

The Scholarly Study of Mexican Politics

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This essay reviews the state of the scholarly study of Mexican politics. It focuses on research on political change since 1990. It discusses the political origins of economic problems and policies, including the enactment of NAFTA and the 1994-95 financial panic. It assesses the decline of the PRI, the presidency, and official organized labor; the role of urban protest and the Zapatista insurgency; and the revitalization of Congress, the Supreme Court, and state governments. It synthesizes the principal analytical findings on parties, public opinion, and elections.

Este ensayo revisa la situación actual de los estudios académicos sobre la política mexicana. Se concentra en la investigación sobre los cambios políticos desde 1990. Pondera los orígenes políticos de los problemas económicos y políticas derivadas, inclusive la aprobación del TLC y el pánico financiero de 1994-95. Discute el declive del PRI, la presidencia, y el sindicalismo oficial; el papel de la protesta urbana y la insurgencia Zapatista; y la revitalización del Congreso, la Suprema Corte, y los gobiernos estatales. Sintetiza los principales resultados analíticos sobre los partidos, la opinión pública y las elecciones.

The journal *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* was born in 1985 on the eve of political transition in Mexico. Its pages reflect the substance of political change in Mexico and the shifts in scholars' determination of how and what to study in Mexican politics. This essay embraces the welcome excuse of the journal's twenty years of publication as one prism through which to assess politics and its study in Mexico; it references many of the journal's contributions to the study of Mexican politics. This

*I am grateful to Kevin Middlebrook and Alejandro Poiré for very helpful comments on an earlier draft, and to Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs for general research support. Errors of fact or interpretation are mine alone.

Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos Vol. 20, Issue 2, Summer 2004, pages 377-410. ISSN 0742-9797 electronic ISSN 1533-8320. ©2004 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, at www.ucpress.edu/journals/rights.htm.

essay's central purpose, however, is to assess broad trends in recent research on contemporary Mexican politics, by focusing on explanations about political change in Mexico and giving less attention to works about historical political circumstances.

Twenty years ago, the focus of political research on Mexico was the fall-out of the country's profound economic and social crisis and the fate of Mexico's political, economic, and social regime. The means of political incorporation and control, the emergence of more independent social movements, the evolution of labor unions, the cracks within the ruling party, and the political economy of crisis gripped the attention of Mexicans and those who study the country. Now, near the mid-point of the first decade of this new century, *politics* in Mexico, and the scholarship it generates, are less about regime-level questions and more about the politics of economic reform, the liquidation or transformation of old institutions, Congress, the courts, elections, parties, public opinion, and divided government, as well as about the understandable frustrations that accompany the construction of a more democratic polity. The previous scholarly agenda has not vanished, but its center of gravity has shifted. *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* illustrates visually how the field has changed: Numbers matter in the study of public opinion, voting behavior, and Congressional power, and the pages of this journal as well as the realities of Mexican politics now bristle with quantitative stuff once deemed irrelevant or unobtainable.

In this article, I first draw from the scholarship of Mexicanist political economy to argue that many of Mexico's significant economic problems had political origins, as did the alleged solutions to those problems, and that Mexican presidential administrations employed political means to address economic issues. Specifically, I argue for the higher salience of politics to understand the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the 1994-95 financial panic. In the end, I consider the effect of the economic reforms on politics.

The second section considers the decline of three institutions that were central to Mexico's political regime for several decades: the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the all-powerful presidency, and the officially sponsored labor movement. One initial cause of this institutional decline is the political effect of economic reforms. Another exogenous change is the ecological realignment of Mexican politics, with the marked decline of the rural population. Yet, the political process soon acquired a dynamic of its own that affected elite coalitions, voter support, and the PRI's internal balances that had once held effectively. The PRI, the presidency, and the official labor movement were weakened through parallel and interlocked processes. The results have been a still powerful but no longer omnipotent PRI, a constrained presidency, and

labor movement federations in increasing disarray. The short subsequent section takes note of some important continuities in the style of elite politicians and the persistence of a church-state political cleavage.

The three final sections of this article focus on the processes and consequences of democratic politics: urban and rural protest; the revitalization of Congress, the Supreme Court, and state governments; and the growth of opposition parties and the decisive role of the Mexican voter to enact a slow-moving but effective transition in the political regime. These processes fed on each other. An electorate ready to support opposition parties elects a Congress at odds with the president and chooses governors prepared to contest Mexico City's clout. The Supreme Court acquires judicial review to sort out disputes, and in the end helps to deepen democratizing processes. The wider prevalence of opposition officeholders in state and national executive and legislative posts emboldens voters to elect a president from the opposition while also retaining the PRI as the single largest party.

Mexico's Political Economy

In a prescient analysis, written at a time still marked by the "euphoria of financial markets" in Mexico and well before the December 1994 financial panic, Jaime Ros argued persuasively that "the Mexican economy entered the 1990s severely weakened—rather than strengthened—by the adjustment process of the 1980s." Mexico's capital stock had aged rapidly because capital investment had declined; the private savings rate was low and fell further in the 1980s. Real wages in manufacturing and the per capita gross domestic product performed badly during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. Ros anticipated the bursting of Mexico's financial bubble.¹ Mexico's longer-standing structural economic and social problems also lingered, including high rates of poverty and inequality and deficient services in health and education.

