

New Paths in the Thorny and Endless Mexico-USA Relationship

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Abstract

This essay analyzes the opportunities that Mexico could have, as a signatory of the “United States, Canada, Mexico Agreement” -USMCA-, within the arrival of Joseph Biden to the presidency of the United States. This change of baton unleashed singular expectations; first, by simply replacing Trump and proposing domestic social and economic policies of high social content and, second, by announcing the American return to the diplomatic forms exercised since the end of World War II. Whether it is domestic or foreign policy, it is clear and often explicit that the central motivation of the United States is the defense of the American national interest, which is to reduce inequality, ethnic discrimination and strengthen the economy. It is legitimate and necessary, therefore, for Mexico to identify its interests and opportunities to advance them within the framework of the reorientation of internal and external politics of the new Democratic administration, without forgetting that Biden is an expert politician with long experience, for whom “those own interests” express personal ambitions, partisan needs, national aspirations and personal desires.

Keywords: *United States, Mexico, North America, Biden*

Jel Codes: *F5, F50, F52*

Meksika-ABD'nin Çetrefilli ve Sonsuz İlişkisindeki Yeni Yollar

Öz

Bu çalışma, Joseph Biden'in ABD başkanı olmasıyla, Meksika'nın, “ABD, Kanada, Meksika Anlaşması” kapsamında elde edebileceği fırsatları tartışmaktadır. Bu yönetim değişikliğiyle bireysel beklentiler açığa çıktı; ilk olarak, Trump'ın yerini almasıyla yurt içinde yüksek sosyal içerikli ekonomi ve toplum politikaları önerdi. İkinci olarak ise, Amerika'nın, 2. Dünya Savaşı'nın sonundan beri uygulanan diplomatik şekillerine geri dönüleneceğini açıkladı.

İster yurt içindeki, ister uluslararası politikalar olsun, temel motivasyonun, Amerikan ekonomisini güçlendiren, etnik ayrımcılığı ve eşitsizliği azaltan, yani Amerika'nın milli çıkarlarını gözetten bir tutum olduğu su götürmez bir gerçektir. Bu tutum meşru ve gereklidir ancak Meksika'nın, Biden'in kişisel hırs ve ihtiraslara, partizan ihtiyaçlara ve milli arzulara, bununla birlikte ciddi tecrübeye sahip bir politika uzmanı olduğunu unutmadan; yeni demokratik yönetimin gerek iç gerekse dış politikada yeniden konumlanacağı çerçevesinde fırsatlar ve çıkarları belirlemesi gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Birleşik Devletler, Meksika, Kuzey Amerika, Biden*

Jel Kodları: *F5, F50, F52*

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Introduction

Amid the crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States held a very hectic electoral process in which Democrat Joseph Biden was elected by a narrow margin. Upon his arrival at the White House in January 2021, he reiterated his firm conviction to claim “America’s place in the world” after the chaotic Trump administration, as well as to make up for years of austerity policies that privileged the richest and exacerbated social inequality since the late seventies. From the beginning of his term, President Biden made clear his administration’s domestic priority and, in this regard, the need to rebuild and strengthen the national economy.²

The president is constantly stoking the illusion of change. Internally, to weaken the social foundations of *Trumpism* and Republican opposition to his programs, some of which break into the mold of economic policies centered on fiscal austerity, free trade and limited government, applied during the last seven administrations including those of the three Democratic presidents: Carter, Clinton and Obama, who had to deal with the effects of economic crises, fiscal and trade imbalances inherited by the republican governments. Presidents Carter, Clinton and Obama found the public treasury in sharp balance, Biden had to face the effects of Trump’s regrettable handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and the costs of fiscal policy that reduced the directs of large corporations, in addition to antagonizing the allied countries of the United States, raising tariffs and making general consumer products more expensive, as well as in alienating the alliance with the international community, by protesting international agreements, such as that of Paris, the TPP and the one signed with Iran. The idiosyncrasies of U.S. politics and legislative weaning off reduced majorities force the president, either to negotiate only with his party and accept the most progressive Democratic proposals or to compromise with moderate Republican sectors and deepen the division of the Democratic ranks.

2 The White House, “Remarks by President Biden on America’s Place in the World”, The White House, February 4th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>.

Externally, Biden's task may be more complex. It is not easy to restore the leadership of the USA, its prestige as a hegemonic power or the confidence of allies, eroded in the years of Trump after his decision to ignore the complex international scenario of weakening economic and political hegemonies. Biden's actions in the internal and external fields are of particular interest to Mexico and need to be carefully analyzed. In this text, only the aspects that are considered of greater relevance will be suggested, and it must be said that detailed studies are essential to suggest concrete lines of action of public and business policy. In any case, emphasis is placed on the national security strategy of the current US administration, the design and objective of international economic policies and their relationship with the strengthening of domestic productive policies in support of workers, small businesses and infrastructure, as well as the integration of measures to solve problems of the transition to new technologies and both the goals and the distributional challenges in terms of costs and benefits of the changes.³

Biden's strategy in the domestic arena is gradually being deployed in several bills and budgets; (1) to temper the effects of the pandemic containment policies, (2) with the intense vaccination plan of the population, (3) with the presentation of radical budget spending initiatives due to the size of the resources and the distributive content and, (4), in its intention to advance its initiatives even without the consent of the Republican Party. In this regard, it is claimed that Biden begins the return of the Democratic Party to its populist nature, as on June 29th, 2016, U.S. President, Barack Obama, reminded the Mexican president, Enrique Peña Nieto, when he asked the leaders of the USMCA to combat populism.⁴ Others consider Biden a second Roosevelt for being a *transformational* leader. Transformational leaders are charismatic leaders who emerge with vitality in the face of the emerging problems of globalization, proposing changes that mobilize broad sectors of the population towards economic and ethical goals. Hence the optimistic expectation of all trading partners and allies,⁵ especially developing countries, who consider that Biden brings more favorable winds blowing for all. Mexico does not escape this euphoria.

