March 11, 1988

EVOLUTION OF MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Mexico's foreign policy is of increasing concern to the United States. Reversing its long aversion to foreign activities, Mexico in the past decade has sought growing international involvement. Some of this activism undercuts important U.S. security interests. This is evident in Central America where two of the most important U.S. security interests — the Panama Canal and the nearby Atlantic and Pacific sea lines of communications — are threatened by the military buildup of Nicaragua's Sandinista regime. Mexico has supported that regime actively and consistently has opposed U.S. foreign policy in the region.

Mexico insists that its foreign policy is based upon the three principles of "nonintervention," "self-determination," and the "peaceful solution" of conflicts. At the same time, however, Mexico claims that it is pursuing a pragmatic foreign policy. This qualification allows Mexico to ignore the three principles when convenient. Example: In the late 1970s, Mexico intervened in Nicaraguan affairs by allowing guerrillas fighting against Nicaragua's Somoza regime to use Mexican territory and also supplying them with large quantities of ammunition.

This is the eighth in a series of Heritage studies on Mexico. It was preceded by *Backgrounder* No. 611, "Privatization in Mexico: Robust Rhetoric, Anemic Reality (October 22, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 595, "Keys to Understanding Mexico: The PAN's Growth as a Real Opposition" (July 29, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 588, "Deju Vu of Policy Failure: The New $14 Billion Mexican Debt Bailout" (June 25, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 583, "For Mexico's Ailing Economy, Time Runs Short" (June 4, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 581, "Mexico's Many Faces" (May 19, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 575, "Mexico: The Key Players" (April 4, 1987); and *Backgrounder* No. 573, "Keys to Understanding Mexico: Challenges to the Ruling PRI" (April 7, 1987). Future papers will examine other aspects of Mexican policy and development.

Serving Domestic Needs. For much of its modern history Mexico had a passive foreign policy. This was to a large extent the consequence of Mexico's historical experience, which includes invasions, occupations, and defeats by foreign forces. In the early 1970s, however, Mexican foreign policy became very active, supporting the socialist government of Chile's Salvador Allende and denouncing the "imperialism" of the industrialized nations. Then a decade later Mexico intervened in El Salvador as well as in Nicaragua. Mexico nonetheless still contends that its foreign policy is noninterventionist.

Foreign policy in Mexico is largely an instrument of domestic policy. It serves three main purposes:

1) to satisfy the political far left which, although relatively small, is powerful and well-organized;

2) to exploit nationalist sentiments, especially in the form of anti-Americanism, and

3) to distract popular attention from the troubled economy by presenting real or imaginary successes overseas.

Fueling the nationalist fires of Mexican foreign policy is the 1846-1848 war between Mexico and the U.S. in which Mexico lost more than half of its territory. On occasion, such U.S.-Mexican issues are used to instigate waves of nationalism and anti-Americanism. Typical was the march of approximately 200,000 demonstrators in Mexico City in May 1986, protesting the criticism of Mexico made during the hearings on drugs held by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, chaired by Senator Jesse Helms.

Despite Mexico's current temptation to pursue an anti-*Yanqui* foreign policy, relations with the U.S. long were friendly and cordial. Since 1979, however, the two countries have had serious differences over Central America, particularly regarding Nicaragua's Sandinista regime.

Courting Havana and Moscow. A further irritant to the U.S. has been Mexico's warming relationship with Cuba. Mexico and Cuba even appear to be coordinating their foreign policies to help the Sandinistas. Mexico has been the tacit leader in the Contadora Group of four Latin American nations and its "support group" composed of four South American nations which has tried to bring peace to the Central American region. Contadora's delaying tactics in dealing with the Sandinistas allowed the communists to consolidate their power in Nicaragua. In recent years, moreover, Mexico has increased substantially its commercial, cultural, technological, and scientific relations with the Soviet Union.