There was generally little scholarly quarrel, however, with the proposition that the previous Mexican economic model had crashed and should not be reconstructed. Robert Looney made that point plainly in this journal. In the 1970s, rising budget deficits caused a significant monetary expansion, generating substantial and persistent inflation. Increased government expenditures and loose monetary policy exhausted

1. Jaime Ros, "Mexico in the 1990s: A New Economic Miracle? Some Notes on the Economic and Policy Legacy of the 1980s," in *The Politics of Economic Restructuring: State-Society Relations and Regime Change in Mexico*, eds. Maria Lorena Cook, Kevin Middlebrook, and Juan Molinar Horcasitas (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1994), 66-103, quotations from pp. 68 and 101.

the country's reserves. This approach reinforced "a series of ill-timed government policies" that deepened the economy's inefficiencies and gradually rendered it internationally uncompetitive except for the export of crude petroleum.²

Perhaps the most noteworthy accomplishment in Mexico's political economy in the 1980s and 1990s was not the solution to the country's fundamental economic problems but the reorientation of the prevailing economic model to set the foundations for a more efficient and faster-growing economy in the future, as Nora Lustig has demonstrated. Sounder fiscal and budget policies, deregulation, freer trade policies that included accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the construction of NAFTA, and the closure of bankrupt state enterprises and the privatization of other such firms, among others, would be the longer-term economic legacies of the presidencies of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-88) and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-94).³

The success of those earlier economic reforms would thus become evident only with Mexico's spectacular international trade boom that started in the late 1980s and picked up speed in the 1990s, the rapid recovery from the 1994-95 economic debacle, the high economic growth rates of the late 1990s, and, early in the current decade, the country's first "normal" economic recession since the early 1960s—that is, the first recession in forty years when the Mexican economy declined no more than what would be expected from the U.S. economic recession.

A companion article in this issue reviews scholarship on Mexican economics. Thus this article reflects only upon the politics of Mexican economic issues. Politics has been present at the origin of the economic crisis and management of its effects. In the journal's founding issue, Wayne Cornelius explored the delicate balancing act that characterized the political economy of the de la Madrid presidency. Mexico had overspent its resources to buy social peace and political support from the poor while requiring a low tax effort from the wealthy to obtain their political acquiescence or, preferably, their support. That general policy was the political origin of the economic crisis. In the midst of the economic crisis of the mid-1980s, it was both more necessary and more difficult to continue to buy the cooperation of both the poor and the wealthy. The president and his closest advisers responded with a keen interest in their own and the political regime's preservation. Their many

2. Robert Looney, "Inflation in Pre-Crisis Mexico: A Monetarist Interpretation of the Relative Importance of Internal and External Factors," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 319-46.

3. Nora Lustig, *Mexico: The Remaking of an Economy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992).

economic reforms imposed high social and political costs but stopped short of embracing economic orthodoxies that might threaten core political interests. Little attention was given to persistent poverty and inequality—there were insufficient resources to address these important problems.⁴ This intellectual framework helps to explain the reason for the adoption of reforms and their relatively slow pace and somewhat unorthodox character.

Others also have explored the political foundations of economic troubles. Henry Schmidt argued that the cause of Mexico's debt crisis in 1982 was "primarily political." The Mexican government's statist economic policies had hitherto sought political objectives while paying insufficient attention to the high economic costs incurred as a result.⁵ Dan Cothran shows that President Lázaro Cárdenas began the practice of systematically and deliberately underestimating government expenditures along with budgetary secrecy. The latter enabled the presidency to assign missing resources in secret. This budgetary deception sought to increase presidential discretion in the allocation of resources, balance the political demands within the ruling coalition, and further reduce the real allocation to the armed forces. While in time the third motivation became less important, the others remained, leading to "enhanced budgetary deception" in the 1950s and 1960s that contributed to the economic difficulties in the years that followed.⁶ Budgetary deception weakened internal controls within the executive branch, made it harder for the Congress to supervise the government's accounts, and magnified distrust.

The political means for coping with the economic crisis in the 1980s and early 1990s were no less important. In the 1980s, economic adjustment policies were harsh in Chile and were implemented under a severe authoritarian regime. Such policies in democratic Brazil failed in the late 1980s and early 1990s in part because they were badly designed but also because their implementation was defective. In Mexico, in contrast, a social pact engaging the peak labor union and business federations along with the government helped to restrain price and wage increases at lower social, political, and—arguably—even economic cost. Many economists disdain economically unorthodox policy instruments such as a social pact, but Mexico's social pact worked well.⁷

4. Wayne Cornelius, "The Political Economy of Mexico under De la Madrid: Austerity, Routinized Crisis, and Nascent Recovery," *MS/EM* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 83-124.

5. Henry Schmidt, "The Mexican Foreign Debt and the Sexennial Transition from López Portillo to De la Madrid," *MS/EM* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 227-54.

6. Dan A. Cothran, "Budgetary Secrecy and Policy Strategy: Mexico under Cárdenas," *MS/EM* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 35-58.

7. Ian Roxborough, "Inflation and Social Pacts in Brazil and Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24 (October 1992): 639-64. On the skepticism of economists regard-

Political tools include aspects of institutional redesign. Some institutional changes were more successful than others. In 1993, Mexico accorded greater formal independence to its central bank. The purpose, Delia Boylan has argued, was to insulate the bank and preserve the financial reforms that had been part of the new economic model in anticipation that anti-reform forces might win a subsequent presidential election. The central bank's performance during its first year of formal independence—1994—could not have been worse, however. In the face of falling investor confidence, the bank should have raised interest rates; instead, to accommodate the Salinas administration, the bank adopted a cheap credit policy and sailed directly into the December 1994 financial panic.⁸ Yet, as Boylan anticipated, the central bank behaved more creditably after the financial panic, facilitating Mexico's recovery and cushioning the impact of the U.S. economic recession at the start of the next decade.