Biden's policies have been equated with the Democratic populism of the Roosevelt era. In the context of the Great Depression, President Roosevelt implemented an interventionist policy that displaced the liberal model, this was seen with aid and reconstruction packages — in what became known as —the *New Deal*— and with the intervention of the

3 The White House, “Renewing America's Advantages. Interim National Security Strategic Guidance”, The White House, March 3rd, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

4 CNN *Peña Nieto criticizes populists, but Obama...*, video of CNN, 2:00, published on July 1st, 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/spanish/2016/07/01/cnnee-sots-digital-pena-nieto-critica-populistas-obama-yo-soy-populista.cnn>.

5 Helinna Ayalew, “Political Leadership in the Transformation of Societies: F.W. de Klerk and Pim Fortuyn in the Multicultural Project”, *Macalester/Maastricht Essays* 25, (2010): 1-18, <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1475&context=macintl>; James MacGregor Burns *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

state itself in the national economy.⁶ Once the domestic economy was restored and after its action in World War II, “the United States reached a hegemonic position by exercising its enormous economic power”;⁷ demonstrating that without the consolidation of the state as a major player, Americans would not have been able to enshrine their status as a world hegemon.

President Biden faces priority problems to solve the domestic political crisis that was long conceived by the decline of the economic and technological supremacy of the United States, the increase in poverty and inequality, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing rivalry with the People’s Republic of China. The Trump administration used this discontent to allege electoral theft, weaken Biden and diminish his frustration of being, of the 45 the sixth president not re-elected for a second term. On the economic and political front, the Biden administration has launched controversial initiatives that privilege those that, under the slogan: “Buy American” and “Build Back etter” serve to ensure a democratic second term. The diagnoses and justification of the policies suggest that Mexico, and the North American region, in economic terms and in the short to medium term, are not within the U.S. priorities. However, there may be opportunities for Mexico’s economy and political stability.

Is this a time of change and what does it offer Mexico?

In recent decades, the economic crises of the 1990s, the financial crisis of 2008 and the one caused by the measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have shown flaws in economic models and globalization, which are manifested in the sharpening of economic cycles, low economic growth and productivity, as well as greater inequality in the functional distribution of income. Since the late seventies, it is remarkable the greater growth of capital gains than of output and labor productivity, which implies a transfer of income from wages to profits and from low-middle to high wages..

At the same time, problems regarding the dependence on the domestic market for inputs and final consumer goods on value chains emerged, and for developing countries, difficulties of moving towards more technical fragments of production were highlighted. Based on the foregoing, the absence of selective productive sectoral policies has been questioned and has discredited the integration agreements that oblige countries to hand over sovereignty in policies of growth and technological development, as well as dependence on exports of raw materials. In consequence, in different latitudes there is a demand for greater intervention by the State in the planning and implementation of economic policy in general and sectoral policy, suggesting the return of the Developmental State. This pressure coincides with Biden’s proposals, both to restore the economy with more and better wages,

6 Antonia Sagredo Santos, “The abandonment of the liberal model during the New Deal Rooseveltian”, *History* 396, no. 2, (2013): 299-331, <http://www.historia396.cl/index.php/historia396/article/view/32>.

7 I. William Zartman, *Imbalance of power: US hegemony and international order*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 5.

the strategy of “Buy American” and even sectoral development as an instrument to slow down Chinese development and its technological advances.⁸

Internal changes: political and economic

A year after the entry into force of the United States, Mexico and Canada Agreement (USMCA), in July 2020 and half a year after the COVID-19 crisis, Biden’s initiatives announce changes that make it necessary for the Mexican government to prudently analyze the direction they will take, both in terms of “Buy American” and tax policies to finance the broad infrastructure plan and support for lower-income groups. Up to this point, the content of the executive order has been considered without much substance, omitting elements in which regional benefits could be alluded to, i.e., to what extent Buy American equals or could amount to “Buy USMCAN”. In other words, the definition of Biden’s self-interest is extended to Canada and Mexico, as partners of the USMCA, the North American region.

A likely scenario is that to benefit the U.S. economy, companies with national or mostly national capital will be favored, which would be detrimental to U.S. trade and investment in Mexico and Canada, especially in sectors identified as strategic in the campaign to contain the progress and accelerate technological transformation, generation of employment, objectives that are on the agenda of the U.S. president. A statement to focus on is Biden’s claim to “work with partners and allies to modernize international trade rules, including those related to government procurement, to ensure that all countries use tax revenues to stimulate investment in their own countries.” This could be interpreted as raising to a multilateral standard the rules for the protection of domestic production proposed in “Buy American”⁹, which is positive from every point of view.

National interests: the intersection between national and international

During the first hundred days of his term, President Biden pushed through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (COVID-19 Stimulus Package), the Buy American Act, and the American Jobs Plan, all aimed at restoring the economy, generating employment, distributing support to families and children, promoting green technologies to combat climate

8 The White House, “Executive Order on Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America’s Workers”, The White House, January 25th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/25/executive-order-on-ensuring-the-future-is-made-in-all-of-america-by-all-of-americas-workers/>.

The White House, “Build Back Better”, The White House, June 26th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build-back-better/>.

