

The Mexico-United States Relationship in the 20th Century: Three Presidential Meetings

*La relación México-Estados Unidos en el
siglo XX: tres encuentros presidenciales*

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Abstract:

This article describes the agendas and little-known details of three presidential meetings that reveal the most important aspects of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States in the 20th century: Porfirio Díaz and William H. Taft, Miguel Alemán and Harry S. Truman, and the first trilateral summit between Carlos Salinas, George H. Bush, and Brian Mulroney. For the author, the complexity of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States in the 20th century is illustrated by these presidential meetings.

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Resumen:

En este artículo se describen las agendas y los entresijos de tres encuentros presidenciales que revelan las vertientes más importantes de la relación bilateral entre México y Estados Unidos en el siglo XX: Porfirio Díaz y William H. Taft, Miguel Alemán y Harry S. Truman, y la primera cumbre trilateral entre Carlos Salinas, George H. Bush y Brian Mulroney. Para la autora, la complejidad de la relación bilateral entre México y Estados Unidos del siglo XX se puede ilustrar a través de estos encuentros presidenciales.

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Key Words:

Presidential summit, understanding, cooperation, economic integration.

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Palabras clave:

Cumbre presidencial, entendimiento, cooperación, integración económica.

The Mexico-United States Relationship in the 20th Century: Three Presidential Meetings

Roberta Lajous

The complexity of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States of America over the 20th century can be illustrated through three presidential meetings that defined lengthy phases in the relationship between the two countries: Porfirio Díaz-William H. Taft in 1909; Miguel Alemán-Harry S. Truman in 1947; and the first formal trilateral summit, with the presence of Canada for the first time, between Carlos Salinas, George H. Bush, and Brian Mulroney in 1992.

At the risk of omitting too much history, in particular the conflictive stage during the Mexican Revolution and the first governments to emerge from it, this article describes the agendas and ins and outs of three presidential encounters that reveal the most important aspects of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States in the 20th century. The first reflected, for the first time in the history of both nations, a consolidated relationship of friendship; the second, after a period of intense collaboration during the Second World War, put the seal on the cooperation pact between neighbors during the Cold War; and the third, at the end of the Cold War, laid the foundations for the economic integration of North America.

Díaz-Taft meeting, 1909: understanding

The first presidential meeting in the history of the two countries was between Porfirio Díaz and William H. Taft. It took place when the United

States was the leading investor in Mexico, although European investment represented an important counterweight. Porfirista diplomacy had managed to reestablish links with Europe following the execution of Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg in Querétaro in 1867, which had left Mexico isolated from the Old World, and engaged in an active policy to attract European capital, with great success.¹

Díaz and Taft met on October 16 in the neutral territory of El Chamizal, subject to international arbitration by mutual agreement, to resolve the dispute over the changing the course of the Rio Grande. Díaz wore a Prussian-style military uniform, with a chest full of medals, and Taft wore a suit. From there they went to a light lunch at the Chamber of Commerce in El Paso, Texas, and in the evening the President of Mexico offered a formal dinner in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. At the end of the day, Taft remarked to Díaz that he had received him in El Paso with republican sobriety, but that in Mexico he had been the object of attentions worthy of an emperor.²

Porfirio Díaz never forgot the difficulties he experienced coming to power in 1876, when official recognition from Washington took almost two years to arrive. As a result of the challenges he faced in consolidating his first government, Díaz is credited with the phrase: “Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States.” Washington granted its recognition in 1878, once Mexico complied with the payment of the claims accepted by a previous treaty with the United States, and the common border was pacified. The collaboration among Generals Jerónimo Treviño and Edward Ord, on each side of the border, helped to prevent the incursions by Apache Indians, displaced by colonization, and cattle rustlers who committed crimes on one side of the border and hid on the other.³

¹ Roberta Lajous, *La política exterior del porfiriato (1876-1911)*, Mexico, El Colegio de México (México y el mundo, Historia de sus relaciones exteriores, vol. IV), 2010.

