EMBAJADORES DE ESTADOS UNIDOS EN MÉXICO

DIPLOMACIA DE CRISIS Y OPORTUNIDADES

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The Personal Style of Representation

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A few months ago I visited Ken Salazar (U.S. ambassador) to interview him. On the table in the room where he received me, I could see the book that is the subject of this review. We spoke for a few minutes about the text before commencing the televised conversation, and I told him that, as an observer of bilateral relations, I had been fortunate enough to interview and talk with several of his predecessors. Without going into details that are not important for the purpose of this text, I recalled the interaction with John D. Negroponte in the Trilateral and at various meetings on the North American Free Trade Agreement; with Jeffrey Davidow on multiple occasions in Mexico and San Diego; with Tony Garza, from whom I learned the scope and limitations that an ambassador close to the president has. I was always dazzled by Pascual's intelligence and the deep knowledge of Wayne's diplomatic technique. I enjoyed Roberta Jacobson's political talent and charisma. As fate would have it, I never met Christopher Landau in person, since the appointment we had scheduled coincided with the start of the pandemic, meaning I shared Zoom meetings with him a couple of times, and little else.

The informal and brief conversation with Salazar before the interview[1] focused on Josephus Daniels, with whom (I told him) I found some parallels.

[1] Available at adn40mx, "Ambassador Ken Salazar in Así Amanece," in YouTube, September 21, 2022, at *https://youtu.be/EZ3c7agwuxk* (date consulted: 3 October 2022)

Thanks to Paolo Riguzzi's chapter in this book, today we have a more precise idea of what Roosevelt's ambassador who had been secretary (just like Salazar) represented. He maintained a functional autonomy from the claims of U.S. companies, and was empathetic towards the arguments of the Mexican government, to an extent that irritated Foggy Bottom.

Future editions will probably analyze the figure of Salazar, who arrived in Mexico labeled as a lobbyist for energy companies but little by little his political skill has given him access to the presidential office and transformed his mission. But that is another topic.

All this is to say that U.S. ambassadors are not an irrelevant cog in the machinery of a foreign policy defined in a distant office in the country's capital. Rather, the ambassadors have marked the bilateral relationship with their personal style. When I think of personal style, I am referring to their career, their previous background, their closeness to the president, their cultural or linguistic relationship or distance from Mexico and, of course, their ideology.

In a relationship such as that between Mexico and the United States, which is determined by proximity, a different treatment applies compared to the rest of Latin America, and for this reason the power of the ambassador is crucial. The international relations of the power in a broader sense are seen by the State Department, the Pentagon or any other agency. In the case of Mexico, the ambassador plays a fundamental role in outlining, expanding or restricting the range of options, as well as endowing it with greater or lesser harmony in the respective historical phases.

It is a wise move for the book editors to focus (as a category of analysis) on the ambassadors, and to do so with such rigor and good judgment. As the introduction notes, we had a very valuable precedent in Ana Rosa Suárez Argüello, to whom we owe the guide to U.S. diplomatic representatives, but no one had ever (as far as I know) gone into such depth with the aim of systematizing knowledge of the role of the representatives of the United States, as we see in this work.

In the selection of cases, there are of course some well-known ones, and others less conspicuous, such as Thomas Corwin or Henry P. Fletcher, John W. Foster or George S. Messersmith, who nevertheless were key factors in their time. There are some who had a visible influence in helping to stabilize the internal life of the country, such as Dwight W. Morrow,

and others who have had a polarizing and disruptive effect, such as John Gavin. There were ambassadors who managed to temper the climate in moments of great tension and keep channels of communication open; others managed to secure greater autonomy for their actions with respect to business or political interests, which tried to influence decision-making; many staked their reputations, and even their fortunes, on deescalating the crisis to ensure the continuity of relations with Mexico.

Each of the chapters has merit, but the overview offers a very valuable scope to better understand these two centuries of history.

The book comprises 14 case studies of 17 ambassadors. Their assignments take place at decisive moments in the history of the two countries, and the subsequent political wisdom or foolishness, ideological restrictions or open-mindedness to broaden the understanding between the two countries, depended to a large extent on the personal style of the ambassador.

