially from those of the other two candidates, constituting a revision of the current model of economic development that has operated in Mexico and the rest of Latin America in recent

years fostered by the United States. This would imply, in principle, a relationship that included more dialogue, though not necessarily greater understanding. López Obrador will have to have a very clear strategy to dialogue with Washington and at the same time defend his platform proposals and, eventually, his government program, but also to not underestimate relations with the most important trade partner for our country and the world. If this is not properly taken into account, he would run the risk of a dialogue with the United States that does not correspond to the country's needs. ■■■

NOTES

¹ According to Article 176 of the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Processes (Cofipe), political parties and their candidates must register their electoral platforms, which, if they win, will be the basis for their government program.

² The PAN's electoral platform contains 412 proposals. Numbers 384 to 412 are those related to foreign policy. The platform can be consulted at <http://www.pan.org.mx/?P=43>

³ The Alliance for Mexico's electoral platform is made up of 944 proposals; foreign relations issues are dealt with from points 723 to 787. The platform can be consulted at http://www.pri.org.mx/estadetulado/Alianza/documentos/alianzapormexico_plataforma2006.pdf

⁴ The Alliance for the Welfare of All electoral platform contains 312 proposals; proposals 275 to 312 refer to foreign policy. The platform can be found at http://www.prd.org.mx/docs/PLAT_ELECTORAL_PBT.pdf