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Mexico

July 1, 2018 - a new historical period opens

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV522 - July 2018 -

Publication date: Thursday 5 July 2018

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Around 11 pm on July 1, 2018, after an election day that had kept the country holding its breath, Lorenzo Córdova (the President of Mexico's National Electoral Institute) announced, confirmed, a trend that could only have been overcome with an ignominious electoral fraud of unprecedented proportions (which it is saying a lot) in the recent history of Mexico. The vote for Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO) of the MORENA party, which will surpass 53% of the effective vote, obtained with record participation levels (above 60%), will make him president with a historical democratic legitimacy. In record time all the important actors of the regime (the opposition candidates, the National Electoral Institute, Peña Nieto, Trump, employers' groups and the mass media) recognized the triumph of Obrador.

During the day, several polling stations registered delays in opening and there were many areas where, in addition to the purchase and coercion of votes, political violence (as throughout the campaign) took an indeterminate number of lives. The reports of violence were not focused around the presidential candidacy (in which the PRI and the PAN rushed to recognize themselves as defeated), but in the few local power preserves, which support more solid clientelist machines. Such is the case in the state of Puebla, which experienced one of the most violent days in its history and where the difference in the votes counted was very close; presaging a possible post-electoral conflict.

The historical defeat of the PRIAN (RD)

And yet, fraud in its common form ("system crashes", unforeseen figures and so on) was defeated. Before the victory of AMLO, the great event is the resounding defeat of the PRI, PAN, PRD, and the peripheral parties. The PRI is going through what we hope will be a terminal crisis (with about 15% of the overall vote and loss of the governorships in important states such as Veracruz, while, although it maintains the governorship, it lost control of the congress and the vast majority of municipalities in the state of Mexico, rendering difficult the medium-term survival of its clientelist and mafia machine). However, the "political culture of the PRI", although suffering a severe setback through an election day full of hope and joy, is still far from being buried by history.

The PAN comes out of the election divided, challenged and with clear political disagreements although it is positioned as the main opposition force on the right to the new government. Although very diminished before the electoral wave of MORENA, it still maintains a sufficient parliamentary force and at least two governorships (notably Jalisco). But nothing compares with the terrible crisis of the PRD, its pragmatic alliance with the PAN condemning it to be its uncomfortable shadow with an absolute blurring. In the PRD, and its history, development, degeneration and tragic end, MORENA should see its mirror. Winning elections at all costs has its costs, and the PRD paid, without ever reaching the presidency.

The electoral debacle of the so-called PRIAN (RD) expresses the culminating point of the rupture of the previous governing pact, in force since the 1988 fraud, between the PRI and PAN leaders. They bet on a model of identity politics and a false game of transition of functions in government. At some point in Peña Nieto's presidency, the pact between the PRI and the PAN was broken, as shown by the previous state elections with promises to imprison the previous administration (Chihuahua, Veracruz, Coahuila), and by the implementation of structural reforms, after the consensus represented by the Pact for Mexico, and the management of the political costs of the different political crises in the Peña Nieto administration.

The democratic victory and the recognition of the majority

The above reasons are sufficient to explain the excessive joy that was experienced in the country on the night of July 1. The accumulation of rage and social grievances, excessive violence and immodest corruption laid the foundations of the majority for MORENA. When the official candidate José Antonio Meade, went to vote, a woman spontaneously shouted "without fraud, Meade, without fraud"; when the former PRI governor of Veracruz, Fidel Herrera, went to the polls, and tried to skip the line of voters; it generated only anger and shouting from those who had waited their turn to vote. Even after several of the attacks (even armed) in polling stations in Puebla, the people around were looking for a way to resume order and continue with the election.

For the first time, Mexico has an electoral process that, despite the fraudulent obstacles and the violence, was also, paradoxically, the only one in which the popular will was heard loud and clear. The fall of the PRIAN and the social fiesta that followed represented for millions a moment of celebration, which presaged justice after the long list of defeats. Very different from the electoral nights of 2006 and 2012, when anger, frustration and disbelief were imposed. On December 1 of this year, when AMLO comes to power (if no unexpected turn occurs, which is very unlikely) the mobilized sectors will be able to see, analyse and think about the challenges that come, instead of facing the anguish of the number of arrests, of wounded, and having to run from tear gas.

The social anger that was expressed in the polls is so great that the campaigns of dirty war, the concessions and turns to the right by Obrador during the campaign, the scandalous alliances that would have cost victory and credibility, were now trifles for the electorate. But AMLO would make a mistake in thinking that the electoral majority that takes him to the presidency will be unconditional. On the contrary, the discontent with the existing state of things is such that the millions celebrating today will from the beginning not accept a disappointment or retreat from the new government. It is central in the new moment to emphasize the importance of popular empowerment - if the majorities have put the new government in, they have the primary right to decide on its actions and movements. The joy of last night has to remain in the collective memory as proof that when you want, you can and that organization and popular will is capable of anything.

