



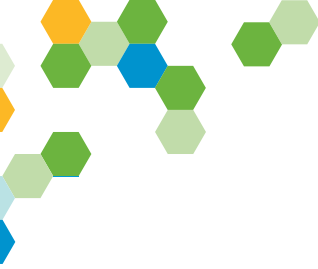
SPECIAL REPORT

# Mexico and the United States elections in the autumn of discontent

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## I INTRODUCTION

How did we get here? This is the question of the year. Not only in the United States, but in Colombia, the United Kingdom, Spain, and many other countries where there seems to be a disconnect between the elite politicians and the electorate, as well as a desire to break from the status quo. The world seems to agree with this, but no one is in agreement in regards to which would be the best solution in order to reinstate faith in the system, whether this be through a reform or a complete break.

Taking this current situation into account, many have asked how the U.S. has gotten to this point. How has one of the most innovative and exemplar countries, characterized as leader of the free world gotten itself into this? The United States' elections seem to be chaotic, with highs and blows that no one would have expected a year ago. We are spectators of two of the least favored candidates in over 50 years with the majority of their electorate not identifying with either or.

"Most recently the American Dream has been increasingly difficult to attain"

## 2. THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

Since its beginnings the United States has been labeled and perceived as the “land of opportunities.” The U.S. is grandiose, innovative, and has time and time again been characterized for its plethora of cultures and beliefs that have come together to work hard and make it “big,” creating a lasting impact in society. There are few U.S. citizens who have not heard that if you work hard, you will make it, and this is exactly what the American Dream is—a rags to riches story that anyone can achieve.

After World War II, the American Dream transformed into even more than just hard work, but a white picket fence, a nuclear family, and a job that would give families economic stability to live comfortably. Supported largely by economic development and government programs like the GI Bill<sup>1</sup>, many Americans were able to have access to this dream and the opportunities that came with it<sup>2</sup>. In fact, even with a minimum wage salary,

Americans were able to live comfortably with the minimum wage reaching its peak in 1968, while today the minimum wage has lost a little over 8 % of its purchasing power to inflation<sup>3</sup>.

Most recently the American Dream has been increasingly difficult to attain. Years of growing income inequality have slowly eliminated America’s backbone: Their middle class<sup>4</sup>. This, tied to other various factors such as political polarization, America’s changing demographics (America’s majority will be its current minority population by 2060<sup>5</sup>) that have made America’s White anxious, globalization, and technology that has replaced jobs from various sectors such as manufacturing, have made Americans question whether this dream is still conceivable.

Needless to say, times are hard, and despite the economic growth achieved by the Obama administration,<sup>6</sup> many are disillusioned by the system, which has stemmed from policies such as the Supreme Court decision, Citizens United,

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.I.\\_Bill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.I._Bill)

<sup>2</sup> Bohanon, Cecil. "Economic Recovery: Lessons from the Post-World War II Period." Mercatus Center. N.p., 15 Sept. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> DeSilver, Drew. "5 Facts about the Minimum Wage." Pew Research Center RSS. N.p., 23 July 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Sommeiller, Estelle, Mark Price, and Ellis Wazeter. "Income Inequality in the U.S. by State, Metropolitan Area, and County." Economic Policy Institute. N.p., 16 June 2016.

<sup>5</sup> United States Census Bureau Projections 2015

<sup>6</sup> Strauss, By Daniel, By Shane Goldmacher, and By Cristiano Lima. "Obama Charts Path to Economic Growth in Not-so-subtle Trump Rebuttal." POLITICO. N.p., 6 Oct. 2016.

**"Many Americans feel disenfranchised and are angry with a political establishment that is not looking after them"**

that has allowed politicians to receive funding from private individuals, allowing corporations (Corporate personhood)<sup>7</sup> and America's wealthiest to influence and dictate many decisions and legislation. In other words, many Americans feel disenfranchised and are angry with a political establishment that is not looking after them. A trend that is not far from other countries in mainly Western Europe who have questioned the viability of the current Welfare State.

