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Mexico-Brazil Relations: Status and Prospects

Gerónimo Gutiérrez Fernández

At the outset of his administration, President Felipe Calderón signalled that relations with Latin America and the Caribbean would occupy a privileged place in Mexico's foreign policy. It is only natural then, that the prospects for renewed Mexico-Brazil relations are fast becoming a matter of attention for scholars and analysts that follow the region's international relations. On the one hand, Brazil and Mexico are, in some regards, Latin America's heavy weights. As Alberto Pfeifer points out in the April edition of Focal Point, together they account for half of the region's population and 65% of its GDP. Moreover, they are major trading partners of many Latin American countries and leaders in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). A recent report by the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) points that, in 2006, FDI received by Mexico and Brazil constituted more than 50% of the region's total, while they are also becoming significant investors within the region and around the world. These aspects, along with the fact that Mexico and Brazil are Latin America's largest democracies, both countries with a long tradition of professional foreign services, make them important players in several global and regional issues. On the other hand, and perhaps for these same reasons, much analysis—as well as some speculation—is frequently given to the question of how much their strategic interests actually converge.

Over the course of the last months, both governments have engaged in a series of high-level contacts and actions which illustrate the fact that shared interests do exist and that they are willing to pursue them. Presidents Calderón and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva have already met twice and instructed their teams to put together a realistic but thoughtful agenda. Consequently, last March a Binational Commission gathered for the first time to raise the level of dialogue and create a framework that can help manage the relation comprehensively. In the Commission's first joint statement, issued by Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs Patricia Espinosa and Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Celso Amorin, both governments agreed to deepen cooperation in areas such as biofuels, deep-sea oil exploration, science, technology and education; to broaden trade and investment ties through Latin American Integration Association's (LAIA) Economic Complementary Agreements 53 and 55; to strengthen the Rio Group—perhaps the region's main political forum; to streamline their respective consular procedures as to improve and increase travel. Likewise, they formed a consultation group on multilateral affairs, a space that can prove useful given both governments' legitimate interest in weighing in important processes such as United Nations reform.

President Lula's State visit to Mexico, expected this August, will help move bureaucracies towards these goals and will serve as a good opportunity to take stock

of advances. Beyond discourse, it is worthwhile to discuss why both governments should seek a “steady course to improve their relation”.

First, a long-standing notion exists that Mexico’s relations with Latin America and particularly with Brazil became strained as it entered the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a notion not dissimilar to that sometimes held in Mexico about Brazil’s focus on South America and MERCOSUR. Open and high-level political dialogue will help both governments to better understand what their respective national interests are, and what each other has at stake in its relations with its closest neighbours. After all, Brazil and Mexico know well that trade should be a positive sum game. Both countries naturally need an effective agenda with neighbouring nations while being able to project common interests in the region and worldwide.

Second, Latin America finds itself at a complex political juncture. Over the last 20 years, democracy has experienced a significant advancement. Yet, during that same period, economic growth registered an unimpressive 2.2% a year, as compared to a healthier 4.6% in the rest of the world. Not surprisingly prosperity eludes many Latin Americans. As societies become more demanding of their governments and they in turn discuss these issues in all sorts of regional fora, Brazil and Mexico can provide input in the search for common ground and regional consensus. A stronger relation between Mexico and Brazil can prove its effectiveness and weight in the revitalization of the Rio Group mechanism. Aside from the fact that Mexico will take over the *Pro Tempore* Presidency in 2008, governments have expressed their commitment to a strengthened and more dynamic mechanism that facilitates the much needed political dialogue between Latin American nations, as well as the exchange of ideas with other regions of the world.

Third, as regional blocks are finding it increasingly important to work together in order to face common challenges, Latin America lacks anything close to a long-term shared vision about what its role should be in a rapidly changing world; or what it should do in the face of profound geopolitical and economic transformations. Notwithstanding the fact that Latin American integration is much easier said than done, particularly in the present context, when addressing issues such as regional competitiveness, fighting environmental degradation, improving infrastructure or expanding financial services to the poor, Brazil and Mexico can foster communication and links between sub-regional integration processes in which both countries have a leading role in their own right.

