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Public opinion and foreign policy in Mexico

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Abstract

The Mexico and the World 2006: Public opinion and foreign policy in Mexico survey, conducted by Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) and Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales (COMEXI) is the second comprehensive study of Mexican public and leadership opinion on international affairs. The study is designed to measure general attitudes and values concerning Mexico's relationship with the world rather than opinions on specific foreign policies or issues.

Resumen

La presente publicación, México y el Mundo 2006: Opinión pública y política exterior en México, reporta los resultados de la primera encuesta realizada por el Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) y el Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales (COMEXI), como parte de un proyecto de investigación conjunto de largo aliento. El propósito del estudio es conocer y medir las actitudes, valores y orientaciones generales de los mexicanos con respecto a las relaciones de México con el mundo y a las reglas del sistema internacional, más que las opiniones de carácter particular sobre asuntos específicos conyunturales en la agenda de la política exterior.

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MEXICO AND THE WORLD 2006

Public opinion and foreign policy in Mexico

Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas
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A Heterogeneous Country Facing an Uncertain World

Mexico and the World 2006: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in Mexico is the second biennial survey conducted by the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) and Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales (Mexican Council on Foreign Relations, COMEXI) of Mexicans' opinions, outlooks, values, and general attitudes toward the world. This is the continuation of the long-term research project that the two institutions began in 2004, with the aim of periodically filling in gaps in information and knowledge about how Mexicans, including the country's foreign affairs leaders, understand and respond to changing world realities. The project is composed of two mirror surveys consisting of house-to-house visits of a representative sample of the adult population (1,499 respondents) conducted from July 22 through July 27, 2006, while the second consists of telephone interviews with 259 political, economic, and social leaders in foreign affairs.

The aim of the project is to generate analytical tools and data that can be used both in higher education and research on Mexico's international relations, as well as to help design, formulate and assess the country's foreign policy. The survey also aims to contribute to an informed and pluralistic public debate on Mexico's interests and role in the world. In a young democracy such as Mexico's, gathering and disseminating data on public opinion through surveys such as this helps give the public a role in decision-making, particularly in an area of national debate as highly specialized as foreign policy. Given the upcoming change of government, it is essential that policymakers in charge of designing the foreign policy agenda in the coming six years of the next presidency have accurate information on Mexicans' views of their country's relations with other countries.

Rather than merely presenting public perceptions in this area and describing how they have changed, the report also offers analyses of how the survey results fit into current debates on Mexico's foreign policy. The survey covers a broad range of opinions on global issues grouped into seven main themes:

- interest, contact, and knowledge;
- identity, nationalism, trust, and threats;
- Mexico's role in the world and the formulation of its foreign policy;
- the rules of, and the stakeholders in, the international economic and political arena;
- relations with Latin America;
- relations with North America;
- relations with other countries and regions.

The report focuses particularly on attitudes toward the Western Hemisphere and opinions on the dilemma Mexico faces because of its dual status as both a North American and a Latin American country.

Two trends characterize the external context: first, rising global uncertainty, insecurity, and competition; and, second, Mexico's worsening position in the global economy and its withdrawal from active participation in global affairs. The complexity of the international scenario is compounded by difficult domestic circumstances stemming from political polarization surrounding the recent presidential election and the upcoming change of government amidst open post-electoral conflict. Below we analyze the principal characteristics of the international and domestic setting, and then describe the terms of the current foreign-policy debate in Mexico.

An uncertain, insecure, and competitive world

Mexico finds an international environment that has become more uncertain and that places greater demands on it. In the political sphere, the legitimacy and efficacy of the existing multilateral arena is being increasingly questioned. Questions arise from difficulties in bringing about a comprehensive institutional reform of the United Nations and in limiting the United States' tendency to conduct

a unilateral, preemptive foreign policy since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. This situation has forced Mexico to assume positions that distance it from the United States and emerging powers such as Brazil, due to its own opposition to increasing the number of non-permanent members on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and to pre-emptive military actions.

In international security, the situation is tenuous and unstable. Islamic terrorism has expanded its radius of action with the wave of attacks in Spain, Great Britain, and several Asian countries; military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have failed to stabilize the governments, contain violence, or dismantle terrorist networks in those countries. In the Middle East a new conflict has broken out, this time between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, and Israel's conflict with the Palestinians has intensified in the wake of Hamas's rise to power. The advance of nuclear development programs in North Korea and Iran has heightened tensions between those countries and the United States, causing increased concern in the international community over nuclear proliferation.

Many observers believe that the United States has lost its moral authority on the world stage and its image as the leading defender of democracy and human rights has been tarnished by the perceived excesses of the War on Terror. Within the United States, there is a persistent feeling of fear about terrorism. At the same time, there is growing domestic criticism of the current administration's pre-emptive security strategy and even doubts regarding its effectiveness and legitimacy.

In such an environment, Mexico has found it difficult to promote its own agenda in the United States and to maintain a climate of political understanding and stable cooperation. Mexico's greatest dilemmas are related to the growing security concerns of its neighbor and leading trading partner over increased illegal immigration, drug-trafficking, and the activities of organized crime across and along the border. The United States' steady unilateral adoption of tougher border control and security measures as well as the foundering of the congressional debate on proposals to reform immigration laws have complicated efforts to deepen the integration process that began 12 years ago when Mexico, the United States and Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Security needs now dominate the bilateral agenda, complicating the relationship between Mexico and the United States and making it even more uneven.

In the global economy, the years of unfettered market liberalization have ended. Globalization is facing obstacles that directly affect Mexico. The most important problems include the breakdown of multilateral trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO); the failure to revive hemisphere-wide negotiations to create a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) following the Mar del Plata meeting in late 2005; the growing divisions in Latin America over different regional integration options and economic models; the United States' new trade agreements with other Latin American countries, particularly Central America and the Dominican Republic; and China's rapid advance in gaining an increasingly large share of the U.S. market. The suspension of the WTO Doha Negotiations in July 2006 over developed countries' opposition to eliminating agricultural subsidies not only raises questions over the viability of the multilateral trade system but also heightens the risk of greater global protectionism.

The bet Mexico has made on economic globalization over the last fifteen years has not paid off fully and may require an adjustment to its current trade and regional-integration strategy. The conditions for seeking closer economic integration with the United States and Canada are not in place. Meanwhile, the country has become less competitive. The United States' new trade accords with other Latin American countries have weakened Mexico's preferential access to the NAFTA market. At the same time, Mexico has been left out of the integration processes in South America such as Mercosur and the South American Community of Nations.

Mexico has found it increasingly difficult to balance its policies between the countries of North America and those of South America. In the Western Hemisphere, there is a growing rift between the United States and Latin America as a result of the failed FTAA negotiations, the electoral gains of the Left and of populist leaders in some Latin American countries, and the region's ongoing geopolitical realignment due to Brazil's renewed

jockeying for a leadership role in South America as well as Hugo Chavez's efforts to united the region in opposition to the United States. Tensions between Venezuela and Cuba, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other, have been intensified by the lobbying of the Chávez government as it attempts to secure a position as a non-permanent member of the United National Security Council and by the eventual transfer of political power in Cuba related to Fidel Castro's health problems.

Consequently, we should not be surprised by Mexican diplomacy's recent lack of success. Mexico's relations with the countries of both the north and the south of the Hemisphere have become mired in difficulties. Mexico lost its bid to fill the vacant post of Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS). Its diplomatic ties with Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia have become tense. It has had differences with Chile over the OAS leadership, which Chile won. It maintains a distant relationship of rivalry with Brazil. It was surpassed by China as the second largest exporter to the United States. And, not only has it failed to win an immigration agreement or an overhaul of immigration law from its northern neighbor or to allay U.S. concerns over growing public insecurity along the countries' shared border, but it is now confronting the United States' decision to construct a wall between the two countries.

A divided and polarized country?

While global realities demand clear and immediate responses from Mexico, the country's domestic situation complicates foreign-policy conduct. This year's presidential and federal legislative elections were the most closely contested in the country's history. The electorate divided into three and the difference between the top two candidates was less than one percentage point, generating post-electoral conflict and creating doubt over the fairness and legality of the elections. The internal dispute extended beyond the nation's borders through international news coverage that hurt the country's international image and tarnished its relations with some Latin American countries.

Mexico faces a complicated political transition. The new president will take office without a clear mandate or a majority in congress. Eight parties have seats in the Chamber of Deputies, while in the Senate four small new parties have joined the three main parties. The center-right governing National Action Party, the PAN, has a plurality of seats in both houses, with 41.2% of the seats in the lower house and 40.6% of those in the Senate. The center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution, known as the PRD, is the second-largest party in the Chamber of Deputies, with 24.6% of the seats, and the third-largest in the Senate, with 22.7%. The Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, which has positioned itself in the center, is the third-largest force in lower house, with 20.8% of the seats, but the second in upper house, with 25.8%.

The most troubling aspect of the election outcome is increased political polarization due to the dramatic decline of the PRI in the center, and the growth of the parties on the left and right. The number of PAN seats increases in both chambers, from 148 to 206 deputies and from 47 to 52 senators, as does the number of PRD seats, from 97 to 123 deputies and from 15 to 29 senators.

The image of a politically divided country is magnified by the geographic distribution of the election results: a PAN north, "colored blue," and a PRD south, "colored yellow." However, disaggregating each state shows that this image of a country divided into two is a simplistic representation. There is a less polarized and more heterogeneous reality marked by increased political and electoral competition. Still, the growing competition between different political forces in a context of enormous social and regional inequalities raises the concern that the government could become gridlocked or that parts of the country could become ungovernable.

Social and regional inequalities and persistent poverty are not new in Mexico; indeed, they are old, accumulated problems that have become the primary issue on the domestic policy agenda. The social and economic realities of the early twenty-first century point to a country of contrasts. The northeast, northwest, and central regions have much higher health, education, and income levels than the south and southeast. According to figures from the government's National Institute for Statistics, Geography and Information Systems, or INEGI, 51.7% of Mexicans live in poverty. The wealthiest 10% of families receive an average income 2,074% higher than the poorest 10%, and the poorest ten percent of the population receives

1.6% of total income, versus 36.5% for the richest tenth. Although when measured in terms of gross domestic product, or GDP, Mexico is the world's fourteenth largest economy, it ranks 58th in GDP per capita and in human development, as measured by the United Nations Human Development Index, it ranks 55th out of 175 countries.

For our study, the key question is to what extent polarization and greater political and electoral competition have extended to foreign policy. Have they weakened Mexico's long-term tacit consensus on foreign policy, already shaken by entry into NAFTA in 1994 and the PRI's loss of the presidency in 2000, after 71 years in power? To our surprise, the results of the survey portray a country that is less divided and polarized than we expected, at least in attitudes toward the world and on relations with other countries.

The terms of the foreign-policy debate: three visions

Politics in Mexico today is pluralistic, and foreign policy is not an exception. Even though foreign policy received little attention during the presidential race, various stakeholders and members of different political factions raise serious questions. The electoral debate offered three different foreign-policy platforms. The PRD proposed a nationalist, inward-looking foreign policy centered on greater isolationism, withdrawal, and diplomatic caution. The PAN called for continued trade liberalization and for expanding Mexico's international responsibilities in promoting international peace, human rights, and democracy. The PRI advocated returning to a somewhat active foreign policy that seeks economic openness but that is selective and non-interventionist in other spheres.

The divergence on foreign policy is a particularly crucial issue. For decades there was assumed to be an overriding domestic consensus, from both government officials and those who study Mexican policy, on the principles governing Mexico's relations with the world. The political elite viewed and presented foreign policy to the public through the paradigm of national unity, the space in which a majority of the population agreed on a nationalist and defensive vision marking a clear distance from the United States. This tradition prevailed during nearly the entire twentieth century, from the Mexican Revolution through the early 1990s. The first sign of a break with it was NAFTA. Then in 2000, for the first time a president from a party other than the PRI took office. This led to a new shift in Mexico's foreign policy, toward the active promotion of human rights, and a departure from Mexican diplomacy's traditional non-intervention.

Twelve years into NAFTA and six years after the country's first experience with a democratic alternation of power, the issue of where Mexican foreign policy should go is on the table. In the political debate over foreign policy there are three ways of framing Mexico's participation in the global economy and its role in the world. The first is the essentially defensive and nationalist vision that prevailed until the signing of NAFTA and is based on non-intervention and national sovereignty. This outlook conceives of foreign policy as a barrier against the multiple problems that arise in an essentially hostile and unsafe world. It maintains a healthy and necessary distance from the United States. In this view, Mexico's limited participation in multilateral fora is designed to help offset the enormous power of the United States. Mexico opposes any external intervention in domestic issues, even by multilateral agencies, and prefers to look southward.

The second foreign-policy option has prevailed since the signing of NAFTA. It is based on a pragmatic and pro-active vision of economic openness that looks mainly northward. Rather than seeking ways to offset the power of the United States, this outlook hopes to make closer U.S. ties the cornerstone of Mexico's international position.

The third foreign-policy alternative or model emerged after the implementation of NAFTA, and it was put forth by Mexico's first non-PRI government. The proponents of this liberal and pro-active outlook consider the principles of promoting human rights and democracy the cornerstones of foreign policy. These three conceptions are not completely irreconcilable. In practice, past governments tried different combinations of the various components of these traditions. The Salinas administration severed economics from politics by promoting economic opening and NAFTA while strictly adhering to the principles of a nationalist and defensive vision. For its part, the Fox administration's foreign policy has combined economic liberalization and the search for a close relationship with the United States with policies contrary to the nationalist vision, such as the active defense of human rights and international monitoring of democracy.

At present, foreign policy is torn between these three schools of thought: the defensive and

nationalist tradition, the pragmatic and economic-determinist proposal, and the liberal vision. All three proposals can be put into practice by looking either northward or southward, but they each have distinct implications for Mexico's relations with different regions. Despite their differences, the three visions share two common traits: the preference for multilateralism and a pacifist orientation, opposed to the use of force as a legitimate instrument in international affairs.

The dilemmas of foreign policy: where to look to?

Public discussion on foreign policy in Mexico centers on four principal topics that are framed as dilemmas:

- whether to deepen or renegotiate NAFTA;
- the degree of foreign-policy activism, which turns on the question of whether to participate in the UNSC and in peacekeeping operations and whether to seek high posts at international organizations;
- the values and principles of foreign policy such as nonintervention versus promoting human rights, absolute or shared sovereignty, and the use of force by the United Nations;
- the regions with which Mexico should strengthen its ties—the dilemma between the north and the south.

The outcome of these debates should be decided internally, based on an evaluation of the importance of the country's principles and of its interests vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Underlying these issues is an abstract discussion on fundamental concepts such as sovereignty, human rights, the ultimate purpose of the State, and especially on whether the outside world is a source of threats or opportunities. Even if some of these choices constitute false dilemmas, Mexico's foreign policy is torn between interests and principles, between the head and heart. The proposals put forth by the different political parties during the presidential race underscore a lack of consensus among the political class on which options to choose, which will undoubtedly complicate decision-making in the new government. Moreover, public opinion, as the survey suggests, does not reveal a broad consensus or a dominant strategic vision either. Instead, the survey results show a gradual acceptance of globalization, a less defensive attitude, and greater optimism and trust regarding the rest of the world.

In its relationship with the United States, Mexico faces difficult dilemmas. Given that the United States appears increasingly oblivious to Mexico's interests and disinclined to accept cooperative action, to what degree is it in Mexico's interest to seek a closer relationship with the United States so as to transform the current economic partnership into an authentic strategic alliance? Does Mexico need—or benefit—from more integration and cooperation with the United States? Or will that lead it to lose its identity and sovereignty?

The survey indicates that Mexicans' general perception of the United States has improved since 2004, although increased negative sentiments—distrust, disdain, and resentment—as well as positive ones have supplanted indifference. It also shows that Mexicans have an increasingly positive view of NAFTA and that most believe being a neighbor of the United States represents more advantages that disadvantages. However, there is ambiguity over intensifying economic integration with the United States; although a majority of the general public favors renegotiating the agriculture chapter of NAFTA, many of the country's foreign policy leaders are opposed.

The results of the survey also reveal that although there is a lack of consensus on some of the most important choices the country must make, there is a basic, general agreement on what Mexico's foreign policy objectives should be and what threats the country faces. Disagreement and polarization are concentrated only on a few sensitive topics. That means there is sufficient room for decision-makers to construct foreign-policy options that are acceptable to most of the population. Nevertheless, political leaders may have little space to maneuver because domestic divisions may prevent them from cooperating even when there is broad public support, such as for an activist economic policy. Decision-making will be close to impossible where there is limited public support, such as allowing some foreign investment in sensitive sectors, particularly energy.

The data portray a pluralistic, heterogeneous, and ambivalent country more than a strongly divided and polarized one. And although notable regional differences persist, party identities and social inequalities have not generated rigid or clearly differentiated political ideologies regarding foreign policy. Political and regional differences tend to be selective, centered only on a few specific topics on the country's international agenda. But we cannot rule out a scenario in which the lack of a clear

mandate and post-electoral conflict thwart even the most limited domestic agreement. The risk remains that the country could fall into legislative paralysis, widening the gap with other countries that have experienced strong economic growth and made considerable political progress over the last decade.

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A task force composed of members of the academic community at CIDE and COMEXI collaborated on designing the research, administering the study, analyzing the data, and preparing this report. Professor Susan Minushkin, of CIDE's International Studies Division, acted as project director, coordinating all the work carried out by the task force. Professor Guadalupe González González, also in the International Studies Division, acted as the project's principal investigator. The following people played key roles on the task force: Aurora Adame, director of COMEXI; Professor Jorge Chabat, also of the International Studies Division; Antonio Ortiz Mena L.N., director of the International Studies Division; Mónica Colin, project administrator; José Luis Caballero, currently a CIDE research assistant, and Ana González, previously project administrator and a CIDE research assistant. In the final stage, CIDE professors Matthew Adam Kocher. Covadonga Meseguer, Arturo Sotomayor and Jorge Schiavon, and an external expert, Luis Herrera-Lasso, joined the task force to help analyze the results and design and draft the reports.

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The study's information and data will be deposited at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor; the Roper Center for Public Opinion, in Storrs, Connecticut; and the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago. The data will also be stored at the Public Opinion Studies Databank of the library of CIDE, for consultation by academics, professionals, students, and the public at large. They will be available at the following websites: http://mexicoyelmundo.cide.edu and http://www.consejomexicano.org .

Executive Summary

Some noteworthy findings

The 2006 survey confirms many of the findings of the previous survey. Mexicans are interested in events outside their country and they do want to influence their government's foreign policy. They reject isolationism and they favor a pragmatic foreign policy that puts their economic and security interests first rather than their principles and values.

In other areas, the results reveal important changes in the public's mood since 2004, responses that raise questions on widely held interpretations about what Mexicans are like and what they think. Mexicans are generally less pessimistic about the world than they were two years ago and they are more inclined to accept economic globalization and to cooperate with the United States.

Interest, knowledge, and contact

- Against our expectations, even in this electoral year Mexicans' interest is not focused exclusively on the domestic political and economic situation. Instead, their attention to the international situation and to Mexico's relations with other countries has remained at a level similar to that found two years ago.
- Most Mexicans are familiar with general information on international affairs such as the United Nations and the Euro, although they know less about more specialized areas such as the World Trade Organization, or details such as the name of the Secretary General of the United Nations.
- They regularly interact with the outside world, principally through personal and work-related ties. Just over half of the survey respondents have relatives abroad, nearly one-fourth receive remittances, and one-third would move to the United States if they could.
- About one-third have traveled outside of the country, one in seven have work-related relations with other countries, and a slightly higher proportion have lived abroad.

Identity and nationalism

- Mexicans generally have a strong sense of national identity, but in the south and southeast local identity is more important. A broad majority are very proud of their nationality.
- Most feel Latin American, just over one-fifth consider themselves citizens of the world, and only 7% identify themselves as North American.
- They are much more open to the spread of ideas and customs from other countries now than they were in 2004. Today two-fifths have a favorable view of cultural globalization whereas one-third are opposed to it.
- However, Mexicans are wary of foreigners, rejecting even the possibility of naturalized citizens having the same rights as native-born Mexicans.
- They are less nationalistic about their economic self-interest. A majority would be willing to see Mexico and the United States form a single country if that would raise their standard of living.

Mexico's role in the world

- Mexicans are not isolationists and, even in an electoral year, most favor an active foreign policy, regardless of their party identification.
- A majority, however, prefer a selective activism, limited to issues with a direct bearing on the country.
- Nearly one third are "hardcore" internationalists who favor active participation even in world affairs that do not affect the country. Only 15% are hardcore isolationists who think that Mexico should remain on the sidelines of international efforts to address world problems.

Foreign-policy priorities and objectives

- Mexicans assign less importance in 2006 than they did in 2004 to the main priorities of the foreign-policy agenda, but their opinion on the order of importance of those topics is almost unchanged.
- They have a pragmatic rather than a legalistic or altruistic vision of foreign policy, and just as in 2004, they give precedence to issues that affect their living conditions and security.
- Mexicans believe the top three foreign-policy objectives should be promoting exports, protecting Mexican interests abroad, and combating drug-trafficking.
- Five other goals, also related to security and economic interests, rank in the middle of the list of priorities: protecting the borders, attracting foreign investment, combating terrorism, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, and controlling illegal immigration.
- By contrast, the four least important objectives are strengthening the United Nations, helping raise the standard of living of less developed countries, defending human rights, and promoting democracy in other countries.

Formulation of and responsibility for foreign policy

- A majority want ordinary citizens' voices and opinions to be taken into account in the design of foreign policy; indeed they believe that public opinion should have greater influence than any other actor, including the president.
- Most Mexicans favor checks on the government's foreign-policy decision-making, prefer the president's authority to be restricted by other actors, particularly the congress. They want the president and congress to have the same level of influence in foreign policy.
- They generally agree with the government's management of the country and they approve, although to a lesser degree, of its foreign-policy performance.

A less hostile world scenario

- Mexicans have a less pessimistic outlook of the world today than they did in 2004, but a majority still believe that the world is headed in the wrong direction.
- The population feels less vulnerable and is less apprehensive than in 2004. The extent to which respondents describe potential threats to Mexico as serious has decreased in all regions.

Most serious threats for Mexico

- Security issues rank highest, among the threats that Mexicans consider to be serious over the next 10 years, although public-health topics are also of source of concern. The top four issues are drug-trafficking, pandemics such as AIDS and avian flu, chemical and biological weapons, and international terrorism. These perceptions might well reflect Mexico's geopolitical position as the United States' neighbor.
- Nonetheless, Mexicans also are concerned about environmental and economic issues, especially global warming and global economic crises.
- At a third level of concern are the hardening of U.S. immigration policy, religious and ethnic conflicts in other countries, and the relatively large numbers of undocumented foreigners entering Mexico.
- Mexicans show a surprising lack of concern over economic competition from Asian countries and the ascent of China to global power status. Mexicans seem unaware of the supposed economic threat from China.
- Although Mexicans are less concerned with international terrorism than they were two years ago, they are still willing to allow U.S. agents to collaborate with government authorities in Mexico on securing Mexico's borders, sea terminals, and airports. This view contradicts the notion of Mexicans' fierce protection of their national sovereignty.

Limited and selective multilateralism

- Mexicans have a growing, although selective, multilateral outlook. They have a more favorable opinion of the United Nations than of any other international organization or institution, but the proportion who believe that Mexico should always be willing to coordinate its actions with the United Nations is still less than half, 46%.
- Knowledge of the United Nations is higher than two years ago. A broad majority, 72% consider it effective at maintaining peace and security.
- Mexicans support, although less strongly than they did two years ago, the U.N. authorizing

the use of military force to address a range of situations that go beyond conventional military conflicts between states.
- Close to half, 49%, believe that Mexico should take part in U.N. peacekeeping operations, but a similar percentage, 43%, disagree.
- However, Mexicans are divided about whether to abide by decisions made by the World Trade Organization that go against Mexico and to share decision-making with other countries in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations.
- They prefer to act through multilateral institutions on international human rights issues, or to remain on the sidelines of such problems, rather than taking unilateral action such as breaking diplomatic ties.

Globalization, trade, and foreign investment

- Favorable opinions on economic globalization have increased considerably among Mexicans, to nearly double the level found two years ago. Two-fifths consider globalization generally favorable for Mexico, whereas one-fifth disagree.
- International trade enjoys firm and broad support among Mexicans, although there are notable regional differences. Support is higher in the north and the center than in the south and southeast. This is consistent with the ranking of export promotion as the most important foreign-policy objective.
- A majority of Mexicans consider international trade good for job creation, Mexican companies, their own standard of living, and efforts to mitigate rural poverty in Mexico, although they question its environmental impact.
- Regarding the North American Free Trade Agreement, a smaller percentage, although still a majority, believes that it is good for employment, Mexican companies, and living standards but not for rural areas or the environment. 52% agree on the need to renegotiate parts of NAFTA, particularly the agricultural provisions, even if this means losing certain benefits.
- Mexicans view the current number of trade agreements (12), with 43 countries, as an upper, not a lower, limit, since they prefer that the country focus on consolidating existing agreements rather than signing new ones.
- Attitudes toward foreign investment are more positive but less so than two years ago; attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) is the fifth most important foreign-policy goal.
- Although Mexicans say that the country benefits from foreign investment, their opposition to such investment in certain strategic sectors has risen. A large majority of Mexicans categorically oppose foreign investment in the energy sector (petroleum, gas and electricity) and smaller majorities reject it in government bonds, telecommunications, mass media, and infrastructure.

Relations with Latin America

- Mexicans say, when asked what region Mexican foreign policy should prioritize, without considering North America, that Mexican foreign policy should pay particular attention to relations with Latin American countries, followed by relations with European countries. Mexicans place little priority on paying greater attention to Asia, Africa or the Middle East.
- Mexicans believe that the country should seek to serve as a bridge between North America and Latin America rather than attempt further integration with either region.
- They expect greater economic and political integration among Latin American countries in the future.
- They see Latin American countries more as friends than as partners, rivals, or threats. Nevertheless, they hold more favorable views of developed countries than of Latin American countries.
- In addition, they do not believe that it is in Mexico's interest to devote economic resources to helping Central American countries develop their economies. They are divided over their views of Central American immigrants and a majority favor stepping up controls on the southern border rather than establishing temporary worker programs.
- A majority approve of Mexico's participation in international efforts to improve human rights in Cuba.
- They would be reluctant to see Mexico taking strong measures in response to coups d'état in Latin America. In the event of conflict in the region, they prefer that the country act through international agencies or avoid involvement rather than step in as a mediator.
- Mexicans do not want Mexico to assume the

role of regional leader and they prefer that it promote regional co-ordination and co-operation.

Relations with North America

- Mexicans generally have more favorable opinions of Canada and the United States than of any other country included in the survey.
- Just over one-half believe that being a neighbor of the United States is more advantageous than disadvantageous, whereas 39% hold the opposite view.
- However, Mexicans hold opposing and ambivalent sentiments toward the United States and are divided in their degree of trust, empathy, and admiration for it.
- Mexicans accept cooperation with the United States on issues ranging from combating international terrorism, controlling drug-trafficking, and extraditing fugitives, to permitting U.S. agents at Mexican airports to simplify the processing of paperwork for tourists.
- They would support an agreement in which Mexico clamped down on drug-trafficking and undocumented immigration toward the United States in exchange for more Mexicans being permitted to live and work north of the border.
- By contrast, they would oppose a bilateral agreement in which Mexico would allow foreign investment in the energy sector in exchange for the United States providing financing for Mexico's economic development.
- They are concerned with the situation on the northern border and they believe the government should warn border crossers of the risks. Many believe the Mexican government should even patrol the area and establish checkpoints to ensure that only authorized crossings are used.

Other countries and regions of the world

- In Mexicans' conception of geography, regions outside of the Western Hemisphere and, to a lesser extent, Europe, do not register as important.
- The Mexican public does not feel that Mexico should pay more attention to relations with Asia, the Middle East, or Africa. Mexicans are not alarmed by the possibility of the Chinese economy growing to the size of that of the United States.
- Regarding Mexicans' sentiments toward the rest of the world, developed, large or successful countries, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, China, Spain, Germany, and South Korea fare better than do countries that are culturally and geographically closer such as those in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

CHAPTER 1

Mexican Identity and Nationalism

The survey was conducted against the backdrop of a bitterly fought presidential race that underscored the country's social diversity and growing political pluralism. The election showed that the country is democratic and open to change but that there are widely varying opinions regarding the direction it should take. To what extent does the array of different political viewpoints influence the way Mexicans understand and interact with the world? Surprisingly, this survey shows that divisions over domestic policy do not neatly translate into similar divisions over foreign affairs. The one exception concerns regional differences, where the survey finds that Mexicans in different parts of the country do have distinct opinions on selected issues.

This chapter demonstrates that Mexico's reality is more complex, more heterogeneous, and less "black and white" than the tightly contested presidential election and the intense post-electoral conflict would suggest. Mexicans do not divide into political-ideological blocs that correspond neatly to income levels, education, region, or age. Mexican nationalism does not reflect a single, unchanging set of defensive attitudes on every issue. The different elements of Mexican nationalism do not necessarily mesh. For example, the survey found that even as more Mexicans are receptive to outside cultural influences and to globalization, opposition has grown to opening up the energy sector to foreign investment.

In the 2006 survey, 52% of the respondents were between 18 and 36 years old and 54% were women. 65% have completed nine years of education. 40% work at private companies; 24% have a household income between three and five times the minimum wage—which is now about $4.30 a day. A plurality of respondents, 38%, do not identify with any political party, while 27% lean toward the center-right National Action Party (PAN), 16% toward the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and 15% toward the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Since our 2004 survey, those who do not identify with any political party decreased slightly from 40% to 38%, although the overall number is larger than might be expected after such a tight presidential race. However, the correlation of forces among the three major political parties has changed, with a dramatic drop in those who identify themselves as supporters of the PRI, to the benefit of both the PAN and the PRD. The number of those who back the PRI declined by 11 percentage points, from 26% in 2004 to 15% in 2006. Support for the PAN and the PRD increased from 21% in 2004 to 27% in 2006 and from 9% to 16%, respectively (Table 1.1).

