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ANALYSIS

NEW PATHS IN MEXICO- US RELATIONS

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NEW PATHS IN MEXICO - US RELATIONS: AN ASSESSMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

Mexico, a strategic actor in international relations, emerges as a decisive country in shaping political, economic, and social dynamics both regional and global levels. Geographically located in the north of Central America, Mexico draws attention with its rich history and diverse cultural heritage, while also playing a significant role economically and politically. As a neighbor to the United States, Mexico has complex relations with the U.S. in areas such as trade, migration, and security. Additionally, the 3,200-kilometer border between Mexico and the U.S. is seen as a significant security concern for the U.S.

Mexico also emerges as an important country in Latin America economically. Mexico, one of the largest economies in the region, is one of the trade centers of Latin America with its dynamic workforce and strategic trade agreements. Particularly through agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico is seen as a significant part of regional trade and economic integration. Additionally, Mexico is a member of important international organizations such as the G20 and OECD.

With its regional leadership role, Mexico has a significant impact on various security, development, and environmental sustainability issues in Latin America. Therefore, Mexico's role in Latin America is of vital importance for the overall stability and development of the region.

Mexico faces various significant issues on the international stage, such as migration, violence, and drug trafficking. Particularly due to its proximity to the United States border, migration takes center stage in the country's policy agenda, while waves of migration from Central America also influence Mexico's migration policies. Violence and security issues are directly related to the activities of drug cartels and organized crime groups. This situation leads to conflicts, violent incidents, and high crime rates. Drug trafficking poses serious security threats both domestically and internationally, exacerbating narcotic addiction and health problems.

The relationship between Mexico and the United States emerges as a significant focal point in international relations. These relations are influenced by various factors such as geographical proximity, economic integration, migration, security, and trade.

In addition to common issues such as illegal migration and drug trafficking across the border, the economic relationships between the two countries, including trade and investment, are also part of the equation.

The regional leadership roles of Mexico and the United States and the power balance in North America play a significant role both within the continent and in the international arena. The stability and effectiveness of the relationship between the two countries are critical for regional stability and the health of the global economy. Their geographical proximity and economic, political, and cultural ties constantly influence their relationship. However, these historically complex relations have sometimes led to tensions and conflicts. Issues such as migration, trade, security, and border security form the fundamental dynamics of the

relationship between Mexico and the United States. While both countries often find themselves in direct opposition due to policies and decisions that directly affect each other's internal affairs, they also tend to collaborate based on shared interests. Therefore, the relationship between Mexico and the United States is a significant subject of study in the field of international relations.

This analysis will address the importance of Mexico in the context of Latin America and the United States. Border issues between Mexico and the United States will be discussed, and the impact of regional cooperation on Mexico will be examined. Finally, solutions will be proposed for economic problems and the issue of migration. This analysis serves as a foundation for understanding Mexico's role in international relations and the complexity of Mexico-US relations for those seeking insight into the matter.

Origins of Mexico-US Relations

From the processes of independence to the present day, the relationship between Mexico and the United States has had a deep historical depth and has undergone changes at various periods. The initial contacts occurred simultaneously with the independence struggles of both countries. The gaining of independence from Spanish colonialism by Mexico and the United States' own independence process are considered the beginning of the relationship between the two countries. The post-independence period, marked by the delineation of borders and territorial disputes, led to tensions between Mexico and the United States.

The Mexican-American War is seen as one of the turning points in these relations.

Taking place between 1846 and 1848, this war resulted in significant territorial losses for Mexico to the United States. Ending with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the war resulted in the cession of a portion of Mexican territories to the United States. This agreement was decisive in defining the borders between Mexico and the United States and influenced their relationship for many years.

The Mexican Revolution, which took place at the beginning of the 20th century, appeared as a period in which major social and political changes took place in the country. During this period, relations between Mexico and the United States became more complex. U.S. intervention in Mexico's internal political and economic developments sparked a backlash among the Mexican people towards the United States. However, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries after the Mexican Revolution, and cooperation in certain areas was gradually achieved over time.

Economic relations also constitute an important dimension of the relationship between Mexico and the United States today. Trade agreements such as NAFTA have contributed to increased trade between the two countries and deepened economic integration. However, alongside these economic developments, issues such as migration, security, and the environment have further complicated and underscored the importance of relations between Mexico and the United States. Today, Mexico-US relations are not only significant between the two countries but also hold great importance in the regional and international arenas.

