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*The challenges in the relationship between state and nation.
The Mexican case*

Wyzwania związane z relacją: państwo-społeczeństwo. Przypadek Meksyku

ABSTRACT

Economic globalization and communication have triggered new external and internal logic in Nation States the impact of which has been differentiated across countries. In the case of Mexico, migration, indigenous group movements and organized crime are challenging the conventional relations between State and Nation. This article analyzes the way Mexico-United States migration and the demands of indigenous peoples challenge the structures of State and National identity. It describes how the war waged by the current government against organized crime is shattering state institutions. Nation, State and democracy, are facing the challenge of a spatial, symbolic and institutional reconfiguration.

Keywords: State, nation, migration, indigenous peoples, organized crime

GLOBALIZATION AND THE NEW SUPRANATIONAL
AND INTRANATIONAL PHENOMENA

Globalization, a polysemic concept for obvious reasons¹, has coined new supranational and intranational phenomena. One of the characteristics of economic and

¹ Some authors no longer speak of globalization but rather of „post-globalization” (Touraine, 2004) due to the transition of economic logic to the logic of war emerged, especially as of *September 11*. Others refer to a “de-globalization” in view of new forms of protectionism that have become hardened due to the global economic downturn.

communicational globalization is that it has triggered, for better and for worse, a new external and internal logic in national states. For this reason, the analysis of the relation between State and nation demands a new focus. Methodological nationalism, questioned by Ulrich Beck, (1998) naturalized the nation state, making this entity the unit for social analysis *par excellence*. The new configurations that have emerged show economic and cultural processes that have crossed political and symbolic boundaries, with some disappearing, others being built and no small number being hardened.

Migration, the movement of indigenous peoples and organized crime are some of the processes in Latin America and especially in Mexico that defy conventional relations between state and nation.

THE PHENOMENON OF MIGRATION AND THE RESHAPING OF SOCIETAL AREAS

Massey (2003), when analyzing the evolution of migration in the world, poses that at the beginning of the twenty-first century five migration systems can be discerned in which there is a steady population flow over time: that of North America, Western Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Asia-Pacific region and the Southern Cone in Latin America. The North American system is the most intense and migration from Mexico to the United States exhibits the greatest flow of migrants and remittances of the five systems. The explanatory theories for the phenomenon are varied and frequently complimentary².

This population movement, related to the global transformation of the productive system is generating important societal changes that touch the core of reality called the nation, as well as of the reality called democracy; because it is reconfiguring new transnational social identities, and is more and more relevantly impacting ejector and receptor societies, and is pressuring the political system.

THE TRANSNATIONAL SPACES OF MEXICAN MIGRANTS

Analysts debate old and new concepts in order to conceptualize the movement of population: migration circuits, transnational communities, transnational institutions, networks and diasporas. In the case of the Mexico-US migration there are different configurations and dynamics of these migratory circuits.

There are communities such as the municipality of Coyula in Puebla, whose way of bonding with Coyuleños on Long Island, New York, allow us to speak of a transnational

² From the theory of neoclassical economics to Massey's own theory of cumulative causation, passing through that of social capital and the segmented labor market, Wallerstein, Sassen and Morawska sustain that from the perspective of the system-world, migration is moving in the opposite direction of capital flow. Sassen considers that in the places where there are strong investments of capital new inequalities are generated which eject the population (Schuerkens, 2005.)

community (Sánchez, Ibarra, Basaldúa, Vargas, 2009). The same is true of the population of San Juan Mixtepec, (Besserer, 1998) in Oaxaca and its relations with different *sanjuanenses* settlements in Baja California and California. There are other ejector locations such as Santiago Mexquititlán, an Otomi community located to the south of the state of Queretaro where the population has migrated to various regions within the country and the United States, in a process that could be conceptualized as a diaspora (De la Peña, Martínez, 2005) There are locations like that of Tlapanalá in Puebla, where migration to New York has resulted in the structuring of transnational families that differentially impact the community. (Ibarra, Corro, Perera and Ramirez, 2005).

The aforementioned processes have been reconfiguring multiple forms of transnational identification and structuring in the communities of origin, destination, and at different points along the route. These are territorial dynamics which establish intense relationships between distant populations which transgress the set boundaries, legal but not legitimate boundaries, and build *sui generis* transnational communities whose management policy is developed in the interstices of Mexico-US policy.

