

DIFFERING PERCEPTIONS IN FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY

THE MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY TRADITION

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INTRODUCTION

Mexico's foreign policy is quite unique. More than any other large country, the Mexican tradition has been to renounce the unstated assumptions of "power politics." In its place, twentieth century Mexican decision makers have substituted a defensive foreign policy distilled from their ideology, prudent self-interest and their national experience. In the late 1980s, this has begun to slowly change. Oil, financial crises, tension at Mexico's northern and southern borders, and domestic unrest have altered Mexico's interaction with the world. It is unclear whether this has altered Mexico's perception of its own interests.

Mexico's position and participation in international politics thus defies easy categorization. The issue is not whether it has the means to enter the ranks of powerful nations. Mexico is already a significant nation whose sense of nationalism confirms that. The question is how Mexico will face its overwhelming problems. Positioned to take off industrially with its resources, energy, and growing technology Mexico is an upwardly mobile nation. The global petroleum economy has brought a new challenge to Mexico, that is now forcing major choices on Mexican policy. Even with the potential for being a modern state, Mexico does not appear to have the national self-confidence and attendant interests for even regional power aspirations. In strategic terms, Mexico has the foundation to become a powerful nation, but appears reluctant to accept the responsibility.

The apparent absence of serious ambitions is indicated by an adaptive and flexible foreign policy. Mexico has adapted itself to

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being in the strategic shadow of the United States. This strategic factor has in turn enhanced flexibility. The nation's unique political system and the myth of a revolutionary government has given Mexico flexibility in the Third World community, albeit uncertain flexibility. Since Mexico has not viewed itself as a "power" player, it has not played a particularly meaningful global or even regional role.

The lack of structure in Mexican foreign policy thus makes its assessment important but difficult. Mexico is a potentially powerful, fast-developing, increasingly sophisticated nation. It is likely to generate challenges for its neighbors, and thus, is a nation to be reckoned with. Its present economic crisis notwithstanding, Mexico has the capability to join the ranks of the key newly industrialized countries by the end of the century. Its status as an "emerging power," and its unique proximity to the United States highlight the subtleties involved in assessing Mexico's foreign and defense policy.

I. MEXICO'S WORLD VIEW

Since the early 1980s the fragility of Mexico's vast natural wealth has become increasingly apparent. Many areas and particularly southern Mexico, suffer from the same type of socio-economic problems that have spawned guerilla movements in Central America. Yet, Mexican rhetoric is often encouraging and tacitly sympathetic to neighboring revolutionary movements. The public doesn't seem to be aware of the potential for similar activity developing within Mexico.

Areas of northern Mexico have rejected the "Revolution" practices by demonstrating rage at the ballot box and near-chaos in provincial streets. Mexican foreign policy has ambivalently embraced the principles of Western democracy, creating a challenging paradox for the nation's leadership.

Mexico's ability to preserve domestic peace and protect its own interests will be issues if regional crises spread within its borders. Some argue that there is an implicit understanding or expectation, in both Mexico and the United States that a U.S. security blanket covers Mexico. It is argued that the United States would be the ultimate guarantor of Mexico's security in the event of a major threat to Mexico. However, Mexico should be the ultimate guarantor of its own security.

There is scattered evidence of a more sober and realistic tone in recent Mexican foreign policy. The nation's acute economic chal-

lenge, political unrest, and proximity to Central American instability have cooled the idealistic notions of Mexican rhetoric. In addition, it appears that national security issues have received increased attention by the Mexican leadership in recent years.

The Mexican view of international relations cannot be compared to Brazil's practical "realpolitik" or Argentina's active, if not mistaken, vision of itself in the world. There has not been any strenuous activism trying to change Mexico's physical or material condition. This has caused policy generally to be devoid of specific references to practical instrumentalities, but strong on procedural details. The Mexican Foreign Ministry is concerned with ideological matters and public relations, saying that these areas represent the national interest. Defense matters are within the purview of the Interior Ministry (internal security) and the National Defense Ministry (operational matters). Overall policy originates from the Presidential office. The Mexican President holds extensive executive authority. However, in the absence of a conventional military strategy, and with the secondary role played by the Mexican military establishment in the current political structure, Mexico's world view is defined in diplomatic rather than defense terms.