Last but no least, there is the question regarding the role of Mexico and Brazil as key emerging countries. This June in Heilingendamm, Germany, the G-8 Group will host a dialogue with the G-5, a group formed by Mexico, Brazil, China, India and South Africa, countries whose international influence is unquestionable. As developing countries Brazil and Mexico can benefit from a stronger dialogue that can further common positions in areas such as human rights, trade, international governance, migration and development.

In the last issue of Focal Point, Federico Vázquez, rightly stated that the rift in Latin America is contrary to the interest of both governments, which have the political responsibility to avoid losses in the region’s influence. Despite

misunderstandings as well as true differences, it would be unwise to ignore the possibilities of convergence. ■

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CUBA-CANADA

Official conversations took place on May 25 in Havana between the First Deputy Ministers of Canada and Cuba, Leonard J. Edwards and Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla.

During the meeting, Rodríguez Parrilla said that Cuban-Canadian relations are “an example of exchange between two countries with different systems but similar interests”. He also highlighted their common stance on many international situations, and expressed gratitude for Canada’s support at the UN General Assembly to the resolution condemning Washington’s embargo against the island.

For his part, Edwards noted the continuation of bilateral relations despite some differences, and the two countries’ capacity to talk sincerely and with “mutual respect” about all topics. Edwards also said this visit was a great opportunity to exchange opinions with Cuban leaders and review the state of bilateral trade relations. “Both parts coincided on the need of continuing deepening trade, investments, tourism and other spheres of cooperation” between the two countries, he reported.

Editorial

The US Demographic Shift and Canada

Carlo Dade

In June 2003 the US Census Department announced that the Hispanic population of the United States (based on self identification by census participants) had grown to 38.8 million and Hispanics had surpassed African-Americans as the largest minority in the US—a source of tension between the two groups. This demographic shift is impacting both the US political landscape and economy.

For foreign governments and businesses, understanding the changes being wrought by this demographic shift and being able to manoeuvre around them is important. For Canada it is imperative. The special and somewhat unique relationship between Canada and the US has been built upon shared culture and connections amongst political elites of the predominantly Anglo-Saxon Northeast. Now three of America's largest cities, San Antonio, Miami and Los Angeles have Latino mayors, two Latinos were elected to the Senate in 2004, and nationally, there are nearly 5,000 Hispanic elected officials. As demographic trends make the US more Hispanic and shifts power to the south and west while Canada becomes more Asian, more effort, thought and long-term re-evaluation of strategy are needed on Canada's policies and engagement toward the US.

The Demographic Shift

According to the US Census Department, the US Hispanic population has grown by 9.8% over the past decade versus 2.5% growth for the entire US population. The Hispanic population remains overwhelmingly concentrated in the West and South (44% and 35% respectively) but the highest absolute growth over the past decade has been in “non-traditional” states such as Georgia, 233% increase, Nevada, a 202% rise and Arkansas, a 196% increase. Traditional gateways like New York, Los Angeles and Miami still account for the largest increases from 1980 to 2000, but smaller metropolitan areas saw faster growth and more than half of Hispanics now live in suburbs. Mexicans are the largest single component of Hispanic immigration at 66% of the total followed by Central Americans at 14%. Cubans account for just above 3%. The Hispanic population has spread out across the US faster than any previous immigration wave, making it of relevance to a surprisingly large number of communities and congressional districts. Moreover, Hispanic voters are concentrated in the key presidential electoral swing states of California, Florida, Texas, and New York.

There were 7.5 million registered Hispanic voters in the 2000 census. By the 2002 congressional elections, Hispanic voters had already increased by 17% over this number. Only 53% of eligible Hispanics are registered to vote compared to 69% of eligible non-Hispanic Whites and 62% of Blacks. There is thus the very real potential for a surge in Hispanic voters in the 2008 US elections should eligible Hispanics register and vote at levels similar to other

groups. Both US political parties are going beyond the simplistic and paternalistic early outreach efforts to develop more sophisticated messaging for Hispanics including translating campaign messages—not just *text*, into culturally relevant language. The importance of Hispanic voters coupled with more sensitive and engaging messages will lead to even more political awareness and participation among Hispanics.

