

## » Mexican State's decision: a preview of the 2018 presidential elections?

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According to Lorenzo Córdova, President Advisor of the National Electoral Institute (INE), the elections held last June 4<sup>th</sup>, took place in a complex economic context, socially convulsed, politically divided and highly disenchanted with democracy<sup>1</sup>.

Although elections were held in three different states, to elect governor -Coahuila, Nayarit and State of Mexico - it was the latter that was the most interesting and had the biggest impact on public opinion, due to its historical and electoral weight.

In this context, it's worth noting that this state is one of the few that has not experienced political change. It has been governed by the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI- Partido Revolucionario Institucional) the last 88 years and has been the breeding ground for key politicians affiliated to this party. The current president Enrique Peña Nieto, forged his political career there.

Regarding the electoral register, the state has the largest number of voters nationwide: 11.4 million citizens; nevertheless it is one of the states with

smaller participation when renewing a governor. In the elections of 1999, 2005 and 2011, the average participation was at 45 percent. That is to say that less than half of the locals have chosen the last three governors; in contrast, in this last election of 2017, absenteeism decreased, achieving the participation of 52.53 percent.

This last statistic could answer to the fact that in recent years, the population of the State of Mexico has faced a complex context in which there is a deficient implementation of public policies, services, security, economy and urban planning. In this regard, the group "Mexico Evaluates" indicates that between the first quarter of 2012 and the fourth quarter of 2016, the state only grew an annual average of 2.3 percent<sup>2</sup>.

The economic stagnation has been reflected in the level of job creation. To provide all the inhabitants who are part of the labor market with a formal job, 166.600 jobs would have to be created each year; but between 2012 and 2016, only 42,164 jobs were generated annually<sup>3</sup>, while in 2016 over a 55.4 percent of the population worked in the informal sector.

These figures can be observed from the percentage of the State of Mexico citizens living in poverty: 49.6 percent<sup>4</sup>; as well as in the insecurity faced by the state, since crimes such as kidnapping, extortion, vehicle robbery and robbery with violence present higher rates than the national average<sup>5</sup>.

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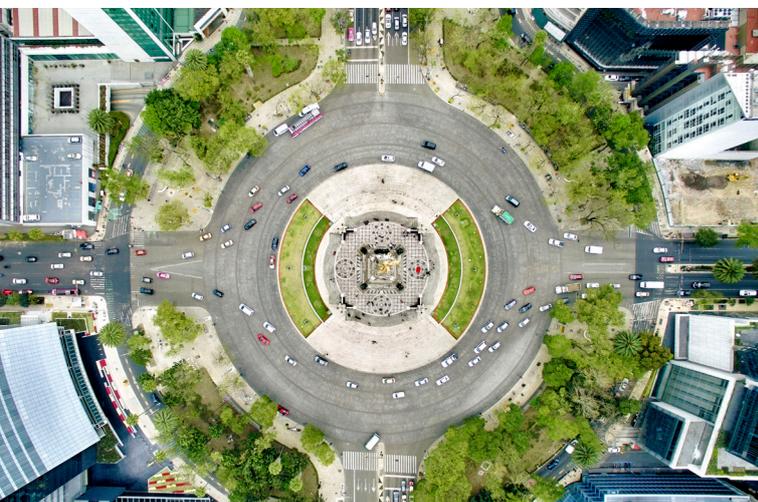
<sup>1</sup> Grupo Fórmula. México llega al 4 de junio en un contexto políticamente muy crispado: INE. May 29<sup>th</sup> 2017. <http://bit.ly/2rNxK9W>

<sup>2</sup> #FocoElectoral2017. Estado de México. México ¿Cómo vamos? April 2017.

<sup>3</sup> #FocoElectoral2017. Estado de México. México ¿Cómo vamos? April 2017.

<sup>4</sup> *El Economista*. El reto, en Edomex, de enfrentar la pobreza. Salvador Corona. April 20<sup>th</sup> 2017. <http://bit.ly/2pZBEAo>

<sup>5</sup> Observatorio Nacional Seguridad, Justicia y legalidad. Elecciones 2017. Panorama de Seguridad. Coahuila, Estado de México y Nayarit.



