

Corruption in Mexico: A Historical Legacy

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ABSTRACT

Among the many consequences of colonialism that are still present in post-colonial societies are corruption and the lack of strong institutions to fight against this phenomenon. What used to be unequal power relations between the colonizers and the colonies have been replaced by the dominance of the local elites over ordinary citizens, who have practically given the former a lot of leeway to commit acts of corruption with a sense of impunity and without regard for accountability. One case in point is Mexico which, in recent times, has made international news headlines because of incidences of drug trafficking, violence, and corruption in the country. This article delineates the historical relationship between corruption and colonialism, and how these forces have shaped Mexican culture. The discussion tackles the presence of corruption since the colonial times to the present. Specifically, it starts with an analysis of the role of colonialism in the incidence of corruption. Secondly, it describes the discrepancy between the law and its application, from the arrival of the Spanish colonizers to the present. Finally, it examines the cultural, educational, and social challenges that should be addressed in order to surmount the colonial legacies that breed corruption.

Keywords: Corruption, colonialism, Mexico, elites, culture

In recent years, Mexico has been in the headlines of the national and international media because of cases of corruption, extortion, and embezzlement involving politicians, judges, police officers, teachers, and priests. The pandemic of corruption in this country has become a main concern not only of its citizens, who have demanded action against corruption, but also of international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organization of American States (OEA), and Transparency International (TI). The term corruption here is taken as the abuse of public power for private purposes. This definition assumes the distinction between public and private roles. In many societies, the distinction is not clear, and it seems natural to give some gifts in exchange for assigning contracts and jobs (Rose-Ackerman, 1999).

The concern over corruption in the country is understandable given that in 2011, Mexico ranked 100th among 182 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index published annually by Transparency International. Specifically, Mexico scored 3 on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is equivalent to highly corrupt and 10, to highly clean (TI, 2011). Moreover, in its Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013, the World Economic Forum (WEF) identified corruption, crime and theft, and inefficient government bureaucracy as the three most problematic factors for doing business in Mexico (WEF, 2012).

These data indicate that Mexico still has a long way to go when it comes to good governance, high transparency and accountability, and efficient anticorruption programs. The term governance is understood according to Kaufmann's definition: "as the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them" (Kaufmann, 2009, pp. 5-6).

Understanding the situation in Mexico is a complex phenomenon and requires looking into historical factors that date back to colonial rule. In this context, the aim of this article is to delineate the historical co-variance between corruption and colonialism in Mexican culture. The article starts with an analysis of the role of colonialism in fomenting corruption. Secondly, it describes gaps in the implementation of the law since the arrival of the Spanish colonizers to the present. Finally, it examines the political, cultural, and social challenges that should be addressed in order to surmount the colonial legacies that breed corruption.

Loomba (1998) defines colonialism as one country's takeover of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labor, and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation. Meanwhile, for Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998), colonialism is an international system of economic exploitation in which more powerful nations dominate weaker ones. Colonialism, therefore, is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over a territory beyond its borders by the establishment of either settler colonies or administrative dependencies in which indigenous or local populations are directly ruled or displaced. Colonizing nations generally dominate the resources, labor, and markets of the colonial territory, and may also impose sociocultural, religious, and linguistic structures on the conquered population (Faruque, 2008).

Colonialism was not only the vehicle for the export of Western technologies and ideas; it was also the channel to export administrative and governmental structures (Loomba, 1998). Thus, colonialism exported political structures in the administration and management of public and economic affairs, as well as practices in the management of financial resources. One of these practices was using corruption as a way to rule and control colonial territories.

Mulinge and Lesetedi (1998) point out that colonizers used corruption as a tool to subdue and control colonized people mainly through two methods: by the practice of divide and rule, and by allowing local tax collectors to abuse the system to amass private wealth. The practice of divide and rule entailed

favouring one tribe over others with the dual objective of securing the loyalty of a particular group or tribe to the colonial administration and encouraging rivalry between different tribes as a strategy of preventing the development of a sense of unity among them which could threaten colonial rule (...) The groups that enjoy a privileged status in the colonial administration were rewarded with easy access to Western (missionary) education and government sponsored economic opportunities. (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 1998, pp. 19-20)

On the other hand, the financial gains accruing from the amount pocketed from taxes transformed chiefs and local leaders into willing agents of colonialism and blinded them to the plight of their people as a consequence of taxation:

For the collection of taxes, the colonial governments mostly relied on local leaders especially chiefs. When chiefs did not exist or were un-cooperative, new ones were appointed by the colonial powers. Above all, to motivate chiefs to generate as much tax revenue as possible, and do so with zeal, the colonial administrations allowed them to retain a part of it. The practice of rewarding tax collectors became a principal method for the accumulation of private property, a way of life that was hard to give up which encouraged chiefs to abuse their office. In this way colonial chiefs were implicitly encouraged to use their positions to amass wealth and demonstrate thereby that it paid to cooperate with Europeans. (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 1998, p. 19)

In light of this colonial practice, it becomes apparent why Angeles and Neanidis (2010) have argued that the co-relationship between the colonial experience and current corruption levels is straightforward. According to them, "corruption will be highest in societies where the elite are powerful and have little regard for the well-being of the rest of the population" (p. 7). This implies that members of the elite could, if they wanted to, embezzle funds without much fear of punishment and with little remorse for doing so.

Angeles and Neandis' argument is illustrated in the *encomienda* system that the Spanish colonizers implemented in Mexico. The *encomienda* is a labor system that was employed mainly by the Spanish Crown during the colonial rule. The Crown granted a number of indigenous people to a Spanish colonizer in order to instruct them in the Spanish language and Catholicism. The colonizer received in return a tribute in the form of labor, gold, animals, and agricultural products from indigenous people (Keen & Haynes, 2008). This system resulted in serious administrative abuses that led to not only the inhuman treatment of indigenous workers, but also to embezzlement of resources by the local elite. Worse, the local elite were able to ward off the Spaniards' attempts at reforming the system. As Angeles and Neandis (2010) note:

The *encomienda* system granted its beneficiaries the right to extract tribute – usually under the form of labour – from the Indian population of a given region. An *encomienda* was a highly-sought reward for the early conquistadors of the Aztec and Inca empires. The large abuses to which the system gave place led the Crown to attempt its regulation and demise from the early days of the Spanish Empire. A first attempt, the Laws of Burgos (1512) regulated the treatment of Indian workers and was largely ignored. A second, more forceful attempt came in 1542 with the approval of the New Laws of the Indies. These laws prohibited the enslavement of Indians, regulated tribute and declared that existing *encomiendas* would pass to the Crown at the death of the holder. The ensuing protests and revolts forced the Crown to retreat and pursue a less ambitious target. *Encomiendas* continued to operate for some time and eventually mutated into the large *haciendas* that characterize much of Latin America up to the present. (Angeles & Neandis, 2010, p. 6)

In these *encomiendas* and *haciendas* the most serious offenders were the *capataces* and *patrones-bosses*. *Haciendas* were an eighteenth-century system of large landholdings which were allocated for plantations, mines, and factories. The *capataces* were people who were in charge of ruling and ensuring that workers carried out their work in accordance with their instruction. They were also the managers of the *hacienda*. The *capataces* engaged in authoritarian practices with an almost complete lack of respect for the law. The *hacendados* or *patrones* were the owners of *haciendas*, and the indigenous people worked as *peones* on a land that belonged to the patron. The *peones* received the right to live and work in a small parcel of land belonging to the patron, and in return they had to work for life for their masters (Keen & Haynes, 2008).

Ferguson (2011) further argues that since the arrival of Spanish conquerors in Latin America, land, wealth, and political representation have been controlled by a tiny elite. Under the *encomienda* system, the Spanish elite gained the right to exploit

labour for the Crown; in the haciendas, they acquired the right to own land and control labor:

In Spanish America it was the right to exploit the indigenous people that were granted to a tiny elite. Previously, they had worked for the Inca Emperor under the *mita* system. Now their lot was to work for the Spaniards. It was essentially a tribute system and tribute took the form of toil (...) This system changed only slightly with the introduction in 1542 of the *repartimiento de labor*, which imposed royal control over the allocation of native labour in response to reports of abuse by the *encomenderos* (...) *Encomiendas* were not granted in perpetuity to a man and his heirs; under Castilian law, the land on which they stood remained the property of the Crown; they were not even supposed to be fenced. Only slowly did they evolve into hereditary haciendas. But the ultimate result was that the conquistador class became the idle rich of America. (Ferguson, 2011, p. 113)

The legacies of Latin American colonialism still persist as, according to Ferguson (2011), conflicts in this region continue to revolve around two issues: land and democracy. “Time and again, democratic experiments failed because, at the first sign that they might be expropriated, the wealthy elites turned to a uniformed *caudillo* to restore the status quo by violence (...) in Latin America constitutions are used as instruments to subvert the rule of law itself” (Ferguson, 2011, p. 128).