² María del Rosario Rodríguez Díaz, “La entrevista Díaz-Taft en la mirada de *El Diario del Hogar*, 1909,” in Ana Rosa Suárez Argüello and Agustín Andrés Sánchez (eds.), *A la sombra de la diplomacia. Actores informales en las Relaciones Internacionales de México, siglos XIX y XX*, Mexico/Morelia, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora/Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas-Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2017, pp. 413-436.

³ R. Lajous, *Historia mínima de las relaciones exteriores de México*, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 2020, p. 122.

After more than thirty years in power, Díaz seemed like an eternal president, while Taft had only just taken office that year. The president of the emerging world power showed admiration for the statesman who had provided Mexico with a prolonged stability never seen since its birth as an independent country, ignoring press criticism of the Díaz administration, above all with regard to the border. At a time of massive imperialist expansion around the world, Taft sought to strengthen U.S. investment in the American continent, through “dollar diplomacy,” and reduce European influence. He was a faithful follower of his immediate predecessor, Theodore Roosevelt, author of the corollary to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.⁴

Taft was worried about the future of some half a billion dollars that his countrymen had invested in Mexico, as the principal destination of U.S. investment in Latin America.⁵ He was aware that the successor to Díaz could bring about a revolution in Mexico. Although there are no minutes of the private conversations between the two presidents, which did not last more than fifteen minutes, Taft wrote to his wife the following day, recounting the details of both meetings and his reflections. In that letter, Taft recorded Díaz’s wit, despite the fact that he was approaching eighty years of age.⁶

The meeting was a boost for Díaz, to whom opposition was growing, not only in Mexico, but also in the United States, where members of the Mexican Liberal Party led by the Flores Magón brothers had taken refuge. Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón had moved to Texas in 1904, having escaped prison in Mexico; later, they began to publish *Regeneración*, initially in St. Louis Missouri, and then in Los Angeles. However, Ricardo Flores Magón and Antonio Villarreal were imprisoned from 1907 to 1910, accused

⁴ “Adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.” *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵ Paolo Riguzzi, “México y la economía internacional 1860-1930,” in Sandra Kuntz Ficker (ed.), *Historia económica general de México. De la Colonia hasta nuestros días*, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 2010, p. 380.

⁶ Juan González Morfin, “La entrevista Díaz-Taft (1909) narrada por uno de sus interlocutores: el primer gran acercamiento entre México y Estados Unidos a nivel de primeros mandatarios,” in *Letras Históricas*, 2020 Special guests, September 2020, at <https://doi.org/10.31836/ll.v0i0.7270> (date consulted: August 15, 2022).

of violating United States neutrality laws. By then they had already built a circle of U.S. socialist sympathizers, who took advantage of the presidential meeting to draw attention to the Mexican Committee for the Defense of Political Refugees and denounce the collaboration by the two governments to repress Díaz regime dissidents living in the United States.⁷

In El Paso, Taft introduced Díaz to Edward L. Doheney, owner of the Mexican Petroleum Company, who was competing with Weetman Pearson, the first Viscount Cowdray, the main British shareholder in the El Águila oil company. Díaz had had dealings with American investors since he left the presidency in the hands of Manuel González between 1880 and 1884, and he took advantage of his marriage to Carmen Romero Rubio, his English teacher, to take her on a honeymoon to the principal U.S. cities. Accompanied by the bride's father, the influential liberal politician Manuel Romero Rubio, General Díaz explored the development of the Mexican rail network that linked the two countries, and which his predecessor, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, had opposed.⁸

The Díaz-Taft meeting failed to resolve the sensitive issue of the U.S. naval base at Magdalena Bay, which became the subject of speculation in the U.S. press, raising suspicions that Díaz might offer it to Japan. Although the accusations were never confirmed, Díaz did not renew the concession located in the center of the Pacific coast of the Baja California peninsula, a strategic resupply point between San Francisco and Panama.⁹ It is not known whether the Tehuantepec railway, built by Cowdray, which ended up in the hands of U.S. contractors, was discussed. Nor was an agreement reached on Nicaragua, rocked by an uprising in Bluefields, and a confrontation between President José Santos Zelaya and Secretary of State Philander Knox following the murder of two U.S. mercenaries. Following the subsequent coup in Nicaragua, Díaz sent the gunboat *General Guerrero*

⁷ Claudio Lomnitz, *El regreso del camarada Ricardo Flores Magón*, Mexico, Era, 2016, p. 274.