### 3. CANDIDATES IN QUESTION

All of today's analysis coincide that both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are not the desired candidates of the general populous, this proven by some of the worst approval ratings that no candidate has seen in over 50 years.

"I'm sick of him," stated former first lady and Republican Barbara Bush in reference to Donald Trump. And yet, Donald Trump is the Republican presidential candidate. What Donald Trump's own party has not seemed to grasp is what the candidate himself represents: Disillusionment

with the establishment or the current political system. Affected by income inequality and the threat of changing demographics, Trump's main supporters are found in non-urban, blue collar populations and are primarily White, whose death rates have increased unlike any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S., according to Princeton economist Angus Deaton, mainly due to substance abuse—a result of increasing marginality and poverty rates.<sup>8</sup>

When taking this demographic into consideration, this makes perfect sense. The American Dream corresponded to this population in the past, thus, "Make America Great Again," Trump's party slogan, is symbolic of a population yearning for a time when the Dream was conceivable and available to them.

Although many will critique Trump's supporters as racist, misogynist, and nationalist, his devotees have legitimate concerns about America's current political system or the "establishment," although they may not be voicing them in the most politically correct manner. For example, polarization is at an all-time

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Kolata, Gina, and Sarah Cohen. "Drug Overdoses Propel Rise in Mortality Rates of Young Whites." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 16 Jan. 2016.

high in Washington, causing extreme political gridlock and in response a high abuse of executive power by Obama himself, where he has issued a number of executive orders that encroached on Congress' territory. In addition, as mentioned before, income inequality, this in part fomented by government policies, has hurt these populations, causing them to feel disenfranchised and not heard. In addition, a large number of policies have contributed to current income inequality, mainly the U.S.'s current tax code that has benefited only those at the top and has provoked a sort of resentment and discontent from the general population,

making them feel as though they are not truly represented.

And while Trump has little policy outlined, his rhetoric has hit hard. Arlie Russell Hochschild, professor and sociologist of the University of California, has studied Trump's supporters and explains that the majority live outside metro or urban areas, coming from low socio-economic classes and who have received help from government welfare programs. However, when Hochschild displayed a series of images of current President Obama offering these same programs to minorities (Blacks, immigrants, among others), Trump's main followers felt as though these minorities were stealing from them. Trump's strategy has identified this discontent and therefore has consisted in criticizing minorities that, according to the candidate, have robbed White Americans of their jobs among other resources. Therefore, according to Hoschschild, Trump has become the "King of Shame," reaffirming these populations' "proud anger from other places, and displacing a shame that might otherwise work its way inward". In other words, Trump is "solving a White male problem of pride" rather than focusing on fixing any type of policy, and yet this is precisely the rhetoric that Trump's followers understand and to which they have responded most, allowing the candidate to progress throughout the

Figure 1. The wealthiest american families growing even richer



Source: Emmanuel Saez and Thomas Piketty's analysis of IRS data, Washington Center for Equitable Growth. 2015

**“In essence, Bernie’s supporters are just as disillusioned with the system as Trump’s, but have a different idea of how we got here, who to blame, and how to fix it.”**

election cycle unharmed by any of his fear mongering and bigoted commentary.

On the other side of the battle field, we see that while Bernie Sanders is not the official Democratic presidential nominee, he has been such an important force during this election that even Clinton’s campaign has asked him to join her on the campaign trail.

Sanders’ grassroots campaign was enough to almost win him the nomination, which meant putting a Socialist candidate on the ticket, starting what some are calling the “Political Revolution” against what Bernie has labeled a political oligarchy that has benefited a small elite, exacerbating income inequality and only representing a selected few. In essence, Bernie’s supporters are just as disillusioned with the system as Trump’s, but have a different idea of how we got here, who to blame, and how to fix it.