There are cases of the emergence of spatial reconfigurations that tighten the relationship between localities whose populations have not gone through the national, as in the case of monolingual indigenous migrants, especially from the state of Oaxaca, who have become established in the United States without ever having been “Mexican” among other things because most do not speak Spanish (Besserer, 1998)

Mexican migrants experience the same thing Massey observed in the five systems of migration, new forms of discrimination and xenophobia related to the inability of the population of migrants to integrate culturally because the host society does not accept them, but also because they do not wish to be integrated and even rework their cultural background so as to accentuate their differences. But it also happens that migrants are members of both societies and somehow would like to belong to both. However, as Martínez Assad (2004) noted, Mexicans in the United States will always be “Mexican-Americans” and “*Agringados*” in Mexico. In short: Chicanos. The United States sends them to war as has happened in some cases and as casualties of war on being returned to their hometowns they are buried with the American flag covering their casket often triggering disputes due to this fact.

The different ways of reconfiguring the “national identity” of this population, its ambiguity in the face of U.S. citizenship and the difficult political management of this reality, challenge traditional forms of relationship between State and Nation.

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

There is no doubt that the ideology of national identity constructed by Latin American elites with emphasis on the idea of miscegenation (*mestizaje*) consolidated a latent racism which to date still lacerates Latin American societies (Gómez Izquierdo and Sánchez, 2011)

Gómez Izquierdo (2005) deepens the thesis that sustains that, in the case of Mexico, miscegenation is the racist ideological construction of national identity, which has meant that racism is not a marginal element in Mexican society, as we have been led to believe, but a structural element, a constant and pervasive phenomenon. And the same could be said of all other countries in Latin America.

The different movements of indigenous peoples that have emerged in recent decades on the subcontinent question these national identities, the symbiotic nature of the identity as dominator and dominated (Memmi, 1971) and the state scaffolding that has hosted self-denigrating, sexist and racist identities (Gómez Izquierdo and Sánchez, 2011)

The increasing self-assertion of the indigenous identity in Latin America, has been, one of the most significant human developments of recent decades. Beaucage (2011) discusses this process, from the grassroots; it has been structured both at continental meetings as well as at meetings inside the countries: The celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Columbus (1992), the marches and blockades in Ecuador (1990,1994), the Zapatista uprising (1994), the election of Evo Morales to the presidency in Bolivia in 2008. The movements have faced numerous external and internal difficulties in this effort for self-identification and self-determination (López Bárcenas, 2011) efforts which in all cases demand substantive changes in the structuring of the state and the social identities. Are we referring to nationalities, peoples or indigenous nations?

Regardless of the differences between the movements, the key has been the “defining of an identity and a proper Amerindian worldview” (Beaucage, 2011) but a modern view that assumes the ancient roots.. As Yvon Le Bot states: “On a planetary scale, in a world marked by rising anti-democratic identity claims, indigenous movements are one of the few actors that combine cultural project, social conflict and democratic aspirations” (2004).

THE ZAPATISTA UPRISING IN MEXICO

In Mexico, the Zapatista uprising on January 1st 1994 suddenly destroyed two myths: that of the benefits of neoliberalism and the Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the oldest myth, that of miscegenation, officially conceived as a national anti-racist identity resulting from the symmetrical and harmonious coordination of pre-Hispanic tradition and the European tradition. The San Andres Accords intended, perhaps for the first time in the history of Mexico, to give way to the gradual construction of a horizontal dialogue between the indigenous and non-indigenous people beginning with the structures of autonomy that would allow it. Unfortunately the Mexican government which has signed these Accords refused to recognize them³.

³ On February 16, 1996, the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional) and the federal government signed agreements on Indigenous Rights and Culture. The San Andres Accords were the

The Zapatista uprising in Chiapas made evident the historical divide that existed between state and nation in the country that the supposed national identity was able to hide.

Almost all nation states have been constructed from the hegemony of a cultural group that in a more or less consensual or violent manner imposes its imagination and practices on others. In the case of Mexico, this imposition was an enormously grating racism that was not fully recognized until a few years ago. The ideology of miscegenation, whose discourse was anti-racist did not mean the urge to merge two cultures, that of the Hispanic matrix with that of the Mesoamerican matrix symmetrically, but rather to seek, on the part of the elites, the way of distinguishing themselves, yes, from Spain initially and later from the United States, while wiping out the Indians who were considered a set-back by liberals and conservatives. Assimilationism was the preferred form of solving the “Indian problem” and segregation was the covert form (Gómez and Sánchez, 2011).

