

# **La Política Exterior de los Estados Unidos Hacia México y Latinoamérica según el Resultado Electoral del 2000.**

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## **Introduction**

Good Afternoon. My name is Peggy Wesselink and I come to you today from a point about as far away as one could find and still be in the contiguous United States. I live Potsdam, New York, which is a small college town nestled in the foothills of the Adirondacks, about 30 miles from the Canadian border. My location is somewhat remote and the closest airport, is in Ottawa, Like Culiacán it is not exactly a hub for international or domestic flights even though, like Culiacan, it services a large metropolitan area. It was a long and circuitous trip. But, I am here and even though we are many hours apart, we are neighbors.

I would to like begin by expressing my appreciation to those who invited me to speak, made the necessary arrangements and are responsible for making my stay a pleasant one. In particular the faculty and students at the Autonomous Universidad de Sinaloa and the Universidad de Occidente., as well as; Estelle Baird of the US Dept. of State and Araceli Partearroyo. Thank you.

With that said, I will now divulge that their job is an easy one. Easy because no one has to twist my arm to come to Mexico. I have deep appreciation for this country. It is a land of sun, art, delicious food and good people. This in turn means I come to you with prejudice. I value Mexican culture as it is, not as some may hope it will be. When I traveled the back roads from Guadalajara en route to Manzanillo a few years ago, I was impressed. I was impressed by the beauty of the landscape and the friendliness of the people. When I would walk the markets of Merida, Colima or Mazatlan, I would witness the invisible hand at work and I enjoyed the interaction. But, I have also seen changes over the years. Today, many products are not made in Mexico and I wonder what I will see in another decade? Will "free trade" rob Mexico of its identity and livelihood? Will the demands of globalization overshadow the need for more even distribution of the fruits of Mexican labor? I do not know, but when I mentioned this to a colleague, she said, if any country can resist the pressure of the capitalist steamroller, Mexico can. It is a country tied to the land. Products are drawn in unique and beautiful ways from the Earth and reflect the artisan's relationship with the organic. That is much less true in the United States and we are poorer for it. So, I hope Mexico can negotiate a kinder, gentler model of prosperity, one that retains the rhythm of the people. As for me, I look forward to experiencing your rich diversity, soaking in the strains of your music and learning from your expertise as we approach the new millennium together and in peace.

## **Part I: Can we predict each candidates behavior and does it make a difference anyway?**

When discussing what topic I was to speak on today, Estelle Baird gave me a long answer. I am to consider the possible outcomes of either an Al Gore or George W. Bush win in the November US Presidential elections on foreign policy toward Mexico in particular and Latin America in general. That is difficult to articulate, and difficult to answer. So, initially, I would like to simplify the title by asking two smaller questions: First, Can we predict candidates behavior once they enter office? and second, if we can, is there enough difference among candidates that it matters?

To answer the first question, yes, we can predict. But that doesn't mean the candidate will act predictably. Presidential candidates who become president are notorious for reneging on their campaign promises. Looking back, there was former president George Bush, father of George W. , who repeated the mantra, "read my lips, no new taxes." However, when in office, he was forced to raise taxes. More recently, President Bill Clinton campaigned on tax cuts for the middle class. However; when he was elected and reviewed the budget, surprise, there was no tax cut for the middle class. Voters try to hold candidates accountable. They attend debates and dinners, asking questions that they hope will nail down a candidates commitment to a particular policy, but time and again, campaign promises are broken.

This does not mean our attempt to understand each candidate's position towards Mexico and Latin America is futile. There is room for theorizing. Gore and Bush have revealed much. There are repeating themes in each campaign and consistent policy preferences, there are patterns. In this talk, I will relate Bush's campaign promises, positions and rhetoric and Gore's campaign promises, positions and rhetoric. Then I will bundle each candidate's initiatives into a coherent political paradigm. A vision, per se, that will give us a glimpse of what a Gore or Bush win might mean for the future.

I see basically three possibilities. Gore will be good for Mexico and Latin American, or not. Bush will be good for Mexico and Latin America, or not. Or it doesn't matter. That it makes absolutely no difference. To sort this out, I turn, once again, to history. Foreign policy has traditionally been tied, in a general sense, to the office of the presidency, rather than to a party or individual. Consider NAFTA. It was an agreement penned by Republican policy-makers that languished in debate until Bill Clinton, a Democratic president took the White House. It was he who vociferously pressed for passage and is credited with making the agreement reality. This might befuddle some political analysts. Why would a democratic president go against the groundswell of opposition that emerged from traditionally Democratic constituencies of Labor Unions and environmentalists? Wasn't that a risky maneuver? Probably not. Although vocal, labor and environmentalist are unlikely to vote Republican under any circumstances, and Clinton claimed he was pursuing US national interest, or their interests too. So, Clinton, under the umbrella of the office of the president, pressed even harder. He enthusiastically advocated for expansion of the NAFTA to include Chile. And he may very well have accomplished it, if the Republican congress had not pulled the plug on "fast-track diplomacy." It appears backwards.