Mexico's foreign policy lacks a hard edge due to a reluctance to conceptualize the nation's role in politically active terms. Mexico is generally cautious and low-profile; it may even appear to be passive. In contrast to Brazil and Argentina, there appears to be only a limited cognizance of the nation's growing margin of international action. Thus, Mexican foreign policy achievements are unlikely to be felt by the international community.

II. FOREIGN RELATIONS RESOURCES

The Mexican President has unchallenged primacy in the realm of foreign relations. He is the principal initiator and final arbiter of the government's foreign policy. His influence in the domestic sector gives him the ability to affect most aspects of the nation's relations with the outside world. This independence provides "revolutionary legitimacy" at the international level, blunts domestic criticism, and strengthens Mexican symbolism. In practice, the President's powers are very extensive. The President makes important foreign policy decisions assisted by a small coterie of personal advisors. He also commands the armed forces, appoints the nation's diplomatic representation abroad, approves treaties, and attends or hosts international conferences.

The opinions of the top bureaucrats and leading Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) figures are considered. However, Congress, the press, and non-government intellectuals have little direct impact. The Mexican President enjoys wide latitude within the broad limits set by ideology, entrenched political interests, and public opinion.

Presidential directives on foreign policy questions as well as day-to-day contact are handled by an expanding network of government agencies. This network reflects Mexico's reserved diplomacy, low visibility, internal security interests, and the high priority given its economic and development policy. Foreign affairs neither support a large bureaucracy nor absorb a significant portion of the national budget.

Security policies are defined by a closed elite. However, there are no empirical statements clearly suggesting how Mexican leaders should define foreign and security policies. First, Mexican security has been influenced by a "power politics" strategy inapplicable to regional realities. This strategy has been used because of the unique difference between national power on the northern and southern borders. Fear of American expansionism has receded, but remains present in the Mexican psyche. Mexico's attitude toward Central America has not been considered in relation to security or national ambition until recently.

Second, contemporary Mexican policy continues to be balanced between independence from the United States and cooperation with the United States in global and regional affairs. The United States is Mexico's primary security guarantor, but represents its most salient psychological threat. The policy asymmetry was based on the unchallenged regional power of the United States. The fundamental integrity of Mexico was not an issue. These assumptions are no longer entirely applicable.

Third, since 1950, Mexico's preoccupation has been promoting economic growth, in response to the perception of the foreign economic threat. Additional priorities have been the need to maintain socioeconomic and political equilibrium. Mexico feels the most vulnerable in regard to its economic wealth, its industrial and its technological infrastructure.

III. MEXICO'S SECURITY CULTURE

Mexico has no major foreign rivals. In this century, this has resulted in Mexico's cultivation of the legal and moral norms of Western culture. Those norms promote opposition to the use of force to settle disputes and the interference by one nation in the internal affairs of another. Critics have suggested that this has led Mexico to overlook potential external security threats. But the nation's leadership believes its security has been preserved by the continuous affirmation of the juridical approach to international relations. According to the Mexican world view, the legal and moral equality of states is the foundation of a viable global system. Therefore they have applied the principles of non-intervention and self-determination. The Estrada doctrine of 1929, implied that nations well capable of making judgments regarding the legitimacy of regimes in other countries.

Mexico's disinclination to be actively engaged in international affairs has been particularly noticeable in security matters. Thus, Mexico has not allied itself with any other nations or bloc. One attempt to do so was apparent in Luis Echeverría's presidency (1970-1976) when he proposed a Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States to the United Nations. This was a nebulous mechanism for defining relationships between developed and developing states in the areas of trade, investment, and assistance policies an attempt that led nowhere. There were similar hopes at the 1981 North-South conference at Cancún. There President Lopez Portillo (1976-1982) hosted an international gathering, with an agenda full of symbolism but devoid of substance.

Because Mexico's approach to its security strategy is the product of its ideology, self-interest, and national interest, trends in the nation's security behavior have been changing very slowly. But Mexico now faces a change in the security equation, domestically and in Central America, that is rendering original calculations obsolete. The basic national interest continues to include protecting the achievements of the Mexican revolution, and promoting Mexico's economic development and commercial needs. However, these foundations have been increasingly eroded by domestic crises, regional vulnerabilities, internal security problems and the discontinuities between Mexico's rhetoric and its strategic realities.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Mexican Foreign Secretary Bernardo Sepulveda wrote in 1984 that his country's foreign policy is distinguished by its continuity, uniformity, and predictability.¹ Unlike other countries in which external priorities and policy directions often change when new administrations are inaugurated, or surprising departures are announced by those already in office, he argued that Mexico has followed a "consistent course" for more than sixty years. Sepulveda emphasized that through administrations of presidents since the 1920s, and the often sweeping changes in domestic policies that they have directed, Mexico's foreign policy has remained remarkably constant. The principal reason for that, according to the foreign secretary and to the president he has served, is that Mexican international interests are based on a set of enduring principles—self-determination, non-intervention, the juridical equality of states, and the peaceful settlement of disputes—that inspire a unique foreign policy and national security doctrine.

President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-88), writing on Mexican foreign policy in 1984, stated that those principles "are a product of our own historical experience—one that led us to place a high value on . . . the force of reason, political negotiation and compliance with international law."² The experience to which he refers includes the traumatic and truncating war with the United States that resulted in the loss of about one-half of Mexico's territory in the mid-nineteenth century, and in widespread and seemingly intractable fears of U.S. domination in the twentieth century. Thus, it is because of Mexico's geography, history, and psychology that its nationalism is overwhelmingly defined in terms of its relationship with the United States. Also, observers have argued persua-

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1. Amor, *Reflexiones Sobre la Política Exterior de México*, 24 FORO INTERNACIONAL 408 (Reflections over the Exterior Politics of Mexico) (April-June 1984).

2. De la Madrid, *México: The New Challenges*, 63 FOREIGN AFF., 68 (1984).

sively, that it is because of Mexico's singularity of outlook, that its foreign policy has changed very little since the administration of Venustiano Carranza (1917-20). Sepulveda argues that it is not a policy of abstractions, but one based on Mexico's "most legitimate national interests."³

Although these and similar arguments by Mexican leaders and scholars accurately describe a high degree of continuity in their country's foreign policy, they tend to obscure the many substantial changes that have also occurred since the early 1970s. Within about fifteen months of his inauguration in December 1970, the populist and ultra-nationalist president Luis Echeverria launched an unprecedented international campaign aimed at expanding Mexico's prestige and influence, and transcending its traditional dependence on, and preoccupation with, the United States. During the remainder of his six-year term Echeverria was more preoccupied with foreign policy issues than any Mexican president before or since. He traveled to thirty-five countries and the Vatican, met with sixty-four heads of government, and exchanged diplomats with sixty-seven additional countries.⁴ Echeverria probably visited more countries during his term in office than all other Mexican chief executives combined.

The new Mexican internationalism that Echeverria launched departed in significant respects from the established foreign policy that he inherited. It was, according to a leading Mexican scholar, "a more activist and universalist" approach, and one more "concerned with Third World causes."⁵ Echeverria visited twenty-two countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, and indefatigably campaigned for the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States that his administration drafted. His efforts in behalf of Third World causes resulted in a steady escalation of tensions with the United States, in large part because of his often outspoken advocacy of revolutionary and radical causes and governments. Mexico's relations with the Soviet Union began to improve dramatically during Echeverria's administration, and his extended visit there in April 1973 was the first by a Mexican president and only the third by a Latin American chief of state. In addition, he was the first Mexican president persistently to assert Mexico's aspirations to perform as a regional power in Latin America

3. Amor, *supra* note 1, at 409.

4. Grayson, *Mexican Foreign Policy*, 72 CURRENT HISTORY, 98 (March 1977).

5. M. OJEDA, MEXICO: EL SURGIMIENTO DE UNA POLITICA EXTERIOR ACTIVA (1986).

and the Caribbean Basin.