Mexico uses such international forums as the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) to project an image of independence from the U.S. At the U.N., for instance, Mexico champions regimes at odds with the U.S., such as Nicaragua. Mexico also introduces resolutions that tend to undermine U.S. foreign policy, including a 1986 resolution criticizing El Salvador's human rights. And Mexico seldom votes with the U.S. at the U.N. Last year, Mexico's percentage of agreement with the U.S. was 14.8 percent, placing it in the bottom one-fourth of all Latin American countries.

In the OAS, Mexico in 1975 persuaded the organization to lift its sanctions against Cuba, and in 1979, Mexico played an important role in stopping the U.S. from sending an Inter-American peace-keeping force that might have prevented the Sandinista takeover. Mexico, however, prefers the U.N. to the OAS because Washington exercises more influence in the OAS.

Dealing with Mexico presents many problems for the U.S. Perhaps no other country, in the long run, is more important to U.S. security. Yet past mistakes by Washington and past tough, though perhaps unavoidable, actions by the U.S. have made Mexico wary. Wounds from the past disappear slowly. Anti-American rhetoric will persist in Mexican political discourse. Yet much of this rhetoric is designed for Mexican internal consumption. If U.S. policy makers pay attention to the history of U.S.-Mexico relations, they will be able to distinguish between rhetoric and policies that threaten legitimate U.S. security interests.

ROOTS OF MEXICO'S FOREIGN POLICY

Principles and Foreign Policy

Humiliating invasions and occupations by the U.S. and France in the 19th and 20th centuries made Mexicans conscious of their vulnerability and led them to seek protection in the principles of nonintervention and self-determination. Mexico believed these principles would shield them against foreign meddling in its internal affairs. Mexican interpretation of the principle of nonintervention is expressed in the 1930 Estrada doctrine (named after Mexican foreign minister Genaro Estrada), stating that Mexico will grant unconditional diplomatic recognition to any government regardless of its ideology.

The principle of self-determination is derived from the Calvo doctrine of 1868, which stated that citizens or corporations involved in economic activities in Mexico should abide by Mexican laws. Any intervention by a foreign government on behalf of these citizens or corporations was to be considered unjust and illegal.

The principles, however, have been interpreted according to perceived advantage. In 1936, for example, Mexico ignored these principles and refused to recognize the government of Spain's Francisco Franco. And then in 1979, Mexico severed diplomatic relations with Anastasio Somoza's Nicaragua.

Echeverria's Switch. Mexican foreign policy long was exclusively articulated in juridical and moralistic fashion, and was essentially passive. This changed dramatically when Luis Echeverria became president in 1970. His foreign policy sided actively with those considered friends and attacked those regarded as enemies, but he did not abandon the traditionally moralistic overtones.

Echeverria traveled extensively championing radical Third World causes and blaming the industrial "North" for the problems of the impoverished "South." In 1972, Echeverria became involved in the Chilean situation. After the international financial community had stopped lending to Chile, he traveled to that country to offer socialist, anti-U.S. president Salvador Allende a line of credit. In the same year, he even risked a wave of domestic criticism for sending oil and wheat to Chile at a time when Mexico itself was not self-sufficient in either product. In 1973, after the overthrow of Allende, Echeverria refused to recognize the new Chilean government, broke diplomatic relations with Chile, and welcomed great numbers of leftist refugees from that country. This nonrecognition of the new Chilean government, of course, was inconsistent with the principle of nonintervention.

Foreign Policy and Domestic Interests

Foreign policy in Mexico scores domestic political points. This is particularly true when Mexico is suffering from social, political, or economic crisis. Any real or apparent foreign policy success diverts public attention from domestic problems. Example: the meeting last November in Acapulco of eight Latin American presidents, called by Mexico, to discuss the region's foreign debt. Although no major agreement was reached, it gave Mexico the opportunity to show its solidarity with other Latin American countries. This theme is always well received by the Mexican public, especially by Mexico's ideological Left, which is a great power within the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The PRI, founded in 1929, has ruled Mexico ever since.