This is where differences come into play, and where predicting policy begins to make sense. In this case, different parties and different personalities collided. That was predicted. The Republican congress, headed by Newt Gingrich, never liked Clinton's style. So even though the republican party claimed free trade as their exclusive motto, they stopped Clinton in his tracks. To paraphrase Frank Sinatra, Congress wanted to advance free trade but only if they could do it "their way." Clinton, using the same tune, wanted to do it "his way." The "way" or implementation of policy is linked to each person, or candidate in this case. Thus we can make projections by looking at the "ways" of A1 Gore and George W. Bush.

Bush's way is folksy and straight-forward. He is a big picture kind of guy. His approach to most issues is sweeping and universal; advance free trade. Gore's way is more complex. So much so that he is criticized as too intellectual. To combat this image, Gore never strays far from the democratic party line of being pro-environment, pro-labor and pro-human rights. For him, trade expansion is good, but not without side agreements.

These positions are financially backed by each party and by interest groups The Republican national committee spent more than \$52 million dollars since June 1 st on the Bush campaign while the Democratic national committee chipped in \$21 million dollars to Gore's campaign. Gore also picked up \$2.4 million in political ads between June 1 and Sept. 20 from the AFL-CIO and Handgun Control Inc., while during the same

period, Bush received \$897,000 in political ads from American Family Voices and the National Rifle Association. Unions support Gore and "get big government off our backs" gun owners support Bush. Clearly they see a difference in the candidates and a stake in who wins the election.

So, to answer the original two questions I posed, yes, we can predict but once in office the candidate may act unpredictably. And yes it does make a difference who wins. Even though foreign policy objectives are defined by the office of the president, each president wants to do it "their way."

So who is going to win the election? Citizens, pundits and academics are offering guesses. Mike Lewis-Beck, a scholar at the University of Iowa, offers a list of rules for prognostication to help us out. There is the height rule: that the taller candidate will win. The name rule: the candidate with the longest name will win. The wine rule: that if the Beaujolais harvest is poor, Republicans will win. And the hockey rule: if Montreal or Toronto wins the Stanley cup the democrats win. He also offers variables for prediction, such as, percentage change in real GNP over the previous 6 months, approval percentage for the president in July of election year, number of seats the incumbent party lost in last midterm election and percentage of total primary votes received 60% or more. If we use prognostication rules, Bush wins. Based on prediction, Al Gore wins.

## **Part II The issues according to Fox and the approaches of Bush and Gore.**

Obviously who will win remains a mystery, but that each might do, if elected is less ambiguous. So that is what I will begin. By offering an overview of each candidate's stand and strategy on issues relevant to Mexico and Latin America. To determine those key interests in Mexico, I looked to President-elect Vicente Fox. In a recent interview with Margaret Warner on PBS's Newshour, Fox identified "three big changes" he anticipates in the US-Mexico relationship. First, he says, we need to fully open borders between the US and Mexico. Second, he wants to see the United States give \$20 billion dollars a year in new development aid to assist Mexico's economic growth. And third, he calls for an end to the US policy of forcing the president to go before Congress and argue for certification of Mexico's commitment to the drug war. These, he asserts, are "long term, holistic and achievable objectives" for a strong partnership among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Interestingly, these three innovative ideas strike at the heart of what each candidate features in their campaign speeches and press releases concerning Mexico which indicates that all parties agree on the nature of the challenges facing our nations.

### **Issue #1--Opening Borders**

I will address the issues in the order Fox gave them. First, opening the US-Mexico border. No candidate advocates the US doing that, although candidate Pat Buchanan, at one time, suggested we build a fence between our two countries. He was ridiculed for it, but closed borders really are a given in US politics. Labor complains loudly and persistently of the damage done by increasing employment of foreign workers and marketing of foreign made products. The anti-immigrant sentiment is so high in the States, that opening borders seems preposterous and raises little debate. So, neither candidate suggests an open border in the near future, in fact they suggest the reverse. They want to step up border patrol. However; both say that legal immigration should be made more "user friendly."

