Mexico – toward regional power or a failed state?

At the beginning of the 21st century the global international relations are the scene of several important phenomenon that are changing the nature of contemporary world. We are eyewitnesses of the globalization process that changes the world in a global village. Thanks to the new technologies we can travel through the world without leaving our home. Globalization has also a huge impact on international relations. On the other side there can be observed an opposite trend toward a deeper regionalization and regional cooperation.\(^1\) This process is the result of special international correlations connected with the geopolitical position, economic development and also a cooperation of countries within the frames of a territory, related to the community of interests.\(^2\) Irrespective to the definition of regionalism, it is beyond doubt that in the contemporary world states are not able to develop alone, neither economically nor politically. So, the effect of regionalism is a progressive regionalization understood as a separation of regions on the base of different criteria and regional policies of the countries in a specific region. Also, it seems that contemporary international system is going toward a multilateral model. After the cold war period that was characterized by the bipolar competition, there were the period of unipolar dominance of the United States that at the turn of the 20th and 21st century could claimed itself a unique superpower. Meanwhile the contemporary international system is changing toward greater multipolarity. It’s not only the United States that determine international relations and have the ability to influence different regions of the world. China is known from its global aspirations since many years. The European Union is an important global power. Japan, despite its economic problems, still is one of the biggest world economies that permits to play a role of global economic power. Conflict at Ukraine demonstrates that after years from the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia returns to its imperialistic traditions, mostly in the post-soviet area. Also, there are new

---

\(^1\) Derwich, K., *The U.S. and the New Regionalism In the Western Hemisphere*, in: *Ad Americam*, vol. 10, 2009, p. 15;

actors of international system that claims their bigger role on it. Here can be mentioned such countries as members of the BRIC group: Brazil, India and already mentioned China and Russia.

Taking under consideration this changing character of the contemporary international system, what is the place and role of Mexico? Since many years Mexico is perceived as one of the most important countries in Latin America and the Caribbean region. This opinion has strong fundamentals. Territory, geographical location, economy, and political influence are the key factors that predestine this country to the role of regional power. Democratic transition that takes place in Mexico in last decades and economic cooperation with the United States also permit to play a role of regional leader. It is necessary to mention a huge impact of structural reforms that were undertaken in Mexico since the decade of the 1980s. They also resulted in a growing role of Mexico in the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The economic transformation that introduced Mexico to the world of liberal economies increased its role as an important actor in Latin America. Also, the democratic transition was not meaningless. Those process change hitherto situation of Mexican state both in the internal and external dimensions. It seems right a statement that Mexico in the first years of the 21st century became a country of open economy, unequal society and unconsolidated democracy. All these elements has its impact on Mexican foreign policy.³

Analyzing Mexican foreign policy in the last years one can reach the conclusion that since the beginning of the 21st century it is more and more influenced by the internal factors. The economic opening caused a strong interest of Mexico in broadening its economic relations not only with Latin American countries. The principle was building a strong relationship with the northern neighbor and the world’s biggest economy – the United States. It can be concluded that the final of those efforts was the successful conclusion of negotiations over the free trade agreement that entered into force on January 1st, 1994 in the form of North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada. However, the economic transition that led to the total transformation of Mexican economic and developmental strategy led also to looking for another possibilities of broadening its commercial opportunities. Already in 1997 Mexico had ratified an agreement with the European Union that entered into force in 2000.⁴ On May 17, 2008 Mexico and European Union agreed on a “strategic association” to further advance trade liberalization and

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/mexico/ (18.05.2014)
to address climate change issues. In the last two decades Mexico signed plenty of free trade agreements with countries from all over the world. That demonstrates how strong impact on its foreign policy had and still has economic transformation. At the present, Mexico is one of the biggest supporters of free trade in the Western Hemisphere. It was particularly visible during the negotiations over the idea of Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA/ALCA). However during the first years of negotiations Mexican diplomacy was quite cautious as it did not want to share with other Latin American countries the benefits of free trade with the US, at the beginning of the 21st century Mexican president Vicente Fox supported the idea even stronger than the George W. Bush administrations. During the 4th Summit of the Americas in Mar de Plata it was Fox who had been agitated in the strongest way for the continuation of negotiations as the George W. Bush was already concentrated on the security issue and the war on terror.

