



Calderón in Canada Mexico in the World



The Canadian visit of Calderón (May 27-28th, 2010) came a week after the visit to the US. It was not an afterthought, simply touching bases with the other Nafta partner. The visit was about Calderón asserting international policy leadership in general, and specifically on climate change themes anticipating the continuation later this year in Cancún of the UN sponsored COP 16 Copenhagen discussions.

The visit was also used for both the now standard agenda item of the promotion of investment in Mexico, and the urging of change on the visa requirement for all Mexicans traveling to Canada.

Nonetheless, the heart of the visit was in Calderón's bid to put Mexico in front on climate change, and to seek Canada's support for joining him on a greenhouse gas levels formula, one to which the US has not yet agreed. Prime Minister Harper indicated that Canada was waiting to see what the US would do. Thus, Calderón may be so far in front on the issue that he is willing to have a separate position from both Canada and the US.

Calderón as Promoter of Investment in Mexico

The promotion of investment in this period requires arguments about Mexican economic recovery, and public security. On these issues, Calderón is either on the defensive (public security) or asserting more than the data and local private sector consensus will sustain (economic recovery).

Nearly half the agenda in Canada was focused on promotional discussions, though the key item was a private meeting with Bombardier – the one truly strategic investor from Canada in long term economic and development activity.¹

There is no indication that significant new investment or “partnership projects” emerged from this quick visit.

¹ What is strategic about Bombardier's investment and activity is that it is not conditioned on Calderón or the PAN in power. It is a project as different as possible from mining for example, in that it touches advanced production, space age vehicle manufacturing and the employment of generations of the best and brightest space technology engineers from the Poly (IPN).



Calderón as Petitioner on behalf of Mexico

Calderón arrived with the plea to return Mexico to its “safe country” status, and not require visas of all travelers from Mexico to Canada. The Canadian Prime Minister and Canadian government officials put off this possibility until the thorough review of the immigration and visa programs was complete. This could take a couple of years (Harper) or longer (nearly everyone else) depending on what emerges from the review and the reform dynamics of the coming period. In the meantime, the visa policy stands.²

Calderón also offered ideas to provide for visa exemptions for businessmen, students and temporary workers. While the official report of the meetings and agreements as published by the Presidential Office in Mexico contained the following, it is not clear if there is anything beyond the cosmetic future intentions (our translation):

The first accord signed today by the two leaders is the Plan of Action Mexico-Canada 2010 that renewed previous accords on labor mobility, security, environment, commerce and international cooperation.

The second is a memorandum of understanding about youth mobility to facilitate that young people from both countries can travel and work in temporary formats.

And, the third is a protocol in air transport between the two countries including an improved cooperation in this industry.³

Calderón as International Policy Leader

Mexico is a founding member of the United Nations, and has long cherished its leadership role on international policy questions in the region. From the Treaty of Tlatelolco (1967) providing the basis for a nuclear weapons free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Contadora initiatives and the Chapultepec Accord (1992) ending the conflict in El Salvador, Mexico has had an activist policy mainly in the context of the UN and related multi-lateral frameworks.

With the election of Fox in 2000 and the arrival of a PAN foreign policy team in the Secretariat of Foreign Relations, Mexico's ambitions in the UN sharpened to include the designation to permanent membership on the Security Council. Such an ambition is shared (competitively) by other emerging nations, including Brazil in this hemisphere.

² The new visa policy developed in 2009 by the Canadians was based on an unanticipated explosion of refugee applications (from 2007 to 2009) by Mexicans who had traveled to Canada under the long-standing “no visa” required policy.

³ See press material from the Office of the Mexican President, as reported in UNIVERSAL, May 27-28, 2010.



There are two parts to the Mexican strategy to crystallize its international leadership with a permanent seat on the Security Council: moving from regional to international leadership on a major policy question; and, reversing the long-standing Mexican policy prohibition to participate in armed peace-keeping operations under the UN or any other international body.

Climate change as the signature issue of the Calderón administration

Mexico is not an opportunist player in the climate change discussion. The country has many areas already impacted by climate change dynamics, and is as vulnerable as many other nations to what is to come. While people in Mexico, as expressed in surveys over the past decade, have a difficult time understanding climate change there is no culture of scientific denial and few evidences of fatalistic acceptance. It may not be defined as the number one priority in a time of public insecurity and economic problems, but Mexicans are well disposed.

In fact, the Mexico-link to the issue is a symbol of national pride. As a post-doctorate researcher at the University of California at Irvine, the Mexican Mario Molina developed the critical science for identifying the impact of CFCs on the ozone layer with Frank Sherwood Rowland. While there was plenty of dispute at the time over the “science” – led by Dupont’s CEO calling it “science fiction”, one of the first great science disputes was resolved with broad global agreement. This led to the Montreal Protocol (see below) in 1987 and eventually the sharing of a Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1995 for the work by Molina, Sherwood and Paul J. Crutzen.

