

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (generally known as AMLO) could be described as a left-leaning populist. Like other populist leaders, he has not been friendly to climate action.

In November, Mexico ramped up its 2030 [commitment](#) under the Paris Agreement from 22% to 35%. That sounds like great news, but there may be less to this commitment than meets the eye. It may have been intended [more](#) as a public relations gambit than an international commitment, and some of Mexico's other policies seem likely to undermine its ability to hit its target.

AMLO has come under [criticism](#) for his commitment to fossil fuel production and refining in Mexico. His attitude toward fossil fuels is reflected by a speech he gave last August to celebrate the planned opening of a new oil refinery. As the [NY Times](#) reported,

“Though not yet operational, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador hailed the refinery as a centerpiece in his grand campaign to secure Mexico's energy independence.

‘We ignored the sirens’ song, the voices that predicted, in good faith, perhaps, the end of the oil age and the massive arrival of electric cars and renewable energies,’ he told the cheering crowd.”

Thus, as in the US, the crusade for energy independence mostly translates into “drill baby drill.” Moreover, there are policies in the electricity sector that will discourage the expansion of renewables that AMLO has promised in northern Mexico.

Much of the problem relates to [favoritism](#) for Mexico's ailing state utility, the Comision Federal de Electricidad, or CFE. The CFE's older hydro and fossil fuel projects have priority in the loading order, meaning that renewables can only be used when these other older sources aren't supplying enough power. Also, the CFE has to be the majority shareholder in any new renewable energy projects in the key Sonoran region but lacks the resources to play this role.

In short, it seems true that, as the *Times* reported, “driven by Mr. López Obrador's long-held goal to wrest control of the energy sector from private companies and allow state firms to dominate the market, the government is undermining efforts to expand renewable power and staking the nation's future on fossil fuels.” Under AMLO, the *Times* continued, “Mexican authorities are using the might of their regulatory agencies to keep renewable firms out of the market, blocking their power plants from operating, and instead propping up fossil fuel-powered plants owned or run by the state, according to interviews with more

than a dozen former government officials, analysts and energy executives.”

AMLO has engaged in [discussions](#) this year to reduce the favoritism for CFE, but so far I haven't seen reports about implementing new policies.

There are many things to celebrate tomorrow on Cinco de Mayo. Unfortunately, Mexico's climate policy does not at present seem to be one of them.

This is especially sad because, according to the [World Bank](#), Mexico is highly exposed to climate change impacts, especially in the poorer, southern states. As in most countries, it will be the poor in Mexico who will pay the greatest price if we fail to curb global warming.