As it was already mentioned, the process of democratization in Mexico also has its important impact on Mexican foreign policy. First of all, because of breaking PRI domination, the process of decision making – also in the area of foreign policy – has changed. Although, president maintained its dominant position in foreign policy making, the new distribution of power, basically in Congress but also in the administration, has weakened its position in political system in general. It was particularly visible during the Zedillo presidency and during the presidential terms of Fox and Calderón. Democratization brought with itself several effects in the area of foreign policy. The political transformation means more representation in all branches of powers, principally in the legislative one. This means that differences of opinions among society in the issue of foreign policy are manifested publicly. It was enforced by the democratizations of mass media that produced a better flow of information from the government level to the citizens. Also, in the effect of political opening, problems of foreign relations became a subject of internal political competitiveness. However it would be untruth to conclude that process of democratization affected the area of foreign policy in a negative way. The decision making process is more complicated in the conditions of divided authority but it is still president who is the main actor in the area of foreign policy. It is another example of internal factor’s impact on external affairs.

---

5 Angeles Villareal, M., Mexico’s Free Trade Agreements, Congressional Research Service, [https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40784.pdf](https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40784.pdf) (18.05.2014);
7 Ruiz Perez, A., Los factores internos de la política exterior mexicana: los sexenios de Carlos Salinas y Vicente Fox, in: Foro Internacional, vol 51, No. 2, Apr-Jul., 2011, p. 314;
8 Ibidem, p. 328;
As economic liberalization and democratic transition can be perceived as positive elements of internal changes and their influence on foreign policy, since a several years in Mexico can be observed also negative phenomenon that affects Mexican foreign relations. A few years ago appeared opinions about Mexico as a failed state. It’s the consequence of increasing power of organized crime – principally drug cartels – and a huge wave of violence that has erupted several years ago. The so called ‘war on drugs’ declared by Felipe Calderón soon after his assumption of the presidency in 2006 neither have restricted the activity of drug cartels nor helped to improve the security in Mexico. As a lack of public security and continuous development of narcobussines is a growing internal problem it constitutes also significant challenges in the area of foreign relations. As the opinions that claim Mexico a failed state are too far-reaching there is no doubt that Mexico suffer a deep dysfunction in the area of public security.

It is important to see the difference between the dysfunction of a state and the term failed state. In the last years it is quite common to use the latter term in the reference to the countries that have significant problems with functioning of their institutions and with fulfillment of their obligations toward their own citizens. However, using this term is not always suitable for description of a state. The term was popularized by the US think tank Fund for Peace and the magazine Foreign Policy as they publish each year the Failed States Index. In fact, only countries form the top of the ranking can be described as a really failed states. Although, also in this situation there are some doubts. Is it justified to use the term failed state in case of a country that had never had a solid state’s institutions? If something failed it had to be not failed previously. It constitute a significant question about the very nature of the term ‘failed state’. There is also a question when a state can be described as a failed one? The Failed State Index – the most prestigious study related to the condition of the states – is based on a broad set of factors. However, it doesn’t give a precise answer when the state is a failed one, is it a place in the top ten or top twenty or top fifty etc. That is why it seems more appropriate to speak about dysfunction of states. Using this term it is possible to point out with a big precision the nature of a state’s problems without necessity of describing it as a failed one. The distinction between the term failed state and dysfunctional one is one of the conclusions of the research project realized at the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Jagiellonian University. Mexico was one of the case studies

---

analyzed during that project. It was justified as several years ago some of the annalists used term failed state for description of the situation in Mexico related to the growing development of drug cartels and state’s inability to stop the huge wave of violence. Its beyond any doubt that the most serious problem of the contemporary Mexico are the lack of public security, violence and human rights violations. And this situation is confirmed by the numbers. During the presidential term of Felipe Calderón the war on drugs resulted in over 60 thousands dead victims. In 2012 more than 26 thousand persons were killed. And the homicide rate is 22 per 100 thousand citizens. This is the basic reason for all those who perceived Mexico as a failed or falling state. However, is the huge number of killed and unprecedented wave of violence enough to call Mexico a failed state?