The Zapatista movement, beginning with the uprising, and later with the “Other Campaign”, has demanded recognition of indigenous peoples as subjects of public law, that is to say of people as cross-community entities, not just as local communities, and the construction of a legal multiculturalism (Gómez, 2004), not only recognition of their “customs and practices”. The movement confronts the political class as a whole and focuses on the development of another Constitution, another pact between State and Society, a radical State reform. Rejection of current military and political harassment of the Zapatista communities is due to many reasons: the wealth of natural resources of the regions currently exploited, and to be exploited by national and transnational companies, the difficulty of structuring and managing the autonomy of indigenous peoples, and racism of the ruling classes.

The racist dimension of this problem has been scarcely explored. But it seems that the dominant Creole and Mestizo identities come into crisis at the moment the Indians assert themselves as equal but different, in that they seek equality without homogenization and difference without discrimination. They come into crisis because the identities of the dominant and the dominated are symbiotic (Memmi, 1971). The Zapatista movement faced a national identity and a State which could no longer remain what they had been.

THE BUSINESS NETWORKS OF ORGANIZED CRIME

The transformation of networks of production and consumption worldwide, due, among other things, to the development of new technologies, has increased social

result of talks between the government and the EZLN, with the participation of indigenous, peasants, intellectuals, religious representatives, the media, legislators and officials. These discussions lead to an agreement on Indigenous Rights and Culture and the results were signed by the EZLN and the government on February 16 1996. In them, national laws would recognize indigenous peoples as entities of public law and would grant them their right to organize themselves autonomously. But at the end the Mexican government refused to recognize the San Andrés Accords.

polarization. The increasing exclusion of broad sectors of the population and the transnationalization of organized crime are two of the pernicious effects of this new global dynamic.

To speak of exclusion is no longer to speak of marginalization with a possible horizon of integration nor of exploitation relating to two entities: the exploiter and the exploited, it is the exclusion of production and consumption networks, to say it in the brutal manner of Zygmunt Bauman (2005), it is the production of “human waste” and of “superfluous populations”. And this exclusion has fueled the ranks of organized crime.

Organized crime became globalized creating networks of “enterprises” that link mafias from different regions and articulate the criminal economy to the formal economy through, above all, money laundering which is the core of this criminal system (Castells, 1999).

It is a system that brings together businesses of all kinds: drug production and trafficking, people smuggling and trafficking, sale of human organs, sale and trafficking in firearms, and smuggling of all kinds.

In this context, it is possible to state that the economics and politics of Latin America have changed in recent decades due to the drug industry (Castells, 1999) and that the criminal economy “represents a significant and dynamic segment of Latin American economies “(Castells, 1999: 221)

On their part the unemployed population, made up especially of young people, and due to the dynamics of exclusion referred to above, has promoted this “perverse connection” with the global economy as Castells calls the criminal economy.

THE DRUG WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN MEXICO

The Mexican case is emblematic of this process of increased embedding of the criminal economy in institutions (Hernandez, 2010) as of the second half of the twentieth century and the depredation of social life. However the war the government declared against organized crime in 2006, has resulted in institutional and social decomposition of such magnitude that even if you speak cautiously of a failed state, this scenario is not so remote and certainly is a reality in certain areas of the country such as in Ciudad Juarez.

The lack of legitimacy with which Felipe Calderon became President of the Republic⁴, led him to rely on the army and bet on the fight against drug trafficking as a form of legitimation. The poor diagnosis of reality made by authorities and the inability or lack of political will to accept the consequences of that

⁴ Calderon obtained 35.89 % of the votes and the main opponent Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador obtained 35.33%. These results were questioned by a large part of society due to the underhanded campaign waged prior to the elections and the manner in which they took place.

decision are the basis of nearly 40,000 deaths in the first four years of the current government. Institutions have weakened, social decay is growing and it is becoming increasingly difficult to envision a way out of this war that has clearly failed.

It seems the government ignores various fundamental aspects which explain the aforementioned failure:

- That the police, army and intelligence services were infiltrated by members of drug cartels (Hernandez, 2010).
- That organized crime is a network of enterprises related to banks, private companies and public institutions, Mexican and foreign, and if they did not face money laundering, the fight was lost (Buscaglia, 2011).
- That members of the political class have been linked to organized crime for many years (Hernandez, 2010).
- That the uncontrolled arms trade from the United States demanded urgent action, this traffic was recently revealed in the scandal caused by the *Fast and Furious* operation⁵.
- That the dynamics of violence and its regulation requires that it be analyzed because some studies indicated that between 1998 and 2007 there had been a reduction of such violence (Escalante, 2009).
- That among other things, unemployment had led to over 7 million young people not having any opportunity to study or work⁶.

