

# ПІЖНАРОДНІ ВІДНОСИНА

DOI: 10.31110/consensus/2023-03/005-017

УДК (UDC) 327 (72) «20...»

## THE PRIORITIES OF MEXICO'S FOREIGN POLICY AT THE BEGINNING OF 21 CENTURY: OVERVIEW OF AMLO ADMINISTRATION

**Tetiana Bohdanova\***

**Iryna Tykhonenko\*\***

### Abstract

The article attempts to analyze the priorities of Mexico's foreign policy at the beginning of the XXI century with an emphasis on reviewing the foreign policy strategy of the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). The methodological basis of the study is a comparative analysis of Mexico's foreign policy priorities.

Currently, Mexico is the leading state in Latin America, which tries to implement an autonomous foreign policy, being involved in all international affairs. In the XXI century Mexico moved away from the policy of isolationism in accordance with the Estrada doctrine and began to be guided by the Castañeda doctrine – to conduct an active foreign policy both at the regional and global levels of the international system. Therefore, the following goals of Mexico's foreign policy strategy can be defined: support of regional autonomy and a balanced policy in the international arena, issues of social and economic development of the state, relations with the U.S.

Despite the ambitious goals of Mexican foreign policy, the state has a number of internal problems that undoubtedly affect its positioning in the world. It is worth noting that the administration of the previous President Peña Nieto emphasized the positioning of Mexico as an active player in the international arena. In turn, the López Obrador administration, being populist, puts domestic politics as the primary goal of its activities – following the principle “the best foreign policy is a good domestic policy”. Therefore, Mexican priorities under the AMLO administration are the development of trade and economic cooperation with Central American states, relations with

---

\* PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of International Relations and Foreign policy, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Mykolaiv, Ukraine. E-mail: [tatjanabohdanova@gmail.com](mailto:tatjanabohdanova@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9879-9073>

\*\* PhD in Political Sciences, Associate professor of the Department of International Relations and Foreign policy, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Mykolaiv, Ukraine. E-mail: [irinavi2202@gmail.com](mailto:irinavi2202@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7716-085X>

the United States (in particular, within the framework of the USMCA and the reduction of migration flows), as well as non-interference in global issues of international politics. It should be noted that such non-interference is quite controversial on the example of the Russian-Ukrainian war – neutrality in condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the existing pro-Russian position of the leading political elites.

**Keywords:** Andres Manuel López Obrador, AMLO administration, Mexico, Mexico-U.S. relations, Castañeda doctrine

## ПРІОРИТЕТИ ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ МЕКСИКИ НА ПОЧАТКУ XXI СТОЛІТТЯ: ОГЛЯД АДМІНІСТРАЦІЇ ЛОПЕСА ОБРАДОРА (AMLO)

Тетяна Богданова\*

Ірина Тихоненко\*\*

### Анотація

У статті здійснено спробу аналізу пріоритетів зовнішньої політики Мексики на початку XXI ст. з акцентом на огляді зовнішньополітичної стратегії адміністрації Президента Андреса Мануеля Лопеса Обрадора (AMLO). Методологічною основою дослідження виступає компаративний аналіз пріоритетів зовнішньої політики Мексики у XXI ст.

Наразі Мексика є провідної державою у Латинській Америці, яка намагається реалізовувати автономну зовнішню політику, будучи залученою до усіх міжнародних справ. У XXI ст. Мексика відійшла від політики ізоляціонізму відповідно до доктрини Естради та почала керуватися доктриною Кастаньеди – вести активну зовнішню політику як на регіональному, так і глобальному рівнях міжнародної системи. Тому, характерними цілями зовнішньополітичної стратегії Мексики можна визначити наступні: підтримка регіональної автономії та збалансована політика на міжнародній арені, питання соціального та економічного розвитку держави, відносини зі США.

Незважаючи на амбітні цілі мексиканської зовнішньої політики, держава має низку внутрішніх проблем, що безперечно впливають на її позиціонування у світі. Варто зазначити, що адміністрація попереднього Президента Пенья Ньето робила акцент на позиціонуванні Мексики як активного гравця на міжнародній арені. У свою чергу, адміністрація Лопеса Обрадора, будучи популістською, ставить внутрішню політику як першочергову ціль своєї діяльності – дотримуючись принципу «найкраща зовнішня політика – це хороша внутрішня політика». Тому, мексиканські пріоритети за адміністрації AMLO є розвиток торговельно-економічної співпраці з державами Центральної Америки, відносини зі США (зокрема, в межах ЮСМКА та зменшення міграційних потоків), а також невтручання у глобальні питання міжнародної політики. Відзначимо, що політика невтручання є досить

---

\* кандидат історичних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри міжнародних відносин та зовнішньої політики Чорноморського національного університету імені Петра Могили, Миколаїв, Україна. E-mail: [tatjanabohdanova@gmail.com](mailto:tatjanabohdanova@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9879-9073>

\*\* кандидат політичних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри міжнародних відносин та зовнішньої політики Чорноморського національного університету імені Петра Могили, Миколаїв, Україна. E-mail: [irinavi2202@gmail.com](mailto:irinavi2202@gmail.com). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7716-085X>

контроверсійним на прикладі російсько-української війни – нейтральність щодо засудження агресії Росії та наявна проросійська позиція у провідних політичних елітах.