By 1979, Mexico apparently concluded that the U.S. was in political trouble in Central America and that the future of the area belonged to the Left. The Sandinistas were about to take power in Nicaragua, and leftist guerrillas in El Salvador seemed likely to succeed. Mexico decided to turn the U.S. difficulties in the area to its own advantage by opposing U.S. policy. Mexican politicians saw a new field for using their revolutionary rhetoric with renewed impetus. This tactic is even more important now, given the increasing decline of Mexican living standards.

Foreign Policy Formulation

The Mexican president makes foreign policy. The ministry of foreign relations, along with such other agencies of the executive as the ministry of defense and the ministry of the interior execute these policies. Mexico's congress plays almost no role in foreign policy. President Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-1982), for example, reportedly decided to break diplomatic relations with Nicaragua in 1979 without even notifying his foreign minister, much less the congress. Without any complaint, the leaders of congress approved the action.

In a few specific foreign policy cases, such as the Guatemalan refugees in Southern Mexico, senators from the border areas have complained about the social and economic problems generated by the refugees.

In the process of formulating Mexican foreign policy, an unprecedented action has been taken by the PRI's presidential candidate and likely successor to current president Miguel de la Madrid, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. He has appointed a 70-member commission composed of top officials from banks and the economic ministries to make recommendations. The creation of this commission suggests that Mexican leaders are starting to recognize that certain economic realities, such as the foreign debt and trade issues, must be addressed seriously by the larger Mexican community. Salinas also included a separate sub-commission on relations with the Pacific Basin, reflecting his special interest in that part of the world.[1]

POLICY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES

Before the Mexican Revolution

The war between the U.S. and Mexico during the mid-19th century has influenced Mexican foreign policy deeply. When the U.S. annexed Texas in 1845, U.S. President James K. Polk tried to negotiate the purchase of California from Mexico. He apparently never imagined that even offering buy part of Mexico's territory would offend Mexican sensibilities profoundly. Failing in his attempt Polk provoked a military incident over disputed territory between Texas and the northern Mexican state of Tamaulipas. The resulting clash in April 1846 triggered the U.S. war with Mexico. U.S. troops landed in the Mexican port of Veracruz and marched inland, occupying Mexico City and raising the Stars and Stripes over the National Palace in September 1847.

The war ended the following February with the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty. In exchange for $15 million and the assumption by the U.S. of the Mexican debt, Mexico ceded almost half of its territory, including part or all of what are now Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Five years later, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who commanded the Mexican army during the war with the U.S., sold another chunk of Arizona to the U.S.

First Grade Map. Even today, Mexican attitudes and feelings toward the U.S. are shaped in part by the humiliation suffered during that war. Monuments and even museums are dedicated as memorials to remind the Mexicans of the U.S. invasion.

Children in Mexican schools are taught about the war in a way that arouses nationalistic sentiments and anti-American feelings. The obligatory textbook for the first grade, for example, has a map of Mexico that depicts Mexico as it was before the loss of territory to the U.S.[2] Mexican officials in their speeches constantly refer to the loss of territory to the U.S. A private statement made by Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, Mexico's president from 1964 to 1970, reveals how profoundly many Mexicans are affected by past conflicts with the U.S. He said: "There is no real Mexican who doesn't want to get even with the United States."[3]

Anti-American attitudes, however, are not universal. In the northern states, closest to the U.S. border, anti-Americanism is practically nonexistent. A plausible reason is that many northerners have visited the U.S. or been influenced by American culture and feel attracted to its way of life. Also, northerners are distrustful of the central government in Mexico City, and from time to time, have demanded greater autonomy. In consequence, any anti-Americanism promoted by politicians in Mexico City is unlikely to be accepted in the north.[4]

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[1] "Mexico Broadens Foreign Policy Planning," *Financial Times*, February 9, 1988, p. 4.