NAFTA was the culmination of trade and investment liberalization policies begun in 1985. Its design sought to lock in the economic reforms enacted during the de la Madrid and Salinas presidencies. The political economy research on NAFTA pertains to the politics of its origins. For the 1980s, economic sectors characterized by substantial foreign direct investment were over-protected; that is, multinational firms that had invested in Mexico were effective in securing trade protection from a government eager to lure additional foreign direct investment. The trade reforms begun in the late 1980s corrected that over-protection.⁹ Trade liberalization combated oligopoly power.

What explains, then, a trade liberalization adverse to some powerful multinational firms located in Mexico? Scholars recorded the formation of a complex free-trade coalition around Salinas that widened to include and muster support from the private sector. Some have emphasized the salient role of Mexican big business in pushing for such a change while others have focused on the decisive role of the Mexican presidency.¹⁰ Manuel Pastor and Carol Wise observe that the economics of the Mexican crisis in the 1980s might have led to varying outcomes, not necessarily to free trade. The growth in U.S.-Mexican trade in the late 1980s

ing such a policy instrument, see M. I. Blejer and A. Cheasty, "High Inflation, Heterodox Stabilization, and Fiscal Policy," *World Development* 16, no. 8 (August 1988): 867-79.

8. Delia M. Boylan, "Democratization and Institutional Change in Mexico: The Logic of Partial Insulation," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 1 (February 2001): 3-29.

9. Jean-Marie Grether, Jaime de Melo, and Marcelo Olarreaga, "Who Determines Mexican Trade Policy?" *Journal of Development Economics* 64 (2001): 343-70.

10. Strom Thacker, *Big Business, the State, and Free Trade: Constructing Coalitions in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Guy Poitras and Raymond Robinson, "The Politics of NAFTA in Mexico," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1-35.

does not explain how even former protectionists came to support NAFTA. Instead, Pastor and Wise argue that institutional redesign made it possible for state elites to craft a free-trade coalition including the private sector, but they emphasize the salience of the linkage of the new trade policies into "one overall reform package" and the strong ideological commitment to economic reform evinced by President Salinas and his economic cabinet.¹¹ Statist and presidentialist reasons predominated.

Scholars of international relations added a key factor: the structure of the international system at a juncture of dramatic transformation—the end of the Cold War in Europe. The Mexican government looked actively but in vain to diversify trade with Europe but Europeans looked eastward to the countries that had just shed the communist systems. Japan's prolonged economic decline began at about the same time, making it a less attractive partner for Mexican trade growth. Latin America may have ranked high in the hearts of Mexican officials but they knew that its decade-long economic depression made it an unpromising partner for economic reacceleration. The end of the Cold War in Europe also helped to settle Central America's civil and international wars and ended the Soviet-Cuban alliance; issues that had divided the United States from Mexico in the 1980s suddenly "disappeared." The United States also became interested in the development of free trade in North America to gain leverage in negotiations with Europe and Japan over what would become the World Trade Organization.¹² This different international structure and juncture set the stage for effective human action—specifically for the roles of states and heads of state.¹³

The second act in the great drama of Mexico's dozen years of economic crisis and stagnation was the panic, devaluation, and deep recession that broke out in late 1994 and engulfed Mexico for the next year. Some economists have argued that the Mexican crisis was a "chronicle of a death foretold," because shifts in foreign capital flows and anticipation of a banking-system bailout produced large imbalances between stocks of financial assets and foreign reserves, thereby threatening the sustainability of the currency peg.¹⁴ Others argue that the roots of this

11. Manuel Pastor and Carol Wise, "The Origins and Sustainability of Mexico's Free Trade Policy," *International Organization* 48, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 459-89, quotation from p. 487.

12. Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro, *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2001), chap. 2.

13. Carlos Salinas' account of his presidency is particularly interesting on the NAFTA negotiations. See Carlos Salinas de Gortari, *México: Un paso difícil a la modernidad* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 2000), chap. 2-7.

14. Guillermo Calvo and Enrique Mendoza, "Mexico's Balance of Payments Crisis: A Chronicle of a Death Foretold," *Journal of International Economics* 41 (1996): 235-64.

new crisis were deeply political. Jeffrey Sachs, Aaron Tornell, and Andrés Velasco argue that the Mexican peso was overvalued by the end of 1993 and that there was a large current account deficit. In the wake of the January 1994 insurgency by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) and the March 1994 assassination of PRI candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, the government should have tightened fiscal and monetary policies and accelerated the pace of devaluation, which would have been easy to explain and carry out in this context with international support.

Instead, to buy time and peace in anticipation of the upcoming presidential election, the government "essentially pegged the exchange rate" and let its reserves dwindle in order to defend that exchange rate. The overvalued peso enabled middle-class Mexicans to import goods at lower relative prices. This calmed the political waters, deferred the gathering economic storm, and helped the PRI's Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994–2000) win the presidential elections. The central bank's position became vulnerable as it ran out of reserves and piled up short-term debt, however. The central bank and the finance ministry hoarded financial information, a lack of transparency that would in the end magnify the surprise and anger regarding Mexico's financial management. At the juncture of the presidential transition in December 1994 and the release of evidence showing Mexico's precarious financial position, a massive flight from the peso triggered the crisis.¹⁵ This political-economic explanation better accounts for the dimensions of the crisis and its timing.¹⁶

Finally, it is worth recalling that the internationalization of the Mexican economy and NAFTA in particular earned little political support in Mexico. Mexican public opinion strongly supported NAFTA prior to its enactment but turned negative with the 1994–95 financial crisis, with a slight pro-NAFTA plurality returning after the crisis. The principal explanation for attitudes toward NAFTA has been that they mirror general attitudes toward the United States.¹⁷ In turn, attitudes toward the United States often track domestic Mexican circumstances, especially economic performance.

