

# Visions of Mexico's Future

## Interview with the Presidents Of the Three Main Parties



Susana Navarrete/Cuambscuro

The three party presidents discussing the nation.

*Voices of Mexico* interviewed the presidents of the three most important national political parties about different issues that we consider vitally important for Mexico's political and economic development, as well as for the viability of the recently established democratic regimen.

Although the interviews were done separately, we have merged them here to facilitate comparison of the party leaders' positions on the issues. The order in which we print each answer, as well as the photographs and bullets, follow the criteria used by Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute for arranging the parties' emblems and candidates' names on the ballots and electoral documents: the order in which they were registered as political parties. This mechanism has the stamp of approval of the parties themselves and aims to maintain impartiality. The National Action Party (PAN) has had official registration the longest, followed by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).



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Luis Felipe Bravo Mena (PAN).

“The National Action Party is working hard toward the upcoming elections to get important political and legislative results that may refresh the process of change and speed up all the structural reforms our country needs.”

**VOICES OF MEXICO:** Poverty, and above all extreme poverty, has been an unresolved problem in Mexico for decades. It may be the most important one for the future and the viability of any political project. What strategies and policies is your party planning to deal with this problem?

**LUIS FELIPE BRAVO MENA:** Resolving the problem of poverty in Mexico involves different issues. In the very first place, our democracy must be based on the rule of law. A country whose institutions and community life are not strictly ruled by the law has a very difficult time creating conditions of justice for the whole society. So, the first basis for solving this kind of problem is the rule of law.

Second, economic development. We need an economic policy that will enhance our country’s economic growth and productivity, as well as increase the opportunities for development that will help us become more competitive among all nations.

The third aspect is precisely equal opportunities, which are linked to educational policy. This is the center and the very soul of any profound, substantive strategy for fighting poverty. That is why it is important to create the possibilities for Mexicans to get trained and well educated.

Regarding extreme poverty, the country needs new social policies, like the ones proposed by President Vi-

cente Fox, which discard paternalism and the patronage system, the main problems that keep people in poverty. What is required is a social policy that will create ways out, fostering self-sufficiency, independence and self-realization as the main objectives that help reduce poverty.

**ROBERTO MADRAZO:** We propose a competitive economy with social responsibility based on a fiscal reform to foster growth and link up to productive chains so Mexico can create jobs, and the benefits will trickle down to the country’s population and enter into their homes.

This economic policy, closely tied to a clear industrial policy, a consolidated mortgage market and reactivated, strengthened domestic savings, will achieve an average economic growth of at least 5 percent a year.

We will concentrate our efforts on the three levels of government (federal, state and municipal), instrumenting the ideal programs and mechanisms to create a million jobs a year and on ensuring that the majority of Mexicans have access to public education on the secondary, technical, undergraduate and graduate levels.

This strategy is fundamental because jobs and fair wages are decisive for overcoming poverty, and edu-

cation and training guarantee that the social inequality of the market economy be counterbalanced.

We will fight in Congress for the federal, state and municipal governments to earmark more resources to satisfy the demands of the neediest sectors of the population: jobs, real opportunities in intense regional and micro-regional development; the transfer of technology; and the expansion of the domestic market. Our proposal emphasizes particularly the reactivation of the countryside: renovating irrigation infrastructure and integrating production, industrialization and marketing of agricultural activities.

**ROSARIO ROBLES:** The PRD has always said that the best way to fight poverty is through employment, to provide a decent income that will let people cover their basic needs.

We do not agree that the inequality and enormous economic and social polarization that prevails in Mexico can be overcome by distributing crumbs to just manage poverty.

That is why our agenda has always included priority issues like job creation, the fight for a decent wage, economic recovery, fostering productive activities, support for our small and medium-sized industries that create employment and support for the Mexican countryside to guarantee stability, since it is in rural areas that the greatest poverty is concentrated. For this reason, we fight for full rights for everyone, as a constitutional right, not like up until now when rights have been seen as perks for a political clientele.

**VOICES OF MEXICO:** Mexico participates in the North American Free Trade Agreement, recently signed the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union and is part of the negotiations for the future Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). What is your party's position regarding trade regionalization?

**LUIS FELIPE BRAVO MENA:** Mexico has taken important steps for diversifying its economy considering that our country's vocation is varied. Just as we are partners in NAFTA and are committed to taking advantage of the opportunities brought by free trade, Mexico also has historic and cultural relations with the European Union. That is why these agreements will let us optimize our

geographic position not only toward Europe and North America but also toward Latin America.

The upcoming FTAA has been talked about a great deal, but it seems quite remote. Currently, basic elements for its viability do not exist, starting with the situation in the United States itself and also with the political instability among Latin American nations. But, in any case, whenever it becomes a viable and serious project, Mexico will surely have outstanding participation in the FTAA.