[2] *Ciencias Sociales, Primer Curso*, Secretaria de Educación, Cultura y Bienstar Social del Gobierno del Estado de Mexico, p. 83.

[3] Julio Scherer Garcia, *Los Presidentes* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo S.A., 1986), p. 16.

U.S.-Mexican relations improved shortly after the war of 1846-1848. In 1861, after Mexico suspended all payment to its creditors, Spain, Great Britain, and France decided to intervene militarily in Mexico. Less than four months after landing in Veracruz, the British and Spanish troops withdrew, but the French troops stayed. Napoleon III had plans to create a Mexican empire under French protection. During the French occupation (1861-1867), Mexico turned to the U.S. for military and political support. The U.S. provided weapons to the Mexican rebels fighting the French invaders in northern Mexico and refused to recognize the government that France had imposed on Mexico. U.S.-Mexico relations improved further during the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, who ruled from 1876 to 1910. He created a stable environment that attracted considerable investment from the U.S. Such stability crumbled with the outbreak of the Mexican revolution in 1910.

From the 1910 Mexican Revolution to 1970

Memories of the 1846-1848 war came alive in 1914 during the U.S. occupation of the port of Veracruz. President Woodrow Wilson dispatched a squadron to support the opponents of General Victoriano Huerta, who seized the presidency in 1913. Wilson's aim was to interdict a shipment of German weapons for the Huerta government. Wilson underestimated Mexican nationalism. Not only Huerta, but his opponent Venustiano Carranza, condemned the U.S. occupation as an intervention in Mexico's internal affairs. Although the six-month U.S. occupation of Veracruz effectively cut off Huerta's supply line and custom revenues it also gave Mexicans a new reason to resent the U.S.

Oil Crisis. When the Mexican revolution ended in 1917, the issues dominating relations between the U.S. and Mexico were oil and foreign-owned land. The Mexican constitution of 1917 provided for state ownership of the subsoil, a provision that predictably worried foreign oil companies. Because of this implicit policy of nationalization of private property, the U.S. for three years refused to recognize the government of Alvaro Obregon (1920-1924). The oil situation appeared to be settled, however, by the Bucarelli Agreements of 1923, which converted the property rights of foreign companies into practically indefinite concessions.

Two years later, the Bucarelli Agreements were reversed when the Mexican Congress limited the subsoil concessions to 50 years. This triggered a new U.S.-Mexico oil-related crisis. Some oil companies even lobbied in Washington for U.S. military intervention. In 1928, Mexico revised its law to allow open-ended concessions.

This policy, however, changed once again under Lazaro Cardenas, who became president of Mexico in 1934. In 1938, Cardenas expropriated and nationalized all foreign companies.

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[4] Even in the central and southern states attitudes toward the U.S. are ambivalent, ranging from bitter feelings of resentment to discreet and enthusiastic admiration for American attitudes and culture.

The U.S. then imposed a boycott on oil imports from Mexico. Finally, in 1942 the Mexican government agreed to pay compensation to the oil companies. A period of almost three peaceful decades in U.S.-Mexican relations followed. They were years of an essentially passive Mexican foreign policy.

Since 1970

Under Luis Echeverria Alvarez. Luis Echeverria assumed the Mexican presidency in December 1970, succeeding Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, a president who was relatively conservative and pro-American. Echeverria's policies, by contrast, were definitively leftist. After decades of diplomatic passivity, Mexico charged into the international spotlight. Among the leftist causes championed by Echeverria during his six years in office were the demand for a radical international economic order, the establishment of closer ties with Cuba and Chile's socialist government, support for a United Nations resolution equating Zionism with racism, and the endorsement of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) claims.

Echeverria traveled overseas more extensively than any of his predecessors, visiting 35 countries and the Vatican and meeting with 64 heads of government. He established diplomatic relations with 62 more nations. Critics of Echeverria in Mexico pointed out that, in doing so, he was trying to gain the favor of as many countries as possible to fulfill his aspirations of obtaining the Nobel Peace Prize and of becoming secretary-general of the United Nations. If that is so, he failed in both.