Implications for Foreign Governments: What Are the Issues for Canada?

In Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico, it is now *de rigueur* for political candidates to campaign in the US. Many diasporas have the right to vote in elections in their home country and are important sources of campaign finance. Because remittances sent by these diasporas to extended family networks back home, these diasporas actually exercise greater political influence than their numbers would indicate. This is illustrated by the official recognition given to the 10th department (province) in Haiti or to the 15th department in El Salvador. Latin America and Caribbean governments have also organized their diasporas to defend labour rights in the US and to contribute toward development back home. In 1990, Mexico established the Institute for Mexicans Abroad and in 2002 created an Advisory Council of Mexicans and US nationals of Mexican descent to advise the Mexican government on community issues in the US. In addition, there is a “spillover” effect in Canada: as foreign governments expend more resources to develop organizations in the US, extending these efforts north of the border comes at a lower marginal cost. Already we have seen this with the creation of the Jamaica Diaspora Foundations in the US (3 chapters) and Canada (1 chapter) by the Jamaican government and increased organizing efforts in Canada by the Institute of Mexicans Abroad.

In addition to the support given by governments of the region, US foundations and some government agencies have also invested significant resources to strengthen the capacity of Hispanic organizations as development actors in their countries of origin. This investment is producing a new type of US Hispanic organization that is well schooled in how the US foreign aid “game” is played and that feels increasingly confident and competent to push new agendas. Though these

groups currently are not heavily involved in US foreign policy, as they become more *adroit* at using the mechanisms of power and patronage in the US, they could exert pressure on the domestic and foreign development programmes, and eventually likely the foreign policy programmes, in a way that African-Americans have not. For example, within NAFTA, with 25 million residents in the US, Mexico is better poised than Canada, with only 630,000 residents, to use its diaspora to influence change. While the Mexican community in the US is split over NAFTA—those whose jobs are threatened are more concerned with their employment status than they are with helping Mexico—a diaspora of 25 million is large enough to wield considerable influence even if it is divided. It is therefore important that Canada

understand the dynamics between the Mexican government and Mexican diaspora organizations in the US as this may affect what Mexico will be doing in NAFTA and could present opportunities to work together. Overall, Hispanic groups will not rise as a monolithic entity capable of the influence achieved by the Israeli lobby because the interests within the Hispanic community are too diverse, but eventually the Hispanic population may be able to exert significant influence on certain overarching, unifying issues.

ST LUCIA

After two weeks of prolonged speculation the Acting Prime Minister of St Lucia Stephenson King announced on May 18 the full extent of Prime Minister Sir John Compton's absence from St Lucia. It was initially reported that Sir John, 83 years of age and generally regarded as the father of the nation, had left St Lucia for Manhattan for his annual check up on May 1. The reports then ended until it was announced on May 16 that Sir John had suffered two or three mild strokes while still in St Lucia.

It was following a meeting of Cabinet Ministers on April 30 to discuss the issue of the recognition of Taiwan that Sir John had his first stroke. St Lucia had on May 25 moved to recognize Taiwan, which earned it the condemnation of the Chinese Government stating that it was in direct contravention to its own One China policy. It seems the greatest proponent of this policy shift was the External Affairs Minister Rufus Bousquet who leads what is termed the 'Super 8' faction within the ruling United Workers Party (UWP) that holds the balance of power in the ruling coalition. Following this controversial policy redirection Sir John and two of his senior ministers (Stephenson King and Leonard Montoute) signalled a desire to revisit the issue. The debate exploded between the Super 8 and the Compton faction drawing in commentary from opposition leader Dr. Kenny Anthony who in a public statement reported by national newspaper *The Voice* called for "all St Lucians alike to join together and support Sir John against the Super 8" (*The Voice*, 5/5/07).

