



Mexico City, May 27, 2021

To the Editor:

Just a few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of speaking with the international editor of The Economist. I took the opportunity to explain the key points of the profound political, economic and social transformation that has been taking place in Mexico over the last two and a half years. Among other topics, we discussed the government's efforts to end the COVID-19 pandemic, our constructive relationship with the United States, our vision of how to drive development in southern Mexico and Central America and the political situation of the country in general.

The international editor was not receptive to a single one of my explanations. To the contrary, just a few days before the elections in which we Mexicans will freely elect our representatives, The Economist publishes some articles that invite a vote against the president and his party. The opinion expressed and the message are surprising, not because of the magazine's ideological position, but because of the virulence of the writing and the fragility of the reasoning. You seem to believe that the majority of Mexicans, especially those with the fewest resources, are wrong and are backing the wrong person. Today's cover is, in essence, exasperating. Clearly, just as in 2018, the outcome of the election will not be the one you desire.

Just recently, the election of López Obrador was seen as doubtful and, if we Mexicans did elect him, it was predicted that he would lead the country inexorably to economic ruin, characterized by devaluation, hyperinflation, indebtedness and a direct clash with the United States.

None of this has happened. On the contrary, the administration of President López Obrador has fulfilled its promise to prioritize and refocus spending on our poorest citizens, as he always promised. At the same time, it has maintained its fiscal discipline and sound public finances. For example, it has achieved historic increases of the minimum wage, while keeping inflation at bay and the currency stable. At the bilateral level, it has quickly succeeded in building a relationship of respect and collaboration with the administration of President Joseph R. Biden.

The failure of the elites to understand López Obrador today seems to be reflected in your pages. They paint a bleak picture of the country, losing sight of the fact that,





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although the Mexican economy, like that of other countries, suffered the ravages of the pandemic, it will grow around 6% this year, without having entered into debt, with healthy finances and historical levels of Foreign Direct Investment.

Your magazine questions the government's response to COVID-19, but overlooks way in which Mexico managed, in a matter of months, to more than double its hospital capacity and ensure timely, universal access to the vaccine. It is not by accident that Mexico is currently the tenth-ranked country in terms of the highest number of vaccines administered to its population, which, incidentally, has not wavered in its support for the president in these difficult times.

But the assertion that perhaps stands out the most for its absurdity is the suggestion that President López Obrador has somehow undermined Mexican democracy, when what he has done is precisely the opposite. Many of your readers will remember that, until not so long ago, Mexico was an authoritarian country, with no freedom of the press or free elections, which made the transition to democracy thanks to the impetus of many Mexicans, among which López Obrador stands out.

His decades-long struggle against a closed system has given rise to a strong, plural and diverse democracy, in which the people are consulted directly on substantive issues as never before. This happens regularly in, for example, the United States, where controversial propositions are voted on together with the candidates during an election.

As never before in our history, there is full freedom of the press and of thought in Mexico. At an unprecedented level, President López Obrador is accountable to the public and engages in a two-way dialogue with the press. President López Obrador has been criticized at a level that is incomparable with his predecessors (just open any Mexican newspaper). Nevertheless, he is democratic Mexico's most popular president.

There are two possible explanations as to why a government like that of President López Obrador has maintained such a high approval rating, even after having gone through difficult times. The elitist view, defended *ad nauseam*, is that the majority is wrong, and doesn't know what is good for it. The other, perhaps the obvious one but surprisingly rarely cited, is that the majority supports a system that, for the first time, sees them as the priority. Isn't it time to ask if it's not the elite—angry and





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exasperated with President López Obrador—and not the majority of the people, who feel represented and defended, that is wrong?

We are living in turbulent times and there is clearly still much to do to defeat the pandemic, ensure a definitive economic liftoff and fulfill the promise of closing the offensive social divide, but the Mexican people believe that we are on the right path to accomplishing just that. To paraphrase an article from your magazine from a few years ago, perhaps it is time for the exasperated elites to understand that they just don't understand.

Sincerely,

Marcelo Ebrard

Secretary of Foreign Affairs

