

## The New (dis)Order

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The traditional question that political scientists posed in decades past was who gets what, when and how. This economy-driven focus derived from the principle that economic performance (national or by region) exerted a direct impact on the perspective of the voters and allowed for the development of models of predictability of electoral behavior. Behind those models lies a premise that ceased being valid some time ago: they assume the existence of order and act under the dictum that this is permanent.

In a very distinct milieu, on being invited to attend the 1960 U.S. presidential election, Vicente Lombardo Toledano had it explained to him that for the first time in history, computers would be employed for the electoral process and that this would permit knowing the winner the afternoon of that same day. Lombardo, an old war-horse of Mexican politics, responded "That's nothing; in Mexico we known six months before". The premise was the same: the order is immanent, indisputable.

In both instances, the assumption of a permanent and predictable order has disappeared. After the financial debacle of 2008, some analysts began to speak of a "new normality", intimating that we had passed from one threshold to another, but that the new one would be sustainable, albeit, in this instance in economic terms, less benign. Everyone seeks order because it allows for stability and some degree of predictability. Individuals, families and countries crave those elements and become attached to the offerings of a semblance of order. Unfortunately, if one observes the world around us, everything suggests that we are entering into an era of disorder at the worldwide scale. Inexorably, Mexico will be part of that maelstrom, on occasion the protagonist.

The news of recent times reveals a grave deterioration of the order gestated after the Second World War and, admirably, after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Migrating hordes relentlessly accost the shores of Europe, the resurgence of nationalistic movements in France, England, the U.S. and, in general, in the greater part of the developed world, imply a rejection of the existing international order, in good measure because there exists the well-attested perception in those nations that the benefits have come to roost in other nations. Each case is distinct, but the common denominator is clearly the sensation that others are winning or, even, that they are making off with the advantages of the previous winners. This week, the U.K. is faced with a momentous decision in this matter.

The British referendum responds to a clamor, hitherto from the Left, today concentrated in the Right, for the return of decision-making faculties to the country. For many of the British, the European Union (EU) has seized too many attributions, thus depreciating the quality of life of its inhabitants; in particular, they reject two factors: freedom of transit for potential migrants who have ended up “inundating” England, one of the most attractive countries for persons fleeing their native countries due to the dynamism of the British economy and the liberal nature of its institutions. On the other hand, the powers that European judicial instances have assumed are discerned by the English as aberrant and excessive. In one way or another, these disruptive elements have eventually placed in checkmate the functionality of the economic benefits that the U.K. acquires and that, without a doubt, in objective terms, are superior to the costs. However, there are no rules that govern perceptions and believers in maleficence have been gaining ground.

The decision that the British make is theirs, but its consequences could be dramatic. Not by chance have top-level U.S. and European dignitaries, from Obama down, attempted to skew the result in favor of remaining in the EU. What is evident is that this decision could trigger a dismemberment process not only of the EU itself, but also of the entire order constructed in the Post-War era and that has done so much good for humanity in terms of economic growth, stability and peace. The Americans themselves detect that their stability, above all at such a complex electoral moment, could be harshly affected. Although distant from the European forum, we Mexicans could be severely affected by the outcome. The massacre of Orlando some days ago inevitably fortifies the hard liners, in this case Trump, as does the isolation inherent to the proponents of the so-called Brexit. This suggests that the succeeding months will be excessively risky for Mexico: every time Trump’s stock goes up, Mexico’s will be affected in the financial markets as well as in the exchange rate. And still worse, given the weakness of Mexico’s fiscal accounts, the current vulnerability is extreme.

The world of today is exceedingly convulsive and complicated; there is no way to avoid its benefits from concentrating or for its damages not to affect us. What is urgent is pragmatism; what is available is vain and rhetorical nationalism. Regrettably, as a government and a society, Mexicans have presumed that we can abstract ourselves from what is happening outside and pretending that, following worn-out dogmas, we will attain development. The ensuing months will put that premise unsparingly to the test.

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