**Ключові слова:** Андрес Мануель Лопес, адміністрація AMLO, Мексика, мексикансько-американські відносини, доктрина Кастаньєди

**Цитування:** Bohdanova, T. & Tykhonenko, I. (2023). The Priorities of Mexico's Foreign Policy at the beginning of 21 century: Overview of AMLO Administration. *Consensus*, 3, 5-17.

**URL:** <https://konsensus.net.ua/index.php/konsensus/article/view/70>

**Research Issue and Its Significance.** The 21 century was marked by the growth of the global role of Latin America. The leading states of the region – Argentina, Brazil and Mexico – are members of the G20, and the election of an Argentinian as Pope Francis I in 2013 became also symbolic for the importance of Latin America on the global stage. Mexico is the second country (after Brazil) in terms of population and GDP in the region<sup>1</sup>, one of the leading producers and exporters oil in the region.

Mexico for a long time (from the 1930s to the 2000s) was guided by Estrada's isolationist foreign policy doctrine, which means a policy of non-interference in the affairs of other countries, in particular neighboring authoritarian regimes, and refusal to positively or negatively evaluate their leaders<sup>2</sup>. At the beginning of the 21 century, under the administration of Vincente Fox, the rethinking of the regional position and vectors of foreign policy was made, and as a result, the transition to the Castañeda doctrine was implemented. During the administration of Felipe Calderon, Mexico became one of the initiators of the consolidation of Latin America as one of the poles of the world's global architecture, contributing to the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). However, later diplomatic work in this direction weakened somewhat under the influence of the domestic agenda.

Currently, the Andres Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) administration is demonstrating Mexico's return to the doctrine of non-intervention with an emphasis on domestic politics. It becomes important to identify the accents and positions of the AMLO administration regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war and relations with the United States, which continue to be central to Mexican foreign policy. It is important to stress on the factor of upcoming presidential election in Mexico in 2024, given the constitutional limits on the double term of office of the president.

**Analysis of the Latest Research and Publications.** Mexico belongs to the Latin American civilization, while for almost two centuries it has close ties with the U.S., since 1994 it has been a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), now

---

<sup>1</sup> Explore All Countries Mexico. The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. URL: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mexico/#economy>

<sup>2</sup> Groen C. To the Left, To the Left: Mexico's turn to an Old Foreign Policy Doctrine. *Berkeley Political Review*. 2020. May 1. URL: <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2020/05/01/to-the-left-to-the-left-mexicos-return-to-an-old-foreign-policy-doctrine/>

USMCA. Ukrainian researchers consider Mexico's foreign policy mainly through the context of U.S.-Mexican relations (I. Derevianko<sup>3</sup>) or Mexico's participation in integration processes in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean (L. Matlai<sup>4</sup>). Certain aspects of Mexico's foreign policy, in particular, participation in NAFTA/USMCA, are highlighted in the works of M. Bessonova, T. Bohdanova, and N. Kryvenko<sup>5</sup>. The problems of creating the Pacific Alliance are reflected in the article by I. Plevako and V. Stepanets<sup>6</sup>.

Analysis of recent research and publications has demonstrated the presence of a significant volume of scientific works devoted to the contemporary foreign policy of Mexico. However, the data of the study mainly concern the traditional vectors of Mexico's foreign policy. Among them, note the works of S. Villanueva<sup>7</sup>, E. Sandoval<sup>8</sup>, R. Velazquez Flores and R. Dominguez<sup>9</sup>. The researchers of Mexican scientists and politicians, namely, J. Castañeda and H. Camín<sup>10</sup> stressed on the basic principles of Mexico's foreign policy.

Statements of the presidents of Mexico, annual reports of heads of state on the main issues of domestic and foreign policy created the source base of the research.

**The purpose of the study** is to clarify the priorities of Mexico's foreign policy at the beginning of 21 century and overview their transformation under the administration of A.M. López Obrador (since 2018).