Sanders has influenced Clinton, moving her over even more to the left in order to garner his voters, although this has proven difficult when considering Clinton’s lack of transparency and inability to truly relate not only to the general populous but to the press, a weakness that has frustrated even her supporters time and time again. Her email

scandal does not seem to end and has her critics constantly attacking her in damaging ways that have not allowed her to successfully pull over all of Bernie’s supporters, some of which are so sick of the establishment, that they are willing to vote for Trump.<sup>9</sup>

Even so, Clinton’s strengths will probably be what win her the Oval Office. Her ability to foster successful coalitions—that neither Sanders nor Trump could seem to garner in different parts of the country—has pushed Clinton to lead in some of the key swing states she needs to win. Clinton has been called a “crusader” of the Democratic agenda, with a long history of pushing through the party’s political causes and adaptability to a more progressive agenda. And of course, Clinton’s presidency would be historical, becoming the first female president of the United States, something that has allowed her to win over even Republican women.

If Clinton were to win the Oval Office, the looming question would be: And now what? As mentioned before many Americans are disenchanted by the current political system and Clinton for many only represents more of the same, which leads to even more questions such as: What will happen to Bernie’s Political Revolution?

<sup>9</sup> Green, Joshua, and Sahil Kapur. “Nearly Half of Sanders Supporters Won’t Support Clinton: Poll.” Bloomberg.com.

"Politically speaking, the United States is Mexico's main ally in terms of security, rule of law, and formality"

Or, how or will both parties transform themselves in order to reach out a more diverse demographic in order to garner the votes they are currently losing? And most importantly: How will the U.S.'s relations on an international level be affected whether it be a Clinton or Trump presidency?

#### 4. MEXICO'S IMPORTANCE

Economically speaking, Mexico is not only the United States' most important market, but the U.S.'s second largest international buyer when it comes to goods. The integration of both countries' manufacturing sectors has provided the greatest impulse to the integration of intra-industrial commerce. Many key sectors in both countries are shared, these ranging from machinery, automotive, and electrical machines to mineral fuels.<sup>10</sup> The main destination for Arizona (40.4 %), New Mexico (44.5 %), and California's exports (16.2 %) is Mexico<sup>11</sup>. In addition, almost 5 million jobs in the United States depend on

trade with our country.<sup>12</sup> These are just a few of the reasons that the business cycle of both countries is highly connected.<sup>13</sup>

Socially and culturally speaking, about 63 % of the U.S.'s Latino population is Mexican<sup>14</sup> and 876, 628 U.S. citizens live in Mexico (almost 30 % of the U.S.'s population lives abroad)<sup>15</sup>, with Mexico positioning itself as the tenth country with most students in the U.S. where various institutional mechanisms have allowed students to carry out their studies in each other's countries. Institutions such as the Mexican Institute of Culture and the Benjamin Franklin Library are just a few examples of cultural institutions which are dedicated to spreading the cultural richness of both countries.

Politically speaking, the United States is Mexico's main ally in terms of security, rule of law, and formality. Internationally speaking, Mexico has a large diplomatic deployment in the U.S., along with various

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Wilson, "Growing Together: A regional Manufacturing platform", pág.2, available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/growing-together-regional-manufacturing-platform>

<sup>11</sup> US Census Bureau, States Exports, available at <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/state/data/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> NAFTA Mexico, US-Mexico Economic Relations, <http://www.naftamexico.net/>

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Wilson, "Growing Together: A regional Manufacturing platform", pág.10, available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/growing-together-regional-manufacturing-platform>

<sup>14</sup> Pew Research Center, U.S. Hispanic country of origin counts for nation, top 30 metropolitan areas, available at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/05/26/us-hispanic-country-of-origin-counts-for-nation-top-30-metropolitan-areas/>

<sup>15</sup> International Organization for Migration, World Migration, available at <https://www.iom.int/world-migration>

legislative groups, summits (like North American Leaders' Summit, better known as the Three Amigos Summit), and a large bilateral bureaucratic comprehension.

