

## Mexico: A new revolution

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Mexico moved one step closer to a social explosion with the Federal Election Tribunal's [decision](#) to crown conservative Felipe Calderon as the victor in the hotly contested presidential elections of July 2.

The tribunal acknowledged Calderon's campaign had "violated the norms of public order," particularly with the role played by the business associations in airing rabid TV ads attacking leftist candidate Andres Miguel Lopez Obrador. But it refused to question the fundamental legitimacy of the elections or to recount all the votes as demanded by the leftist opposition.

Lopez Obrador immediately rejected the tribunal's ruling, declaring that a "privileged minority" has seized control of Mexico's institutions, "keeping the country in ruins and the majority in poverty".

He called for the convening on September 16 of a National Democratic Convention "to form a government that has the legitimacy to reestablish the Republic and constitutional order".

As he spoke tens of thousands of his supporters retained control for the 37th consecutive day of the centre of Mexico City around the Zocalo, the country's main historic plaza. The rest of Mexico is also gripped with unrest, particularly the city of Oaxaca to the south.

There some 350 popular organizations have staged a virtual insurrection, taking control of the city and demanding the ouster of the state's governor. While not directly tied to the presidential election, the movement reflects the profound discontent in recent years that has led to similar uprisings in Chiapas, Mexico's southern most state, and in San Salvador Atenco, a city that borders on the capital.

Some political observers, like Denise Dresser of Mexico's Autonomous Technical Institute, recognize the legitimacy of much of the political and economic platform of the left, but lament the "refusal of Lopez Obrador to move to the centre, to modify his demands. He says 'to hell with the institutions' and this could tear the country apart".

But the real problem of Mexico runs much deeper. The entrenched political classes along with the Electoral Tribunal, and the Federal Electoral Institute before it, will not make any concessions to Lopez Obrador because they are afraid the entire system of privileges will collapse if they make even modest concessions.

The campaign slogan of Lopez Obrador was straightforward: "For the good of all, the poor first." His program during the campaign was actually quite reformist. In a country where half the population lives below the poverty line Lopez Obrador pledged to provide a stipend to the elderly and healthcare for the poor.

Millions of jobs would also be created, particularly by undertaking large construction projects to modernize Mexico's dilapidated transportation system. He also promised to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States, particularly the clauses that allow the importation of cheap subsidized grains that undermine Mexico's peasant producers.

More importantly Lopez Obrador pledged to break up the corrupt economic relationship that exists between the business class and government bureaucrats.

Everyone in Mexico knows that bribes and kickbacks are commonplace throughout Mexico as much of the country's wealth is skimmed off at the expense of the workers and the poor.

This system existed under the previous governments of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). It became particularly insidious under the incumbent President Vicente Fox and his National Action party (PAN) because it more than the PRI, is the party of an entrenched business elite.

And not only is Lopez Obrador threatening to break up the system of inside favours and corruption, he is also proclaiming that the rich will have to pay the income and business taxes that they routinely avoid.

All this is too much for the dominant classes. They cannot countenance a thorough review of the election process or the opening of the ballot boxes to recount all the votes in an election that was fraught with innumerable irregularities.

It is this privileged minority that has radicalized Lopez Obrador and the Mexican masses.

Mexico has had two major social upheavals in its history. One came with the independence movement in 1810, and the other with the revolution that began in 1910 with a fraudulent election staged by a dictator.

On September 16, the same day on which a military parade will take place in Mexico City, a massive popular assembly will be held to discuss the creation of an authentic democracy and the possible formation of a parallel government.

This could very well be Mexico's next revolution, four years before the century mark.

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