The two key objectives of Echeverria's foreign policy were: 1) reducing economic dependence on the U.S. by diversifying financial and commercial relations and 2) wooing the Mexican political Left by opposing U.S. interests.

Echeverria embraced the development theory known as "dependency." This theory implies that Third World countries can achieve economic growth and development only by cutting off their economic and political dependence on the industrialized world, especially the U.S. One of Echeverria's most important initiatives was the so-called Charter of Economic Rights and Duties approved by the United Nations in 1974 by a vote of 120 to 6, with 10 abstentions. The charter was a collection of Third World complaints and positions blaming industrialized countries as the main cause of economic backwardness. Although it added no new positions, the adoption of the charter by the United Nations gave Echeverria a cause to promote on his trips around the world.

The Lopez Portillo Era. Echeverria's successor, President Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-1982) did not depart substantially from Echeverria's course. Jorge Castaneda, deputy foreign minister under Echeverria, became Lopez Portillo's foreign minister.

While concluding that Echeverria had gone too far in alienating the U.S., the Lopez Portillo administration, nonetheless, created more tensions with the U.S. — this time over Nicaragua and El Salvador. Mexico became a strong supporter of the Sandinistas, providing them with hundreds of millions of dollars in oil and other economic aid as well as with decisive political support long after it became clear that the Sandinistas were

Marxist-Leninists. Lopez Portillo in 1981 also recognized the communist guerrillas in El Salvador as a "representative political force."

Lopez Portillo believed that its oil wealth would reduce Mexico's economic dependence on the U.S. and allow it to assert an independent foreign policy. He was convinced that such an approach would help him gain the Left's affection and confer "revolutionary legitimacy."

Facing Economic Realities. When he took office in December 1982, Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado faced serious economic problems. In his relations with the U.S., de la Madrid attached a high priority to the issue of the foreign debt. Despite average oil revenues of about $11.25 billion per year between 1979 and 1982 for the Mexican Treasury, Mexico had borrowed $60 billion overseas during the six years of the Lopez Portillo presidency. In August 1982, four months before de la Madrid took office, Mexico announced that it was no longer able to service its debt. Falling oil prices had sharply reduced Mexican hard currency export earnings.

De la Madrid started renegotiating the foreign debt. This required lowering the volume of Mexico's Third World rhetoric, so typical of his two predecessors. Thus while de la Madrid is on good terms with Cuba, he has not traveled there. De la Madrid also realized he could not continue Lopez Portillo's policy of open, even strident, support of the Sandinista regime without endangering his foreign debt renegotiating position. At the same time, Mexico was not willing to abandon the Sandinistas. He found a formula to resolve the dilemma: covering Mexico's support of the Sandinistas under a mantle of multilateralism.

Contadora Efforts. The key to this formula was the Contadora Group. In January 1983, Mexico proposed that Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama meet to seek a formula for peace in Central America. Known as the Contadora Group because it met on the Panamanian island of Contadora, it was led from the start by Mexico. Through the Contadora Group, Mexico has continued supporting the Sandinista regime by opposing U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance and by not pressuring the Sandinistas to comply with their 1979 promises to the OAS to bring democracy to Nicaragua.

At the same time, however, de la Madrid normalized relations with the non-communist government of El Salvador in June 1984. He also put some pressure on the Salvadoran guerrilla organizations *Farabundo Marti Liberation Front/Democratic Revolutionary Front (FMLN/FDR)* to curtail public activities in Mexico.[5] De la Madrid's tactic succeeded: Without having to change the essence of Mexico's foreign policy in Central America, Mexico managed in 1987 to reschedule its debt repayments and even secured over $10 billion in new loans from the international financial community.