Regionalization is a stage of globalization in which the regions optimize their advantages and capabilities by an internal union and association. In this scheme of things, I think Mexico is doing pretty well.

**ROBERTO MADRAZO:** We accept multinational trade blocs because, if we know how to take advantage of them, they can regionalize important economic cycles so Mexico can move forward. But we reject limiting ourselves to an economic policy that disregards the issues of redistribution and greater equality of opportunities.

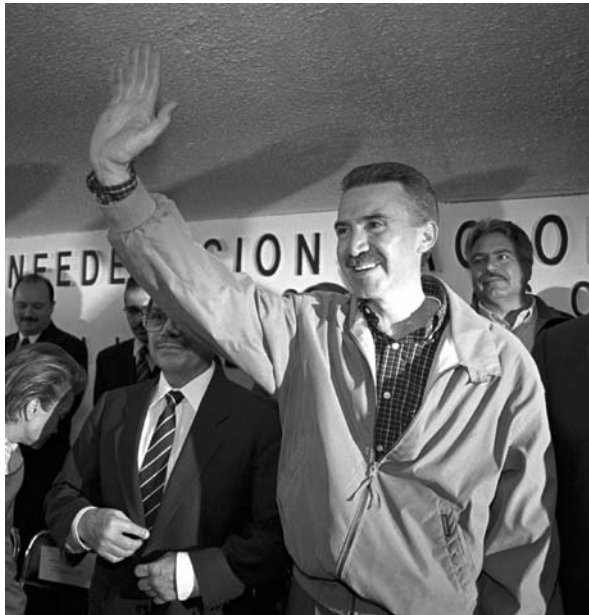
Our position is not against globalization but against being globalized. We must turn globalization into an opportunity, controlling its risks and dangers to achieve the greatest advantages possible and find the instruments that will make our project of a just nation viable.

Thus, we will give economic globality its national, human dimension, which means finding local solutions to global problems.

The market requires freedom to assign productive resources and investment, but the distribution of the benefits of economic growth demands public policies with a long-term state social vision, as much as specific mechanisms that avert third party interference in internal matters and the temptation of extraterritorially applying the laws of any other country, unilateral criteria and any attempts at subjection or submission.

The fundamental characteristic of twenty-first-century Mexico must be that inequality not turn into injustice or a source of humiliation; that social development correspond with the place our economy has gained in the world.

**ROSARIO ROBLES:** We promote multilateral relations and the consolidation of regional development plans, but very different and alternative to those fostered until



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Roberto Madrazo (PRI).

“The market requires freedom to assign productive resources and investment, but the distribution of the benefits of economic growth demands public policies with a long-term state social vision.”

today, which are basically models for integration in conditions of profound inequality. The free trade agreement with the United States and Canada has not benefitted Mexico; on the contrary, it has given rise to considerable losses, for example in the case of agriculture and transportation, and the dismantling of other productive sectors.

The world context we face today is one in which great powers argue for free trade and integration, but at the end of the day, are the first to protect and subsidize their producers.

Given this situation, we propose forms of regional development, global development, but based on totally alternative proposals using criteria of equity and justice that would make it possible to create a solid basis that includes respect for the rights of communities and citizens and the sovereignty of nations.

**VOICES OF MEXICO:** The first parliamentary elections after alternation in the presidency, to take place in July 2003, will be key because they will define the viability of a system that is still presidentialist but with a divided government. What are your party’s strategies and expectations for the 2003 federal elections?

**LUIS FELIPE BRAVO MENA:** Our party is working to make the 2003 elections an opportunity for having more

room for maneuvering in the context of the current political change. Mexico has gone through a difficult process of change; it has not been easy and this 2003 election must push it forward.

The National Action Party is working hard toward these upcoming elections to get important political and legislative results that may refresh the process of change and speed up all the structural reforms that our country needs.

**ROBERTO MADRAZO:** We are delineating a new architecture for power for the twenty-first century. With it, we will win in 2003 and recover the federal executive in 2006. We will invigorate change with direction—today the country lacks this direction—and clarify the kind of country we all want, rooted in diversity and plurality.

We know that no victory is final and no defeat is eternal. Reality teaches that the PAN has not learned to live with the president and the PRI must learn to live without the presidency. The odds are on our side.

The profound democratization of the PRI includes opening ourselves up to Mexican society, synchronizing and joining with it, showing that we are key for the transition to democracy and indispensable for the governability of this country. In the 2003 elections we will run in the country’s 300 districts. Taking into con-

sideration the deputies elected by proportional representation, we are aiming for at least 287 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Currently we have 208 seats: 132 of the 300 elected by district and 76 elected proportionally.

In the July 2003 gubernatorial elections, we will be reelected in San Luis Potosí, Sonora, Campeche and Colima and win back Querétaro and Nuevo León, just as we did in Chihuahua. The PRI currently occupies 17 of the country's 31 state houses. We will run in Mexico City's Federal District's 16 wards and in 564 mayor's races. This will allow us to keep a majority where we already have one and recover those we had lost. We already have an electoral strategy structured to this end.