9 The White House, “Buy American Provisions, Ensuring Future of America is Made in America by All of America’s Workers”, The White House, January 25th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/25/president-biden-to-sign-executive-order-strengthening-buy-american-provisions-ensuring-future-of-america-is-made-in-america-by-all-of-americas-workers/>.

change, investing in physical and social infrastructure, stimulating scientific and technological development in specific sectors, among other measures. These policies have been discussed by the Republican caucus and some Democratic congressmen, for various reasons, among which stand out those of fiscal balance and price stability, the enormous budget cost, financed via higher taxes from a date still under debate, related to economic growth and increase in production and profits, expected from productivity gains. In contrast, these economic programs increased aid and wages, are widely accepted among U.S. society.¹⁰

The approval of the initiatives foresees challenges for the administration due to the bipartisan consensus that would have to be reached for their approval, however, with the experience gained during the Obama term, Biden has decided to redefine this situation. While he is in dialogue with Republicans, he is also opting for a firmer stance in which makes it clear that he is willing to abandon his role as a negotiator and prioritize his figure as a *transformational* president.¹¹

This has led to criticism of the perceived lack of bipartisan negotiations, Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, has stated that he is focused on stopping the president who intends to turn the United States into a “socialist country.”¹² In response, Biden has stressed his commitment to tax the corporations and the wealthiest, in order to build a fair, strong and innovative economy, capable of competing internationally with research and development, announcing the largest investment in jobs since World War II.¹³

If the initiatives are consolidated, the president would change the economy modifying the State’s role and that would seem to point to a New Consensus of Washington, with probabilities of consolidating like the previous one.¹⁴ Thus conceived, economic policy is a key point that goes beyond prosperity and international relations, it pushes for changes in values and the exercise of power.¹⁵

10 See. Lydia Saad, “COVID-19 Aid Package Both Popular and Controversial”, Gallup, March 26th, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/342041/covid-aid-package-simultaneously-popular-controversial.aspx>.

11 Anita Kumar, “Biden is talking to Republicans, but for only so long”, Politico, May 3rd, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/05/03/biden-republicans-bipartisan-485111>.

12 Eugene Scott “Biden dismisses McConnell’s pledge that he’s ‘100 percent’ focused on stopping the administration”, The Washington Post, May 5, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/biden-mcconnell-spending-taxes/2021/05/05/1da1a0aa-ade2-11eb-acd3-24b44a57093a_story.html.

13 The White House, “Remarks by President Biden on the American Jobs Plan”, March 31, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/31/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-american-jobs-plan/>.

14 Martin Sandbu, “A new Washington consensus is born”, Financial Times, April 11, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/3d8d2270-1533-4c88-a6e3-cf14456b353b>.

15 For example, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared “ we’re not only in a political and economic competition; we are in a competition for ideas. If people don’t believe that democracy and free markets deliver, then they’re going to be looking elsewhere for models that more readily respond to their daily needs. And we happen to believe that our model is not only the best for us; we think it embodies universal principles, human aspirations, and proven results that make it the best model for any country or people.”

C-SPAN, *Secretary Clinton Remarks on Economics and Foreign Policy*, video of C-SPAN, 1:03:00, published on 14 of October of 2011, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?302086-1/secretary-clinton-remarks-economics-foreign-policy>.

In this respect, “the economy is a scenario of power relations”,¹⁶ and so far in the twenty-first century, the power of the United States has been challenged by China. In the face of a growing Beijing, Washington has decided to re-establish relations with its allies around the world, seeking to vindicate U.S. hegemony and recover the days of the *Pax Americana*. Since the 2008 financial crisis, however, there has been evidence of the shift in global wealth — and power — from the West to the East, with China and its exponential economic growth and presence on the international stage as a rising power.¹⁷

President Biden has made clear his intention to continue the course of action of his predecessor, Donald Trump, on China and declared that he sees Beijing as “the most serious competitor” because of the threat it represents to democratic values and has exposed the need to confront the Asian giant’s economic abuses, human rights violations, damage to intellectual property and global governance.¹⁸ However, unlike Trump, Biden is willing to make use of selective cooperation, to address areas that are of mutual interest and require the action of both countries, such as climate change.

Simultaneously, Biden maintains the confrontation with Russia inherited from the previous administration, deteriorating the bilateral relationship. In response, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping strengthened their “strategic partnership,”¹⁹ revealing that U.S. belligerence has induced the rapprochement of these countries that the US sees as challenging its hegemony. In a diplomatic spiral, Biden seeks to strengthen his alliances and induce countries to align, “choose a side” as happened with the Quad Security Dialogue (QUAD),²⁰ or stay on the sidelines, an expensive option.

In the world triangle formed, on one flank, by the United States and its allies, on the other, China and Russia, and a very distant amorphous remnant to an Aligned Movement, the contest is far from that held during the Cold War, for ideological reasons, it is more an imperialist dispute for economic, political, geostrategic, technological and military power. In addition, it highlights the interconnection of the various countries around the world, derived from the process of globalization and the emergence of various centers of power that, in one way or another, affect decision-making on the international stage.

Biden presented and convinced the leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) to commit to the “Build Back Better for the World” B3W strategy and the “Green Belt and Road” plan as democratic credit alternatives to China’s lending, the political spearhead of global authori-

16 Arturo Santa-Cruz, *US Hegemony and the Americas. Power and Economic Statecraft in International Relations*, (New York: Routledge, 2020).

17 Christopher Layne “This Time It’s Real: The End of Unipolarity and the “Pax Americana””, *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1, (March 2012): 203-213, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41409832>.

18 The White House, “Remarks by President Biden on America’s Place in the World”.

19 Vladimir ISchenkov & Kin Moritsugu, “Leaders of Russia and China tighten their grips, grow closer”, Associated Press, April 7th, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-china-politics-power-clout-9b38a8258305a016e7fd819b532f9c77>.