Recent Developments

Ronald Reagan and de la Madrid have met six times in the six years that their presidential terms have coincided. The first meeting was in October 1982 and the most recent was last February 13 in the Mexican port of Mazatlan. This last meeting was the most cordial. At previous meetings, the dominant issue was Central America. In Mazatlan, however, both presidents agreed to de-emphasize their differences on the Central American issue and to emphasize the bilateral issues of trade and foreign debt where some progress has been made.

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[5] The Salvadoran government insists that Mexican aid to the guerrillas continues.

Briefly touching on Central America, de la Madrid reiterated the longstanding Mexican position that negotiations rather than arms should resolve the conflict in Nicaragua. He also referred to social injustice alone as the sole source of the conflict, conveniently ignoring communist infiltration. He said: "We are concerned that violence and instability in the region could deepen serious institutional and social insufficiencies that are rooted in the origin of the conflict."[6]

MEXICO'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA

Central America

Mexico's policy toward Central America today is focused on 1) preventing Cuban-sponsored subversion in Mexico, 2) appearing independent from the U.S., and 3) placating the Mexican Left by actively supporting Cuba and Nicaragua as well as leftist groups in Central America. For years, however, Mexico almost completely ignored Central America. Not until 1966 had any Mexican president ever visited a Central American country. Economic relations were minimal. Mexico's chiefly was interested in maintaining political stability in the area and was satisfied even if such stability was the result of military dictatorships.

Violating Principles. Mexico's political involvement in Central America has increased dramatically since 1979. That May, with president Anastasio Somoza still in power in Nicaragua, Mexican President Lopez Portillo broke diplomatic relations with Nicaragua. By implicitly backing the Sandinista rebels, Lopez Portillo was violating the much proclaimed Mexican principle of nonintervention in internal affairs of other countries. Interestingly, this action was preceded by a visit from Fidel Castro to Lopez Portillo earlier in the same month.

Mexico then took the lead in working with Costa Rica, Venezuela, Panama, and Cuba to provide diplomatic, economic, and other support to the anti-Somoza groups. Mexico permitted its territory to be used to ship weapons to the Sandinistas.[7] When in December 1980, Jimmy Carter suspended economic aid to Nicaragua because of its support of the communist guerrillas of El Salvador, the head of Mexico's ruling PRI traveled to Managua to pledge unrestricted solidarity with the Sandinista regime. Since the Sandinistas took power in Nicaragua in July 1979, Mexico has given the Sandinista regime at least $800 million in economic aid and has supported them strongly in Latin America, Western Europe, the Organization of American States, and the U.N.[8]

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[6] *FBIS-Latin America*, February 16, 1988, p.7.

[7] Constantine C. Menges, "Mexico's Central American Strategy," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 13, 1981.

Irritating Washington. To support the Sandinistas further, Mexico launched the Contadora initiative. Not only did it fail to bring peace to the area, it failed to prevent the Sandinista military buildup. The formal end of the Contadora Group, and with it the end of Mexican interference in Central American conflicts, was this January at the Costa Rican meeting of the Central American leaders.

Mexico's El Salvador policy has irritated Washington as much as has Mexico's Nicaragua policy. In August 1981, Mexico issued a joint declaration with the new socialist government of France in support of the communist Salvadoran guerrillas, recognizing them as "a representative political force." The Mexican initiative was repudiated by fifteen Latin American countries, which denounced it as an act of intervention. Last November 5, El Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte accused Mexico of supporting the Salvadoran guerrillas. Mexico denied the charges and emphasized Mexico's "wholehearted support to the principle of nonintervention."[9]

Hands Off Guatemala. Mexico's support for revolutionary movements in Central America has been selective. Lopez Portillo, while supporting communist guerrillas of El Salvador, did not back the communist guerrillas in Guatemala: Said Lopez Portillo: "Mexico will take no sides in the [Guatemala] conflict...It is an internal problem and we view internal affairs in the context of nonintervention."[10]

Mexico apparently believes that, by supporting communists in Nicaragua and El Salvador, it will prevent communist subversive activities inside Mexico. There is probably a tacit agreement between Mexico and Cuba, by which the latter agrees not to sponsor subversive activities in Mexico if Mexico agrees to support radical movements in Central America.