At the crossroads of international and domestic politics, Mexico's foreign policy has gained the status of one of the main strategic components of government action. In addition to solving routine issues, officials are tasked with paving the way to medium- and

---

<sup>3</sup> Дерев'яно І. Ефекти асиметрії в американо-мексиканських відносинах. *Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка. Міжнародні відносини*. 2019. Вип. 2. С. 43-48. URL: [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/VKNU\\_mv\\_2019\\_2\\_10](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/VKNU_mv_2019_2_10)

<sup>4</sup> Матлай Л.С. Мексика у міжнародній інтеграції: політико-економічний аспект. *Вісник Дніпропетровського університету. Серія: Філософія. Соціологія. Політологія*. 2015. № 4. С. 62-68. URL: [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/vdufsp\\_2015\\_4\\_11](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/vdufsp_2015_4_11)

<sup>5</sup> Бессонова М.М. Канадсько-мексиканська співпраця в рамках НАФТА. *Історико-політичні студії. Збірник наукових праць. Серія «Політичні науки»*. 2018. № 2 (10). С. 5-15; Богданова Т. Є. ЮСМКА як новий етап північноамериканської інтеграції. *Наукові праці. Політологія*. 2019. Вип. 312. Т. 324. С. 33-37; Кривенко Н. Торговельно-економічне співробітництво США, Канади і Мексики в контексті угод НАФТА та ЮСМКА. *Журнал європейської економіки*. 2020. Т. 19. № 4. С. 611-643.

<sup>6</sup> Плевако І., Степанець П. Тихоокеанський Альянс – новий міжрегіональний геополітичний проект. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія». Серія: Міжнародні відносини*. 2013. Вип. 3. С. 253-268.

<sup>7</sup> Villanueva C. Mexican Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: From Defensive Tradition to Incomplete Modernity. *Politics and Policy*. 2019. Vol. 47. Issue 1. P. 28-49.

<sup>8</sup> Sandoval E.R. Alcances y límites de la política exterior de México en las Américas: apuntes para la “cuarta transformación”. *Fundación Carolina*, 2019. URL: <https://www.fundacioncarolina.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/AC-12.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Velázquez Flores R., Domínguez R. Balance de la política exterior de México en el sexenio de Felipe Calderón bajo los tres niveles de análisis: límites y alcances. *Foro Internacional*. 2013. № 53 (3-4). P. 483-516.

<sup>10</sup> Castañeda J.G., Camín H.A. Un future para Mexico. Mexico, D.F.: Santillana Ed.Generales, 2010. 111 s.; Castañeda J.G., Camín H.A. Mexico's Age of Agreement. *Foreign Affairs*. 2012. URL: [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138361/hector-aguilar-camin-and-jorge-gcastaneda/mexicos-age-of-agreement](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138361/hector-aguilar-camin-and-jorge-gcastaneda/mexicos-age-of-agreement)

long-term foreign policy goals. Naturally, the goals are aimed at protecting national interests, such as economic prosperity or national security, but they also reflect Mexico's image, how it understands its role in the international system, and what its core values are<sup>11</sup>. Thus, foreign policy is usually determined by both a combination of structural conditions and national capabilities, as well as a set of multiple, intersecting identities and values. Structural conditions such as geographic location, availability of natural resources, long-term economic development, and political system are understood as characteristics that cannot be changed easily or cannot be changed at all. National capabilities are related to a country's economic power, military assets, global presence and activity. As part of the international community, states also promote certain values or worldviews according to their cultural or political identity, which are useful for promoting their national interests and strengthening alliances with other global actors.

However, the international system imposes its own limitations on the design of foreign policy. Unprecedented global challenges of the modern world create inextricable ties between the state and non-state actors. Isolated actions hardly ever produce results. Dialogue and cooperation are prerequisites for a harmonious global community that is ready to take on the challenges of tomorrow.

In this regard, Mexico is an interesting example of policy formation and implementation precisely because of its unique combination of multiple identities, structural conditions, opportunities, and values. The country has a privileged geopolitical location, access to the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, sufficient natural and human resources, and a population of more than 120 million people with a significant demographic bonus<sup>12</sup>.

Three main topics characterize the foreign policy concepts of Mexico at the turn of the 20-21 centuries. Firstly, the need to strengthen national and regional autonomy is given special importance, focusing more on the concept of a balanced distribution of functions in the international arena, and not on the desire to gain significant advantages in the struggle for power. Secondly, the importance of promoting and achieving economic and social development. And, thirdly, the primary and predominant role of bilateral relations with the United States<sup>13</sup>.

The transformation of Mexican foreign policy in recent years is determined by internal and external factors<sup>14</sup>. Nowadays global challenges are numerous and complex. They are the result of a process of transformation that the world has undergone and which

---

<sup>11</sup> The road ahead: the 21st-Century world order in the eyes of policy planners / B. Belli, F. Nasser (Eds.). Brasília: FUNAG, 2018. P. 250-251.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibide*. P. 251.

<sup>13</sup> Kosevich E. Mexico in the system of geopolitical coordinates of the beginning of the 21st century. Moscow: Saint Petersburg: Nestor-Historia, 2020. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345716955\\_Mexico\\_in\\_the\\_system\\_of\\_geopolitical\\_coordinates\\_of\\_the\\_beginning\\_of\\_the\\_21st\\_century](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345716955_Mexico_in_the_system_of_geopolitical_coordinates_of_the_beginning_of_the_21st_century)

<sup>14</sup> Bohdanova T. Mexico's foreign policy: objectives and challenges. *Міжнародні відносини і безпека в багатопольному світі: контури нового світоустрою для України та світу: матеріали наукової конференції* (червень 2023 р.). Суми, 2023 (у друці).

has greatly accelerated in recent decades, paying particular attention to issues such as globalization, rapid technological change, the emergence of new security threats, worsening climate change, unprecedented flows of migrants and refugees, and a new phase of geopolitics. In an interconnected and interdependent world, these problems must be solved collectively and comprehensively. From a Mexican perspective, should be analyzed some of the biggest challenges the world is currently facing and in which Mexico will continue to play a leading role<sup>15</sup>.

