

THE TRANSITION OF THE RÉGIME OF THE MEXICAN STATE: FROM STATE MANAGER TO A STATE OF MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper has the purpose to analyze most recent economic and political changes in the Mexican States, which show a clear transitional tendency from an entrepreneurial state toward a state of entrepreneurs through the following stages: The PRI-presidential Mexican Entrepreneurial State with an emphasis in the welfare state model, followed by a period marked by the transition of the Mexican State focused on a neoliberal PRI-presidential reinventing of the state, as the result of the economic and political impact of globalization and its pervasive effects on an unequal income distribution, weak governance, political instability and lack of property security, besides a new relation's interface between government and enterprises. Finally, the regime's transition under the change of party in power opens the stage of a Mexican State of Entrepreneurs in the new period PAN-presidentialist.

INTRODUCTION

Mexico is a highly centralized country with a powerful government, no reelection or, until recently, strong, open political competition. Since independence and for the last two centuries the dominant political system in Mexico has been authoritarian and presidential. Starting with the governments emerging from the Mexican Revolution (1910-17), it settled on a system of dictatorship in which the dominant party monopolized political representation and a deformed presidency. Krauze denominated the Imperial Presidency, weakening the legislature's ability to carry out its functions and duties, and diminishing judicial power. Various forms of patriarchal power represent yet another feature of the Mexican government before and after the Mexican Revolution.

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In Mexico the XXI century began with the new paradigm of the manager government. PAN's charismatic leader, Vincente Fox, won the election for the Presidency in the year 2000. Fox was the candidate guided by a marketing campaign that emphasized the régime/anti-régime condition. He took the PRI out of the presidential residence, The Pines, ending the PRI régime and beginning a new cycle. In part the people voted more against the PRI than in favor of Fox who said that his government would bring a transition to a new democratic régime. In his speech of August 2, when he received his Certificate of Elected President, Fox stated emphatically: "I will head a transitional government that is inclusive, capable, and with a vision of a State with high standards of honesty and quality" (MacroeconomÍA, 2000).

The endogamy of the Party-state in power for 71 years had generated into a perverse structure with problems that the Mexican society would no longer tolerate. Fox was the beneficiary of the

decisive vote of the poor from the big urban centers, who were formerly excluded, from the votes of the rural areas, and from native stragglers who renounced the PRI. However, the supposition that the “green vote” of the rural and excluded areas would decide the elections in favor of the PRI was correct, although this party still obtained a majority, though smaller than in the previous federal elections of 1994. This electoral behavior had not been seen before because the voters had differentiated their vote in order to prevent a single party from getting all the power.

In the 2000 elections, for the first time in 71 years, the PRI lost the presidency of the Republic. This was a transcendental event for the political life of the country because it radically changed the political perspective and national expectations. The defeat of the hegemonic PRI party, which “progressively destroyed social cohesion: normally expressed and implicit, that held us together as Mexicans was due to the government's inclination to favor the Creole oligarchy and the concentration of monopolized capital” (Ortíz Pinchetti, 2000).

On the other hand, Touraine (2000) argues that the result of the elections put an end to the long reign of the PRI. It had reinforced the political action and intervention of the State in a country whose growth had not reduced social inequality. The economy grew but the benefits of that growth were not distributed, that is to say, it generated wealth but it also generated poverty. The opposite, the reduction of the weight of the State, was announced, although the public sector was traditionally weak in Mexico. Mexico's entry into the global economy increased the State's options for institutional change.

It opened up the Mexican political system for movement guided by the changes they had made, beginning with protest and public debate, more than a new political project. However, this democratic project could only be understood when viewed from the standpoint of political depolitization.

In fact, Fox's political and economic project gave continuity to the technocrats' project which was not more than a transition, because the only thing that happened was not a change of political régime but an alternate party in power. Given the conditions of the system the ideal thing would have been an alternate party with an alternative, a necessary alternative to government. In any event, political transition has been possible thanks to that same neoliberal model as disarticulated to civil society and citizens. What has happened in Mexico, according to several analysts, is that “a type of caudillista democracy has triumphed over a weakened left, marked by weak, unstructured political parties that reflect the decadent, centralist elite” (Muñoz, 2000). However, it is highly questionable whether the change has led to a democratic régime and the death of a dictatorial presidential régime.

More than continuity, the pattern of neoliberalism increased with the Fox's rise to the presidency of Mexico. He represents a third movement of the neoliberal economy begun by Saline. Nevertheless, the technocrats were hit politically by the managers. The new political class, which mainly emerged from the local organizations of small and medium managers in the North, wanted to liberate the country from the corruption and clientelism of the State party. The Manager State was dismantled in the rise to power of the technocratic economists. Now with a manager-like President in Mexico, the Mexican State has become a State of Managers that treat democracy like good business, called the Coca-colaification of Mexico in reference to the managerial antecedents of Fox's transnational government.

According to a Canadian managerial leader, for Fox the governing of Mexico won't be the same thing as managing Coca Cola, but his managerial experience will help him to make decisions (Inclán, 2000). The analyst Rubio (Jiménez Lazcano, 2000) describes Fox as “evidently a practical, pragmatic person who clearly adapts to circumstances. He has his priorities very clear and he has a clear sense of who to use and for what reason; he wants to use each one of the people. And in that sense what we see is a person not very ideological, not very dogmatic, but very adaptable to circumstances as they arise, moment by moment.”

It is paradoxical that in a country where more than 60 percent of the population is poor, the elections were won by a party of the right that proposes to deepen the neoliberal model responsible for the increase in poverty. Fox's rise to power, coincides with the consolidation of a concentration process, an economic oligopolitization, and political centralization of decision-making (Fazio, 2000a).

With Fox the Mexican presidency is transformed from autism to democratic caudillism. Fox's ascendancy to the Presidency of Mexico, according to Krauze (mentioned by Fazio, 2000b) resulted in “a direct, immediate switch to managerial power. Wines of new marketing in old wineskins of caudillism... a caudillism plebiscitary with messianic edges, very dangerous in a country like ours that finds the separation between the church and the State difficult”. Nevertheless, the ghost of presidentialism has not gone away with Fox in the presidency. He has assumed an attitude of “commander of the town” because behavior patterns still exist that encourage it, reinforced by the existing Constitution. A true change in the régime implies a deep reformation of the State with a new Constitution, and in which diverse political forces delimit presidential activity.

Fox is the first manager president to arise out of the local elite from the center of the country. He represents the “electoralist stream” of the managerial elite in PAN and especially the stream dominated by the faction from the northern states or “Monterey Group”. It has loose connections and is supported by the ideology of the new, Mexican right, as expressed in current pragmatism or neopanism, and is opposed to traditional orthodoxy. According to the ex-leader and twice Panista candidate, Pablo Emilio Madero, nephew of the democratic anti-re-electionist Francisco I. Madero, “Vicente Fox Quezada's eventual victory in the presidential election crowned the agreement of a group of managers. In 1982, these managers decided, in a meeting in Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua, to infiltrate and control the National Action Party (PAN) to gain particular interests. The virtual ascent of neopanism to power constitutes a serious risk for Mexico because the pragmatic principle of personal interest would take precedence over common interests. And once in power they would be overcome by the temptation of authoritarianism to eliminate opponents, which would discourage the nation” (Ruiz, 2000).

Fox's proposed changes are considered imprecise as they relate to the panista proposal. According to Loeza (Rivera, 2000) “The lower and middle classes are described as not reactionary. On the contrary they want political change, would like a modern society, and are outward looking, though on the other hand, would be interested in a reduction of social inequality but not absolute equality, because that doesn't interest them. They have a vision of an anti-egalitarian society, they are not interested in equality but freedom. Freedom with order yes... social justice is not a panista topic...”

Contrary to the current doctrine, the ideology of neopanism, with certain flashes of fascism, defends the “changarro” from the attacks of official populism. With the focus on a distant political social democracy, the view is that the “useful vote” doesn't recognize the difference in

ideologies but operates on the simple desire to reduce the power of the State Party. And under the representation of “virtual party unity”, the political class is recomposed with the rise of the managers to formal power. The managers, mainly from managerial unions in the North of the country, rose to political power using their managerial unions as launching platforms.

Nevertheless neopanism fought official populism and the decomposition of the Mexican political system was the main reason that a new, anti-party populism arose. According to Touraine (2000), this political decomposition goes hand in hand with the advance of worldwide economic conglomerates. In the Mexican case it is also expressed as an alternative “to the Mexican” that, though difficult can be considered “like a real road for the creation of a true democracy.” But in the aftermath of these political remarks, it is as dangerous to give priority to the fall of the whole substance of their régime, as it is to encourage the union that is already way too strong between a vague populism and economic liberalism. The resistance to this populist tendency attacks the political system at the same time that the capacity of the State to intervene has to be organized for popular movements. These popular movements have the capacity to manifest and to express the popular demands of the less favored sectors, in such a way that they really contribute to the restoration of public life.

The transition to the new régime has not been so smooth and soft. The caciques that held political and economic power weren't resigned to their loss. The death of the wounded PRI has ended in internal disputes over the little power that remains and the political groups defend their interests to their share of the power, resulting in violent confrontations. The smoothness of the political transition leads us to suppose a pact was made with those with real power.

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