St Lucian Social Transformation and Sports Minister Leonard Montoute reported back to the nation on May 18 after his visit with Sir John in a New York hospital. He found him to be weak but in high spirits. Sir John has since returned to St Lucia. There have been no further medical updates and local newspapers are only able to confirm that he is recuperating. Thus many questions remain unanswered concerning, not only Sir John's health but also the future leadership of St Lucia and the UWP.

For Canadian foreign policy toward the region and the US, it is important to understand how these new groups are emerging and the overarching issues that emerge to unite them and to have the capacity to interact with Hispanic organizations when they impact Canadian interests.

Some policy responses to the demographic shift in the US are obvious and straightforward, for example, increasing Spanish language capacity in consulates throughout the US. Other responses will require more time to develop and for that more research, reflection, outreach and observation will be needed. Fortunately, Foreign Affairs Canada has established a program to look at these issues and in this Canada appears to be ahead of everyone else. ■

Carlo Dade is Executive Director of FOCAL.



Op-Ed

The Mother of All Reforms

Juan Antonio Blanco

While there is much speculation regarding Raúl Castro's will to implement reforms in Cuba, nothing is being said about the most pressing change required to guarantee Cuba's governability: namely a new defence and security doctrine.

For over a decade militaries and governments in the Western Hemisphere have been moving towards a multidimensional approach to security. Meanwhile, the Cuban Armed Forces, the Ministry of the Interior and the Cuban government as a whole have remained entangled in a narrow-minded military defence doctrine that dates back from the Cold War.

The Cuban government's approach to national defence consists of a doctrine which subordinates every aspect of the Cuban society—economy, politics, laws, information, culture—to a national security rationale, defined as control from a military perspective.

This doctrine of security and defence rests on two premises. First is the belief that no major internal conflict can arise from the Cuban reality. The socialist society is a peaceful and harmonious commune disrupted only when subversion is introduced by a foreign enemy, i.e. the United States, exploiting weaknesses in the State's system of controls. If the youth, for example, are prone to embrace the enemy's cultural messages or if socialist businessmen fall prey to corruption, it is because of "weaknesses" in the mechanisms of political indoctrination and control over these sectors. The second premise is that the first duty of the State is to protect the country against a powerful foreign enemy threatening its independence and sovereignty; therefore it becomes necessary to respond with a national security doctrine that subordinates every aspect of society to the logic and needs of this national defence.

As result of these premises, the idea that underpins the organization of the Cuban society is not one of sustainable human development that leads to prosperity, but of vertical micro-management that fosters inefficiency and social asphyxia in daily life. This model of social organization is there to serve the needs of the national security doctrine first and foremost rather than to foster social development.

This militarized conception of the national and international reality relies on effective control of access to national information and the means for its broadcast or reception (TV, Internet, radio and press outlets); civil society institutions or organizations, effectively removing their autonomy or neutralizing them—as in the case of churches—via police infiltration, bribes of various sorts, and the imposition of arbitrary legislation and procedures regulating their work; all cultural, educational and academic activities; and all

economic activities, precluding self-employment from generating spaces of economic autonomy from the State.

The outcome of this national defence and security doctrine has been the perpetuation of a development paradigm that has reached its historical limit. It can no longer work in a world characterized by a transition towards a civilization of information societies, the globalization of production and finance, and multi-polar geopolitics. Very soon the Cuban economy will face the aging of its population in a context of low productivity, obsolete technologies and infrastructure, and where the creation of local capital is non-existent. It remains a country that is highly dependent on a handful of foreign markets and investors.

Cuba is not immune to paradoxes: today the American "enemy" is its main supplier of food products, and remittances from the demonized Cuban exile community provide an important safety net against the danger of social explosions.

Domestic governability calls for a new paradigm of development that allows, in the economic realm, access to markets and capital, as well as the introduction of high productivity technologies; in the political sphere, the diversification of its international alliances, the implementation of political and cultural mechanisms for constant consensus building, non-violent resolution of a wide spectrum of conflicts, and the eradication of corruption. However, the current national security doctrine and the mindsets of those associated with it thwart these possibilities.

This paralysis is compounded by the enormous contradiction between Cuba's professional capacity and an authoritarian development paradigm based on vertical integration and state monopoly that precludes any independent political or economic initiative. Nevertheless, this paradigm is maintained against all sensible logic because the current security doctrine cannot operate within any other system of social organization.