Mexico develops and conducts its foreign policy within the framework of its constitutional principles. These principles are also based on the fact that Mexico is an actor with global responsibility, and the conduct of an active and consistent foreign policy is key to its internal development, the affirmation of national sovereignty and the strengthening of the country.

Over the past two decades, Mexico has transitioned from a centralized political system dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which controlled the presidency from 1929–2000, to a true multiparty democracy. Two presidents from the conservative National Action Party (PAN) – Vicente Fox (2000–2006) and Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) – struggled to enact some of the reforms designed to address Mexico's economic and security challenges.

The PRI's return to the presidency in 2012 created new expectations for foreign policy. From the start, Peña Nieto administration marked a significant difference in foreign policy objects by not putting security, migration and human rights on the agenda, unlike previous governments, but it also sought to put a different spin on his foreign policy. The plan was to make Mexico a responsible global player.

According to Rafael Velazquez Flores and Jessica de Alba Ulloa, the activity of this administration was deeply conditioned by internal and external factors in different stages of the term. The authors identify the main foreign policy goals of the Peña administration.

The new government planned to gain more weight for the country in international relations system from a position more committed to global issues. It seemed that the goal was to achieve a greater correspondence between the geographical and economic importance of the state with the scope of its foreign policy. To achieve this goal, the president proposed four pillars: strengthening Mexico's international presence; expand international cooperation; promote Mexico's value in the world and monitor Mexico's interests abroad Another major goal was to improve the country's image abroad. The general perception and image of the country outside to 2012 was violence due to the number of deaths resulting from the drug trade. For this, the new government has developed various strategies. The media was asked not to focus on news of violence in Mexico, and all Mexican missions abroad were instructed to promote a positive image of the country. This policy became a priority at the beginning of Peña Nieto's administration<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> The road ahead: the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world order in the eyes of policy planners... P. 256–257.

<sup>16</sup> Velázquez Flores R., Alba Ulloa J.L. de. Los Factores Internos y Externos en la Política Exterior Mexicana (2012–2018): Una Evaluación General. *Foro Internacional*. 2019, № 3–4 (237–238). P. 675–676.

Four pillars of the National Development Plan for 2013–2018 were established by Government of Mexico in the following foreign policy goals:

- 1) promote political dialogue to strengthen Mexico's presence in the world and provide a clear and reliable legal framework for interaction with other states;
- 2) promote the value of Mexico through economic, tourism and cultural outreach;
- 3) affirm free trade, capital mobility and industrial integration;
- 4) watch over the interests of Mexicans abroad and protect the rights of foreigners in the national territory<sup>17</sup>.

According to scientists, Mexican foreign policy during the period of Peña Nieto developed in 4 stages: 1) from 2012 to 2014, which develops the structural reforms that impacted Mexico's foreign policy; 2) from 2014 to 2016 that analyzes domestic issues; 3) from 2016 to mid-2018 when Donald Trump appeared on the political scene; 4) and from mid-2018 until the end of the administration<sup>18</sup>.

Since Donald Trump became the head of the U.S., the foreign policy position of Peña Nieto's government has been adjusted. On January 23, 2017, President Enrique Peña Nieto outlined Mexico's foreign policy position. He said that "Mexico must not only face the new world challenges that are emerging, but also take advantage of the new opportunities that are arising with them". He focused Mexico's foreign policy will be oriented towards two main priorities:

- 1) Strengthening Mexico's presence in the world, in order to diversify its political, trade, investment, tourism and cooperation links.
- 2) Building a new map of dialogue and negotiation in bilateral relations with the United States<sup>19</sup>.

Mexico has undergone significant changes under the populist rule of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, leader of the leftist National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) party, who took office for a six-year term in December 2018. President López Obrador, who created MORENA in 2014, is the first Mexican president in over two decades to enjoy majority support in both legislative chambers. As of May 2023, MORENA controlled 201 of 500 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 60 of 128 seats in the Mexican Senate<sup>20</sup>.

In contrast to his predecessor, President López Obrador generally has maintained that the best foreign policy is a strong domestic policy. Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard (former mayor of Mexico City) has represented Mexico in global fora. After 2018 Presidential elections AMLO (Andrés Manuel López Obrador) administration announced it

---

<sup>17</sup> Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2013–2018. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. URL: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mex148347.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Velázquez Flores R., Alba Ulloa J.L. de. Los Factores Internos y Externos en la Política Exterior... P. 671.