It is important to note that, for much of the 19th century, the policy of the United States was not to send ambassadors, since, in the diplomatic tradition of the "old regime," these were representatives of the king, a condition that was denied to the president of the United States. Therefore, the controversy over whether the generation of ambassadors from Joel R. Poinsett to those accredited at the end of the 19th century were only "representatives" and not ambassadors is no longer relevant. That policy, the editors remind us, was also applied in Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy, and Mexico was the first American country to receive a U.S. embassy in 1898.

An old principle, developed by Thomas Jefferson at the end of the 18th century, establishes that the highest interest of the power was to maintain stability in the nascent American republics, rather than wager on uncertain transformations.[2] It is true that Jefferson's postulate referred to the relationship between the United States and the Spanish Empire (a key relationship to achieve its independence, as Thomas E. Chávez has shown),[3] but later it became a "diplomatic constant" in the relationship with its neighbor to the south, namely to privilege stability over any other consideration.

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[2] José Fuentes Mares, *Poinsett. Historia de una gran intriga*, Mexico, Jus, 1958.

[3] Thomas E. Chávez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2002.

As Ana Rosa Suárez Argüello reminds us in the first chapter, it fell to the controversial Poinsett to play the role of promoter of the virtues of the federal and democratic republican government, at a time when part of the Mexican elite was leaning towards monarchy. In addition, it fell to him to persuade the old New Spain, many of them pro-British, that the ideals of the Monroe Doctrine were a benefit for Mexico. His first interlocutor was Lucas Alamán, who had strong sympathies for Great Britain. It is interesting to note how most of the authors of this book incorporate the negative perception that diplomats had of Mexico into their analyses. Suárez Argüello points out, for example, that Poinsett maintained the "black legend" and considered Mexicans "a more ignorant and libertine people than their ancestors had been." His meddling in internal affairs through Masonic rites has been much criticized, but it is evident that modern Mexico and the indisputable prestige of the republican form of government are due to the proliferation of the ideas promoted by Poinsett.

It is clear that in the first embassies the relationship was marked by the Mexican fear of U.S. expansionism; the colonization of Texas was the preamble to a phase defined by expansion. Amy S. Greenberg's chapter is about Nicholas Trist and its subtitle is revealing: "unauthorized diplomat." It addresses, of course, the most painful moment in the relationship: the Mexico-U.S. War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that put an end to it. The consequence of that treaty was the territorial cession that (as the author explains) was less than what President James K. Polk longed for.

The figure of Trist has been examined by several authors,[4] but Greenberg works with the diplomat's own papers. The fact that Mexico did not see itself compelled to also cede Baja California, Sonora and Chihuahua was the result of his initiative. Trist was the highest-ranking official in the State Department, had been a student of Jefferson's, and later married his granddaughter and ended up as executor of the Monticello tenant.

Trist spoke Spanish and was well-versed in domestic politics, skilled enough to write the documentation for Slidell's mission to convince the Mexican government to sell California. According to the author, Mexico's refusal to comply with that proposal bolstered Polk's backing for war. In 1846 it was assumed in many quarters that the war would be short and focused

[4] Alejandro Sobarzo, *Deber y conciencia. Nicolás Trist, el negociador norteamericano en la Guerra del 47,* Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000.

on obtaining a territorial concession after the victories and to gain control of California and New Mexico. Trist was named representative to consolidate and formalize those conquests. The capture of Mexico City by the U.S. military and the abandonment of the unstable Santa Anna further propelled the decision to occupy all of Mexico, but again the negative American perception of Mexico played a crucial role.

Trist's stance was that peace should be achieved by demanding as little of Mexico as possible, a consideration that was unprecedented in American tradition, and in an unusual gesture he refused to be withdrawn. He considered himself the only one who could secure a treaty and was convinced that prolonging the occupation was unwise, and the annexation of the entire country counterproductive; turning Mexico into a conquered province would end up corrupting and destroying the United States.

Trist's opposition was not the product of magnanimity, but rather of pragmatism and, deep down, of racism. Once General Winfield Scott wrote: "The Indians and people of mixed race make up seven million. They are exceedingly inferior to ours." "As someone who loves my country, I was opposed to the mixture of that race with ours." But his moral sense also stimulated his desire to achieve peace under less iniquitous conditions. Upon returning to the United States, Trist was disliked by Polk and suffered retaliation by having his emoluments withheld for many years.