Governability in Cuba will not be ensured by prohibiting satellite dishes and short wave radios, blocking Internet access, penalizing the freedom of academic and journalistic research, removing the autonomy of civil society organizations, prohibiting

the freedom of expression or imposing limitations on the citizens' right to free movement. Neither will it be ensured by centralizing investments, preventing self-employment and the capitalization of remittance resources, harassing potential migrants and obstructing relations with the Diaspora, which is denied the possibility of assisting in national development.

Paraphrasing Marx, we could say that the security doctrine has determined the configuration of a system of social relations that today impedes the development of productive forces in Cuban society and fosters systemic crisis. The biggest threat to the country's governability and independence stems from its own security and defence doctrine. The Cuban elite should conduct a dispassionate analysis of its options to turn this situation around in a constructive fashion. The repercussions of not doing so might be felt even in the very short term. Time is not running in favour of Raúl Castro and his colleagues but against them. The most pressing reform required in Cuba is that of its defence and security doctrine. This is the mother of all reforms. ■

Juan Antonio Blanco is on the Board of Directors of Citizen Digital Facilitation, a Canadian based non-governmental organization that fosters the empowerment of civil society in the Americas and promotes non-violent conflict prevention, resolution and transformation strategies.

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

During a regular session of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) on May 23, the Venezuelan Mission sought the organization's support on the extradition of Venezuelan citizen and Cuban-born Luis Posada Carriles from the United States. No agreement was reached on the request. Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador backed the Venezuelan proposal while Canada, Panama and the US voted against it.

Acting US Ambassador to the OAS Robert Manzanares argued that the issue was a bilateral one between member states—not a multilateral matter. Manzanares said that the extradition request is being reviewed by the US and Posada is under investigation for past activities. He added that US officials "are communicating with other countries about the possibility of taking Mr. Posada". (OAS, 5/23/07)

Representatives of Venezuela and the United States conducted intense negotiations with the help of OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and Dominican Republic Permanent Representative Roberto Álvarez. The final document "Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism and the Impunity of its Perpetrators" was adopted by consensus on May 28. The text of the resolution does not mention Luis Posada Carriles, but states "the value of extradition as an essential instrument in the fight against terrorism; and (...) urges all those states that have received requests lodged by member states for the extradition of terrorists to process them duly". (OAS, 36/1599/07)

Ethanol and Latin America: Economic Opportunity or Impediment to Growth?

Matthew Fuller

With the upward trend in oil prices and geopolitical events in the Middle East many countries, especially the United States, are searching for alternative sources of energy. Ethanol has become the preferred choice in the Western Hemisphere and demand for the product has increased dramatically over the last few years. Although the increased use and production of ethanol holds many benefits for both North and South American countries, one must be cautious in evaluating the economic implications of this "ethanol boom" and in perceiving it as a panacea for Latin America development.

The United States demand for ethanol currently and will continue to outpace its supply, leaving Latin American countries to fill this gap. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) recently reported that over half a dozen Latin American governments have begun or are expanding major ethanol programs, namely Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Venezuela and Peru (IDB, 7/2/07). The IDB also noted that over 100 new distilleries are being built in Central and South America, with the majority being constructed in Brazil, but also in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Jamaica (IDB América, 8/06).

The IDB is forecasting that ethanol will turn poverty-stricken farmers into profitable entrepreneurs and attract investment to depressed rural areas. This could potentially generate much needed employment and relieve migration pressures in rural areas. Brazil, the leading producer of ethanol in the world at more than 600,000 barrels a day, has successfully integrated the ethanol industry into its economy by replacing 40 % of that country's vehicle fuel with ethanol (Inter Press Service News Agency 2/3/07). Brazil has also been successful in creating a market for ethanol-fuelled cars, termed "flex fuel" cars, which run on gasoline, alcohol or a combination of the two. With the increase in ethanol-based production,

employment in rural areas is increasing and providing much needed stimulus to the small local economies. Recently Minister of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade for Brazil Luiz Fernando Furlan stated that currently one million jobs are related to ethanol production. Furlan believes that this number will grow by 20 % over the next five years.