In this context, corruption, authoritarianism, lack of respect for the law, embezzlement, and manipulation of the law permeate all institutions and administrative procedures of the colonial government, creating a new society with a political culture highly susceptible to, and tolerant of, corruption. Political culture here is defined in terms of Almond and Verba (1965), that which “refers to the specifically political orientations of attitudes towards the political system and its various components, as the attitudes of the role of individuals in the system (...) the set of ideas, feelings and political assessments internalized by a population” (pp. 12-13). This definition is relevant to this study to the extent that it takes into account the guidelines and structures of the political system and the role of institutions and political actors in shaping their own cultural perceptions.

CORRUPTION AS A HISTORICAL LEGACY

The phenomenon of corruption in Mexico is rooted in colonialism. The study of corruption in Mexico is a complex and polemic subject. This article, thus, limits the discussion to the traditional-modern culture clash framework, as this perspective allows analyzing corruption vis-à-vis the impact of colonialism in Mexican society. The analysis of corruption views the phenomenon as a historical legacy of the

colonial state, which offers an important insight on how citizens embodied the rule of law and dealt with institutions and their representatives.

It is necessary to mention that there are some empirical studies on corruption that regard colonialism as an independent variable – that is, colonialism as the main root of the decline of traditional societies (e.g., Treisman, 2000) – and the process of colonization as the direct and formal political acquisition of states or territory in the periphery (Boswell, 1989). This perspective of colonialism subscribes to the view that there is a hierarchical organization that has monopolistic privileges over peripheral land, labor, production, or trade (Boswell, 1989). This perspective also explores the condition of underdevelopment in colonized societies, through the economic, political and, perhaps most critically, psychological constraints, that served to produce social and economic underdevelopment (Abdullah, 2002). Consistent with this perspective, this article endorses the idea that colonialism is the root of corruption in Mexico. Consequently, the article presents some reflections about colonialism and how it informed the development of corruption in Mexico.

Colonialism is an important period in Mexico's history. It marks the decline of the pre-Hispanic societies and the rise of various issues, among them corruption. This phenomenon played different roles in colonial Mexican society. According to Guillermo Marín (2001), corruption was a strategy of cultural resistance, a product of the clash between the two types of "Mexicos": the "Mexico profundo," and the "Mexico imaginario." The former emanated from the indigenous people and their own vision of a traditional world, and the latter was formed by *mestizos*, people with Spanish and indigenous descendants, who yearned to have the same European model of civilization in Mexican territory.

The clash between the two "Mexicos" contrasts with the situation found in noncolonized countries, whose laws, institutions and authorities, without being immune from corruption, are the product of a homogenous project of development, sharing the same historical, economic, and social model. On the other hand, Mexico, as a colonized country, presented different values and projects of development. Each "Mexico" had its own values and concepts of respect for the law (Marín, 2001) and project of nation. Stated in another way, it could be argued that the lack of coherence between the law and its implementation was the result of a collision between different projects of development reflected on laws, institutions, constitutions, and construction of a national model. As Revueltas (1996) points out:

The lack of adherence to the law is the result of two projects: modernity and tradition (...) we must not forget that behind the modern image of the Mexico civilised, it was an asymmetrical relationship of domination and subordination

which was imposed to the traditional society based on the ancient Mesoamerican civilizations. Therefore, there was a conflict between two value systems and behaviours: the traditional and the modern based on the Western modernity. (Revueltas, 1996, p. 253)

In this situation of conflict, corruption became the rule, and the application of the law, the exception. The colonial administration ushered in a new way of exercising power through the use of corruption. According to the historian Enrique Semo (2000), the colonial period (1521-1821) entrenched corruption into the public institutions, as the colonial administration resorted to selling public offices in the New Spain, from the lowest to the highest public positions:

The practice of selling public offices was common in the Colonial times. Selling only lower positions of the government did not represent too much risk, but under pressure from their voracious needs, the Crown began in 1633 to include treasury functions, court hearings, as well as the posts of magistrates and mayors. There are even reports that on an occasion the post of Viceroy was sold (...) the public positions became private investments and the beneficiary had the right to expect that the investment produced a profit: wealth, influence and power. Especially, if we remember that the Crown paid only small salaries which did not cover the real costs of the work. (Semo, 2000, p. 70)

Thus, Semo believes that corruption was born in the modern group or modern Spanish elite, gradually spreading from the public institutions, political elite, and religious representatives to the rest of society, until it became a systemic form of transgression of the law.