15. Jeffrey Sachs, Aaron Tornell, and Andrés Velasco, "The Mexican Peso: Sudden Death or Death Foretold?" *Journal of International Economics* 41 (1996): 265–83, quotation from p. 268. See also Sebastian Edwards and Moisés Naím, eds., *Anatomy of an Emerging-Market Crash: Mexico 1994* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997).

16. For a thoughtful political economy explanation of Mexico's previous financial crisis that, nonetheless, privileged economic rather than political explanations, see Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, "Mexico's Recent Balance of Payments Experience and Prospects for Growth," *World Development* 14, no. 8 (1986): 963–91.

17. Neil Nevitte and Miguel Basáñez, "Trinational Perceptions," in *The Controversial Pivot: The U.S. Congress and North America*, eds. Robert Pastor and Rafael Fernández de Castro (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 167; Charles Davis,

Among the micro-reasons for NAFTA's weak popularity in Mexico is the effect on its firms. NAFTA has hurt a very small number of Mexican producers, mainly in agriculture and livestock production. Yet, the number of gainers from trade liberalization has also been small. Luis Rubio estimates that only about ten percent of Mexico's manufacturing firms are consistent exporters; they account for four-fifths of the country's industrial production. The successful manufacturing exporters tend to be geographically concentrated in Mexico's north and the Bajío region. The less successful manufacturing firms employ about seventy percent of Mexican workers in manufacturing and tend to be concentrated in and around Mexico City—two factors that increase their social and political clout even as their economic importance has declined dramatically.¹⁸

Political economy research on Mexico straddled the scholarship in economics and political science but it emphasized the utility of political explanations for economic phenomena. Given the long-term significance for, and weight of, the Mexican state for the economy and the high profile of the Salinas presidency in reorganizing it, this emphasis on political explanation is apt.

The Decay of the Old Regime's Political Institutions: The PRI, the Presidency, and Organized Labor

Mexico's fundamental political problem, Luis Rubio wrote in the aftermath of the 1988 presidential elections, is a crisis of political legitimacy. Under this rubric, he bracketed a wide array of issues including political representation, the role of parties, Congress, the courts, and federal decentralization. He called attention to the gap between an increasingly open economy and a still rather closed political system; in his judgment, Mexico's economic liberalization would most likely, in due course, foster Mexico's political opening—as indeed happened.¹⁹ A great deal of scholarship is focused on this broad array of issues. This section addresses the decline of the PRI, the omnipotent presidency, and the official labor movement. Their combined weakening amounted to a slow-moving shift in the essential features of the political regime.²⁰

"Mass Support for Regional Economic Integration: The Case of NAFTA and the Mexican Public," *MS/EM* 14, no. 1 (1998): 105–130.

18. Luis Rubio, *Tres ensayos: Fobaproa, privatización, y TLC* (Mexico: Cal y Arena, 1999), 136–39.

19. Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo A.C. (CIDAC), *Reforma del sistema político mexicano* (Mexico, DF: Editorial Diana, 1990), especially 10–14, 66–74.

20. For a general analysis, see Wayne Cornelius, *Mexican Politics in Transition: The Breakdown of a One-Party-Dominant Regime* (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1996).

The economic reforms had obvious impact on political change. The old regime lost political legitimacy in part because a significant fraction of Mexicans felt betrayed. In 1987, those economic reforms—and the lag in adopting political reforms—led to the major fracture on the PRI's left, led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo. The breakaway former PRI members believed that the party's new economic direction unacceptably departed from its programs and trajectory; they also believed that the PRI's internal procedures were unacceptably authoritarian. Cárdenas gathered an impressive share of the vote in the 1988 presidential election and would go on to found the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD)—one of the three big parties along with the PRI and the long-established Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) in the new stable multiparty system that replaced the seven decades of PRI single-party hegemony.

The PRI was weakened not just by elite divisions but also, and more importantly, because its style and method of operation was thoroughly undermined.²¹ The old PRI's new economic reforms, as Mark Williams has written, "drove a wedge between the government and important segments of the labor movement," undermining the utility of the alliance between the unions and the party. Many in the PRI's peasant base also resented the end of the land reform process, the privatization of communal (*ejido*) land, and some of NAFTA's impact on agriculture.²² Writ large, this process gravely undermined the PRI's social bases and mode of organization, especially the clientelistic resources of PRI leaders in the labor and peasant sectors. More generally, Judith Teichman has commented on the effect of the wholesale "withdrawal of the state:" privatization of state enterprises, deregulation of agricultural markets, price decontrol, cuts in budget expenditures, termination of most subsidies for goods and services, and depoliticization of banking credit. In addition, the labor unions suffered from wage reductions, layoffs (one quarter of civil servants were dismissed in the second half of the 1980s), and the loss of union privileges regarding the allocation of labor or promotions within firms.²³

The political incentive for continued support for the PRI and the political regime understandably declined. Attempts to strengthen parts of the PRI in some regions or to substitute for it in others—President

21. The first political science work on the PRI that sought to connect its study to the wider scholarship of comparative politics was Robert E. Scott, *Mexican Government in Transition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959). Scott over-estimated the speed of Mexico's political transition but otherwise this splendid book stood well the test of time.

22. Mark Williams, "Traversing the Mexican Odyssey: Reflections on Political Change and the Study of Mexican Politics," *MS/EM* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 159–88, especially p. 175.