Although there are obvious benefits to the increase of ethanol use one must balance them with the potential negative and perhaps unintentional effects such as food price inflation, land and income inequality. The demand for sugar and corn in ethanol production has dramatically increased the price of these staple products. In January of this year a large protest was held in Mexico City to demonstrate against the rising price of tortillas. Tortilla flour has nearly doubled from \$2.80 to \$4.20 a bushel (Foreign Affairs, 05-06/07). This is a dramatic increase in a context where Mexicans depend on tortillas as a part of their daily nutritional diet and are subject to a minimum wage of \$4.00 a day. With inflation and minimum wage increases hovering around 4 % last year in Mexico, a rise of 14 % in the price of tortillas is having a profound economic effect on the country's poorest. The reason behind the dramatic increase in recent prices is the strong demand for corn supplies at ethanol plants in the US and elsewhere. The United States currently accounts for 70 % of the corn traded worldwide, therefore any deviation from its supply will have a robust effect on corn prices. Although Mexico is fairly self-sufficient in the production of white corn, which is used in tortillas, the country imports yellow corn for animal feed from the United States. The problem lies in that both types of corn are easily substituted for one another. For example, the diversion of corn to American ethanol plants results in lower corn exports from the United States, resulting in lower imports of yellow corn for Mexico, causing higher demand for Mexican white corn and hence higher prices for the average Mexican consumer. However, others have argued that higher tortilla prices rather, are a result of NAFTA since it opened up the Mexican corn market to cheaper US imports, resulting in lower domestic corn production since farmers who could not compete with the American imports were simply put out of business.

Turning to Brazil, the increase in exports of ethanol has and will continue to increase the country's Gross Domestic Product and the majority of Brazilian sugar producers will share in larger profits. However, many believe that the ethanol boom in Brazil has and will continue to contribute to the increase in the country's land and income inequality, which is already one of the highest in the world. The increase in ethanol demand, some argue, will also lead to environmental degradation as a result of clear cutting to plant more sugar cane crops.

Although ethanol is not a panacea for Latin America, it can certainly provide much needed investment and employment to economically depressed regions. In the Western Hemisphere the single most important policy to be adopted by developed countries is the elimination of tariffs and quotas on sugar cane ethanol by the United States. Currently the US imposes a duty of US\$54 cents per gallon on imported sugar cane ethanol as well as an ad valorem tariff of 2.5 %. These tariffs limit market access for Latin American countries, especially Brazil, by reducing exports to the US market and limiting benefits to Brazilian sugar farmers. Some economists have pointed to these

tariffs as the reason for tortilla price increases in Mexico, since they artificially inflate the price of corn in the US, which is then passed on to Mexican consumers. Although it is unlikely that the US government will eliminate sugar cane ethanol tariffs anytime soon, a gradual reduction in these tariffs over time could signal to both Brazilian and American farmers that the current scenario will not last forever. It may also force American producers to start looking at sugar cane ethanol, which is more cost effective to produce and provides more energy per pound than corn based ethanol, as a viable option in the United States.

Latin American policy makers must focus on the distribution of the wealth generated by the increased production of ethanol. This "ethanol boom" will not help rural development if the profits generated are concentrated in the hands of a few producers. A land reform policy to distribute land in rural areas would allow the benefits derived from ethanol production to be more evenly allocated. If a major land reform is seen as too big an undertaking, local farmers could form cooperatives whereby they would share in the production and profits. An additional consideration is that the United States is decreasing its exports of corn leaving a gap in the market that could be filled by Latin American farmers. For example, the Mexican corn farmers that were forced out of business because of NAFTA and cheap American corn may now be able to re-enter the market.

As long as world oil prices remain high it appears that ethanol, along with other biofuels, are here to stay however the impact that it will have on Latin America is still unknown. The region has the resources and labour force to lead the world in production and trade of this product. However, measures should be taken now so that both developed and developing nations of this hemisphere enjoy the benefits while minimizing the potential negative side effects of increased ethanol production. ■

Matthew Fuller holds a Masters in Development Economics (MDE) from Dalhousie University and has written extensively on Latin American development issues. He is currently employed with the Canadian government.