20 Baohui Zhang “The Biden presidency: a different China policy?”, *RSIS Commentary*, no. 195, (November 13th, 2020), <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/144921/2/CO20195.pdf>.

tarianism. The United States would concentrate on Latin America and the Caribbean and the other G7 countries in the countries of its particular interest.²¹ The B3W initiative will provide hundreds of billions of dollars in credits for infrastructure projects, thus combating China and strengthening its growth and influence in the world.²² That attempt prompted him to meet with Putin, in a meeting in which the millimeter preparation of the two sides could not fail. The American interest is not to turn Putin into an ally, or to achieve his silence on U.S. policy against China and to cool—or pause—the economic, military, and space rapprochement of U.S. rivals. Europe was quick to react, to express and to justify its decision to speak in its voice with the two countries. Merkel’s possible successor, Armin Laschet, declared the need to defend German interests and maintain good relations with the country main destination of its exports; meanwhile, Merkel and Macron plan a summit with Putin to agree on “smooth routes of dialogue” and joint actions on issues of mutual interest.²³ Therefore, it is not surprising that Biden’s conciliatory signals towards Russia, by freezing military aid to Ukraine, canceling sanctions on the companies that build the Nord Stream gas pipeline between Russia and Germany, authorizing the return of ambassadors and announcing the establishment of permanent dialogue to ensure strategic stability, turning Russia from an enemy to a pillar of order, as stated in the joint statement.²⁴ In effect, in politics, nothing is sculpted in stone, everything flows and moves...

The challenge of thinking about the region and the opportunities for Mexico

On the difficulty of imagining the region, it is worth mention that, for the United States, in commercial and political terms its region of influence is the whole world; however, as a priority and on the side of the allies, there are the members of the G7 and the European Union, as well as the opposite flank, China and Russia by rivalry. It fights China for what it is and above all for what it will be, based on its great economic, scientific and military power, the scale of its internal market and the ability to mobilize huge financial and human resources. It antagonizes Russia, for other reasons, not least its technological capability and rising military might.

Given this scenario, Mexico is nevertheless important, except for its economic power, but for being a relevant market for some products and certain U.S. states; not to mention

21 The White House, “FACT SHEET: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership”, The White House, June 12th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/>

22 *Ibid.*

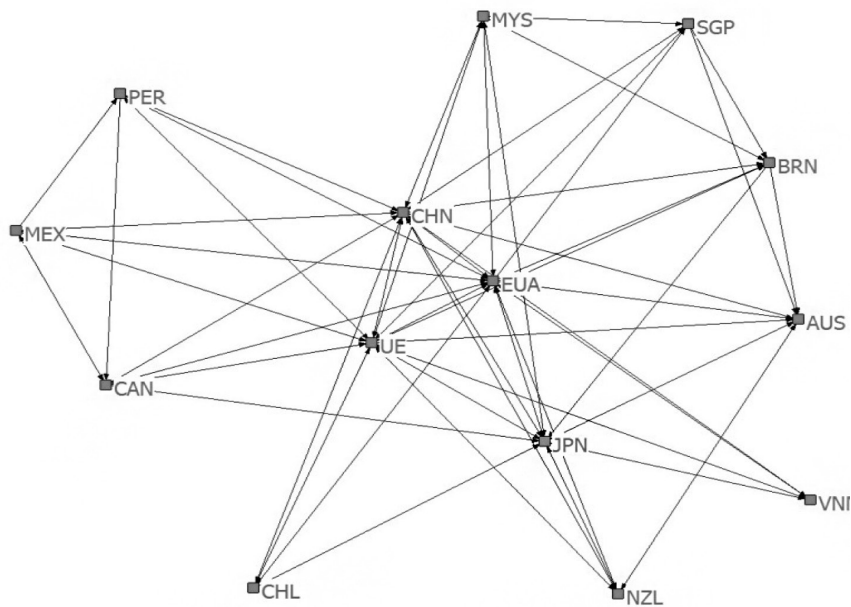
23 Sam Fleming *et. to the* “Berlin and Paris propose reset for EU relations with Moscow”, Financial Times, June 23rd, 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/03528026-8fa1-4910-ab26-41cd26404439>.

24 The White House, “U.S.-Russia Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability”, The White House, June 16th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/16/u-s-russia-presidential-joint-statement-on-strategic-stability/>.

the containment of Central American migration, given that the Mexican has been significantly reduced and oil is no longer the strategic product in bilateral trade, due to the reduction of Mexican production and exports in the face of the growth of U.S. production, which made the country a net exporter of crude oil.

For the United States, as an imperialist power, the world is its region of influence and control, which is very evident if only trade ties are considered, as observed in Graphic No. 1, which points out the trade ties of the main developed and developing countries. It also shows the dense network of countries for which the U.S. is the main trading partner and identifies the United States, China and the European Union, as the global focal nodes, while Canada and Mexico appear relatively isolated on the world trade stage. This chart suggests that to a greater degree than Chile or Peru, Mexico became globalized in the U.S. market and not independently of it, so its ties with Latin America, and other developed and developing countries, are weak. Chile and Peru, smaller countries, maintain a more diversified trade structure than Mexico; however, the latter has a greater industrial development, and varied national productive structure and divergent degrees of technological development of its companies, ergo dissimilar ability to compete in external and national markets, so it is prudent to diversify as much as possible the commercial structure, both of goods and markets of origin and destination.

