

The US-Mexican Deal Advances “Fortress America”, Softens China’s “Counter-Sanctions”

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Region: [Asia](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#),
[USA](#)

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The deal that Trump struck with Mexico late last week in order to prevent the imposition of 5-25% tariffs on all of its exports to the US marketplace simultaneously advances his vision of “Fortress America” and softens the blow of China’s counter-sanctions by making Mexico his country’s “Lead From Behind” security partner in Central America’s “Northern Triangle” and getting it to agree to the large-scale purchase of agricultural products that the People’s Republic recently tariffed.

Trump came out on top in last week’s high-stakes tariff game with Mexico after clinching a deal with it just days prior to his promised imposition of 5% tariffs on all of its exports to the US marketplace, which would compound every month until November when they’d reach a 25% ceiling. The Mexican economy is completely dependent on the American one, especially after NAFTA enabled third parties to invest in the country as a backdoor to exporting their goods tariff-free to the US. There was no way that it could have survived the [crushing effect](#) of up to 25% tariffs, which would have inevitably led to the rapid large-scale exodus of untold billions of dollars from its economy as foreign investors rerouted their supply chains in response, hence why Mexico felt compelled to give in to Trump’s border security demands by “taking unprecedented steps to increase enforcement to curb irregular migration” along the Guatemalan border from Central America’s unstable “Northern Triangle”.

The [official State Department statement](#) also said that both parties “welcome the Comprehensive Development Plan launched by the Government of Mexico in concert with the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras” to “promote prosperity, good governance and security in Central America”. This aspect of the agreement can be understood as the US delegating Mexico as its “[Lead From Behind](#)” security partner for [managing](#) the three primary Central American states from which the majority of illegal immigrants have been arriving in recent years. In exchange for acting as the US’ border security vanguard by directly curtailing illegal immigration from the southern isthmus, as well as agreeing to house US asylum seekers on its territory until their cases have been adjudicated, the Mexican economy will be spared the “nuclear bomb” of Trump’s 5-25% tariffs on all its northern-destined exports. Put another way, Trump was able to masterfully leverage the US’ economic influence over Mexico in order to achieve a tangible security outcome.

In addition, Trump also [tweeted](#) that “Mexico has agreed to immediately begin buying large quantities of agricultural product from our great patriot farmers”, which will help one of his key constituencies ahead of next year’s heated 2020 elections after China’s counter-

sanctions curtailed their exports to the world's largest marketplace as a retaliatory escalation in the ongoing "[trade war](#)". Taken together, it becomes evident that Trump's deal with Mexico advances his "[Fortress America](#)" vision of restoring the US' "sphere of influence" over the Western Hemisphere by having his southern neighbor take the lead in dealing with the unconventional threat of "[Weapons of Mass Migration](#)" under pane of crippling economic punishment, as well as representing a clever solution for softening the political-economic blow from China's counter-sanctions against American farmers. In essence, Trump is pursuing US-led hemispheric autarky by relying on Mexico's massive market (and possibly soon, the rest of Latin America's and [especially Brazil's](#)) to compensate for the loss of China's.

This wouldn't have been possible had it not been for the success of the Obama-era "[Operation Condor 2.0](#)" series of rolling regime changes across the region that pushed back the so-called "Pink Tide" and restored the US' supremacy over the hemisphere, which in turn enabled Trump to weaponize access to the US consumer market through sanctions threats for political-economic purposes, a tactic that's already become the hallmark of his presidency after being rigorously applied against the multipolar Great Powers of Russia, China, and Iran. The quickness with which Mexico capitulated to Trump's border security demands speaks to the effectiveness of these interconnected efforts, as well as the systemic vulnerability of the rest of the hemisphere's comparatively weaker southern states vis-a-vis their dependence on exports to the US, strongly suggesting that the Mexican precedent can simply be repackaged and reapplied as needed on a case-by-case basis as Trump puts the finishing touches on "Fortress America" in preparation for his drawn-out "trade war" with China.

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