Mexico-US Border Issues

Border issues between Mexico and the United States are closely related to increasing migration and border security concerns, especially throughout the 20th century. Migration movements between Mexico and the United States have been shaped by a complex combination of historical, economic, social, and political factors. The causes of these migrations are diverse and develop under the influence of various factors. Economic reasons primarily play a significant role. Inadequate employment opportunities, low wages, and economic uncertainty in Mexico lead many Mexicans to migrate to the United States in search of a better life. Higher wages and better job opportunities in the United States encourage Mexican workers to cross the border.

Additionally, social and political factors also affect migration movements. Issues such as violence, crime, and political instability in Mexico lead many individuals to seek a safer life in the United States. Moreover, US immigration policies and regulations also affect migration movements. Restrictions or complexities in legal migration pathways increase the tendency for people to enter the United States illegally. Cultural ties also impact migration movements. Factors such as family ties, cultural similarities, and language among Mexican-origin communities in the United States encourage new immigrants to migrate to the United States. Finally, trade and economic integration are also significant factors influencing migration. Trade agreements such as NAFTA deepen economic relations between Mexico and the United States while also increasing labor movements with the liberalization of trade.

Assessment of Mexico-US Relations in The Context of Economic Relations

The waves of migration from Mexico to the United States have increased border security concerns in both countries and led to tightening of border control between the two countries. These issues are also linked to regional economic cooperation.

The economic integration between the United States and Mexico experienced a boom as Mexico shifted from decades of protectionism to a regional strategy resulting in unilateral liberalization of its economy first, followed by the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. While there are criticisms regarding certain economic and social impacts of the agreement, its contribution to the development of bilateral trade is evident. Regional and global factors have slowed down integration since the year 2000. NAFTA deepened production sharing and cross-border investment models among the three North American countries, making their economies more interdependent. One of the greatest challenges to US-Mexico integration has been China. China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2000 and subsequently becoming the largest source of imports for the US has affected US-Mexico economic relations.

Economic cooperation between Mexico and the United States plays a significant role in resolving border issues. Trade and investment relations between the two countries contribute to the economic development of border regions. In particular, trade agreements like NAFTA have increased Mexico's trade with the US and deepened economic integration. This has positively contributed to Mexico's

economic growth and employment. After NAFTA came into effect, US economic investment in Mexico increased sixfold. However, experiencing the same effect from Mexico's perspective is quite challenging.

In the United States, approximately 6 million jobs are tied to trade with Mexico. Border states such as California and Texas, in particular, engage in extensive trade with Mexico. At the beginning of 2023, Mexico became the largest economic partner of the United States with a trade rate close to 15 percent. When examining the data from 2022, it is observed that Mexico is a source of crude oil for the United States, and the United States also places great importance on exporting petroleum products and natural gas to Mexico. Additionally, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which came into effect in 2020, replacing NAFTA, is seen as a commercial support promoting freer markets, fair trade, and economic growth mutually beneficial for both countries. Mexico, as a strong supporter of trade liberalization, has made trade agreements with many countries. It has 13 trade agreements with 50 countries and, additionally, 32 investment promotion agreements. Furthermore, there are nine limited agreements with the European Union, Japan, and many Latin American partners.

Mexico derives various advantages from its economic collaboration with the United States. Particularly, the increase in trade in border areas leads to revitalization of local economies and an increase in employment. Additionally, the United States' technology and capital accumulation strengthen Mexico's economic infrastructure and enhance its competitiveness. Thanks to this collaboration, Mexico has attained a more

effective position in the international economy and integrated into global value chains. The benefits of Mexico's economic collaboration with the United States are also related to the influences of international economic and trade organizations. For example, organizations such as the OECD and G20 play a significant role in shaping Mexico's economic policies and strengthening its position in international trade. These organizations assist Mexico in aligning with international standards and supporting economic reforms.

Migration movements between Mexico and the United States are a complex and multifaceted issue, and their resolution requires a comprehensive approach. This means not only promoting economic development and social welfare but also managing migration policies in a balanced manner.

Mexico's Border Strategies: Migration, Security and Trade

Mexico grapples with complex issues in managing its border with the United States. In navigating this border and its dynamics, Mexico engages in a complex balancing act. The policies and strategies Mexico pursues in areas such as migration, security and trade are significant both in domestic politics and international relations.