On the other hand, it is important to stop and analyse the reasons for the rapid acceptance of MORENA's triumph. It seems that the traditional oligarchy, faced with overwhelming defeat at the polls, sat on their hands and let AMLO pass without further ado. But to think that the Meades, Anayas and Peñañas are in effect "democrats that know how to recognize defeats" would be much more than a simple naivety. Although it is true that the electoral majority was so great that the only way to reverse Obrador's victory would be practically a hyperviolent military coup, and this was seen was not an option for the oligarchy; they preferred instead to take AMLO's word and to believe in the multiple guarantees of continuity in relation to economic policy, property relations and commercial policy that the winning candidate offered throughout the campaign and which he reaffirmed in his victory speech.

The new government

It is important to analyse, with a cool head, the true potentialities and profile of the new government of Obrador. We must not forget that, despite the indignant, anti-neoliberal and popular electoral majority that voted for this government; not a few representatives of the oligarchic layers are in key positions (Romo, Ebrard, Espino, to name but a few). Which gives an idea of what the policies promoted by the AMLO government will really be.

As throughout the campaign, everything indicates that important issues of the national situation will continue to be ignored. Will a new development model be promoted that will move the country away from its structural dependence

on fossil fuels and mining? It seems not. Will the rights and demands of women be respected and will they advance in tune with the new feminist wave in Latin America? More than ever, that depends on struggle.

There is a big question about the fiscal and public spending policy of the new government. As scandalous and ignominious as is the corruption that Obrador wants to banish, its real cost would hardly be enough to capitalize the resources necessary to initiate the social measures that AMLO promises today. The refusal, for now, to reverse the energy reform and merely “review” the contracts awarded, will eventually clash with the promise to stop oil price increases (intimately linked to the new energy framework). What will happen with educational reform? And with the new airport?

At a local level, the majority of new popular election positions conquered by MORENA are the crudest expression of the pragmatic cost of Obrador's victory. Will the cascade of “unpresentables” that today represent MORENA in the immediate regional space enter into contradiction with the will for change expressed in the ballot boxes? In short, will the expectations that AMLO himself has raised around the aims of his government encounter an economic environment that makes their concrete realization difficult? Will MORENA's huge multi-class umbrella, with conflicting ideologies and interests, remain after the taking of power? In the medium term, given the institutional locks that protect structural reforms today, the only way to fulfil many campaign promises would be the convening of a constituent assembly and the construction of a new social pact (given that the one of 1917 was liquidated antidemocratically in the three decades of classical neoliberalism). This possibility is not close today.

New political spectrum, challenges for a new anti-capitalist left

Whatever the immediate development of events, it is clear that a process of general political readjustment will accelerate and consolidate. Despite the important access the evangelical Christian PES party will have to parliament, it also runs the risk of losing legal registration. The New Alliance and Greens are in an even worse situation. Many political forces and the political spectrum will be reorganized in the coming months.

In this new historical framework and political spectrum, the question is: what will happen to the anti-capitalist left? In the immediate future, it faces two symmetrical dangers: on the one hand it runs the risk that, seeking to accompany the popular experience in MORENA, it sacrifices political, ideological and tactical independence; this was the case for the immense majority of the socialist left when the PRD was founded, and the result was nothing but political suicide. It would be just as terrible if, in the opposite sense, the quest to maintain political autonomy means that the anti-capitalist left suffers from sectarian atrophy and places itself at the margins of the course of political events in the new framework. A similar situation exists in relation to the social movements. In the immediate, it is important to take advantage of the new moment so that the struggles advance, maintaining their political and social independence. It is urgent that, in order to face the new historical moment, bold initiatives can be launched that allow the construction of an anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal pole.

In this sense, the experience of the campaign for the registration of Marichuy, spokesperson for the Indigenous Council of Government, as an independent candidate, was a political success within the framework of the entire electoral process that is now ended. It was an unprecedented experience to bring an anti-capitalist political alternative to the national level, and many lessons must be drawn from it. Likewise, the fact that different sectors of the anti-capitalist left did not explicitly call for a critical vote for AMLO is also a sign of the possibility of the construction of a left to the left of MORENA, as long as it does not fall into a vulgar sectarianism. However, it is much more difficult to know how to interact with the new political situation and the spirit of the masses that today pushes us forward.

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The hubbub and political upheaval should not make us forget that today, on July 2, the violence in the country is still unleashed, that the megaprojects are advancing, that women are still being killed, that hunger is still there, that we are still missing 43 students and thousands of other people. On the contrary, we must translate the joy of victory into organization, into more struggle, into more street activity in raising autonomous political projects. The democratic conquest that the PRIAN (RD) debacle represents will have to become a first step, which is concretized inasmuch as the ballot boxes are no longer the only way of political participation; a political reform that democratizes the public life of the country is necessary. We have to put people at the centre, because yesterday was their victory, of millions who seek a transformation that only struggle will achieve. This was not a final victory (or defeat of the right), but the opening of an unprecedented historical moment that will pose new challenges, contradictions and possibilities.

And yet, last night, for the first time, thousands of people gathered in the Zócalo in Mexico City, not for political catharsis, but to defend life and an end to repression. For these reasons, on the night of July 1, people met to smile, sing, dance, hug and meet. Our struggle is for life, yes, but life without joy is nothing.

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