

EL PRI, LA VIEJA ESTRUCTURA DE PODER Y LAS BARRERAS PARA LA DEMOCRACIA EN MÉXICO

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Following PAN's victory in the 2000 presidential election, nearly everyone would label Mexico's regime as democratic. This, however, is an inaccurate perception since the democratic transition is far from being completed. As Jacqueline Peschard states, "even with new and diverse actors in the political arena, [in Mexico] there is not a new pattern of decisionmaking processes and much of the old political behaviour still exists." Mexico *per se* also praises its supposed shift to democracy from long-lasting era of authoritarianism. In reality, Mexico, as well as the rest of the world, rather prefers to see the glass half full and avoids to consider the option to critically assess the lagging transition to democracy. As prominent democracy theorist David Held wrote, "[p]olitical regimes of all kinds throughout the world claim to be democracies. Yet what these regimes say and do is often substantially different from one to another."

While some progress towards a more democratic political system was achieved in the 1990s and early 2000s, the democratisation process significantly slowed down since then. The Democratic Development Index IDD-Lat 2013 revealed that the levels of democratic development in Mexico dropped by 5.6 percent between 2012 and 2013, resulting in total drop of 20.2 percent between 2002 and 2013.

The main arguments of my work focus on the weaknesses of current political system that allow for flawed electoral processes, policies resembling authoritarian rule, limited freedom of expression, biased media, human rights violations and the lack of rule of law. Importantly, Mexican political arena struggles with electoral inconsistencies. Although extensive political bargaining that enhanced Mexico's democratic transition focused almost exclusively on electoral rules, the legacy of the seven decades of marriage between the single official party and the state, guaranteed by series of electoral frauds, has not disappeared since the tactics of vote buying, as well as other types of mobilisation of citizens to vote in return for concrete benefits, remain familiar to PRI's candidates.

Existing flaws became particularly evident after the 2006 elections that left only very thin margin between the winner and the loser. According to John M. Ackerman, who criticised Mexico for what he calls electoral authoritarianism, "[t]he events of 2006 demonstrate that authoritarian practices continue to be deeply ingrained in Mexico's institutions and political class," since "the authorities seemed to have done everything possible to generate suspicion about their own independence and the reliability of the electoral results." Indeed, the outcome of the 2006 presidential election led to numerous criticisms. Even scholars who defend the behaviour of the electoral authorities recognised the inconsistencies.

The 2012 presidential election was accompanied by several major irregularities that raised a new wave of suspicions and further fuelled public distrust in electoral authorities. Additionally, the victory of PRI's candidate Enrique Peña Nieto nurtured general scepticism stemming from the return of the old-new PRI that *de facto* never disappeared from the political scene and the way in which the party won the presidency. Peña Nieto's presidential campaign received accusations related to manipulated polls, vote buying and coercion, the use of resources of illicit origin for campaign financing, overshooting the maximum campaign expenditure, and the unfair support received from TV channels. Although the IFE

and the TEPJF made an effort to persuade general public about the impartiality, honesty and allegiance of the 2012 election, social network spread a great quantity of contents that implied serious irregularities.

Mexico has struggled to create efficient structures that would establish rule of law, transparency, reliable institutions, or mechanisms guaranteeing good governance. Instead, Mexico's continuing transition to democracy left a power vacuum, soon filled by growing power of organised crime. Following the 2000 regime change, the power of Mexican drug cartels continued growing, as well as their profits from illicit activities. While in the beginning organised crime focused on economic objectives, nowadays, the goal is to obtain complete freedom from government interference, through political autonomy and state reconfiguration. In certain communities, municipalities and even states, government seems to be no more governing, as the narco business expands and enters the political sphere, creating a parallel regime.

Last but not least, one of the crucial challenges to Mexico's democratisation is the pervasive socioeconomic inequality. The extreme poverty levels as well as marginality of certain communities practically exclude a large portion of Mexican citizens from the state structure, hindering their access to basic services. Importantly, large portion of marginalised population is represented by indigenous people that face discrimination in the job market and exclusion from the system, including judiciary and politics.