<sup>19</sup> Mexican Foreign Policy Objectives. *Gobierno de Mexico*. 2017. January 23. URL: <https://www.gob.mx/epn/en/articulos/mexican-foreign-policy-objectives>

<sup>20</sup> Ribando Seelke C. Mexico: Background and U.S. Relations. *Congressional Research Service*. 2023. May 17. P. 3. URL: <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R42917.pdf>

would focus on the south, protect Mexicans abroad, work for transparent diplomacy and strengthen Mexico's role in human rights and the multilateral agenda<sup>21</sup>.

The assessment of López Obrador's personality by G. Weeks represent interesting facts. President López Obrador is a populist for whom foreign policy issues are not relevant. In his 2018 election campaign, he proposed ambitious plans to address the problems of corruption, poverty and human rights violations, and tried to avoid foreign policy issues and conflicts that divert attention from the domestic political agenda. After his election as a Mexican President, his approval rating was 86%, which encouraged him to continue to follow the principle of "the best foreign policy is a good domestic policy", which consists in carrying out reforms, increasing trade and economic cooperation with the countries of Central America and ignoring other issues of international politics<sup>22</sup>.

Rafael Velazquez determines three key characteristics of AMLO's foreign policy in 2018–2020. Firstly, a pattern of change and continuity. His administration has maintained some international policies implemented by past governments and, at the same time, it has transformed others. Secondly, the new administration has adopted a pragmatic approach and, at the same time, has developed a foreign policy based on Mexico's traditional tenets, such as non-intervention, self-determination, peaceful dispute resolution and so on. Thirdly, the first year of the AMLO administration has seen a pattern of conflict and cooperation, particularly with the United States<sup>23</sup>.

As President, López Obrador continued to show limited interest in international affairs, mostly focusing on cooperation with the US on the North American Free Trade Area and helping to reduce migration flows from Central America to the US in exchange for non-interference in Mexico's internal affairs<sup>24</sup>.

In Latin American region, the present leadership of Mexico changed its stance on Juan Guaidó's recognition as the Interim President of Venezuela. Instead, they facilitated negotiations under the guidance of Norway in 2021, involving representatives from both Nicolás Maduro administration and the political opposition. The government led by López Obrador also worked on strengthening its ties with Cuba, offering temporary asylum to Evo Morales, who was removed from his position as the President of Bolivia. Also Mexico refrained from endorsing Organization of American States' resolutions that criticized

---

<sup>21</sup> The Foreign Policy of the Mexican Government Is Transparent, Humanitarian and Effective. *Gobierno de Mexico*. 2019. URL: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/the-foreign-policy-of-the-mexican-government-is-transparent-humanitarian-and-effective>

<sup>22</sup> Weeks G. AMLO's cautious foreign policy. *Global Americans*. 2020. July 24. URL: <https://theglobalamericans.org/2019/02/amlos-cautious-foreign-policy/>

<sup>23</sup> Velazquez R. Mexico's New Foreign Policy: Between Pragmatism and Principism. *Latin America and the New Global Order. Dangers and Opportunities in a Multipolar World. Institute for International Political Studies*. 2020. P. 125. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340362827\\_6\\_Mexico's\\_New\\_Foreign\\_Policy\\_Between\\_Pragmatism\\_and\\_Principism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340362827_6_Mexico's_New_Foreign_Policy_Between_Pragmatism_and_Principism)

<sup>24</sup> Rudman A. Mexico's domestic-minded foreign policy could alienate the US. *The Hill*. 2021. URL: <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/567407-mexicos-domestic-mindedforeign-policy-could-alienate-the-us/>

Daniel Ortega government in Nicaragua, and showed support for Pedro Castillo, the impeached President of Peru.

Thus, U.S.-Mexico relations have grown turbulent during the López Obrador administration. Mexico has accommodated changing U.S. immigration and border security policies, negotiated a U.S.-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement (USMCA), worked with the United States on pandemic recovery, and relaunched security cooperation under a new Bicentennial Framework. Nevertheless, ongoing insecurity in Mexico and illicit drug trafficking from Mexico, trade disputes, and U.S. concerns over democracy and human rights issues have caused tension. The Mexican government has pressed for increased U.S. efforts to address drug demand and gun trafficking.

Mexico's long-standing war on drugs, with the support of Washington, has neither slowed the flow of illicit substances into the U.S., nor reduced violence in Mexico. AMLO took office with plans to address the root causes of drug use and violence, using military to tackle drug-related crime and violence<sup>25</sup>.

Mexico's relations with the United States under Trump administration figured prominently among AMLO's challenges. Some expected that relations between ANLO and Biden administration would have some more differences, but two leaders have steered clear of any major disputes, while cooperating on continuing to migrants' access to the southern U.S. border.

Specialists in Latin American Affairs by U.S. Congressional Research Service resumed U.S.-Mexico relations are likely to be tested in 2023 by ongoing tension in security and energy relations and by U.S. concerns over human rights, the weakening of Mexico's democratic institutions, and the military's growing role in Mexico's economy and society.

