

## The Internal Challenge

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Moments of malaise are also moments of risk –and of opportunity. The risk of reverting what does function in the interest of achieving redemption, and opportunity to build something new, distinct, that solves the injustices in which the country has become mired. The present moment is ripe for both; the question is how those with real power will contribute and what the potential candidates will furnish. The future of the country rides on this.

The panorama is extremely clear and complex: a population at once courted by all, but also forsaken; everyone wants their vote, but no one wants it to participate, influence nor, much worse, complain. The population is there to serve the politicians: some of the latter direct themselves to the populace to threaten it, others to vow atonement; the President tells us that “today... there are risks of regression... new threats are emerging that represent the paralysis of the right or the jump into the void of the left” because we do know how to govern. Surely he is thinking of the performance of his government over the last two years... For his part, López Obrador volunteers platitudes, such as “the prosperity of the people and the rebirth of Mexico,” an overture that sounds good in the discourse but that is not accompanied by concrete proposals.

And that is the problem: some market the idea that “they know how to govern,” others who know “what to do” and still others state that their forte is “professionalism” and “honesty”, when the evidence is overwhelmingly against all three of these propositions. In the context of the 2012 campaign, a PRIist governor allowed himself the luxury of stating that “we may be corrupt but we know how to govern,” an excellent prolog for what took place summarily: profuse corruption and incapacity for governing. The presidential speech on the PRI’s birthday was a perfect example of the distance separating the political class from the population.

The book by AMLO reminded me of the stellar work of Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind*: the sermonizer has to do no more than denounce the obvious -the decadence, the abuse, the beneficiaries, the corruption- to describe a disastrous scenario that lies behind much of the unease afflicting the population. But the important question, the one posed by Milosz, is why there continue to be subscribers to a motion that has no possibility at all of solving Mexico’s quandaries. López Obrador himself proclaims that we must return

to the past. The past? Which one? The past of the crises, of the poor services, of the lack of opportunities? In contrast with the presidential demagoguery, that of the Morena party is vague: the candidate is the solution and one must not zero in on how to solve the problems: that is merely a problem of implementation.

The PANists are not to be outdone. Incapable of governing, they ended up immersed the same corruption rackets as the PRIists, but steeped in internal quarrels and without the capacity to construct solutions. Great ones such as opposition, always disposed to join forces, they proved to be more concerned with moral posturing than with governing.

The panorama explains the discontent and, perhaps, the electoral preferences expressed in the polls: plainly, no party or candidate satisfies and these perceive no reason to put forth intelligible and precise outlines, susceptible to convincing the electorate. They do not do this because they do not want to commit, because they fear losing disciples among their divided and rancorous devotees.

Tony Blair wrote some days ago that “Today, a distinction that often matters more than the traditional right or left is open vs. closed. The open-minded see globalization as an opportunity but one with challenges that should be mitigated; the close-minded view sees the outside world as a threat.” Will candidates emerge who are capable of explaining the dilemmas with that clarity and of proposing specific actions to face up to the problems and to break once and for all with that nostalgic but unacceptable past?

The country semi-worked during the last decades because NAFTA supplied a source of indisputable certainty, while the U.S. job market released social pressure. Whatever happens in the U.S. in the upcoming months (and I think it will be benign), imported assuredness will no longer be reliable. Now everyone knows that this can disappear and that creates a moment of extreme risk, but also of opportunity: the risk of destroying all that exists (without the penalty that was inherent in NAFTA) and the opportunity to face up to our challenges in order to build sources of certainty founded on internal political arrangements.

Our true dilemma is the same as that of fifty years ago, but it is already unavoidable. The country requires a seamless political transformation based on an effectively represented population, a system of government that responds to the population and a government whose purpose is that absent verb: to govern.

In the face of this, the presidential offer is that of winning the power, because that is what PRIists know how to do; that of AMLO is to attack the “power mafia,” because that is his

obsession; and that of the PAN is an honest and professional government, one which they were not able to articulate when they were in power. None of them understand the country of today, that which does not require promises, demagoguery or redeeming moralization. It requires answers. The challenge is internal.

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