

## The Next Step

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“History teaches by analogy, not by identity”, noted Kissinger in an interview. His proposal was that there are no two identical historical situations, but that some indeed present important similarities that transcend the time and space in which they have occurred.

It is evident that Trump and Andrés Manuel López Obrador are very distinct in origin, personal profile and political orientation, but their similarities are equally astounding and, now that the U.S. elections have taken place, it is this on which Mexicans will inevitably focus in looking toward the future.

Donald Trump was born in a working class suburb in New York and never left it. His economic plight was transformed but his political conception was forged in the place of his birth; although he was always a businessman, his televised star quality allowed him to express –for decades now- the political postures that he now raised as a candidate: he was always ostentatious and vain, and exceedingly thin-skinned. Everything indicates that he entered this electoral contest in reaction to what he perceived as an attack, an offense by Obama during one the most famous roasting sessions of mutual insults and self-flagellation that U.S. presidents engage in annually with the press.

On his part, López Obrador emerged from a modest background and always focused on social and political mobilization; he has for decades confronted the established powers-that-be, recurring to the media to achieve his task, first in his native state of Tabasco and later as Head of the Government of the Federal District. His activism was always pragmatic: from the construction of the second-level roads in the city to his relationship with businessmen and the Church. When he registered his protest against what he termed a fraudulent election for the governorship of Tabasco, he took over the oil wells of the region, never permitting his followers to touch the valves or other sensitive equipment; it was one thing to protest, another, very distinct one, to engage in unnecessary risks. In that vein, there is nothing more in contrast with Trump

than his personality: modest and measured, always flaunting his humility. But likewise there are coincidences and resemblances that cannot be overlooked.

It was not difficult for Mexicans to understand the inherent risks in the Trump discourse. It is not only what he said about Mexico and Mexicans throughout his campaign, but also the context, vision and discursive style. It was his very nature that we Mexicans beheld with consternation and scorn: the rejection of all that exists, his ignorance of the most elementary things, the implicit threat that he must be elected or the arrival of the deluge would transpire and, above all, his willingness to annul what does work, independently of whether there are so many other things that would merit changes. When in the last of the three debates Trump refused to commit to respecting the electoral result, we Mexicans were reminded of the 2006 post-electoral moment when Lopez Obrador took control of the city's major thoroughfare for months. It would appear to be a caricature, but it is not.

The two personages share a series of very clear values and preferences: their anti-systemic discourse, the absence of specifics in their public stance (they scan solve it alone, as if by magic) and the arrogance inbred in their personality: there is no reason for them to render accounts to anyone. Various journalists have scratched the surface of the discourses of both, finding a Pleiad of practically identical sentences, making up the obvious: it is not that they derive from the same roots, but that they are the same in political proposal and that is the core matter. I doubt that they have ever met, but philosophically they are indistinguishable.

This is about a deeply conservative political vision that does not emerge from the search for social transformation but rather from the protection of losers and the preservation of the old social order; hence their ever-nostalgic manner of thinking: everything worked fine before... In this, both profess an acute nationalism as well as contempt for institutions, the market, international agreements and any rule or law not serving their purposes. In the face of the incompatibility of their discourse with the mundane reality, their response ends up being messianic not only because it entertains no concrete proposals but also because the solution is they themselves. A Messianic perspective allows "ignoring the reality" as often as necessary, building a fantasy sustained on lies that, in their mind, are not.

Now we must wait and see how Trump will react to so brutal a defeat and, above all, how the American institutions will resist the pummeling that he represents. What is certain is that his victory is the result of something we Mexicans understand full well: a series of governments devoted to not governing, to promising but not delivering and, above all, to ignoring the needs, preferences and complaints of the population. Obama's government has been disastrous and the American people are now paying back.

Mexico's government refuses to understand a similar reality: that people are fed up with the lack of government response to their needs, with the violence, the constant loss of value of the peso and the lackluster economic performance that affects most people, all of which entails consequences.

I have no doubt but that the worst-case scenario for Mexico would be that of Trump in Washington and AMLO in Mexico: two nationalists seeking to distance their countries from each other, a lethal combination for the Mexican economy. With its paralysis or, rather, with its disdain and misguided actions, the Peña administration is making the Messianic vision ever more likely.

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