The results of these omissions have led the country into a very critical situation. Fernando Escalante (2011) shows that in 2008-2009 killings in Mexico increased without any social logic or any prior statistical trend that could explain it. The analyst also rigorously proves that deaths increased especially in places where there have been large military and police operations: Baja California, Chihuahua, Durango, Sinaloa, Sonora, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nayarit, and Oaxaca.

Moreover, Escalante and other authors, suggest that the actor of that war are not just the cartels, nor is the issue only drug related. Faced with homicides and forced disappearances of a large number of human rights defenders and decisive journalists, of migrants and young people in drug rehabilitation centers, Steinsleger suggests that several wars are taking place simultaneously: against drug trafficking, of counterinsurgency and social cleansing, and perhaps the most serious issue is that faced with impunity, murder has become irrelevant.

⁵ „Operation Fast and Furious” allowed the trafficking of over 2000 weapons for 15 months in 2009 and 2010 so they would reach the cartels and supposedly they could then be detected. The operation was carried out with permission from the authorities at the highest levels of American government, and without the Mexican authorities’ knowledge.

⁶ Statement made by the President of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

NATION, STATE AND DEMOCRACY FACED WITH NEW CHALLENGES

The nation has been, among other things, a symbolic construction anchored in a territory that has made sense of the everyday lives of citizens regardless of class contradictions. It has justified waging war on the “others” and has fed the belief that the inhabitants of this territory have a common origin and destiny. This cultural homogeneity built at the expense of otherness and internal antagonisms is suffering fractures which are probably irreversible.

Democracy, meanwhile, is conceived by some authors as „a grammar for organizing society and the relationship between state and society” (de Sousa Santos, 2004: 45) of which the representative capacity involves the following three dimensions: authorization, identity and accountability (De Sousa Santos, 2004: 44) and it is being challenged by the new global dynamic. Nation and democracy are a new institutional engineering that is linked to intercultural dialogue, because, as Touraine (1998), would say: that which makes politics democratic is to enable dialogue between cultures, and this is what makes a nation viable.

In the new context of virtual and population flows, and of movements with collective identities that demand recognition, nation and democracy face the challenge of a spatial, symbolic and institutional reconfiguration.

The reconfiguration of space is a challenge because, in the case of migrants, a strong relationship is being built between distant populations that as has been said transgress established boundaries, and because relatively autonomous communities are being built, as in the case of indigenous peoples, within nation states.

The symbolic reconfiguration is a challenge because the new realities are leading to an interaction and a conflict that did not exist before between world views, meanings and lifestyles, or that existed, but was covered up and repressed.

To the spatial and symbolic reconfiguration is added institutional reform as a challenge to the nation and democracy, because the traditional forms of political regulation are facing many difficulties in the areas of migration processes (and in general in transnational dynamics) and internal group restructuring. Immigration agreements are evaded because they are not politically popular among the voters of the host societies, but unofficially a quota of migrants is accepted because cheap labor is needed for thankless tasks that no one wants to do. Sending countries such as Mexico have remittances as one of its main sources of income; recipient countries like the United States increase their GDP by exploiting allowing illegal workers. And transnational networks are consolidated in spite of retaining walls such as that of the Rio Bravo and, despite the ill treatment Central American migrants are subjected to at the Mexican border.

In the domestic Mexican context, the “other campaign” that was launched by the EZLN focuses on the construction of a new constitutionality and new relations between State and Nation. Both in the case of migratory processes and in the movements of indigenous peoples what is mentioned by Wiewiorka (2003), appears, this

is a cultural affirmation momentum with two somehow simultaneous logics, the logic of reproduction and resistance, and the logic of invention or production of difference.

And the mandatory questions are: What relationships do new transnational identities and new intranational identities being constructed have with the “nation”. What does the nation mean as the symbolic construction capable of mobilizing the energies of a collectivity to a population that has been expelled from its country and is rejected by the country in which it arrives, as is the case of the migrants? What does the nation mean for the indigenous population that has always been discriminated against and is mobilized proposing a reconfiguration of the State and the nationalities? In what way are exploitation and exclusion juxtaposed and transnationalized reconfiguring class structure? What does democracy mean in this case and for populations located in two or more different national states? What does democracy mean in the face of the demands of collective groups for acknowledgment as differentiated subjects of law?