Graphic No. 1 Major trading partners of the world's largest economies 2020

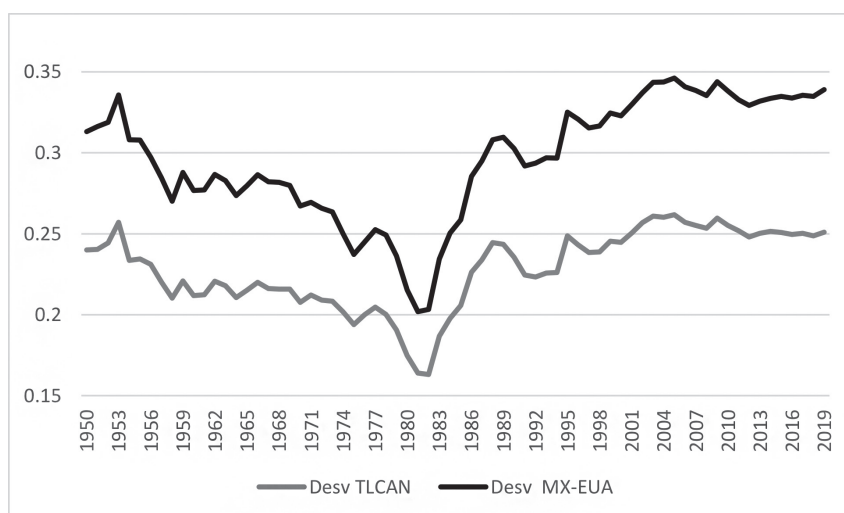


Source: Own elaboration, with information of WTO 2020

Another point that reinforces the difficulties of integrating partners of different degrees or of development and industrialization through trade is the evidence of the non-conver-

gence of per capita income (absolute convergence) or its growth rates (relative convergence), which were not verified either in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or in the European Union. Instead of narrowing the gap, the divergence of the economies of Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. increased. The convergence, or reduction of, the standard deviation of GDP per capita of the three countries occurred between 1954 and 1982 with the outbreak of the debt crisis, the first part of that year and the introduction of the liberal model presented the opposite process.²⁵ This same trajectory shows the gap between the economies of Mexico and the United States, but the regional one more intense, with the aggravating factor that the speed of dispersion increases, since the signing of NAFTA to date (see Graphic No. 2).

Graphic No. 2 The two stages of convergence of NAFTA economies and the Mexican and American. 1950-2019



Source: Own elaboration with information from *The Conference Board*, 2021, accessed at: <https://conference-board.org/data/economydatabase/total-economy-database-productivity>.

The economic potential of the region

The economic potential of the region that includes NAFTA-USMCA is undeniable. It is enough to consider some indicators: population, GDP, GDP per capita, value-added of manufactures, exports and imports (see Table No.1). However, this economic potential does not imply harmony of interests or development strategies, which reinforces the need to establish to what extent and degree the U.S. interests expressed in the Biden administration's

²⁵ Alicia Puyana, “Free Trade Agreement and America the North al Mexico-United States-Canada Agreement. New Chapter of U.S.-Mexico Integration?”, *The Economic Quarter* 87, no. 3, (July-September 2020): 635-668, <https://www.eltrimestreeconomico.com.mx/index.php/te/article/view/1086>.

strategies coincide with Mexican ones. For example, to what extent it may be in Mexico's national interest to antagonize and reduce its political and economic relations with China and Russia in support of the strategies that the United States maintains with each of them. This is due to the evidence on the effects of the asymmetric integration of the Mexican and U.S. economies, an imbalance that has increased since the establishment of NAFTA.

Table No. 1 North American and China Potential 2020

Serie	País	EU es... veces mas grande que...		China es... veces mas grande que...	
		1990	2019	1990	2019
Población total (millones)	Canadá	27.7	37.6	9.0	8.7
	México	83.9	127.6	3.0	2.6
	Estados Unidos	249.6	328.2	N/A	N/A
	Total TMEC	361.3	493.4	0.7	0.7
	China	1,135.2	1,397.7	0.2	0.2
PIB (miles de millones)	Canadá	976.8	1,615.4	10.0	12.3
	México	429.7	1,180.4	22.8	16.9
	Estados Unidos	9,807.2	19,939.0	N/A	N/A
	Total TMEC	11,213.7	22,734.8	0.9	0.9
	China	593.5	13,284.4	16.5	1.5
PIB per cápita (miles)	Canadá	35.3	43.0	1.1	1.4
	México	5.1	9.3	7.7	6.6
	Estados Unidos	39.3	60.7	1.00	1.00
	Total TMEC	79.7	113.0	0.5	0.5
	China	0.5	9.5	75.1	6.4
Exportaciones (millones)	Canadá	245,811	511,176	3.7	4.6
	México	80,367	458,382	11.3	5.1
	Estados Unidos	907,632	2,339,439	1.00	1.00
	Total TMEC	1,233,810	3,308,998	0.7	0.7
	China	80,801	2,457,141	11.2	1.0
Importaciones (millones)	Canadá	244,300	538,440	4.2	5.4
	México	85,140	461,341	12.2	6.3
	Estados Unidos	1,035,674	2,907,351	1.00	1.00
	Total TMEC	1,365,113	3,907,132	0.8	0.7
	China	63,256	2,303,657	16.4	1.3

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the WorldBank. * = trillions of dollars

Due to the size and dynamics of the Chinese domestic market, 4 times greater than the sum of the Mexican and Canadian and 11.3 times larger than the Mexican, it is not clear that the stimuli to invest in the United States nullified the gains in economies of scale offered by the Chinese market. The importance of the Chinese market is greater when considering that it is 20% richer than the three countries, concentrates a fifth of the total income, the high-income market of China is equivalent to 2.8 billion dollars, about five times higher than the sum of Canada and Mexico and only about 40% of the U.S. It is feasible to say that the weight of the Chinese economy in the world and in the North American region is considerably greater since it was the only one that did not decrease in 2020 and its expansion was forecasted for 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Mexican economy, just as other latitudes of the world, the Mexican GDP contracted by an estimated -8.2% in 2020. However, the country expects to recover in the coming years depending on several external and internal factors, such as the speed of global vaccination, the dynamics of U.S. growth and the increase in private investment.²⁶

26 World Bank, “Mexico: breadoGeneral branch”, consulted on June 12th, 2021, <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/mexico/overview>.

