

The Emergence and Entrenchment of a New Political Regime in Mexico

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Abstract

Mexico in the eighties was torn between two political systems: one statist, populist, and authoritarian and the other neoliberal, technocratic, and no less authoritarian. Large and powerful business groups, both Mexican and foreign, that had adopted neoliberal dogma managed to impose the latter through the fraudulent election of Carlos Salinas de Gortari as President of the Republic in 1988. The technocracy, first under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party— PRI) and then under the Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party—PAN), became entrenched in power and did not hesitate to conduct a preemptive coup to prevent Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolution Party—PRD) from winning the presidency in 2006. The reason is not hard to understand: López Obrador represented something that the ruling class was unable and unwilling to concede: the need to dismantle the new regime and return to greater state intervention and the safeguarding of national sovereignty, especially with regard to natural resources. The dilemma of two overlapping political regimes was resolved, by trickery and fraud, in favor of neoliberal technocracy in 2000, with the victory of the right-wing PAN. The problem is that the center-left party, with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and López Obrador, does not seem up to the historic challenge that it confronts.