First of all its necessary to emphasize the very nature of Mexican state after the Mexican revolution in the first decades of the 20th century. The aim of the new political force that emerged from the revolution and finally formed in the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional – PRI) was to create a strong institutions that would replace caudillos – strong regional politicians that destabilize Mexico through the 19th century and were establishing dictatorial rules. This specific political system created in Mexico was based on a broad bureaucratic apparatus and strong institutions, both dominated by the PRI. Despite ousting the PRI from power at the turn of the 20th and 21st century, the political system remained in general the same. It can be observed a general weakening of the position of president but it is not the effect of structural reforms but the inability of the presidential parties to win majority in Congress and to serve as an instrument of a president. However, democratization brought to Mexico changes in less formal spheres. As political system in general remained unchanged, ousting the PRI from power resulted in breaking hitherto connections between the ruling party and different groups of interest. Meanwhile the drug cartels had already functioned as one of such groups. During the PRI domination Mexican authorities have been tolerating existence and activity of drug cartels if those restricted violent actions. Appearing of the new authorities after the presidential victory of Vicente Fox created a new situations. Relations between authorities and organized crime – based on the clientelistic connections – have been broken. That constituted the situation of conflict. Simultaneously, at the beginning of the 21st century several drug cartels gained such a big power and possibilities that it produced a new situation in relations between the state and

organized crime. It was no longer the state and its authorities that could dictate the conditions of that relations. The growing power of Mexican drug cartels was the effect of continuous and intensive demand on illicit substations in the United States. That made drug trafficking extremely profitable business. It assures a huge income for the organized crime. Those funds are used for creating new routes of trafficking illicit substations to the United States, for buying the newest and advanced weapon in the United States and for corrupting important officials of the Mexican state. Since the beginning of the 21st century it was no longer the state and its authorities that could determine the character of the relations with the drug cartels. Since then the cartels have the possibilities and instruments to dictate the conditions of that relation. The governments, especially the administration of Felipe Calderón had responded to this new situation by the militarization of its anti-drug policy and by the declaration of the so-called war on drugs.

This extraordinary empowerment of narcobusiness in Mexico leads to a deep dysfunction of the state in certain spheres. However, also it was possible because of the inability of the state to respond to the growing danger from the organized crime. The situation of Mexican police force is a good example of such a situation. The institutions which is dedicated to ensure internal security and legal order since several years is unable to realize its basic functions and obligations. In last decades there were several reforms of Mexican police forces. It was president Zedillo, Fox and Calderón who had undertaken the challenge of reforming police and make this force more effective in combating organized crime and in ensuring security to the citizens. The main problem of Mexican police forces is corruption. It is one of the most corrupted institutions in Mexico. In the research made for the Transparency International in 2013 90 percent of respondents answered that police is the corrupted or extremely corrupted institution. It leads to serious pathologies. A significant percentage of policemen closely cooperate with drug cartels. Some of the analysts say that in Mexico can be observed a process of privatization of the police because a lot of its members works also for criminal groups. What is particularly important, corruption do not touch only lower police officers. There were several huge scandals because of the cooperation of the most important persons in Mexican police and agencies responsible for combating narcobusiness with drug cartels. One of the most important examples of the corruption and collaboration of the top officers was detention of the head of the National Institute for Drug Combating (Instituto