Echeverria's new interests have continued to be important priorities for subsequent Mexican administrations. Echeverria's successor, Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-82), was even more energetic in seeking to advance Mexico's influence in the Caribbean Basin while also presiding over a considerable broadening of relations with the U.S.S.R., Cuba, and other communist countries. He placed high priority on improving relations with Third World nations, and on supporting revolutionary movements and governments. This focus generated serious tensions with the United States. Although his successor, Miguel de la Madrid, has been less concerned with foreign policy issues because of the grave internal problems that he inherited when he took office in December 1982, he too, has continued to assert a more activist international posture. This has occurred, especially through the leadership role that Mexico has played in the Contadora and Delhi Six groups of countries. Since 1972, Mexican presidents and their foreign secretaries have developed an ambitious and energetic foreign policy that has been truly global in its reach. It differs from Mexico's traditional foreign policy in the following four main respects.

I. ADVOCACY OF NON-ALIGNED AND THIRD WORLD CAUSES

Echeverria's first trip abroad was made, in March 1972, to Japan, however, one month later, during a visit to Peru and Chile his abiding interest in foreign affairs was first elaborated. He appeared on April 19, before the third session of the United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in Santiago, to present his Charter of Economic Rights and Duties. For the remainder of his term the goals expressed in that document served as the bulwark of his ambitious foreign policy. During the visit to Chile he solidified close relations with the socialist regime of Salvador Allende, which was by then in sharp conflict with the Nixon administration. Echeverria intended to demonstrate Mexico's independence from the United States and to express support for Allende's nationalistic and radical program, but he also used the visit to assuage radical and leftist forces in Mexico whose opposition to his administration had been intense.⁶

Echeverria's Charter of Economic Rights and Duties was

6. See, e.g., Shapira, *Mexico's Foreign Policy Under Echeverria*, 31 INTER-AMERICAN ECON. AFF., 38 (1978).

designed to correct what he considered the egregious inequities between rich nations and Third World countries. In his State of the Nation address, in September 1976, he attacked “the structure of the unjust system of world exploitation based on a colonial view of work, on the stealing of natural resources and devaluation of raw materials and human effort of Third World countries.” By aggressively advocating the Charter, Mexico for the first time became a progressive leader among those countries demanding a radical realignment of international wealth and power and an outspoken advocate of improved North-South dialogue. By the time the Charter was adopted by the United Nations in December 1974, Mexico’s legitimacy as a leading Third World nation seemed assured.

The pursuit of that goal has caused recurring and serious tensions in Mexico’s relations with the United States. Although considerable stress was generated by the support that Echeverria and Lopez Portillo provided to revolutionary governments and groups in Latin America, some of their sharpest confrontations with the United States were the result of Mexican initiatives involving the Middle East. Echeverria, in particular, courted the Arab world. He visited five Arab nations and then on August 4, 1975, announced his proposed Third World economic system in Alexandria, Egypt. Later, he permitted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to open its first Latin American office in Mexico City. It was Mexico’s anti-Zionist vote at the United Nations on November 10, 1975, however, that resulted in the greatest damage to U.S.-Mexican relations during those years.

Although that vote was generally consistent with Echeverria’s larger Third World policy, it dramatized his abandonment of the traditional principles of non-intervention and self-determination, and marked a sharp departure from Mexico’s policy of non-involvement and neutrality in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷ That controversial vote proved highly counterproductive and embarrassing. Jewish organizations in the United States organized a boycott of Mexico, and the resulting decline in tourist revenues and foreign investment flows added strong new downward pressures to an already troubled economy. Ultimately, Echeverria was forced to retreat, and in December 1975 he sent Foreign Secretary Emilio Rabasa to Jerusalem where, in effect, he apologized. Thus, by demonstrating how Mexico’s economic vulnerability imposed serious

7. *Id.* at 55.

limits on its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy, the anti-Zionist vote was highly embarrassing to Echeverria.⁸

Another grave misunderstanding, this one between the Lopez Portillo and Carter administrations, involving another Middle Eastern country, marked the nadir of relations between those two leaders, late in 1979. When it became clear in October that the Shah of Iran, then in exile in Mexico, needed medical treatment for cancer, the Carter administration reversed its earlier reluctance to allow him into the United States. Quoting Acting Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, Carter noted in his memoirs that "Mexican President Lopez Portillo informed the Shah on October 19, that he could return to Mexico following the medical treatment here."⁹ The U.S. embassy in Teheran was occupied by Iranian radicals on November 4th, and soon, according to Carter, the Shah "recognized the problems he had caused us in coming here, and thought he would be able to leave . . . in a few days."¹⁰ On November 29, however, Carter made the following entry in his diary: "About 6:30 (Secretary of State Cyrus Vance) called with the unbelievable news that the Mexicans had reversed themselves during the day and now would not be willing to accept the Shah in their country. Lopez Portillo is not a man of his word. . . ."¹¹ Carter's uncharacteristic condemnation of the Mexican president was one of the harshest criticisms he levied on record, against any world leader.

