

State and Local

Professor: Mexico's stability depends on reform

Political scientist calls integration with U.S. needed factor



Dr. Jorge Castañeda

Photo by Jay Janner

By Lee Schexnaider
Staff Writer

The future stability of Mexico is dependent upon economic integration with the United States and on political, economic and social reform, Dr. Jorge Castañeda said in the closing speech of the Mexico-USA conference Saturday.

Castañeda, a professor of political science at the National University of Mexico, said the changes are necessary for the country.

"The Mexican political system is in dire need of reform," he said. He commented on Carlos Salinas, the main candidate for the Mexican presidency.

"I think the country needs major political reform," Castañeda said.

"I think (Salinas) understands this," he said.

"But the resistance he will face is enormous," he said.

Citing what he calls the "Salinas Paradox," Castañeda said that there are high hopes that Salinas will be able to reform Mexico, but he sees three doubts that could stand in his way:

- Can somebody so young, energetic and technocratic run Mexico?

- Is he already too much in conflict with the old political power base and the union bureaucracy?

- Is he a "closet leftist?"

The reform of Mexico's political system will not be quick or easy, Castañeda said.

"It's not going to happen without turbulence," he said. "People in the U.S. should look at the general direction of the policy, not the specific policy."

"There will be problems, but nothing out of this world — nothing earthshaking."

Castañeda said the views of U.S. policymakers have a large impact on Mexico.

The United States' overriding concern since the 1920s has been Mexico's stability, but only if it can be achieved without unrest, he said.

"The U.S. wants to have its cake and eat it too," Castañeda said.

"It wants reform for stability and wants no one to rock the boat," he said.

"It can't be had both ways," he said.

He said how the economic integration is handled will determine the future of the Mexican economy.

He said the process could be re-stated, managed or left alone.

But he said because of the close economic links between the two countries, the situation must be taken seriously.

He criticized some U.S. politicians for not being concerned about the situation.

"There should be a greater degree of seriousness," he said.

He said 60 percent to 80 percent of the business Mexico does with the rest of the world is done with the United States, and 80 percent of the tourism also comes from the United States.

"Contraband is almost 100 percent with the U.S.," he said.

He said the social issues are a prime concern because of the large number of poor people in Mexico. He said 20 million to 25 million Mexican people live in unacceptable poverty.

But the problems are complex and should be looked at closely, he said.

"You can't just solve the problem by throwing money at it," he said.

Official: U.S., Mexican policies have different purposes

By Drew Leder
Staff Writer

While Mexican foreign policy is directed toward maintaining sovereignty, independence and security, U.S. policy is based on achieving global power and transmitting American ideology, the former chairman of Mexico's House of Representatives said Friday.

Santiago Roel Garcia visited Texas A&M to speak at "Mexico-USA: Past, Present and Future," a Mexican Student Association conference.

"It's elementary to say that the Mexican way of practicing international politics and the American way of doing it have dissimilar origins, different bases and different purposes," Garcia told about 100 people in Rudder Theater.

The differences in the countries' foreign affairs policies stem from their different outlooks on the world, Garcia said.

Although the policies occasionally are directed toward the same goal, they seldom go hand in hand, he said.

"The Mexican and American ways of handling their foreign affairs are

two parallel lines that approach and separate but seldom unite," Garcia said. "Our ways of practicing our diplomacy are very different because of our different philosophies and ways of interpreting the world events."

This difference of goals, he said, originates from the countries' differing military capacities and economies, which often leads to mis-

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— Santiago Roel Garcia, former chairman of Mexico's House of Representatives

understandings, particularly from the side of the Americans, Garcia explained.

Although Mexico and the United States don't always agree on foreign policy issues, he said, geographic location makes it necessary for the two countries to have an interdependent relationship, which he called a sea-saw relationship.

"Everything that affects the United States affects us," he said. "If the U.S. coughs, we get pneumonia."

This relationship, Garcia said, has helped shape Mexican diplomacy.

"The only human resource Mexico has had, living geopolitically near the U.S., is to have solid international principles and well-prepared diplomats," he said.

A good diplomatic relationship

understand each other better, he said. "We observe from the outside that since the '50s and the Vietnam War, the United States, in many important areas, has been declining," Garcia said.

"The diplomacy of the U.S. will eventually have some problems that Mexico has suffered as a developing country," he said. "Perhaps this will make the U.S. react in order to understand us better."

While the United States is facing these problems, Mexico's economy is steadily improving and power is being transmitted to a younger and better-prepared generation, Garcia said.

"Mexico is becoming more competitive, with an exportation mentality," he said. "This new generation will transform our country, eliminating obsolete systems."

But an improved bargaining position in world politics won't change the way Mexico handles its international affairs, Garcia said.

"We will continue maintaining our basic international principles," he said.

Recent problems facing the United States, like a big debt, exportation and international trade competition, might help the countries

between the two countries is imperative, Garcia said, but during the Cold War the United States subordinated its relations with Latin American countries.

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Santiago Roel Garcia

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