According to Clare Ribando Seelke, Specialist in Latin American Affairs of U.S. Congress, Andrés Manuel López Obrador has remained popular (63% approval rating in February 2023), likely because of his social programs, minimum wage increases, and ability to connect with voters. Critics have expressed concerns about López Obrador's attacks on freedom of the press, independent government institutions, and judicial independence, as well as his increasing reliance on the military to perform civilian functions. According to the International Monetary Fund, Mexico's economy expanded 3.1% in 2022 and may expand 1.8% in 2023. Observers expect MORENA to dominate the July 2024 presidential elections even though President López Obrador is constitutionally prohibited from seeking reelection<sup>26</sup>.

R. Sandoval stressed that Mexico currently has such style of foreign policy, where the president makes unbalanced and uncoordinated populist statements due to a lack of interest and understanding of international issues, and then the minister of foreign affairs,

---

<sup>25</sup> Can AMLO Deliver on His Vision for Mexico's Future. *World Politics Review*. 2023. June 12. URL: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/under-amlo-mexico-s-economy-and-mexico-u-s-relations-in-the-spotlight>

<sup>26</sup> Ribando Seelke C. Mexico: Background and U.S. Relations... P. 2.

who has a much better understanding of the details of international politics, tries to “put out fires” and clarifies the president’s positions and statements<sup>27</sup>.

Mexico’s current position regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war can be characterized as neutrality bordering on aiding the aggressor.

Although Mexico was the first among Latin American countries in 2014<sup>28</sup> to issue an official statement regarding support for the territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine (the administration of E. Peña Nieto), it also consistently supported all Ukrainian resolutions from the UN General Assembly both in 2014 and in 2022 year, Mexico refused to support the sanctions policy of the states of the Western world. The leader of Mexico did not express solidarity with the Ukrainian people and did not express proposals for asylum for Ukrainian refugees. President President López Obrador pointed out that Russia’s war against Ukraine is the result of the mistakes of the world’s political elites, who “couldn’t create conditions for maintaining peace”. In addition, Mexico refused to supply weapons to Ukraine, but expressed its intention to provide humanitarian aid<sup>29</sup>.

Note that neutrality is the main traditional position of Mexico regarding international affairs, and it is also constitutionally enshrined. Official Mexico City historically follows the concept of “principled pragmatism” in politics, if in some cases the primacy of international law is preserved, and in others – national interests are a priority<sup>30</sup>.

Mostly Mexican neutrality is manifested in President López Obrador’s rather naive proposal to declare a five-year global truce. For this, as the Mexican president stated, it is necessary to form a committee of 3 people with the participation of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Pope Francis and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to López Obrador, Narendra Modi, who maintains good relations with the leaders of Russia, the United States, and China, will be able to convince all three parties to agree to the proposed peace initiative.

First of all, Antonio Guterres, Pope Francis and Narendra Modi must achieve an end to the war in Ukraine and at the same time convince Russia, China and the USA, as the main “disturbers of peace in the world”, to sign a five-year peace treaty. The formed committee should also deal with the solution of the “Taiwan” issue, as well as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict<sup>31</sup>.

It is appropriate to point out that Mexico has clearly separated itself from the rest of the countries of Latin America by abstaining from voting in the UN General Assembly regarding the issue of Russia’s exclusion from the Human Rights Committee in accordance

---

<sup>27</sup> Sandoval E.R. Schizophrenia in Mexican Foreign Policy: Lopez Obrador’s Government Facing the War in Ukraine. *Wilson Center*. 2022. URL: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/schizophrenia-mexican-foreign-policy-lopezobradors-government-facing-war-ukraine>

<sup>28</sup> Політичні відносини між Україною та Мексикою. *Посольство України в Мексиканських Сполучених Штатах: офіційний сайт*. 2019. 25 серпня. URL: <https://mexico.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo/477-politichni-vidnosini-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-meksikoj>

<sup>29</sup> Can AMLO Deliver on His Vision for Mexico’s Future...

<sup>30</sup> Velazquez R. Mexico’s New Foreign Policy: Between Pragmatism and Principism... P. 125.

<sup>31</sup> Can AMLO Deliver on His Vision for Mexico’s Future...

with the violation of international law and the creation of a de facto genocide of the Ukrainian people. In addition, Mexico did not join the group of 41 states that appealed to the International Criminal Court with a request to conduct an official investigation into the crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine. Also, among Mexican political elites, the vast majority is dominated by a pro-Russian position. Almost a month after the beginning of the large-scale Russian invasion, about half a dozen members of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of the Mexican parliament), among them the ruling MORENA party, as well as the Workers' Party and the opposition Institutional Revolutionary Party, created the "Mexican-Russian Friendship Committee" of the General Congress of the United Mexican States of the states.