23. Judith Teichman, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Mexican Authoritarianism," *MS/EM* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 121–47.

Salinas' National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL)—were successful in the 1991 nationwide congressional elections but did not outlast the Salinas presidency.²⁴ The PRI suffered from being the governing party, compelled to approve policies contrary to its historical roots, political trajectory, and long-standing programs.²⁵

The PRI's power long rested on its ability to coordinate the leaders of multiple political clienteles, fill public office, and provide support for a presidentialist decision-making organization. The connection to its base was corporatist; that is, citizens were identified in social categories, organized as such in socio-economic or occupational groups, and formally incorporated within the PRI's internal organization into peasant, labor, and "popular" sectors. As Edward Gibson has ably argued, the PRI's capacious, national, and multi-sector coalitional characteristics and its clientelistic skills and capacity to allocate rewards help to explain why its leadership could enact far-reaching economic reforms contrary to the party's past programs and nonetheless retain power for the last fifth of the twentieth century.²⁶

The old PRI sought electoral backing via group support, not individual action. The internal party management of this complex coalition featured the allocation of government posts to the PRI sectors and the quota assignment of electoral candidacies for legislative assemblies, including the national congress. As Guadalupe Pacheco Méndez argues, this system could work so long as Mexico possessed a differentiated social structure that was not too complex, a relatively passive political culture, a growing economy that enabled the state to bestow rents on organized labor and business, social movements bounded by existing PRI formal and informal rules, and top leaders capable of intra-party coordination.²⁷ By the end of the 1980s, as just noted, elite intra-party coor-

24. Wayne Cornelius, Ann Craig, and Jonathan Fox, *Transforming State-Society Relations in Mexico: The National Solidarity Strategy* (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1994); Kathleen Bruhn, "Social Spending and Political Support: The 'Lessons' of the National Solidarity Program in Mexico," *Comparative Politics* 28, no. 2 (January 1996): 151–77. For a more positive assessment of targeted state intervention with regard to poor people, see Emanuel Skoufias, Benjamin Davis, and Sergio de la Vega, "Targeting the Poor in Mexico: An Evaluation of the Selection of Households into PROGRESA," *World Development* 29, no. 10 (2001): 1769–1784.

25. Arturo Alvarado Mendoza, Rafael Loyola Díaz, and Lilliana Martínez Pérez, "Partido Revolucionario Institucional: Contexto, situación política y escenarios electorales," *MS/EM* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 325–62.

26. Edward Gibson, "The Populist Road to Market Reform: Policy and Electoral Coalitions in Mexico and Argentina," *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (April 1997): 339–70.

27. Guadalupe Pacheco Méndez, "Los sectores del PRI en las elecciones de 1988," *MS/EM* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 253–82, especially pp. 256–67.

dination broke down, the economy crashed and was slow to recover, and the economic reforms added social and political complexity. As will later be shown, political participation and social movements greatly exceeded previous standards of behavior.

The 1988 presidential election was held as the waves of change swept over the PRI, deeply affecting a once-stable system for the internal allocation of the spoils of office. Competition from the PAN and the Cardenista coalition was strongest in the urban areas where the candidacies were disproportionately allocated to the popular and labor sectors. Voters turned most strongly against the PRI in these cities; the PRI won less than half the vote in urban areas with candidacies from the labor and popular sectors. In contrast, PRI retained nearly two-thirds of the vote in areas with peasant sector candidacies. This was principally a function of urban-rural differences, however, not of voter preferences for one PRI sector over another. In rural areas, candidates from the PRI labor, popular, and peasant sectors performed approximately equally but peasant sector candidacies were understandably predominant. This shift in political demographics hurt the PRI's internal balance. The PRI's labor sector was especially hard hit. From 1979 to 1985, the PRI's labor sector counted on approximately 70 safe seats in the federal Chamber of Deputies. By the 1997 congressional elections, it was down to 35 seats, dropping to just 5 deputies in 2000.²⁸

The PRI was hurt not just by the turn of voters toward the opposition parties but also by a sustained ecological electoral realignment that compounded the problems just noted. An ecological realignment occurs where there are "changes in the relative size of one or more social groups or economic strata. In this case, the bases of party support do not necessarily undergo marked changes. Rather, the relative size of various demographic or attitudinal groups changes, bringing with it a shift in the fortunes of two or more parties."²⁹ Joseph Klesner found that the only variable consistently and significantly associated with PRI vote since the 1967 elections has been the percent of a municipality's population that is rural.³⁰ The "green vote" was critical for the PRI, which consistently won four-fifths of rural voters.

In 1940, 80 percent of Mexicans lived in rural areas or towns with

28. Idem, especially 264, 273, 280-81, and Reyna Vargas Guzmán, "La representación obrera corporativa en las elecciones federales, durante la consolidación del periodo neoliberal," *Estudios políticos* (Sixth era) 26 (January-April 2001): 229-57.

29. Russell Dalton, Scott Flanagan, and Paul Allen Beck, eds., *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 96.

30. Joseph Klesner, "Modernization, Economic Crisis, and Electoral Alignment in Mexico," *MS/EM* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 187-233.

fewer than 15,000 inhabitants. In 1980, that proportion had dropped to 48 percent and, in 1990, to 40 percent. Between the 1982 and 1988 presidential elections, the PRI's share of the vote in the Federal District dropped by 43 percent while its share of the rest of the urban vote in the country dropped by 39 percent. In contrast, the PRI's share of the rural vote dropped only by 24 percent. In 1988, the PRI still won 61 percent of the rural vote but only between a quarter and a third of the vote in the Federal District and the rest of urban Mexico.³¹ The PRI had been strong in the rural areas for various reasons; these included its popularity, but also the capacity of its political machine, its access to clientelistic resources, intimidation, and electoral fraud, which is easier to commit when there is little or no competition from other parties. In any event, the PRI's most faithful vote base—the "green vote"—became more important for the PRI precisely as it was rapidly vanishing.

