

'INDIA AND MEXICO HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS TO ARRIVE AT SAME POINT ON RUSSIA'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

*Mexico, like India, has taken a stand against sanctions on Russia, making the case that the current polarisation is a threat to global security. Mexico's Foreign Minister **Marcelo Ebrard** was in New Delhi for meetings with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and said it was crucial to find a political solution as soon as possible to the Ukraine crisis.*

Tell us about the purpose of your visit here.

The purpose of the visit mainly, is to advance India and Mexico's ties to a strategic partnership. Currently, India is the ninth largest partner of Mexico in trade. So, we need to structure a more definitive relationship for the future. We are in a crisis in the multilateral system — India, as well as Mexico and other countries — and we are very concerned about that. We need to organise ourselves in order to reduce polarisation, which is increasingly a threat for global security and stability.

You discussed cooperation at the UN Security Council where both India and Mexico are members this year. Yet last month, when Mexico and France sponsored a proposal for a resolution on the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, India abstained both in the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly. Were you disappointed?

No, not really, because both countries have a different reality, and we have our different ways or mechanisms to reach the same point. And that main point is: not to corner Russia, to avoid escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in all the multilateral spaces and try to find out a political solution as soon as possible. So we are in the same position that Turkey and others are, because if you cannot find a political solution to the conflict, we are going to have an uncertainty in economic and political relations worldwide.

What kind of coordination do you hope for on this issue with India?

I think that we can work together on political issues, for instance, we are preparing for the G-20 meeting in Indonesia, along with some other countries like South Africa. It is important that countries like ours [non P-5] talk among ourselves about how to reduce polarisation. Why should we wait for others to take decisions? So this was the main dialogue with India on my visit.

The U.S. has said publicly that they would like for Russia to be kept out of the G-20, due to the war. What is Mexico's position? Is this something you discussed as well with Indian officials?

Yes, I have spoken to several friends including Indonesia, India, that is not a good idea to exclude the Russians from G-20. The G-20 is not a political forum in the first place. And secondly, assuming that this happens in the future, what's going to happen next? Russia is the 11th largest economy [11th in terms of nominal GDP, 6th in terms of PPP] in the world. So, are we going to organise two different groups of countries, some Cold War style grouping... what's next for the United Nations? How far will this go? So it doesn't make sense for me, and for Mexico's foreign policy.

Despite some pressure from the United States, Mexico, like India, has not joined the sanctions. Do you think that the sanctions that have been imposed by more than 30 countries on Russia are going to be effective?

Let me point out historically, for instance, the Cuba situation. The blockade on Cuba has been on for 60 years, with huge suffering for the people and the economy. But they [remain] there, they haven't changed. So it seems that sanctions don't work, really. Obviously, these countries [sanctioning Russia] have all the freedom to take those decisions. But Mexico will not join this sanctions policy.

Where do you think India's role lies when it comes to the conflict in Ukraine?

India is a very important country at this point, because India can talk at the same time with Russia, U.K., Mexico, United States, and very few countries that have this network. And you have a brilliant Foreign Minister, if I may say so.

You have been to the Middle East, you visited the Saudis.... Amongst other issues on the mind of the world, is rising fuel prices, especially out of this crisis. Is there a conversation between India and Mexico on cooperation when it comes to oil and petrol?

Well, this is always a part of our conversation, because Mexico exports a lot of crude oil to India [sixth largest supplier in 2021]. Traditionally, we are close partners in this regard.

Did you discuss the proposal by India and South Africa at the WTO for a full waiver of patents on COVID vaccines and medicines?

Yes, we are preparing an MoU between our regulatory authorities, to bring India and Mexico's positions closer. One of the biggest problems we face is that in Mexico, for instance, we have 40 million people who have taken the [Russian] Sputnik V vaccines or [Chinese] CanSino vaccines etc., but they haven't yet got approval for these from the World Health Organization. Those vaccines are working, we have the facts to prove that. We see Covaxin has similar problems.

So we are talking about this with India, on how to build an approval process for vaccines, which is not politicised. We are talking about a life and death situation here.

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