From Carter's perspective, Mexico's refusal to readmit the Shah was inexplicable. "The Mexicans had no diplomatic personnel in Iran, had moved all their people out of the country, and did not need Iranian oil," he noted in his diary on November 29. Carter and other United States officials apparently failed to understand that Lopez Portillo had performed in a manner entirely consistent with two converging priorities of Mexican foreign policy. Despite whatever elements of personal unpredictability and animosity that may have been involved in his decision, Lopez Portillo wished, above all, to demonstrate Mexico's independence from the United States and to avoid the appearance of taking sides with Washington

8. Shapira emphasizes that the tourism boycott by U.S. Jewish organizations was interpreted in the Mexican press as a major humiliation. He points out that *Excelsior*, articulating a generally-held feeling, insisted that the guidelines of Mexico's foreign policy should be "neither improvised nor respondent to pressures, but neither should they be impolitic nor injurious to the values of Mexican diplomatic tradition." *Id.* at 56.

9. J. CARTER, *KEEPING FAITH: MEMOIRS OF A PRESIDENT* 456 (1982).

10. *Id.* at 468.

11. *Id.*

against a revolutionary Third World regime. As a result, U.S.-Mexican relations fell to one of their lowest levels in decades.

Since de la Madrid took office in December 1982, Mexico has largely suspended its efforts to play a leadership role among Third World countries, and on North-South issues. The current Mexican president's limited foreign travel has been largely aimed at expanding markets for Mexican goods, and attracting capital and technology. His speeches, writings, and interviews suggest that he has virtually no personal interest in Third World causes and issues. Even in the face of the approximately \$100 billion debt that had accumulated by 1987, he was unwilling to join with other debtor states in seeking to gain greater leverage over Mexico's creditors through the use of multilateral pressures. Thus, his assertion that "the principles of self-determination and nonintervention in the affairs of other countries are of deep significance to Mexico"¹² suggests that his interpretation of those doctrines is more in keeping with the traditional view than were those of his two, more activist predecessors.

II. REGIONAL POWER ASPIRATIONS

Although a few previous presidents, especially Adolfo Lopez Mateos (1958-64), exhibited special interest in expanding relations with other Latin American countries, it was Echeverria who first strongly asserted Mexico's desire to play a leadership role in Latin America and the Caribbean. He traveled to twelve countries in the region, and was the first Mexican chief executive to visit Castro's Cuba. As a result of his persistent lobbying in the hemisphere for his Charter of Economic Rights and Duties, and for greater cooperation among the developing nations, Echeverria became the most visible, and, after Allende's ouster by the Chilean military in September 1973, the most outspoken Latin American advocate of Third World causes.¹³

During a seven-nation regional tour in July 1974 Echeverria accelerated efforts to forge greater Latin American solidarity in relations with the United States. During his third stop, in Lima on July 15, he first spoke publicly of his plan to create a Latin American Economic System (SELA) that would exclude the United States. A

12. De la Madrid, *supra* note 2, at 68.

13. Poitras, *Mexico's "New" Foreign Policy*, 28 INTER-AMERICAN ECON. AFF., 71 (1974). This is especially true since Allende's ouster by the Chilean military in September 1973.

few days later, in Buenos Aires, he and the aged populist President Juan Peron signed a joint communique attacking the great powers and asserting their countries' independence in foreign affairs.¹⁴ In a combative speech at the Argentine presidential residence, Echeverria denounced great power control over the destinies of dependant nations and called on the Latin America countries to integrate economically. A week later, in Venezuela, he won the enthusiastic backing of President Carlos Andres Perez for his SELA proposal.