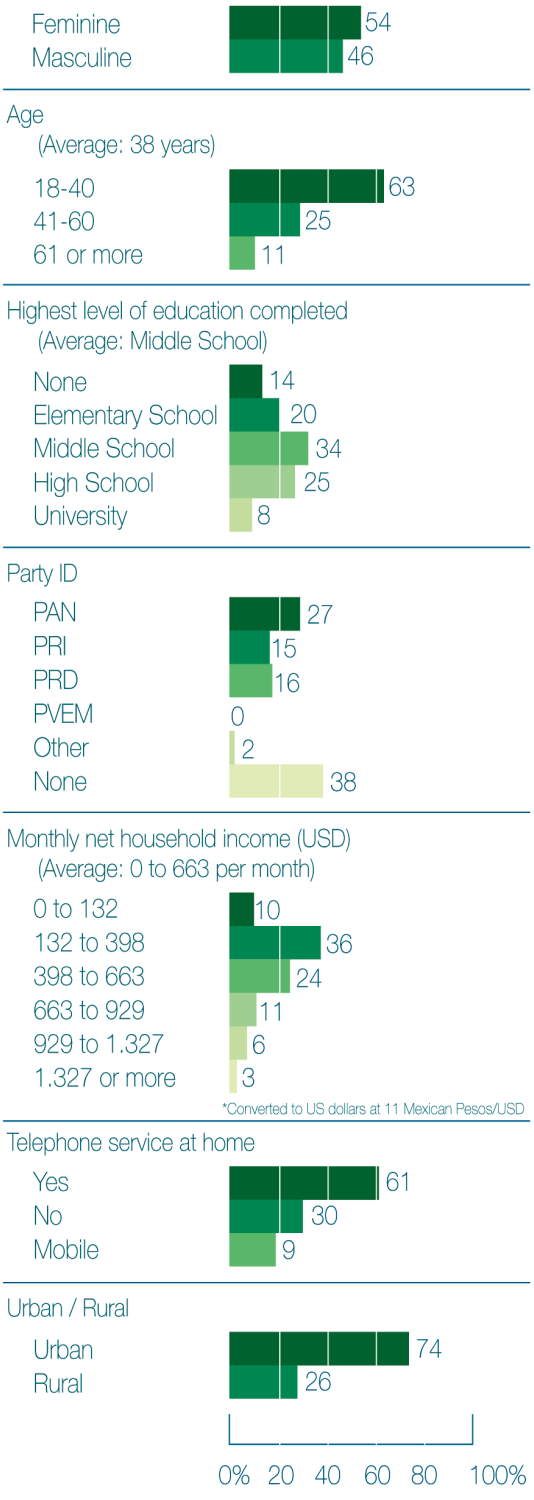
How much do Mexicans know about the rest of the world? How much contact do they have with other countries? Are they interested in external affairs or do they focus more on domestic issues? Are they losing their national identity in a globalized world? What are their perceptions of other countries and regions? This chapter will attempt to describe Mexicans' conception of national identity and the degree to which they follow and come into contact with events beyond the nation's borders.

Interest in and contact with the rest of the world

Mexicans continue to view domestic affairs as a priority, particularly in an election year. 25% are very interested and 51% are somewhat interested in news about finance and economics. The interest is higher in the center of the country, which includes Mexico City and a number of other industrial and business centers. In the center, 28% say they are very interested and 52% somewhat interested. In the poorer south and southeast, those who are very or somewhat interested is 15 percentage points lower. Even more Mexicans follow domestic social and political news: 48% say they are very interested and 37% somewhat interested in these issues.

However, the Mexican public also follows world events. Interest in international affairs is close to that found for domestic issues and slightly higher than

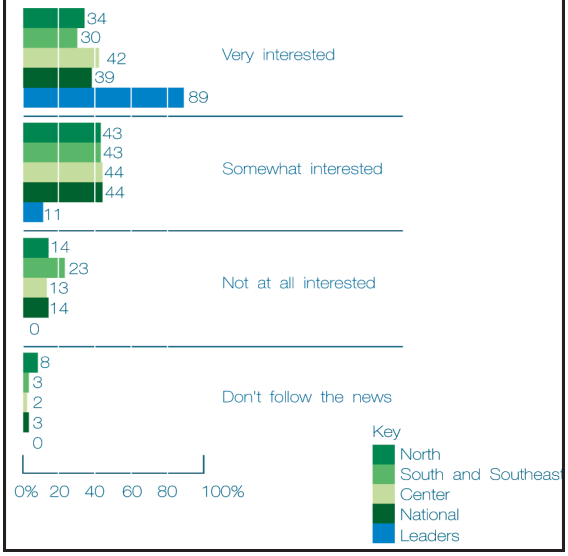
Table 1.1
Socio-Demographic Characteristics
PUBLIC 2006



interest in economic issues. 34% of Mexicans are very interested and 48% are somewhat interested in events in other countries, while only 15% indicate no interest. Similarly, 83% are interested in Mexico's relations with other countries, with 39% very interested, and 44% somewhat interested. Still, there are important regional differences. Whereas in the center, 86% indicate some interest in news on Mexico's relations with the outside world, in the south and the southeast, interest is thirteen percentage points lower, 73% (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2
Follow news
PUBLIC 2006

When you follow the news these days, how interested are you in news about Mexico's **relations with other countries**?

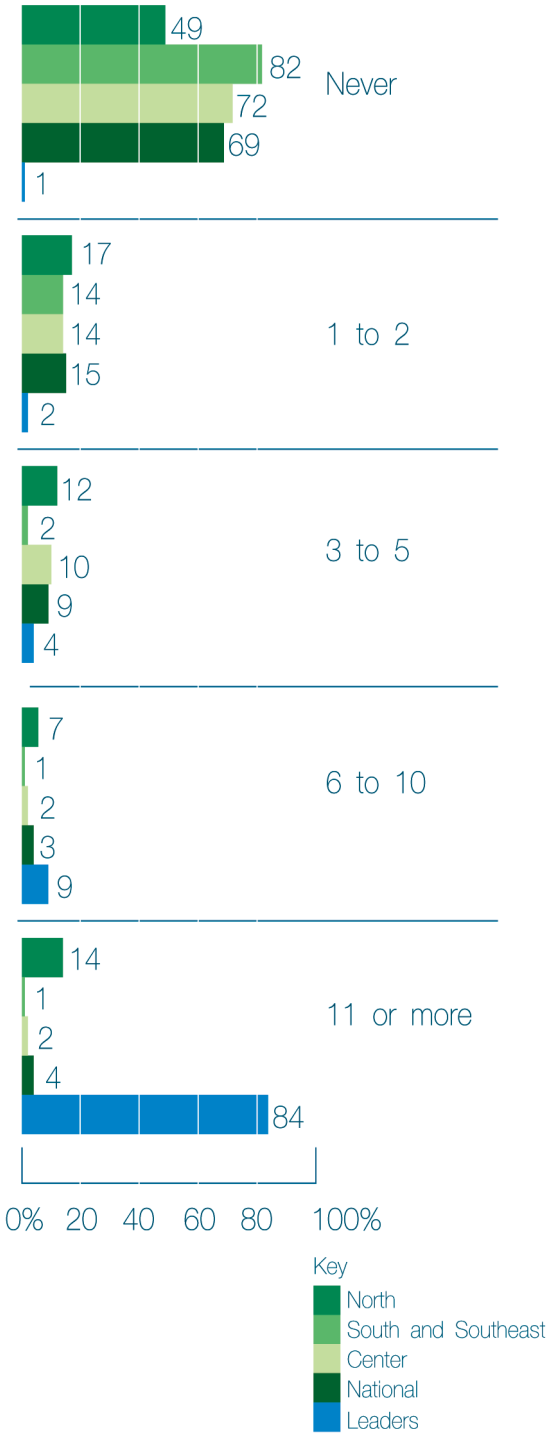


These findings are surprising given how few Mexicans have traveled abroad. Only 15% of Mexicans have traveled outside the country only once or twice and 69% have never left the country. (The regional breakdown varies sharply because of the ease with which many in the northern states can travel to the United States. In the south and southeast, 82% have never traveled abroad; in the center, 72%; and in the north, 49%) (Table 1.3).

Despite Mexicans' interest in foreign affairs, the survey found a slight decline of 4 percentage points since the 2004 study. This decline is explained by the greater visibility and importance of domestic issues in a polarized election campaign where the candidates had sharply divergent proposals. Throughout the entire period leading up to the July

Table 1.3
Travel outside of Mexico
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, approximately how many times in your life you have traveled outside of Mexico?



elections, the candidates' campaigns, speeches, and platforms paid scant attention to foreign policy. Still, Mexicans' interest in international affairs continues to be surprisingly strong. Why do Mexicans show a relatively high and unwavering interest in world affairs?

One important reason is the extent and the type of contact they have with outside countries, mostly the United States. Because of steadily growing emigration and increased foreign trade, particularly in the last five years, Mexicans constantly interact with other countries. Just under a third, 31%, of Mexicans have traveled abroad and a little more than a quarter, 26%, have lived in at least one other country. More importantly broad segments of Mexico's population are in direct, regular contact with people outside the country, for either work or family reasons.

The border with the United States is the mediation point for many Mexicans' contact with the outside world. So every issue that emerges from the region is of prime interest. Beyond that, Mexicans are indirectly exposed to the world through the mass media, information on government policies and programs, political advertising, and the activities of civil society organizations.

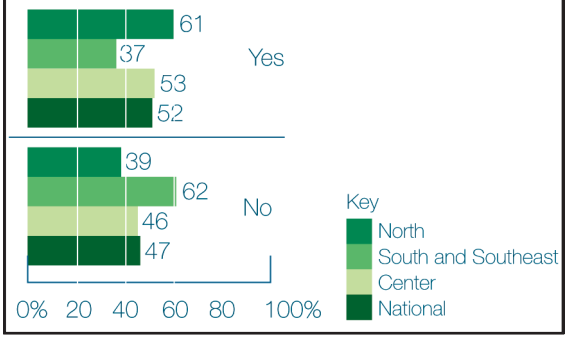
The more contact Mexicans have with foreigners, and the more they travel or have lived in other countries, whether for work, academic, or personal reasons, the greater their interest in foreign issues and the more favorable their view of the outside world. The 4% of Mexicans who have traveled abroad more than eleven times indicate a level of interest in international affairs 27 percentage points above that of the 69% of the population who have not been outside of the country.

There is also a direct correlation between income, education, contact, and interest in international affairs. Lower-income Mexicans, defined as those who receive up to three times the minimum wage, show a much lower level of interest in the world, 23 percentage points less, than those who earn between 10 and 30 times the minimum wage. More educated Mexicans are more likely to have had contact with other countries and show more interest in international affairs, either because they have studied at foreign universities, worked abroad, or traveled for work. Only 30% of Mexicans who have not finished primary school say they are very interested in news about Mexico's relations with other countries. The percentage is more than double, 58%, for those with a university degree.

For most Mexicans, the main form of contact with a foreign country is through family members who live abroad, principally in the United States. 52% of the respondents say that they have relatives who live in another country—a somewhat lower proportion than in 2004 when it was 61%. Once again, fewer Mexicans in the south and southeast, 37%, than those in the north, 61%, say they have relatives abroad. In the center and southeast, the percentage of respondents who say they have relatives outside the country fell since 2004, from 64% to 53% and from 48% to 37%, respectively (Table 1.4). This decrease points, most likely, not to real changes in emigration flows but to other factors, such as how broadly the respondents interpret the term "relatives." The findings on remittances support this interpretation. The percentage of Mexicans who say they receive remittances from abroad increased by three percentage points since 2004 to 24%.

Table 1.4
Relatives living abroad
PUBLIC 2006

Do any of your family members live outside of Mexico?



One-third of Mexicans—a number unchanged since 2004—say they would be willing to move to the United States if they could. The north shows the highest percentage of persons who would emigrate, 42%, compared with 31% and 30% in the center and south-southeast.

To gauge their knowledge of foreign affairs, respondents were asked a number of questions of varying degrees of difficulty. 65% can correctly identify the initials of the United Nations and 59% know that the name of the European Union's common currency is the Euro. Surprisingly, more respondents are familiar with the Euro and the initials of the United Nations than with Mexico's own Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 46% are able to identify the initials "SRE" (for Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores), 19 percentage points less than those who know the meaning of "U.N." 21% of the respondents know the name of the Secretary General of the United Nations and only 27% are able to identify the initials for the Spanish name of the World Trade Organization.

The 2006 survey also finds that respondents in the south and southeast scored significantly lower on these questions—some 10 to 17 percentage points below the national level. 54% know the initials for the United Nations, 42% the name of the European Union's currency, 36% the initials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and only 19% and 13% the name of the Secretary General of the United Nations and the initials of the WTO. These results reflect the region's relatively lower income and education levels as well as the more limited contact residents have with other countries due to lower emigration rates and less opportunity to travel to the United States.

National identity: How do Mexicans define themselves?

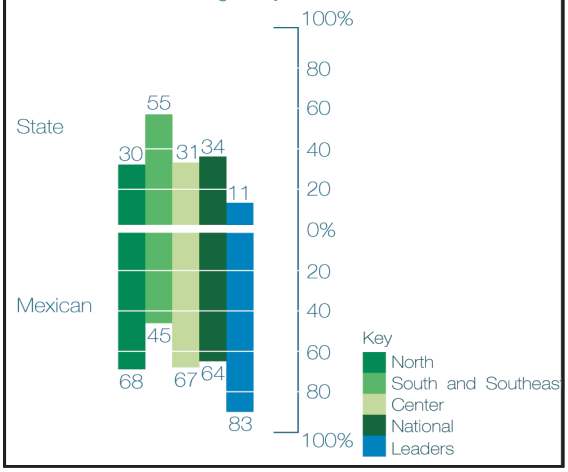
The 2006 findings confirm that Mexicans have a strong national identity. 64% of the respondents say that they feel Mexican above all in contrast with 34% who identify first with their state. There were no significant changes at the national level from 2004, but sub-national identification with the state or locality is markedly stronger in the south and southeast and has strengthened since 2004. In this region, 55% identify more strongly with their locality or state, 21 percentage points above the national average, while 45% identify themselves primarily as Mexicans, 19 percentage points lower than the nationwide figure (Table 1.5).

In contrast, there are no regional differences in national pride. 72% of the respondents say they are very proud to be Mexican, with very similar levels of national pride found throughout the country (75% in the north, 71% in the center, and 70% in the south and southeast). This relatively high level of national pride is likely related to the improvement in Mexicans' assessments of their own and their country's economic situation compared to the levels registered in the 2004 survey, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Mexicans' sense of a Latin American identity is by far the strongest when it comes to identifying with different regions of the world. Despite Mexico's

Table 1.5
Self Identity: State / Mexican
PUBLIC 2006

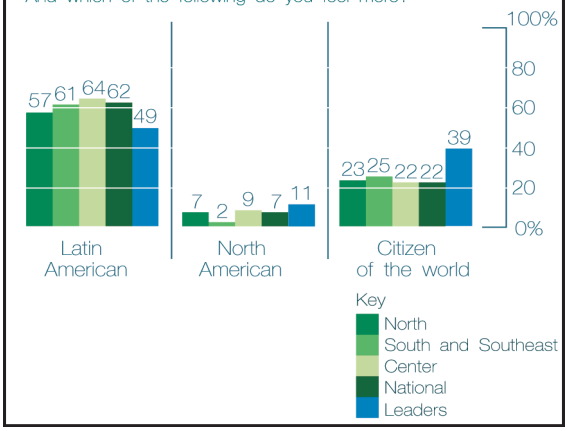
Which of the following do you feel more?



growing economic integration into North America, there is no echo in Mexicans' cultural identification with the region. Most Mexicans in all regions in the country, 62%, feel primarily Latin American; only 7% see themselves as North American (2% in the south and southeast), and 22% consider themselves citizens of the world. These results contradict Samuel Huntington's thesis that Mexico's economic relationship with North America will drive a wedge between the country's old Latin American identity and its new North American outlook; Mexicans harbor no doubts about whether they are Latin American (Table 1.6).

Table 1.6
Self Identity:
Latin American / North American
PUBLIC 2006

And which of the following do you feel more?



In sum, our findings indicate that in general Mexicans' national identity is strongest, while sub-national and supranational identities tend to be secondary, except in the south and southeast, where local identity predominates. Mexicans also have a strong Latin American identity and, twelve years after the North American Free Trade Agreement took effect, there is still no indication they feel a North American identity.

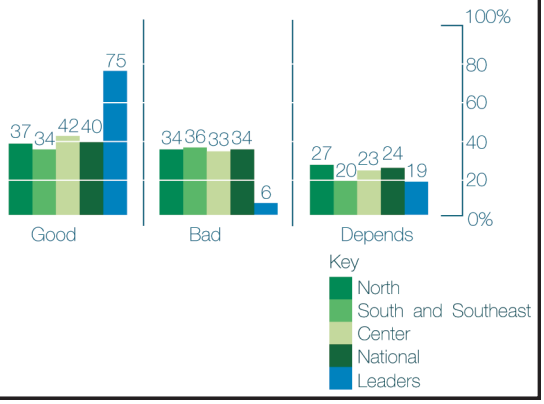
Mexican nationalism: change and continuity

Since the 1990s, Mexican nationalism has shown clear signs of change, but also of vitality. However, the topic continues to be confusing and fraught with contradiction. Many analysts have argued that the main obstacle to Mexico's deeper integration into the world economy and to a larger role on the political stage is Mexican nationalism. To what extent is this viewpoint still valid? Do Mexicans have a predominantly defensive and suspicious attitude toward the world? The survey results shed some light on these issues and provide information on three different aspects of Mexican nationalism: cultural (traditions, customs), political (national sovereignty), and economic (foreign investment and trade).

This year's survey shows that the Mexican public has become more open to the outside world. 40% of Mexicans believe that the dissemination of ideas and customs from other countries in Mexico is good, compared with only 27% in 2004. The percentage of Mexicans who think that foreign influence is bad decreased by 17 points, from 51% in 2004 to 34% in 2006. This important change also reflects a decrease in regional differences. Support for the spread of ideas and customs from other countries increased in the center as well as in the south and southeast, by 17 and 13 percentage points, respectively; in both areas respondents with a negative opinion of such influence decreased by 21 percentage points. In the northern part of the country opinions did not change much; 37% say it is good in 2006 versus 39% in 2004, and 34% now say it is bad versus 37% in 2004. The evolving acceptance of outside influence may reflect the effect of globalization on Mexicans' daily life; they increasingly recognize that their country is interconnected with the rest of the world, which makes it necessary to open up to other influences (Table 1.7).

Table 1.7
Non-Mexican customs and ideas
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, for you, is it good or bad that ideas and customs from other countries spread in Mexico?



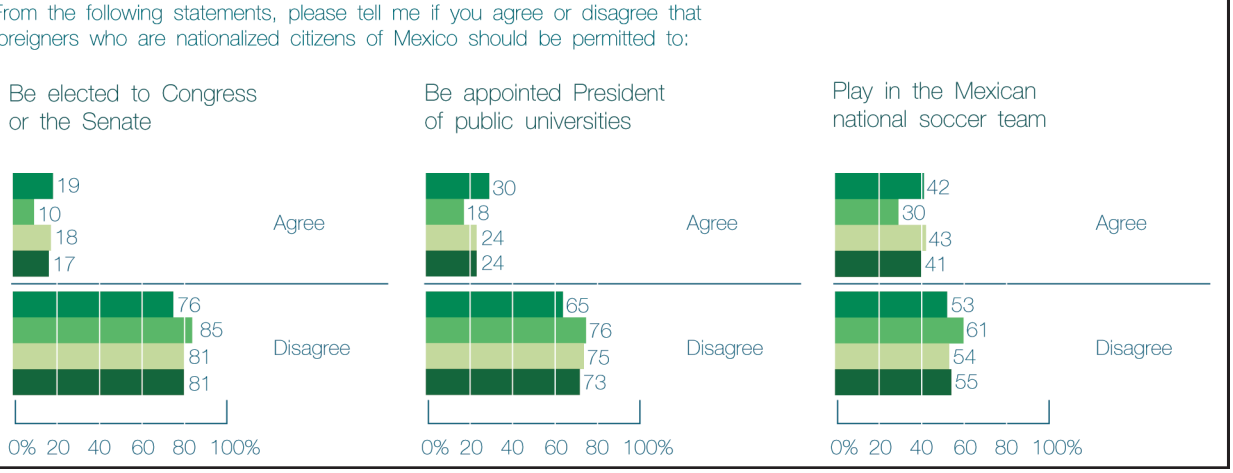
But Mexican nationalism remains unshaken in some areas. Mexicans are reluctant to grant foreigners who become Mexican citizens full rights to participate in the country's political life. And Chapter 4 shows that while Mexicans have become more pragmatic and less ideological on international economic issues, they continue to express strong nationalist resistance on issues such as oil or property rights for foreigners. In sum, there has been a cultural opening, but Mexicans resist the full integration of things "foreign" into the country's political and economic life. There is still a lingering distrust of foreigners, of "others," who are "outsiders" and "different" and therefore not considered to be part of the national community.

Although Mexicans are more open to the spread of customs and ideas from other countries, they want to keep control over institutions that they consider essential to maintaining national identity, particularly in politics and education. Mexicans from all regions of the country agree strongly on matters related to independence, autonomy, and sovereignty vis-à-vis foreigners. There is much reluctance to allowing naturalized Mexican citizens to hold leadership or high-profile positions in government and academia where they would have key policy-making jobs. 81% percent do not agree with naturalized Mexicans having the right to be elected to congress, a right held by those born in Mexico or those whose parents were born in Mexico; 73% do not agree with naturalized Mexicans being named president of a public university; and 55% are opposed to them playing on the national soccer team. In the south and southeast of the country opposition is consistently higher (Table 1.8). In this sense, Mexicans show a non-inclusive nationalism based on a strong conviction that only those born in Mexico or those whose parents were born in Mexico should have decision-making power to deal with the country's political, social, economic, and cultural issues. Other findings from the survey confirm this essentially defensive attitude to foreign influence.

Nevertheless, when it comes to Mexicans' economic well-being, defensive nationalism and

Table 1.8
Rights of nationalized foreigners
PUBLIC 2006

From the following statements, please tell me if you agree or disagree that foreigners who are nationalized citizens of Mexico should be permitted to:

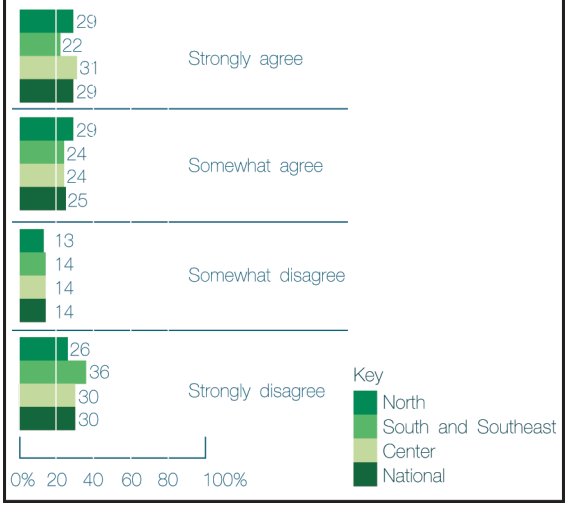


resistance to foreign influence tend to wane. A majority of Mexicans agree (29% strongly and 25% somewhat) with the hypothetical proposal that Mexico and the United States form a single country if this would improve their standard of living. Opposition to this idea fell by 18 percentage points from the levels in 2004: only 30% stated they disagreed completely in 2006, whereas, in 2004, 48% of the respondents strongly disagreed. In 2004, fewer respondents, 38%, totally or partially agreed than those who showed some degree of opposition, 57%. In 2006 the findings are reversed: 54%, a majority of the respondents strongly or partially agree, while 44% disagree, 30% strongly and 14% somewhat.

Support rose most in the center of the country, from 35% to 55%. In the south and southeast it increased by 10 percentage points (from 36% to 46%), whereas in the north it remained nearly unchanged, from 56% in 2004 to 58% in 2006. It is important to clarify that the question does not ask if the respondent approves of the idea of Mexico joining the United States or the United States absorbing Mexico. It asks if a political union should be carried out between the two countries so as to bring about an improvement in Mexicans' standard of living. These results confirm Mexicans' admiration for successful and powerful countries as will be detailed in Chapter 2 (Table 1.9).

Table 1.9
Mexico and the US union
PUBLIC 2006

How much are you in agreement with Mexico and the United States becoming a single country if this would mean a better standard of living for you?



The survey shows that despite a strong sense of nationalism, Mexicans are receptive to other cultures. They favor what they believe will improve their standard of living, but oppose any opening they think might adversely affect their interests. Still, a residual distrust remains, shown by their reservations about incorporating or integrating "outsiders" into decision-making. Mexicans accept foreigners, as long as they are perceived not to undermine national practices and customs. Similarly, Mexicans are also suspicious of any possibility that foreigners might take over certain resources or spaces they consider basic symbols of their national identity and sovereignty, such as oil and education.

CHAPTER 2
Defining Mexico's Role and Objectives in the World

There have been three main impediments to policymaking during President Fox's government: the lack of consensus and struggles for power between the executive and legislative branches; the difficulty in moving forward with deep reforms; and the polarization of opinions on topics that previously were not subject to open political debate. This situation also affects foreign-policy decisions by putting the executive and the legislative branches' powers over foreign policy on the table. At the same time, the emerging public debate generates greater public interest.

The survey responses on foreign-policy priorities, performance, and powers follow patterns similar to those in 2004. Still, we found some interesting differences: respondents overall give Mexico's participation in foreign affairs less importance. They have also lost some confidence in nearly all the actors in foreign policy. The findings confirm that Mexicans have quite clear, realistic and consistent ideas about the direction they want their country to follow. Mexicans define their country's role and objectives in the world in much the same way as they did in 2004. This chapter presents findings that point to a large gap between perceptions in the north and center and those in the south and southeast, where more respondents shrink from an activist role for Mexican foreign policy. The most dramatic changes in the survey responses between 2004 and 2006 were also in the south and southeast.

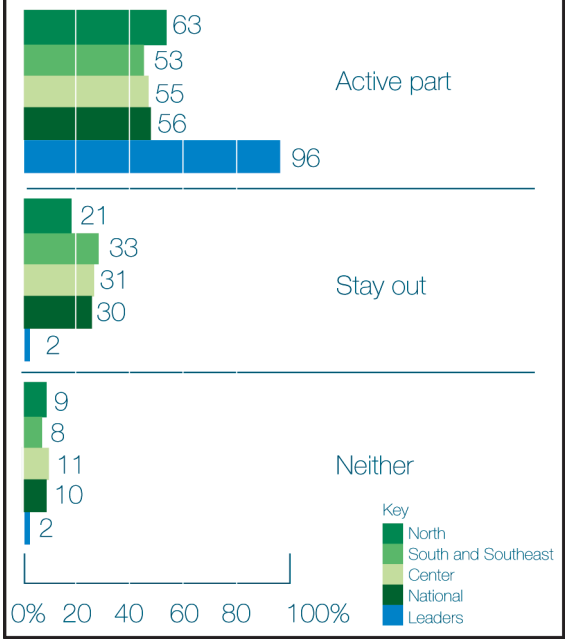
In favor of an active but limited participation for Mexico in the international arena

The underlying question in formulating Mexican foreign policy is how activist a role Mexicans want their country to play on the international stage. Is it in Mexico's best interest to pursue an internationalist or an isolationist foreign policy? Which of these policy stances does the public support?

A majority, 56%, remain in favor of Mexico participating actively in international affairs, little changed from 2004, when 57% were in favor. In contrast, only 30% believe that Mexico should be a bystander in international affairs, a slight drop from 2004, 34%. These findings are consistent with interest in world affairs but contradict Mexico's self-image as an essentially defensive and passive country. As with many other topics, here the north stands apart from the rest of the country: preference for active participation is stronger in the north, 63%, than in the center, 55%, and south, 53%. This is likely because of the north's proximity to the United States and northerners' daily contact with it (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Active part in world affairs
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, what is better for the future of Mexico, taking an active part in world affairs or staying out of world affairs?



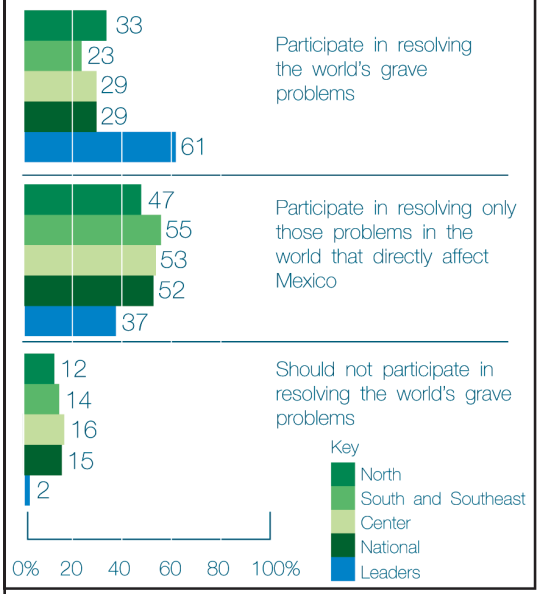
The lack of important differences among respondents who identify with Mexico's three main political parties, the PAN, PRI, or PRD, suggest that domestic political sympathies do not weigh heavily on support for an active or passive foreign policy. Whereas 58% of those who identify with the center-right PAN say that an active role will best serve the country's interests in the future, 53% of those who identify with the PRI feel this way, and the number drops to 51% for those who identify with the center-left PRD. By contrast, 28% of those who identify with the PAN feel that Mexico should remain on the sidelines, while 34% of PRI supporters and 38% of PRD sympathizers agree with this isolationist view. In sum, a majority of all parties' supporters favor Mexico's active participation in world affairs. There are differences but they are far from polarizing.