Examining Mexico in the context of migration reveals challenges stemming from both internal migration issues within its own borders and influxes of migrants from Central America and other regions. Mexico's border policies play a critical role in managing the flow of migrants to the United States and preventing human trafficking. In recent years, Mexico has made efforts to enhance border security

and prevent illegal crossings to align with US immigration policies. However, debates persist regarding the effectiveness and suitability of protection policies for migrants, considering the humanitarian aspect.

The United States implements various migration policies aimed at addressing the root causes of irregular migration and ensuring border control and security. Mexico participates in certain organizations involved in migration control. One such organization is the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), an eleven-member organization aimed at coordinating regional migration policies. Another is the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), which operates to prevent forced displacement both within countries and regionally.

Drug trafficking and organized crime pose significant security challenges for Mexico. The Mexican government has developed various strategies to strengthen security forces, reduce corruption, and combat criminal organizations. Additionally, it collaborates with the United States in organizing joint operations to combat drug trafficking.

With the renegotiation of NAFTA, Mexico's trade strategies have become a significant focal point. Mexico continuously reviews and improves its trade policies to strengthen its trade relations with the United States and sustain economic growth. Moreover, it develops international agreements and partnerships to increase trade and investment opportunities with other countries.

In conclusion, Mexico's border strategies require the integrated use of various

policies and strategies to address and resolve the complex issues the country faces. The policies pursued in the areas of migration, security, and trade aim to protect Mexico's national interests while also promoting regional stability and cooperation.

Undoubtedly, economic relations between the United States and Mexico face serious challenges. External factors such as increased competition from Asia and crises in Europe, along with the strengthening of regional competition, are significant in this context.

Discourses and Actions in The Border Crisis

With a population of approximately 15 million, the border region necessitates cooperation between the United States and Mexico. The United States collaborates with institutions covering not only border infrastructure, transportation planning, and security but also migration, natural resources, environment, and health issues. In November 2021, President Biden signed a Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allocating \$1.4 billion for construction and modernization at ports along the U.S.-Mexico border. Collaboration between Mexico and the United States is crucial, particularly concerning illegal fentanyl, methamphetamine, heroin, and other narcotics trafficking.

In this context, Mexico and the United States collaborate on stopping illegal drug trafficking, managing migration, enhancing security, and combating transnational organized crime and weapons trafficking.

The statements and policies of U.S. Presidents regarding Mexico constitute one of the fundamental dynamics of U.S.-

Mexico relations. Mexico carefully evaluates and responds to U.S. border policies and rhetoric in line with its national interests. Particularly, U.S. immigration policies and border security measures directly impact Mexico's domestic politics. The impact of these policies on Mexico should be thoroughly examined both economically and politically. Recent U.S. Presidents have adopted different policy approaches towards Mexico. Decisions taken, especially regarding migration, trade, and security, directly affect Mexico's political and economic future. Additionally, uncertainties in trade policies negatively affect Mexico's economic stability.

While Mexico values cooperation and dialogue with the United States in its relations, it also appears resolute in safeguarding its national sovereignty. Mexico adopts an approach that criticizes U.S. border policies and rhetoric while advocating for Mexico's rights in the international community. However, maintaining a balance in its relations with the United States, while pursuing mutual interests, seems the most logical path.

The US-Mexico Border Crisis

The 200 year old relationship between the United States and Mexico has evolved into intimate and strategic bilateral relations intertwined with economic, social, cultural, and political interests. This longstanding partnership dates back to the annexation of Texas in 1845 and the subsequent Mexican-American War, which forced Mexico to sign the Guadalupe Treaty in 1848, resulting in significant territorial losses for Mexico to the United States.

Migration and border crises have played a significant role in international relations between both countries, especially since

the signing of NAFTA in 1994. This agreement intertwined the relations between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, aiming to "eliminate barriers and promote the movement of goods among the three countries" within a trade partnership.

Historically speaking, migration is a mutual concern, meaning it affects the international and domestic affairs of both countries during the formulation of policies and reforms. Due to the shared geographical borders, border security issues, illegal migration influx, and economic problems have escalated into a crisis. Therefore, it has been an undeniable and critical issue in politics for decades.

When examining the US-Mexico relations during the Donald Trump era, Trump's strict immigration policies stand out. Serving as President from 2017 to 2021, Trump became prominent for his immigration and border security policies. These policies deeply influenced the dynamics of US-Mexico relations and garnered significant international attention. Regarding immigration policies, Trump's attempt to build a wall along the Mexican border sparked extensive debates and became central to US immigration policies. This policy aimed to deter immigrants from entering the United States, leading to the implementation of harsh measures. Additionally, the Trump administration took steps such as deporting migrants at the border and tightly scrutinizing asylum applications.