12 Rubén Aguilar V., Jorge G. Castañeda, El Narco: La Guerra fallida, Punto de lectura, Mexico, D.F., 2009, ss. 33-34;
Nacional de Combate a las Drogas), Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo who was accused for collaboration with the Juarez cartel. This profound dysfunction of police forces that leads to the inability to fulfill its basic tasks and to successfully combat the organized crime is perceived nowadays as one of the principal problems of Mexican authorities. It also preoccupy significantly Mexican neighbors, mainly the United States. The George W. Bush administration disturb by the growing violence and increasing activity of Mexican drug cartels decided on an extended cooperation with the Mexican authorities. In March 2007 President Felipe Calderón and President George W. Bush announced, in Merida, a significant strengthening of cooperation between the two countries and a profound US aid for the Mexican government in its struggle against narcobusiness. This is commonly known as the Merida Initiative. In the framework of that cooperation, the United States is currently providing technical expertise and assistance to Mexico for police professionalization, prosecutorial capacity building, judicial and prison reform, justice sector institution building, information technology enhancement, infrastructure development, and border security. More than one-third of a billion dollars worth of equipment and assistance has been delivered to Mexican government agencies through the end of 2010, with approximately another USD 500 million scheduled for delivery in 2011.13

The profound dysfunction of Mexican state in the area of public security is produced also by a huge inefficiency of the judicial system. Statistics are disastrous for the Mexican authorities. According to them, less then 10 percent of processes ends with a sentence. Because of the extremely low efficiency of the judicial system alarmingly low number of delinquencies is reported to the police.14 Also, the judicial system is perceived by the citizens as strongly corrupted. In 2007 almost 60 percent of respondents declared lack of confidence to the judicial system.15 This grave inefficiency of the system results in a broad confidence that there is no danger of being captured and sentenced. And even if criminals are arrested, organized crime has a lot of possibilities to evade a penalty. The problem that results from this inability of judicial system to realize its functions is not easy to resolve for the government. However the permanent lack of funds needed for building a more efficient judicial system is a serious problem, there are much more complicated dilemmas. First of all, the judicial system

is the less reformed one. It still functions on the basis created during the authoritarian system. That opens doors for a lot of negative tendencies. It is particularly visible in the organization of the office of the attorney general. The lack of transparent rules related to the activity of the office results in permanent accusations about corruption. In the present conditions the hitherto construction of the office of the attorney general in Mexico is unclear and does not help to resolve the problem of the organized crime.

The effect of the extended dysfunction of Mexican state in the sphere of security is a growing role of military in ensuring the internal order. This is always very risky as the military is not the institution dedicated to the internal affairs – its objective is to secure independence, sovereignty and territorial integralty, not to fight with organized crime and ensuring legal system. That is way, usually the use of military brings increase of human rights violations. In the effect, the increasing level of insecurity and the growing dysfunction of Mexican state institution can bring very dangerous results in the future. Permanent inability of the State institution to realize its principle function can lead to the increase of antidemocratic attitudes among the citizens of those countries. Although in Mexico the support for democracy is quite high or does not differ strongly from the other countries in the region, in other cases – as for example in Guatemala – this seems to be a significant problem. The government is losing control on political process and is unable to match peoples expectations and demands. One of the results of this weakness and inefficiency is the number of people living in poverty.\textsuperscript{16} At the present especially dangerous is State’s inability to combat organized crime. It has fundamental meaning as there can be observed growing activity of Mexican drug cartels in Guatemala.

At this situation it a huge importance has a question about the role of Mexico in the region. Is it a state that can be a regional power or due to its dysfunction in the sphere of security it can be rather a destabilizing factor? In the first moment that question can be strange. It is because since the half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century Mexico have elaborated a strong position in the Latin American region. Also it has most of the attributes that needs a state to be a regional power. It is the third biggest country in Latin American region with the total area of 1,964 375 sq km. It’s geopolitical location is extremely important. Geographically it belongs mostly to the North America (the very south of Mexico belongs to Central American isthmus). However culturally Mexico is an integral part of Latin American region. It has important impact on Mexican foreign policy, as already there were strategies to play the role