While Mexicans clearly do support an active role in international affairs, they also have a selective and limited view of the types of issues in which the country should become involved. Most respondents, 52%, best described as soft internationalists, say they favor Mexico participating in the resolution of only those world problems that directly affect Mexico. Only 29%, hardcore internationalists favor Mexico playing an active role in helping to resolve all the world's grave problems, including those that do not affect the country directly. A small minority (15%), the isolationists, say that Mexico should not participate in resolving the world's problems. Hardcore internationalism is little changed from 2004, declining 2 percentage points, but soft internationalism fell by 6 percentage points and isolationism rose by 6 percentage points, compared to 2004 (Table 2.2).

The survey also attempted to gauge Mexican sentiment regarding its role in the Americas, whether it should integrate with North America, with Latin America or become a bridge between the countries of North and Latin America. The largest group, 41%, favors Mexico acting as bridge country. 32% favored integration with the countries of Latin America and only 18% support integration with the countries of North America. Surprisingly, the south, which is consistently more reluctant to become involved in foreign affairs, has the largest proportion of respondents in favor of integration with North America, 20%, while the highest percentage of respondents favoring integration with Latin America are in the center, 34%. What makes this result particularly noteworthy is that it demonstrates that the choice of whether to join the north or the south as featured in recent political

Table 2.2
Take a part in world affairs
PUBLIC 2006

In its relations with the world, do you think Mexico should:



debates, is, a false dilemma, according to public perceptions on the issue. More Mexicans say that their country does not have to choose between north and south than say it must go in one direction or the other. As we will see in Chapter 5 large majorities of Mexicans believe that there will be greater political and economic integration among the countries of North America and Latin America. Mexicans' pragmatism—wanting to be able to take advantage of North American and Latin American links regardless of cultural affinities—appears to lead them to prefer the bridge option rather than picking one direction over the other.

Priority topics on Mexico's international agenda

In the 2006 survey, we asked respondents how important they considered 12 foreign-policy objectives to be for Mexico's international agenda (in 2004 there were only nine topics). The first noteworthy finding is that respondents rank all nine of these objectives as less important in 2006 than they did in 2004. Moreover, in all cases the change was between 8% and 18%—the only exception being the importance of strengthening the United Nations which declined by just 4%. Human rights

showed the sharpest decline—18%. This change is largely the result of the increased importance and greater visibility of domestic concerns in an electoral year, which apparently pushed international issues from political discourse in 2006 (Table 2.3).

In 2006, export promotion ranks highest among foreign-policy goals in terms of the percentage who describe it as a very important foreign policy objective: 76% say that it is. Protecting the interests of Mexicans in other countries is in second place, with 73% saying it is a very important policy objective and drug-trafficking third with 70%. Those were the top three goals in the 2004 survey, although they were ranked differently two years ago: protecting the interests of Mexicans in other countries ranked first with 88%, followed by export promotion 85%, and drug-trafficking 83%.

Given that the difference in support for these three issues is very small, the changes in ranking among them is less important than their continued status as the objectives that the largest percentage of Mexicans believe are very important for their country's foreign policy. Their ranking highlights the primacy of those objectives that directly affect Mexicans' lives; the economy, migration, and fears about crime and violence that arise from drug trafficking.

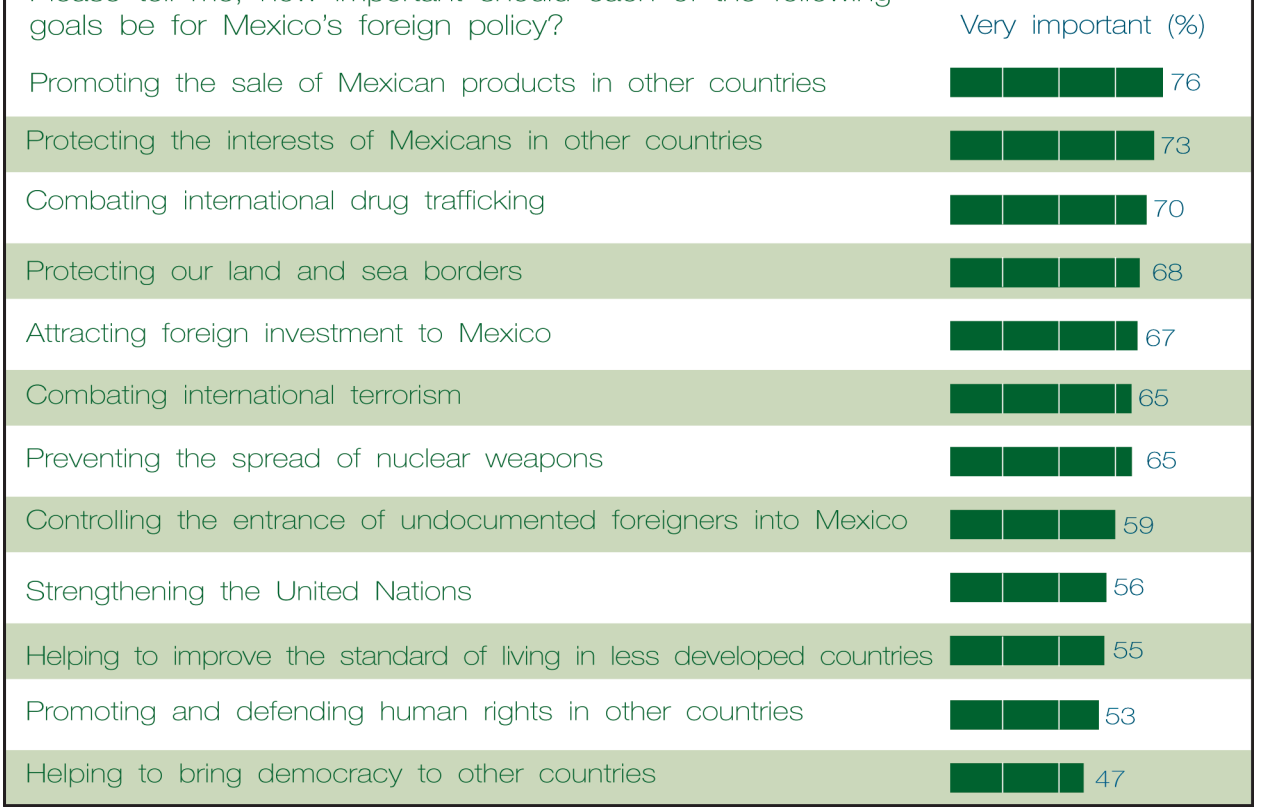
Indeed, the economy is so important that regional opinions differ very little; export promotion is most important to 79% of those in the north, 77% of those in the center and 71% in the south and southeast.

Drug-trafficking continues to be the third priority, with 70% considering it to be very important. The question wording asks respondents how important they believe it is to stop the flow of drugs toward the United States. The south has suffered less from the explosion in drug-related violence that has affected parts of the north and center, which might explain the difference between the north, 75%, and center,

Table 2.3
Foreign policy goals
NATIONAL 2006

Key
National

Please tell me, how important should each of the following goals be for Mexico's foreign policy?



72% versus the south, 59%. In the south, there is a noteworthy twenty percentage-point decline compared to those who viewed this goal as very important in 2004.

Two of the three new issues introduced in the 2006 survey jumped into the top five concerns in terms of the percentage who say they are very important policy goals. 68% of Mexicans say that protecting the country's borders is very important, putting it into fourth place, followed by attracting foreign direct investment in fifth place, with 67%. Unlike the objective of export promotion, there are important regional differences in support for attracting foreign investment; in the north, 75% of the respondents consider it to be very important while 69% agree in the center and only 50% think so in the south (Table 2.4). Perhaps the underlying reasons for the south's less enthusiastic support for attracting foreign investment as a very important policy goal has to do with the limited foreign investment in Mexico's south. Mexicans in the south likely see export promotion as a job creator but unlike those who live in the center and northern states, which have attracted almost all of Mexico's foreign investment, southerners have little experience with foreign companies providing jobs. Combating terrorism and nuclear arms control came next, with 65% describing each of those as very important. Terrorism's lower place on the list of concerns may be explained by the fact that Mexico has so far not been a terrorist target and there have been no new attacks in the United States since September 11, 2001. People still perceive the issue as a serious international problem, but one with less direct implications for Mexico. There is a sharp contrast between the number of respondents in each region who see the topic as very important: 71% in the north and 67% the center say it is very important, but only 48% of those in the south and southeast say it is. Those who are closer to the northern border are more exposed to the threat felt in the United States, and they may be more likely to reflect U.S. concerns about terrorism.

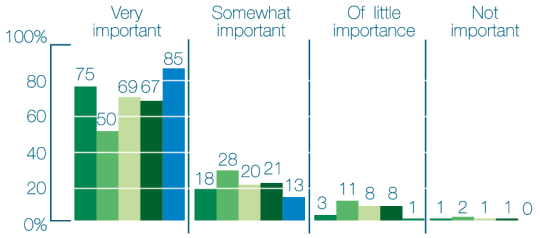
Our findings regarding the perceived threat of nuclear weapons are similar. The contrast between the north, where 70% consider it very important, and center, 68%, versus the south, 47%, is striking. This disparity is likely due to less access to information and different priorities in the south, where residents are more concerned with raising their living standards than with potential existential threats that emanate from Mexico's proximity to the United States.

Table 2.4
Foreign policy goals
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, how important should each of the following goals be for Mexico's foreign policy, very important, somewhat important, or of little importance:

Key: North; South and Southeast; Center; National Leaders

Attracting foreign investment to Mexico



The next priority is that of preventing undocumented persons from entering Mexico, whether they intend to remain in the country or to continue on to the United States. This is the third of the new potential threats added to the 2006 survey. Interestingly, whereas one issue closely linked to migration, protecting the country's borders, ranked fourth, with 68%, another, controlling the entry of undocumented foreigners, ranked behind seven other issues with 59%. We found greater cross-regional agreement on the importance of protecting Mexico's borders, with 73% of the respondents in the north considering it very important, 68% of those in the center, and 63% of those in the south. There are more regional differences when it come to the issue of undocumented migrants: 61% of respondents in the north and center consider the topic very important versus 46% of those in the south and southeast. This is surprising, given that the southern border is the most frequent point of entry for undocumented persons from Central and South America.

The last four correspond to topics associated with the promotion of values or adherence to the international system rather than to economic wellbeing and security. Strengthening the United Nations, the next priority, shows the smallest decline since 2004, down 4 percentage points to 56%. Indeed, it has moved up in relative rankings since 2004 because three new issues were added. Since 2004, when similar percentages across regions considered this goal very important, there has been a strong shift in opinion in the south, with a drop of 20 percentage points to 40% who now believe this is an important goal.

The following goal on the list, that of supporting relatively less developed countries is considered to be very important by 55% of Mexicans. More Mexicans consider this to be an important topic on the country's international agenda than Mexicans who believe defending human rights, 53%, and promoting democracy, 47%, are very important.

The findings on the United Nations appear to confirm Mexicans' multilateralist outlook, but the responses also suggest that for Mexicans involvement with other countries has more to do with economic and social issues than with intervention in favor of democracy and human rights. Perhaps Mexicans view the latter as domestic issues protected by conservative views of state sovereignty. Such a view is consistent with Mexicans' traditional reluctance to allow outside actors to intervene in Mexico's own domestic affairs.

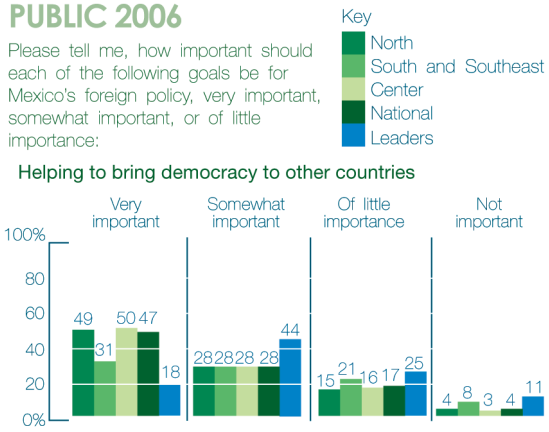
The last two foreign-policy objectives for Mexico—promoting human rights and supporting democracy in other countries—show a sharp drop in relative priority and importance. In 2004, 71% considered defending human rights in other countries very important for Mexico's international agenda, versus only 53% who do in 2006. This change is noteworthy because the Fox Administration broke with traditional Mexican policy and has made the defense of human rights and promotion of democracy a centerpiece of its policy agenda, most prominently in the case of Cuba. The percentage of Mexicans who believe promoting democracy is an important policy goal has declined to 47% from 55% in 2004 (Table 2.5) The reason for this lower interest may stem from the fact that relations with Cuba, an issue linked directly to concerns about democracy and human rights, received much media attention in 2002 and 2003. Since then, these issues have faded somewhat from the Mexican media.

The response to the question on what specific actions Mexico should take regarding massive human rights violations in other countries confirms Mexicans' support, albeit limited, for a multilateralist outlook. 48% percent of the respondents favor actions within the framework of the United Nations, while 28% favor the non-interventionist approach and argue against Mexico becoming involved in other countries' domestic affairs. 18% favor severing diplomatic ties—a unilateral alternative—with states alleged to have committed such violations.

In sum, the 2006 survey confirms that Mexicans believe foreign policy should focus

Table 2.5
Foreign policy goals
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, how important should each of the following goals be for Mexico's foreign policy, very important, somewhat important, or of little importance:



principally on objectives directly related to the country's economic performance (and by extension Mexicans' standard of living) and its security. The ranking of foreign-policy objectives points to a wide agreement on a view of Mexican diplomacy that is essentially realistic and pragmatic rather than idealistic or altruistic as promoted by the Fox administration, or a legalistic conception based on conservative notions of state sovereignty, which has been Mexico's traditional foreign policy position.

Lastly, the findings show no evidence that Mexicans are significantly divided along ideological or party lines regarding Mexico's foreign policy agenda or even specific objectives. One of the principal cornerstones of Mexico's foreign policy, enshrined in its constitution, has been its complete rejection of any intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, a reaction to the country's historical traumas arising from the loss of territory to the United States and continued U.S. interventions and invasions of Mexican territory in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Yet, even for objectives such as promoting human rights, which Mexicans once considered to be a form of illegitimate intervention in the internal affairs of another country, supporters of the PAN (51%), PRI (46%), and PRD (52%) give it similar levels of importance.

While a majority of the population supports principles such as multilateralism, international economic development, the defense of human rights and support for democracy, they view them as secondary. Still, a majority of Mexicans view three of the last four objectives on the list as very important, and the last one approaches that level. Even though these objectives are far from

priorities for the Mexican public, officials in charge of Mexico's foreign policy need to take them into account.

Politicians and foreign policy

In this electoral year, how do Mexicans evaluate those in charge of the country's governance in general, and those responsible for foreign policy in particular? 41% approve of the current president's overall performance while 31% somewhat approve, 10% somewhat disapprove and 15% disapprove. Hence, a broad majority—72%, or 8 percentage points more than in 2004—indicate some degree of approval. Approval is highest in the north, with 47%, where President Fox has always had a strong base. It is lowest in the south and southeast where he is less popular. There, approval has dropped 15 percentage points since 2004, to 26%.

In all three regions, approval of the government's foreign-policy performance is lower than the president's overall approval rating. Nationwide, 33% approve of the government's foreign policy, 32% somewhat approve, 10% somewhat disapprove and 15% disapprove. The highest approval rating for the government's foreign policy is in the north, where 39% fully approve, followed by the center, with 35%. Once again, there is a large gap between these regions and the south and southeast, where only 17% approve, down sharply from 39% in 2004.

In sharp contrast to the findings on the priorities for foreign-policy objectives where party differences do not much matter, political party preferences weigh heavily on these evaluations of government performance. 86% of PAN supporters approve or partially approve of President Fox's performance. Only 63% of PRI supporters approve or partially approve and the number drops to 49% for PRD supporters. We found similar differences in the assessment of the government's foreign-policy performance. 80% of PAN supporters approve or partially approve of the Fox government's foreign policy, compared with 54% of PRI backers and 44% of PRD supporters.

Power to make important foreign-policy decisions

When asked, on a scale of 0 to 10, how much influence different groups should have in making foreign policy, 38% say that the influence of public opinion should rank as 10, extremely influential, followed by 34% who say the president's level of influence should be 10. 22% give the Congress a score of 10, 16% score business leaders at 10, and, lastly, only 12% say that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) should have this highest level of influence. The average level of influence respondents felt public opinion should have is 9 on the same scale. They assigned the president and the congress the same level of influence (8) although in the south and southeast, the average for the legislative branch was lower (7). Business leaders and NGOs both received average scores of seven, although respondents in the north are in favor of business leaders having more influence (8)—equal to that of the president and the congress (Tables 2.6—2.10).

The idea that the public should have the most influence in determining foreign policy, even more than the president and the congress, is not surprising since, in essence, the question is asking respondents how much influence they should have. More importantly, we view this response as a general expression in favor of democracy in foreign policy decision-making.

A majority of Mexicans favor checks on foreign-policy decision-making. They feel that the executive and legislative branches should have the same level of influence over such issues. This is an important topic for the current political debate. Congress has been discussing proposals to modify the distribution of power between the executive and legislative branches regarding foreign policy. Some proposals call for strengthening the president's freedom to travel outside the country and send troops abroad for non-combat purposes, whereas others would strengthen congress' oversight powers regarding treaties and making appointments.

We posed several questions on who should have the most power over specific foreign-policy decisions. Respondents very clearly favor legislative limits on the president's actions.

A 72% majority feel that the president should seek congress's approval before traveling abroad, which is now required by Mexican law and which, on occasion, has been denied. In most modern democracies the head of state or of the government does not need to ask congress or parliament for authorization to travel abroad. Hence, the fact that most Mexicans favor maintaining this check on presidential power is surprising (Table 2.11).

Respondents expressed similar sentiments on the need for the president to request congressional authorization to send armed forces abroad to assist

Table 2.6
Impact groups should have on foreign policy
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means should have no influence and 10 means should be extremely influential, how much influence should **the opinion of the majority of Mexicans** have in shaping Mexico's foreign policy?

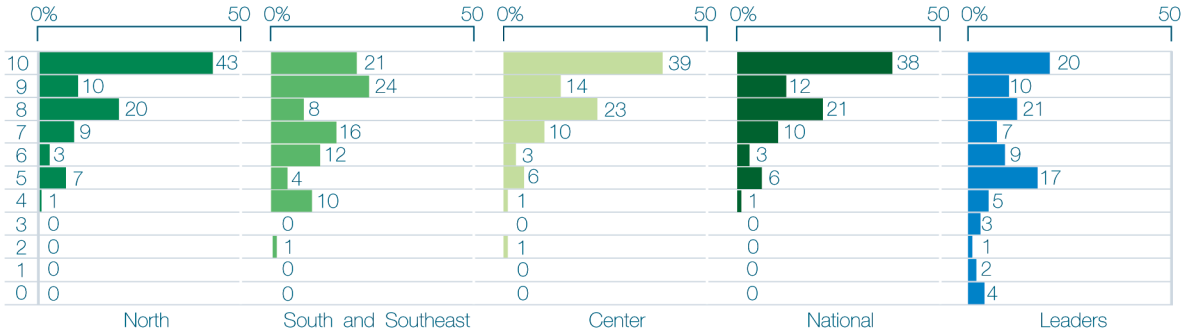


Table 2.7
Impact groups should have on foreign policy
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means should have no influence and 10 means should be extremely influential, how much influence should **the Congress** have in shaping Mexico's foreign policy?

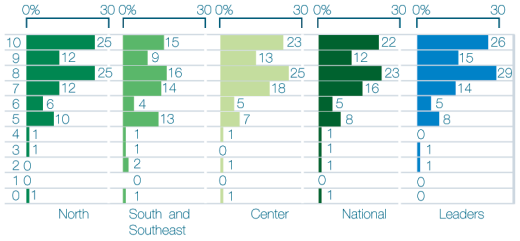


Table 2.8
Impact groups should have on foreign policy
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means should have no influence and 10 means should be extremely influential, how much influence should **the President** have in shaping Mexico's foreign policy?

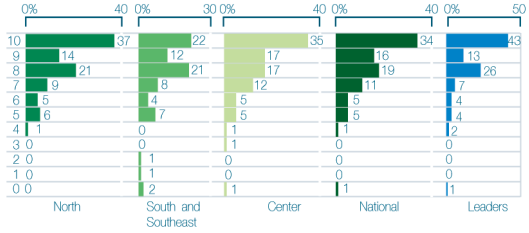


Table 2.9
Impact groups should have on foreign policy
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means should have no influence and 10 means should be extremely influential, how much influence should **Business Leaders** have in shaping Mexico's foreign policy?

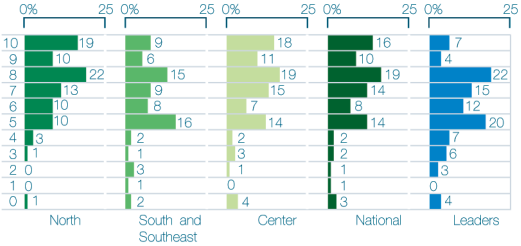
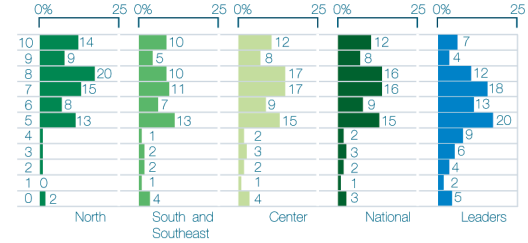


Table 2.10
Impact groups should have on foreign policy
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means should have no influence and 10 means should be extremely influential, how much influence should **non-governmental organizations** have in shaping Mexico's foreign policy?

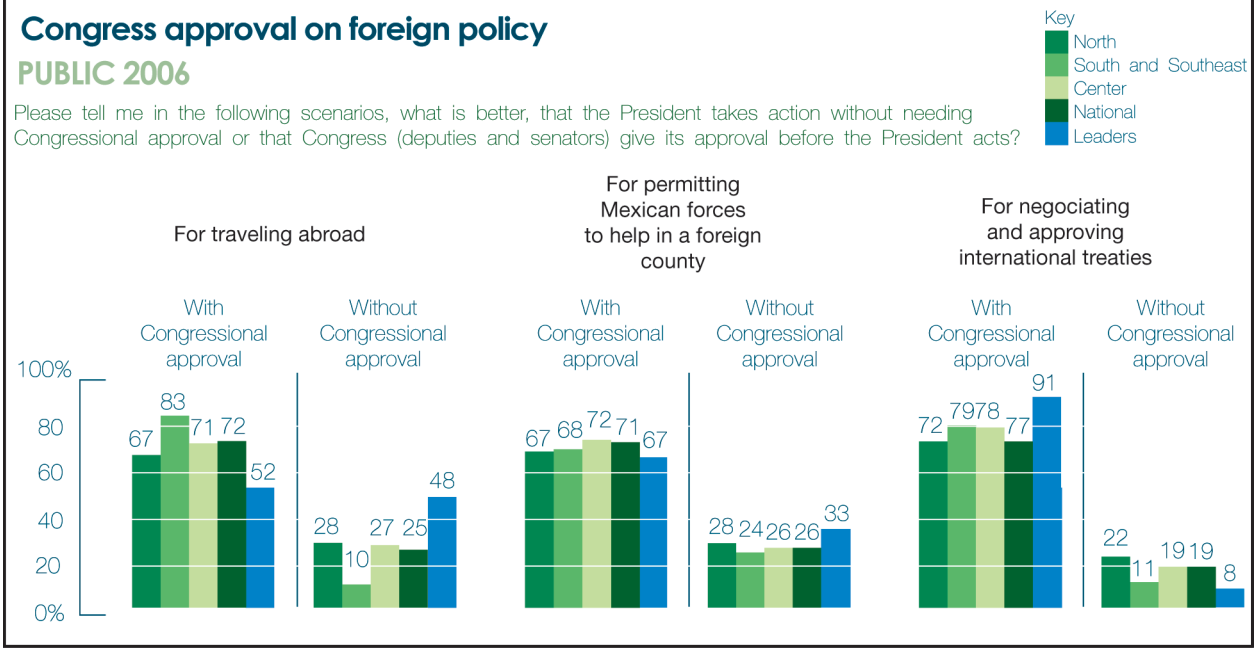


allies in non-combat efforts such as humanitarian aid after natural disasters. A clear majority, 71%, favor congressional approval; only 26% believe that the president should be free to make this decision alone. In this case, we found a broad consensus across regions, a divergence from the general trend in which the south and southeast generally favor more checks on the president's foreign-policy powers.

Lastly, regarding the power to negotiate and approve international treaties and agreements, 77% favor requiring congressional approval, with only 19% opposed. There is a clear majority across the three regions who see the need for a strong congressional check on the president's foreign-policy actions.

Table 2.11
Congress approval on foreign policy
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me in the following scenarios, what is better, that the President takes action without needing Congressional approval or that Congress (deputies and senators) give its approval before the President acts?



CHAPTER 3
Mexico and the International System: Governability and Security

Among the most important findings of the survey are Mexicans' interest in foreign affairs and their support for an active foreign policy. That support, however, has limits. Mexicans want their country's diplomacy to concentrate on issues that directly affect Mexico and they prefer multilateral action as a means to minimize the costs and risks associated with participation in the international sphere. Security issues, rather than abstract principles or altruistic causes, are the aims of foreign policy. These attitudes have changed little since the 2004 survey.

For decades, analysts have argued that the experience of losing one-third of its territory to the United States has led Mexican society to be highly suspicious of the rest of the world. Based on this experience, Mexicans have rejected, on principle, the use of force as a legitimate instrument for solving problems among nations. They have eschewed participation in military alliances and rejected any international action that limits national sovereignty or undermines the principle of non-intervention. According to this view, Mexico is protective of its sovereignty, and always prefers cooperation over confrontation. Successive governments have avoided critical stances or multilateral responsibilities that might lead to open disagreements with other countries, particularly the United States. Despite what the survey confirms as a high opinion of international organizations, Mexicans prefer to remain somewhat aloof from world's decision-making centers, especially concerning controversial security or military issues.

The results of the 2006 survey allow us to examine Mexicans' perceptions of the workings of the international system and its rules and institutions. Do Mexicans view the international system with trust or apprehension? As a system that offers opportunities or a hostile arena where pragmatism is pitted against idealism? What type of threats do Mexicans believe put their country at risk? How familiar are they with the international system? How effective and legitimate do Mexicans believe the international system's rules, organizations, and actors are? When do they approve of the use of force? Are they willing to abide by international organizations' rulings? Do they really want to be on friendly terms with every country or do they identify some as rivals, adversaries, or threats? Toward which countries do they have the warmest feelings and why?

A country that is less pessimistic and suspicious of the world

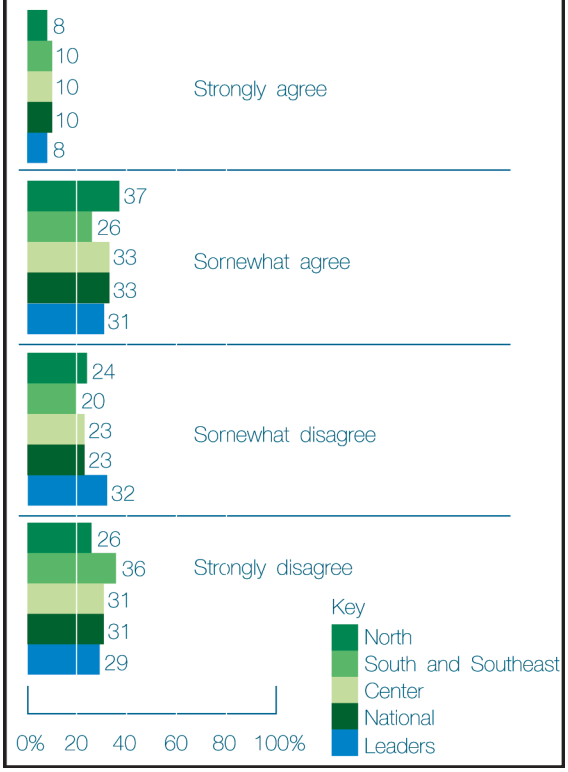
Today Mexicans are significantly less pessimistic and apprehensive than they were two years ago. In 2004, Mexicans had a bleak outlook of the world and perceived serious external threats. Just over one-fourth, 26%, believed that the world was moving in the right direction. A large majority, 69%, were pessimistic. Those in the northern border states were less pessimistic than the national average, but still 54% of the respondents in the north did not feel that the world was moving in the right direction.

In 2006, several indicators in the survey reflect a decline in the feeling of vulnerability and a higher degree of optimism. The percentage of respondents who say they believe the world is moving in the right direction increased to 43%, split between 10% who feel very strongly and 33% who feel somewhat this way. Nevertheless, a majority, 54%, still say the world is moving in the wrong direction. In 2004, the ratio of pessimists to optimists was 69% to 26%; it fell in 2006 to 54% to 43% (Table 3.1).

As in 2004, the north has the largest percentage with an optimistic outlook, 45%, followed by the center, 43% and the south and southeast, 36%. Most significant was the jump in optimism in the center and the south and southeast this year; up 20 % in the center to 43% and up 19% in the south and southeast to 36%. Even though a majority are still pessimistic, the last two years have seen a consistent tendency throughout the country toward a less bleak outlook of the world.

Table 3.1
The world is going in the right direction
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement. "In general, the world is going in the right direction".



The 2006 survey confirms the conclusion in 2004 that Mexicans' opinion on the direction in which the world is headed affects their perception of threat. Just as Mexicans' pessimism has decreased, so has the degree to which they see some potential threats as serious. We asked survey respondents whether eleven global issues are seen as serious threats to Mexico's interests: economic competition from Asia, China's emergence as a global power, international terrorism, global warming, weapons of mass destruction, drug-trafficking, world economic crises, violent conflicts due to ethnic or religious strife, undocumented immigration into Mexico, the hardening of the United States' foreign policy, and pandemics such as AIDS and avian flu. In each case, the percentage of Mexicans who see the issues as serious threats to the future of Mexico in the next ten years decreased—between 1% and 16% depending on the issue—compared to 2004 (Table 3.2).