In the realm of trade, during the Trump era, renegotiating NAFTA and reshaping US-Mexico trade relations came into focus. Threats of tariffs on products imported from Mexico and trade wars occurred during this period. This situation created

uncertainty in the Mexican economy and resulted in imbalances in trade relations. In the context of border security, the Trump administration intensified federal security forces along the Mexico border and tightened border control. These policies often led to tensions with the Mexican government and faced criticism from the international community.

If Trump were to succeed in the 2024 elections, he has stated that he would reinstate the “Remain in Mexico” program, which requires non-Mexican asylum seekers intending to enter the US via the Mexican border to wait for their cases to be resolved in Mexico. Additionally, Trump, who continues his campaign visits, likened the situation at the US-Mexico border to a war in early March 2024. Furthermore, he has characterized migrants at the border as criminals and terrorists.

When examining the Joe Biden era, it is observed that Biden has made statements aimed at reversing the strict immigration policies of the Trump era and fostering a more collaborative relationship with Mexico. However, uncertainties persist in trade and security matters. At the end of 2023, US President Joe Biden and his Mexican counterpart, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, discussed enhancing bilateral relations and expressed their desire for shared efforts in addressing migration and drug-related issues, particularly highlighting their desire for joint action. Biden’s statement, “Mexico and the United States stand together,” is significant in this context. Biden emphasized that he would work with Mexico, especially on security, combating arms trafficking, organized crime, and drug trafficking. When examining Lopez Obrador’s statements, it is seen that he characterized US-Mexico relations as

respectful and collaborative. Additionally, Lopez Obrador praised Biden for his immigration policies.

One of the significant challenges Biden faced upon taking office in 2021 was the issue of illegal immigration from Mexico and the need to take significant steps on this issue for reelection. Furthermore, one criticism directed at Biden is his alleged failure to exert enough effort to address the drug issue.

The extent to which Biden fulfilled his promise to reverse Trump’s strict immigration policies in 2021 is a subject of debate. After taking office, Biden also adopted a tougher stance, with one of the most notable examples being his statement that he would close the border completely to reject migrants if granted the authority and his request for additional funding. Additionally, when examining data from 2023, it is observed that the US deported over 142,000 migrants, nearly doubling the deportation rate compared to the previous year.

It is also observed that Biden has frequently utilized Trump’s policy of sending non-Mexican asylum seekers to Mexico. Flights deporting individuals from the US to Venezuela indicate significant sanctions that will increase substantially in 2024.

Conclusion and Future Perspectives

Mexico is seen as one of the closest and most valuable partners of the United States. Between the two countries, there are 47 active ports of entry and a 3,200-kilometer border. Therefore, bilateral relations are significant in many areas such as trade and economic development, education, citizen security, drug control,

migration, human trafficking, entrepreneurship, environmental protection, and climate change. The lives and economic livelihoods of millions of people are directly tied to these relationships due to various factors. Additionally, reasons such as climate change, conflict, and unrest in other countries are increasing the number of migrants attempting to cross the US border from Mexico. In addition to extensive diplomatic and official relations between the two countries, comprehensive commercial, cultural, and educational exchanges also play a significant role.

If one country is not secure, it is unlikely that the other country will be entirely secure. Security is a comprehensive phenomenon and a shared responsibility. Especially countries like the United States and Mexico, which are border neighbors, must collaborate to ensure security. The US and Mexico should see each other not as ultimate rivals but as partners; this is a non-zero-sum game. Being interconnected and supportive of each other will yield positive results for both states.

The statements about Mexico differ between former US President Trump and current President Biden. The two leaders competing for the 2024 elections appear to be determined to adopt different policies, at least rhetorically. While Biden adopts a more conciliatory approach, it is clear that Trump employs provocative rhetoric. However, there are significant differences between the attitudes and behaviors adopted. Biden's conciliatory approach can be easily undermined due to his actions. Contrary to his promises, Biden continues to expand Trump's wall and enforce harsh policies.

In fact, in recent years, the United States seems to have created a border wall economy. This economy has turned into an industry that empowers political parties, contractors, military suppliers, and politicians. Therefore, the problem may not be insufficient border control but rather excessive control. It is an important reality that people condemned to migrate by the US and the capitalist system go through a dangerous and costly process.

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