



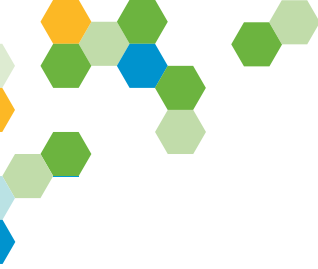
SPECIAL REPORT

The U.S. elections and their implications for Latin America

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PRESENTATION
THE U.S. ELECTIONS AND THEIR
IMPLICATIONS FOR LATIN AMERICA

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PRESENTATION

On November 8, a diverse group of more than 200 million Americans will go to the polls to elect their next president. Only then, after months of feuding between the Republican party candidate Donald Trump and Democrat party candidate Hillary Clinton, will we find out who will occupy the Oval Office.

The race for the presidency has been marked by the candidates' personalities and questions regarding their characters and their use of communication strategies. The last televised debate between the candidates, held Oct. 20, featured discussions ranging from nationally relevant subjects to accusations and personal attacks.

In any case, it is safe to say this race to the White House has been characterized by a period of uncertainty. Few will dare to predict for sure whether Trump will be elected president despite forecasts to the contrary, or if, for the very first time, a woman will become the president of the United States.

Beyond the uncertainty, what has become clear over the last few months is American citizens' loss of confidence in their ruling classes and the deterioration of the political parties.

The United States is about to experience a great change, both internally and in its external relations. At the same time, Latin America is experiencing a moment of change that is still marked by a strong dependence on international markets and where bilateral relations between the U.S. and the many countries that make up this heterogeneous region will remain very important. Political changes in countries such as Brazil and Argentina, the change in U.S. policy toward Cuba, an economic situation marked by falling commodity prices following the Chinese slump and social changes have all created a new scenario that will extend into 2017 in line with the new U.S. political period. Ultimately, a myriad of questions precedes the new era to begin in the United States when the 45th president takes their oath January 20.

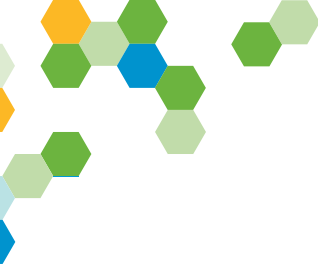
So, the question is: What are the implications for Latin America with the election of a new U.S. president?

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“Latin America does not seem to hold particular significance for either the democrat Hillary Clinton or the republican Donald Trump”

THE U.S. ELECTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR LATIN AMERICA

I. IMPLICATIONS FOR LATIN AMERICA

The fall of the Berlin wall and the terrorist attacks on September 11 caused a shift in U.S. global geostrategic interests, and Latin America ceased to be a foreign policy priority for its northern neighbor. The arrival of the new administration to the White House January 2017 raises questions about how much of a priority it will be in the coming years.

After observing the issues discussed during the U.S. presidential contest, there is no indication Latin America will be a key concern in the new president’s foreign policy. The candidates have made little mention of the region and, in practice, their programs do not contain specific content about Latin America.

This is one issue on which the two aspiring presidential candidates coincide; Latin America does not seem to hold particular significance for either the democrat Hillary Clinton or the republican Donald Trump, nor does it hold any more importance than it has for previous presidents, from the mid-90s’ until now.

If, indeed, Latin America is not a priority for either candidate, this still does not mean we should

not highlight the differences between them in terms of the main electoral campaign issues concerning Latin America: foreign trade policy and immigration.

The potential modification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, as well as the ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which includes twelve nations, including three from Latin America (Mexico, Peru and Chile), have caused controversy during the electoral contest and could have greater repercussions. With a protectionist stance, Trump firmly upholds his opposition to both free trade agreements, which, according to his supporters, could mean the further destruction of jobs on a national level. Trump has promised not to sign the TPP if he becomes president and, if necessary, withdraw from NAFTA should negotiations for more favorable terms for the United States prove impossible.

As far as Clinton goes, even though she was initially in favor of the agreements, she has recently criticized aspects of NAFTA and has declared her opposition to the TPP, albeit in a more half-hearted and vague way than Trump. However, everything suggests

“Both candidates have dropped the national tradition of belief in the benefits of free trade”

her opposition has more to do with getting votes than a visceral opposition to trade liberalization. It is difficult to imagine she would actually withdraw from NAFTA, an agreement she duly supported as first lady and that was signed by her husband, former president Bill Clinton. Even though she has now shown her opposition to the terms under which the TPP has been proposed, it is important to remember Clinton was a driving force behind the agreement during her term as Secretary of State in President Barack Obama’s administration. If she is elected, it is expected she will resume her original stance and support these initiatives.

Nevertheless, and despite their differences, both candidates have dropped the national tradition, driven by both republican and democrat presidents, of belief in the benefits of free trade.