The two proceeded to persuade their Latin American neighbors that "the countries of the Third World, and those of Latin America in particular, must unite in defense of their common principles and interests or resign themselves to remaining underdeveloped indefinitely."¹⁵ Their efforts resulted in the approval of SELA by twenty-five countries of the region on October 17, 1975. The continued collaboration of Echeverria and Perez, and their parallel interests in asserting greater influence in the Caribbean Basin, also resulted, in 1975, in the creation of the Caribbean Multinational Shipping Company (NAMUCAR), which like SELA, included Cuba but not the United States. Echeverria and Perez also promoted the reactivation of the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE).¹⁶ Echeverria's attempts to play a regional leadership role were given even greater impetus by his successor. In fact, Mexico's importance as a regional power willing to confront the United States, and to act as an ally of Marxist and revolutionary forces in Central America and the Caribbean, reached its zenith during the last few years of Lopez Portillo's term. His government helped the Sandinista National Liberation Front to win power in Nicaragua. In May 1979 Mexico severed diplomatic relations with the Somoza dictatorship and called on other Latin American countries to do the same. The resulting damage to Somoza's legitimacy was profound, and the Sandinista National Directorate promptly issued a statement expressing "revolutionary joy" for the Mexican action.¹⁷ During its first few years in power, moreover, the Sandinista government was the recipient of substantial Mexican economic support, through the deliveries of petroleum on credit, at reduced prices. Lopez Portillo publicly emphasized his strong attachment to the Sandinista revolution during a visit by Nicaraguan leader Daniel

14. *Id.*

15. Grayson, *supra* note 4, at 99.

16. Bryan, *Mexico and the Caribbean*, 10 CARIBBEAN REV. 6 (1981).

17. S. CHRISTIAN, NICARAGUA, REVOLUTION IN THE FAMILY 111 (1985).

Ortega to Mexico City in May 1981 when he exclaimed that “Mexico will defend the Nicaraguan cause as if it were its very own.”¹⁸

Lopez Portillo’s policy toward El Salvador also directly and powerfully confronted U.S. interests. In 1980 his government withdrew its ambassador and downgraded its embassy in San Salvador to a consulate while becoming increasingly critical of the military and other conservative elements there. Mexico invited the Salvadoran Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) to join a Mexican sponsored coalition of progressive Latin American political parties. Most importantly, Mexico joined with the Mitterrand Government in France in August 1981 in recognizing the coalition of the FDR and the Marxist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) as a “representative political force.” Although, no other governments emulated that initiative, the international legitimacy and backing of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement was greatly enhanced in the aftermath of the Franco-Mexican declaration.

Mexican relations with Cuba flourished during Lopez Portillo’s term, even as U.S.-Cuban relations steadily deteriorated. Between May 1979 and August 1981 Lopez Portillo and Fidel Castro held annual summits during which they coordinated their countries’ policies toward Central America. In May 1982 the two spoke for the first time on a presidential “hot line” linking them by satellite.¹⁹ A number of new bilateral accords were signed; binational commissions met frequently; and cultural, scientific, and other contacts increased dramatically. Trade, which in earlier years had remained at negligible levels, grew rapidly beginning in 1979 mainly as a result of sizeable Mexican purchases of Cuban sugar. By 1981 Mexico purchased \$190 million of Cuban products while earning only \$25 million on sales to Havana.²⁰ In fact, no other Mexican leader before or since has collaborated so intimately with Fidel Castro.

Thus, when de la Madrid took office, he inherited a regional foreign policy that had put Mexico at the forefront of developing countries confronting the United States. However, unlike his two immediate predecessors, he has been almost entirely absorbed with Mexico’s grave economic and financial problems, and has placed a higher priority on maintaining cordial relations with the United States. As a result, his administration has withdrawn from many of

18. Granma Weekly Review, May 17, 1981.

19. Latin America Daily Report, May 3, 1982, at V 1.

20. *Id.*, April 29, 1982, at M 2.

the confrontational policies pursued in earlier years, and Mexican relations with Nicaragua, Cuba, and regional revolutionary groups have noticeably cooled. Unlike Echeverria and Lopez Portillo, de la Madrid has not visited Havana, or met with Castro, since he took office. The warm rhetorical and diplomatic support that Mexico had been providing Havana has markedly decreased. The large trade deficits with Cuba that Lopez Portillo was willing to subsidize for political and foreign policy purposes, have been transformed into surpluses since de la Madrid took office. Mexico has played the leading role in the Contadora group of countries seeking a negotiated settlement of conflicts in Central America, but bilateral relations with the Sandinistas have cooled. Thus, under de la Madrid's leadership, Mexico has withdrawn at least temporarily from its assertive role as a regional power in the Caribbean Basin.