80% of the respondents described drug-trafficking as a grave threat, putting it at the top of the list of perceived threats. Second on the list is the potential for outbreaks of epidemics such as AIDS and avian flu, 77%, followed by weapons of mass destruction, 75%, in third place. International terrorism, global economic crises, and global warming are tied for fourth, with 70% of respondents considering them serious threats to Mexico's vital interests in the coming decade.

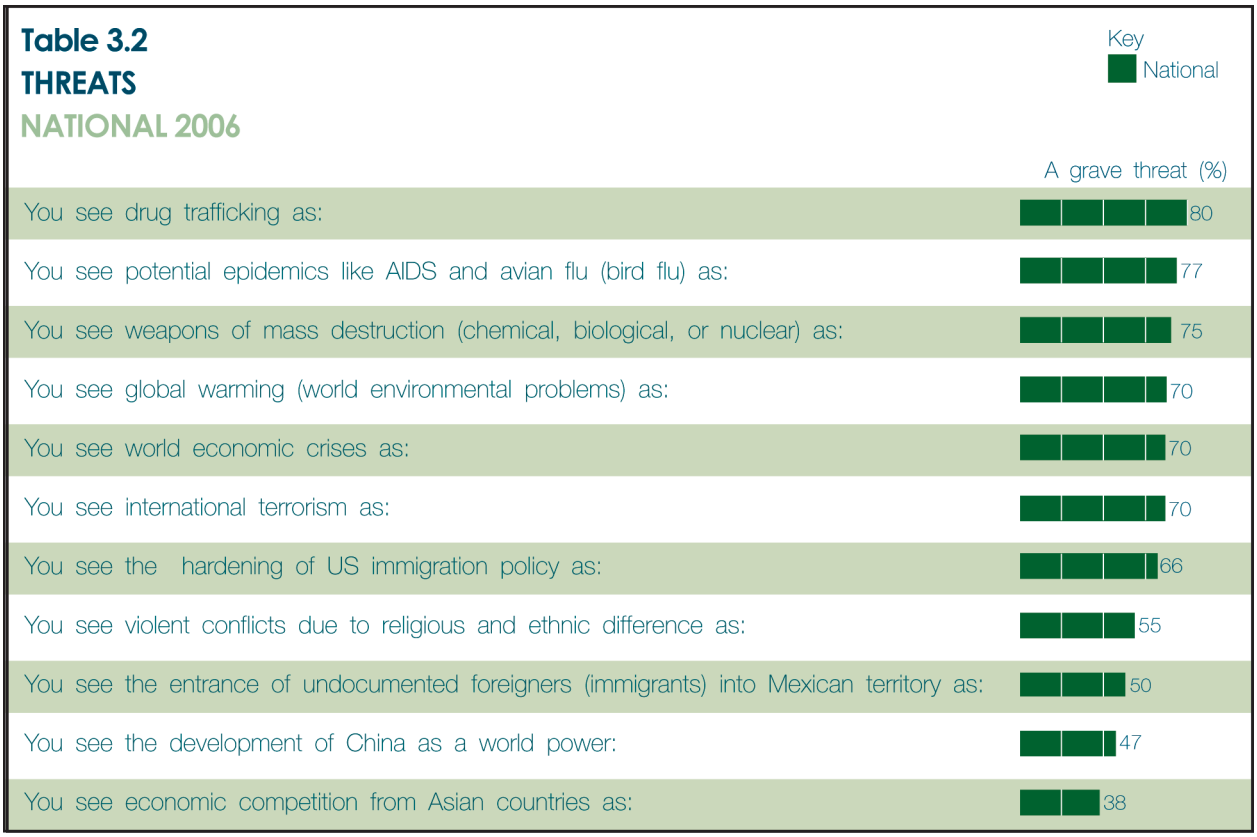
A second set of three issues ranked fifth, sixth, and seventh in respondents' perceptions of grave threats to Mexico's interests over the next ten years: the United States' hardening of its immigration policy, 66%, violent conflicts due to religious and ethnic strife in other countries, 55%, and the entry of undocumented migrants into Mexico (50%).

The perception by two-thirds of the population that harsher immigration and border controls in the United States seriously threaten Mexico's interests is not surprising, given the steady increase in the number of Mexicans who emigrate there. Mexico's National Population Council estimates that in each of the last five years, close to 500,000 Mexicans have permanently left for the United States. A high percentage are presumed to have entered illegally and will be directly affected by stricter surveillance and immigration controls in the United States.

These findings on perceived threats indicate that Mexicans are more concerned by the United States' stricter immigration policy—which directly affects many more Mexicans—than by the increased number of undocumented foreigners entering and living in Mexico. The percentage of respondents concerned with events on Mexico's northern border is 16 percentage points higher than that of those concerned with problems on its southern and ocean borders. Nevertheless, at least one-half of the respondents perceive undocumented immigration into Mexico as a serious threat.

There are two issues that Mexicans don't seem to find very threatening: China's emergence as a global power and economic competition from Asian countries. Asia does not appear to show up on Mexicans' radar screens. This is either because they are not familiar with the importance of the "Asian Tigers" or because they consider the region a remote place with little influence on their personal lives or on Mexico's domestic economy. Only 38% of Mexicans consider that economic competition from Asian countries seriously threatens Mexico's interests. Moreover, despite increased Chinese

Table 3.2
THREATS
NATIONAL 2006



exports to Mexico and the fact that in 2003 China surpassed Mexico as the world's second-largest exporter to the United States (after Canada), Mexicans still do not view China's emergence as a global power as a serious threat. A minority, 47%, of the respondents say that China's rise is a grave threat to Mexico.

Mexicans define serious threats as issues that may affect their living conditions directly, such as personal safety, health, and job security. It is not surprising, therefore, that drug-trafficking should rank first on the list of serious threats, given that this problem has spread throughout the country, amid increasing violence in states formerly removed from the problem and rising drug consumption on the streets of the major cities. Nor do we find it surprising that Mexicans should be highly concerned with the possibility of global economic crises hurting Mexico's economy, given the recent historical experience of sweeping international economic changes that have led to severe financial crises.

However, what is more difficult to explain is Mexicans' perception that threats such as pandemics, weapons of mass destruction, global terrorism, and global warming, which have not yet had a direct impact on their living conditions, potentially pose high risks. Part of the explanation may lie in the broad media coverage these threats receive. For example, this might explain why Mexicans are concerned with AIDS, avian flu, global warming, chemical weapons, and terrorism. But it does not explain Mexicans' relative lack of concern with the emergence of China and the Asian Tigers, since both issues receive harshly critical and negative coverage in the media, both nationally and internationally. The concern with pandemics, terrorism, and nuclear weapons may reflect a certain distrust of the ability of institutions responsible for public health and safety to effectively combat such problems.

We found no important differences in how Mexicans rate the seriousness of the various issues. The north, center, and south and southeast of the country rank the global issues in the same order of importance and assign the same level of risk to them. In addition, and surprisingly, given the image of an ideologically polarized country, partisan preferences and affinities do not translate into clearly different visions of what Mexico's agenda for addressing potential threats should be.

Mexicans classify threats into two types—those related to security and those related to the economy. Weapons of mass destruction rank as the third most serious threat (75% say that they are a grave threat to Mexico's most important interests over the next ten years), ahead of global economic crises, which dropped to 70% from 86% in 2004. These perceptions may be due, first, to Mexico's recent macroeconomic stability and second, to the permanence of nuclear nonproliferation on the international agenda. This issue includes Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, Iran's nuclear development program, and North Korea's recent claim that it has tested a nuclear device and previous long-range missile tests.

As the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks have become more remote in time, perceptions of international terrorism as a serious threat have diminished, with the percentage falling from 81% to 70%. The more recent series of bombings in Asia and particularly Great Britain and Spain, do not appear to have had an important impact on public opinion in Mexico. The percentage of Mexicans who view violent conflicts stemming from religious and ethnic differences in other countries as a serious threat also decreased, from 60% in 2004 to 55% in 2006.

This year's presidential election may also have had an effect on perceptions of risk. During electoral periods people tend to follow national events much more closely than foreign affairs. In 2004, 87% of the respondents were very or somewhat interested in Mexico's relations with other countries, whereas in 2006 the percentage is four points lower.

Scope of and limits on Mexico's multilateralism

On the international stage Mexicans tend to favor joint decision-making and consensus within a multilateral framework. Typically, medium-sized countries such as Mexico favor multilateral action and promote international standards and rules that limit the maneuvering room of the great powers in an attempt to give smaller and weaker countries a greater voice in international decision-making. But, what do Mexicans know about international organizations? Are they willing to abide by rulings and take part in multilateral actions that are contrary to their preferences—that is, what happens when Mexicans are required to pay the costs of multilateralism?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the number of Mexicans familiar with the initials of the United Nations rose three percentage points to 65% from 2004. However, only 21% knew that the name of the U.N. Secretary General (at the time of the survey) was Kofi Annan, by all measures a pretty difficult question for the general public of most countries. By comparison, 27% of the respondents correctly identified the meaning of the initials for the World Trade Organization. As in most countries, the United Nations is by far the most familiar international organization in Mexico.

That familiarity translates into a greater commitment to the ideals of the U.N., whether related to economic, cultural, or security issues. Despite questions regarding the U.N.'s legitimacy and representativeness and the recent stagnation in its process of institutional reform, Mexicans continue to perceive it as the multilateral forum par excellence.

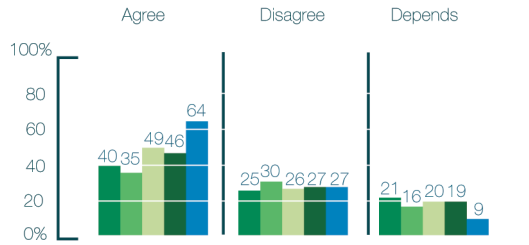
Mexicans' attitudes and assessments of international organizations' efficacy are more positive than negative. 72% of the respondents consider the United Nations either very effective, 31%, or somewhat effective, 41%, at accomplishing its main task, guaranteeing international security and peace. Only 20% do not share this view—16% believe that it is not very effective and 4% that it is not at all effective. Mexicans' high opinion of the United Nations is not surprising. In addition to the fact that it is a multilateral forum that aims to resolve conflicts peacefully, none of its security resolutions has taken issue with Mexico or had a direct negative effect on the stability of the region where Mexico's geopolitical interests lie.

But Mexicans' multilateralism is more ambiguous when the country's own interests are at stake. 46% say they agree with Mexico abiding by United Nations decisions even when they are contrary to Mexico's original preference or position (Table 3.3). A majority of Mexicans have yet to show an unconditional commitment to multilateralism. Close to one-fifth (19%) of the respondents believe that Mexico's decisions on whether or not to abide by adverse U.N. decisions should not be unconditional but rather should "depend" on the circumstances. The percentage of respondents who agree with Mexico abiding by adverse WTO rulings on trade disputes was higher, 53%.

Another indicator of the limits to the Mexican public's internationalist outlook is the extent to which Mexicans would like the country to assume greater responsibilities in addressing international

Table 3.3
Mexico – UN joint decision making
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statement. When dealing with international problems, Mexico should be willing to make decisions within the United Nations even if this means that Mexico will sometimes have to go along with a decision that it would not have preferred.

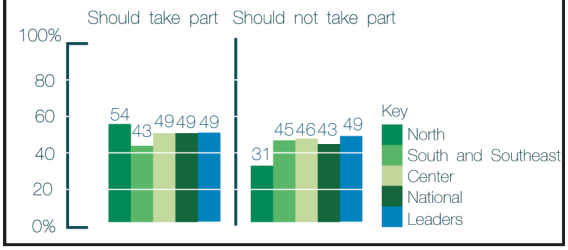


problems, and their willingness to pay the economic, political, and even human costs of participating in multilateral efforts. One way to explore this is to ask whether Mexico should join U.N. peacekeeping operations in conflict areas or in humanitarian crises. Such participation would mean contributing financing, arms, equipment, soldiers, police, and civilian experts. Mexicans are currently more divided than two years ago, and remain ambivalent on the suitability of Mexico providing personnel for multilateral contingents of "Blue Helmets" or "Blue Berets." Close to half, 49%, of the respondents think that Mexico should participate in U.N.-led multilateral actions to restore or maintain peace in countries affected by violent conflicts; however, a similar percentage, 43%, disagree and believe that Mexico should leave it to other countries to carry out these tasks. The proportion of Mexicans opposed to Mexico taking part in such operations has increased by seven percentage points from 2004. The percentage of those in favor rose only one percentage point, with the remainder of the difference distributed among respondents who volunteered the answer that "it depends" or did not know (Table 3.4).

This is a particularly important issue. The current administration has insisted on the need for Mexico to review its traditional policy of not taking part in peacekeeping operations. The government argues that Mexico's commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter as well as its substantial financial contributions to the organization's budget, including peacekeeping operations, require Mexico to take part in those operations, as do

Table 3.4
UN peacekeeping
PUBLIC 2006

If the United Nations asks member countries to participate in a military or police peacekeeping force being sent to some part of the world, what do you think Mexico should do, participate in the peacekeeping force or leave this type of activity to other countries?



most countries of the world. Those against the proposal argue that Mexico's traditional absence is consistent with its commitment to the principle of non-intervention, its rejection of the use of military force and its constitutional limitations on sending troops abroad. At the level of public opinion, the national debate on multilateral peacekeeping missions has not yet been resolved.

A majority of Mexicans do support the United Nations' authority to authorize the use military force to restore international security and peace when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) votes for such measures. This position stands in contrast with the notion that Mexico rejects military intervention as a matter of principle. 73% of the respondents agree with the UNSC authorizing the use of force to prevent grave human rights violations such as genocide. 71% agree with the Security Council permitting military action to prevent countries from supporting terrorist groups, and 65% believe that it should authorize the use of force to defend a country that has been attacked by another. Lastly, 54% of the respondents agree with the UNSC permitting military force to reinstate a democratic government that has been overthrown. The fact that a slim majority supports using force to restore democracy is consistent with the lower priority placed on this issue, as was described in Chapter 2.

These findings point to Mexicans' ambivalent commitment to multilateralism and to their reluctance to become involved in other countries' internal political affairs. Mexicans support dialogue and multilateral cooperation as well as the use of multilateral force when authorized by the UNSC,

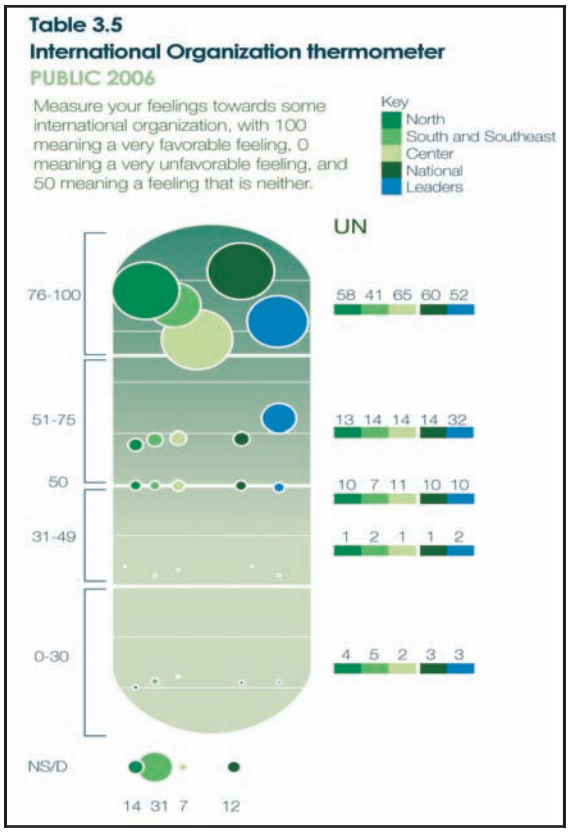
but they are also reluctant to play an active role. Their support for the multilateral use of force authorized by the UNSC has decreased since 2004 in every situation asked about. This change probably reflects the public's decreased attention to international affairs and declining concern about it.

Charting Mexicans' sentiments toward the world: identification and disagreement

Mexicans' sentiments toward different international organizations and countries are consistent with their preference for a pragmatic foreign policy, one that is focused on promoting and protecting their own economic and security interests.

Respondents were asked to rank their sentiments toward six different international (intergovernmental or nongovernmental) organizations, with "0" indicating very unfavorable, "50" being neither favorable nor unfavorable, and "100" very favorable. They gave the highest score, 80 to the United Nations. The second highest score was for the World Trade Organization, with 69, although we should recall almost three-quarters of Mexicans didn't know what the initials stand for. Multinational corporations and the European Union are tied for third, with a score of 68, followed by NGOs that promote human rights with 65 and in last place is the Organization of American States, or OAS, with a score of 64. The only important regional differences we found were regarding multinational companies. In the south and southeast they scored next to last, with a rating of 64, whereas in the north and center they ranked second, with a rating of 74 and 67. No entity obtained a score below 60; as we'll see, Mexicans generally have more favorable sentiments toward international agencies than toward many individual countries (Tables 3.5—3.10).

In general, Mexicans' evaluation of different organizations probably reveals as much about their knowledge as their interests and priorities. They give higher evaluations to the international forums having the most real influence—that is, those where the most far-reaching decisions are made—both in security and international-trade matters, two of the issues Mexicans consider most important. By contrast, they give the lowest scores to the organizations that are the least prominent in the international arena.



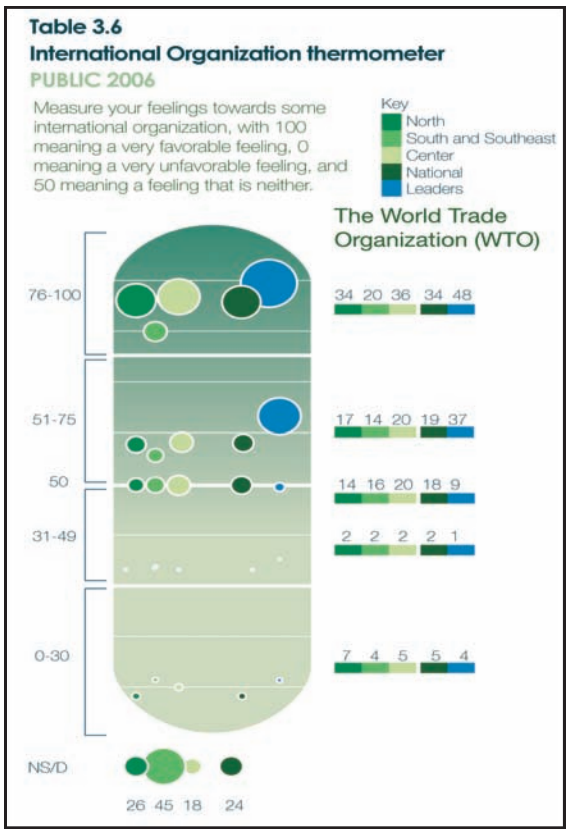


Table 3.7
International Organization thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some international organization, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither.

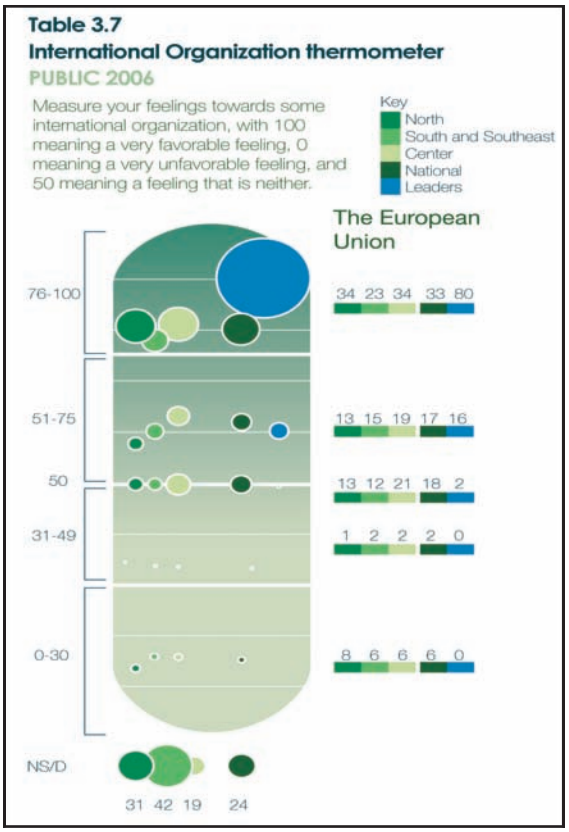


Table 3.8
International Organization thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some international organization, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither.

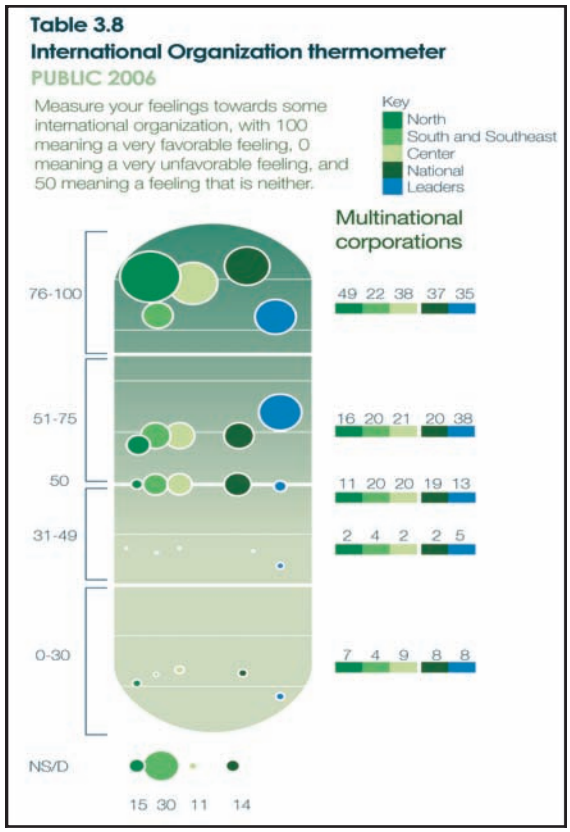


Table 3.9
International Organization thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some international organization, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither.

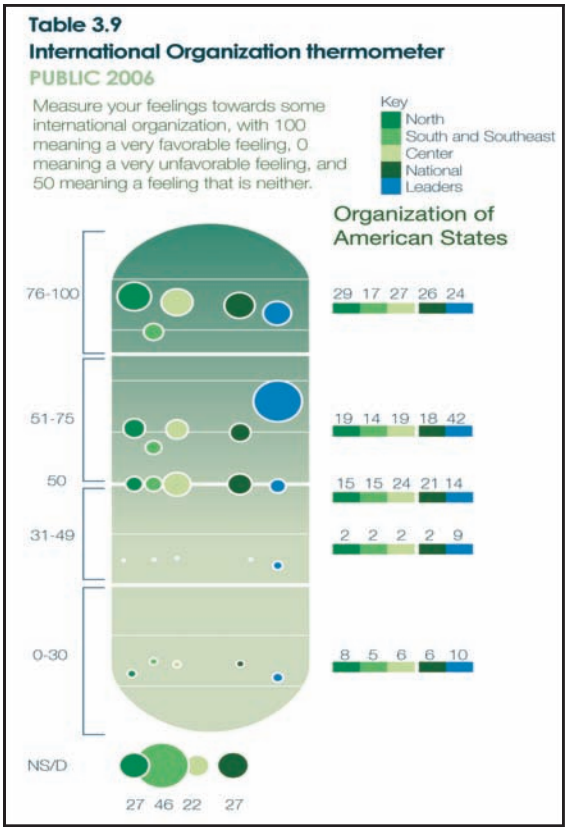
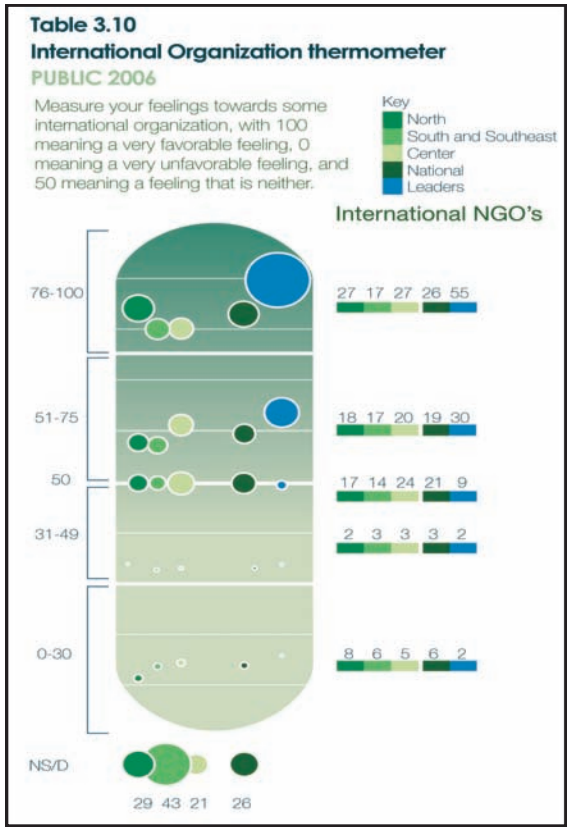


Table 3.10
International Organization thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

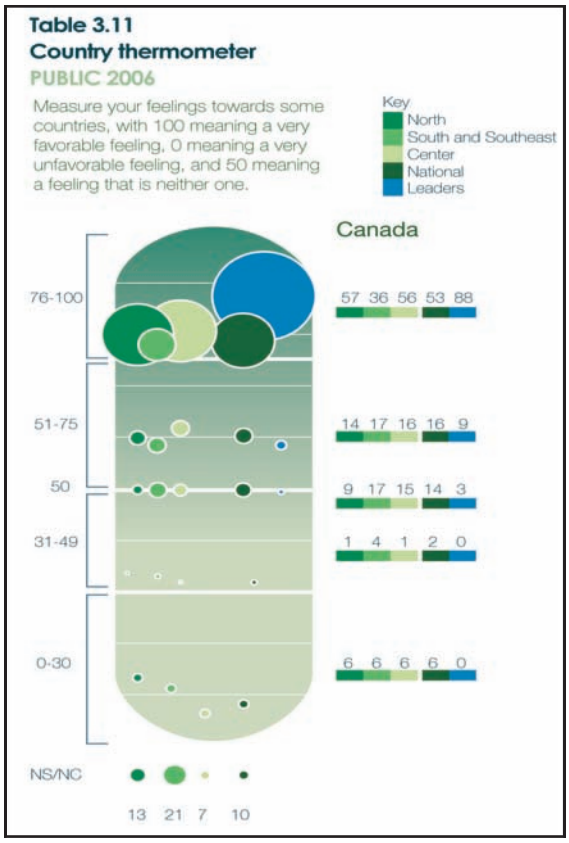
Measure your feelings towards some international organization, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither.



Mexicans' favorable sentiments toward the United Nations reflect their desire to see the strengthening of this organization become a focus of the country's foreign-policy goals. When asked how important strengthening the United Nations should be, 56% of Mexicans say very important, 26% say somewhat important, and only 2% describe it as unimportant. Part of this support may stem from Mexican society's support for the principles enshrined in the Mexican constitution and the United Nations Charter. The constitution's emphasis on international co-operation, equality among nations, non-intervention, and, most importantly, peaceful conflict resolution, parallels the United Nations Charter. Mexican schoolchildren are taught these principles along with the importance of the United Nations as the fundamental international institution for promoting global co-operation and peace.

Mexicans appear to have a more favorable view of developed countries and emerging powers than they do of countries more similar to Mexico both culturally and in terms of social development. Asked to rank their sentiments toward 16 different countries on a scale of 0 to 100, Mexicans gave higher scores to those that are large and successful in terms of economic growth, social welfare, and democratic stability; countries with lower scores are less developed, less stable and more socially unequal. Surprisingly, Latin American countries do not receive the highest scores in terms of favorable sentiments, despite their strong cultural, religious, and linguistic similarities as well as the feeling of friendship Mexicans' feel toward these countries, as will be detailed in Chapter 5 (Table 3.11—3.26).

In 2006, Canada received the highest average score, 75, up 10 points compared with 2004. Very close behind is the United States, with 74. In 2004, it ranked first, although its score for favorable sentiments was six points lower, 68, than this year. The third-highest ranking country is Australia with 69, and Japan follows with a score of 68. China's high ranking, fifth, with 66, is surprising. Mexicans' sentiments toward China appear to indicate that they do not feel threatened by its emergence as a global power. This interpretation is also supported by answers to a separate question: whether the growth of the Chinese economy to a level similar to that of the United States would have a positive or negative impact on Mexico. 38% feel that the impact would be positive, whereas 33% disagree, and 29% either did not answer or said the impact would be neutral.