South America

Mexico has never played a political role in South America. Exports to Latin American and Caribbean countries represented no more than 6 percent of total Mexican exports in 1985; imports from the area in that year were only 5 percent of Mexico's total imports.

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[8] According to the Central American magazine *Militancia Democratica*, it would seem that since 1979, Mexico has provided credit to Nicaragua for a total of $2 billion. Of this, only $800 million was approved and documented by regular credit authorities. The other $1.2 billion was hastily given to Nicaragua to cover a temporary balance of payments deficit. Mexico has been trying, without success, to document such credits to make them an official obligation of the Sandinista government. The Sandinistas, by delaying the documentation of the obligation, have made the Mexican government hostage to their interests in any peace negotiation process. *Militancia Democratica* (Costa Rica), No. 3, 1987, p. 12.

[9] *FBIS-Latin America*, November 9, 1987, p.11.

[10] As quoted in Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), p.357.

The Contadora Group was one of Mexico's few efforts at working with South American countries. Another effort is the so-called Group of Eight. It is composed of the Contadoran nations of Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela plus Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay. The Group of Eight met for four days in the Mexican port of Acapulco last November to discuss their shared problem of foreign debt. Their final communique, however, reflected widely diverse interests. The communique outlined general positions on foreign debt, but it did not call, as some observers had expected, for the formation of a debtors' cartel.

At the end of the conference, President de la Madrid complained that the Organization of American States (OAS) "doesn't effectively fulfill its function." He spoke of the desire of the Group of Eight to reincorporate Cuba into the OAS. These views, however, were not reflected in the conferences's final communique.[11]

FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET BLOC

Cuba

In 1964, Mexico was the only Latin American country that did not obey the OAS resolution calling on its members to sever diplomatic relations with Cuba. For one thing, it was widely believed that the resolution had been inspired by Washington; this gave Mexico the opportunity to appear independent of the U.S. For another thing, Mexico seemed to have an implicit understanding with Cuba that, if Mexico were not to obey the resolution, then it would not suffer from Cuban-sponsored subversion. Mexico's refusal to go along with the OAS was very well received by the Mexican political and ideological Left. From 1964 to 1970, Mexico was the only Latin American country that had diplomatic relations with Havana. In 1970 Chile, under Salvador Allende, reestablished relations with Cuba.

"Most Dear to Us." Relations between Cuba and Mexico have improved since the early 1970s. During the 1976-1982 presidency of Lopez Portillo, they became very cordial. According to Brian Latell, a senior Latin America specialist at the National Intelligence Council and Georgetown University lecturer, Castro and Lopez Portillo held annual summits "at which, among other things, they apparently coordinated their countries' policies toward Central America."[12]

Under Lopez Portillo, Mexico gave Cuba strong political and even timely financial support. In 1981, Mexico secretly loaned $100 million to Cuba.[13] Mexican imports from Cuba, for many years very small, started to increase in 1979. By 1981, Mexico was buying

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[11] Matt Moffett, "Latin American Presidents Urge Relief from Debt but Take No New Initiative," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 30, 1987, p. 15.

[12] Brian Latell, "Continuity and Change in Mexican Foreign Policy," *California Western International Law Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1987-1988, p. 88.

[13] Prepared Statement of Jorge G. Castaneda, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., October 16, 1985.