The corruption introduced by the colonizers into Mexican traditional society became a new language for the indigenous people, who eventually learned how to cope with the situation by pretending that nothing was happening. This has had serious repercussions on Mexican society, as Octavio Paz (1985), in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, says:

The Mexican excels at the dissimulation of his passions and himself. He is afraid of others' looks (...) perhaps our habit of dissimulating originated in Colonial times (...) The colonial world has disappeared, but not the fear, the mistrust, the suspicion. And now we disguise not only our anger but also our tenderness. When our country people beg one's pardon, they say: "Pretend it never happened, señor." (Paz, 1985, pp. 42-43)

Frédérique Langué (1993) shares Paz's view. He argues that the colonial rule was crucial in shaping the Mexicans' tolerance of corruption. More significantly, he links

the development of Mexico's political institutions to various relations of patronage such as nepotism,¹ clientelism,² parenthood,³ patrimonialism,⁴ and caciques⁵ (Langue, 1993, pp. 123-139). As a result, the distance between the law and its application vanished into personal relationships among political elites.⁶ The exchange of illegal favors among colonial elites was part of the political language, and it is a practice that, according to Paz, persists until today:

Each of the new nation had, the day of the independence, a constitution more or less (usually less than more) liberal and democratic principles. In Europe and the United States, these laws were a historical reality. They were the expression of the rise of a bourgeoisie, the result of the industrial revolution and the destruction of the old regime. In Latin America, the laws only served to dress with a modern fashion the vestiges of the colonial system. (Paz, 1979, p. 60)

The end of colonialism in Mexico and the arrival of independence on September 16, 1810, and the following historical periods such as the revolution in 1910 and the postrevolutionary regime headed by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), did not reduce corrupt practices. In fact, the opposite occurred: the post-revolutionary regime promoted corruption as a tool of governance among the political elite. The words of General Obregon (1880-1928) are well known: "No general can resist a 50,000-peso cannon blast." By the same token, Carlos Hank Gonzalez (1927-2001), nicknamed "the professor," coined a political phrase: "A politician who is poor is a poor politician."

In Mexican society, corruption is often referred to as the *mordida*, which, according to Zaid (1979, p. 181) is "a personal payment" to whomever holds an official position for a service, which involves avoiding law enforcement. Zaid (1979) adds that the *mordida* has its own structure: on the one hand, there is a person who pays a bribe, and, on the other hand, another person who receives the bribe.

When a *mordida* is negotiated, it is necessary to use Mexican cultural codes to make it appear that the bribery is a "favor" from the police officer who is willing to forget the infraction, in exchange for a token of appreciation. The *mordida* is widely practised in Mexican society, and this is perhaps one of the reasons why respect for the police in the country is so low. Furthermore, the *mordida* is assumed as a compromise between the representative of the law and the citizens, a means of avoiding the law and getting things done quickly. The *mordida* is deeply entrenched in Mexican society. According to Riding (1985), children observe the giving and receiving of *mordidas* to police officers, teachers, doctors, and other authority figures.

In this sense, children develop admiration for those who get rich easily and without a lot of effort.

The Mexicans' sentiments about corruption are more complex than they seem to be at first glance. On one hand, some people accept it as a measure to speed up administrative, legal or economic procedures, or to avoid the costs of the law. On the other hand, others refuse it as they recognize corruption's perverse effects on the whole society. While public opinion is divided over corruption, however, the benefits that it brings to the bureaucracy and the powerful elites cannot be denied. In fact, a survey carried out by the magazine *Este país* shows that 48% of people interviewed were inclined to tolerate corruption as long as government employees use the "fruits" of their corruption to do "good things" for the people (*Este país*, 2003, p. 16). Similar results were obtained by the more recent National Survey about Political Culture and Citizen Practices (ENCUP, 2012) conducted by the Ministry of Interior. This survey found that 70% of Mexicans "extremely agree" or "agree" that officials could steal, as long as they distribute their earnings to the wider society.

These contemporary views about corruption are perhaps reflective of how the postrevolutionary government, political and social institutions, and political elite, namely the "revolutionary family," have dealt with corruption. The postrevolutionary system headed by the PRI (1929-2000) and the extra constitutional powers in the hands of the president of the country, as well as the corporatist structure constituted through the National Peasant Confederation (Confederación Nacional Campesina, CNC), the Confederation of Mexican Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos, CTM) and the National Confederation of the Popular Organizations (Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares, CNOP) served as the main engines to forge political alliances, maintain trade union leaders, promote or ruin political careers, and buy loyalties and disempowered opponents (Morris, 1992). For Riding (1985), the corruption during the post-revolutionary system was "the oil that moved the wheels of the Mexican political system." Even more, the corruption was a *modus operandi* of the regime, in which political positions were seen as an opportunity to create personal wealth.