**ROSARIO ROBLES:** Our goal is to remain one of the country's three most important political forces. We are going for the largest third. We have an entire strategy linked to making a priority of the areas in which we are most competitive, where we have the best chances of winning.

We want to position our party as the only distinctive party, the only one that can represent real change because the Institutional Revolutionary Party and the National Action Party in many ways propose the same policies. For example, at different times, both have proposed levying VAT on food and medicine. Under Ernesto Zedillo, the PRI attempted to privatize the electricity sector as the PAN is now trying under Vicente Fox.

Given this situation, the PRD is the party today that can offer a real alternative, besides the fact that it is not mixed up in scandals like that of the Mexican oil company, Pemex, and its possible financing of the PRI [presidential] candidate, or the matter of the Friends of Fox, involving alleged participation of foreign companies in presidential campaign funding.

We have great possibilities as an ordered, organized party, with clear positions, an identity and a project for the nation that speaks to people in terms of their real needs and aspirations, a party that speaks to people on the issues that concern them (employment, wages, education, health, social security, public safety and job security), that puts the citizenry's issues at the center of its agenda.

All of this makes me very optimistic about the PRD's showing in 2003 and, based on that, about preparations for the 2006 presidential elections.

**VOICES OF MEXICO:** The events of 9/11 produced, among other things, the strengthening of the perception in the international community that the United States is assuming and acting the role of a single international power. What does your party think of the Fox administration's foreign policy of greater alignment with the United States?

**LUIS FELIPE BRAVO MENA:** I think President Vicente Fox's administration is operating on the basis of political realism and with strategic vision. If our main partner, our main neighbor and our main field of action for both migration and other issues is the United States, we have to give it a privileged place in our foreign relations.

I think it is correct for President Fox to extend and reinforce the bilateral agenda, as well as facing problems constructively, not in a confrontational way based on views from the past, but with an accurate vision of the future. That is correct.

At the same time it is important to strength our participation in multilateral fora in the context of globalization. In this way, we can find alternative support for a single power scenario, where the international community's multilateral organizations might become an important counterweight to the United States' strength. In this sense, an organized international community can grow faster for the well being of our institutions, as long as we all observe international law.

This means that the dual strategy of maintaining a privileged relationship with the United States and promoting an international approach toward other regions like the European Union, the Pacific Basin and Latin America is the correct policy that Mexico must continue to follow.

**ROBERTO MADRAZO:** We are subjected to an intense relationship between unequal economies. We do more than 80 percent of our trade with the United States and sell it most of our oil, on which the Mexican economy is dependent in large part. The partial solution to this interdependence lies in trade diversification.





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Rosario Robles (PRD).

“The free trade agreement with the United States and Canada has not benefitted Mexico; on the contrary, it has given rise to considerable losses, for example in the cases of agriculture and transportation.”

The advance of globalization makes it difficult for states to exercise absolute sovereignty: the processes of trade integration and free circulation of capital and investment seem to erase borders and nationalism. However, the basic principles of Mexican foreign policy must remain in place because they continue to respond to the need to safeguard the identity and viability of the national project.

The Constitution establishes the principles of self-determination of all peoples, non-intervention, the peaceful solution of controversies, the banning of threats or the use of force in international relations, legal equality of all states, international cooperation for development and the fight for peace. These are and must continue to be the crosscutting themes that guide Mexico’s relations with the United States and the rest of the world.

Mexico’s foreign policy must defend our sovereignty, effectively advance our national interests and establish a balance between association, trade or cooperation agreements and the sovereign right to make public decisions in the framework of democratic institutions that respond exclusively to our national interests.

**ROSARIO ROBLES:** The PRD has emphasized that relations with the United States are central to what we are

experiencing every day. But obviously we are totally against the foreign policy that the current administration has followed, aligning us with the U. S. Much of Mexico’s strength lies in its multilateral relations, in its ability to become the spokesperson for Latin America vis-à-vis the United States and not the reverse, as is the policy’s aim, being the spokesperson for the United States vis-à-vis our sister countries in Latin America. We do not share the view of wanting to be included in a project of North America—or all of the Americas—following the dynamic of the U.S. government. Neither do we share the Mexican administration’s relatively uncritical position of the war in Afghanistan or other [U.S. policies].

We have a different opinion in these matters. The PRD has put forward the idea that foreign policy must be a state policy [not merely a matter for each administration], and with that in mind, it must be discussed and defined by the Mexican people so that it is not subject to fluctuations every six years, but rather that it correspond to the country’s interests and placement in the international concert.

Our foreign policy should reinforce Mexico’s international position as an actor on basic issues such as equality, security, peace and the self-determination of peoples, all of which are values that we Mexicans should defend. **MM**