Marcela Terrazas deals with James Gadsden and discusses the spaces for a diplomacy of annexation. Gadsden was also a Southerner and, like Poinsett, originally from Charleston; he had accompanied Andrew Jackson on the inspection of the fortifications in the Gulf of Mexico, the importance of which we have already underlined. Gadsden's mission had five priorities: improve trading relations; secure a solution to outstanding claims; propose the modification of the border, establishing it on the 30th parallel; negotiate the acquisition of the land essential for the railroad route, and repeal Article 11 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which obliged the United States Government not to pursue nomadic Indians on Mexican soil.

It was not an easy relationship. With Antonio López de Santa Anna and Manuel Díez de Bonilla he became tense and on multiple occasions the *Immortal Warrior of Zempoala* asked Washington to remove the plenipotentiary. Gadsden gambled on delaying the payment of three million dollars owed to Mexico in order to precipitate the fall of Santa Anna.

In the wake of the assistance received from Washington, General Juan N. Álvarez commenced the liberal government and integrated pro-Americans into important portfolios in his administration. Gadsden's enthusiasm for the Liberals, however, was limited. The arrival of Ignacio Comonfort to the presidency (in December 1855) was a turning point. To the payment of the abovementioned indemnity an American factor was added: the pressure of two companies that demanded the construction of the railway through Tehuantepec.

The concessionaires demanded the mediation of the minister to ensure their interests prevailed. Gasden objected. The concessionaires did everything to overthrow him: they accused him of intervening in the internal affairs of Mexico and hindering a harmonious relationship. It fell to Gasden as a result to attend to State affairs and also to deal with the powerful interests of bankers, businessmen, speculators and money-grubbers who demonstrated their growing influence in Washington's decisions. He was, so to speak, "a bipolar meddler."

Those who in 1848 advocated for the Mexican Senate to ratify the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, based themselves on the assumption that the agreed border established a limit to U.S. expansionism. They would soon realize their mistake. The need to connect the two oceans would open a new channel for the expansion of the young republic, which would alter the relationship with Mexico, and later with Colombia as well as the Central American countries. These were the times of "manifest destiny," and in Mexico giving up more territory became politically toxic and downright unpatriotic.

Erika Pani examines the vision of three diplomats: John Forsyth Jr., Robert M. McLane, and Thomas Corwin, who suffered the impact of the civil war in Mexico and the long conflict that divided the United States in a manner that had striking parallels, splitting both countries in internal fights. Forsyth was professionally and politically linked to the strategic port of Mobile, Alabama, which since the 18th century had played a very important role in the outlet of the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, and was instructed to secure the purchase of Baja California, Sonora and part of Chihuahua, in addition to opening up U.S. trade in the Mexican market, which then had a large British presence, and guaranteeing passage through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

In the midst of the dispute between the Conservatives and the Liberals, Buchanan decided to send Robert McLane as his representative. The appointee had negotiated trade issues with China and was a West Point graduate.

His objectives were essentially the same as those of his predecessor: to insist on the passage through Tehuantepec, the sale of Baja California, and the claims. McLane agreed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Melchor Ocampo, to establish the treaty that bears their names (McLane-Ocampo), considered the archetype of the vexatious diplomatic arrangement. The instrument in question recognized the right of transit through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the military protection of the route; it also recognized the right of passage for U.S. troops between Nogales and Guaymas, and at any point on the Rio Grande to Mazatlán. The Mexican government would receive four million dollars to address the claims of U.S. citizens and the U.S. Congress assumed the power to determine the items that could enter without tariffs, and set quotas on others. The concessions to the Americans produced a scandal, and the treaty was even rejected by the Senate of the United States. McLane believed that his treaty opened the way for the admission of all Mexican states to the Union, as had happened with Texas.