III. EXPANSION OF RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

The third major change in Mexican foreign policy that has occurred since the early 1970s has been the broadening and intensification of relations with Moscow.²¹ In 1924 Mexico was the first country in the Western Hemisphere to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet regime, and since then, has often been at the forefront of the Latin American countries broadening ties with Moscow. However, it was not until Echeverria went to Moscow in April 1973 that both Mexico and the U.S.S.R. began to assign a high priority to their relations. Moreover, Echeverria took the initiative with an initially somewhat reluctant Brezhnev regime, as a steady and significant expansion in state-to-state relations occurred during the remainder of his term. Numerous bilateral accords were approved, including the first agreement, in August 1975, between a non-communist Latin American country and the Soviet-controlled Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA). Two new joint commissions were constituted—the first having been established during Echeverria's visit to Moscow—and cultural, commercial, scientific, and other contacts considerably expanded.

Relations continued to broaden and deepen under Lopez Portillo. He also visited the U.S.S.R. in May 1978 spending over a week there with a large official entourage including four key cabinet secretaries. A Soviet-Mexican consular convention and a program for

21. For a detailed discussion of Mexican-Soviet relations see B. LATTELL, *THE U.S.S.R. AND MEXICO, THE SOVIET UNION AND LATIN AMERICA* (E. Mujal-Leon, ed., forthcoming).

scientific and technical cooperation were signed, and a warm, lengthy communique was issued noting "the identity of their stances on many key problems."²² Lopez Portillo's main accomplishment was in winning Soviet accession to the Mexican-initiated Tlatelolco Treaty banning nuclear weapons in Latin America. The joint communique emphasized that the two governments agreed on the need for a "complete and universal ban on nuclear weapons tests," and the termination of the "production of such weapons."²³ It seems in retrospect that Soviet support for the treaty was an important watershed in bilateral relations. It marked the beginning of a gradually widening Mexican-Soviet cooperation in support of international peace and disarmament.

During the mid and late 1970s, more agreements were negotiated between the U.S.S.R. and Mexico than during the preceding fifty years.²⁴ Leaders in both countries placed a high priority on developing close personal ties, and the level and frequency of official visits increased markedly. Most of these trends have continued under the leadership of President de la Madrid. Although beleaguered by his country's acute internal problems, and less committed than his two predecessors to an expansive foreign policy, he has nonetheless contributed to the development of closer relations with Moscow. Like Echeverria and Lopez Portillo, de la Madrid recognizes that Mexico's credibility as an independent, major world actor requires close and expanding ties with the Soviet Union. He also realizes that those ties provide important domestic political dividends in assuaging and coopting left wing and communist pressures.

The warming trend in Mexican-Soviet relations has probably intensified since Mikhail Gorbachev assumed power in March 1985. His foreign minister, Eduard Schevardnadze, visited Mexico in October 1986, his first to a Latin American country. Apparently, the general secretary also plans to visit Mexico and thus become the first top Soviet leader to visit a Latin American country other than Cuba. Gorbachev signalled the high priority assigned to Mexico when he received visiting Foreign Secretary Sepulveda in the Kremlin, in May 1987, after passing up earlier opportunities to meet with the Brazilian, Argentine, and Uruguayan foreign ministers during their visits to Moscow. Judging from Soviet media cov-

22. USSR Daily Report, May 17, 1978, at N 2.

23. Pravda, May 26, 1978, USSR Daily Report, May 30, 1978, at N 2.

24. Bushuyev & Y. Kozlov, untitled article, *Kommunist*, August 1978, no. 12. JPRS 72097, October 23, 1978, at 134.

erage of the Sepulveda visit, the two leaders engaged in wide-ranging and lengthy discussions. Among other things, Gorbachev declared that "we treasure" the development of bilateral relations and "want them to improve further."²⁵ He was also quoted by the Soviet news agency, Tass as praising "the independence and vigor of Mexico's foreign policy."²⁶

