

Foreign Policy under Mexico's Next Administration: 2006-2012

In a breakfast discussion on January 24, 2006, the CSIS Mexico Project convened two of the closest advisors to Mexican presidential candidates Felipe Calderón and Roberto Madrazo. Ernesto Cordero, advisor and chief of staff to the Calderón Campaign of the National Action Party (PAN), and Jose Alberto Aguilar, advisor to the Madrazo Campaign of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), carefully delineated their candidate's respective foreign policy platforms in a session that continually stressed competitiveness, migration, and security as guiding principles to foreign policy under Mexico's next administration.

On the economic platform, Mr. Cordero advanced an agenda rooted in an active agricultural sector, tourism, private investment, and regional development through growth in infrastructure and technology. He suggested that Calderón and the PAN would follow the party lead and continue President Fox's reliance on the U.S. market and on an export-driven economy if elected in July. While Mr. Aguilar also pointed to a greater investment in energy and infrastructure, he noted that a Madrazo presidency would push competitiveness beyond NAFTA through its "Global Mexico, Sovereign Nation" agenda. He expressed the urgency of effectively inserting Mexico into a global economy by successfully utilizing its competitive advantages -- similar to China's policy -- but cautioned the high risk of a failed foreign policy without internal consensus and coalition within the government.

On the bilateral front, Mr. Cordero emphasized a policy of cooperation with the U.S., asserting that North America would be a priority in Felipe Calderón's foreign policy. He stated that the PAN administration would create stronger policies to combat transnational crime, including professionalizing law enforcement along the border region, and that Calderón would work to generate economic opportunities in Mexico to prevent increased out-migration, while continuing to lobby the U.S. for a temporary worker program.

Mr. Cordero believed that renewed attention on prosperity and security would again prioritize Mexico in the U.S. agenda. In contrast, the PRI advisor suggested a more distant policy with the U.S., insisting that Madrazo would sanction a healthier marriage in which Mexico could equally benefit from bilateral accords. Mr. Aguilar presented a foreign policy dictated more by domestic activities, with particular emphasis on curbing unemployment and achieving competitiveness to decrease migration. He also challenged President Fox's approach of separating migration and security and added that Madrazo's foreign policy would differ in observing these not only as complimentary, but interrelated.

Both Mr. Cordero and Mr. Aguilar agreed on the need to devise a more inclusive foreign policy towards migrant communities to strengthen the interest and participation in electoral politics of this sector, now projected to be 10 percent of the Mexican population. Both advisors also agreed that anti-American rhetoric would not be employed by either campaign in an attempt to garner additional votes.