With 'Friends' Like Mexico's Obrador, Who Needs Enemies Like Putin, Xi, Kim Jong Un and the Ayatollahs?

by Victor Davis Hanson

In a recent *60 Minutes* interview, Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador—who prefers to be known as AMLO for short—issued to the Biden administration blackmail demands that sounded more like existential threats.

AMLO warned the U.S. that the current influx of some 10 million illegal aliens through the southern border will most certainly continue—*unless* America agrees to his ultimatums.

One, Obrador says the U.S. must now send $20 billion in de facto bribery payments to Latin American nations, many of them corrupt and dysfunctional. Apparently, he thinks it is America's fault that millions of Latin Americans are fleeing

these failed states northward, not the inept and corrupt governments that create such misery.

Two, AMLO demands amnesty for vast numbers of Mexican illegal aliens currently unlawfully residing inside the U.S. He apparently also thinks there is no such thing as U.S. immigration law. Or, if there is, such statutes do not apply to citizens of Mexico. Can we ask Mr. Obrador to simply grant permanent visa-free, no-questions-asked residence to any American living in a vacation complex in Mexico?

Three, he also requires America to lift sanctions against anti-American Venezuela. That communist government currently is part of the new China/Russia/Iran strategic axis. It is sending thousands of its citizens northward to enter the U.S. illegally.

Many of them are criminals, as the recent murder of Laken Riley by a felonious Venezuelan illegal alien attests. Dictator Nicolás Maduro's Venezuelan regime recently threatened to invade and annex oil-rich Guyana, its smaller neighbor to the east. Maduro's "security forces" have routinely murdered hundreds of political opponents. This rogue state is apparently Mexico's newest ally.

Four, AMLO further requires the U.S. to stop its long embargo of communist Castroite-controlled Cuba, a decades-long avowed enemy of the U.S.

And what, AMLO was asked, would happen if the U.S. were to refuse Mexico's blackmail threats?

Obrador abruptly snapped, "The flow of migrants will continue"—an admission that Obrador himself has the power to stop or turn on illegal immigrant influxes into the U.S.

Translated, that means we can expect that another 2-3 million illegal aliens will leave Mexican territory to enter the U.S. unlawfully in 2024. Or if Joe Biden is attuned to the

political disaster he has created by illegal immigration for his party in November, we should expect this cynical administration quietly—in the fashion on the eve of the last midterms of cancelling student loans, draining the strategic petroleum reserve, or currently slow-walking resupplies to Israel—to send cash to Obrador to limit inflows before the election.

In his long interview, AMLO also denied that Mexico is one of the most violent countries in the world, despite currently having the ninth highest murder rate among nations. AMLO claims further that there is no corruption in America, although Mexico also ranks among the world's most corrupt nations.

As far as the nearly 100,000 American deaths per year attributed to Mexican cartel-produced and illegally imported fentanyl—often deliberately disguised as both illicit and prescription drugs to mask its toxicity and increase its usage—Obrador claims that the fault is solely on Americans who take the drug. He believes Mexicans simply supply the demand regardless of its legality and in such a way to ensure thousands of accidental overdoses.

AMLO adds quite dishonestly that there is no real drug use in Mexico. Consequently, the cartels supposedly do not threaten the stability of his government. He apparently shrugs that they are an American, not Mexican, problem, despite the cartels' annual murdering of several hundred Mexican politicians and candidates.

Finally, under his "Mexico First" policy, AMLO warns he will not pass any law or adopt any policy that is American-inspired.

Much of AMLO periodic tough-guy rhetoric—in the past he has bragged of the huge expatriate Mexican community and the power it now exercises over American politics—is simply the bluster

of an insecure, smaller neighbor overshadowed by its northern colossus, and both mindful and resentful of an often shared troublesome history.

In addition, Obrador is a radical socialist. He believes a nation's prosperity is achieved through forced state, or indeed, international redistribution from the wealthier to the poorer—not by guarantees of free markets, individual freedom, consensual government, or the rule of law. Thus, Mexico's problem is not its misuse of rich natural resources, lack of the rule of law, corrupt federal, state, and local governments, or the cartels, but simply exploitation by its northern neighbor. Obrador never asks himself why a resource-poor Japan or Switzerland is rich and a resource-rich Mexico is poor.