It should be emphasized that the dynamics of the countries suggest a small convergence of Mexico's total GDP and per capita with both Canada and the U.S., as well as a great acceleration of its total trade with the two countries. In contrast, China's progress in all the variables presented in table No. 1 was formidable, closing the gaps to a larger extent.

However, the figures show that...

Mexico is an important partner of the United States, as seen the table 1, the importance goes beyond trade relations, it implies political, demographic and social factors. These linkages extend from migration, licit and illicit trade, investments and being an ally in some international forums. For Biden, the priority issues on the bilateral agenda are migration, security, and the economy, and Mexico's unrestricted compliance with the commitments made in the labor chapter of the USMCA, according to several executive acts, action plans, and statements by members of his cabinet that are referred to below.²⁷

One of the biggest concerns is that Mexico complies with the labor provisions of the USMCA, in which the U.S. government has exerted pressure through lawsuits over the alleged denial to free association and collective bargaining in Tridonex, Matamoros and General Motors, Silao, both require an immediate response.²⁸ In addition, evaluations of the progress of the USMCA (and all trade agreements) have been required to measure the impact on the well-being of U.S. workers to enforce the highest labor standards of the agreement, a fundamental pillar of the Worker-Centered Trade Policy of the Biden administration, ratified as an element of the National Security policy²⁹ and that was seen in the visit to Mexico of the Vice President, Kamala Harris, in which technical assistance was announced for 130 million dollars for the implementation of the labor reform of 2019, as well as the eradication of child labor and the improvement of labor conditions in the industries of goods exported to the U.S., provided within the USMCA.³⁰ Of course, Mexico's relevance to the United States, and vice versa, is not static, growing—or weakening—depending on the political and economic cycle, the parties in power and the influence of the different U.S. states. Hence the need, as in the current situation, to review and, if necessary, modify the course of binational policy.

Since Mexico depends on the United States, its largest trading partner and destination

27 See. Alicia Puyana, “Free Trade Agreement and America and the North and Mexico-United States-Canada Agreement. New Chapter of U.S.-Mexico Integration?”, *The Economic Quarter* 87, no. 3, (July-September 2020): 635-668, <https://www.eltrimestreeconomico.com.mx/index.php/te/article/view/1086>.

28 USTR, “United States Seeks Mexico's Review of Alleged Freedom of Association Violations at Mexican Automotive Parts Factory”, USTR, June 9, 2021, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2021/june/united-states-seeks-mexicos-review-alleged-freedom-association-violations-mexican-automotive-parts>.

29 The White House, “Renewing America's Advantages. Interim National Security Strategic Guidance”.

30 The White House, “FACT SHEET: U.S. -Mexico Bilateral Cooperation”, The White House, June 8th, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/08/fact-sheet-u-s-mexico-bilateral-cooperation-2/>.

for its exports, it is necessary to consider that, the more urgent and accelerated the reconstruction of the economy, the greater the weight of the existing productive and export structure, as well as the increase in productivity and efficiency of the entire economy. This does not eliminate the need to think simultaneously about the strategy of productive structural change and the adoption of selective industrial policies.

Therefore, it is necessary to explore in which products Mexico can take advantage of and capture spaces of the U.S. market currently occupied by China, in case the advantages found by U.S. investors, importers and exporters are reduced, an issue that will be developed later. It is a question of stimulating these sectors and products in a Great Push scheme, prioritizing those that have the greatest capacity to compete in the U.S. market over imports from China, building a strategy to do well, whatever Mexico decides it must do.

After new opportunities

The statement of economic initiatives, especially the technological changes planned in important sectors such as health, green technologies and the automotive sector, reinforces the desirability of Mexico delimiting the national interest in foreign relations, beyond the general principles of defending sovereignty and non-interference. This is important, for example, with the emphasis on technological change in production processes, which relates to and affects national social policies, such as employment, wages, functional distribution of income, social and environmental sustainability. These considerations are very important for economies as open as Mexico and whose opening focuses on the interchanges with the USA, as discussed above.

The zero-carbon economy, much emphasized by the Biden administration and radically opposed to its predecessor, demands profound technological and productive changes. It is not only a question of replacing the automotive fleet or all existing capital goods such as machines for producing machines, machines for producing goods, etc.; but also, the provision of goods in homes, electronics, building materials for infrastructure and housing... It is about putting an end to the so-called oil civilization... nothing trivial. For all these reasons, it is not an easy task to identify the possible opportunities for Mexico, which depend on predictable and unpredictable factors, for example, the management of the authorities, workers, Mexican entrepreneurs and other sectors of society.