The presidency changed as well, at first imperceptibly. Mexican presidentialism once seemed omnipotent, especially upon the political regime's consolidation in the 1930s. The 1933 reform to the Mexican constitution, prohibiting the re-election of deputies and senators, prevented Congress from developing the institutional knowledge and capacity to check the presidency, shrouded legislators from accountability for their actions before the voters, and compelled them to curry favor with the executive to advance their careers, as Michael Taylor has argued.³² The power of the presidency blossomed, reaching its imperial apotheosis under José López Portillo (1976-82).

María Amparo Casar and Jeffrey Weldon, in different works, have ably dissected the constituent features of Mexico's hyperpresidentialism. Its key characteristic was undivided and unitary government, thereby overcoming divisions between the branches of the federal government and the potential constraints of federalism. Its instrument was the pervasive and intrusive ruling party, whose design of incentives made it in the interests of key elites to delegate power to the presidency.³³

What, then, constrained Mexican presidentialism from the 1930s to the 1980s so that the political regime never became like the repressive

31. Computed from Wayne Cornelius and Ann Craig, *The Mexican Political System in Transition* (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1991), 70; BANAMEX, *México social, 1990-1991: Indicadores seleccionados* (Mexico: 1991), 73.

32. Michael Taylor, "Constitutional Crisis: How Reforms to the Legislature Have Doomed Mexico," *MS/EM* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 299-324.

33. María Amparo Casar, "Las bases institucionales del poder presidencial en México," *Política y gobierno* 3, no. 1 (1996): 61-92; Jeffrey Weldon, "The Political Sources of Presidentialism in Mexico," in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 225-58.

bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes of southernmost South America? Alicia Hernández Chávez gives thoughtful answers, emphasizing the rule of no presidential reelection; the custom of ample consultation prior to the incumbent president's selection of his own successor (a practice known as *dedazo*);³⁴ the formal exclusion of big business from the PRI's internal structure, which compelled the government to negotiate outside the structures that it controlled directly; the quasi-independence of labor and peasant organizations; and the staggered electoral calendar that forced each president to negotiate with governors elected during his predecessor's six-year term (*sexenio*).³⁵ Nevertheless, for five decades the presidency remained nearly all-powerful and it seemed to become more so with the passing of time.

Miguel de la Madrid's term seemed an exception to the otherwise uninterrupted 1970–1994 span of imperial presidencies of Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–76), López Portillo, and Salinas with regard to whom those constraints on the president seemed to apply less effectively. Enrique Krauze, in his magisterial collective biography of Mexican presidents, attributes this difference in outcome—a much more subdued presidency from 1982 to 1988 when a more assertive one might have been expected—to de la Madrid's personality: "De la Madrid had confused prudence with passivity and sometimes with immobility."³⁶

In retrospect, the same processes that weakened the PRI weakened the presidency, making Mexico's governance more difficult. The type of presidency changed decisively in the early 1980s; de la Madrid was not an exception but the start of a trend. Except for Salinas' term, Mexico has had highly constrained presidencies since 1982: de la Madrid, Zedillo, and Vicente Fox Quesada (2000–2006). The argument about personality differences creating an exceptional outcome may apply better to Carlos Salinas and his executive team—a much more assertive presidency from 1988 to 1994 when a more subdued one might have been expected. Salinas, a modern-day King Canute, held back the waves of history for five of the six years of his presidential term. Krauze describes Salinas and his closest associates as follows: "They were an imperious and impatient group, the new *científicos*, the 'enlightened despots' of the computer age." Krauze, nonetheless, portrays well the final act of

34. For analysis and fascinating interviews with former presidents and unsuccessful presidential contenders regarding the *dedazo*, see Jorge G. Castañeda, *La herencia: Arqueología de la sucesión presidencial en México* (Mexico: Alfaguara, 1999).

35. Alicia Hernández Chávez, "Mexican Presidentialism: A Historical and Institutional Overview," *MS/EM* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 217–25.

36. Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power. A History of Modern Mexico, 1810–1996*, tr. Hank Heifetz (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 769.

this presidential drama: "But as had happened to Porfirio Díaz in 1910, after the Centenary [of independence] Fiestas, history was preparing an unexpected surprise for Carlos Salinas de Gortari. At the blithest point of his surge toward the future, all the forces of the Mexican past would rise to block his way."³⁷

Ernesto Zedillo's presidency is difficult to assess because it is unclear how much of the outcome should be attributed to his policy preferences,³⁸ the somewhat accidental nature of his presidency's origin (he was the last-minute replacement for the murdered Colosio as PRI candidate), his personality, or his executive team. Aspects of Zedillo's presidency advanced the prospects of Mexico's democratization, such as his willingness to negotiate extensively with all political parties, his distancing from the PRI, and in 2000 his statesmanship in managing the transition to opposition-party victor Vicente Fox. Zedillo was the first PRI president who deliberately decided to forego the customary right to choose his own successor (*dedazo*). Other elements of the Zedillo administration remain puzzling—its bizarre and contradictory policies toward the EZLN insurgency in Chiapas and its impotence in the face of the nearly year-long paralysis of the national university, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). These and other events, Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez argues, contributed to the permanent public questioning of the president's authority and competence.³⁹ Zedillo was most decisive in economic matters. He ensured that Mexico would retain a market-economy model and sound macroeconomic policies. He increased the value-added tax significantly and bailed out the private banks in the wake of the financial crisis.

