

**Sergio González Gálvez, *Historic Events in Japan-Mexico Relations***

The history of relations between Japan and Mexico is one of shared and conflicting economical and political interests. This rule also applies to diplomatic relations between the two nations, which stretch back 120 years. Mexico and Japan may be poles apart, but both are countries of deep-rooted traditions that have always been sympathetic to one another. Over the decades, a series of common interests have strengthened the ties between them. In the case of Japan, the search for new markets led it to Mexico's door, which was subsequently opened to Japanese immigrants. Japan was also interested in Mexico's natural resources and, as a neighbor of the United States, our geopolitical situation conferred us strategic importance from a military perspective prior to World War II and in terms of trade with the United States following the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). From Mexico's standpoint, Japan was—and continues to be—a rich source of cutting-edge technology and, although we may choose to deny it, an alternative to our increasingly dangerous dependence on the United States, not to mention a gateway to the Asia-Pacific region and all its untapped potential. It is in this context that the author feels it necessary to acquaint the reader with the historic events that, to a large extent, have laid the foundations of the relationship currently enjoyed by Mexico and Japan, which is based on mutual trust and friendship. As the acclaimed Uruguayan diplomat Héctor Gros Espiell wrote in *De diplomacia e historia*, "Without an awareness of history, a people cannot

truly constitute themselves as such, fight to exercise their right to self-determination and form a State.”

**Melba E. Falck Reyes, *Economic Relations between Mexico and Japan 120 Years after the First Agreement***

Japan was Mexico's most important partner in the Asia-Pacific region in the postwar period, during which time the two nations consolidated their diplomatic and economic ties with the signing of several cooperation agreements. In the Nineties, their economic relationship took on even greater significance, due mainly to the coming into effect of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, which proved successful at attracting Japanese investment to Mexico. A decade later, Japan and Mexico entered into a reciprocal Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), motivated by a desire to recoup their dwindling competitiveness on international markets. In this essay, Melba Falck analyzes the factors that brought Mexico and Japan closer in the Nineties, at a time when Mexico was forging ahead with its program for the relaxing of economic restrictions and Japan was embarking on a series of structural reforms and opening its markets in an attempt to offset slow economic growth. The author then goes on to analyze the course of Mexico-Japan economic relations in the following decades, identifying a strong interrelation between established Japanese investment in Mexico, trade flows between the two countries and the predominant role played by the US market. While there can be no question that the EPA has strengthened economic ties and boosted flows of trade and investment between the two nations, there are still challenges to be overcome —challenges that are duly addressed in this essay.

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**Carlos Uscanga, *Putting Diplomatic Relations between Mexico and Japan into Historical Context***

Three key moments in the history of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Japan are analyzed in this essay, in which the author broaches the need to reinterpret major historical events spanning from the late nineteenth century to the first three decades of the twentieth century that have, in one form or another, defined our bilateral ties. The objective is to reconstruct and recoup a shared history dating back four centuries to the first encounter between Japan and Mexico. By offering the reader greater insight into the events that form part of the collective memory of Mexico and Japan, but that have been relegated to the history books or overlooked, Carlos Uscanga puts the political and economic strategies of Mexico's current foreign policy toward Japan in a new light that takes into account 120 years of diplomatic ties.

**Iyo Kunimoto, *Negotiation of the 1888 Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation and its Historical Import***

The first contacts between Mexico and Japan can be traced back to the sixteenth century, but these ties were to take on even greater significance in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when both nations embarked on a modernization process that culminated in the signing of a Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation in 1888. Iyo Kunimoto puts the background to this historic event into context for us, explaining how Japan, isolated and suffering economic hardship under the Tokugawa shogunate, was forced to enter into "unequal" treaties with the United States in 1854, and later England, Russia and Holland. Most-favored-nation clauses, judicial extraterritoriality, the loss

of autonomy over customs duties and other repercussions of these agreements led to the decline of Japan's fledgling industry, until the new imperial Meiji regime came into power and devoted its energies to reinstating the nation's sovereignty as a constitutional monarchy. During this era, Mexico was anxious to establish trade and diplomatic relations with China and Japan, in the hope of reaping economic benefits after a protracted period of political instability. According to Kunitomo, two events facilitated this rapprochement: the setting up of Pacific steamship lines and the talks Matías Romero, the Mexican minister commissioned to the United States in Washington, held with Kogoro Takahira, the Japanese legation's chargé d'affaires ad interim. These talks prompted Secretary Ignacio Mariscal to sign a Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation on an equal footing with Japan, setting a precedent that would enable the latter to denounce the inequitable treaties it had signed with other countries. The Treaty marks the official starting point of a diplomatic relationship that has lasted 120 years.

