

Sheinbaum vows Mexico “will never be a colony” while offering military collaboration, cheap labor and minerals to Trump

Andrea Lobo
11 September 2026

On Monday morning, Donald Trump posted on Truth Social a map of North America in which Mexico, Canada, Greenland, Iceland and a string of Caribbean islands including Cuba were painted over in the stars and stripes, labeled simply “United States of America,” with the Gulf of Mexico renamed the “Gulf of America.” There was no accompanying text.

Hours earlier, standing near the US border, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum had wished for a good relationship with Trump: “In President Trump’s first term there was a very good relationship with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. And that is what we aspire to, a good relationship with our neighbor to the north. Cooperation always, subordination never.”

Amid protests from Iceland, Denmark, France and other governments, Sheinbaum then replied to the provocative map on X, referring to Mexico’s month of independence: “In the month of the homeland we reaffirm that Mexico is not and will not be a colony or protectorate of any foreign country. We are proudly a free, independent and sovereign country.”

The provocation is not unforeseen, however. It follows Trump’s proposal to rename the state of New Mexico “New America,” and his executive order renaming Lake Ontario “Lake America.” Three days earlier, from the Oval Office, Trump had said of Mexico:

“We lose with Mexico \$195 billion a year. If I don’t trade with Mexico, they have nothing that we have to have. I mean, hot tamales? Tomatoes? A couple of things? Basically, they have nothing we need. We have oil. We have everything.”

Almost immediately after her protest, Sheinbaum geared back to her empty nationalist rhetoric combined with subservience before Trump.

On Wednesday, she and Economy Minister Marcelo Ebrard held a video call with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on the US, Mexico Canada (USMCA) trade deal review. Ebrard described it publicly as “cordial” and “very useful for the ongoing commercial negotiations.” Sheinbaum said it was in the interests of all three countries to preserve the treaty.

That same day in Quito, Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a direct threat of military action against Mexico. He claimed there are “vast territories in Mexico that are not governed by the state” and are under cartel control. He allowed that Mexican authorities “have done more than they’ve ever done before,” but that “it is still not nearly enough.” He concluded: “Eventually that threat will have to be confronted, one way or the other.”

Asked on Thursday whether she considered Rubio’s remarks disrespectful, Sheinbaum declined to engage: “I’m not going to get into it that way. It’s the reverse—let’s respect each other, each in his own territory, each with his own election. Mexico shouldn’t be an argument in a United States election.”

The substance of the relationship, however, is codified in the USMCA review, the trade war with Canada and the invasion of Venezuela. The back-and-forth reflects growing tensions and real fears in sections of the Mexican ruling class of a similar fate as Venezuela, whose oil sector and management of the economic, foreign and domestic policy have been turned over to Washington.

On July 1, Washington declined to renew the treaty for a further 16 years, leaving it to lapse into annual review—so that Mexico’s entire economic model, built on a record \$534.9 billion in exports to the US in 2025, now

hangs on Washington's yearly assent. When formal talks opened, the US Trade Representative announced that the two governments had agreed to negotiate "stronger rules of origin for key industrial goods, enhanced collaboration on critical minerals, and increased external trade policy alignment."

Stripping away the technical language, this means securing US access to Mexican high-tech inputs for US auto, defense, electronics and pharmaceutical industries, as well as lithium, copper, silver and rare earths. "External trade policy alignment" means Mexico subordinating its trade relations to Washington's confrontation with China—which Sheinbaum has already begun with tariffs of 10 to 50 percent on Chinese goods.

Labor power is the key commodity. Average formal-sector wages in Mexican manufacturing remain around \$2 an hour. Mexico is now the largest source of US imports, and the purpose of "nearshoring" is to relocate production out of Asia and into a low-wage platform under direct US military and political control.

There is no contradiction between Sheinbaum's statements. The nationalism is not a defense against the subordination; it is the mechanism by which the subordination to capitalism and US imperialism is imposed on the working class.

The Mexican bourgeoisie has no independent perspective. Its profits derive precisely from Mexico's function as the cheap-labor and raw-materials annex of US imperialism. What it fears in Trump's map is not the exploitation of Mexican workers—it organizes that itself—but losing its cut. It therefore combines assurances to Washington with patriotic appeals at home, wrapped in the defense of the minimum social programs the ruling class conceded in 2018 to contain mass opposition.

Those programs have not altered class relations. Labor poverty stood at 31.9 percent in the second quarter of 2026, with 41.8 million people unable to buy a basic food basket from their wages. Informal employment rose to 55.1 percent, above both the previous quarter and the year before.

Sheinbaum's invocation of the "very good relationship" between López Obrador (also known as AMLO) and Trump is also telling.

In 2019, under Trump's tariff threat, AMLO deployed the newly created National Guard to suppress US-bound migration, converting Mexico into Washington's border wall. In July 2020, he traveled to the Rose Garden to celebrate the USMCA—an instrument of US preparation for war with China—and told Trump: "You have never

attempted to impose anything on us that would violate our sovereignty." He constitutionalized the domestic deployment of the military and doubled its budget. He established the world's largest free-trade zone along the northern border, halving added-value taxes and cutting corporate tax to compete for relocated production. He also invited US Special Forces to train Mexican troops.

Sheinbaum has intensified every element. She assured Trump in December 2024 that migrant caravans would "not reach the northern border," and her government boasted of cutting arrivals by 76 percent. In February 2025, she deployed a further 10,000 National Guard troops under tariff threat. She has transferred cartel prisoners to US custody in three mass extraditions. She halted oil shipments to Cuba under US pressure, despite being the island's top supplier.

The alternative to this subordination was demonstrated last week not by Sheinbaum nor any government, but by workers. Hundreds of Mexican cross-border truck drivers, organizing themselves through a WhatsApp group that hit its 1,024-member ceiling, blockaded the Mexicali-Calexico and San Luis Río Colorado-Yuma crossings for four days after 17 drivers had their US visas arbitrarily revoked. They appealed to no party and no union bureaucracy.

That is a step forward. Mexican workers cannot defend themselves by rallying behind a government that polices Washington's border and offers up the country's minerals at the negotiating table. The trade war against Canada, the seizure of Venezuela's oil, and the pressure on Mexico are expressions of a single process: the drive of US imperialism to recolonize and reorganize the hemisphere to wage World War III. It can be answered only by the unification of workers across the Americas in a common struggle against capitalism—the fight for the United Socialist States of the Americas.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact