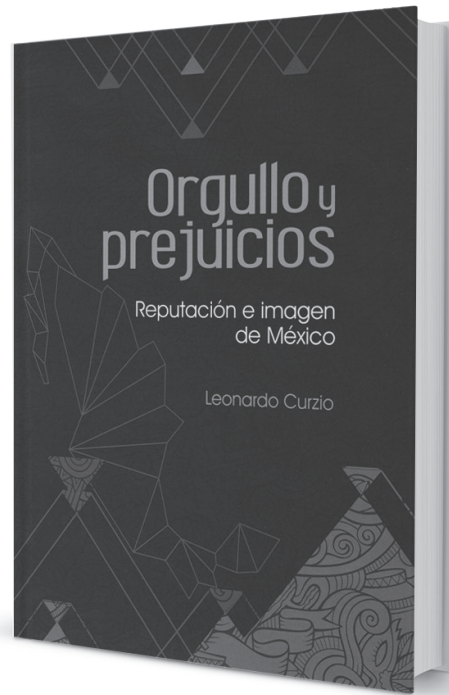


**Orgullo y prejuicios. Reputación e imagen de México**

(Pride and Prejudices. Mexico's Reputation and Image)

*Leonardo Curzio*

CISAN, UNAM/Miguel Ángel Porrúa  
Mexico City, 2016, 148 pp.



The recent U.S. elections have thrust the whole world into uncertainty about what will happen to that country's bilateral relations and the international system itself. In particular, Mexico's relationship with the United States is very important, not only because of the long border the two countries share, but also because of their strong commercial ties and the close link-up of their economies. From the time of the campaigns, many analysts realized not only how dangerous it could be for Republican candidate Donald Trump to win, but also the consequences that his speeches based on xenophobic, racist feelings were having. Given this panorama, it is imperative that Mexico take steps not only to let U.S. Americans, but the whole world, know what Mexico really is. In *Orgullo y prejuicios*, Leonardo Curzio analyzes Mexico's image and reputation using statistics, hard data, historical examples, and comparisons with other countries. He also puts forward a series of proposals that should be taken into account to improve the perception of Mexico in the world.

It is important to mention, as Curzio does in this, his most recent book, that we should not confuse image and reputation. While both are necessary and should be included on the national agenda, a country's image is more volatile and depends on momentary circumstances, while the construction of a reputation is a longer, more structured process that takes years. But why is the perception of Mexico abroad so important?

Observers have noted that a country's image is fundamental for tourism as well as for attracting investment. In addition, time has bestowed great strength on public opinion so it can be analyzed. In this, the concept of soft power developed by theoretician Joseph Nye plays an important role, since reputation and image are essential components of soft power. For Nye, three main spheres give rise to soft power: culture, a country's political values, and its foreign policy. While Mexico has a strong, attractive culture, due to its history, its entertainment value, its cuisine, etc., and a good projection to the outside world, its institutions reduce its soft power, keeping it from having a desirable reputation. It should be remembered that the image one has of oneself is not always the same as the one others have of us.

Where does Mexico fall down? The author reviews the deterioration of our country's reputation, with particular emphasis on the bad image it acquired due to the so-called "war on drug trafficking" headed by President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012). He mentions that in that period, the main issue regarding Mexico to hit the international media was its domestic insecurity, which, of course, was a constant in the president's speeches. In addition, the 2009 AH1N1 sanitary crisis also put Mexico in the spotlight in not the best way; as a result, the number of tourists dropped considerably.

Not only the issue of insecurity has affected the country's reputation and image throughout its history, but also the perception that it is headed up by a corrupt government, that it

is a place where doing business is not always easy for foreigners, since *compadrazgo*, or cronyism based on strong friendships, benefits the economic elite, a sector with close ties to politicians and decision-makers. In the same fashion, Mexico must overcome the lack of credibility remaining regarding how it has handled its border and reduce its important levels of social inequality.

Leonardo Curzio maintains that when Enrique Peña Nieto took office, the perception of Mexico began to improve, reaching a balance of opinion of 20 points in 2014 (while in 2013, it had been -2 according to Gallup polls). In part, this was due to the fact that the Presidente Peña opted for minimizing security issues in his speeches at the same time that he was perceived by the news media as the great reformer and “savior of Mexico.” However, events like Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán’s 2014 escape from prison and what happened to the Ayotzinapa normal school students that same year once again tarnished the government’s credibility.

After Donald Trump’s victory in the U.S. presidential elections, the Mexican government has to have a plan of action to repair the damage caused by his statements. The author proposes forging a different narrative about Mexico through favorable press coverage, developing public diplomacy to include more actors, to achieve a better understanding of Mex-

ican reality, an improvement in the country’s reputation, increasing its capacity to have an influence abroad, and bettering its ability to actually perceive what is said about Mexico in the world.

Our country has domestic aspects that must be improved, actions that would benefit the perception of us abroad, such as making a priority of reinforcing control of the border, increasing contact with the Diasporas to foster among them a feeling of greater proximity to Mexico, ridding ourselves of impunity, improving infrastructure, offering an efficient railway system, publicizing NAFTA’s benefits for the region, and promoting an easy-going, healthy lifestyle, among others.

In short, *Orgullo y prejuicios* is a relevant book today. Leonardo Curzio lays out a sweeping panorama of the importance of image and reputation, how they are built, as well as proposals for nourishing this nation’s so-very-necessary soft power. In today’s international scene, plagued by racist comments against our compatriots, it is important that decision-makers also weigh in on the matter and promote a better, fairer image of what Mexico really is. **MM**

*Karla D. González Esquinca*

**International affairs analyst and sales manager  
at *Foreign Affairs Latinoamérica* magazine.**