of a kind of bridge between Latin American and the United States. Also, Mexico has two coasts: the east one at the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, and the west one at the Pacific Ocean. It opens Mexico both to the West and to the East. It also had play a significant role in the history of Mexico. Already in the colonial times Spaniards wanted to made from Mexico a middle point between Spanish colonies in the Far East, the New World and metropolis at the Iberian Peninsula. Also contemporary Mexican diplomacy is conscious of advantages that constitutes access to two oceans. Since the economic transformation of at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, Mexico is interested in broadening its economic relations with the European countries. The “strategic association” with the European Union is a good example. It does not result in disrespect of the Pacific region. Since the beginning Mexico is a member of APEC that is broad forum of economic cooperation in the Asia and Pacific region. Also last years has brought examples of Mexican activity in the Pacific area. In 2012, together with Chile, Colombia and Peru, Mexico formed the Pacific Alliance. Two Central American countries – Panama and Costa Rica are strongly interested in joining that new integration initiative. The Pacific Alliance differs substantially from recent agreements that tend to be regionally focused, such as the Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Union of South American Nations—UNASUR, 2004), the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America—ALBA, 2004), and the Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States—CELAC, 2010). Unlike the other groupings, the Pacific Alliance goal is to deepen cooperation among members with the explicit purpose of forging closer relations with the Asia-Pacific region. Whereas UNASUR, ALBA and CELAC view regionalism and integration as tools for combating globalization, the Pacific Alliance perceives them as critical links to global flows.\(^\text{17}\) Finally, it is not meaningless for Mexico the fact that it initiated its integration with foreign markets in 1994 when it constructed with the United States and Canada the North American Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA was a historical step, because it happened for the first time that Latin American country linked up with an industrialized partner. Moreover, it became a prototype for other new initiatives in the America during the decade. A series of new free trade agreements (FTAs) throughout the region followed the NAFTA model. For several years Mexico was the only Latin American country that has signed free trade agreement with the United States.

\(^\text{17}\) Ramirez S., Regionalism: the Pacific Alliance, [http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/regionalism-pacific-alliance](http://www.americasquarterly.org/content/regionalism-pacific-alliance) (24.05.2014);
Those examples of economic cooperation of Mexico in the inter-regional scale presents that it is able to play a significant role. It is possible also because of its economic potential. Mexico is an important economy at the Latin American region. In 2012 the value of Mexican GDP was 1.178 billion USD and it was the second result in Latin America, after Brazil (2,253 billion USD) and far much more than third Argentina (475 billion USD).\textsuperscript{18} The value of foreign direct investments shows that Mexico is a significant economy in the region. It places third (15,4 billion USD) after Brazil (76,1 billion) and Chile (30,3 billion).\textsuperscript{19} It seems that economy is a crucial factor that permits Mexico to play a significant role in the Latin American region.

And finally the political aspect. As it was already mentioned, in the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century it was quite well visible that the Mexican authorities have had aspirations to ensure Mexico the role of regional power. It was particularly apparent during the cold war period when Mexican diplomacy realized foreign police aimed at making Mexico a bridge between Latin American countries and the “colossus from the North”. In the effect the bilateral relations between the two neighbors are described as \textit{relación especial}. In the bipolar world it was very important for the US authorities that in Mexico there was a stable government that presented restrained position toward communism. In the effect, Mexico maintained an exceptional independence of its foreign policy from the influence of the US. It was particularly clear after the Cuban revolution when the government of Mexico did not agreed with US policy toward the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro. This unique – for Latin American conditions – independence of Mexican foreign policy during the cold war guaranteed Mexico a strong position in the Latin American region. It was perceived as an important actor international relations in the Western Hemipshere. For Mexico the relations with its northern neighbor always constituted the most important aspect of its foreign policy. Since the end of the cold war the most important element of this relation is mutual commerce and economy. However, the United States perceives Mexico basically by the prism of its national security. It was visible during both world wars, during the cold war period and it is still at the present, particularly after the 09/11.\textsuperscript{20} The problem of security in the bilateral relations between Mexico and the US is not limited to the lack of control of the border and the risk of using it by terrorists to enter the United States. Equally important is the problem of drug trafficking and illegal immigration to the US. The question is not whether Mexico is able

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Source: }\url{http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/} (24.05.2014);

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibidem};

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ojeda Gómez, M., Los Países prioritarios para Mexico, in: Foro Internacional, vol. 50, no 1, Jan-Mar 2010, p. 150;
to improve to a significant degree the situation at the border? There is a real danger that Mexico can be a source of destabilization of the region due to its profound dysfunction in the sphere of security and a total lack of capabilities to lead a successful combat with the organized crime.