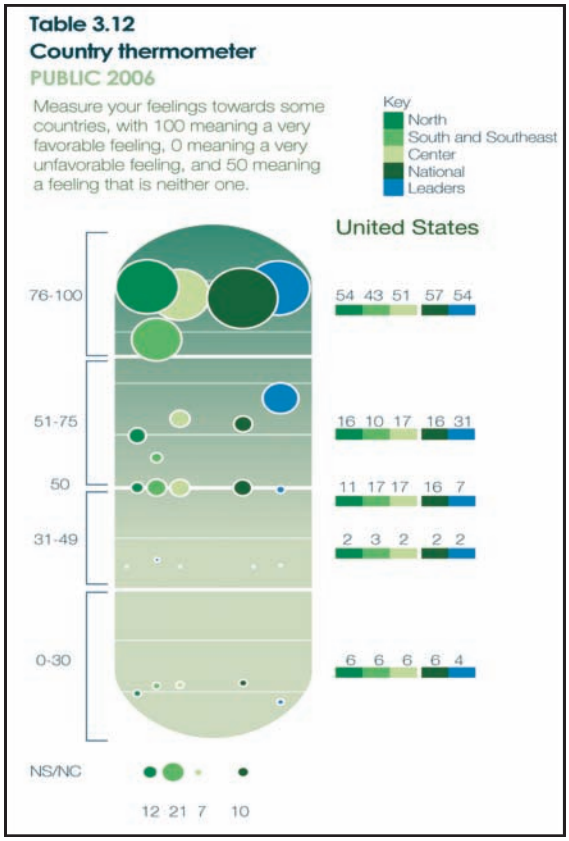


Table 3.13
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

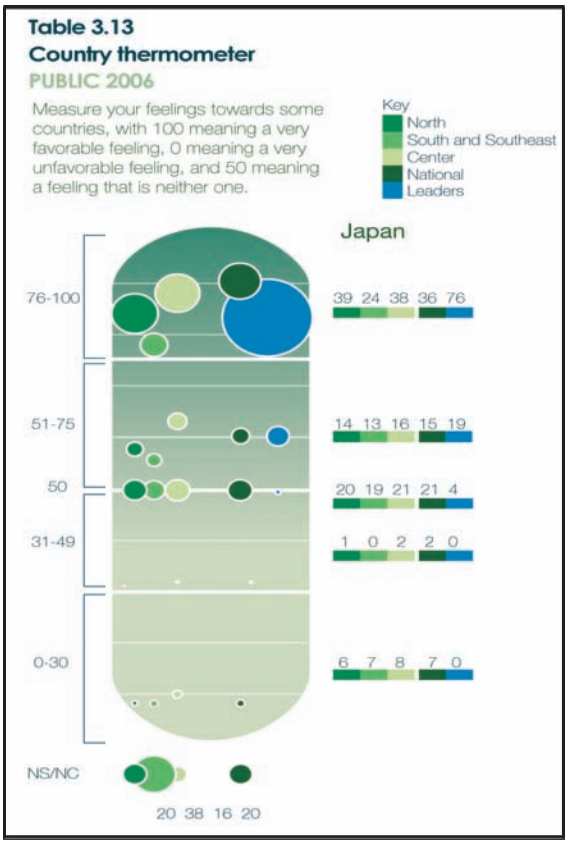


Table 3.14
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

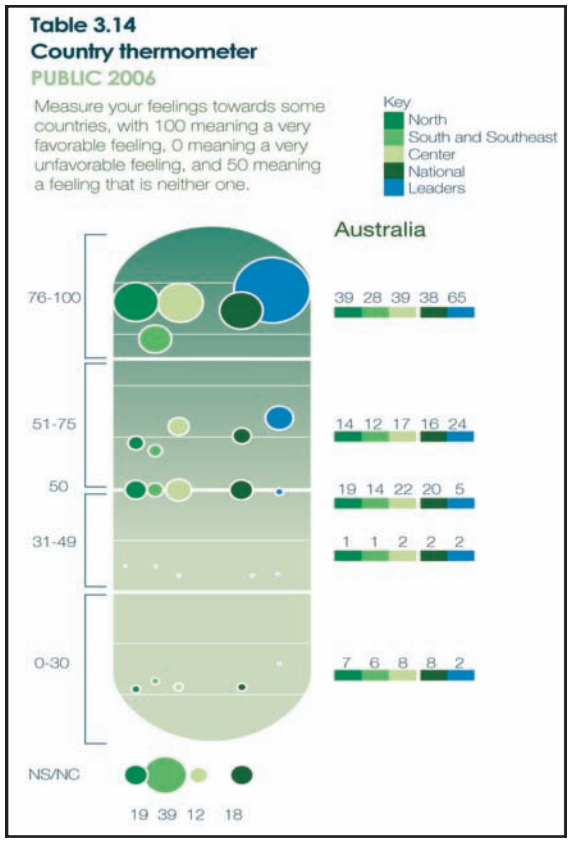


Table 3.15
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

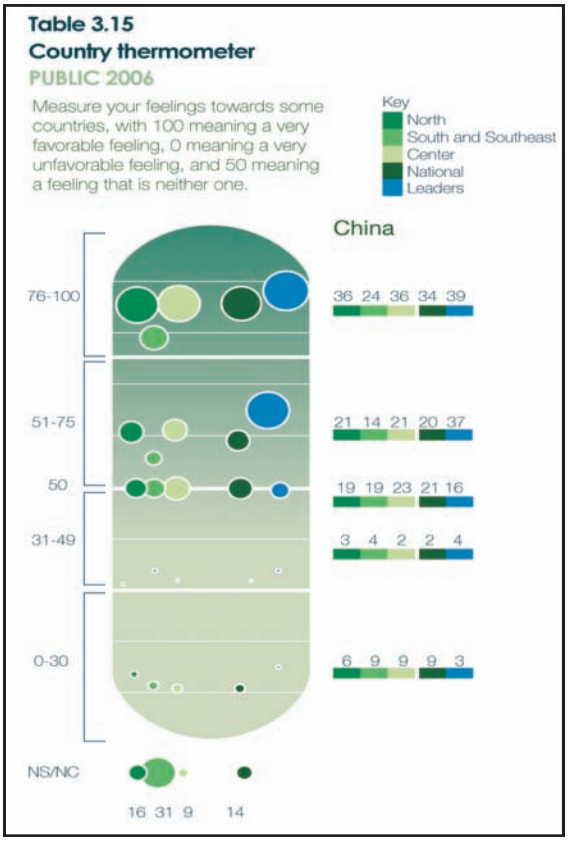


Table 3.16
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

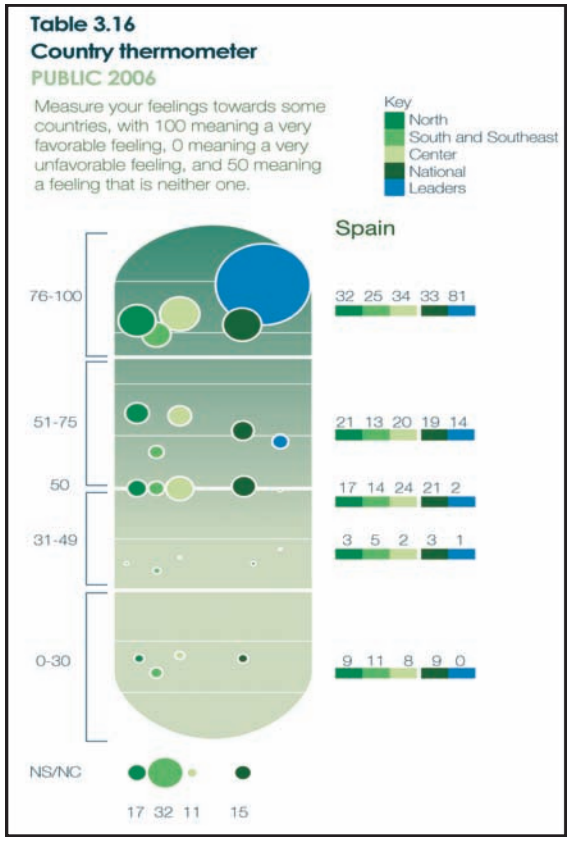


Table 3.17
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

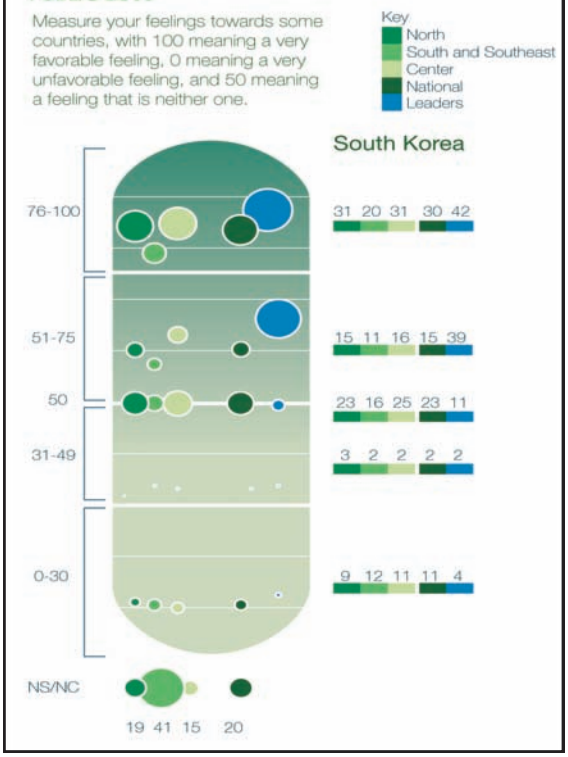


Table 3.18
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

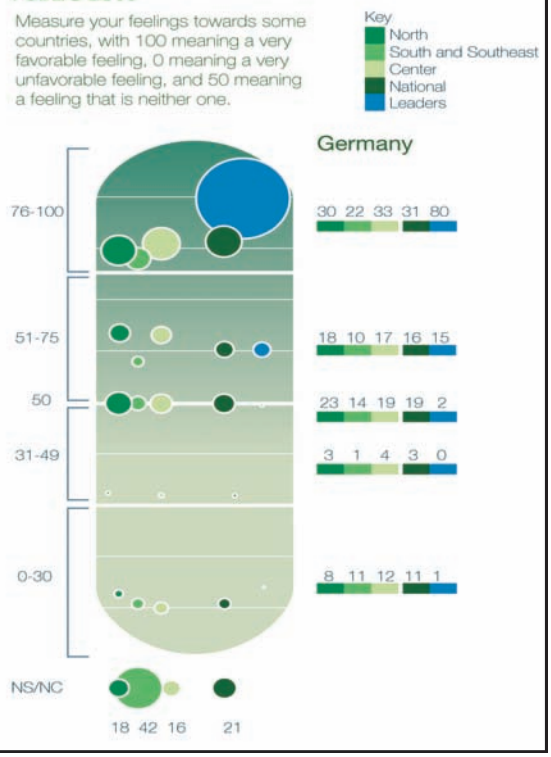


Table 3.19
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

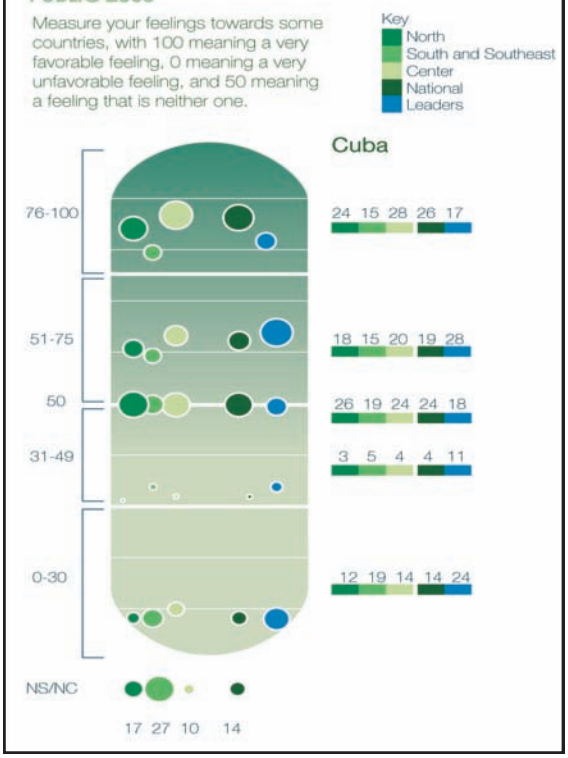


Table 3.20
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

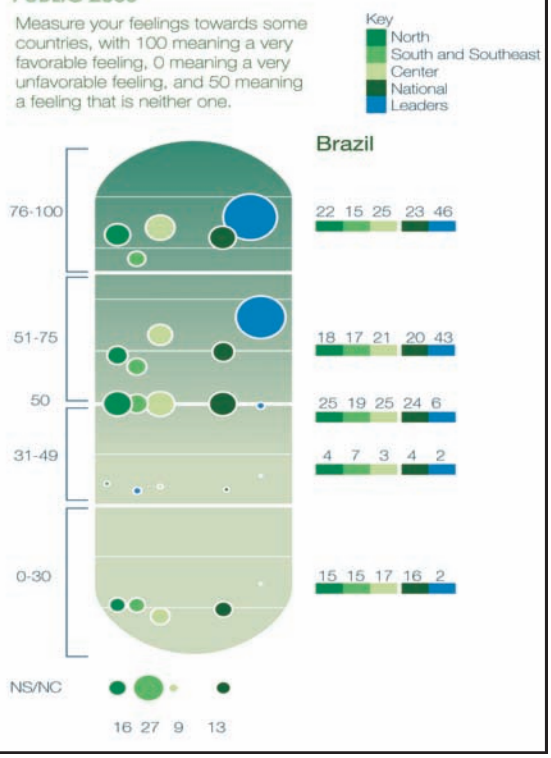


Table 3.21
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

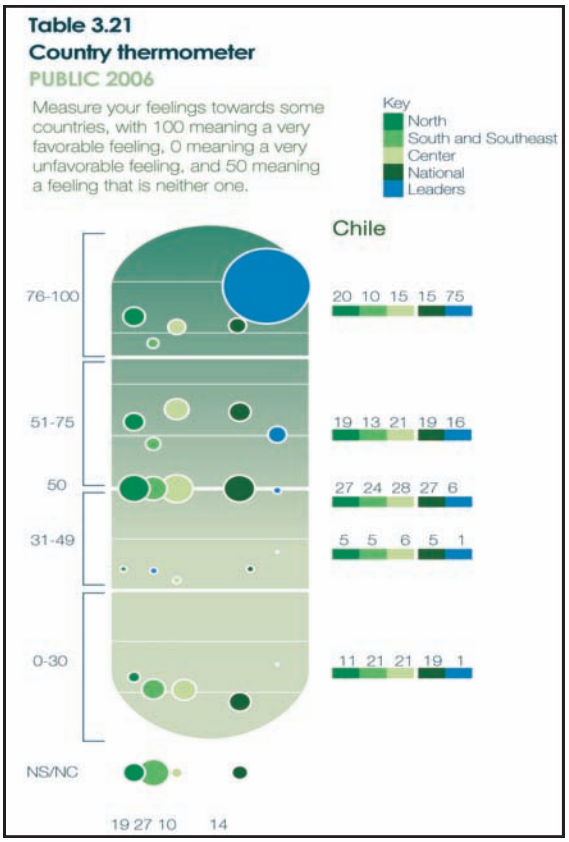


Table 3.22
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

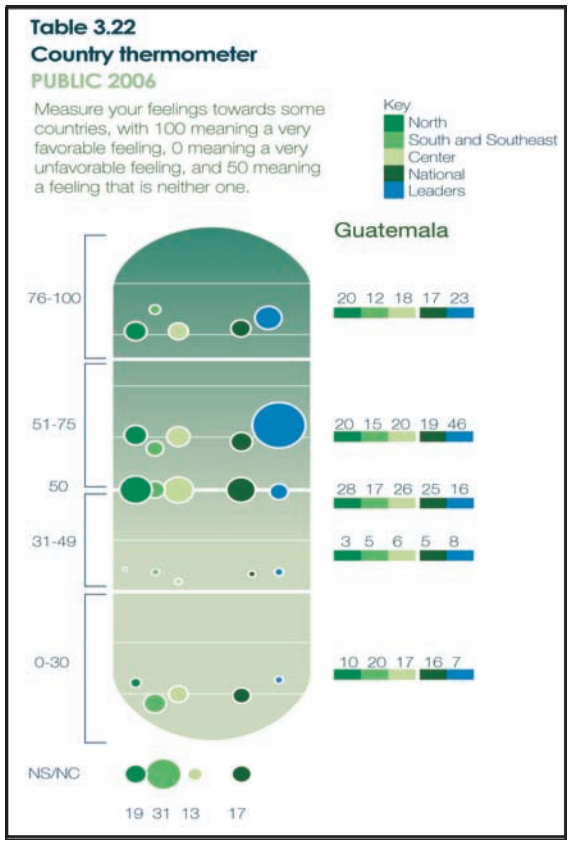


Table 3.23
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.

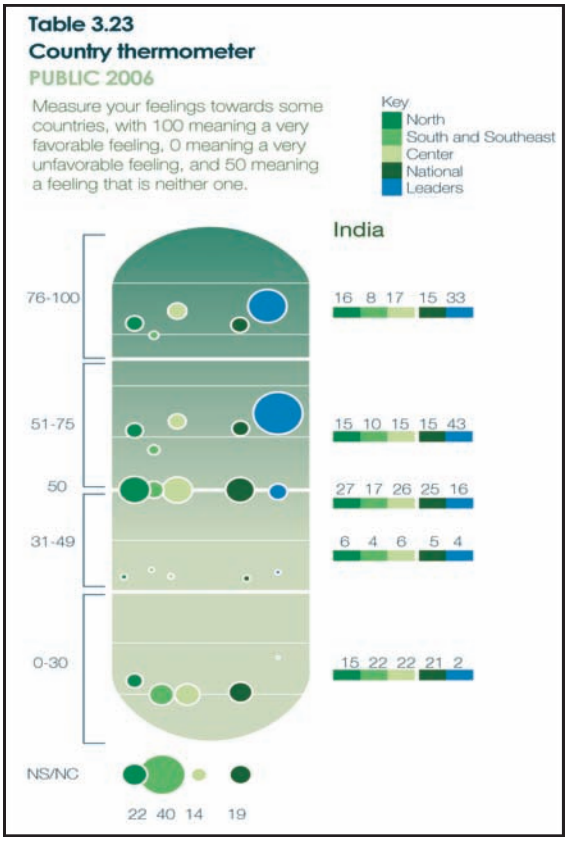
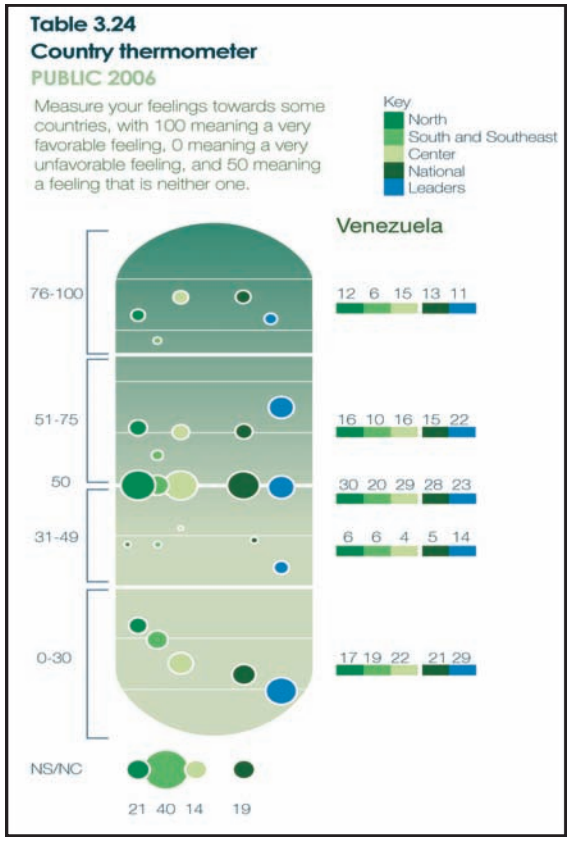
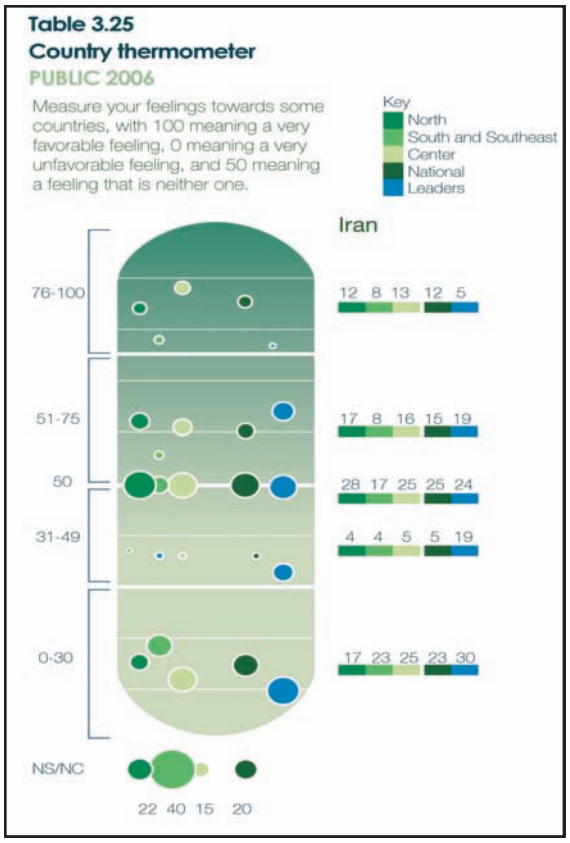
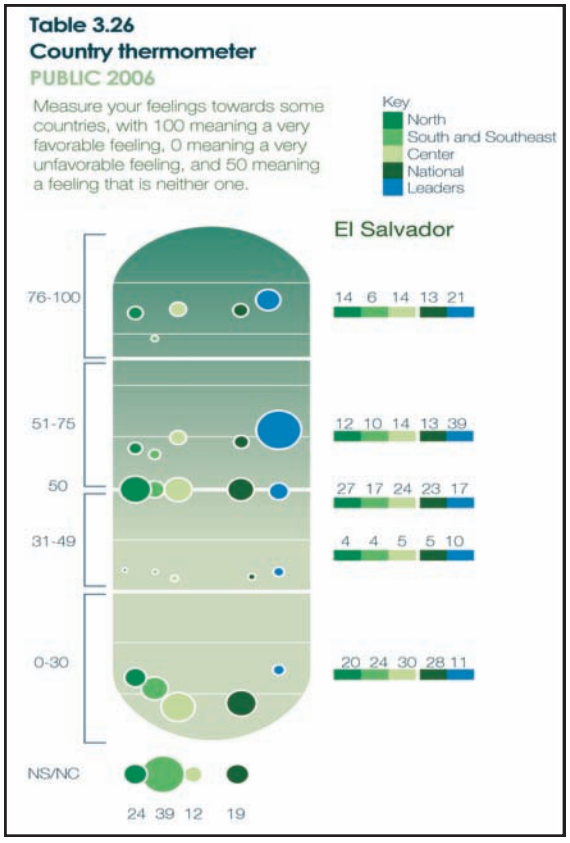


Table 3.24
Country thermometer
PUBLIC 2006

Measure your feelings towards some countries, with 100 meaning a very favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning a feeling that is neither one.







Spain, a developed European country, is next with a score of 65. Another developed European country, Germany is in the next position with a score of 64. South Korea scores 63. Four points below in ninth place, is the first of six Latin American countries included on the list, Cuba, with a favorable rating of 59. Three Latin American countries—Brazil, with 57, Guatemala, with 54, and Chile, with 52,—hold the next positions and are closely followed by India, with 51 and Venezuela, with 50. The lowest rankings went to Iran, with 48, and surprisingly, El Salvador, with 47, was last. The unfavorable view of Iran may be due to respondents' lack of familiarity with it as well as Mexico's longstanding interest in and commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In the case of El Salvador, despite its cultural and social similarity and its geographic proximity to Mexico, sentiments toward it are more negative than toward any other country on the list, perhaps because of the large numbers of Salvadorans who cross Mexican territory on their way to the United States and their more recent association in the Mexican media with organized criminal gangs (maras) operating in Mexico's southern states.

The fact that Chile received a score of 52, behind 11 other countries, is unexpected, since this South American country is clearly a success story relative to the rest of Latin America in terms of its transition to democracy as well as its strong economic and trade growth. On both accounts, Chile is a clear example for Mexico. Moreover, the low scores for Latin American countries indicate they find little favor with Mexicans compared to developed countries. Clearly, Mexicans' sentiments toward other countries reflect material aspirations more than cultural identification or ideological affinity. Mexicans evaluate more favorably those countries that appear to provide keys to success than those where there are cultural similarities or a sincere but fruitless friendship.

CHAPTER 4

Mexico and the World Economy

Mexico's position in the world economy has been declining since the beginning of the decade. In 2000, Mexico was the tenth-largest economy in the world and the second-largest exporter to the United States after Canada. By 2004, after four years of lackluster growth, the economy had dropped to twelfth place and more dynamic economies continue to overtake it. China has displaced Mexico as the second-largest exporter to the United States. But Mexicans remain strong supporters of international trade and foreign direct investment with one important exception: they strongly oppose foreign investment in energy. One of the most surprising findings of the 2006 survey is that Mexicans are much more positive about economic globalization than they were in 2004.

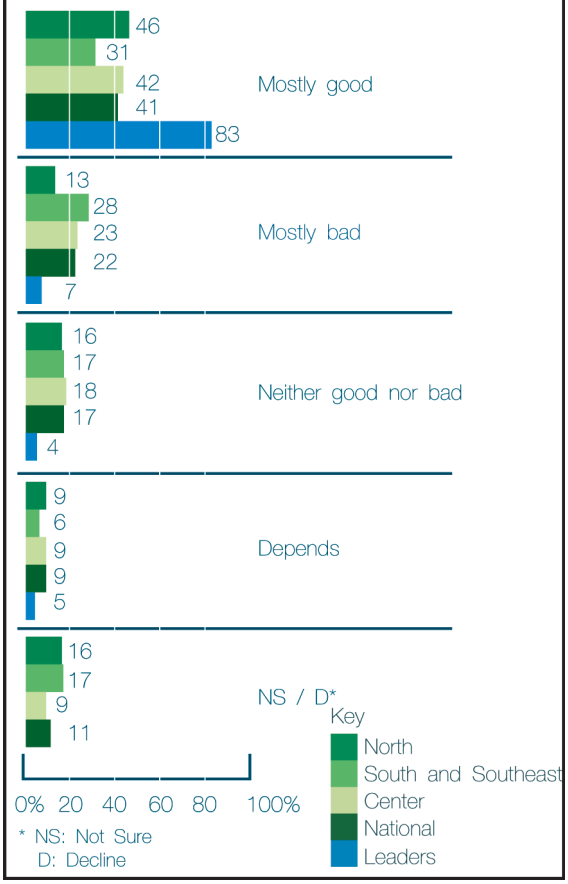
Increased support for globalization

Almost double the number of Mexicans believe that globalization is mostly good for Mexico, 41%, than consider it to be mostly bad, 22%. The rest volunteered answers to this open-ended question that were undecided or neutral (Table 4.1). In 2004, opinions were more divided: 34% said it was mostly good and 31% considered it was mostly bad. Again, the rest were undecided or neutral. Support for the idea that economic globalization is good rose seven percentage points. Belief that it is bad fell nine percentage points, and uncertainty about the effect of globalization stayed roughly the same.

Residents of the poorer south and southeast were less positive than were those who live in northern border and center states. In the south and southeast, only 31% believe that globalization is mostly good, unchanged from the level of support in 2004, while 42% of Mexicans living in center states have a positive opinion, up nine percentage points from 2004. Attitudes were also slightly more favorable among northern border residents; 46% said globalization was mostly good, up from 43% in 2004. The rising support for globalization among

Table 4.1
GLOBALIZATION
PUBLIC 2006

Do you believe that the increasing contact of our economy with others around the world, what is known as globalization, is mostly good or mostly bad for Mexico?

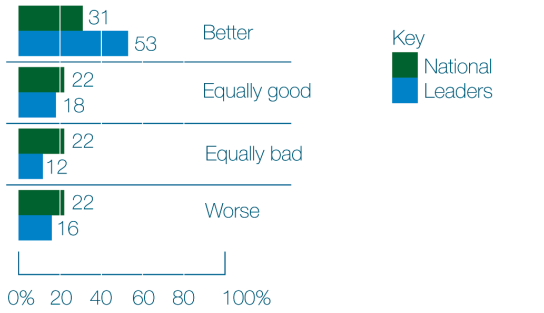


those who have a strong opinion one way or the other suggests that Mexicans are increasingly willing to engage economically with the world. We attribute this increase to Mexicans' improved perceptions of their own personal economic situation and that of the country. 53% of Mexicans believe that the country's economic situation is better than, or

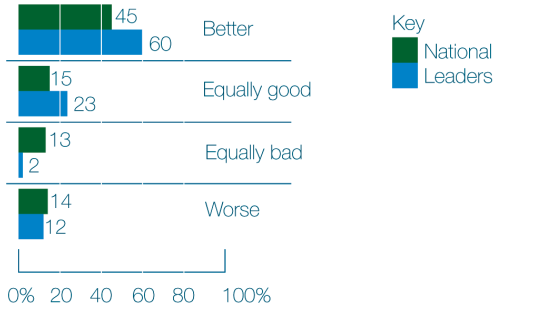
equally as good as, the year before and 60% believe that their personal economic situation will be better, or equally good, in the coming year (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2
Economic Situation
Personal Vs. National
NATIONAL / LEADERS 2006

With respect to last year, do you consider that the country's economic situation is better, the same, or worse?



And how do you think your personal economic situation will be next year, better or worse?



These findings are supported by crosses of the questions. 49% of those who believe that the country's economic situation is better and 41% of those who say it is equally good as the year before agree that globalization is mostly good for Mexico. Only 21% of those who believe that Mexico's economic situation is better than in 2005 and the same number of those who say that it is equally good consider that globalization is mostly bad for Mexico.

The same patterns hold for respondents' assessment of their personal economic situation. 49% of those who say that they will be better off in the coming year agree that economic globalization is mostly good for Mexico. The figure is 39% for those who expect their personal situation to be equally as good in the coming year. Only 17% of those who expect to do better in the coming year say that globalization is mostly bad, while 22% who say that they will be doing equally well believe that economic globalization is mostly bad for Mexico.

Mexicans are also more confident than two years ago about the world's outlook. 43% agree or somewhat agree that the world is going in the right direction compared to only 26% in 2004. Still, a majority, 54%, disagree or somewhat disagree with this statement, down from 69% in 2004.