The appointment of Corwin by President Lincoln was presented as a reversal in the attitude of the colossus towards Mexico. It sought to establish a new relationship, despite the fact that it was still mediated by the interests of investors, speculators and even filibusters. The U.S. representative saw how the troops of the tripartite alliance landed in Veracruz at the end of 1861 and signed several treaties that provided for the extension of a loan so that Mexico could cover one of its weaknesses with regards to the U.S.: the service of its foreign debt.[5]

Finally, despite the fragility of the Mexican position, the acquisition of territory was frustrated by the tenacity of the two opposing sides in Mexico and also by the growing contradictions between the north and the south of the United States and their respective models of social organization; the southern states that defended slavery.

Heredia González's chapter focuses on the recognition of Porfirio Díaz in 1876. Foster, who had forged his political career alongside Ulysses Grant, stayed in Mexico for seven years where his priority was the pacification of the border, the fight against smuggling and the attacks of the so-called "warlike Indians," filibusters and livestock thieves. The border conflict issue was so important that, in 1872, the United States Congress appointed

[5] Carlos Marichal, *Historia de la deuda externa en América Latina*, Madrid, Alianza, 1988.

a special commission to investigate the depredations committed in Texas; the Mexican commission responded in 1873. Foster, found himself facing increasing violence and Texan pressure that had been seeking a heavy-handed policy against Mexico.

Grant was recognized as one of Mexico's "best friends" and, unlike most southerners, treated Mexican issues with more balance. The change of president to Rutherford Hayes brought about a change in the border policy, as the residents once again opted to apply a strong-arm policy. The hardening once again raised the specter of war and Foster pressured the Porfirio Díaz government for a solution until, in late 1877, the Oaxacan-born president, at the same time as attending to the border by sending troops, launched a publicity campaign in United States in favor of his government, which, apparently, had an effect. Foster reopened the instruction to recognize the Díaz government, because the United States could not receive payments from a government it did not recognize.

Luis Barrón's chapter addresses the situation during the First World War and the embassy of Henry P. Fletcher. Much has been said about the Zimmermann telegram of 1917 and the possibility of Mexico opening a German front to attack the United States.[6] But, as Barrón recalls, thanks to the personalities of Woodrow Wilson and Venustiano Carranza, as well as their ambassadors, the potential conflict was averted. If Wilson has gone down in history, with due merit, as one of the great internationalists, we are in debt to Javier Garciadiego for a very careful reading of Carranza's foreign policy.[7] He demonstrated his ability to understand the international situation and the national interest in such troubled times.

Fletcher was a native of Pennsylvania and added to the list of northern ambassadors who had been occupying that office at least since Corwin, displacing the southerners who held the position from Poinsett to Forsyth. Fletcher had connections to J.P. Morgan and Thomas Lamont; he was ambassador to Belgium and undersecretary of the Department of State. Without securing a public statement from Carranza that he would not join the German

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6 Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1981.

7 Javier Garciadiego, *La Revolución mexicana. Crónicas, documentos, planes y Testimonios*, Mexico, UNAM, 2018.

side in the event of a confrontation with America, Fletcher remained convinced that Mexico would stay neutral. He did important work to convince his government that it was essential to stabilize the Carranza government, especially after Francisco Villa's attack on Columbus.

Old problems were added to the new ones. The interests of the oil companies pressured Carranza to modify the Constitution. Finally, although Germany had every incentive to move closer to Mexico, Carranza was not tempted to directly rival the United States. Fletcher's priority was to keep Mexico at peace during the war. The important thing for Wilson was to have a free hand in Europe, without worrying that the Germans might be on his southern border.

When Wilson fell ill, starting in 1919, foreign policy towards Mexico became the responsibility of Fletcher and Robert F. Lansing. They recommended not recognizing the new Obregón government until it accepted the conditions that Carranza had always rejected.

We are indebted to María del Carmen Collado for a chapter that studies one of the most interesting stages: the turn to negotiation. As the relationship between Plutarco Elías Calles and Calvin Coolidge deteriorated, the U.S. president asked Dwight W. Morrow (who was a partner of J.P. Morgan) to assume the duties of ambassador to Mexico. Those were times when the country was beginning to be accused of being the spearhead or the fifth column of the Soviet Union against the interests of the United States. Businesses pushed that narrative, but their abuses, disrepute, and corruption led Morrow to carry out a recount of the failure of heavy-handed diplomacy, and instead recommend a policy that went beyond corporate interests.