We have in mind, first, complex elements to appreciate and anticipate, such as the intensity and scope of trade confrontations with China and Russia and, consequently, to what extent the US private sector will respond. In this scenario, the question is whether the experience of Trump's Sino-U.S. trade war would be repeated, during which Mexico displaced China in a set of low-value-added goods in which China lost its competitiveness because of the imposed tariffs.³¹ The similarity of Mexican and Chinese exports to the U.S.,

31 Matthew Townsend & Eric Martin “U.S. and China got into a Trade War and Mexico Won”, Bloomberg, March 27th, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-27/who-is-winning-trump-s-trade-war-with-china-so-far-it-s-mexico>.

always considered a disadvantage for the advance of Mexican sales, in the confrontational situation applied by former President Trump, this served as an opportunity, limited but real that is worth considering. The similarity index of Mexicans sales with Chinese ones in the United States is interesting but decreasing from 05 to 02 between the years 2010 and 2020. One of the explanations is the accelerated shift of Chinese exports to higher value-added goods and higher technological content, which explains the US concern. In the goods that still compete with the two countries, Mexico could explore convenient opportunities.

The change in the dynamics of total U.S. imports between 2019 and 2020, attributable to the pandemic, is noticeable, given the contrast with 2019-2020. Table no. 2 shows this decline with different rates, and evidence the lower growth and greater decline in oil, as well as in certain manufactured goods, precisely in which, the automotive sector, of interest to Mexico and in which this clear trend appears, suggesting perhaps the technological change that refocuses production in the generating technology centers, a process by which imports are reduced, the structure of these and the supply markets are altered, even in those activities with intense intra-industry trade, that is to say, flows of imports and exports of similar products; for example, cars distinguished by quality or by technological qualities and content.³²

Table No. 2 Total imports from the United States. Annual growth 2015- 2020

	Valor, Millardos de dólares			Cambio porcentual anual		
	2015	2019	2020	2015-2019	2019-2020	2015-2020
Alimentos y Bebidas	127.8	150.5	154.4	17.8	2.6	20.8
Suministros Industriales	486.0	521.5	479.2	7.3	-8.1	-1.4
Bienes de capital	602.5	677.8	646.5	12.5	-4.6	7.3
Vehículos automotores	349.2	375.9	310.7	7.6	-17.3	-11.0
Bienes de consumo	594.2	653.6	639.3	10.0	-2.2	7.6
Otros bienes	89.3	118.2	106.4	32.4	-10.0	19.1
Petróleo	182.0	193.8	116.4	6.5	-39.9	-36.0
Manufatura	1,946.8	2,158.7	2,069.1	10.9	-4.2	6.3
Agricultura	113.8	131.2	135.9	15.3	3.6	19.4
Total importaciones de bienes	4,491.6	4,981.2	4,657.9	10.9	-6.5	10.9
Servicios	768.4	875.8	697.1	14.0	-20.4	-9.3
Servicios de mantenimiento y reparación	19.8	27.9	15.1	40.9	-45.9	-23.7
Transporte	84.4	91.1	56.4	7.9	-38.1	-33.2
Viaje	192.6	193.3	76.1	0.4	-60.6	-60.5
Construcción	2.8	3.2	2.3	14.3	-28.1	-17.9
Servicios de seguros	15.5	16.2	14.7	4.5	-9.3	-5.2
Servicios financieros	115.0	135.7	135.8	18.0	0.1	18.1
Cargos por el uso de propiedad intelectual	111.2	117.4	115.3	5.6	-1.8	3.7
Servicios de telecomunicaciones, informática e información	41.4	55.7	54.3	34.5	-2.5	31.2
Otros servicios empresariales	141.4	189.4	185.7	33.9	-2.0	31.3
Servicios personales, culturales y recreativos	24.2	23.4	18.2	-3.3	-22.2	-24.8
Bienes y servicios gubernamentales	20.1	22.6	23.1	12.4	2.2	14.9
Total importaciones de servicios	1,536.8	1,751.7	1,394.1	14.0	-20.4	-9.3

Source: Own elaboration based on USTRD, 2021 Trade Policy Agenda and 2020 Annual Report.

32 See, Alicia Puyana & George E. Horbarth, "Trade intra-industrial of Mexico during 1993-1998: an exploration of changes five years into NAFTA" in Alicia Puyana, *Economic integration and globalization: new proposals for the Latino project American?*, (España: Square and Valdes- FLACSO-Mexico, 2003).

In order to suggest the most suitable trade links, we proceeded to identify the Mexican products with the greatest competitiveness in the U.S. market, which expresses the potential to displace competitors and is measured with the Revealed Comparative Advantage Index (RCA), when exports from one country to another grow more than the total imports of a given good in the importing market. Table No. 3 shows the products exported by Mexico to the United States with this performance and seem to grow at the pace of U.S. expansion. All these goods are among those indicated to be promoted within the framework of the Biden strategy for the recovery of the US economy, therefore it is possible to hinder the importations from China.

Table No. 3 Export Revealed Comparative Advantage index (RCA) Mexicans in U.S. World Imports 2019

Producto	Clave	Balanza comercial con EUA*	X+M con todo el mundo*	IVCR
Máquinas para la recepción conversación y transmisión o regeneradores de voz imágenes incl. apar	851762	6,369.55	16,545.98	0.38
Aparatos receptores para televisión en color sin radio receptor incorporado aparatos reproductores de sonido o video diseñados para incorporar un dispositivo de video en la pantalla	852872	8,627.76	11,636.49	0.74
Unidades de proceso digitales para máquinas automáticas para tratamiento o procesamiento de datos aunque incluyan en la misma envoltura uno o dos de los tipos siguientes de unidades: unidad de memoria unidad de entrada y unidad de salida (exc. las unidades periféricas y las unidades de la partida 8471.41 o 8471.49)	847150	18,607.11	21,855.44	0.85

Source: *Own elaboration based on ECLAC MAGIC.* *= millions of current dollars

Another step was to select, in the universe of products imported by the United States, those in which Mexico demonstrates greater competitiveness, in a less restrictive concept than the RCA. Mexico achieved this progress in seven tariff categories, of which there are three six-digit lines of disaggregation and are in the sectors of machines, electrical appliances, semiconductors and parts of launch aircraft, as well as four four-digit aggregation divisions belonging to the automotive, medicines, metals and minerals sectors. Mexico has room for action to make progress in the dynamic sectors, in which it competes successfully, and to move out of the non-dynamic sectors in which imports fall due to the decline in demand (See Table No. 4).