Note that the speech of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyi on April 20, 2023, in a video conference mode before the members of the Congress of the United Mexican States and diplomatic representatives, could not fundamentally change the attitude of the political elite of Mexico regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. Of course, at the diplomatic level, Mexico condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but the discourse of most political elites is dominated by the view of the Russian-Ukrainian war as a conflict in which there is no clear culprit and which can be resolved through concessions and dialogue. Mexico is not ready to join the policy of international isolation of the Russian Federation, as it considers Russia its partner and sees prospects in cooperation with it, as opposed to the USA. In general, Mexico condemns the war as such, calls for peace and dialogue, but at the same time, leaves room for establishing cooperation with Russia in the future, because it does not support the international sanctions policy and does not provide military support to Ukraine<sup>32</sup>.

In particular, President López Obrador, in his comments on the summit in Saudi Arabia on August 5 and 6, 2023, regarding the implementation of the Ukrainian peace formula, noted that Mexico will participate in the negotiations regarding Ukraine, only if both sides are present, but called the war "irrational"<sup>33</sup>.

Foreign policy of Mexico in the 21 century has changed regarding the activation of Mexico's position in the international arena in accordance with the Castañeda doctrine. In sum, Mexico's foreign policy under AMLO administration can be characterized by several aspects:

- 1) under López Obrador, Mexico has returned to its historic noninterventionist and independent approach to foreign policy;
- 2) U.S.-Mexico bilateral cooperation may falter as both countries convene presidential elections in 2024;
- 3) Mexico has sought to remain neutral in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and proposed the creation of a high-level caucus for peace in Ukraine within the United Nations.

---

<sup>32</sup> Шевченко Н. Президент Зеленський виступив у Конгресі Мексики: як відреагував мексиканський політикум та медіа? *Українська призма*. 2023. 1 травня. URL: [http://prismua.org/lacb\\_digest5/](http://prismua.org/lacb_digest5/)

<sup>33</sup> Президент Мексики закликає припинити "іраціональну" війну в Україні. *iPress*. 2023. 31 липня. URL: [https://ipress.ua/news/prezydent\\_meksyky\\_zaklykaie\\_prypynyty\\_irratsionalnu\\_viynu\\_v\\_ukraini\\_346121.html](https://ipress.ua/news/prezydent_meksyky_zaklykaie_prypynyty_irratsionalnu_viynu_v_ukraini_346121.html)

## REFERENCES

- Belle, B. & Nasser, F. (Eds.). (2018). *The road ahead: the 21st-Century world order in the eyes of policy planners*. Brasília [in English].
- Bessonova, M.M. (2018). Kanadsko-meksykanska spivpratsia v ramkakh NAFTA [Canadian-Mexican cooperation within NAFTA]. *Istoryko-politychni studii. Zbirnyk naukovykh prats. Seriia «Politychni nauky»*. 2 (10), 5–15 [in Ukrainian].
- Bohdanova, T.Ye. (2019). YuSMKA yak novyi etap pivnichnoamerykanskoj intehratsii [USMCA as a new stage of North American integration]. *Naukovi pratsi. Politolohiia*. 312 (324), 33–37 [in Ukrainian].
- Bohdanova, T. (2023). Mexico's foreign policy: objectives and challenges. *Mizhnarodni vidnosyny i bezpeka v bahatopoliarnomu sviti: kontury novoho svitoustroiu dlia Ukrainy ta svitu: materialy naukovoï konferentsii (cherven 2023 r.)*. Sumy (in publishing process) [in English].
- Can AMLO Deliver on His Vision for Mexico's Future (2023, June 12). *World Politics Review*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/under-amlo-mexico-s-economy-and-mexico-u-s-relations-in-the-spotlight> [in English].
- Castañeda, J.G. & Camín, H.A. (2010). *Un future para Mexico*. Mexico [in Spanish].
- Castañeda, J.G. & Camín, H.A. (2012). Mexico's Age of Agreement. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138361/hector-aguilar-camin-and-jorge-gcastaneda/mexicos-age-of-agreement](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138361/hector-aguilar-camin-and-jorge-gcastaneda/mexicos-age-of-agreement) [in English].
- Central Intelligence Agency (2023). Explore All Countries Mexico. *The World Factbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mexico/#economy> [in English].
- Derevianko, I. (2019). Efekty asymetrii v amerykano-meksykanskyykh vidnosynakh [Effects of asymmetry in US-Mexican relations]. *Visnyk Kyivskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni Tarasa Shevchenka. Mizhnarodni vidnosyny*. 2, 43–48 [in Ukrainian].
- Embassy of Ukraine in the United Mexican States (2019). Politychni vidnosyny mizh Ukrainoiu ta Meksykoiu [Political relations between Ukraine and Mexico]. Retrieved from <https://mexico.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobotnictvo/477-politychni-vidnosini-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-meksikoj> [in Ukrainian].
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Plan Ncional de Desarrollo 2013-2018*. Retrieved from <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mex148347.pdf> [in English].
- Gobierno de Mexico (2017). *Mexican Foreign Policy Objectives*. Retrieved from <https://www.gob.mx/epn/en/articulos/mexican-foreign-policy-objectives> [in English].
- Gobierno de Mexico (2019). *The Foreign Policy of the Mexican Government Is Transparent, Humanitarian and Effective*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/the-foreign-policy-of-the-mexican-government-is-transparent-humanitarian-and-effective> [in English].
- Groen, C. (2020). To the Left, To the Left: Mexico's turn to an Old Foreign Policy Doctrine. *Berkeley Political Review*. Retrieved from <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2020/05/01/to-the-left-to-the-left-mexicos-return-to-an-old-foreign-policy-doctrine/> [in English].
- iPress (2023). *Президент Мексики закликає припинити «іраціональну» війну в Україні* [The President of Mexico calls for an end to the “irrational” war in Ukraine]. Retrieved from <https://ipress.ua/news/prezydent-meksyky-zaklykaie-prypynvty-irratsionalnu-viynu-v-ukraini-346121.html> [in English].
- Kosevich, E. (2020). Meksika v sisteme geopoliticheskikh koordinat nachala XXI veka [Mexico in the system of geopolitical coordinates of the beginning of the 21st century]. Moscow [in Russian].