### 5. ASYMMETRY IN THE AGENDAS

A large part of any bilateral relation's success is a good understanding amongst the mechanism that represents the interests in each country and the way they are

communicated. From the passing of each administration in both countries, distinct levels are presented of the previously mentioned aspects. Currently, the relation between Mexico and the U.S. is stable but asymmetrical. Some examples have exacerbated this asymmetry starting with current President Barack Obama's attempt to achieve some sort of immigration reform approval, the delay in the assignment of an ambassador in both Mexico and the United States, the budget cuts in the Mérida Initiative, and the recent visit of Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump to Mexico. With the imminent arrival of Clinton or Trump to the White House, the relationship will probably focus primarily on security, narco-trafficking combat, and migration. Both countries have a long ways ahead when it comes to their internal issues.

#### The Mexican president's approval rates are the lowest of the last government administration



Source: reforma.com

#### Agustín Carstens, Governor of the Bank of Mexico



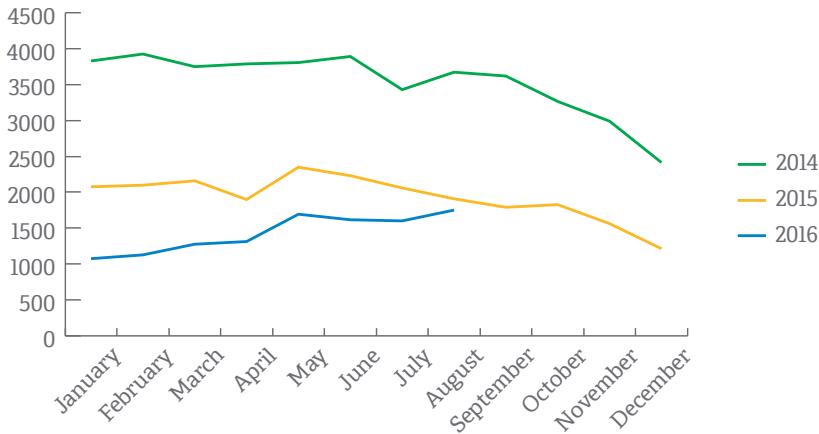
Source: sinembargo.mx

### 6. MEXICO'S REALITY

At the moment, Mexico faces a series of conditions, more nationally than internationally, that have exacerbated the current situation facing the United States' electoral process. Our country's institutional framework is deteriorating, we have a president with some of the lowest approval ratings in the last years, a national anticorruption system, a humans rights crisis, and lastly, there are all the topics related



**Figure 2. Oil exports (in Millions of dollars)**



Source: own elaboration with statistics from *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)*, 2016

**Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, US presidential candidates**



Source: abcnews.go.com

**Figure 3. Peso vs Dolar**



Source: bloomberg.com

with the country’s overall security that has made the world see the country’s rule of law as weak.

Adding to what was previously mentioned, Mexico<sup>16</sup> will face a public spending cut of 70 billion pesos in 2017, apart from the 169 billion pesos that have been cut just this year. Slight contractions (in the second trimester this year) can be observed in key economic sectors such as manufacturing, in part due to the flow of intermediary exports to the U.S. that top off in vehicles and that are not being sold due to a fall in automobile sales this year. In regards to indicators of the balance of payment, there is a decrease in direct foreign investment of 36 % (approximately \$22 billion USD<sup>17</sup> between January-June 2016 to the approximate total of \$34 billion USD). When taking into consideration other macroeconomic aspects, a possible increase in inflation rates is expected, ascending the ceiling by 3 %, according to the Bank of Mexico and external debt has increased by 9 % between 2015 and 2016<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “August U.S. auto sales fall; carmakers say industry has peaked”, Reuters, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-autos-idUSKCN1174UZ>

<sup>17</sup> Banco de México, Sistema de Información Económica, Inversión extranjera, available at <http://www.banxico.org.mx/SieInternet/consultarDirectorioInternetAction.do?sector=1&accion=consultarCuadroAnalitico&idCuadro=CA194&locale=esrating-cut-as-s-p-cites-sluggish-growth>

"It is possible that a few days after the election that the United States carries out the ratification process of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)"

during both years' April to June trimesters, indicating that within foreign markets there will be an increased risk when controlling this balance.<sup>19</sup>

Internationally speaking, the price of oil continues to fall, which also continues to affect Mexican oil exports and the government's revenue, the strengthening of the dollar in the face of other currencies, and the expected increase in interest rates from the U.S.'s federal reserves by December.