⁸ R. Lajous, *La política exterior del porfiriato...*, p. 35.

⁹ The magnate William Randolph Hearst considered control of the Bahía Magdalena indispensable to avoid a Japanese invasion. Marco Antonio Samaniego López, "El norte revolucionario. Diferencias regionales y sus paradojas en la relación con Estados Unidos," in *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 60 (2), 2010, p. 973.

to collect Santos Zelaya and carry him into exile, provoking the anger of the U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson.¹⁰

The Díaz-Taft meeting celebrated the closeness between Mexico and the United States. However, it left more open questions than it resolved issues. Díaz took advantage of it to strengthen the path to his last re-election, and Taft to present himself to his electorate as a statesman concerned with looking after their interests. There was no shortage of those who blamed the United States government for the collapse of the last Díaz presidency.¹¹ However, in reality it was the lack of foresight over the succession of the old and tired dictator that brought an end to the thirty-four-year regime.

The Alemán-Truman meetings, 1947: cooperation

Just a few weeks apart, two meetings were held between Presidents Miguel Alemán Valdés and Harry S. Truman, the first in Mexico City in March and the second in Washington, D.C. in April, as part of the first state visit by a Mexican president to the United States. Between the two, on March 12, the president who replaced Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered the most important speech of his term, defining the Truman Doctrine on the fight against communism. Truman asked Congress for resources to help the free peoples of Greece and Turkey in the face of the external threat that would come to define relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹² At the start of the Cold War, Truman chose Mexico, governed by a civilian president, unlike Brazil or Argentina, to emphasize his policy of containing communism in Latin America.

Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy helped to overcome the differences that had arisen between Mexico and the United States as a result of the

¹⁰ Miguel García Audelo, *El silente coloquio: la entrevista Díaz-Taft*, 16 de octubre, 1909, Mexico, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), 2016, pp. 22-29.

¹¹ Francisco Bulnes, *El verdadero Díaz y la Revolución*, Mexico, Eusebio Gómez de la Puente, 1920, p. 287.

¹² Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation. My Years in the State Department*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1969, pp. 221-222.

legislation emerging from the 1917 Constitution, which established sovereignty over natural resources in the Mexican subsoil, particularly oil and mining resources. The climate of discomfort and uncertainty over the new legislation delayed Washington's recognition of Álvaro Obregón's government and complicated relations during the administrations of Plutarco Elías Calles and his successors. However, the outbreak of the global conflict tipped the balance for the United States in favor of seeking to improve continental relations. The oil expropriation of 1938, carried out by President Lázaro Cárdenas, ended the confrontation with U.S. companies, once compensation for their owners had been announced.

Cooperation with the United States, starting with Mexico's entry into World War II, was expressed through a wide range of agreements, in addition to the Mexican military participation in the War of the Pacific. Mexico ensured the supply of hundreds of thousands of tons of strategic materials and agreed to the transfer of more than three hundred thousand workers to the United States to contribute to the war effort through agricultural work and the repair of railways, among other essential activities in which the Mexicans replaced the U.S. citizens who had been sent to the front lines.¹³

At the end of the armed conflict, the victorious powers experienced difficulties, and the fear arose of a new confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Mexico aimed to participate in agreements between the great powers, but gave priority to obtaining support for President Alemán's industrialization project. In the short term, he sought to renegotiate the 1942 trade agreement in order to halt the rapid outflow of currency reserves to buy consumer goods.¹⁴ Washington's priority was to prevent the spread of communism and guarantee hemispheric security.

Harry Truman was the first U.S. president to travel to Mexico City; Franklin D. Roosevelt made it as far as Monterrey. Truman was received at the international airport with popular celebrations that accompanied him for the duration of his tours of the federal capital, his visit to the Paricutin

¹³ Catherine Vezina, *Diplomacia migratoria: una historia transnacional del Programa Bracero, 1947-1952*, Mexico, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas/SRE, 2017, p. 13. The first agreement was signed in 1942.

¹⁴ Jaime Torres Bodet, *La victoria sin alas. Memorias*, Mexico, Biblioteca Mexicana de la Fundación Miguel Alemán, A.C., 2012, p. 97.

volcano, and to the archaeological site in Teotihuacán. In a gesture that appeared improvised, but was in fact prepared in advance, he laid a floral offering before the Monument to the Heroic Cadets below Chapultepec Castle, an action which was appreciated by Mexicans as helping to bury the specter of the war between the two countries that had ended exactly a century earlier.¹⁵ The cordial character of the public events was also reflected in the conversations that saw the Mexican delegation present its project for industrialization, which departed from the recommendations of the U.S. experts to strengthen the export of raw materials and avoid raising protectionist tariffs.

A month after Truman's visit to Mexico, Miguel Alemán embarked on the first state visit by a Mexican president to the United States. He visited Washington, D.C., where he was received in the same festive spirit with which Truman was received a month earlier. Both leaders followed up on the agenda initiated in Mexico. Alemán delivered the first speech by a Mexican president before both chambers of Congress, in which he asserted his democratic conviction and his commitment to freedom, days after President Truman had declared himself in favor of containing communism in that same venue. The tour continued to New York, where he paraded in an open car with the city mayor and also delivered the first speech by a Mexican president before the United Nations. President Alemán rounded out his tour with visits to the Tennessee Valley Water Project and a model farm in Missouri.

The two stages of presidential meetings were seen as historic by Mexicans. Miguel Alemán, the first civilian president after a succession of military men, projected himself as a statesman who was ushering in a new era of prosperity for Mexico. Among the results that he showed upon his return were the continuity of the Bracero Program, cooperation to combat foot-and-mouth disease, loans from the Washington government in support of industrialization, and the renegotiation of the trade agreement. Like most large Latin American countries, Mexico began a policy of industrialization by means of import substitution, in the face of Washington's reluctance. However, U.S. investors were satisfied with the income generated by their industries established in Mexico, thanks to tariff protection.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

With the welcome received by President Alemán in the U.S., doubts about Washington's supposed support for the presidential candidacy of former Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla—who boasted of his relationship with leading politicians in the country—were also buried.¹⁶ From the Washington side, the meetings were used to embark on the construction of the post-war international system, in the American continent, with its nearest neighbor. The next task ahead would be the negotiation of the continent's collective defense system configured by the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty), signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1947, and the creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Bogotá in 1948, consolidating the Inter-American System. In both processes, Mexican diplomacy made significant contributions to safeguard the principles of defending the sovereignty of States and the self-determination of peoples.¹⁷ As a result of the arrival of the Cold War in the region with the cases of Guatemala in 1954 and Cuba in 1960, Mexico upheld those principles, while acknowledging the incompatibility of the communist system with membership of the OAS.

At the end of the Cold War, the growth in Mexican debt, for diverse reasons, as the import substitution model was exhausted, acquired greater significance. The different interpretations of Mexico and the United States regarding the origin of the problems in Central America also returned to the bilateral agenda. Mexico emphasized promoting economic development in the region to raise the standard of living of the population, while Washington gave priority to limiting the extra-regional influence of the guerrillas, through Cuba. Although the drug trafficking route through Central America and Mexico was already beginning to replace the traditional maritime route through the Caribbean, this did not become apparent until 1985, with the assassination of Enrique Camarena. On the other hand, the Central American migration issue emerged with the subsequent amnesty granted by Washington to Salvadorans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans involved in the conflict. It was not a priority issue at the time, as the fight against communism

¹⁶ Soledad Loacza, *A la sombra de la superpotencia. Tres presidentes mexicanos en la Guerra Fría, 1945-1958*, Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico, 2022, p. 239.

¹⁷ See J. Torres Bodet, *op. cit.*, for a wide-ranging description of Mexico's contributions to the 1947 Quintandinha Conference (Rio de Janeiro), where the TIAR was signed, and to the 1948 Bogotá Conference, where the OAS charter was approved.

was for Reagan and the Republicans in Congress. Ronald Reagan's belligerent policy to repress communism in the region clashed with Mexico's active diplomacy, which instead contributed to resolving the regional conflict through dialogue and agreement, promoting rapprochement between the parties in conflict, through the Contadora Group.¹⁸

The First Trilateral Summit in 1992: Economic Integration

On October 7, 1992, the first trilateral summit was held between the President of Mexico, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the President of the United States, George H. Bush, and the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, to witness the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by its three lead negotiators.¹⁹ It was held in the vicinity of the Alamo, a place charged with negative memories for both Mexicans and Americans due to the bloody clashes that took place there in 1836, on the occasion of the independence of Texas.²⁰ However, President Bush, whose political base was precisely in the state of Texas, presented himself in this city with the largest Mexican presence as the leader who sought prosperity and cordial relationships for all of North America.

Beginning with his campaign for the presidency in 1988, George H. Bush had already proposed the idea of a free trade zone for the entire continent, which he would later baptize the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. Before taking office, he met with the president-elect of Mexico in Houston, Texas, in November 1988 to propose a free trade agreement between Mexico and the United States. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, concerned about Mexico's foreign debt, preferred to give priority to negotiating this and dismissed

¹⁸ The Contadora Group initially comprised Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela.

¹⁹ R. Lajous, "John D. Negroponte y James R. Jones y el Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (TLCAN) (1991-1993)," in R. Lajous, Erika Pani, P. Riguzzi and María Celia Toro (eds.), *Embajadores de Estados Unidos en México. Diplomacia de crisis y oportunidades*, Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico/SRE, 2021, pp. 295-318.

²⁰ Bryan Burrough, Chris Tomlison and Jason Stanford, *Forget the Alamo: The Rise and Fall of an American Myth*, New York, Penguin Press, 2021.

the proposal. However, during his first trip to Europe, having taken office as president in January 1990, he sensed that the opening-up of Eastern Europe exerted a worldwide pull and he reconsidered Bush's offer.²¹

Consultations were immediately launched in Mexico to determine whether a free trade agreement with the United States was desirable. The general opinion was in favor of beginning to negotiate a treaty that would provide certainty to the access to industrial exports that had been expanding since Mexico decided to open up its economy in 1986 and entered the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). However, the procedures to enable the United States to commence the negotiation were complex. Congress had to authorize a process known as "fast track," allowing it to negotiate without having to respond to the individual requests of each legislator. This meant the final text would be approved or rejected in its entirety. From the outset, labor organizations in the United States expressed their doubts about the treaty, arguing that wages were much lower in Mexico and the treaty could lead to job losses among their members.

The bilateral exchanges had barely commenced when an unexpected incident occurred in April 1990: the kidnapping in Guadalajara of the doctor Humberto Álvarez Machain for his alleged participation in the kidnapping and murder of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent Enrique Camarena in 1985. In response, President Salinas sent a proposal to Congress condemning the practice of cross-border kidnapping and considered the expulsion of DEA agents, whose behavior had become increasingly disruptive since the U.S. government unilaterally decided to seal off the Florida peninsula to prevent the entry of drugs from the Caribbean. This administrative provision did not anticipate that the change in the drug trafficking route, from the sea to the land, would cause havoc along its journey through Central America and Mexico.²² Despite the upset caused by the kidnapping, the decision was taken in Mexico to go ahead with the NAFTA

²¹ Carlos Salinas de Gortari, *México, Un paso difícil a la modernidad*, Barcelona, Plaza & Janés, 2000.

