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Termómetro Político

By: Dr. Mario Melgar Adalid

During President López Obrador's administration, the official slogan that the best foreign policy is domestic policy, became a popular refrain. The phrase was not original, however, as its roots can be traced to nineteenth-century ideas and proposals often attributed to President Porfirio Díaz. Not all sectors agreed with AMLO's approach, arguing that it resulted in a relatively passive foreign policy focused primarily on the bilateral relationship with the United States. Others supported the idea, confirming once again that political opinions are diverse, debatable, and inherently subject to discussion.

President Claudia Sheinbaum's administration has introduced a subtle shift in this approach, to the extent that Mexico's foreign policy is now exerting a noticeable influence on domestic affairs. While Mexico's relationship with the United States continues to account for a substantial portion of the country's international agenda, Mexico's voice is once again beginning to resonate in global forums.

A good example is the recently concluded Modernized Global Agreement between Mexico and the European Union, signed at the end of May. The agreement contemplates the elimination or reduction of tariffs, expanded access for Mexican and European agricultural products, new rules governing digital trade, investment, and intellectual property, commitments on labor, environmental, and human rights issues, as well as enhanced cooperation in security, migration, and supply chains.

This experience will be highly valuable for Mexican negotiators as they begin preparations for the mandatory review of the USMCA, which replaced NAFTA in 2020. That review could evolve into either a partial or a broad renegotiation. The United States government has proposed significant changes regarding rules of origin for the automotive industry, steel, and other manufactured goods. Sensitive issues for Mexico, particularly with respect to automotive regulations, steel and aluminum tariffs, regional content requirements, and North America's commercial relationship with China.

The USMCA will continue to influence Mexico's domestic policy. One need only consider the labor reforms Mexico undertook under the agreement, including greater union democracy, the implementation of secret-ballot voting for union leadership elections, and the creation of labor courts that are already operational.

The USMCA is a trilateral international agreement whose effects extend deeply into Mexico's domestic affairs, including labor, energy, investment, regulation, and industrial development. Foreign policy, therefore, unquestionably shapes domestic policy as well.