As such, the postrevolutionary system continued reproducing a clientelistic political culture based on interpersonal relations inherited from colonial rule, such as nepotism. The power of the caciques or political bosses in the postrevolutionary regime comes from different sources: from leadership of syndicates, farmers, party political leaders, and entrepreneurs. As argued by Knight and Pansters (2005), the

peculiarities of the Mexican system have greatly depended on this form of informal politics, which combines repression, patronage, and charismatic leadership. The cacique has survived from the prehispanic times to the colony and from the revolution to the contemporary system. This figure has evolved and transformed according to our time (Knight & Pansters, 2005).

FUTURE CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME COLONIAL LEGACIES

In July 2000, Mexico began a new chapter in its political life with the assumption of Vicente Fox to the presidency, putting an end to the 71-year rule of the PRI. This event marked a new process in the path of the democratic transition, which refers to the dismissal of an authoritarian regime and the creation or establishment of a new democratic regime. “We understand the transition as an interval between one political regime and another (...) The transitions are defined, on one hand, by the beginning of a process of dissolution of the authoritarian regime, on another hand, by the establishment of a democratic shape, the return to authoritarianism or the appearance of a revolutionary alternative” (O’Donnell & Schmitt, 1986, p. 6).

Many important changes in the Mexican political system have recently been implemented, such as creating a multiparty system in Congress, giving a more active role to the legislative Chamber of Deputies and Senate, empowering local authorities and electoral representatives, and launching anticorruption campaigns.

The incidence of corruption, however, remains high, and elites from all political parties have been involved in bribes and embezzlement of public funds. For instance, the main political parties have been accused of corrupt practices. In March 2004, the ex-leader of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) identified with the left side, René Bejarano Martínez, was filmed together with the ex-president of the Federal District Legislative Assembly (ALDF) and along with the ex-secretary of Finance for Mexico City, Gustavo Ponce, pocketing bundles of bills given by the Argentinean entrepreneur, Carlos Ahumada, to use for betting in a casino in Las Vegas in the United States (Llanos & Romero, 2004). Similarly, the ex-president of Mexico, Vicente Fox Quesada (2000-2006), from the National Action Party (PAN) and identified with the right wing, was accused of nepotism after his stepsons Manuel and Jorge Bribiesca Sahagún used their stepfather’s position to relinquish properties from householders and peasants to build luxurious resorts (Alvarez, 2009). Another case of nepotism during Fox’s administration was his alleged participation in the allocation of contracts of the public enterprise Petroleum Mexicans (Petróleos Mexicanos –Pemex), for almost 87 million dollars, to the company *Oceanographic*, a property of Fox’s stepsons Manuel and Jorge Bribiesca

Sahagún (Saldierna, 2007). The leader of the Green Party, Emilio González Martínez, was also reportedly involved in corruption when he negotiated some building construction licenses in ecological reserves in Cancún, southern Mexico (Ramos, 2004).

Nevertheless, most of Mexico's politicians use the anticorruption platform as a way to gain legitimacy and distinguish themselves from their predecessors. For example, Mexico's current president (since July 2012) Enrique Peña Nieto, who belongs to the PRI, promised during his political campaign to fight against corruption. Upon his assumption to the national presidency, he launched an anticorruption program (Pacheco, 2012). Anticorruption initiatives, however, have become a staple each time there is a change of president in the country. Sadly, all of them have not been able to address the root of corruption: the political establishment and the way politics is practised in the country. Various administrations have only managed minimal efforts towards building a solid state based on the rule of law. In Peña Nieto's case, his efforts to fight corruption have already been compromised by his own corrupt practices, such as granting billions worth of public contracts allegedly to his friends and promoting nepotism (Vera, 2012).

Anticorruption campaigns launched by the main political parties, before and after the democratic transition – before the arrival of the PAN in 2000, to the national presidency, and after the PAN lost the executive power in 2012 – have not eliminated or reduced corruption. The phantom from the colonial legacy still holds its niche in contemporary Mexican politics. Corruption, clientelism, nepotism, and caciques continue to be part of the political culture. Corruption is still present both in the *savoir faire* of the political elites and in the *savoir tolerate* of the wider Mexican society. Despite strong anticorruption campaigns launched by international organizations such as Transparency International, and counterpart efforts of the national government, Mexicans continue to be distrustful of their political institutions.