$190 million in Cuban goods while only selling $25 million to that nation. Lopez Portillo, in an action apparently intended to reaffirm Mexico's political independence from the U.S., told a Cuban delegation in early 1982: "Without doubt, the Latin American country most dear to us is our Cuba. Please send an embrace to the Comandante [Castro]."[14]

The close coordination of policies between Mexico and Cuba with regard to Central America apparently continues. Last July, shortly before the signing of the Guatemala agreement (the Arias plan) on Nicaragua and the other Central American countries, Mexican minister of foreign relations Bernardo Sepulveda Amor is believed to have visited Cuba secretly to discuss the situation in Central America. One week after his return to Mexico City, he declared that U.S. assistance to the Nicaraguan Resistance constituted the most serious obstacle to a diplomatic settlement.[15]

Soviet Union

Mexico was the first Western Hemisphere country to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, doing so in 1924. Yet relations between the two countries were minimal for many decades. This changed dramatically after Luis Echeverria took office in 1970. He visited Moscow in 1973 and later signed several bilateral accords with the Soviets. Indeed, in 1975, Mexico signed an agreement with the Soviet-controlled Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, generally known as COMECON, becoming the first non-communist Latin American country to do so. Two Mexican-Soviet joint commissions were established, and cultural, commercial, and scientific exchanges considerably expanded.

Relations between Mexico and the USSR improved further during the presidency of Jose Lopez Portillo, who visited Moscow for over a week in 1978. More agreements were signed between the two countries in the mid and late 1970s than in the preceding 50 years.[16] Although most of these agreements are at the commercial, cultural, technological, and scientific level, Moscow attaches great importance to such accords, because they help to keep open communication channels, which later can be used for political purposes. After the announcement that Carlos Salinas de Gortari would be the PRI's presidential candidate in July's elections, thus assuring him of victory, the Soviet Ambassador to Mexico Rostislav Sergeyev declared that commercial, cultural, and economic exchanges between Mexico and his country could grow under Salinas presidency.[17]

Received by Gorbachev. Strong indications of the increasing level of relations were the October 1986 visit to Mexico of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Schevardnadze and last May's visit to Moscow of Mexican Foreign Minister Bernardo Sepulveda, where he was received by Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Foreign ministers from Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay have visited the Soviet Union, but they were not received by Gorbachev. Gorbachev may visit Mexico this year.

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[14] Riding, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

[15] Constantine C. Menges, "Mexican Actions in Central America: Time for a Positive Change," American Enterprise Institute *Working Paper*, January 1988.

[16] Latell, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

[17] *FBIS-Latin America*, October 13, 1987, p. 7.

A political issue that has brought Mexico and the Soviet Union closer in recent years is that of "peace and disarmament." A Mexican initiative in 1967 — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — aimed at prohibiting nuclear weapons in Latin America, opened the door for Mexico to embrace the cause of "peace." The Soviet Union, sensing the possibility of political profit, has supported the treaty since the late 1970s. Thus began the increased cooperation between the two countries on issues of international peace and disarmament.

FUTURE MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Mexico probably will continue to pursue an activist foreign policy that stresses independence from the U.S. This year's Mexican presidential elections and domestic economic problems, however, could pull foreign policy rhetoric in opposite directions: On the one hand, populist and anti-American rhetoric will exploit nationalistic sentiments. On the other, conciliatory gestures toward the U.S. could assure the continuity of economic and financial benefits in time of urgent need, as when Mexico in 1986-1987 secured U.S. support for a financial bailout that included over $10 billion in new loans.

Mexico is likely to maintain a multilateral approach toward Central America and will continue opposing the U.S. in the region. It also will continue seeking closer collaboration with other Latin American countries on such issues of common interest as the foreign debt. Apart from foreign debt, however, it is unlikely that any other issue will prompt Mexico to start a new initiative in Latin America, at least in the short run.

Mexico's current policy of consultation with Cuba about Central America is not likely to change. Closer and increasing relations with the Soviet Union are probable.

The traditional Mexican principles of foreign policy — nonintervention, self-determination, and peaceful resolution of differences — will continue in foreign policy rhetoric. But they are sure to be violated, especially the principle of nonintervention, whenever Mexico feels it to be in its interest. This unchanging foreign policy is further confirmed by PRI presidential candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari's pledge to continue it.

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