With these facts in the background, the candidates for governor focused their proposals on issues such as the creation of safe communities, the improvement of the rule of law, fighting corruption, creating jobs, increasing investment, reducing crime, improved public transportation, health coverage, women's empowerment, social inclusion and environmental protection.

### THE FACE TO FACE OF THE CAMPAIGN

The State of Mexico electoral process was marked by accusations and public denunciations, between the different contenders and political parties. Some claimed that their opponents exceeded the limits of public resources implemented in their campaigns; others stated that federal program resources were used to benefit the opposition candidate; others denied that nearby people were investigated by federal agencies.

In this to and fro of statements, electoral polls<sup>6</sup> in the State of Mexico were characterized by being extremely closed between the first and second place. Polls like the one in the *Diario Reforma* indicated that Alfredo del Mazo, candidate of the PRI, and Delfina Gómez, from the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA - Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional) arrived tied to the June 4<sup>th</sup> elections.

The Democratic Revolution Party (PRD - Partido de la Revolución Democrática) and the National Action Party (PAN - Partido Acción Nacional) ranked third and fourth. Juan Zepeda, candidate of the PRD, was the one who surprised during the contest since he began the campaign, being one of the least reflected in the polls, but with the passing of days, the acceptance of the PRD candidate increased considerably, having a rebound of almost 4 points in the intention of the vote. Josefina Vázquez Mota, PAN candidate, failed to connect with the electorate, and from March to the end of May, lost almost 11 points (from 25 to 14.1) to the fourth place of preference.

It is a fact that the candidates of the State of Mexico faced one of the most complex and contested electoral processes in the history of this state.

### THE RESULTS AND WHAT THEY REPRESENT FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

The Preliminary Results Program (PREP - Programa de Resultados Preliminares) indicates that Alfredo del Mazo of the PRI has 33.72 percent of votes, while his closest contender, Delfina Gómez de Morena, registers 30.82 percent.

**“The candidates of the State of Mexico faced one of the most complex and contested electoral processes in the history of this state”**

If confirmed his victory, the PRI would have won its most important bastion, but will have lost a third of its electoral support. While MORENA, being three points away of a virtual victory, became a party that—to continue this trend—would become the second national political force and one of the serious competitors to look out for at the 2018 elections.

Regarding the triumph of the PRI, analysts indicate that the party's strong vote, the one located in the rural areas and the state's capital, is the one that granted them the advantage allowing them to maintain the governorship<sup>7</sup>.

In contrast, Delfina Gómez obtained most the urban vote, that is to say, the municipalities that form the conflictive zone of the City of Mexico. In municipalities like Tultitlán, Tlalnepantla de Baz, Coacalco and Cuautitlán Izcalli, traditionally dominated by the PRI, the citizens opted for MORENA. In two of three districts of Naucalpan, municipality recognized for being PAN supporters, the candidate of MORENA came out as a winner.

In addition, votes in favor of Delfina also predominated in Valle de Chalco, Texcoco and Ecatepec, municipality from which Eruviel Ávila, the current governor, is originally from.

Faced with this scenario, columnist Raymundo Riva Palacio points out that “the electoral map of the State of Mexico showed the polarization in the center of the country, in which's megalopolis is concentrated over a 20 percent of the electorate<sup>8</sup>.”

In conclusion, the State of Mexico elections showed an accused social anger against inequality, corruption and insecurity, and despite the triumph of Alfredo del Mazo, the urban areas of the state experienced a change in voting intentions, to have chosen the MORENA candidate. So, if the State of Mexico process is a prelude to the federal elections, in 2018 we could face a new “complex economic context, socially convulsed, politically divided and disenchanted with democracy,” as Lorenzo Córdova pointed out.

<sup>6</sup> *Reforma*. Encuesta 31 de mayo de 2017. <http://bit.ly/2rntlUX>

<sup>7</sup> *Animal Político*. Ecatepec, Tlalnepantla o Tultitlán, ¿en qué zonas del Estado de México resultó ganador Morena? June 5<sup>th</sup> 2017. <http://bit.ly/2qYqDvO>

<sup>8</sup> *El Financiero*. Todo cambió en Toluca. Raymundo Riva Palacio. June 5<sup>th</sup> 2017. <http://bit.ly/2rPvka7>



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