THE INFORMAL STATE AND THE POLITICAL CLASS IN MEXICO

But something very important in the case of Mexico, is that the insertion in the dynamics of neoliberal globalization, which tied governments to market forces controlled by corporations and which somehow defeated society (Zermeño, 1996) made it more evident that in Mexico, the state and the nation functioned by linking a formal state, with liberal-democratic laws and an informal corporatist *cacique*-influenced state, both articulated together by institutionalized mechanisms of illegal reciprocities legitimized by a political culture of patronage. All of this underlies the dynamics of organized crime and impunity.

In recent decades the political class has increasingly alienated the citizenry, a citizenry that still retains an imaginary component as in the nineteenth century (Escalante, 1999) and on the other hand when this citizenry comes together, forcefully demanding decisive changes to the inequalities, impunity, and discrimination, it suffers violent forms of repression as seen in Oaxaca, Atenco, Chiapas and Puebla. Seeking justice for the murder of children or siblings can become a death sentence as has recently been the case⁷. And if the citizens demanding justice do not suffer repression, then they are simply ignored as in the case of victims of the fire at the ABC daycare center in Hermosillo (Osorno, 2010), or the explosion in the Pasta de Conchos mine in 2006.

⁷ Marisela Escobedo was murdered in 2010 for demanding justice in the murder of her daughter. Six members of the Reyes Salazar family in Ciudad Juárez, human rights activists were murdered between 2008 and 2011. Surviving family members have left Ciudad Juárez and are living in a safe place.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

If democracy in Latin America seems to have been sentenced to „navigating through commitments and uncertainties, and to being resigned to sanctioning the unbridgeable distance between the social and political spheres” (Pécaut, 1989:135) the impact of the new faces of poverty, increasing migration and the attempt to suppress it, indigenous group movements and actions of organized crime modify the geometry of the commitments and uncertainties, and challenge one to elucidate the characteristics of the distance between the transnational social sphere today, and the political sphere which is more limited than before due to market forces and more separated from the social basis.

Perhaps, as Pécaut suggests, it is necessary to recognize other forms of partial and local citizenship, and to provide greater legitimacy to various social actors, or perhaps we should try harder to „find overlapping participatory traditions in the process of homogenous national identity construction „as suggested by De Sousa Santos (2004:48) or to engage in the consolidation and articulation of increasingly large niches of empowerment, ownership and resistance (Sánchez and Almeida, 2005).

The new social grammar, the different perspectives of the debate about: representative, participatory, deliberative and inclusive, democracy (Maíz, 2004) the possibilities of articulating electoral issues with the construction of a public space for debate and with the decrease of the distance between the representatives and those represented (Pécaut, 1989) are challenged by the time-space compression characteristic of globalization, by the effervescence of new social identities, by the weight of existing institutions, and in the case of Mexico by the irresponsible war on drugs launched in 2006.

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ABSTRAKT

Ekonomiczny i komunikacyjny wymiar globalizacji wywołały przemiany logiki wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej aktywności współczesnych państw, których skutki różnią się w poszczególnych państwach. W przypadku Meksyku migracje, ruchy społeczne reprezentujące rdzenną ludność i przestępczość zorganizowana podważają klasyczne relacje między państwem i społeczeństwem. Autorka tekstu analizuje, w jaki sposób zjawiska te wpływają na struktury państwa i tożsamość narodową. Omówiony jest też proces rozpadu instytucji państwa w wyniku wojny wytoczonej przez rząd Meksyku przestępczości zorganizowanej. Państwo, społeczeństwo i demokracja – wszystkie stają w obliczu przestrzennych, symbolicznych i instytucjonalnych rekonfiguracji.

Słowa kluczowe: państwo, społeczeństwo, migracje, rdzenna ludność, przestępczość zorganizowana

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Initiator in 1973 of a process of social and intercultural transformation in the *Sierra Norte de Puebla* (Puebla's Northern Mountain Range) in Mexico. Lived and worked in this indigenous region for 15 years. Initiator and Coordinator of the *Cátedra Alain Touraine* at the Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla.

Has published several books and numerous articles in national and international publications.

In 2006 she was decorated with the Academic Palms, on behalf of the Government of France.