The Guatemalan Electoral Roll Key to Citizen Participation

María Alejandra Erazo

For the 6th time since Guatemala's transition to democratic rule in 1985, free and democratic elections will be conducted September 9 of this year. In contrast with former elections however, challenges before the Guatemalan political and electoral system have put the upcoming elections under the scrutiny of national and international observers.

Among the issues that will make the upcoming elections an unprecedented one is the question of citizen participation, which falls to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE). This constitutes a challenge not only in terms of security, logistics and human resources, but also of updating and maintaining the electoral roll.

The electoral roll is the record of all Guatemalan citizens 18 or older who are eligible to vote or be elected to office by virtue of their registration in accordance with the law. In order to establish, update and purge it, legal, administrative and financial procedures must be implemented.

Although responsibility for keeping the electoral roll accurate and updated is shared by the citizens and a number of state actors (Registrar's Offices, the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Government, and National Defense, as well as the Supreme Court), the entity with the specific legal mandate to ensure its maintenance is the TSE.

To ensure civil participation and guarantee that the voting process unfolds peacefully and without complications, four months ago Electoral Observatory (*Mirador Electoral*) offered the electoral authorities to carry out the above mentioned independent and accountable verification, allotting sufficient time to correct the flaws. Therefore, proper authorization was requested from the TSE to obtain the necessary sample from the electoral roll. This request—supported by the fact that, from a legal standpoint, that information is a matter of public record—is still being denied by the TSE. Interestingly, the electoral court's membership in 2003 was the same, and back then it did allow *Mirador* to carry out the audit with the same methodology.

An updated electoral roll is obviously critical to having a universal, free and fair election. In order to correct any possible errors in the electoral roll, audits are carried out that allow establishing, by way of a representative sample, the degree of accuracy of a given register. Since 1983, several audits have been conducted with this purpose. One of them, carried out in 1998 by the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights/Centre for Electoral Consulting and Promotion (IIDH/CAPEL), concluded that: "... the error rate, though not as high as that of other countries, would require further electoral roll purging prior to the elections of 1999 by means of an intensive campaign of public data verification" (par. 22.1 of the Conclusions of the study). That study exposed critical inconsistencies in 13.6 % of the cases examined. Likewise, prior to the 2003 elections, *Mirador Electoral* carried out a two-way audit. This type of audit, which uses methodology developed by the National

Democratic Institute (NDI) and successfully applied in more than 50 countries, applies a sampling electoral roll verification technique. For the first trail, an electoral register sample with the necessary information is selected at random. Then, the person is interviewed at his/her domicile and their data is registered and later collated with that of the electoral roll. This first step is called *electoral roll-to-persons*. In the second trail, by selecting a sample through a systematic door-to-door search, people are interviewed and registered, and the data collected is later collated with that on the electoral roll. This second step is called *persons-to-electoral roll*. This verification produced the following results:

Table 1

First trail results (2003)
Electoral roll to person

Status	Total	%
Accurate data	180	50.6 %
Incorrect address.	60	16.9 %
Address does not exist	70	19.7 %
The person changed domicile	28	7.9 %
Out of the country	8	2.2 %
Deceased	10	2.8 %
Total	356	100 %

Second trail results (2003)
Persons to electoral roll

Status	Total	%
Accurate data	240	48.8 %
Incorrect address.	190	38.6 %
Not found in the electoral roll	62	12.6 %
Total	492	100 %

Source: Mirador Electoral Report 2003

FOCAL Highlights

As we can see, the results were alarming. Only 50.6 % of the data was correct in the first trail and 48.8 % in the second. Due to those results, *Mirador Electoral* made only one recommendation: *not to hold another election until the electoral roll be updated with correct information*. It bears pointing out that these results were reflective of the electoral roll's condition four years ago; therefore, they must not be regarded as indicative of its current status. For that a new verification is needed.