Whatever they think about globalization, Mexicans do follow news about finance and the economy and are surprisingly knowledgeable about the institutions of the international economy. As mentioned in Chapter 1, 25% of Mexicans say they are very interested and 51% say they are somewhat interested in financial and economic news. A majority could name the European common currency. And more than a quarter could identify the World Trade Organization by its initials (OMC in Spanish), not surprisingly low given the question's difficulty.

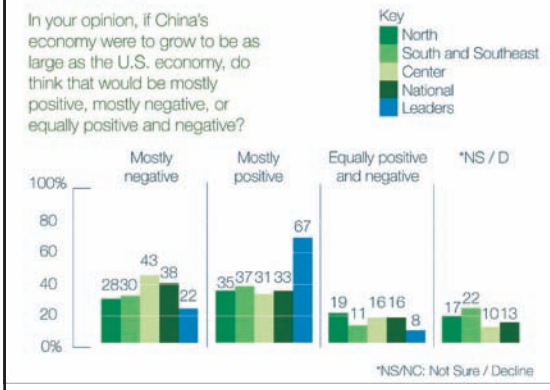
Many Mexicans see economics as the central element in their country's involvement in world affairs, a point that is clear from their assessments of foreign-policy goals in Chapter 2 and international threats in Chapter 3. Promoting exports is the top objective in Mexican foreign policy: 76% say it is very important and only 6% say it is of little or no importance. Attracting direct foreign investment ranks fifth of the 12 possible goals asked about in the survey. 67% say it is very important and only 9% say it is of little or no importance.

The objective of promoting exports enjoys consistent support across the country. Opinions are more divided on the importance of attracting investment. In the northern states, home to hundreds of foreign-owned factories that produce for export, 75% say attracting investment is a very important foreign policy goal. Only 50% of those who live in the south or southeast, which win very little foreign investment, agree.

Mexicans continue to feel threatened by a world economic crisis. 70% consider it to be a grave threat to Mexico's most important interests over the next ten years, placing it fourth in a list of eleven possible threats, following drug-trafficking and pandemics and tied with international terrorism and global warming. Economic competition from Asian countries is perceived to be much less threatening to Mexico; only 38% believe that it is a grave threat to Mexico's most important interests.

One important development in the world economy has been the rise in economic power and prominence of China. Not only has China replaced Mexico as the world's second-largest exporter to the United States but its trade surplus with Mexico has risen from $1.2 billion in 2000 to $16.5 billion in 2005. Although Mexican media coverage focuses on China as a (sometimes) unfair trade rival, Mexicans divide on whether China's rise is mostly positive or mostly negative. 38% say that if China's economy were to grow to be as large as the U.S. economy it would be mostly negative and 33% say it would be mostly positive. (29% say it would be equally positive and negative or were not sure) (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Effect of China's economic growth
PUBLIC 2006



This division is reflected in Mexicans' attitudes toward China. When asked to rank countries according to the favorable opinions they have of them, Mexicans named China fifth on a list of sixteen, trailing only Canada, the United States, Japan and Australia and higher than other developing country competitors such as Brazil and India. (Chapter 3 lays this out in more detail.) Strongly unfavorable feelings (0-30 on a 100-point scale) toward China declined to 9% in 2006, down from 16% in 2004. Strongly favorable feelings (76-100 on the same scale) rose to 34% from 27%.

It is surprising that despite China's impressive economic record, Mexicans do not appear to be very concerned about competition either from China or from other Asian rivals such as India and South Korea. Positive opinions of these countries are even stronger than those of some Latin American countries that are culturally closer.

International trade is good but…no more free trade agreements

International trade enjoys wide, robust support among Mexicans, although there are noteworthy regional differences, with support strongest in the north. To determine how sensitive respondents were to question wording on trade issues, the survey questionnaire included two related questions, each asked to half of the respondents. The first question, asked to half of the respondents, simply asked whether they agree or disagree with Mexico increasing its trade with other countries (a possibly positively biased question). The second question, asked to the other half of survey respondents, were first told: "Some people believe that increasing trade helps to create jobs and allows Mexicans to buy products and services that cost less and are of better quality. Others think that increasing trade with other countries causes unemployment and causes Mexican producers to confront unfair competition." Only then were they asked whether they agree or disagree with Mexico increasing its trade with other countries (a positive/negative question).

For the first possibly positively biased question, 79% either strongly agree or somewhat agree with Mexico increasing its trade. In response to the positive/negative question, 74% also either strongly agree or somewhat agree, a difference just slightly above the margin of error.

For both questions, support for international trade was strongest in the northern border states, 84% for the first question and 78% for the positive/negative question, and weakest in the south and southeast, 63% for the first question and 59% for the positive/negative question. Those in the center states showed the largest difference in response to the two questions. While 82% strongly or somewhat agreed with the simple wording of Mexico increasing its trade, 7% fewer agreed when asked with the positive/negative question wording. Clearly, whatever the wording of the survey question, support for increasing international trade is strong across regions.

This support even cuts across respondents' varying assessments of the economic outlook for themselves and the country. A large majority, 83%, of those who say that Mexico's economic situation is better than in the previous year either strongly or somewhat agree with Mexico increasing its international trade. More surprisingly, a large majority, 75%, of those who say Mexico's economic situation is worse than a year ago also

either strongly or somewhat agree with increasing international trade. Those who think their personal economic situation will be better in the coming year overwhelmingly support Mexico increasing its international trade; 81% either strongly or somewhat agree. Somewhat fewer, 69%, of those who believe their personal economic situation will be worse in the coming year either strongly or somewhat agree. But even this lower level of support is quite impressive.

This impression of strong support for increasing international trade is reinforced by Mexicans' generally favorable opinion of trade's impact on different social and economic groups and national policies.

In this case, half the survey respondents were asked simply about international trade. The other half were asked about the North American Free Trade Agreement. Although the vast majority of Mexico's trade is within NAFTA, it is important to compare support for international trade in general with support for NAFTA in particular. That will give a more accurate gauge of whether Mexicans support trade flows across the globe or just the special position they enjoy with the United States. It also provides a gauge for assessing whether negative evaluations of NAFTA infect attitudes toward international trade in general.

For the first half who were asked simply about the effects of international trade, a large majority, 74%, believe that international trade is good for job creation in Mexico, 66% believe it is good for Mexican businesses, 61% say it is good for reducing poverty, 59% believe that it is good for the Mexican economy, 53% agree that it is good for the living standard of people like themselves, and 53% believe that it is good for agriculture (el campo). However, they divide on whether international trade is good for the environment; 41% say it is good and 41% say it is bad. Mexicans overwhelmingly agree that trade is good for the U.S. economy (78%) (Tables 4.4—4.7).

The other half of the respondents were asked whether NAFTA was good or bad for the same social and economic groups and goals as in the trade question. Mexicans agree that NAFTA is generally positive, although at lower levels than for international trade. 67% believe that NAFTA is good for job creation in Mexico, up from 49% in 2004. 61% say it is good for Mexican businesses, compared to 50% in 2004. A majority, 55%, believe that NAFTA is good for reducing poverty in Mexico and the same number say it is good for the Mexican economy. A slight majority, 51%, say it is good for the living standard of people like themselves, up from 41% in the 2004 survey. A plurality, 47%, say that it is good for agriculture in Mexico, increasing from the 38% who said so in 2004, and 37% say it is bad, down from 49% in 2004. 46% believe that NAFTA is good for the environment compared to 39% in 2004.

Table 4.4
Benefits from international trade
PUBLIC 2006

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for the U.S. economy?

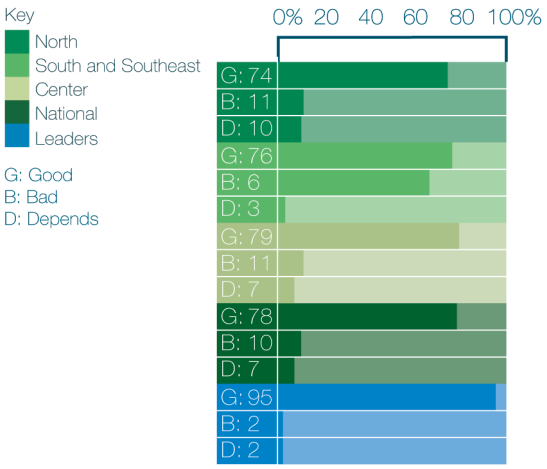


Table 4.5
Benefits from international trade
PUBLIC 2006

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for the environment?

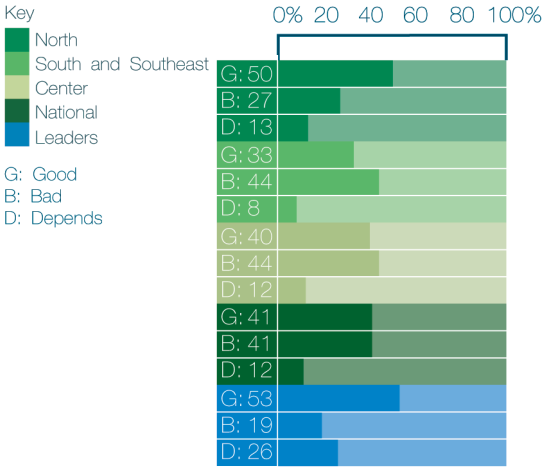


Table 4.6
Benefits from international trade
PUBLIC 2006

Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for the Mexican economy?

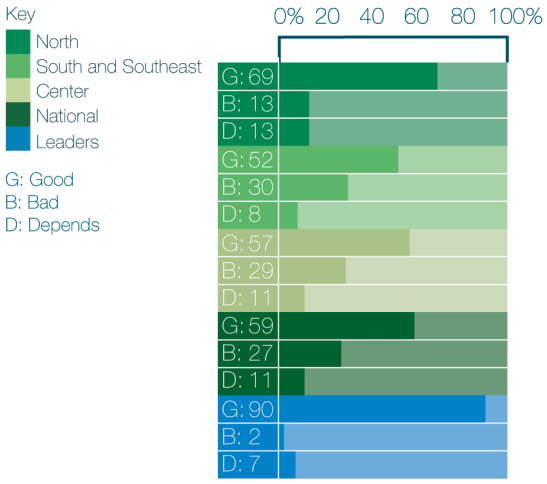
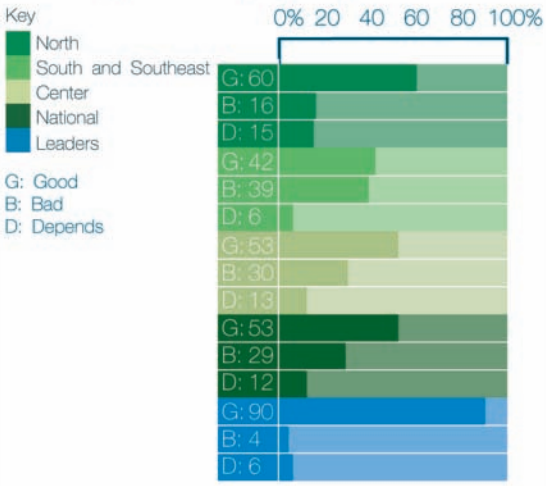


Table 4.7
Benefits from international trade
PUBLIC 2006

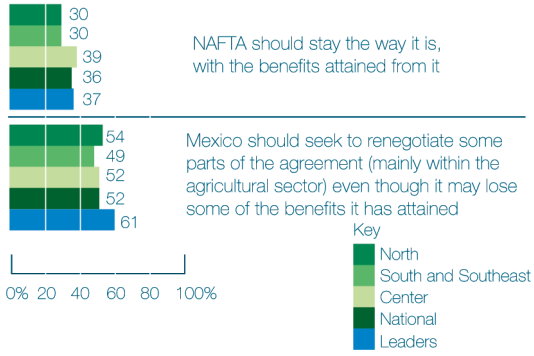
Overall, do you think international trade is good or bad for the living standard of people like you?



In sum, support for international trade is a bit stronger than it is for NAFTA. One explanation for the difference may be that NAFTA's effects receive significant media coverage and analysis in Mexico, while international trade in general is not as extensively studied. Another quite plausible explanation, related to that above, is NAFTA's politicization in the 2006 presidential campaign. Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the presidential candidate for the center-left PRD, called for parts of NAFTA to be renegotiated, particularly the provisions which completely liberalize trade in sensitive agricultural products such as corn, beans and meat in 2008. A majority, 52%, agree with this proposal; they believe that parts of NAFTA, particularly the agricultural chapter, should be renegotiated even if this means that Mexico will lose some of the benefits it gained in the agreement (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8
NAFTA terms and renegotiation
PUBLIC 2006

As you know, Mexico is part of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Which of the following comes closest to your point of view?



Interestingly, when crossing the NAFTA renegotiation question with political party identification, there is no association between these two. A majority of Mexicans want parts of NAFTA renegotiated, regardless of their political party identification. Of those who support the center-right PAN, 55% back renegotiating the agricultural provisions. 51% of those who support the PRI and the same number of those who back the center-left PRD say the same, as do 52% of independents. None of these differences between parties are larger than the margin of error.

Despite favorable attitudes toward international trade and NAFTA, a majority of Mexicans, 53%, think Mexico should focus on the twelve trade agreements it has already signed with 43 countries. This means that the current network of free trade agreements is seen as ceiling rather than a floor regarding Mexico's foreign trade policy. However, a considerable minority, 42%, believe it would be

a good idea for Mexico to continue expanding this network and sign new agreements. In the south and southeast, support for the idea of signing new trade agreements is 10 percentage points lower than in the north.

The foreign-policy implication of these results is that it would be difficult, although not impossible, for the next presidential administration to push for deeper integration with the world economy through the signing of new free trade agreements. After two decades of reforms that have opened the economy to trade and investment, Mexicans do not feel this is the right time to introduce major new initiatives in current economic foreign policy. Rather, the survey results appear to indicate that they prefer that their country maintains an open economy, but also seeks refinements to existing agreements.

Foreign Investment: mostly good but…the oil is ours

Mexican attitudes toward foreign investment are also quite positive, although their support is more qualified than for trade and they have significant reservations. Mexicans generally like multinational corporations, the main foreign investors. 37% of them scored multinationals between 76 and 100 on a 0-100 ranking of international organizations, rising from 25% who scored them at the same level in 2004. 20% gave multinationals favorability scores of between 51 and 75 and 29% scored them 50 or lower, meaning that they have an unfavorable opinion of multinational corporations.

This liking for multinational corporations reflects more favorable attitudes toward foreign investment since 2004. A plurality, 47%, say that Mexico benefits a lot from foreign investment, 15 percentage points more than said so than in 2004, and an additional 29% say that Mexico benefits some, compared to 22% in 2004. Those who say Mexico benefits only a little or not at all from foreign investment dropped to 20% in 2006 from 42% in 2004.

As with trade, half of the survey respondents were simply asked if they agree or disagree with the Mexican government stimulating foreign investment, a possibly positively biased question, and the other half were asked a positive/negative question. When asked the positively biased question, 38% strongly agree with the Mexican government stimulating foreign investment and another 41% somewhat agree. Only 15% somewhat disagree or strongly disagree. These levels of support for stimulating foreign investment dropped slightly for the positive/negative question, "Some people believe that foreign investment is mostly positive because it brings new technologies to Mexico and helps create new jobs. Other people believe that foreign investment is mostly negative because it creates unfair competition that harms Mexican businesses. Do you agree or disagree with the Mexican government stimulating foreign investment?" When presented with the positive/negative, 34% strongly agree and another 39% somewhat agree. Only 17% somewhat or strongly disagree (Tables 4.9 and 4.10). As with trade, support for foreign investment is strong even when presented with the positive and negative arguments.

Table 4.9
Stimulating foreign investment
PUBLIC 2006

Some people believe that foreign investment is mostly positive because it brings new technologies to Mexico, and helps create new jobs . Other people believe that foreign investment is mostly negative because it generates unfair competition that harms Mexican businesses. Do you agree or disagree with Mexican government stimulating foreign investment?

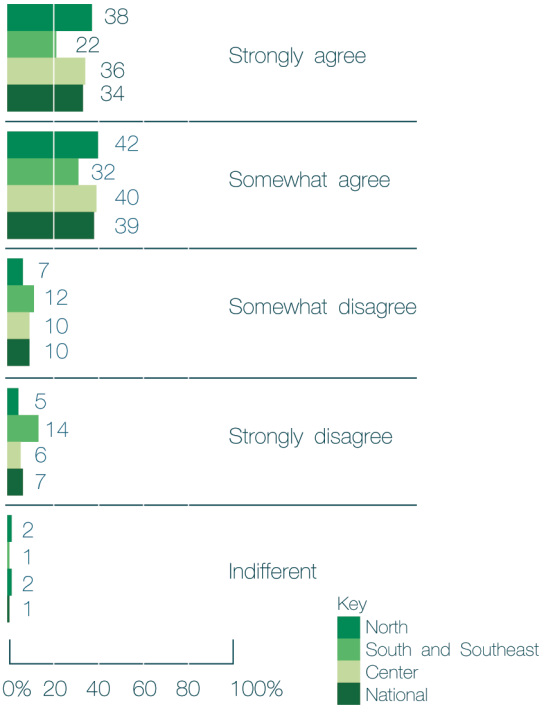
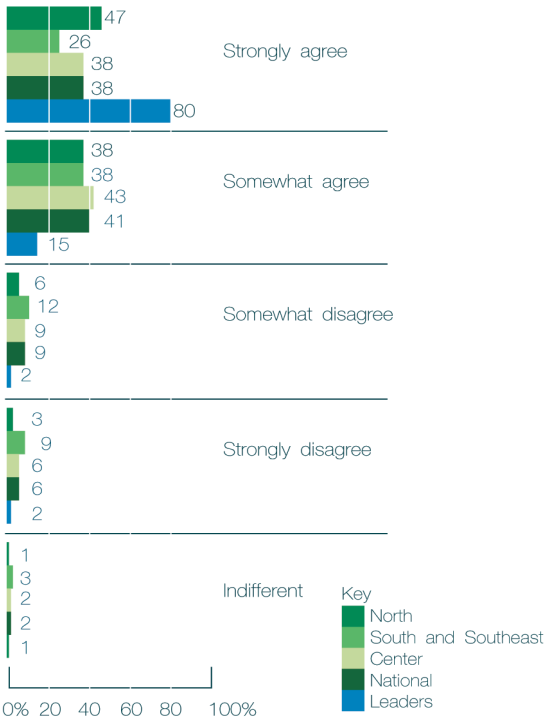


Table 4.10
Stimulating foreign investment
PUBLIC 2006

Do you agree or disagree with Mexican government stimulating foreign investment?



This question was asked to half of those surveyed. The other half were provided with an introductory explanation of some positive and negative effects of foreign investment. The two questions are designed to test whether attitudes toward foreign investment are sensitive to question wording and framing."

However, and very importantly, support for foreign investment does not extend to sensitive economic sectors. Opposition has grown for every sector asked about since the 2004 survey. 57% do not think that the Mexican government should permit foreigners to invest in telecommunications companies, an increase from 45% in 2004. 68% say that foreign investment should not be permitted in the electricity sector and 70% say it should not be permitted in gas. An overwhelming 76% say that it should not be permitted in oil exploration, production and distribution, compared to 68% in 2004. 54% do not want foreign investment in media companies and 58% do not believe it should be permitted in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports and rail lines. 60% argue that foreigners should not be allowed to hold government bonds such as Cetes (Tables 4.11—4.17).

Table 4.11
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **telecommunications companies such as Telmex or Avantel**?

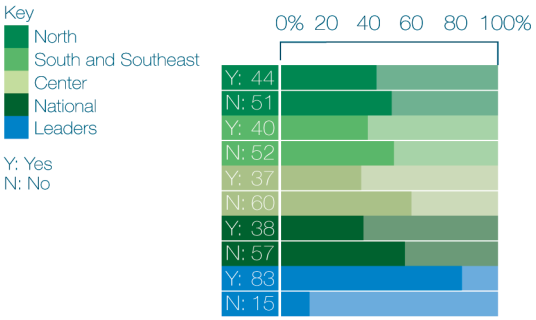


Table 4.12
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **electricity**?

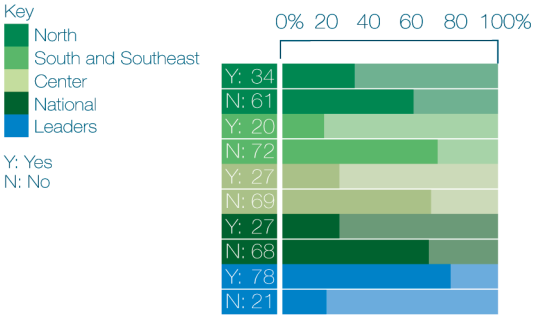


Table 4.13
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **gas**?

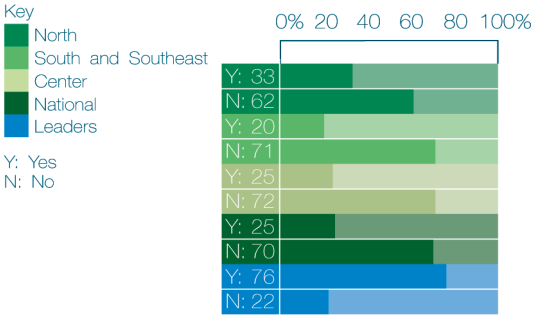


Table 4.14
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **oil production, exploration and distribution**?

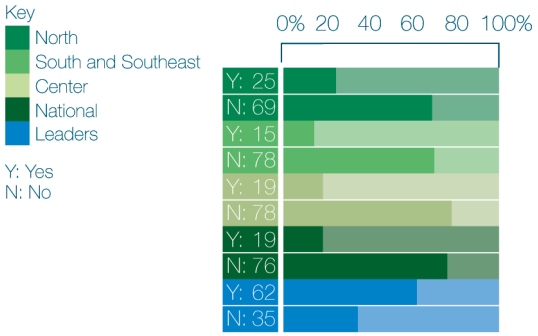


Table 4.15
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **government bonds such as Cetes**?

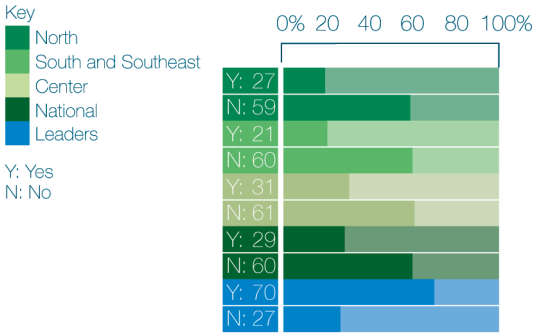


Table 4.16
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **media companies such as television networks and newspapers**?

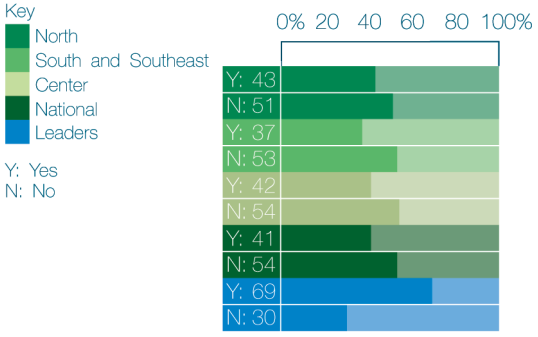
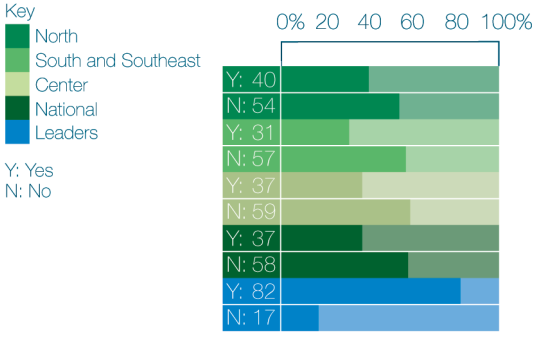


Table 4.17
Foreign investment in sectors
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, should the Mexican government permit or not that foreigners invest in **infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports and rail lines**?



As these results show, there is much more support for Mexico maintaining its traditional restrictions on foreign investment in oil, gas and electricity than there is for any proposal to open up these sectors. Candidates in the 2006 presidential campaign were divided over foreign investment in energy. The center-left PRD opposed any opening while the center-right PAN proposed limited opening. Although there is somewhat more opposition to permitting foreign investment in electricity, by survey respondents who identify with the PRD, 75%, than by those who identify with the PAN, 60%, the general sentiment is similar. In gas, the numbers are similar; 67% of PAN supporters and 71% of PRD backers say no to investment in gas. The numbers rise for those opposed to foreign investment in oil, 74% for the PAN and 78% for the PRD. If the government wants to move forward with plans to permit limited foreign investment in energy, it will need to conduct a sustained public education campaign to win over the vast majority of Mexicans who oppose it.

CHAPTER 5
Mexico in the Americas: between North and South

Building bridges: Mexico's role in the Americas

In the coming years, Mexico will need to find the balance between looking north and south. Mexico has played many different roles in the Americas in its recent history. In the 1960s it had very friendly relations with Cuba, for public consumption, while it co-operated covertly with the United States. During the 1970s, it sought to lead the Third World through its efforts to create a New International Order and its participation in the Group of 77. Central America became its arena in the 1980s as it tried to mediate in the civil wars raging in its backyard. During the 1990s, Mexico sought to become part of the First World by negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada and becoming a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

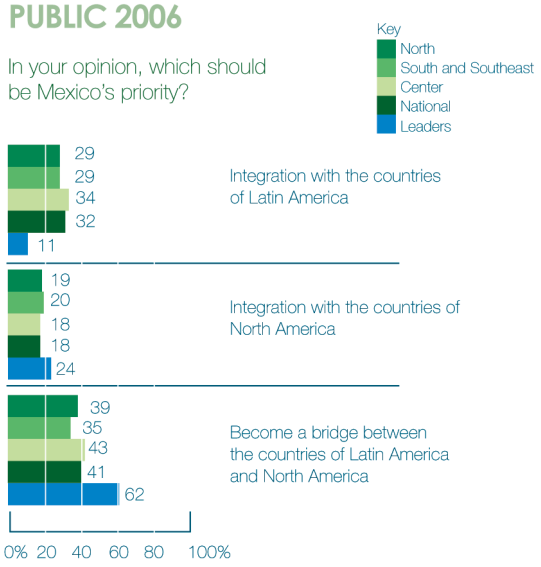
Yet, twelve years after entering NAFTA and joining international organizations more commonly associated with wealthy countries, Mexico is still a developing country and debate is again rising over what its role should be. The status quo, stagnant integration with North America and limited involvement with Latin America, seems to have run into a dead end. Should Mexico deepen its ties with the United States and Canada? Should it resist further integration with North America and seek closer ties with Latin America? Or should it foster economic and political cooperation across all of the Americas?

The 2006 survey results suggest that Mexicans look North, at their partners, and South, at their friends, forming a bridge between the two. Mexicans appreciate the advantages they gain from being in North America, but do not want to forget their friends in Latin America where their cultural affinities are strongest. In their view, policy-makers should not address the question as a North-South dilemma but as a question of finding equilibrium between the two. They do not want to make a choice between their interests and their hearts.

A plurality, 41%, believe that Mexico's priority should be to become a bridge between countries of Latin America and North America, instead of looking either North or South. Yet 32% say that integrating with Latin America should be Mexico's priority and only 18% want North American integration to be their country's priority (Table 5.1). This finding is consistent with the strong Latin American identity reported in Chapter 1 compared with the relatively weak identification with North America among the Mexican public.

Table 5.1
Mexico's priority in the region
PUBLIC 2006

In your opinion, which should be Mexico's priority?

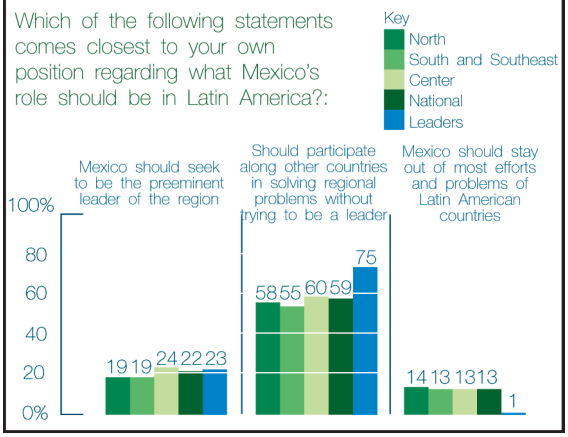


Mexicans also want their country to work with Latin American countries as an equal rather than attempting to lead them. When asked if Mexico should seek to become the preeminent leader in Latin America, only 22% favor Mexico's leadership, whereas a clear majority, 59%, say that Mexico should work with other Latin American countries in solving regional problems, and only 13% want

Mexico to stay out of Latin American problems (Table 5.2). In contrast to other similar countries in Latin America, such as Brazil, a rival for influence, Mexicans do not seem to have any major interest in unilaterally projecting influence beyond their borders, particularly in terms of "hard" power (economic, demographic, territorial and military resources) and to a lesser extent "soft" power (cultural and political resources). When engaging in international and regional affairs, they seem to prefer cooperation over leadership.

Table 5.2
Role of Mexico in Latin America
PUBLIC 2006

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own position regarding what Mexico's role should be in Latin America?:



When asked which region Mexico should pay more attention to outside of North America, a majority, 51%, said Latin America, while in 2004 it was only a plurality, 44%. Roughly half as many Mexicans say that the priority should be Europe, 24%. Interest in all other regions pales by comparison; Asia gets as little attention (3%) as Africa (5%) and the Middle East (3%). Mexicans clearly have a selective and constrained view of their role in the world, and focus almost exclusively on three regions: North America, Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Europe. The rest of the world is not on their radar screen.

How do Mexicans see the future of Latin America and North America? Almost three-quarters of Mexicans, 72%, believe that there will be greater economic integration in Latin America in the future. Two-thirds, 67%, believe that there will be greater economic integration in North America. Large majorities predict that there will also be greater political integration in the two regions: 64% say so for Latin America and 61% believe that will happen in North America (Tables 5.3 and 5.4). Mexicans who live in the center states are more likely to foresee greater political and economic integration with both North and Latin America than are residents of the south and southeast. It is surprising that those who live closer to Latin America are more skeptical about the future of economic and political integration in the region than those with no direct contact. In the center of the country, 78% think there will be greater economic integration and 70% expect more political integration in Latin America, while in the south and southeast only 52% and 40% share this view.