Two further questions arise in response to Obrador's unhinged hostility. One, why is AMLO *now* so emboldened to threaten the United States with even more millions of illegal aliens leaving Mexico soil to enter the U.S. unlawfully?

And two, how will America answer such a belligerent neighbor?

Obrador is feisty and full of anti-American venom now for a lot of reasons. One, he was easily able to transit from his country 10 million illegal immigrants into the United States. He believes that with the existing 50 million foreign-born American residents, America is rapidly becoming a country of enough Latin American ex-patriates to ensure Mexico's influence over American policy.

In projectionist fashion, Obrador also believes that the American melting pot is dead, replaced by the tribalist salad bowl, in which ethnic groups form large, permanent, and unassimilated blocs and vie for government money and influence against rival ethnicities.

In such a Hobbesian U.S., Latinos, Obrador believes, will come out on top and thus greenlight Mexico's agenda. The idea that

Mexican immigrants will likely quickly assimilate, integrate, and replace their Mexican identity and allegiance with an American persona, he believes, is now passé.

More disturbingly, AMLO assumes that Biden deliberately destroyed the U.S. border in order to welcome in the world's poor and needy en masse. Biden, he believes, is engineering the new demographics. He has enticed a constituency that will repay de facto amnesty with fealty at the polls, and in the next census, he will thus help redefine dozens of congressional districts to favor Democrats. Thus, Obrador thinks his open-border policies synchronize with the open-border wishes of the Biden administration.

Two, Obrador sees the U.S. decoupling from China. Billions of dollars in American overseas investment are leaving China and being rerouted to Mexico. Hundreds of new factories producing everything from cheap consumer items to cars are now appearing in Mexico entirely for U.S. export.

Obrador assumes that without such outsourcing and offshoring to Mexico, the U.S. would suffer supply chain disruption, higher consumer prices, and shortages of vital goods—and thus be forced to return to its unhealthy dependence on China. So he believes Mexican labor in the U.S. and Mexican factories at home are indispensable to the U.S. economy, and thus he can say or do what he wishes to any president he chooses.

Three, while Obrador was for a while scared of Trump, he has utter contempt for the bumbling Biden administration in general, and, in particular, for an enfeebled Joe Biden himself. On a recent Biden trip to Mexico, Obrador beamed as he was filmed personally propping up a shaky Biden as he descended from the stage.

In Obrador's view, any country that would open wide its border, welcome in 10 million foreign nationals, without legal sanction, without audit, without even processing, deserves the

contempt he extends to it.

Just as he scans the world stage and sees Biden's humiliating exit from Afghanistan, its passive response to serial Iranian-fueled terrorist attacks on American installations in the Middle East, and its passivity when China launched a spy balloon over the U.S., so too, like other American belligerents, Obrador feels Biden's America is now there for the taking. Thus his emboldened threats that no Mexican president of the past has ever leveled.

Finally, what can the U.S. do to reestablish its sovereignty and remind Mexico that its belligerency, its export of deadly fentanyl, its deliberate sandbagging of U.S. immigration law, its alliances with America's worst enemies, and its greenlighting of the Mexican cartels' anti-American, transborder mayhem all have existential consequences?

So what should the next president do to restore mutual respect and cooperation between our once amicable two countries? Five easy steps.

1. Quietly finish the wall across *the entire border*.
2. Begin deporting to Mexico the ten million illegal aliens who have unlawfully entered and resided in the U.S. over the last three years. Let Mexico disperse them to their countries of origin.
3. Tax at 10% the $60 billion in remittances that annually flow into Mexico from the U.S. Remittances are Obrador's largest source of foreign exchange and made possible only by American state and federal governments' subsidization of Mexican national residents, that in turn frees them to send billions back home to Mexico.
4. Declare the cartels international terrorist organizations. Begin sanctioning all Mexican banks, corporations, and known Mexico officials that traffic and do business with the cartels.
5. Deploy the U.S. military to the border, not merely to

create deterrence and aid the border patrol, but to end
all cartel entry into the United States and to stop all
unauthorized cross-border intrusions by Mexican
paramilitaries.

Do all that, and paradoxically, Obrador will begin praising
the U.S. and ask once again to cooperate in restoring a secure
border.

Like so many passive-aggressive bullies, Obrador respects the
strong adversaries he slanders but he has utter contempt for
the weak leaders he praises.

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