Neither is the current administration a “Johnny-come-lately” to the issue. With good counsel from international friends, Mexico has taken an active part in formulating alternatives for funding climate change support for the developing and poor nations. Backed by a significant ensemble of local environmental NGOs, Mexico signed on to the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and has continued as an active participant through the Copenhagen discussions, and is clearly more than happy to host the next major international discussion in Cancun in late November and early December of this year.

Climate change is a good opportunity for Mexico to go from regional to international leadership on a major policy issue. In fact, it is an extraordinary opportunity.

Where questions need to be raised about Mexico’s participation is a tendency to approach the forging of broad agreements with a kind of “more will than skill” orientation. The Calderón administration so wants to put its mark on this process that it shows signs of skipping steps in the process of forging large scale agreements.



Canada was an early signer of the Kyoto Accords, and has never been happy that its main trading partner the US never signed on (the only holdout of consequence). When Calderón pushed the Canadian Prime Minister on agreeing to a formula of greenhouse gas reduction that the US is not ready to embrace, Harper resisted and publicly stated that it made sense to see what the US would be saying. One doesn't need to be a defender of US post-Kyoto policy to wonder why Calderón was ready to finesse a Mexico-Canada agreement anticipating Cancun without getting the US to agree.

"Prime Minister Harper has said Canada will wait to see what policies the U.S. adopts to regulate major emitters of greenhouse gases, because the two countries' economies are so closely integrated. But Felipe Calderon, who leads the United States' other border nation and trade-bloc partner, expressed exasperation at waiting for rich countries to step forward." Globe and Mail, May 28, 2010.

The US may well be in an embarrassing stalling position while it sorts out its post-Kyoto posture (one of yet another bipartisan challenges for the new administration there). The day before Calderón arrived for his US visit (see Bulletin Series 10 Number 21 on the MUND website) the America.gov site noted in a major release that "*Canada, Mexico and the United States want to fight climate change by expanding the scope of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.*"

The US does not seem to be trying to substitute the Montreal Protocol for the new stage of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, rather it appears to be marking time while things get sorted out. Calderón's Mexico-Canada ploy looks like a kind of bush league tactic compared to what is at stake. Again without defending US policy, the effort to bring the US carefully and skillfully into the Framework seems worth a great deal of sophisticated exhausting work at discussion and consensus, and not just an end-run tactic.

Willingness to participate in armed peace keeping operations as the sine qua non of membership in the decision-making elite of internationals

To make a long story short, one good way to understand the consequences of World War I is as the crucible of definition for who sits at the table of great nations with a voice. The table's composition changed dramatically as the US replaced the UK as the key power and creditor nation.⁴ There were other changes in the form of new seating, purchased in sacrifice and blood at Vimy Ridge, Passchendale, Gallipoli and other battles. Canada lost 64,944 soldiers, Australia lost 61,928 and New Zealand 18,050 and gained new roles within the Commonwealth and in international bodies.⁵

⁴ A dynamic explicitly appreciated by the UK with regard to Latin America; for example, see the editions of the magazine *The Panamerican* for the period of 1919 to 1922.

⁵ India, in a different position, but with support from many tendencies within the Raj including Ghandi, lost 74,187 soldiers.



Mexico in this period had its own partially-defining revolution, with the backdrop of a very complex set of relations to at least two of the contending powers in WWI.⁶ (The number of fatalities in the Revolution, while a contentious theme in historiography, was probably larger than the fatalities of all nations who participated in WWI, on both sides.) Mexico was part of the Allies in WWII, but in the period following WWII had come to extend some aspects of its Estrada-era principles of non-intervention and peaceful resolution of disputes to an overarching foreign policy position.

Without being a full participant in all aspects of UN operations, Mexico's future ambitions for seating at the Security Council table are limited. Brazil understands this, and without hesitation has contributed troops to Haiti since the emergency of 2004 when gangs and former soldiers led a rebellion forcing President Jean-Bertrand Aristide out of the country. Brazil's 1,266 soldiers constitute nearly 15% of the total United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.⁷

There is no way for Mexico to run around its own political classes and popular opinion on the change of policy in participating with armed force peacekeeping. It cannot try to finesse the issue as Fox and his SRE tried in the 2001-2005 period, including the comic opera sending of Mexican troops to assist in the Hurricane Katrina clean up, where they were disarmed, kept under guard briefly clearing streets of trees, and eventually dispatched to Texas where they set up a hurricane workers support kitchen.

A change of policy inevitably requires a national debate, both at the popular and the elite level. And, given Mexico's particular history and geography in the world, it is not an easy one.

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⁶ When Mexico had its own post-revolutionary dynamics more or less sorted out and asked for admission to the League of Nations, its way was initially blocked by the ongoing unresolved problems between Mexico and the US in the 1920s. (The US, of course, was not even a member of the League.) Mexico was admitted in 1931.

⁷ Eleven of these 1,266 soldiers died in the earthquake earlier this year.