Ernesto Zedillo's presidency was constrained in a novel way—by Congress—prefiguring Vicente Fox's presidency. Neither Zedillo nor Fox fully controlled his own party in Congress, the PRI and the PAN respectively, and the president's party lacked an absolute majority in Congress for the second half of Zedillo's and all of Fox's respective *sexenios*. The rise of Congress was essential for Mexico's democratic transition, rendering its constitutional government "real" at long last. I examine this change later.

37. Krauze, *Mexico*, 778.

38. For a brief but informative retrospective account of Zedillo's views regarding Mexico's democratization, see Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, "Relatoria de la conferencia de Ernesto Zedillo," *La democracia en México*, Seminario sobre Transición y Consolidación Democráticas, 2001–2002 (Madrid: FRIDE, 2002), 21–24.

39. Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, "Ernesto Zedillo. La presidencia contenida," *Foro internacional* 43, no. 1 (January–March 2003): 39–70.

Also weakened in the 1990s were Mexico's labor unions and their alliance with the PRI. Some reasons for this process have been mentioned. Yet, as Kevin Middlebrook shows in his magisterial historical analysis of labor politics in twentieth-century Mexico, there were additional debilitating factors.⁴⁰ The Salinas administration took on several key labor leaders. In January 1989, the government arrested and imprisoned Joaquín Hernández Galicia (nicknamed "La Quina"), who was for nearly three decades the de facto leader of the petroleum workers union.⁴¹ Also in 1989, the administration unseated Carlos Jonguitud Barrios, the de facto leader of the teachers' union for the previous fifteen years.

On the other hand, the Salinas presidency promoted favored labor leaders, especially Francisco Hernández Juárez, head of the telephone workers' union, and supported his efforts to create a new peak labor confederation, weakening the PRI's key pillar in its labor sector, the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM). María Victoria Murillo argues that the deliberate promotion of inter-union competition, most of which were associated with the PRI, explains the relative ease of market-reform adoption and implementation in Mexico in comparison with other Latin American countries where organized labor strongly and more effectively resisted such policies.⁴²

The organizational and mobilizational strength of the unions declined well beyond what may be attributed to the actions of specific presidencies. The CTM, Middlebrook shows, blocked the outright elimination of the PRI's sectoral structure (though its electoral gains from this structure, as already shown, dropped markedly). Its delaying tactics also worked at times; it held back the adoption of labor market flexibilization rules and impeded Salinas's reform of the labor code. But CTM political clout waned as high officials in both the Salinas and Zedillo presidencies became less inclined to grant patronage to labor leaders while they still vigorously enforced labor-repressive provisions of the labor code that enabled the government to declare a strike "non-existent." In the 1990s, the advanced age of most leaders of the peak labor federa-

40. Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), especially chap. 8. See also Ruth Berins Collier, *The Contradictory Alliance: State-Labor Relations and Regime Change in Mexico* (Berkeley, CA: International and Area Studies Publications, University of California-Berkeley, 1992); and Ilán Bizberg, *Estado y sindicalismo en México* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1990).

41. For an excellent account of the petroleum workers union and the role of its long-time leader, see Rafael Loyola Díaz, "La liquidación del feudo petrolero en la política moderna, México 1989," *MS/EM* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 263-97.

42. María Victoria Murillo, *Labor Unions, Partisan Coalitions, and Market Reforms in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

tions—above all nonagenarian CTM leader Fidel Velázquez—also made it difficult for the labor movement to symbolize change. But the weakening of union power had deeper causes. The economy's transformation had reduced the number of workers in manufacturing in the Mexican heartland at the same time that non-union manufacturing grew in in-bond manufacturing industries (*maquiladoras*) along the border with the United States.

The decline of the clout of official labor unions was associated only in part with the rise of independent unions or unions associated with parties of the Left. Leftist parties had succeeded hardly at all in linking up with labor unions in the waning years of PRI rule, Middlebrook also shows. Héctor Cary and Barry Carr have also, separately, pointed to the relative weakness of labor-Left alliances, with Carr noting, nevertheless, that the Left has maintained a "constant presence" among workers since the Revolution. Independent unionism, Enrique de la Garza has shown, emerges in cycles—one each in the early 1970s and the early 1980s—but each ended without the independents being able to displace the official unions.⁴³

The effects of a labor union's extra-local links were complex, much more so than simple Left affiliation or independent status might imply. According to Charles Davis and Kenneth Coleman, these latter factors explain the likelihood that workers will protest and engage in election campaigns, but little else. The presence or absence of an assembly-line production process is the key explanation for the extent of class-consciousness and the focus of workers on seeking to shape the circumstances of their work. And the extent to which an industry is strategic has the decisive impact on the likelihood of class solidarity within a given union shop.⁴⁴ The impact of a multipartisan or a nonaligned labor movement remains to be seen, therefore, in Mexico's future.

Mexico's political transition from the late 1980s to the start of the twenty-first century featured the decline of the PRI's seven-decade rule and the weakening of the power of the imperial presidency and the official labor movement. The democratization of Mexican labor unions, however, lagged; the labor movement had been weakened, perhaps crip-

43. Héctor Cary, "La izquierda mexicana hoy," *MS/EM* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 1-33; Barry Carr, "Labor and the Political Left in México," and Enrique de la Garza Toledo, "Independent Trade Unionism in México: Past Developments and Future Perspectives," both in *Unions, Workers, and the State in Mexico*, ed. Kevin Middlebrook (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1991), Carr's quotation from p. 121.

