

'Tough Love' for Mexico's President Meddling in US Politics

By Victor Davis Hanson

I'd like to talk about [illegal immigration](#), but specifically about the new president of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum.



She's been very vocal about U.S. policy [toward Mexico](#).

For example, she said she would offer legal counsel to her citizens that were here illegally that were picked up,

she thought, unfairly or too violently by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

She also said that the United States had no business taxing remittances—that is money that Mexican nationals here, for the most part illegally, send back to Mexico.

She said, "Do not come into Mexican national ground if you're going after the cartels." That's understandable, but the

cartels are going into our ground.

So, what I'm getting at is she's very, very intrusive in American politics. But here's the problem: A recent Pew poll, taken just last year, showed a striking asymmetry. Whereas 61% of Mexican citizens have a favorable view of the United States, only 31% of Americans have a favorable view of Mexico.

Now, why is that? Well, Sheinbaum should ask herself that question. First of all, Mexico is running up a \$171 billion surplus with us. Remember, it was supposed to be the North American Free Trade Agreement. There wasn't supposed to be, at least eventually, surpluses or deficits. Canada, the United States, and Mexico were all supposed to trade freely and equitably. That didn't happen.

Why is Mexico running a \$171 billion trade surplus with the United States? Because China is avoiding tariffs by sending products to Mexico, which then Mexico assembles and exports with less duty into the United States. In other words, she's using a gimmick, as all Mexican presidents have recently, to get around tariffs and to run up surpluses, contrary to the spirit and law of that old agreement.

Second, the cartels are sending [fentanyl](#)—but the thing about fentanyl is the raw product comes from China. The Mexican government could stop that. But the raw product comes from China, it's assembled in Mexican cartel laboratories and factories, and then it's sent to the United States—but it's not always sent labeled as fentanyl. It's labeled as Valium. It's labeled as Ativan. It's labeled as Dexedrine. It's labeled as either illicit or prescription drugs. It contributes to 70,000 or 80,000 deaths per year of Americans, who either commit suicide through it, but the majority just simply overdose.

Mexico knows that. Why don't they stop it? Because, like the trade surplus, it creates foreign exchange—\$20 billion or \$30

billion comes into the cartels and is absorbed by the Mexican economy.

Finally, she's mad about remittances, and the tax on them is really paltry—1% or 2%, we'll see in the "Big, Beautiful Bill." But there's a trillion dollars that go out from foreign nationals, for the most part, in the United States all over the world. In the case of Mexico, it's the largest source of direct foreign exchange, \$63 billion.

But here's the rub. Many of these people sending back that money to Mexico are on local, state, federal entitlements for housing, for food, for education, for health care. In other words, we the taxpayers subsidize illegal aliens so that they can free up cash to send back to people in Mexico in dire poverty that can't find redress of grievances from Sheinbaum's own government.

And so, there's a lot of problems between us and Mexico, and the cure—the solution—is not for her to start editorializing on the shortfalls of American foreign policy toward Mexico or our own domestic policy. I've got a better idea.

Sheinbaum, why don't you do the following? Why don't you say that Mexican nationals are your citizens? They're key to your economic growth. You don't want them to leave your country. You have a new revisionist reform plan that you're going to offer them social services so that they don't flee to the United States. You're going to keep your own people in your own country.

No. 2: You're gonna forbid the importation, at all cost, of fentanyl into your country, and you're gonna go after the cartels and shut them down.

No. 3: You're gonna call up [President Donald Trump](#) and you're gonna say, "In three years, there will be no surplus and no trade deficit on either side. We want to be good neighbors and we want to be equitable."

And therefore, there would be no need for you to intervene in our politics and lecturing us on what we're doing wrong and where we are exposed and all of the misdemeanors and felonies you spot in our policy.

Why am I saying that? Because the problem with Mexican-American relationships, as those polls reveal, is on your side.

Don't run up surpluses by mercantile dealings with an existential enemy of the United States, China. Do not count on [American taxpayers](#) to subsidize your own citizens who entered illegally to send back \$63 billion to your failing economy. And do not lecture us about the cartels—what we should and should not do about it—when you are enabling them to kill 70,000 Americans as a source of foreign exchange inside Mexico.

That's tough love, but it's also honest.

First published in the [Daily Signal](#)