

Mexico and Brazil, an uncertain future

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Brazil and Mexico, the two largest countries in Latin America not only in terms of the number of their inhabitants but also the size of their gross domestic product (GDP), are in a situation of generalised uncertainty, due as much to their internal problems as to the effect the outcome of the elections in the United States will have on their economies. Of course, in either case it is difficult to predict the impact of the outcome of the race between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, but there is no doubt that if Trump won the elections things would get more complicated and the future would be more uncertain.

In 2018 Mexico and Brazil will both hold elections for the Presidency of the Republic. In both countries there is a political crisis of confidence and legitimacy, coupled with the unfavourable behaviour seen from economic growth. This results from the fall in oil prices and energy prices more generally, the incompetence and superficiality of governments, and also from the terrible distribution of income in the two countries and the increasingly complicated strategies to open new opportunities and create more and better jobs.

Both governments have disappointed our countries and their people. Social and economic inequality have increased dramatically, and our fragile democracies have been distorted in favour of the concentrated interests of an elite that does not cover the complex spectrum of political forces, much less the goal of achieving greater wellbeing for the majority of their populations. Having previously enjoyed international prestige and respect, Brazil and Mexico are now seen as the degraded image of two governments who do not know where their objectives are, much less their goals, and who lack the sensitivity, vision and commitment to assert sovereignty, justice and dignity.

In the case of Brazil, on the first of January 2003, for the first time in that country's history, a worker and union leader, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, took office as president. From his first day in office, Lula was determined to fight hunger and poverty, and made it his life's mission to ensure that all Brazilians could eat three times a day. In October 2006 he was reelected for a second term as president. Dilma Rousseff, a member of the Labour Party (PT), the same party as Lula, continued this fight until she was falsely charged and removed from office on 31 August, 2016.

Brazil has a population of 208 million (the world's fifth largest) and Mexico has a population of 120 million (the world's eleventh largest). Brazil today is the ninth largest economy internationally, having risen over the last decade from fifteenth place. Mexico, on the other hand, during the same period went from ninth to fourteenth. The two countries have the worst income distribution in the world: Brazil ranks first and Mexico third. Minimum wages grew eight times under the governments of Lula and Dilma, while in Mexico they have not even doubled and, in real terms, after discounting inflation, they are worth much less than their nominal value. So although we have



some similar structural problems, others are different, particularly in terms of the results.

In the final balance, the frustration and disappointment for the people of both nations is obvious and the political and social risks are also highly dangerous for the stability of these two giants of Latin America. This is why human and labour rights are at risk, and especially those of freedom, justice, democracy and shared prosperity which do not seem to be borne in mind or feature in the government programmes of the politicians and groups that now dominate in both countries.

Under these conditions, the outcome of the US elections between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump increases the uncertainty which is spreading throughout Latin America and the world. In fact, problems are beginning to emerge more forcefully in countries like Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia and others. Unity and solidarity across the continent are fundamental today if we are to work together to address those problems which threaten security, peace, the correct application of justice and equality among our peoples, which could worsen after 8 November.