²² Roberta Lajous was director-general for North America of the SRE in February 1983 when the U.S. Attorney General informed the Mexican Foreign Minister of the measure, in a conversation in which he acknowledged the excellent cooperation on drugs trafficking to date.

negotiation and handle cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking separately, as was traditional in Mexico.²³

Canada concluded that a trilateral free trade agreement, which it had already signed bilaterally with the United States in 1988, was more convenient. Mexico wanted to take advantage of the Canadians' negotiating experience and seek greater balance in the asymmetric relationship with its neighbor, adding Ottawa to the process. However, there was reluctance on the U.S. side to accept the joint proposal from its neighbors. Officials from the Ronald Reagan administration who had negotiated the treaty with Canada, and who were still in Bush's cabinet, did not want to reopen it because it had been so laborious to conclude. The solution was that, if a trilateral agreement was not possible, the bilateral treaty between the United States and Canada would remain in force.

President Bush asked his Mexican counterpart for support in lobbying Congress in order to achieve the approval of the "fast track" process.²⁴ For the first time, Mexico entered the labyrinths of power in Washington to present a favorable image of the country and seek the support of congresspeople whose electorates would benefit from exports to Mexico, or where a significant proportion of voters were of Mexican origin. The complex Mexican strategy included a campaign to approach the population of Mexican origin in the United States.²⁵ Between 1987 and 1989 alone, more than two million Mexicans had acquired U.S. nationality thanks to an amnesty law for residents.²⁶ As the number of Mexicans with relatives living in the United States grew, there was greater interest in maintaining close bilateral relations. Family ties between Mexicans on both sides of the border also made remittances from the United States an increasingly important component of foreign exchange earnings in the national accounts.

²³ R. Lajous, "John D. Negroponte y James R. Jones..." pp. 303-304.

²⁴ C. Salinas, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

²⁵ A new department was created in the SRE to attend to Mexican communities in the United States, separate from the protection of Mexican workers.

²⁶ Jorge Durand, *Historia mínima de la migración México-Estados Unidos*, Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico, 2016, p. 201.

When President Bush was defeated by Bill Clinton a month after the San Antonio Summit, the future of NAFTA was thrown into question. However, in February 1993, Clinton declared himself in favor of its ratification by Congress with the inclusion of two annexes: one on labor and the other on the environment. Faced with growing opposition to NAFTA in the United States, led by Texan businessman Ross Perot, Clinton asked Vice President Al Gore to confront him in a public debate, arguing in favor of its benefits for the U.S. Perot had presented himself as an independent candidate in the presidential elections won by Clinton, where he obtained 18% of the popular vote, arguing against free trade with Mexico.

Once the negotiation concluded, Clinton led the campaign before the legislature to win its ratification of NAFTA. He invited undecided legislators to get to know Mexico and listen to the arguments of the Mexicans firsthand. Finally, in November 1993, with a vote of 234 to 200, NAFTA was ratified by the U.S. Congress with a bipartisan majority. It was then ratified by the Mexican Congress and the Canadian Parliament. In 1994, NAFTA entered into force and with it a rapid stage of integration of the economies of Mexico, the United States, and Canada began, following hot on the heels of the consolidation of the Single European Market with the signing of the Maastricht Agreements in 1992.

Conclusions

Since the Porfiriato period, the main issues present over the course of the 20th century have been inscribed on the bilateral agenda: the border, the Mexican presence in the United States, trade, investment, and different ways of addressing regional problems. However, for the first time there was a cordial dialogue between the leaders of both countries.

At the beginning of the Cold War, during the meetings between presidents Alemán and Truman in 1947, Mexico committed to containing communism, but obtained the support of its northern neighbor for industrialization and added the issue of external debt to the bilateral agenda, which grew every decade until it was able to renegotiate it in 1991.

The first formal summit of the three North American leaders in 1992 marked the turning point in which both Canada and Mexico, having put aside

their protectionist policies, sought, in their proximity to the United States, an opportunity for access to their exports. With the ratification of NAFTA in 1994, trade and joint production in the region accelerated.

Beneath all of these three stages—understanding, cooperation, and economic integration—that have been illustrated in this essay through presidential meetings, the driving force for bringing Mexico and the United States closer, despite resistance, has been the quest for economic development to achieve greater living standards for Mexicans.