



PRESENTATION

In 1997, Dr. Emilio O. Rabasa (†), member of the Legal Research Institute of the Autonomous University of Mexico (IIJ-UNAM), coordinated the preparation of a text, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the 1917 Mexican Constitution. For that purpose, he welcomed contributions from twenty jurists, both researchers and teachers, in different professional fields such as the judiciary, politics, academia, international relations and law. Their contributions were grouped into four topics: Human Rights, Social Reform, Political Reform, and International Affairs Reform. Deputy Rafael Ocegüera Ramos, Chairman of the Library and Information Commission in 1998 wrote a foreword to the text and the 57th Legislature of the Chamber of Deputies and the Legal Research Institute of UNAM jointly published 2,000 copies of it, under the title: “Eighty years of constitutional life in Mexico” with a cover page by Saturnino Herrán, labeled “Alegoría del trabajo 1910-1911” (Allegory of work 1910-1911).

I was invited to contribute with the theme “Political-electoral constitutional reforms” under the topic of Political Reform.

My text gave an account of all the political and electoral reforms carried out by making changes and/or additions to our Magna Carta beginning with the one on granting suffrage to women presented by President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines in 1953 up to the initiative of President Ernesto Zedillo in 1996.

The reforms were classified under two headings: 1) Partial electoral reforms because they included a single theme of constitutional change such as votes for women (1953), party deputies (1963), votes for 18-year olds (1969) and passive political rights (1972); and 2) comprehensive reforms which, because included

different themes such as the new composition of national representation, first in the Chamber of Deputies and then in the Senate, a new paradigm for political parties with such prerogatives as financing and access to social communications media, electoral campaigns and, in particular, electoral organization and jurisdiction. These were put into effect in 1977, 1986, 1990, 1993, 1994 and 1996.

For each of the reforms I explained the altered articles and included a summary of their content. In the text's conclusions major trends were pointed out showing that, taken together, the reforms were intended to rebuild our electoral system based on ideological and political pluralism and the transition to democracy. The trends noted were towards: 1) electoral impartiality; 2) legislative pluralism; 3) fair elections; 4) democratizing the Federal District (Mexico City); and 5) autonomous electoral jurisdiction.

The main purpose of my paper was to include in a single text all the political-electoral reforms undertaken by our Constitution's reforming power, without leaving anyone out, since, although there is no lack of literature that analyses one or the other separately, I had not found any text that included all of them.

Another objective was to explain the reforms briefly and in simple language, above all keeping in mind students of Law, Political Science and related disciplines, rather than specialists, but including those people who, while not professionals or without previous knowledge of the subject, were interested in it.

Considering what has been said so far, as I indicated in the very text: "Although the last political-electoral reform was announced as 'a definitive reform' by the head of the Executive Branch, and unanimously agreed by all political forces represented in the Mexican Congress, many party representatives and political analysts have noted that there still are 'pending matters'".

After the federal elections of 2000 and 2006 and the mid-term ones of 2003, there were new electoral issues on the pub-

lic debate such as the excessive cost of our democracy, the time spent on pre-campaigns and on the campaigns and, above all, on the access to the media, all of which, led to a new political-electoral reform in 2007 which, obviously, did not appear in my text, published in 1998.

An additional motive for updating my text was that in January 2010, I joined the Institute of Legal Research-Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas (IIJ-UNAM) as a full-time researcher, and was also teaching Constitutional Law at UNAM's Faculty of Law. Under my new academic position I decided to review my earlier text and complete it with the unpublished material about the above-mentioned reform of 2007. The new text was ready for publication in late 2010 when another political reform was announced and passed at the Senate. It included a great deal of issues about rights of the citizens to participate in politics. However, the Chamber of Deputies made significant changes to the bill and send it back to the Senate. Now the deadline was overdue for it to be applied in the election of 2012, and there was no clear possibility that it would be finally approved by both chambers of Congress. I decided, therefore, to go ahead with a text that included all the reforms up to 2007, even at the risk of the new reform being passed while the text was undergoing printing, in which case it would be updated in a later publication.

I thank the IIJ-UNAM for consenting to include the material above referred, from their 1998 commemorative edition "Eighty years of constitutional life in Mexico", so that the new publication was updated with the 2007 electoral reform.

I also want to express my appreciation to Jorge Alcocer, undoubtedly one of the leading experts, scholars, practitioners and reformers of political and electoral issues in Mexico, for his friendly foreword that does me so much honor.

My thankful thoughts address to Dong Nguyen Huu and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for having my text translated into English and distributed.

Finally my gratitude to Oliverio Orozco (Political Science) for having revised the whole bilingual text.

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