Their disagreement is even more stark when considering immigration policy. Trump has made illegal immigration a star issue of his campaign. His electoral approach to dealing with the subject is based on building an “impenetrable wall” on the border between Mexico and the United States and on deporting the illegal immigrants who now live in the country. He has mainly focused on Latin American illegal immigration,

especially from Mexico, and has gone as far as to declare, in “Reality TV” style, that “we got **bad hombres** here and we’re going to get them out.”

This speech is emotional and lacks details outlining any practical solutions, but his message is simple and appeals to the large portion of the American population that link immigration to the decrease in jobs and salaries, as well as the threat of international terrorism. Additionally, Trump also links illegal immigration and drug trafficking, going as far as to declare “we are getting the drugs, and they are getting the cash.”

In addition to his firm stance regarding illegal immigration, Trump also causes great controversy in the way he expresses his standpoint. Many Hispanics born in the U.S. and Latin Americans who live in the country have felt offended and insulted by Trump’s declarations. This has increased support for Clinton within this demographic, which tends to vote predominantly democrat.

For her part, Clinton already promised in 2008 that she would consider reforming the immigration system if she got to the White House. The Democrat candidate is not proposing a new approach to the issue, but continuing along a line that aims to legalize the situation for undocumented immigrants.

“Clinton's standpoint on immigration is radically opposed to Trump's”

Clinton is likely to apply policies that build on Obama's legacy, but might differ from the current president by presenting Congress with a draft bill to reform the immigration system. This makes her standpoint on immigration radically opposite to Trump's.

2. THE CANDIDATES AND THEIR LINKS TO LATIN AMERICA

During her time as Secretary of State, Clinton fostered good relationships with several Latin American leaders. In her speeches, at least, Clinton talks of the connections and common interests that unite the U.S. and Latin America, which she considers to be “advantages” rather than inconveniences. Additionally, her experience in international relations is highly respected across the region, and her relationships with Latin American diplomatic representatives enhance her position as the preferred counterpart for many Latin American presidents.

She also conveys a positive message highlighting the importance of maintaining good economic ties with the major economies in the region. In addition, her approach also touches on issues of security and the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, areas in which, for years, the U.S. and Latin America have had a close

relationship. Finally, she has chosen Senator Tim Kaine as her vice president, who lived in Honduras for nine months helping Jesuit missionaries and speaks fluent Spanish. It is expected that, if Clinton is elected, Senator Kaine will be an important figure in her administration for nurturing ties with Latin America.

As far as Trump is concerned, there are more doubts than facts with regards to Latin America. The fundamental reason why the issue may not have been further explored is Trump's lack of interest in the subject and lack of deep knowledge of the region. Domestic issues are his priority. His electoral slogans are “Make America Great Again” and “America First.” Trump believes he should focus primarily on national issues and questions whether the United States has a special responsibility to be a world leader.

Little is known about his view of Latin America. Consequently, he has not presented plans or proposals about future relations with the region. Beyond his approach to issues such as immigration and free trade agreements, the only subject related to the region he has discussed on several occasions is his future policy toward Cuba, though even on this issue he has left us with more doubts than facts. Initially Trump showed support for President

“There are several other fundamental issues on which the United States and Latin American countries have cooperated for many years”

Obama’s open policy, restricting himself only to criticizing the negotiation terms. He recently changed his stance in a speech delivered in Miami, where he stated that, if he were elected, he would reverse the president’s move to opening relations with Cuba unless “religious and political freedom” were allowed on the island. Days later, an article published in *Newsweek* magazine revealed that Trump may have explored business opportunities with Cuba in 1998. In a nutshell, his real stance is not clear.

3. CONCLUSION

If there is one noticeable factor from both U.S. presidential candidates’ campaigns and their appearances before the public, is that Latin America, has neither been among their priorities nor a core topic in a campaign focused on domestic affairs. Having said that, their views on Latin America will likely influence relations with the region.

There are two main issues in which Latin America has been featured in the U.S. electoral campaign: foreign trade policy and immigration. Today, both candidates criticize the international trade agreements, NAFTA and TPP. This issue has been a cornerstone of Trump’s campaign, emphasizing how he would renegotiate them to

help U.S. citizens—especially those who have lost their jobs. Clinton has also criticized them for similar reasons, though it is anticipated she will support them if elected, as she has previously done when the initiatives were driven by presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, respectively.

Beyond the issues that have arisen in the electoral campaign, there are several other fundamental issues, such as security, cooperation in the fight against international terrorism and efforts against drug trafficking, on which the United States and Latin American countries have cooperated for many years. Given their geographic proximity and common interests, they will continue to do so regardless of who wins the race to the White House.

There are many issues that will shape the future of the United States and its relations with Latin America. Much of these will depend on how American citizens vote November 8. That is when, whoever wins, the United States will enter a new political era.

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