**Marta Tawil, *The End of the Two-State Solution? Israel, Palestinians and the International Power Imbalance***

Far from providing a definitive solution to the territorial dispute, ten years of talks seem to have merely exacerbated antagonism between Palestinians and Israelis. According to Marta Tawil, this can be attributed to: a) structural shortcomings in the agreements negotiated in the Nineties between the Israeli government and the Palestinian National Authority, with the participation of the United States; b) the weakness of Palestinian leadership; c) the policies of the great powers, particularly the United States and the European Union, and d) the influ-

ence of regional government actors and international loyalties. The series of confrontations that broke out in December 2008 between Hamas and the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip were sparked off by serious power imbalances between the main local, regional and international actors involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This imbalance has typically resulted in unilateral decision-making and strategies by the more powerful actors, compounded by a misevaluation of the limitations weighing down on Palestinian leaders.

### **Guillermo Reyes, *Mexico's Participation in UN Peace Missions***

Guillermo Reyes believes Mexico's participation in United Nations peace missions to be an unresolved foreign policy and national security issue, whose implications and scope require in-depth analysis and debate. After giving us an overview of Mexico's foreign policy vis-à-vis these missions since they were set up over 60 years ago, the author goes on to discuss our financial contribution to them, the extent to which we have participated in decisions to create or disband them and the participation of our civilians and soldiers in them. The UN's primary objectives, such as peace-keeping efforts and international security, remain valid and are in line with national interests, he says, adding that, in light of the current situation and the challenges we face, no country can afford to sit on the sidelines or wax indifferent to threats to world peace. Over and beyond their military aspect, the author believes that the benefits of participating in these missions greatly outweigh the cost and that they should be used as a tool to further our foreign policy and national security strategies, within a framework of international cooperation that is in keeping with our constitutional principles.

## **José Octavio Tripp, *Guidelines for the Rethinking of US-Mexico Relations***

The taking of office of a new presidential administration in the United States affords Mexico an invaluable opportunity to rethink its relations with its neighbor, with a view to coming up with an agenda that picks up on common development issues and priorities. In his essay, José Octavio Tripp proposes a new neighborly model or “new understanding” as he calls it, which would pave the way for a qualitative improvement in the US-Mexico integration process. Development is endorsed as a mainstay of this new understanding and a driving force of the North American integration process, to which three instruments are deemed vital: a) the concept of “sustainable security”; b) a cooperative approach to the handling of common problems which, in the words of Hillary Clinton, require “collective action”, and c) public spending provisions for projects of benefit to both countries. In this context, Mexico would propose the construction of water networks on the border, encouraging the sustainable use of a resource as crucial as water, while creating “green jobs” and promoting social wellbeing. A similar logic would apply to the coordination of highway nodes, which, aside from creating jobs, would improve interconnectivity and make us more competitive as a region. Cooperation would range from the joint planning of works on either side of the Rio Grande to the design and execution of co-investment projects for the upgrading of ports and airports and the creation of sub-regional hi-tech electronics and aerospace cluster developments capable of creating economies of scale. A *modus vivendi* such as this, whose equation combines traditional elements of the integration process with emerging assets, would imply a qualitative leap in US-Mexico relations. Paradoxically, the current economic crisis calls for greater creativity.

**Jorge E. Salcido Zugasti, *Swedish Foreign Policy Interests: Social Democracy and Liberalism***

Sweden currently ranks among the world's most highly developed countries in political, social, economic and technological terms. Far from being a coincidence, this is the result of a well-thought-out government strategy. Differing views on foreign policy within the country's political parties, from the socialists to the center-right, tend to be approach-related as opposed to ideological, and this has facilitated the successful opening-up of the country to new political and economic ideas. After summarizing the main aspects of Sweden's foreign policy, the author notes that, rather than change, what is required are measures that provide continuity and coherence to the country's efforts to find its footing on the international arena, measures that transcend party interests and differences. The main virtue of Sweden's political and economical development model, concludes Salcido, has been consistency and a long-term vision in the planning and implementation of government programs. Political and economic liberalization have taken place gradually, while the legal and institutional guarantees that safeguard national, public and private interests have been upheld. Over and beyond ideological differences and political interests, Sweden has managed to give continuity to a development model and a nation-building project that effectively combines the advantages of a market economy with the socialist principle of equal opportunities and the freedoms of a democracy. Indubitably, there is much to be learned from the Swedish model. Given the crisis the global economy is currently facing, perhaps the time has come to rethink the benefits of a regulated capitalism geared toward social wellbeing.