To achieve that balance, Gore and Bush offer agendas that revamp the INS and revise immigration legislation to advance a tough on crime border policy, while also preserving the image of the US as the benevolent care taker of oppressed people and industrious immigrants. Let us turn to Al Gore first. His campaign says he is, and I quote, committed to "a fair and comprehensive immigration agenda that is based on keeping families together, providing humanitarian protection of refugees, protecting the US workforce and continuing tough enforcement."

To that end, Gore recently announced his support for legislation to "ensure fairness and equity for certain immigrants and their families already in the United States." Specifically he supports amending the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (S. 2912) to include other Central American and Haitian Refugees in addition to the already covered Cuban and Nicaraguan refugees. The legislation also amends section 249 of the Immigration and Nationality Act which revises the registry date of 1972 to 1986. This allows long-term immigrants who have resided in the US since 1986 to become legal permanent residents. Lastly, the legislation reinstates section 245(I) of Immigration and Nationality Act, allowing certain families to stay together through the application process for residency and also to process certain applications here in the US. Concerning labor movement, he seeks an increase in high Tech worker visas (H-1B)--which is mostly targeted at Indian immigrants for work in the silicon valley --and would also like to increase visa fees and then use the revenue to support training programs for displaced US workers. (Something the Democratic platform purposes.)

To show even greater support of legal immigrants, Gore pledges he will not support legislation to make English the official language of the United States. Lastly, Gore demands increased hiring of border enforcement officers to stem the tide of illegal immigrants into the United States.

Bush takes a slightly different tack. He celebrates his connections South of the border, proclaiming Latin America as part of "the neighborhood" and name dropping when possible. He happily lists Mexican officials he know on a first name basis as evidence of his expertise and lapses into Spanish mid-speech. A move some believe is an attempt to polish his tarnished foreign policy image after some exposing some embarrassing gaps in knowledge of geography and the names of key international leaders in Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Whatever the motivation, Indeed, Bush does seem to know Mexico best. As he remarks "more than half of the 2,000 mile US-Mexico border belongs to his state, Texas" and "Texas exported \$41 billion dollars worth of goods to Mexico last year" (Detroit News. by Maria La Ganga of LA Times. 8-26-00). He would have us believe that he has his finger on the pulse of Mexico, Bush does. Consequently, he presents his ideas of "making our borders more than lines on a map", as an agreed upon strategy conceived by both the United States and Mexico. And sees no contradiction in saying, and I quote, that he is "committed to welcoming new Americans with respect and open arms."

In the spirit of hospitality, he proposes reorganization of the INS. He would split the current office into two separate entities; one dealing only with immigration and naturalization and one enforcing border policy. He also says he will call upon Congress to budget \$500 million dollars toward speeding the processing of gaining citizenship by reducing the legal immigrants wait from the current snail's pace of 3-5 years to 6 months. In addition, he asks for expansion of H-1B high tech worker visas and H-2A farm worker visas.

Without a doubt, Bush has greater experience than Gore dealing with Mexico. He has a history of good relations to his credit. However, can he fashion immigration policy with Mexico based on his experiences? Some, such as well-known author and scholar Robert Kaplan, say no. Kaplan believes that the border Bush shares with Mexico has unique features that make it the model for open arms trade policy. He points out that Monterrey is situated close to the Texas border and is a booming industrialized city that competes with cities in Texas. Thus, immigration issues are not very contentious in Texas. However, in California they are bitterly disputed. There, major urban centers are very close to a Mexican border that includes many impoverished centers, making illegal immigration seductive. Hence, Bush and Senator Phil Gramm "greet with enthusiasm steps to strengthen bonds with Mexico" whereas Governor Grey Davis and Pete Wilson do not.

Kaplan takes the argument a step further. He claims that US policy ignores key immigration issues, such as, the significance of the Chiapas uprising, endemic poverty and unaddressed population pressures. From 1970-1995 the population of Mexico nearly doubled and is currently hovering around 99 million. In 1990 alone,

he says, there were 13 million new members of the working-age population in the countries immediately south of the US border--Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean Basin. If population is cast as the root issue then who becomes president will definitely have impact. Bush will thwart population and development assistance further eroding USAID and seeking strategies consistent with the Right to Life movement. While Gore supports women's right to chose at home and abroad.