In North America Mexico has strong neighbors. It would be difficult to question the leadership of the United States. However, the role of Mexico in North America is growing, especially since the 1994 and entrance into force the NAFTA. It is basically the effect of growing connections between Mexican economy and the US and Canadian ones. It is beyond any doubt that the fundament of Mexico’s relations with the United States and Canada is economy and commerce. These relations have crucial role for Mexico. About 80 per cent of Mexican export goes to the partners from the NAFTA. However, as it was mentioned above, the internal problems of Mexico that results from its deep dysfunction in the security area are more and more important and have strong impact on the relations, especially with the United States. Relations with Canada are much less intensive as the volumen of commercial exchange is less significant. However there is a mutual will to intensify bilateral relations between both countries.

It is worth to emphasize that this destabilizing influence of Mexico which is the effect of its deep dysfunction in the area of public security is not limited to the US – Mexican border. Situation in Mexico is destabilizing the Central American region more and more. This is especially visible in the case of Guatemala. As most of the Central American republics suffer for a weakness of state’s institutions they are especially compliant for activity of the organized crime. There can be observed growing activity of Mexican drug cartels in Guatemala, especially los Zetas. In the effect of increasing presence of Mexican drug cartels in Central American countries, their leaders decided to formed joined forces to combat narcobussines at their territories. The escalation of narcobussines toward the southern neighbors of Mexico constitute a question about its the role in the Central American subregion. Meanwhile the Central American isthmus constitutes a strategic region for Mexico. There is a lot of discussions about the Mexican border with the United States, although the southern border of Mexico is also very important. For many persons from Central and South America it is an entrance to the North America. That is why one of the priorities for Mexico should be cooperation with its southern neighbors – Guatemala and Belize – to enforce their

---

22 Rul, J.L., Crea Centroamerica fuerzas contra los Zetas, El Universal, 28 de enero 2011;
efforts focused on security on the border. As explained Mexican ambassador in Poland, the main objectives of Mexico in Central America are promotion of economic development, human rights protection and supporting democratic transformations.23

Although geographically most of Mexican territory belongs to North America, it is Central American region where Mexico has an opportunity to be a regional power. It is not only the effect of the fact that Central American republics are small in the sense of territory. For decades they also have been the place of strong social conflicts that usually turn in a bloody civil wars. The most profound crisis took place in the 1980s, when the whole subregion was immersed in the deepest crisis in its history. The Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, the civil war in El Salvador, the dirty war in Guatemala, the engagement of the United States, Cuba, Soviet Union and other Central American republics all together turn the region in the scene of sharp fighting. That time Mexico was one of the funders of the Contadora Group that tried to solve the crisis. Today Mexico has even more potential for playing the role of the regional power. However, as long as the problem of organized crime and dysfunction of the state will not solved, Mexico will be the source of destabilization in the Central American region. Any form of destabilization of the Central American countries is both – highly probable and very dangerous. Countries like Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador are quite weak states. They are extremely vulnerable to any forms of destabilization. That is why the role of regional power in this region should be the task of strengthening of stability and stimulating of development. Nowadays Mexico can be attractive for Central American republics mainly in the area of economy. However, the US competition is very strong. The signing of the CAFTA and the bilateral free trade agreement between the US and Panama can limit Mexican economic possibilities in the region. That is why it is so important to combat organized crime. The weakness of Central American states is a great encouragement for Mexican drug cartels to develop their activity in these countries.

As there can be formed a type of pyramid in the importance of the countries for Mexico, at the top are the United States. One step down are Central American republics and Canada. And the third in order are others countries of the Latin American region. It is natural as one takes into account the cultural and linguistic similarities as well as the common history.24 Of course the relations with these countries are different as their importance for Mexico is not the same. Naturally the most important ones are Brazil and Argentina because