Now, a scarce 100 days prior to the general elections, it is necessary to know the electoral roll's condition because of its pivotal role in the process, considering that approximately 15,000 polling stations will open across the national territory and domicile data is crucial for the distribution of those polling stations. The results of the audit will allow, first to gain an objective perspective of the quality of the electoral roll used for these elections and secondly, to make proper recommendations to resolve any problems that may arise. ■

María Alejandra Erazo works in the sociopolitical studies area of FLACSO-Guatemala and is an analyst for *Mirador Electoral 2007*, an entity made up of five academic institutions (FLACSO, INCEP, Acción Ciudadana, DOSES and CECMA) that will monitor the 2007 electoral processes.

Fifth Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas

Violence against women, health, intellectual property and other human rights problems affecting Indigenous peoples of the Americas will be at the heart of this coming event. The meeting is organized by Quebec Native Women (QNW), as a member of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ENLACE) and will take place from the 9th to the 11th of July in Kahnawake, Quebec under the theme "Restoring our Balance". For more information visit <http://www.faq-qnw.org/5conti/index.html>

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A N N U A L S U R V E Y

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1. What country do you live in?

2. What type of organization do you belong to? Please circle your answer.

Academic	Individual	Media
Business	Multilateral	Religious
Government	Non-Profit/NGO	
Independent Research Centre/Institute		

3. What is your professional title?

4. What is your first language?

5. What is the highest academic degree you have obtained?

High School	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community College/CEGEP	<input type="checkbox"/>
Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Licenciatura	<input type="checkbox"/>
Masters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doctorate	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. What did you study?

7. Which themes are you most interested in reading about in FOCAL POINT? Please rank all categories from 1 to 7, 1 being the theme you are most interested in.

- Development
- Economy / Trade
- Politics: Regional
- National
- Canadian Foreign Policy
- Multilateral organizations
- Other (please specify)

8. What sub-region of the Americas are you most interested in reading about in FOCAL POINT? Please rank all categories from 1 to 5, 1 being the region you are most interested in.

- North America Central America Caribbean and Cuba Andean
- Southern Cone and Mercosur

9. To what extent do you associate the following areas of expertise to FOCAL POINT? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest rating).

Political developments	1	2	3	4	5
Trade/Economic developments	1	2	3	4	5
Indigenous issues	1	2	3	4	5
Civil Society issues	1	2	3	4	5
Gender issues	1	2	3	4	5
Cuba	1	2	3	4	5
Canadian foreign policy direction	1	2	3	4	5
Academic guide/tool	1	2	3	4	5

10. Does Canadian foreign policy towards the region interest you?

- Yes No

11. Are there aspects of Canadian politics, economy or news that you would like to see covered? If so indicate which.

Yes _____ No

12. In what areas would you like to see FOCAL POINT develop in the future? Is there any topic or region you would like to see covered more extensively or frequently by FP?

Circle your answer to the following questions.

13. Do you find that the coverage of issues is timely?

Very timely Timely Not timely

14. Do you find the format of the publication convenient?

Very convenient Somewhat convenient Not convenient

15. Does the format of the publication convey information clearly?

Very clearly Somewhat clearly Does not convey information clearly

16. Do you find FOCAL POINT articles well written?

Always Most of the time Sometimes Rarely

17. Do you like reading articles in Spanish from time to time?

Yes No Yes, would like to see more

18. Do you feel that FOCAL POINT offers a greater degree of analysis than other publications you read?

More analysis Same degree of analysis Less analysis

19. Has FOCAL POINT increased your knowledge of the region?

Yes No

20. Has FOCAL POINT influenced your opinion on issues facing the region?

Yes At times Never

21. Would you recommend FOCAL POINT to colleagues and/or friends?

Yes No

22. Do you use FOCAL POINT in your work or studies, if so how?

Yes _____ No

Other comments:

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Founded in 1990, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is an independent policy institute based in Ottawa that fosters informed analysis, debate and dialogue on social political and economic issues facing the Americas. We support a greater understanding of these issues in Canada and throughout the region. The Board of Directors provides strategic guidance to the organization and its activities.

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