Human rights activists offer yet another criticism. As cases of corruption, police brutality and unreasonable arrests by overzealous border patrols rise, they suspect that more hires of patrol officers will exacerbate inhumane treatment of people that "look" Mexican. More officers, they posit, will actually make things worse. So, they criticize both candidates approach as palliative at best and contributing to human rights violation at worst. They counsel slowing down the hires of patrol officers to avoid superficial treatment of important interview questions, insufficient background checks and lack of training. Thus far, their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

### **Issue #2: \$20 billion in new US aid.**

Fox's second suggestion for improving US-Mexico relations was for the US to deposit \$20 billion a year of new aid into an account along the lines of an IMF of NAFTA. It would be an account that all three states would contribute to, and draw upon. Its function would be to decrease the current economic disparity among the three signatories. He believes this would strengthen the regional block and ease immigration problems.

Increasing foreign aid is a tough sell. US Citizens already wonder if they aren't already paying more than their share. Gore knows this and avoids specifics. Instead he makes vague references to increasing debt relief for Latin America and the Caribbean and focuses his attention on seeking congressional authority to negotiate trade agreements with the added caveat that "future agreements must come with environmental, labor and human rights standards". He also makes clear, that Cuba would be excluded from such agreements until it is democratic.

Bush, by contrast, promises \$100 million dollars to underwrite loans to small businesses in Latin America and Mexico. He also plays on US isolationist sentiments and constructs foreign policies that will put it into action. He says he will make it a priority to regain fast track negotiating authority and expand trade within our hemisphere, but implies that he will do so as a method for lightening the US load. Drawing on the strategy of Former President Ronald Reagan, he proclaims " `free trade as a forward strategy for freedom'" that will spread American good, services and values, such as, freedom, respect for human rights and democracy, to foreign countries. Once these values are adopted, he believes the US will no longer have to carry the burden of being the world's 911 and everyone will pay their fair share. For example, he foresees the opening of the door to trade with China as a way to ensure US influence and force them to comply with environmental standards and human rights initiatives at the same levels required of the United States. He thinks China has been getting off too easy. In Bush's statements on the Kyoto Protocol, he decries the agreement as "ineffective, inadequate and unfair to America because it exempts 80% of the world, including major population centers such as China and India, from compliance." To Mexico, he is more encouraging than critical. He says that as long as Mexico is "on the road toward liberty, it will not be alone." And, "As long as Mexico is moving toward freedom, it will have a steady friend in the United States of America."

I suspect Fox would prefer the cash..

### **Issue #3: Drugs**

Fox's third issue was the annual drug certification process. This process, as it is described by Eric Olsen of the Washington Office on Latin America, is a key component of US drug policy and requires the president to certify before congress the `extent to which other countries are "fully cooperating" with US counter narcotics efforts." Of late, the process has become fraught with rancor. Some members of Congress would like to

decertify Mexico based on stories of corruption in the Mexican military and civilian authorities. Stephen Johnson, policy analyst for Latin America, believes the best option is for Congress to support Fox's position and end the annual certification of Mexico. Johnson notes that in 1997 and 1998, President Clinton certified a non-compliant Mexico while not certifying Colombia, despite evidence that both countries did not merit certification. Such dual treatment, he says, is "an irritant to hemispheric relations" and undermines the effectiveness of the certification process. Others add that it is arrogant of the US to certify other country's drug policy success while ignoring its own complicity in the problem. After all, the US is the world's largest consumer of legal and illegal drugs.

Fox states that unilateral drug policy is destined to failure. He counsels a multilateral approach to authorship and enforcement. Gore and Bush disagree. When it comes to the war on drugs, the US trusts no one to help. And each candidate claims they will "fight the good fight." They conceptualize drug problems as happening out there somewhere, somewhere to the south. The US is merely a casualty by location, with a duty to end it. Thus, emphasis remains on controlling supply rather than limiting demand for illegal drugs. When US demand is addressed, it is treated as the problem of troubled individuals. The solution is to increase prison time. This maintains the pressure on supply issues. Most energy and funds, about 93%, are funneled into source control, interdiction and law enforcement. The remaining 7% is used for drug abuse treatment in the US. Congress has considered reducing prison time for non-violent drug crimes, but it has been met with resistance, in particular from the state of New York, where there has been tremendous growth in the building of prisons. Correctional facilities are big business throughout the US. At the end of 1999, one out of every 32 American adults was either in prison or on probation, according to a Department of Justice report. And, non-violent drug criminals constitute 25% of current the prison population. These numbers keep US prisons profitable while keeping the unemployment rates low. The prison system is fast becoming part and parcel of US economic development. Gore and Bush policy agendas, consistent with these themes, advocate increasing militarized anti-narcotic policy at the source and border, AND supporting incarceration for drug offenders.