The oil law in 1925 was a central issue causing conflict. The establishment in the United States was convinced that the interests of its companies were part of the general domain of the nation and should be defended with the vision of a "corporate State." The instructions Morrow received for his mission in Mexico included four notable points: reach an agreement on the issue of claims; secure a *modus vivendi* in the oil affairs that would put an end to the paralysis afflicting the industry; persuade the administration to end the abuses of the agrarian reform; and maintain a dialogue to assess an arms embargo imposed on Mexico since November 1926.

Collado's point that, unlike his predecessors, he did not disparage Mexico, is interesting. He liked the neighboring country and was able to explore

commonalities to establish grounds for collaboration. Morrow's childhood, plagued with limitations, made him more compassionate towards the disadvantaged, instead of blaming them for his condition, and perhaps he projected that vision towards Mexico. He developed the idea of "moral guardianship," according to which powerful countries have obligations to less favored ones. Morrow managed to resolve the oil dispute, and updated and reasserted the axiom of stability: if Mexico is stable and secure, then U.S. interests will be increasingly diversified and will benefit from its economic growth.

With regard to the agrarian conflict, Morrow achieved an intermediate solution. He recognized that the agrarian distribution was a fait accompli, part of the country's political landscape and, therefore, only incremental advantages could be expected. He helped to achieve a *modus vivendi* between State and Church. He promoted cultural diplomacy, hiring Diego Rivera to create the mural in the Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca. When he left the country he organized an exhibition of Mexican arts sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, curated by Rene D'Harnoncourt, who understood local art to be an expression of Mexican civilization, not merely imitations of foreign works. Morrow made culture a vehicle for rapprochement and a strategy to deal directly with issues causing conflict. The abandonment of lengthy legal disputes and the search for practical solutions led to settlements on more thorny issues. For Collado, this turn marks the prelude to the "good neighbor" policy.

One of the most interesting chapters in the book is the one devoted to Josephus Daniels, who arrived in Mexico at the age of 71. Under the Wilson presidency, Daniels had been Secretary of the Navy and, therefore, responsible for the military occupation of Veracruz; he maintained friendly relations and a political alliance with Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had been his subordinate in the Secretary of the Navy. The central concern of his embassy was adherence to "the good neighbor policy." Daniels' close friendship with Roosevelt allowed him, in conjunction with Henry Morgenthau Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, to establish a more favorable environment for Mexico, allowing it to act as a counterweight to the traditional attitude of the State Department and the oil companies.

Daniels, despite his empathy with the Mexican situation, did not speak Spanish and always had to resort to interpreters. The Bucareli agreements

of 1923 continued to generate friction and it fell to him (in 1934) to negotiate a settlement. He always found a favorable argument to justify the Mexican position, from fiscal hardship to bureaucratic conflicts. It is interesting to see how the process of political radicalization in Mexico also affected Daniels who, in early 1938, told Roosevelt that the older he got, the more radical he became. Daniels was a dual ambassador. He represented the United States, but he was also a personal interpreter of the good neighbor policy, the defense of which he saw as a mission. Although he had the backing of Roosevelt, this duality contained an inherent contradiction that became more acute as the Cardenistas' measures regarding property rights became more radical. The oil expropriation, which as we know was the most important political decision of that administration, did not directly affect the principal economic interests of the United States; the memory of a scandal over the illegal allocation of land allocation permits with federal oil reserves in exchange for bribes was still fresh, and remained a reference point in political discussion. Washington's reaction, therefore, was moderate, not challenging the decision to expropriate and not supporting London's position against that Cardenista measure that Lorenzo Meyer has explored in detail.[8]

Good neighborliness should not be affected by an economic dispute caused by the arrogance of oil interests. Daniels' distrust of the State Department and vice versa increased the distance and caution that prevailed from 1938, not only in terms of his performance, but also the information he transmitted, which began to be seen as incomplete, erroneous, and biased.

Blanca Torres addresses the bilateral relationship during World War II. George S. Messerschmitt arrived in Mexico just as the United States entered the conflict. This situation gave rise to a new turn in bilateral relations, entrenching the idea that a stable and close Mexico was the best thing for the United States. It created the conditions for Roosevelt's first visit to Monterrey and Manuel Ávila Camacho's to Corpus Christi.