Table No. 4 Competitiveness of Mexican exports to the U.S. market 2010-2019

SECTOR	CODIGO	Producto	COMPETITIVIDAD*
Semiconductores	848620	Máquinas y aparatos de manufactura con semiconductores o electrónicos	Producto competitivo, mercado dinámico
	848690	Máquinas y aparatos para manufactura de semiconductores y electrónicos	Producto competitivo, mercado dinámico
Industria aeroespacial	880390	Partes de aeronaves espaciales y de lanzamiento y suborbitales n.c.o.p.	Producto competitivo, mercado estancado
Industria automotriz	8703	Automóviles de turismo de menos de 10 personas	Producto competitivo, mercado dinámico
	8704	Vehículos para transporte de mercancías, chasis con motor y cabinas	Producto competitivo, mercado dinámico
	8708	Partes de tractores, automóviles de personas, turismo y mercancías...	Producto no competitivo, mercado dinámico
Productos farmacéuticos	3004	Medicamentos mezclados o sin mezclar, terapéuticos dosificados.	Producto competitivo, mercado estancado
	3005	Apósitos esparadrapos quirúrgicas al detal	Producto competitivo, mercado estancado
Minerales raras	2805	Metales alcalinos o alcalinotérreos de escandio e itrio, mezclados	Producto competitivo, mercado estancado
	2846	Compuestos inorgánicos u orgánicos de itrio del escandio o sus mezclas.	Producto competitivo, mercado estancado

*Producto cuya participación de mercado (competitividad exportadora) aumentó, pero su demanda disminuyó en el mercado estadounidense en 2010 y 2020

Source: Own elaboration based on ECLAC MAGIC. *= millions of current dollars

The next step was to find the products with increasing imports among the total U.S. foreign purchases. It should be noted that in the 50 product lines among the 99 double-digit categories during the period 2010 and 2020, 34 stand out in which China and Mexico are among the top 10 suppliers. Also, it is interesting to note that in 11 of the 34, Mexico's market share is higher than China's and in 11 others it's equal, while China leads by 12 lines. To point out more specifically the export products to be used to a greater degree, we can indicate those in which the positive change in Mexican participation was greater and, secondly, those in which the reduction in Mexican sales was less. These brief suggestions need more detailed analyses of the U.S. market and Mexican production. It is not worth redoubling efforts to sell a good whose U.S. demand decreases or Mexico has no interest in promoting for reasons of national or business economic logic.

Conclusions

Defending the national interest, in the domestic and international political arena, and rescuing the populist ideology of the Democratic party, are the first and most important conclusions of the examination of President Biden's political initiatives and bills, conducted for this work. This interest is clearly expressed in all the presidential and government pronouncements.

In short, the United States, under the Biden administration, is undergoing multifaceted changes to respond to the political crisis, created by Trump, and rearrange the economic, political and social effects derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, in this series of effects is the increase in inequality and poverty of American society. Biden proposed in his first statements actions of relatively progressive economics, which would show a certain inclination for the presence of the state in the conduct of anti-crisis and redistributive policies. In international diplomacy, he proclaims a return to the interventionism that has historically characterized the United States. In this sense, it is possible to say that both strategies, internal and external, obey the need to recover hegemony, combat the effects of COVID-19 pandemics, weaken Trumpism — considering the midterm elections and the re-election to a second Democratic term— and confront China's power.

The expectations that the political and economic turn of the United States, would open new opportunities for the economic development and growth of Mexico, a geographical neighbor and closely linked to the U.S. economy by the NAFTA-USMCA agreements, especially, must be weighed considering political and economic asymmetries that have hindered and will do so in the future, forming the North American region in an arrangement to which the European Union tries, an impossible vision given the reluctance of the United States to give up of its sovereignty.

Paradoxically, the opportunities for Mexico in the new era are linked to the trajectory of the U.S. confrontation with China and the reduction of the two economies trade exchanges. In this regard, Mexico can expand its sales to the U.S. in an interesting universe of goods identified as of strategic interest by Biden in his policy of Buy *American* many of which Mexico already exports. Another group of products is those in which it has already shown the export capacity and has displaced China and other competing countries from the U.S. market. Everything is subject to the trajectory of the US disengagement with China and the response of American businessmen. Whether Mexico can accelerate exports and intensify productive integration will depend on its compliance with the USMCA agreements, especially the implementation of the labor reform. What must be considered, even if all work protection measures are accepted, is whether the speed and direction of that compliance should be governed only by the instances created in the USMCA or other relevant principles. The known issues of the bilateral relationship remain in force, although they are expected to receive different treatment, for example, migration, in which the non-fractional faces of Biden and Harris are good omens and promise of mutual cooperation.

In the current turbulent international order and with rising poles of power, it is opportune, firstly, to make explicit the Mexican national interest and secondly, to question to what extent the confrontation with China and Russia satisfies that national interest and to support Biden in his antagonism with these two countries or with others. The Mexican vaccination campaign is a positive example of the benefits of cooperating with all countries, signed agreements with various countries and production firms in several countries, including China and Russia. Defending the national interest is the first element of any government's foreign policy strategy, a principle that can pay off even in commercial terms, although that is not the end of this position.

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