## 7. HILLARY AND TRUMP

Although Donald Trump's temperament and statements have made him a very controversial candidate and little liked in Mexico, it is important to closely analyze Hillary Clinton as well. Three of the aspects are issues that should be observed in detail in both candidates' agenda: Trade, migration, and the bilateral comprehension in regards to cooperation mechanisms.

On Hillary Clinton's side, her position on foreign trade is uncertain. Her decision-making record to ratify free trade agreements with other nations is mixed, and her position

towards the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been ambiguous and has even spoken little about the few advantages that the U.S. has had in regards to Mexico. If the scenario of renegotiation were to present itself, Mexico could face a significant fall in regards to the country's intermediate goods production and its exported amounts. In addition, the U.S. could face a toughening of fiscal measurements from Mexico which could affect both countries' unemployment rates. If this scenario were to occur, North America's integrated economic power would be taken away.

It is possible that a few days after the election that the United States carries out the ratification process of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). If this were the case, it is not expected that Clinton would approve the agreement, seeing as she does not support the agreement, although there are those who assure that she will end up ratifying the trade agreement in the case that she becomes president.<sup>20</sup> In accordance with some of the statements made by authorities in the Mexican Senate, the decision that the United

<sup>18</sup> Estimated calculation with statistical data about foreign debt of the Bank of Mexico available at <http://www.banxico.org.mx/SieInternet/consultarDirectorioInternetAction.do?accion=consultarCuadro&idCuadro=CE101&sector=1&locale=es>

<sup>19</sup> Christine Jenkis, "Mexico Risks Credit-Rating cut as S&P cites sluggish growth", Bloomberg Markets, available at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-23/mexico-at-risk-of-credit-rating-cut-as-s-p-cites-sluggish-growth>

<sup>20</sup> Eric Bradner, CNN, "Clinton's TPP controversy: What you need to know", available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/27/politics/tpp-what-you-need-to-know/>

**"In the case that the U.S. Congress and the Executive branch were from distinct parties, we could expect a certain paralysis in regards to decision-making"**

States makes will affect if the Mexican government were to ratify the trade agreement or not. If the U.S. were to ratify the agreement, both countries would have to see if it were possible for both NAFTA and the TPP to coexist.

In regards to migration, although Clinton's record is mixed, her stance is a bit more flexible than President Obama's, seeing that she is willing to authorize a temporary work visa plan and an office of migratory affairs, each more humane when it comes to migration cases that involve unaccompanied minors.<sup>21</sup>

With Donald Trump as president, it is possible that Mexico faces a very difficult period in regards to trade and migration. The candidate's discourse clearly reflects an anti-globalization and anti-trade rhetoric. According to the data<sup>22</sup>, just by ending trade among the Border States, approximately 1,063,600 jobs related to trade with Mexico would be lost, a number

that would complicate the Republican's promise to create jobs.

However, it is important to mention that not all related to bilateral cooperation and trade depends entirely on the possible winner, seeing as Congress has a large weight when it comes to decision making. What can be almost assured is that in the case that the U.S. Congress and the Executive branch were from distinct parties, we could expect a certain paralysis in regards to decision-making. The Mexican government's challenge will be to demonstrate keen and sharp diplomatic skills when faced with understanding whichever bureaucratic framework is set in place in order to create a dialogue with the U.S. not as a neighbor, but as a partner, and do whatever possible nationally in order to minimize the possible political and economic affects that could occur. There is no other option than to wait for the election's results as of this November 8th.

<sup>21</sup> Council of Foreign Affairs, Compare the candidates, available at <http://www.cfr.org/campaign2016/>

<sup>22</sup> NAFTA Mexico, US-Mexico Economic Relations, available at <http://www.naftamexico.net/>

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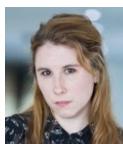
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