One survey on political culture in Mexico has found that among the different political institutions, the Catholic Church holds the highest confidence rating among Mexicans. It obtained a confidence score of 5.4 on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means the lowest level of trust and 7, the highest one. Ranking second in public confidence is the army, which obtained a confidence score of 5.3. The institutions with lower levels of trust are the Supreme Court of Justice, 4.0; political parties, 3.6; and the police, 3.3, (Parás, Coleman, Seligson, López, Estrada, & Coronel, 2006, p. 97). In terms of democracy and respect for the rule of law, the same survey found that less than 1.5% of the respondents considered that respecting the law is part of

the norms of democracy. Moreover, while 27.5% considered freedom of expression the main characteristic defining democracy, only 2% included “justice” as part of a democratic system (Parás, Coleman, Seligson, López, Estrada, & Coronel, 2006, p. 40).

On a positive note, a study carried out by the Latinbarómetro (2010) found that 32% of the Mexican population feel that there has been progress in reducing corruption in public institutions and in the overall fight against corruption, even if the achievements are not so evident.

Indeed, there have been some serious initiatives to fight corruption, which include the creation of the Ministry for the Public Function (SFP) that is responsible for accountability and transparency in the use of public funds, the implementation of the federal law for budget and tax responsibility through the Ministry of the Revenues and Public Credit (SHCP), the passage of laws against corruption inside the Supreme Court, the creation of the Permanent Commission against Corruption inside the Legislative House, and the implementation of the electronic system of governmental purchases (*compranet*). At the international level, Mexico has signed many agreements to fight against corruption in partnership with the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the OEA, and the OECD as its most important partners.

However, the presence of corruption does not seem to have diminished, and the legacy of the colonial past is still present in the practice of politics based on nepotism, clientelism, and sale of political positions. The legacies of Mexico's historical past are multiple and they remain strong at present. Corruption has been intensified by other global phenomena such as organized crime, drug trafficking, illicit goods trade, terrorism, and illegal migration. Social peace, security, justice, transparency, and accountability are now more than ever priorities, as they are necessary conditions to be able to consolidate democracy in a country where democracy is limited by social inequality, illiteracy, ethnicity, corruption, impunity and lack of trust in the judiciary system.

In this context, it is necessary to create a national project that shares the same vision about justice, respect of law, and ethical principles. Mestizos and indigenous people need to adopt a new attitude that condemns corruption and endorses values of accountability, social responsibility, and transparency.

Mexico's development is based on its capacity to reconcile its historical past with the present and on its ability to implement anticorruption reforms in a society in which political elites and citizens do not have the same respect for law. The

country needs to end the permissive political culture of corruption, clientelism, and exclusion of indigenous people. Corruption and illicit forms of enrichment must be condemned. Negative cultural values inherited from colonialism must be changed. Only then can the country strengthen its democratic institutions.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Nepotism is the preference to give public posts to close friends or relatives without taking into account their professional skills and education. The allocation of posts is given on the grounds of loyalty or for a personal favor (Mény, 1992).
- ² Clientelism is a political practice that consists of creating bonds of mutual and unequal dependency (...) the boss does a favour in exchange of services from the part of the client (sometimes in exchange of votes but there are many kind of services that the client can provide to the boss). The services can be done through discretionary decisions in profit to the clients (Mény, 1997, p. 2).
- ³ Parenthood surged as a Catholic requirement set out in the canonical right which gives a child during a ceremony a spiritual director who will serve as a father in his Christian formation. Through this ceremony, a kind of relationship is created among parents and godfathers; this relationship is called co-parenthood. Briefly, this relationship is a religious engagement and is associated with ritual parenthood. This relation can be used to reinforce social and political links within the Latin American political class (Lewis, 1951).
- ⁴ Patrimonialism is a form of governance in which all power flows directly from the leader who holds absolute personal power (Rivelois, 1999).
- ⁵ Caciquism is a form of power exercised by people who are vested with two powers: one territorial and another moral. Territorial power is limited in a region, and moral power is granted by the respect given to the cacique by the people. The exercise of moral power is characterized by authoritarian and clientist schemes (Guerra, 1992, p. 181).
- ⁶ The concept of elite is defined as a group of people with a privileged position inside the political, military, economic, and cultural structure. The decisions of this group of people have very important consequences for the rest of the society (Mills, 1956, pp. 11-12).

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