IV. BROKER ON EAST-WEST ISSUES

The fourth new dimension of Mexico's activist foreign policy is the role it increasingly seeks to play as an arbitrator of important issues relating to international peace and disarmament. Since the 1960s, Mexican statesmen and leaders have used multilateral diplomacy in efforts to reduce great power tensions, and enhance the prospects for world peace and order. Their efforts have been inspired by principles that have long been at the core of Mexico's foreign policy doctrine. In a certain sense, even Echeverria's often bombastic campaign for the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties was consistent with that tradition, as were Lopez Portillo's vainglorious efforts to mediate between the United States, revolutionary groups, and governments in Latin America. The emphasis de la Madrid has placed on Contadora and the Delhi Six processes provides a contemporary example more genuinely consistent with Mexico's foreign policy traditions. It was Alfonso Garcia Robles, however, a prominent Mexican lawyer and diplomat, principal author of the Tlatelolco Treaty, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1982, who has perhaps most selflessly embodied that tradition.

Among the last three Mexican presidents, all of whom, in varying degrees, have aspired to play the role of arbiter on East-West issues, de la Madrid clearly has assigned that goal the highest priority. In fact, he has seemingly placed it at the center of his foreign policy, his administration having withdrawn from the activist role Mexico played on North-South issues and the role as a regional power in the Caribbean Basin. The hallmarks of that new policy are Contadora and the Delhi Six processes, both of which were initiated since de la Madrid took office.

The Contadora process began in January 1983 when de la Madrid and the presidents of Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama met in search of a diplomatic alternative to the escalating conflicts in

25. USSR Daily Report, May 7, 1987, at K 6.

26. *Id.* at K 7.

Central America.²⁷ Mexican leadership in Contadora has been strengthened as new administrations have entered office in each of the other member countries since 1983 and as a result of the de la Madrid government's hosting of a series of bilateral negotiations between the United States and Nicaragua, at the Mexican port of Manzanillo, in 1984. The Contadora process has failed to produce a viable peace plan acceptable to all of the major parties to the disputes in Central America, and Mexico's impartiality has been questioned by many observers in the United States. However, Mexico's legitimacy as an international broker has been widely enhanced.

The second major initiative of this sort associated with de la Madrid began in January 1985 in New Delhi. The Mexican president conferred there with the leaders of India, Greece, Sweden, Argentina, and Tanzania and together they called for a halt to the testing of nuclear weapons and a ban on the development of space weapons. In August 1986 Mexico hosted a second meeting of the leaders of the six nations at the Pacific resort of Ixtapa. They urged the United States and the U.S.S.R. to cease nuclear testing under a verification plan that they devised, and in a criticism widely aimed primarily at the Reagan administration, called for an end to the development of space weapons.

CONCLUSION

Although the record of Mexico's increasing internationalism since the early 1970s in part supports the view that its foreign policy is consistent and predictable, there has clearly been substantial evolution and discontinuity as well. The relationship with the United States has become considerably more complex and volatile since Echeverria launched his global activism. Widespread consensus has developed among Mexican elites in favor of greater independence from the United States and these, and related trends affecting the bilateral relationship, seem likely to grow stronger.

Perhaps the most important trend recently discussed by Humberto Garza Elizondo, a leading Mexican expert, has been the steadily diminishing willingness of Mexico to "collaborate with the United States on problems relating to the East-West conflict."²⁸

27. Purcell, *Demystifying Contadora*, 64 FOREIGN AFF., 75-76 (1985).

28. H. GARZA ELIZONDO, MEXICAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, SOVIET-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS IN THE 1980S 206 (A. Varas ed. 1987).

Garza Elizondo noted that “contrary to what might be expected, the worsening of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union has not meant that Mexico and the socialist camp have grown further apart. Rather it seems to propitiate a convergence of the policies of both parties on topics such as maintaining peace and international security, detente, disarmament, the Mid-East, and Central America.”²⁹ Although these observations are accurate, by focusing only on recent international tensions, Garza Elizondo overlooks the contentious record of U.S.-Mexican relations from 1972-82, and the determined efforts, made by the last three Mexican administrations, to assert a truly global Mexican foreign policy.

29. *Id.* at 206-07.