The new U.S. ambassador faced immediate tasks such as the implementation of agreements to expand the lines of bilateral collaboration: ensure the flow to the United States of food and mining products to support the war effort; obtain Ávila Camacho's agreement to send workers to replace the Americans

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[8] Lorenzo Meyer, *Su majestad británica contra la revolución mexicana, 1900-1950: el fin de un imperio informal*, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 1991.

who were joining the military; contribute to the effort to reduce anti-American sentiment in broad sectors of the Mexican population and increase support for the Allies' cause, an issue that has been studied in great detail by José Luis Ortiz Garza,[9] and encourage the Mexican Government to play an active role in promoting support for the Allies in Latin American countries, and in seeking the collaboration of other countries.

The ambassador supported gentle treatment for Latin American countries, while others favored political and economic pressure and retaliation. For Messerschmitt, it was more or less clear that maintaining a stable Mexico and good cooperation yielded more fruits than direct pressure and confrontation.

It fell to Messerschmitt to crown bilateral collaboration in the military field, within the framework of the collective defense of the continent and the development of a joint defense plan. Advances were made, including the participation of Mexicans who were completing their military service in the United States, whose number is estimated at between fifteen thousand and two hundred thousand, according to sources. An agreement was also reached to have access to Mexican oil, regardless of who produced it; Messerschmitt's position was favorable to the return of U.S. companies to oil production, through contracts with Petróleos Mexicanos, or some other modality. Of course, the close rapprochement between Messerschmitt and Ávila Camacho facilitated comparison and intensified economic relations.

Soledad Loaeza's chapter deals with Francis B. White. Like some of his predecessors, he was a distinguished member of the foreign service; he was twice undersecretary for Latin America. He had significant experience as vice president of the agency for supporting bondholders for countries in default. In Mexico and the United States he consolidated a tacit understanding of a political or strategic order with a shared goal: anti-communism. In 1954 the bilateral relationship took a turn for the worse when the United States embarked on its disastrous policy of knocking the bottom out of the fragile Latin American democracies. Ambassador White, Loaeza claims, served as the executor of the interventionism characteristic of Dwight D. Eisenhower, which was based on wresting the initiative from the communists

[9] José Luis Ortiz Garza, *Ideas en tormenta. La opinión pública en México en la Segunda Guerra Mundial,* Mexico, Ediciones Ruiz, 2007.

to give security to the "free world," and established the idea that positions that the USSR held had to be destabilized. This was not the case of Guatemala, but that country became the first link in that inter-American foreign policy that would favor "national security regimes" in subsequent years. The American blessing to overthrow Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala left Adolfo Ruiz Cortines in a quandary. White got Ruiz Cortines to support his position on Guatemala, with the exception of an armed intervention.

During his mission it became clear that Mexico was part of Latin America as a whole and, therefore, of hemispheric politics. However, its geographical position conferred certain advantages on the country, because some issues required a combination of internal and other external approaches. It is a special relationship, as Mario Ojeda ended up calling it. Over time, this overlap between internal and external issues would end up being called *the intermestic sphere*.

In this phase, the "diplomatic constant" was further consolidated, advocating that the U.S. priority is for Mexico to be a stable, secure, and supportive country in the international arena, since it was ranked as one of the most important centers of administration and propaganda of international communism.

To Ana Covarrubias we owe the study of Thomas C. Mann, *Mister Latin America*, who arrived in Mexico when Cold War trends were intensifying, seeking Mexico's support for regional policy, which was also a significant objective of his predecessor: "the agreement to disagree" was achieved after the effort to change Mexican politics. Mann was a Texan, and learned Spanish at the same time as English; Lyndon Johnson named him Coordinator of the Alliance for Progress and Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs.

For Mann, as for White, the big issue was countering the communist threat in the hemisphere. John F. Kennedy worried that Mexico did not seem to take the communist threat seriously. The United States came to accept its policy towards Cuba, but the road was not easy. Mann's appointment was supposed to be the beginning of the change in U.S. policy. Mann was convinced that the United States was losing bargaining power to Mexico, so he set out to convince the Mexicans that Mexico needed the United States more than the United States needed Mexico.

