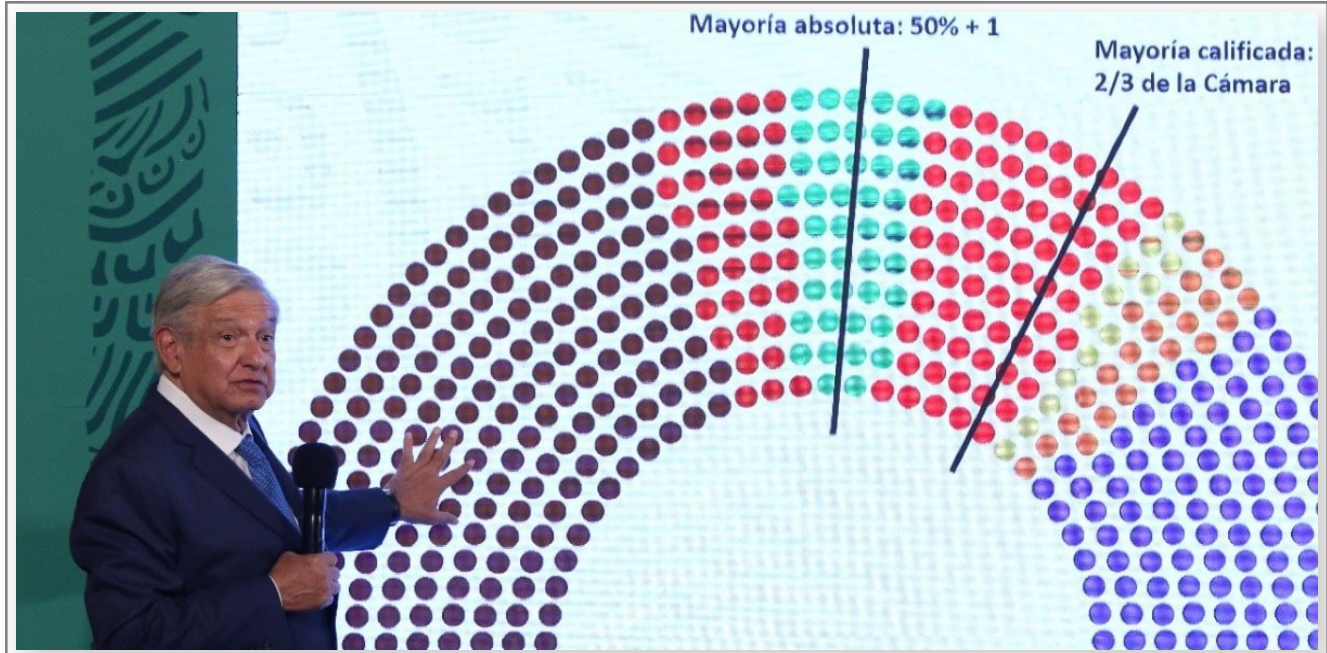


MIDTERM ELECTIONS: MIXED RESULTS AND CLOUDY FORECASTS



Mexico's recent mid-term elections were perceived as a referendum on the country's polarizing president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and his party (Morena). The opposition PAN-PRI-PRD coalition had significant wins in the Chamber of Deputies and Mexico City, but the same parties were roundly beaten by Morena in a number of state governor races. Leaders from the president's party believe the results increase and consolidate their chances of thriving in the 2024 elections. Nevertheless, the aftermath also serves as a beacon of hope for the opposition.

Initial figures portrayed mixed results for the ruling party. López Obrador's coalition will lose at least 50 seats, and the qualified majority (334 seats), in the lower house of Congress. Although the ruling coalition will maintain a simple majority, the defeat will prevent the President from passing major legislative and constitutional reforms without the help of opposition parties. Morena will no longer be able to singlehandedly carry out profound changes for major reforms in Mexico. Thus, they will probably proceed with a controversial tactic, known as "chapulineo", which consists of transferring legislators from coalition partners into their own ranks. For instance, since 2018, over 140 transfers have taken place, of which 112 were within Morena's coalition, which allowed them to achieve supermajority.

Concerning the governorship races, Morena definitely swept the results in a landslide. Victories in 11 of the 15 states have made of Morena the main political force at the state level. On the other hand, the PRI lost 8 governorships, which ended a dominance that had prevailed since the early 20th century. However, one that stood out was Mexico City, where all 16 boroughs held elections. Historically, Morena and left-wing parties



had predominantly ruled the capital, but suffered major setbacks in these elections, retaining only seven of the 11 municipalities held prior to the elections. It is worth noting that most of the losses were concentrated in the more affluent boroughs, which indicates a major socio-economic divide in voting patterns across the city. In addition, the tragedy of the collapse of one wagon of the Mexico City metro on May 3, might have had an impact on these results.

The road towards the 2024 elections is foggy. Before the next elections, there will be an extremely relevant process, which will be the referendum on López Obrador's presidency. The national electoral institute (INE) will be in charge, and the purpose of the referendum will be to know Mexicans' assessment of his administration. The result will pave the way of our political future.

Gains by Morena in the states and losses in the capital in the 2021 elections reveal that the country is divided and undecided. Approximately 23 more million people will be governed by Morena once inaugurations take place, while voters in the Capital and in states where elections were not held have shown disapproval. The personal popularity of the President is still considerably high despite scandals and failures, but the party's lack of a structured and coherent plan to yield positive results in the next three years might harm their odds. Rural and marginal communities have benefited from direct money transfers and social programs, but questions linger on durability and efficiency, particularly after a tremendous economic impact derived from a devastating pandemic. Insecurity has risen drastically in this administration, and now many of the most violent states will be ruled by Morena. Their ability to manage this situation will sway voting patterns in those regions.

There are glimmers of hope for the opposition to gain presence and power in the upcoming elections, but as the midterm elections showed, 2024 could be anyone's game now.