- Kryvenko, N. (2020). Torhovelno-ekonomichne spivrobitnytstvo SSHa, Kanady i Meksyky v konteksti uhod NAFTA ta YuSMKA [Trade and economic cooperation of the USA, Canada and Mexico in the context of the NAFTA and USMCA agreements]. *Zhurnal yevropeiskoi ekonomiky*. 19(4), 611-643 [in Ukrainian].
- Matlai, L.S. (2015). Meksyka u mizhnarodnii intehratsii: polityko-ekonomichniy aspekt [Mexico in international integration: political and economic aspect]. *Visnyk Dnipropetrovskoho universytetu. Serii: Filosofiia. Sotsiologiia. Politologiia*. 4, 62-68 [in Ukrainian].
- Plevako, I. & Stepanets, P. (2013). Tykhookeanskyi Alians – novyi mizhrehionalnyi heopolitychnyi proekt [The Pacific Alliance is a new interregional geopolitical project]. *Naukovi zapysky Natsionalnoho universytetu "Ostrozka akademiia". Serii: Mizhnarodni vidnosyny*. 3, 253-268. [in Ukrainian].
- Ribando Seelke, C. (2023, May 17). Mexico: Background and U.S. Relations. *Congressional Research Service*. Retrieved from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R42917.pdf> [in English].
- Rudman, A. (2021). Mexico's domestic-minded foreign policy could alienate the US. *The Hill*. Retrieved from <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/567407-mexicos-domestic-mindedforeign-policy-could-alienate-the-us/> [in English].
- Sandoval, E.R. (2019). Alcances y límites de la política exterior de México en las Américas: apuntes para la "cuarta transformación". *Fundación Carolina*. Retrieved from <https://www.fundacioncarolina.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/AC-12.pdf> [in Spanish].
- Sandoval, E.R. (2022). Schizophrenia in Mexican Foreign Policy: López Obrador's Government Facing the War in Ukraine. *Wilson Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/schizophrenia-mexican-foreign-policy-Lópezobradors-government-facing-war-ukraine> [in English].
- Shevchenko, N. (2023). Prezydent Zelenskyi vystupyv u Konhresi Meksyky: yak vidreahuvav meksykanskyi politykum ta media? [President Zelensky spoke at the Congress of Mexico: how did the Mexican politicians and media react?]. *Ukrainska pryzma*. Retrieved from [http://prismua.org/lacb\\_digest5/](http://prismua.org/lacb_digest5/) [in English].
- Velazquez, R. (2020). Mexico's New Foreign Policy: Between Pragmatism and Principism. *Latin America and the New Global Order. Dangers and Opportunities in a Multipolar World. Institute for International Political Studies*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340362827\\_6\\_Mexico's\\_New\\_Foreign\\_Policy\\_Between\\_Pragmatism\\_and\\_Principism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340362827_6_Mexico's_New_Foreign_Policy_Between_Pragmatism_and_Principism) [in English].
- Velázquez Flores, R. & Domínguez, R. (2013). Balance de la política exterior de México en el sexenio de Felipe Calderón bajo los tres niveles de análisis: límites y alcances. *Foro Internacional*. 53 (3-4), 483-516 [in Spanish].
- Velázquez Flores, R. & Alba Ulloa, J.L. de. (2019). Los Factores Internos Y Externos En La Política Exterior Mexicana (2012-2018): Una Evaluación General. *Foro Internacional*. 3-4 (237-238), 675-676. [in Spanish].
- Villanueva, C. (2019). Mexican Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: From Defensive Tradition to Incomplete Modernity. *Politics and Policy*. 47 (1), 28-49 [in English].
- Weeks, G. (2020, July 24). AMLO's cautious foreign policy. *Global Americans*. Retrieved from <https://theglobalamericans.org/2019/02/amlos-cautious-foreign-policy/> [in English].