23 Ricardo Villanueva Hallal, The Foreign Policy of Mexico, speech at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, April 16th, 2014;
24 Ojeda Gómez, M. ibid., p. 147;
of their economic potential and political importance. All three countries, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil have aspirations to be a regional powers. There is a question if there is enough space in Latin American region for three regional powers? It seems natural that Brazil wants to be the most important actor in Latin America. That is why its relations with Mexico should be carefully observed. And last years are quite difficult time for these relations. It begun worsening from the very beginning of the Dilma Rousef presidential term. During her inauguration the Mexican authorities were absent – there were no president Felipe Calderón nor even his Secretary of Foreign Affairs. It was the beginning of cooling bilateral relations between the two countries. During last years there appeared more difficulties. It can be mention differences on the climate issues and growing competition in the international financial institutions, basically the IMF.\textsuperscript{25} Also, the perception of cooperation with other regions are distinct in Mexico and Brazil. The first one is principally engaged in the strengthening its relations with North American countries. It is necessary to point out the growing interest of Mexico in the Asia and Pacific regions. The Pacific Alliance seems to play a decisive role in the relations of Mexico with the Far East. As now four Latin American countries participate in this initiative, the next two – Panama and Costa Rica – are strongly interested in a form of cooperation. Meanwhile Brazil is interested mostly in developing its relations with European Union. The Mexican engagement in the relations with Asia and Pacific region can be confirmed in economic data. The value of Mexican commerce with this region in 2012 was almost 108 billion USD meanwhile with Europe it was 65 billions.\textsuperscript{26}

Because of the economic potential, commercial links with the United States and Canada, and its geopolitical situation, Mexico is an important actor in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Also, history is a factor that can explained the Mexican aspirations to be a regional power. Specially during the cold war the international position of Mexico in the region was substantial. The political stability, although based on authoritarian political system, was exceptional on the ground of Latin America. That had permitted on relative independence of its foreign policy from the US tendencies to dominate the Western Hemisphere. When the cold war ended, Mexico realized a huge transformation of its economy that permitted for establishing closer commercial links with the United States. That is also exceptional in comparison with other Latin American countries. All these factors can be mentioned as factors that can help Mexico to build up its position in the Latin American and

\textsuperscript{26} Programa Sectorial…, ibid.;
the Caribbean region. However, nowadays equally important are internal factors, meanwhile the situation in Mexico makes growing embarrassment. The deep dysfunction of Mexican State in regard to the public security strongly affects its relations with other countries and makes them uncertain about the real condition of Mexican State. Is it a reliable partner? Is it able to solve its internal problems as they affects to a significant degree other countries, specially direct neighbors? Finally, the question that constitutes the topic of this paper – is it a regional power or a failed state? It can be stated with a strong emphasize, that Mexico cannot be described as a failed state. First of all, this term is highly imprecise. However, much more important is that the situation in Mexico does not permit for describing it as a failed state. Mexico has strong state institutions created decades ago to serve as an instrument for the predecessors of the PRI. Despite the political change in 2000, the fundaments of the political system did not change significantly. Mexico has a huge problem with public security that results from the deep dysfunction of institutions responsible for that. This is why it would be better to call Mexico a state with a deep dysfunction in the area of public security. Does it makes impossible to act as a regional power? Not necessarily. It is an important actor of international relations, not only in Latin America and the Western Hemisphere. Nevertheless it is necessary to emphasize that the growing dysfunctions of Mexican state is affecting its foreign policy more and more. Without resolving the problem of organized crime, principally the narcobusinesses, and without a significant improvement of the public security it will be difficult to aspire to the role of regional power. As it can be observed in Central American region, Mexico can be source of regional destabilization as drug cartels are expanding their activity to the countries south of Mexico. In that situation they can perceived Mexico as a source of threat. It will deteriorate mutual relations. Very similar situation could appear in the relations with the United States. Since several years the issue of security is – together with economic issues – the most important element of mutual relations. If Mexico is a permanent source of destabilization in the border zone and is incapable to restrain organized crime, it can have a devastating impact on its relations with the United States. To conclude, it can be said that Mexico is in a very important moment. As the authorities want to build a strong international position it is necessary to solve the biggest internal problem which is the deep dysfunction related to the public security. There is a big probability of the mutual dependency of those two elements: the deeper dysfunction of Mexican state, the more difficult would be to play an important role in the region.