



By: TA | AP Brief

Spain and Mexico put diplomatic tussle over their colonial past behind them



With a few choice words and a handshake, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum laid to rest a diplomatic spat between her government and Spain over the Spanish colonial past during her visit to Barcelona on Saturday.

“There is no diplomatic crisis, there never was one,” she said upon arrival at the IV **Meeting in Defense of Democracy**, a gathering of representatives of 15 countries concerned with the rise of illiberalism.

“The important thing is to recognize the efforts of the indigenous people of our land,” she said, moments before shaking hands with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

Sheinbaum’s participation came after Spain’s **King Felipe VI** ironed out a longstanding diplomatic dispute when in March he publicly acknowledged the conquest of the Americas had led to the “abuse” of native peoples.

The international tussle started in 2019, when Sheinbaum’s predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, demanded that Spain “publicly and officially” recognize the abuses committed during the conquest of Mexico in a letter sent to the Spanish king and Pope Francis.

Spain refused to do so, which soured relations between the two governments.

Relations hit a low point in 2024 when Sheinbaum did not invite Felipe to her inauguration over the palace’s refusal to issue a formal apology, a move that Sánchez called “unacceptable.”

Spain subsequently refused to send a representative to Sheinbaum’s inauguration in a breach of tradition.

Step toward reconciliation

The unprecedented step toward reconciliation by Felipe was followed by the Mexican government inviting the Spanish monarch to attend a World Cup match this summer.

Sheinbaum and Sánchez later met privately for nearly an hour, according to Sánchez’s office.

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“I spoke with president Sheinbaum about global affairs and the importance of advancing the relations between Mexico and the European Union,” Sánchez wrote on X. “We are in agreement in continuing to strengthen our special cultural, economic and social ties.”

Sánchez did not publicly mention the now-resolved diplomatic issue at Saturday’s events, while thanking Sheinbaum for offering to host the next edition of the pro-democracy summit next year.