Table 5.3
Economic integration in Latin America
PUBLIC 2006

Do you think that in the future there will or will not be greater economic integration between the countries of Latin America?

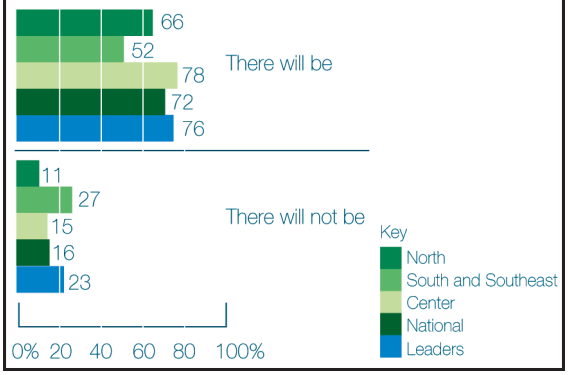
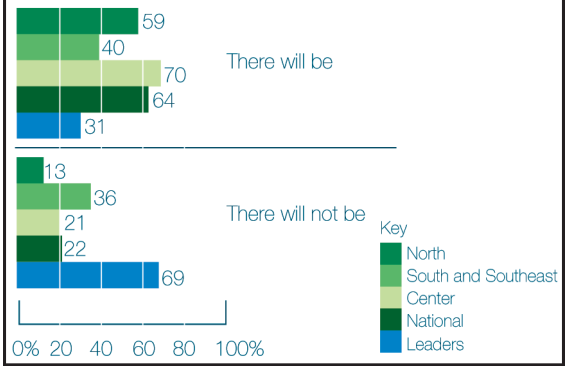


Table 5.4
Political integration in Latin America
PUBLIC 2006

Do you think that in the future there will or will not be greater political integration between the countries of Latin America similar to what is occurring among the European countries?



From regions to countries

When the survey asked Mexicans to give opinions about different countries, rather than overall regions, their answers change. In this case, their preferences are influenced far more by their aspirations and self-interest than by their cultural affinities. In general, we found that Mexicans think favorably of their wealthy partners in the North and have somewhat less favorable feelings toward their friends in the South. In general, the more developed a country is, the more favorably Mexicans feel toward it, regardless of whether they consider the country a friend or a partner.

One of the most surprising findings of the 2004 survey was that feelings toward Latin American countries were less favorable than those toward culturally distant countries in Asia or Europe. The 2006 study confirms those results, as detailed in Chapter 3.

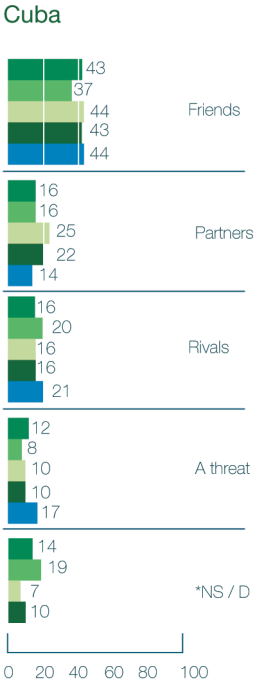
Mexicans' affinity toward Latin American countries shines through, however, when asked how they would describe the relationship between Mexico and various Latin American and North American countries. Majorities describe Argentina, with 56%, Guatemala, with 55%, Brazil, with 53% and Chile, with 52% as friends rather than as partners, rivals or threats while pluralities consider Venezuela, with 45%, and Cuba, with 43%, primarily as friends. These views contrast with the way Mexicans see the other countries in North America: 50% consider the United States to be a partner while 36% describe it as a friend; 48% see Canada as a partner and 43% as a friend (Tables 5.5—5.12).

Mexicans also take into account other concerns, such as economic interests, rivalry and security, although in lower proportion. Large minorities consider all the six Latin American countries we asked about to be partners rather than friends. Brazil came first, with 30% and Cuba last, 22%. Few respondents described any of the countries in the Americas as a rival or threat—the two negative options—suggesting that Mexicans do not perceive their neighborhood to be hostile. Still, there is a slight uneasiness: 16% consider Cuba as a rival and 10% as a threat while 14% describe Venezuela as a rival and 6% as a threat—higher percentages than the 5% who see the United States as a threat. Only 4% describe the relationship between Mexico and Brazil as one of rivals, which is interesting given that Brazil is the only Latin American country that competes with Mexico in terms of economic and demographic power.

Table 5.5
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?

Key
North
South and Southeast
Center
National Leaders

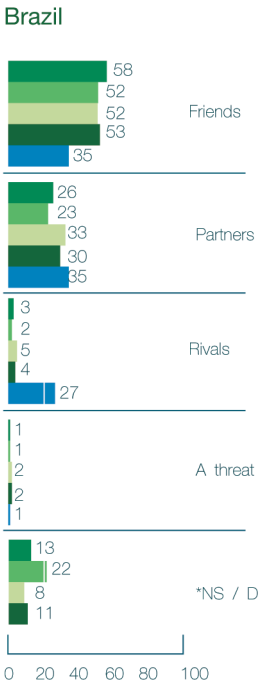


*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.6
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?

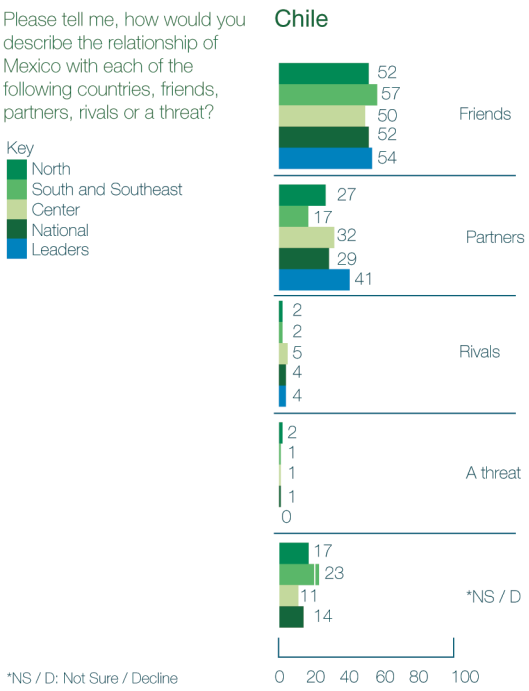
Key
North
South and Southeast
Center
National Leaders



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.7
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

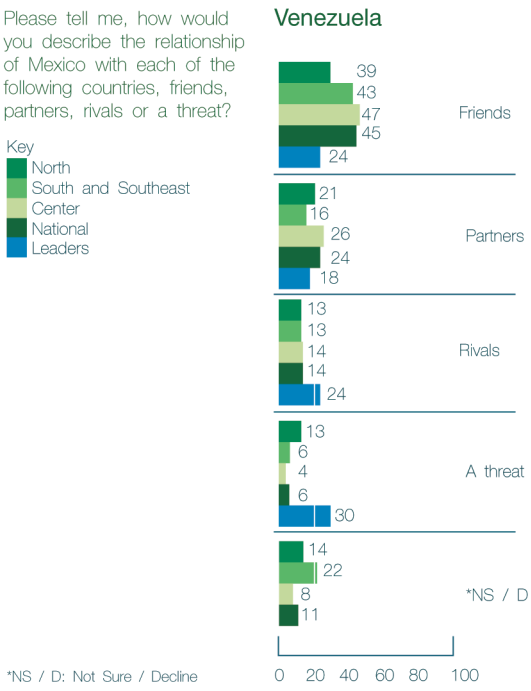
Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.8
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

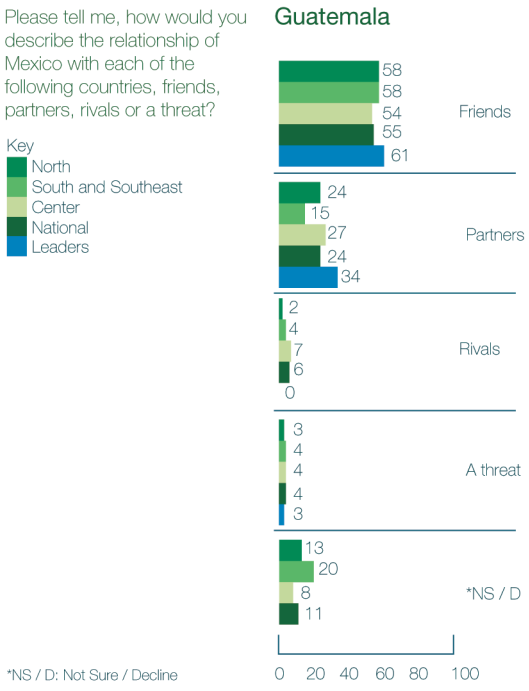
Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.9
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

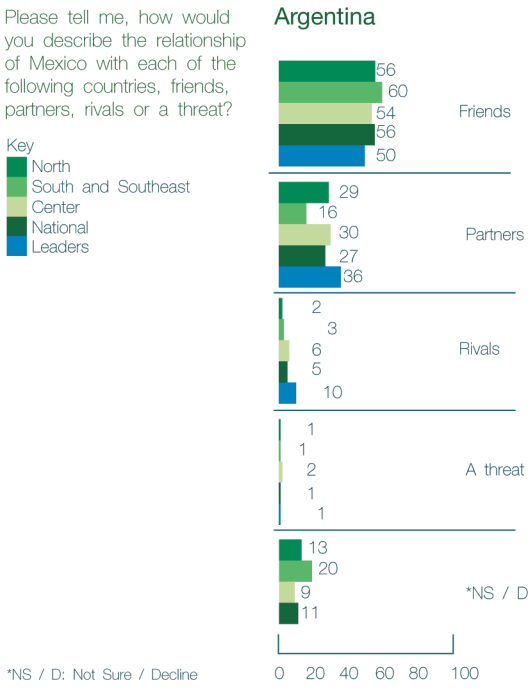
Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.10
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

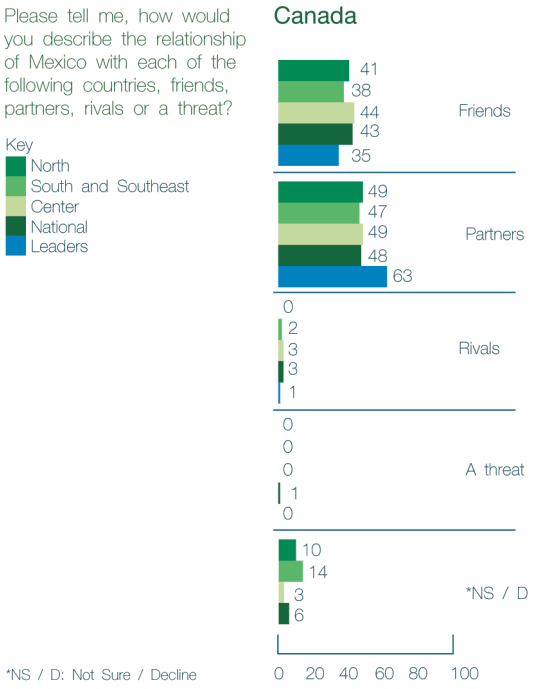
Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.11
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

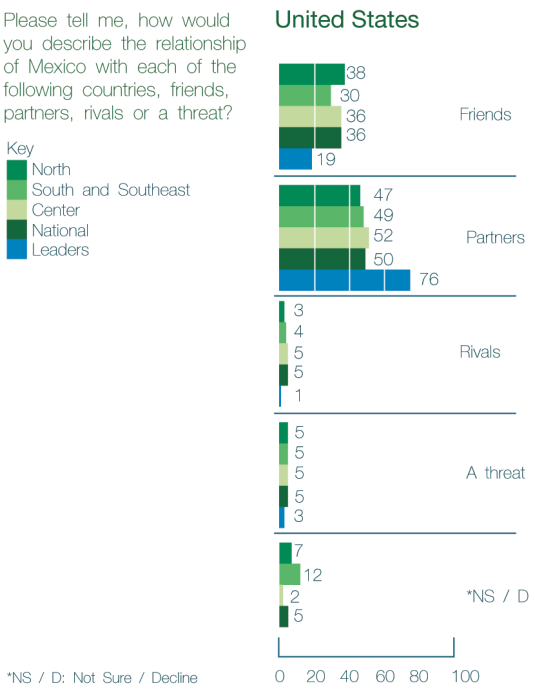
Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Table 5.12
Mexico's relation with other countries
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, how would you describe the relationship of Mexico with each of the following countries, friends, partners, rivals or a threat?



*NS / D: Not Sure / Decline

Is there a Mexican agenda for an active role in Latin America?

As detailed in Chapter 2, Mexicans believe that their country's most important foreign-policy goals are promoting Mexican exports, defending the interests of Mexicans in other countries, and combating international drug trafficking. Promoting human rights and helping bring democracy to other countries are of much less importance. When asked about different potential threats, Mexicans rank drug trafficking as the most critical threat, closely followed by potential epidemics such as AIDS and avian flu and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. International terrorism is regarded as less of a threat on the same level as global warming and world economic crises. These rankings pose a problem for Mexican policy. The foreign-policy goals are in line with the interests of Mexico's northern partners in fostering economic integration and fighting organized crime and security threats in the region, but the relative threat perceptions may bring Mexico into conflict with the United States and, to a lesser extent Canada. Both of those governments are more interested in immediate security issues, such as international terrorism, than more distant threats such as global epidemics, global warming and world economic crises, which all rank higher in Mexico's concerns. Moreover, Mexico's two top foreign policy priorities are economic and social goals. In the United States, the two top priorities are protecting jobs, which are moving offshore to countries like Mexico, and fighting terrorism, which some in the United States fear may be compromised by the porous border between Mexico and the United States. So, Mexicans' priorities are not fully attuned with those of their main economic partners in North America.

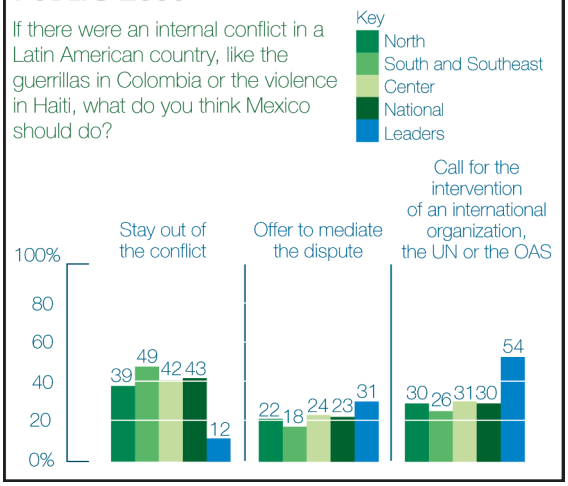
The one issue in which Mexico's policy goals and its threat perception match security priorities in the United States is drug trafficking. Mexico truly is a bridge between North and South for drugs. Mexican drug cartels now control the entry of drugs from South America into their main market, the United States. Another issue of concern in the United States is migration. As with drug trafficking, Mexico is bridge between North and South as both a source and transit country for immigrants into the United States. It is also increasingly a destination for Central American illegal immigrants who are replacing emigrating Mexicans in some low-wage jobs.

To the extent that the increased sense of insecurity and vulnerability in the United States since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks makes it unlikely that North American economic integration will move ahead in the immediate future, the relevant question for Mexico's foreign policy is whether there is a clear agenda for a more active and assertive role in Latin America. We found some ambivalence in the answer. Although Mexicans think Latin America should be the first regional priority for Mexico after North America, they are reluctant to take clear-cut public positions or assume greater responsibilities regarding regional security problems and conflicts.

When asked what Mexico's role should be regarding internal conflicts in Latin America, such as the guerrilla war in Colombia or the violence in Haiti, 43% think Mexico should stay out, while 23% say Mexico should offer to serve as a mediator in the dispute and 30% call for the intervention of an international organization (Table 5.13). Mexicans are relatively reluctant to play a very assertive role or participate in solving other countries' internal conflicts on their own. They prefer to do so under the umbrella of multilateral institutions.

Table 5.13
Internal conflicts in Latin America
PUBLIC 2006

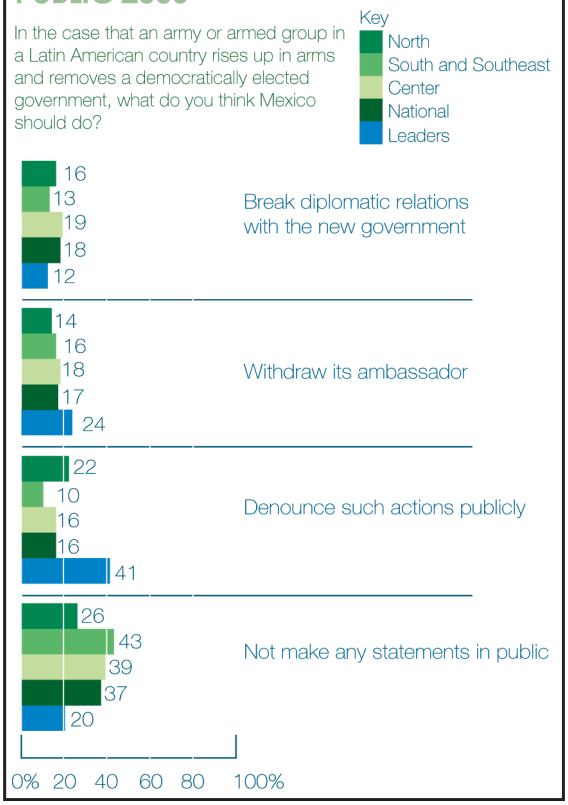
If there were an internal conflict in a Latin American country, like the guerrillas in Colombia or the violence in Haiti, what do you think Mexico should do?



In the case where a democratic government is overthrown, Mexicans are similarly moderate in their preferred policy actions. 37% think Mexico should not make any public statement in the case of a coup d'état or the unconstitutional removal of a democratically elected government in a Latin American country; 16% believe it should denounce such actions publicly; 17% consider Mexico should withdraw its ambassador and almost the same percentage advocate breaking relations with the new government (Table 5.14).

Table 5.14
Latin American democratic government removed
PUBLIC 2006

In the case that an army or armed group in a Latin American country rises up in arms and removes a democratically elected government, what do you think Mexico should do?



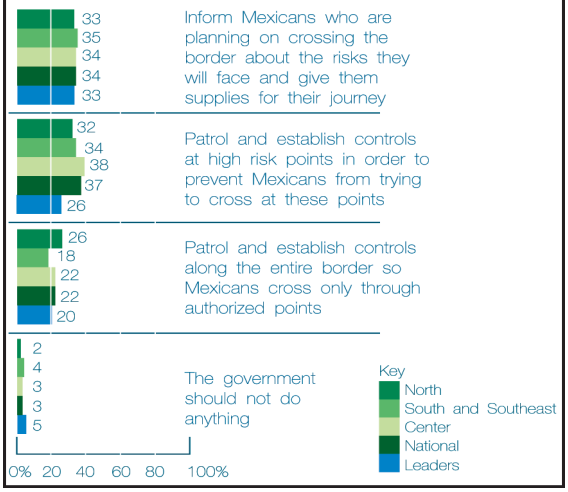
This reluctance to advance stronger measures may reflect Mexicans' traditional non-intervention. But it is more likely that it shows a preference for multilateral action. When the question is framed in more general terms and relates to multilateral or international actions, Mexicans are more willing to be active in the promotion of human rights and democracy. For example, 33% strongly agree and 33% somewhat agree with Mexico participating in international efforts to improve human rights in Cuba. The total, 66%, is up slightly from 61% in 2004.

Border dilemmas: do not unto me as I do unto others

Mexicans are divided on how to deal with undocumented migrants crossing the border into the United States. Roughly 400 people a year die in their attempt to reach the United States, succumbing to heat, cold, dehydration or exhaustion as they walk across remote border areas. Mexicans want their government to do something about this; only 3% say that their government should not do anything. But there is little agreement as to what. 34% believe that the government should inform Mexicans who are planning to cross the border about the risks they will face and give them supplies for their journey. That policy could be interpreted, both in Mexico as well as in the United States, as encouraging or helping illegal border crossers. Somewhat fewer, 22%, want the government to establish controls at high risk points on the border to prevent Mexicans from trying to cross at these places. An additional 37% say that the Mexican government should go as far as patrolling and establishing controls along the entire border so Mexicans cross only through authorized points (Table 5.15). Although one might expect northern border residents to have somewhat different opinions on this issue than Mexicans who live in other regions, responses differ little across regions.

Table 5.15
Border crossing at high risk points
PUBLIC 2006

Every year, nearly 400 people die crossing the US the border. Please tell me, in your opinion what should the Mexican government do about this?



There is a stark difference between how Mexicans believe the United States should treat issues regarding Mexican migration and their view on illegal immigration from Central America into Mexico. Many voices in Mexico denounce the treatment of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States and argue that they are only filling jobs that legal U.S. residents and citizens do not want. Nevertheless, they fail to apply the same logic to undocumented Central Americans in Mexico.

A majority of Mexicans, 51%, favor establishing controls on Mexico's southern border such as a border patrol. Those living in the northern border states, who have more experience with the U.S. Border Patrol and less direct contact with Central American migrants, are less likely to favor such controls. 40% in the north favor a border patrol compared to 60% in the south and southeast. 26% of Mexicans say that the Mexican government should establish a temporary workers' program for undocumented Central American migrants. Northerners are more in favor, with 33%, than those in the south, with 22%. There is a small group of hardliners: 15% of Mexicans say that their government should build a wall on its border with Guatemala and Belize (Table 5.16).

Mexicans are evenly divided on their views of Central American migrants in Mexico: 46% have a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion of them, and the same percentage have a somewhat unfavorable or strongly unfavorable opinion. Northerners have a more positive impression, with 49% holding a strongly favorable or somewhat favorable opinion. The number drops to 36% for those from the south and southeast.

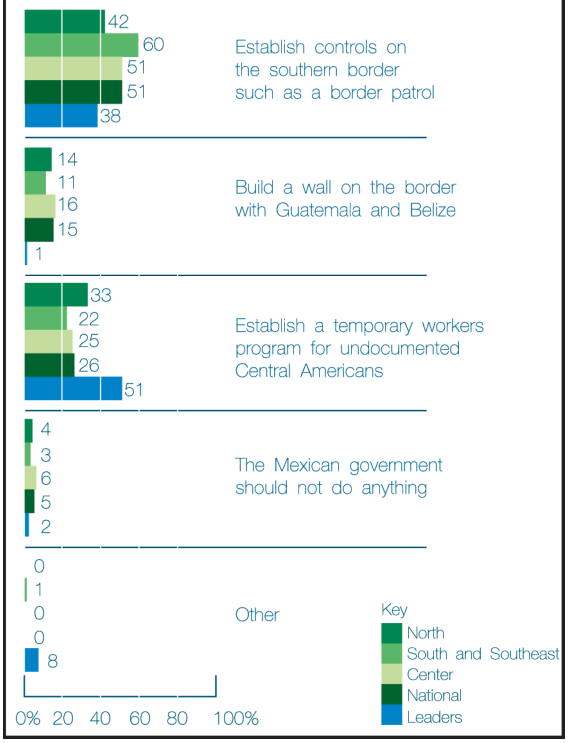
Many observers argue that the main driver behind Mexican migration to the United States are better opportunities and higher wages. In that case, the only solution to the problem would be to reduce the development gap between the countries (obviously, with Mexico rising closer to U.S. levels rather than the U.S. falling closer to Mexican levels!). Some proposals for increased economic integration in North America advocate the United States providing Mexico with significant levels of development assistance.

Similarly, Mexico offers much more opportunity and higher wages than do most Central American countries and is both a way station and final destination for hundreds of thousands of Central American migrants. The development gap between Mexico and the poorer countries of Central America is similar, if not greater than, the gap between

Table 5.16
Actions towards undocumented Central Americans

PUBLIC 2006

Many Central Americans have entered into Mexican territory without permission. In your opinion, what should Mexican government do to confront this problem?



Mexico and the United States, when measured in terms of GPD per capita. And, while extreme poverty, and extreme wealth, exist in both Mexico and Central America, a far greater percentage of Central Americans live in extreme poverty compared to the roughly 20% of Mexicans who do so. One proposal of the Fox administration has been to try to level this development gap through joint planning to increase the integration of Mexico with its Southern neighbors. While such planning is in its earliest phases, Mexicans are divided on whether Mexico should help Central American economies. When asked how strongly they believe that Mexico should provide economic resources to help develop the economies of Central American countries, taking into account Mexico's economic situation, 46% said "a great deal" or "somewhat", while the same number responded "not very much" or "not at all". Those in the wealthier north of Mexico were much more likely to support helping Central America, with 46%, than those in the south and southeast, with 32%.

The different attitudes on how to deal with border issues such as illegal immigration create a dilemma for Mexican foreign policy. Given the fairly strong opinion against illegal migration into Mexico, the Mexican government cannot follow public opinion if it truly wants to be a bridge and credible broker for North-South relations in the Americas. If it is to take public opinion into account, it will have to concentrate on cooperative relations with North America and strike a more defensive and unilateral stance vis-à-vis Central American countries. That could harm its relations with other Latin American countries who may accuse Mexico of doing the United States' bidding rather than maintaining solidarity with its Latin American cousins. The Mexican government must also decide how to deal with countries such as Cuba and Venezuela, which some Mexicans regard as rivals and threats. It cannot be a bridge and play a constructive role if it cannot maintain relatively harmonious, trustful relations with all Latin American countries.

Mexicans' aspiration for some kind of leadership role appears to be there but it cannot coexist with a reticence to assume its responsibilities. Mexico cannot be partners with the North and friends with the South without leading efforts to coordinate actions within Latin America in its dealings with the United States. The posture of one among equals, which Mexico has taken so far in its relations with Latin America, may only lead to greater division within the region as smaller powers like Venezuela jockey for influence. But if Mexico chooses a leadership role, the result could be just as divisive as Mexico competes directly with other countries that have a different vision of Latin unity and relations with the United States.

CHAPTER 6
Mexico's Relations with its North American Neighbors

The relationship with the United States today: the gap between expectations and reality

The North American Free Trade Agreement went into force on January 1, 1994 and it marked a watershed in U.S.-Mexican relations. For Mexico, NAFTA meant a break from its traditional distrust of the United States, a country that was perceived as an obstacle to Mexico's independent economic development and a threat to its sovereignty. For the bilateral relationship, NAFTA meant an unprecedented intensification of trade and investment and increasing social and economic interaction between the new partners.

Mexico's geographic proximity to the United States and the interdependence that has developed since NAFTA make its relationship with its neighbor to the north the most intense and complex relationship it has with any country. Currently, 56% of Mexico's imports come from the United States and Canada, while 89% of Mexican exports are shipped to the U.S. and Canada. The United States is the leading foreign investor in Mexico, accounting for nearly 63% of all foreign direct investment (FDI). Canada is now Mexico's fourth-largest trading partner and its fifth most important investor.

Mexico's second largest source of funds from abroad, after oil exports, is roughly $20 billion per year in remittances, mainly from Mexicans in the United States. The economic and social forces behind this burgeoning trade and financial relationship as well as the increased immigration between Mexico and the United States are unlikely to change in the near future.

Until recently, many pro-NAFTA observers on both sides of the border hoped that the future would bring more intense economic integration and the construction of a North American Community, similar to the early stage of the European Union. Indeed, as the preceding chapter shows, Mexicans share this vision for the future of North America: 67% think that the economic integration of Mexico, the United States, and Canada will continue, and 61% expect political integration to follow a similar path (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). However, after twelve years, this hope has not been fully realized. Nor has that of a stable bilateral relationship based on cooperation and mutual trust, policy coordination, and the acceptance of institutional mechanisms and rules for dialogue.

Table 6.1
Economic integration in North America
PUBLIC 2006

Do you think that in the future there will or will not be greater economic integration between the countries of North America, Mexico, Canada and the United States?

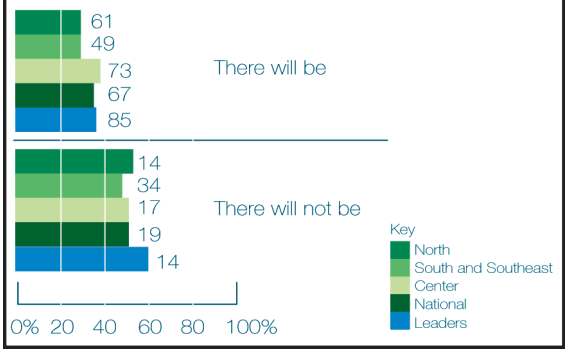
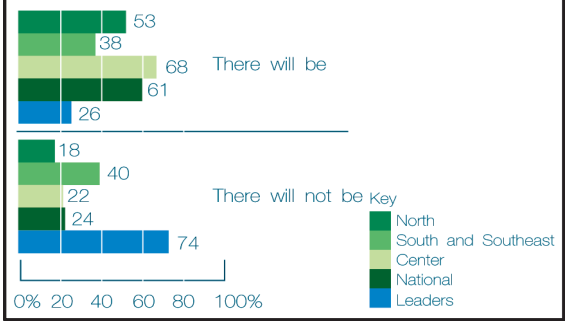


Table 6.2
Political integration in North America
PUBLIC 2006

Some European countries have formed a union where officials nominated by national governments and deputies elected by the citizens make joint decisions that affect all member countries. Please tell me if you think that in the future there will or will not be political integration between Canada, United States and Mexico?



In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. military intervention in Iraq and a lack of progress in overhauling U.S. immigration policy, Mexico's relationship with its northern neighbor has fallen into a cycle of mutual recrimination and diplomatic disagreement. Despite initiatives such as the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPPNA), launched in March 2005 by the Mexican, U.S., and Canadian governments, the economic integration process is at a standstill; meanwhile, the initial benefits of preferential access created by NAFTA are waning and the institutional structures the agreement put in place have eroded.

U.S.-Mexico relations are as uneven as they are intense. The two countries have not yet succeeded in striking a stable and mutually beneficial balance between the logic of the market —which draws countries toward an intensification of economic, social, and cultural interaction —and the logic of security, which pulls them in the opposite direction. The tension between market and security has heightened to such a degree that the U.S.-Mexico border is being strained by increased unilateral controls, recurrent states of alert and emergency related to terrorism and organized crime, and the deaths of hundreds of Mexicans each year who die trying to cross the border illegally. The integration model foreseen by NAFTA is inadequate to today's most pressing issues: the development gap between Mexico and its North American partners, the magnitude of the immigration phenomenon, and increased transnational security threats, such as terrorism and organized crime, which undermine economic growth in the region. It is precisely the topics that were excluded from the trade negotiations twelve years ago — security, immigration, energy, and development — that now demand immediate action from the three governments.

Below we describe Mexicans' general attitudes and sentiments toward the United States. We also examine their opinions on the non-economic topics of the bilateral agenda, issues where Mexico's positions are still unresolved. Because Chapter 4 addressed Mexicans' perceptions on the issues of the North American economic agenda, in particular NAFTA and its implications, this chapter will refer to those issues only in passing.

Political relations and social perception

The United States is facing an extraordinary international situation, and its unchecked supremacy coexists with a sense of extreme vulnerability. This has led it to lean toward unilateralism, distance itself from the multilateral framework, lose interest in the issues that most interest Mexico — immigration and development — and adopt more stringent border controls. Although in many parts of the world the perceived excesses of the War on Terror and mistakes in the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have heightened negative sentiments toward the United States, one of the survey's most surprising findings is that the opposite prevails in Mexico: positive and favorable attitudes toward the United States have increased since the 2004 survey.

For Mexico, the current scenario raises multiple questions and demands a clear formulation of the objectives, priorities, and strategies of its relationship with the United States. How do Mexicans see the United States in light of the new circumstances? What type of relationship do they want with the first global hyperpower? Do they trust, fear, or resent their northern neighbor? Under the current conditions, do they believe that the common border represents more advantages or disadvantages? Do they share the concern over the terrorist threat and to what extent are they willing to cooperate in response? Do they think that it is in Mexico's interest to continue to seek a unique, close relationship with the United States so as to deepen economic integration, or do they want Mexico to return to a stance of relative distance? What are they willing to give in exchange for arrangements to normalize the status of Mexican immigrants and improve the treatment they receive?

The 2006 survey indicates that anti-Americanism has lessened and Mexicans are more open to strengthening their relationship with their northern neighbor. As noted in Chapter 3, on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 as the most favorable sentiment, the United States once again ranked near the top, this time placing second, with an average score of 74. (In 2004, it tied Japan for first place with a average score of 68.) It ranked immediately below Canada, which received an average score of 75. The decline in Anti-Americanism is especially noticeable in the center of the country, where the United States' average score rose from 66 to 74 and in the north, where it increased from 75 to 77.

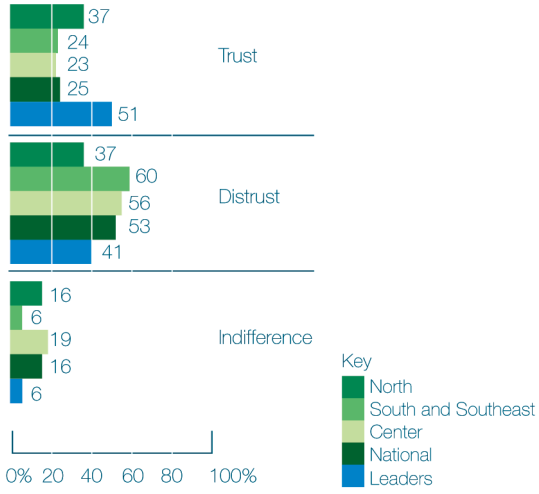
In the south and southeast, however, the average remained at the same level as in 2004, 70.

Nevertheless, an examination of Mexicans' attitudes toward the United States in isolation, outside of comparisons with other countries, shows a different, more ambivalent and more complex, outlook. Although this view does not necessarily contradict the trend toward a more favorable opinion of the United States generally, it does point to a continued strong distrust of that country. Just as in 2004, in 2006 the percentage of respondents who distrust the United States, 53%, is much higher than that of those who trust it, 25%, or who are indifferent, 16%. However, whereas distrust increased by 10 percentage points, from 43% to 53%, trust also grew, although only 5 points, from 20% to 25%. But far fewer Mexicans were indifferent, only 16%, down from 33% in 2004 (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3
Feelings toward the U.S.
PUBLIC 2006

Which of the following words best describes your feelings towards the United States?

Trust or distrust

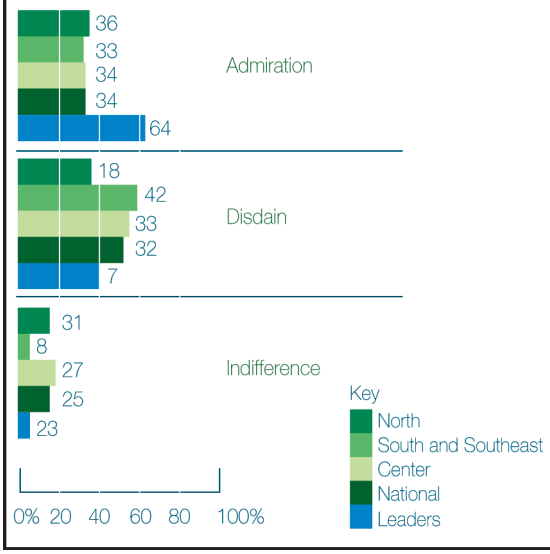


The regional breakdown shows a sharp difference between the south and the rest of the country. The north and center confirm this trend, with the percentage expressing distrust increasing from 25% to 16% in the north and from a very high 48% in 2004 to a majority in the center of the country. In the south, distrust rose by 16 percentage points to 60%. Another sentiment measured by the survey is admiration, disdain, or indifference. The percentage of respondents in the north who said they feel disdain, 18%, was much lower than that of those in the south and southeast, 42%, and the center, 33%. At the national level, we found greater polarization than in 2004: the proportion of respondents expressing indifference declined by 21 percentage points, from 46% to 25%. Those expressing admiration rose by five points, from 29% to 34%, and those who say they feel disdain rose by 12 points, from 20% to 32%. Mexicans are clearly more divided than they were over whether the United States is a model to be emulated (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4
Feelings toward the U.S.
PUBLIC 2006

Which of the following words best describes your feelings towards the United States?

Admiration or disdain



The sharpest change came in the south and southeast, where the percentage of people who say they are indifferent fell from 40% to 8%. The percentage in this region who say they feel disdain for the United States rose dramatically from 23% to 42%, marking a surge in anti-Americanism in this region. Meanwhile, the number of those who admire the United States also rose, modestly in this case, from 26% to 33%. These figures mark a clear contrast with the north, where only 18% express contempt for the United States.

Our findings regarding sentiments of fraternity or resentment are similar. As the percentage of those expressing indifference fell from 46% to 25%, the proportion of respondents who say they have fraternal feelings increased by seven percentage points to 27%. But the number of those with feelings of resentment rose more, up 12 percentage points to 38% (Table 6.5). We found this increase in all three regions, although more so in the south and southeast, rising from 25% to 42%, and the center, from 27% to 42%. One possible explanation for this greater resentment is that these regions include some of the states with the highest emigration rates (Jalisco, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, Puebla, and Zacatecas). These states have been adversely affected in recent years by more stringent state and local anti-immigration laws in the United States. The north is the only region where more respondents feel fraternity towards the United States, 32%, than resentment, 22%, but a large number, 28%, remain indifferent, down 17 percentage points from 2004, or volunteered that they are not sure how they feel, 18% in 2006 compared to 7% in 2004. Surprisingly, the high levels of resentment in the south are accompanied by a significant minority, 35%, who say they have fraternal feelings towards the United States.

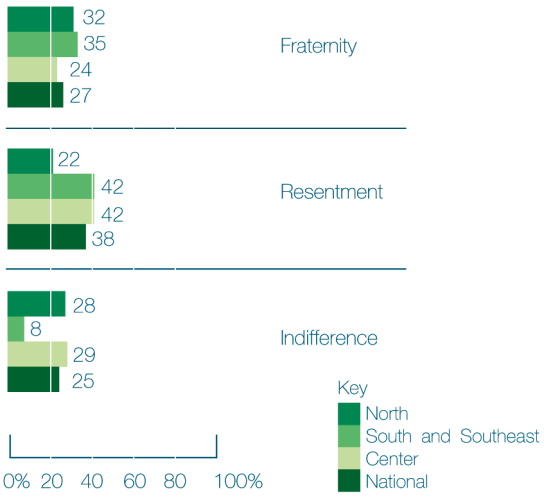
In addition to these changes in Mexicans' sentiments toward the United States, we identified a stronger degree of pragmatism. That may tip the scales in favor of making self-interested choices in situations where attitudes are ambivalent rather than decisions based on traditional principles. For example, in Chapter 1, respondents were asked to choose between national identity and individual economic interest when asked if they agreed with the hypothetical possibility of the United States and Mexico becoming a single country if it meant that their standard of living would increase. Their responses indicate that material considerations, their standard of living, are more important for them than they were two years ago. 54% of Mexicans agreed with this hypothetical proposal, up from 38% in 2004.

Mexicans' pragmatism vis-à-vis the United States becomes clear when they are asked to define the category that best describes Mexico's relationship with a series of countries — partner, friend, rival, or threat. 50% define the United States as a partner, whereas 36% consider it friend, 5% a rival, and 5% a threat. More respondents say that the United States is Mexico's partner than do so for any of the other countries on the list of eight

Table 6.5
Feelings toward the U.S.
PUBLIC 2006

Which of the following words best describes your feelings towards the United States?

Fraternity or resentment



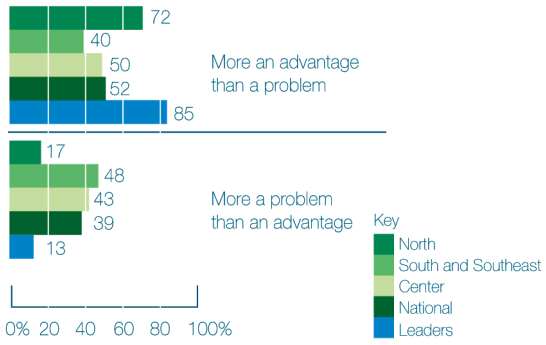
countries in the Americas, while fewer respondents, 36%, say that Mexico's relationship with the United States is that of friends compared to the levels for the other countries on the same list.

Likewise, geographic proximity to and having a common border with the United States are perceived by more respondents throughout the country as an advantage, 52%, than as a problem, 39% (Table 6.6). Again, there are large regional differences. A wide majority of the respondents in the north, 72%, view being close to the United States as an advantage, a smaller number in the center, 50%, hold this view, and in the south and southeast, the number is only 48%. One explanation may be that for those in the south and southeast, the benefits of geographic proximity to the United States are distant: they receive lower remittances per capita, less foreign investment, have weaker trade ties with the United States, and aren't close enough to enjoy an occasional weekend shopping trip in the United States, as are northern border residents.

Mexicans have preferred to construct a unique relationship with the United States by engaging with their powerful neighbor directly, rather than seeking allies or intermediaries. They have chosen this approach rather than seek common cause with Canada, the other North American trading partner and a logical ally in providing a counterweight to

Table 6.6
Being US neighbor, advantage or problem
PUBLIC 2006

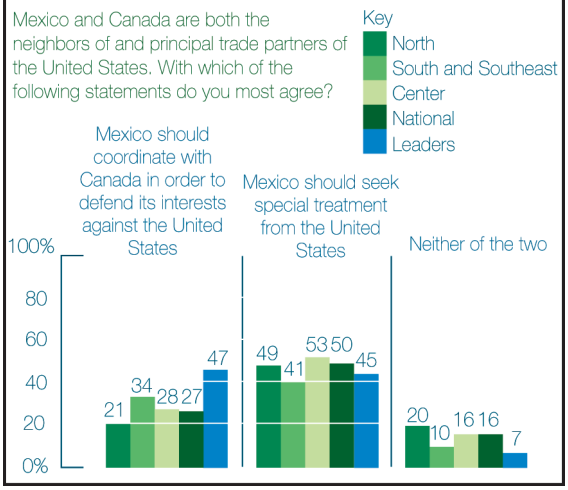
Please tell me, which comes closest to your point of view: being a neighbor of the United States is a big advantage or a big problem for Mexico?



United States dominance. In the twelve years since NAFTA took effect, Mexico has strengthened its links with Canada: trade, for example, increased 150%. But Mexicans perceive a more functional and direct relationship with the United States in which they apparently do not need allies. Half of all Mexicans, 50%, feel that Mexico should seek preferential treatment from the United States, compared with only 27% who feel Mexico should work with Canada to formulate common positions vis-à-vis the United States. (16% volunteered that it should do neither of the two) (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7
Mexico-Canada
PUBLIC 2006

Mexico and Canada are both the neighbors of and principal trade partners of the United States. With which of the following statements do you most agree?



Electoral cycles are particularly useful for detecting linkages between foreign and domestic policy. And, for the purposes of this study, the recent presidential campaign showed different perceptions of political parties' positions regarding Mexico's relationship with the United States. In 2006, Mexicans consider that the PAN, PRI, and PRD are all willing to cooperate with the United States, albeit to varying degrees. On a scale of 0 to 10, respondents view them as more cooperative than they did in 2004. The average score respondents throughout the country gave the PAN for cooperation with the United States rose from 7 to 8. For the PRI, the average score rose from 6 to 7. For its part, the PRD, which had an average score of only 5 points in 2004, rose to 6.

When we asked respondents to use the same scale to rank their personal positions on cooperation between the two countries, the average level of cooperation that respondents indicate they prefer Mexico to have with the United States is 7. The north and center prefer a higher level of cooperation (8) than does the south and southeast (7).

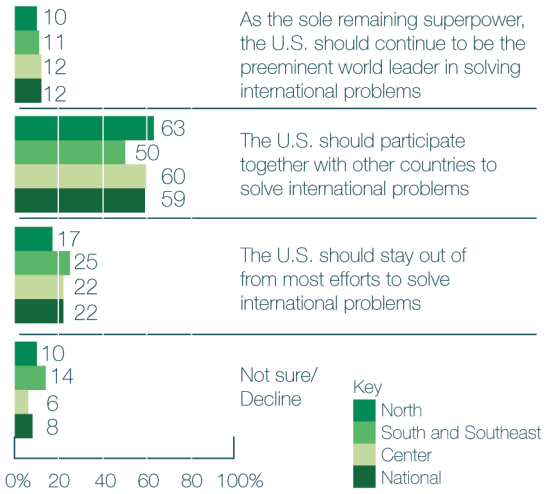
Lastly, we will examine Mexicans' opinion on the role the United States should play in the world. A majority, 59%, say that the United States should assume an active role in solving world problems although in coordination with other countries. 22% of the respondents — six percentage points lower than in 2004 — believe that the United States should stay on the sidelines and not participate in efforts to solve international problems, while only 12% believe that it should continue to act as the preeminent world leader (Table 6.8). Mexicans oppose U.S. unilateralism more than its inaction and isolationism, but above all they would prefer a cooperative and multilateralist dominant power to work with other countries in finding solutions to world problems.

Security, drug-trafficking, and immigration

A constant of the relationship between Mexico and the United States has been the two countries' difficulty in cooperating on security and immigration issues. Given the prominence of security concerns since the September 11, 2001, attacks and the rising public pressure to address illegal immigration in the United States, one of the timeliest issues is how far Mexicans are willing to cooperate and coordinate actions with the United States on these matters. To what extent do Mexicans share their

Table 6.8
U.S. as a world superpower
PUBLIC 2006

Which statement comes closest to your position:



neighbors' security concerns? Do conditions exist for cooperation on immigration and security?

The 2006 survey once again finds that all six of the goals Mexicans classify as "very important" for the country's foreign policy are closely linked to the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. Although the two top objectives, promoting exports and protecting Mexican interests abroad, are not linked to security and immigration, four of the next five are: combating drug-trafficking, which is seen as the third most important goal; protecting the nation's land and sea borders; combating international terrorism; and preventing nuclear-weapons proliferation.

This points to a convergence between Mexico's foreign policy priorities and the United States' security concerns. This convergence, in turn, opens the door for cooperation on sensitive topics such as border management and combating drug-trafficking and terrorism.

Security became a global priority after September 11, 2001. Although Mexicans continue to be willing to cooperate in combating terrorism, their concern with this issue, as noted above, has diminished: in 2004, 81% of the respondents considered it a serious threat, but in 2006, the number slipped to 70%. The reason for this decreased concern may be the lack of evidence that Mexico is either an important potential terrorist target or a likely springboard for a terrorist attack against the United States. Another element that may affect Mexicans' opinion is their critical view of U.S. unilateralism. As we have noted, 59% of Mexicans believe the United States should work together with other countries.

Other questions in the survey confirm that the concern over the terrorist threat has decreased. In 2004, Mexicans were more willing than they are now to take strong measures against terrorism, including allowing the presence of U.S. agents in Mexico to collaborate with their Mexican counterparts in maintaining surveillance over borders, seaports, and airports. Two years ago, 87% of the respondents believed that Mexico should tighten its controls on goods moving across its territory, whereas in 2006, the number slipped to 79% (Table 6.9). Another indication is the lower percentage of respondents who support enacting more stringent requirements for foreigners to enter and leave Mexico: from 84% in 2004 to 74% in 2006 (Table 6.10).

Table 6.9
Actions against terrorism
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, in order to combat international terrorism, do you believe that Mexico should or should not?:

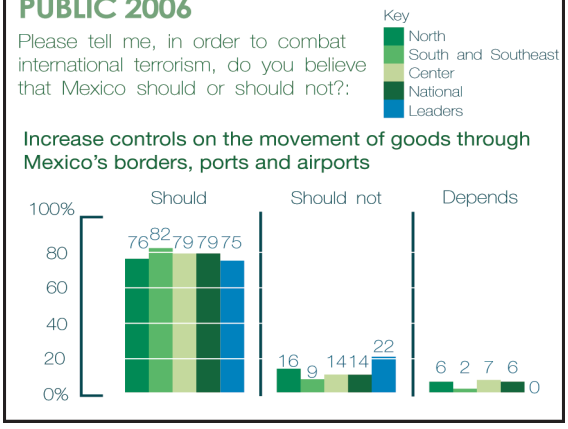
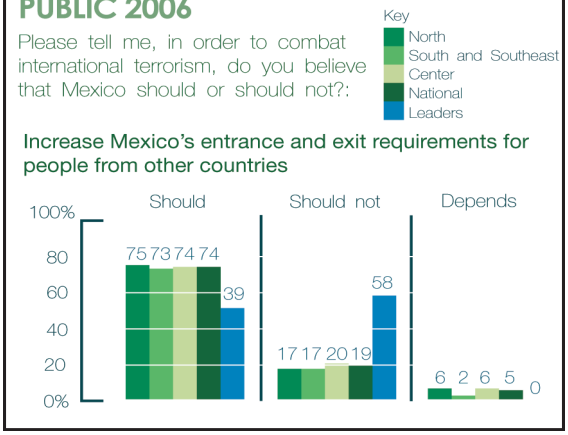


Table 6.10
Actions against terrorism
PUBLIC 2006

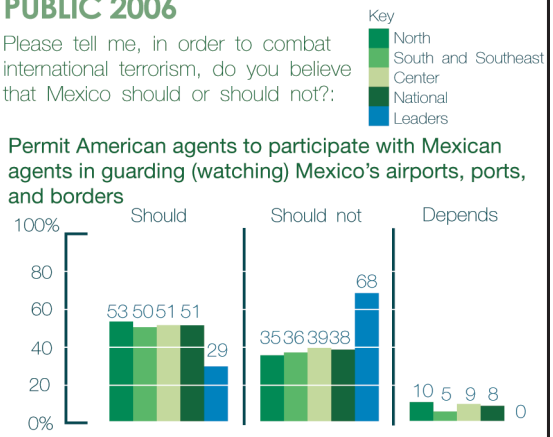
Please tell me, in order to combat international terrorism, do you believe that Mexico should or should not?:



In the fight against terrorism, Mexicans continue to be willing to allow U.S. agents to collaborate with Mexican authorities in monitoring airports, sea terminals, and borders; still, as with the preceding cases, support for such cooperation has fallen, from a large majority of 63% of all Mexicans to a slim one of 51% (Table 6.11) As the perception of an immediate and direct threat to Mexico's security diminishes, so does the willingness to share responsibilities and coordinate actions with the United States. Mexicans are willing to cooperate with the United States on sensitive security issues when they consider it necessary; this support is not based on solidarity with or a liking of the United States but rather on self-interest.

Table 6.11
Actions against terrorism
PUBLIC 2006

Please tell me, in order to combat international terrorism, do you believe that Mexico should or should not?:



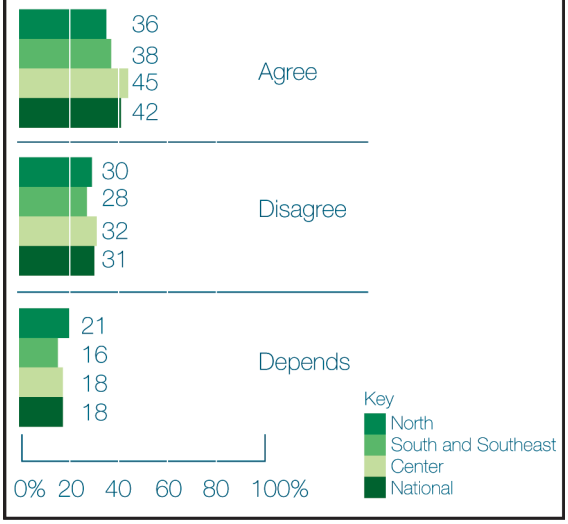
Mexicans are more willing to cooperate with the United States on security issues such as combating drug-trafficking and organized crime, issues that they view as priorities. An overwhelming majority, 81%, of respondents in all regions agree — 59% strongly and 22% somewhat — with the extradition of criminal defendants of any nationality who try to use either country as a haven from prosecution. Only 15% oppose Mexico cooperating with the United States on extradition. Approval of collaboration between the two countries is stronger in the case of extradition than in any other area.

Would Mexicans be willing to permit the presence of U.S. agents on Mexican territory for purposes other than contributing to security, such as facilitating tourism and trade? 56% of the respondents say they would either strongly agree, 27%, or somewhat agree, 29%, to an accord with the United States that would permit the presence of U.S. immigration agents at Mexican airports to streamline the entry of U.S.-bound travelers once they arrive in that country. 39% say they either somewhat disagree, 15%, or strongly disagree, 24%, with such an accord. The highest percentage of those who would accept US immigration agents is in the center of the country, with 59% either strongly or somewhat in favor. That may be because an overwhelming percentage of all international air traffic — excluding tourists flying directly to some beach resorts — passes through the center.

From a broader perspective, rather than just security issues, there is a trend among Mexicans toward more favorable views of the United States. They are more willing now than they were in 2004 to make decisions jointly with the United States to face common problems, even if this may at times mean having to implement policies that weren't Mexico's first choice. 42% of Mexicans agree with making joint decisions with the United States, up sharply from 30% in 2004. Those opposed fell from 54% to 31% now (Table 6.12).

Table 6.12
Mexico-U.S. joint decision making
PUBLIC 2006

When dealing with common problems, the U.S. and Mexico should be more willing to make decisions jointly, even if this means that Mexico will sometimes have to go along with a policy that is not what it would have preferred



As stated above, Mexicans identify security, drug-trafficking, and immigration among their primary foreign-policy concerns. In 2006, their responses to questions on what Mexicans would be willing to give up achieving their objectives once again confirm those priorities. By a ratio of almost

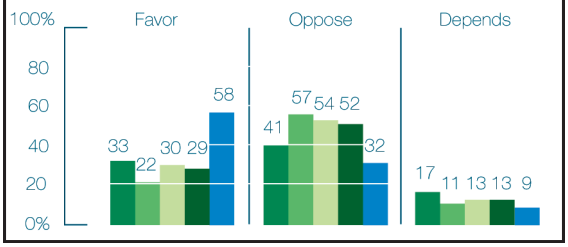
three in four, 71%, Mexicans said they would approve of an agreement in which the United States offered greater employment and residence opportunities to Mexicans in exchange for Mexico making a commitment to reduce drug-trafficking, a topic that concerns many Mexicans because of the violence it creates within Mexico, and illegal immigration into the United States. Mexicans favor such an agreement even though any crackdown on undocumented border crossers by Mexican authorities could hamper many Mexicans' efforts to emigrate. The lower opposition to such an agreement, from 20% of respondents in 2004 to 14% in 2006, underscores Mexicans' favorable opinion of a tradeoff of this nature, even when there are costs.

There are limits to the kind of bargain that Mexicans are willing to strike though. A majority, 52%, say they would not support a bilateral agreement by which the United States provided resources to promote Mexico's economic development in exchange for being allowed to invest in Mexico's energy sector (Table 6.13) Still, that is a notable fall from 2004, when 70% disapproved. And the proportion of respondents who say they would favor such an agreement rose from 20% to 29%. So while opposition to foreign investment in the energy sector continues, it is less widespread than two years ago when considered as part of a trade-off. Oil, Mexico's leading foreign exchange generator, continues to be a strategic resource for the country, particularly in an era of high prices.

Lastly, how should Mexico and the United States manage their common border? More than two thousand miles long, it is the world's busiest border. With millions of legal crossings into the United States every year for tourism, business and migration, it is also the place of entry into the United States for most of the close to 500,000 Mexicans who emigrate to the U.S. Some US$350 billion in goods move across the border each year. Roughly, 400 people die each year trying to cross the border illegally and the Mexican government is under increasing pressure to address the problem. Only 3% of the respondents believe that the Mexican government should not be doing anything, although passivity has long been the traditional policy toward

Table 6.13
U.S. - Mexico agreement on energy/development
PUBLIC 2006

Would you favor or oppose an agreement between Mexico and the United States in which the U.S. would provide greater financing for Mexico's economic development and Mexico would permit the U.S. to invest in its oil and energy sectors?



emigration. By contrast, 37% are in favor of strong measures, such as setting up checkpoints at high-risk locations to prevent would-be emigrants from crossing. This underscores Mexicans' interest in finding mechanisms to control its borders and ports and reduce safety risks for Mexican nationals. 34% believe the government's task should be only to warn border crossers of the dangers and provide them with supplies to reduce their risks, a more recent policy that has provoked outrage among anti-immigration forces in the United States. 22% would favor the Mexican government taking such drastic measures as patrolling and monitoring the entire border to ensure that only authorized crossings are used.

Mexicans' willingness to accept border controls that would reduce risks for emigrants implies that there is a possibility for negotiation on immigration and the border with the United States. Action by the Mexican government to control border crossers to reduce the deaths on the border could help strengthen moderate voices in the United States, those who argue in support of temporary-employment programs, but also stress that Mexico must play its part by stronger policing at the border.

Methodological Note

Mexican General Public Survey

For this second survey of Mexican public opinion on foreign policy issues, CIDE and COMEXI worked BGC-Ulises Beltran & Associates who conducted the general public survey from July 22 to 27, 2006, using the same survey method and field organization as the 2004 survey. The survey was conducted by in-person (face-to-face) interviews based on a sample of the adult Mexican population aged 18 and older. In-person interviews were necessary because of the low rate of telephone and Internet penetration in Mexico.

The general public survey consists of 1499 interviews based on a probabilistic sample design. Given the nature and objectives of the study to compare Mexicans' opinions across regions of the country and in the same regions over time, it was necessary to oversample the populations of the states in the north that border the United States and the relatively sparsely populated regions of the southeast. The resulting sample included 600 respondents in the six states of the north, 299 respondents in the seven states of the south and southeast, and 600 respondents in the remaining nineteen states constituting the country's center region.

The sample design was based on a list of 63,594 electoral sections defined by the Federal Electoral Institute for the 2003 Mexican federal elections. This design provides an exhaustive and exclusive division of the population under study. The selection process used was multistage sampling in which the first stage is the grouping or "conglomeration" of sections in the same state and municipality. This was done to reduce costs by reducing the geographic dispersion of the survey. The number of conglomerates per municipality increases with the population size of the electoral district. This combining of sections produced 6,080 section conglomerates. The selection of 75 conglomerates was then done through random sampling with probabilities proportional to the size of the electoral list. The second stage consisted of choosing two electoral sections inside a conglomerate, selected through random sampling with probabilities proportional to the size of the electoral section. In the next stages, blocks and then residences were selected randomly with equal probabilities. Inside the residences respondents were chosen using quotas for age and sex based on the known demographic characteristics, according to the 2000 Mexican Census. The overall response rate was 48%. The survey took approximately 25 minutes.

Because of the general public survey design, regional oversampling, and sample deviations from the distributions of age and sex, the data were weighted for the national and regional analyses based on the known demographic characteristics. There were, however, generally small differences between the weighted and unweighted results.

For the results based on the total national sample of 1,499 respondents, the sampling error for a 95% confidence interval is +/- 4%. Each regional sample has a larger sampling error. For the north it is +/- 6%, for the south/southeast it is +/- 8%, and for the rest of the country (center) it is +/- 6%. This margin of error does not include any additional error that can occur in surveys due to question wordings and other characteristics of the survey and interview process.

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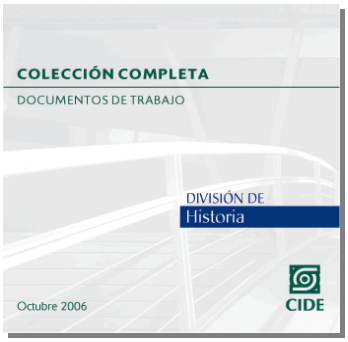

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