In that bilateral relationship, according to the ambassador, reciprocity and mutual respect were required; indeed, there was an agreement on the

substance of Mexico's position of support in the bipolar conflict, with the acceptance of some differences that allowed the country to play a constructive game of relative sovereignty, and take a distance from the hemispheric atrocities that would come later.

The chapter by Miguel Ruiz-Cabañas dedicated to John Gavin is among the most interesting in the book. Gavin was an actor and in California he was linked to another actor who later became Governor of the State and subsequently President of the United States: Ronald Reagan. One of his first objectives was to seek a trade agreement with Mexico, but his priority was to reaffirm the leadership of the United States throughout the world, including Mexico, trying to reduce the space of discrepancy that had arisen in previous decades.

Gavin, of Mexican origin, felt comfortable making public criticisms of the government. These interferences altered the diplomatic constant that the supreme interest with respect to Mexico was to preserve the security of the southern border. He broke in an ill-tempered manner with the tradition of refraining from carrying out actions and statements in a public and systematic way that could weaken the regime. However, Gavin felt that the United States should pressure Mexico to change politically and economically, and that he personally was responsible for doing so. One of the areas of confrontation was Chihuahua, with the 1986 elections and the famous "patriotic fraud." The attitude of "proconsul" irritated Mexico more and more. There was also very strong pressure for Tlatelolco to align with Reagan's increasingly aggressive Central American policy. In addition, there was the issue of drugs and the famous Enrique Camarena incident in Guadalajara, which poisoned the atmosphere. It was a particularly tense six-year term.

Roberta Lajous is the author of the text on John D. Negroponte, which addresses the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), probably the greatest of the transformations that the relationship has undergone in recent years. Negroponte had worked in the White House on the National Security Council and was close to President George H. W. Bush. Some anticipated a storm, but in that respect it was a low-key term, in stark contrast to Gavin's. He did not respond publicly to the very frequent criticisms of his period in Honduras, which reflected the feeling of grievance that Gavin's term had left in Mexico. He was an important ambassador since he helped bring the two countries closer on the trade issue, which in previous decades

had been frankly divisive. Mexico realized that trade integration was contrary to its interests; in fact, it had denounced the framework negotiated during Second World War, while Negroponte asserted that the approval of NAFTA would institutionalize the acceptance of a pro-American orientation of Mexican foreign policy. That is, a close economic relationship with Mexico would bring political benefits to the neighbors.

It fell to Ambassador Jones to ratify NAFTA, which had moments of turbulence, due to last-minute doubts raised by the incoming President Bill Clinton.

The last of the ambassadors to appear in the book is Carlos Pascual. He was Barack Obama's envoy and arrived in Mexico on the day the North American Leaders Summit was being held in Guadalajara. He was a diplomat and academic with extensive insight into security issues. His priority was to secure the initial impulse that Felipe Calderón and George W. Bush had agreed upon with his predecessor, Antonio Garza, an interesting ambassador who, in my opinion, would deserve a chapter in future editions of the book, since he was the first ambassador after Mexico achieved political change.

Pascual spoke Spanish and he gradually began to realize that his role was significant both internally and in the public sphere. He began by ordering the channels of interaction and communication of the United States agencies with their counterparts and performed a function that for years had been taken for granted: the head of all the United States agencies with the Government of Mexico was the ambassador.

These were difficult times: violence in Mexico was on the up, and for some this was a symptom that the security strategy was touching sensitive fibers, while for others it was a sign of its ineffectiveness. Pascual's public interventions and statements to the press grew, to the annoyance of President Calderón,[10] but it was a massive disclosure of diplomatic cables from the United States, known as WikiLeaks, that ended up spoiling any possible understanding between the two. The president of Mexico asked Obama to dismiss Pascual.

In short, the book *U.S. Ambassadors to Mexico*: Crisis Diplomacy and Opportunities, offers a valuable amount of analytical material to understand bilateral

[10] Felipe Calderón, *Decisiones difíciles*, Mexico, Debate, 2020.

relations from a different perspective and, in many cases, to confirm what we already knew. The work clearly demonstrates that the task of the United States ambassador in Mexico is crucial to guide the most important bilateral relationship for the two countries in one direction or another. Its publication is an excellent way to celebrate two hundred years of bilateral relations.