

## **Mexico in the World**

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To announce the surrender of his government in 1945, Emperor Hirohito employed a peculiar linguistic formulation: “The war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan’s advantage”. The phrase suggests the complexity of the moment, but above all the incapacity to understand the circumstances that had led to the defeat. Mexico could easily say the same.

Mexico has advanced a great deal more than it appears at first glance: if one looks back, the magnitude of the change is impacting. Although our way of advancing is unusual (typically two steps forward and at least one step back), the advance is real. The change in Mexico has been more the product of the lack of alternatives than a faultless understanding of the time in which we are living and of the conviction of being able to emerge successful. Mexico has changed to a great degree, but that change has been unwilling and frequently reluctant.

The reform process began in the eighties in a radically different international environment from that of today. Although nobody knew it at the time, the Cold War was about to conclude and globalization released uncontrollable forces that few understood then. Today the characteristic of the world is one of growing disorder with strong centrifugal tendencies. The crisis, essentially a fiscal one, of the last years has led innumerable countries to retire into their shells.

None of that, however, changes two essential factors: one, that technology advances incessantly and that nobody can abstract themselves from it or its consequences. The other is globalization that, while subject to governmental regulations that could change, has so profoundly altered the way of producing, consuming and living that its disappearance is unthinkable. That is, however more adjustments could be wrought upon the rules of commerce and relations among countries, it is inconceivable that the world population would stop retaining instantaneous access to information and seek out and demand similarly immediate satisfiers.

Within this context, countries have no alternative than that of acting proactively in order to prepare their populations for the wave of growth that is imminent and that will be characterized by elements for which we are hardly prepared or, as a society, disposed. For example, it appears obvious that technology will continue advancing in irredentist fashion, that mass markets will no longer exist but rather increasingly

specialized (and profitable) niches and that digital commerce, which privileges knowledge and creativity above any other asset, will dominate production and, above all, the generation of added value in the future.

Beyond governments, parties or ideologies, Mexico will be required to focus on engendering conditions for it to be able to arise from its lethargy and afford opportunities to the populace that have been refused them for decades, thanks to a weak and effete system of government and an educative apparatus that favors control over the development of skills and creativity. The challenge that this entails is enormous because it concerns processes that, by definition, take decades to consolidate, implying that every day that is lost delays opportunity, something particularly worrisome given the demographic transition: if today's young people do not incorporate themselves into the knowledge economy, Mexico will end up in a few decades a nation of elderly poor.

In his inaugural address as Governor of California, Ronald Reagan said something perfectly applicable to today's Mexico: "For many years now, you and I have been shushed like children and told there are no simple answers to the complex problems which are beyond our comprehension. Well, the truth is, there are simple answers. They just are not easy ones."