### **Analysis by Arias**

Fox is not the only one with suggestions for improving relations with the United States. Oscar Arias Sanchez, Nobel Laureate and former president of Costa Rica, has ideas too. His ideas flow from his history of working with the US. He sharply criticizes Gore, Bush and the United States government. He says that neither candidate has had "the courage or leadership to educate the American electorate about the importance ...of the economic and social interdependence between the US and Latin America." And that the US government, not the people, but the government is becoming, and I quote "more arrogant, more disrespectful of its neighbors and even more isolationist everyday" as it "tries to tell the rest of the world what to do-- impose its will." According to Arias, the problem with US foreign policy toward Mexico and Latin America is its lack of respect for governments south of the border.

Arias lists three ways to alleviate the problems and diffuse the economic crisis in Latin American. First, he would like to see NAFTA expanded to include all of Latin America. Second, US, foreign aid needs to be increased. He notes that the US is, and I quote, "one of the stingiest countries on the face of the earth". And third, he calls for increased direct investment in less economically developed nations, such as, Nicaragua, or Honduras.

If we look at some related issues, Arias's criticism of increasing isolationism is born out. Both candidates say they will be internationalist, but what they seem to mean is that they will be internationalist as long as the international community agrees with the US. Both claim they will pay the UN dues only IF the UN conforms to US reform recommendations. Both say they will pursue world peace and security multilaterally, but Gore and Bush are on record as supporting the National Missile Defense System, even though it failed its first test; even

though it violates the ABM Treaty and; even though other states say they will retaliate if the US proceeds Now these are not trivial issues and suggest that neither candidate will shy away from unilateral engagement of the international community. This attitude more than anything, according to Arias, may doom healthy relations between the US and Latin America.

## **Conclusion**

Fox and Arias both ask for major changes. Neither is shy about his requests, in fact, some would say Fox and Arias propose bold initiatives. An open border between Mexico and the US; \$20 billion a year in new US development aid for Mexico's economy; and an end to the US policy of annually certifying Mexico's commitment to the drug war are essential changes for Fox. They are key, he says, "to becoming best friends, best neighbors and best partners". Arias, whose position gives him more political space to be honest, is not afraid to criticize US arrogance in foreign policy, nor to offer bold policy revisions. He recommends: NAFTA expand to include all of Latin America, increasing US foreign aid and also increasing US direct investment in less economically developed nations. All of Arias's ideas are remedies to the economic crisis in Latin America.

How might each candidate respond? Al Gore advocates: expanding trade in Latin American (except to Cuba), amending refugee and immigration legislation, increasing high tech visas,, increasing debt relief for Latin America and the Caribbean, and hiring more border patrols.

George W. Bush states that he will, expand trade in Latin America (except to Cuba), decrease processing time of legal immigration, increase high tech and farm worker visas, budget \$100 million for loans to small businesses in Latin America and Mexico, and hire more border patrols.

There is clearly a disjuncture from what is desired to what each candidate will commit. Taking a longer look at each candidate, Bush shows understanding and knowledge of Mexico. He has experience on his side, although it may be limited, and is open to dialogue. He says he will meet with President-elect Fox in December, if elected. Mexico might have the ear of the President in a Bush administration. However, Bush stresses the US exceptionalism that Arias warns against, and Reagan's version of free trade at all costs which has not, historically, been free. Good for some but not for others.

Gore has a better grasp of world politics on the whole and in this interdependent world, might serve Mexican and Latin American interests better in the long run. He also stresses human rights and environmental standards, which plague all of our countries." He says he will make the world a better place while also expanding trade. However, Gore, as well as Bush, does support the construction of a limited missile defense system that has been criticized as a foreign policy and economic black hole, diverting the economic aid Fox and Arias request into a system, and I quote, "that does not work to counter a threat that does not exist." Once again, good for some, but not for others

The bottom line for Fox and Arias seems to be respect. Respect that comes with equality not sympathy. And both are men are asking the US government to share the wealth. A wealth, that is situated in the US by luck, through hard work and also exploitation of others. Who will be more open to these recommendations on behalf of Mexico and Latin America? I can not say. But I am in good company. When Warner asked President-elect Fox which candidate might be more receptive to his ideas, he played the middle, replying: "Well, both wear Western boots. [and] I wear Western boots. " That may be the best answer of all.