44. Charles Davis and Kenneth Coleman, "Structural Determinants of Working-Class Politicization: The Role of Independent Unions in Mexico," *MS/EM* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 89-112.

pled, by economic and political changes, but labor unions had yet to find new effective ways to advance their interests and represent their members.

Political Continuities within Change

One timeless fact about Mexican politics has been the role of *camarillas*. Politics is the process of gathering friends as a means of accumulating power and influence. Personal ties evolve at the elite level, but also between the powerful and the powerless to bridge inequalities, provide resources, and build political support. Camarillas are built on the currency of inter-personal trust. Their sources, Roderic Camp has argued persuasively, have been family, education, and career. More than any other scholar Camp has traced meticulously and effectively the intricate networks of elites in Mexico and has set the standard for their study. He has also shown that this way of doing politics persisted even as Mexico's process of change accelerated. The "ultramodernizing" Salinas cabinet could, indeed had to, be studied in these same terms in order to understand its politics, bases of support, and pattern of distribution of gains.⁴⁵ Camp's research successfully and comprehensively shows that this scholarly approach unravels patterns in different segments of the Mexican elite, that is, in politics, the Roman Catholic Church, business, and the military, and that it lasts through time.⁴⁶

A second political continuity is more surprising. One undoubted change in Mexican politics in the 1980s was the rise to power of highly technically trained public officials. The Salinas cabinet could easily have done double-duty as the Ph.D.-studded economics department of a small first-rate university. The mainstream view in those years and in the 1990s was that *técnicos* were dogmatic and politically inept ideologues. Instead, Juan Lindau has shown that the number of technically trained foreign postgraduates in the Mexican elite rose at the same time that the proportion of lawyers and those with electoral careers in the elite fell. But these *técnicos* were not distinguishable in ideological terms from their political-trajectory predecessors, nor were they less likely to be prag-

45. Roderic Al Camp, "Camarillas in Mexican Politics: The Case of the Salinas Cabinet," *MS/EM* 6, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 85-107. See also, among others, his *Mexico's Mandarins: Crafting a Power Elite for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); *Crossing Swords: Politics and Religion in Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and *Entrepreneurs and Politics in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

46. On the circulation of Mexican political elites, see also Christopher Ballinas Valdés, "La redefinición de los espacios públicos. Formación y trayectoria de la élite gubernamental mexicana, 1970-1999," *Foro internacional* 41, no. 3 (July-September 2001): 530-66.

matic. They relied on the same tools of camarilla formation and development, occasionally corrected by *grilla* activity, that is, the development of networks and ties involving other camarillas via extensive and active socializing to supplement or rectify initial camarilla ties.⁴⁷ Mexican politicians had changed in important aspects of their biography, but less so in their behavior once in power.

A third continuity amidst change is the persistence of a church-state political cleavage that divides Mexican elites.⁴⁸ In the 1990s, the dispute over the proposed reform of the free history textbooks for Mexican schools brought elements of this ancient dispute to the fore. The first fierce public battle over the textbooks occurred in the early 1960s when their first edition was published. A reprise occurred in 1975 and, unexpected by President Salinas and then Education Secretary Zedillo, again in 1992. The 1992 outcome was dramatic: Education Secretary Zedillo was compelled to reject the drafts of the new textbooks and cancel their order. The actors over this profound cleavage included, to one side, the Roman Catholic Bishops and a panoply of social organizations directly or indirectly associated with Roman Catholicism, plus the peak business federations. On the other side were many Mexican intellectuals including some of the country's most prominent. The issues were constant as well: the depiction in the textbooks of the role of class conflict, business firms, the United States, foreign investment, the Porfiriato, the Roman Catholic Church, and key public figures (especially revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata) in Mexican history. The main change was that government leaders had challenged the bishops and the business federations in the early 1960s and mid-1970s but took their side in the textbook controversy of the early 1990s. In all three episodes, another constant was that the "political right" did not prevail.⁴⁹ In perhaps no other Latin American country today can these historical symbols continue to arouse such passionate fury—a testament to the weight of the past on contemporary Mexico.⁵⁰

47. Juan D. Lindau, "Schisms in the Mexican Political Elite and the Technocrat/Politician Typology," *MS/EM* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 217-35, and also his *Los técnicos y la élite gobernante mexicana* (Mexico: J. Mortiz, 1993).

48. In its very first issue, this journal's lead article was about the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico. See Asunción Lavrín, "El capital eclesiástico y las élites sociales en Nueva España," *MS/EM* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 1-28.

49. Dennis Gilbert, "Rewriting History: Salinas, Zedillo, and the 1992 Textbook Controversy," *MS/EM* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 271-97. For an analysis of the early 1960s textbook controversy, see Soledad Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México: La querrela escolar, 1959-1963* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1988).

50. For a more general discussion of the changes in church-state relations during the Salinas presidency, see Roberto Blancarte, "Las relaciones Iglesia-Estado: Del debate al des-

The Rise of New Political Organizations: Urban Protest and the Zapatista Insurgency

The 1985 earthquakes in Mexico City shook the ground and cracked the foundations of the political regime. In the face of official ineptitude or corruption, neighbors came to each other's assistance. The government and the PRI's political instincts shockingly failed in the midst of human tragedy. In time, however, the new urban movements at times collaborated and at times clashed with government authorities, but added a new layer of complexity to the politics of a seemingly ungovernable megapolopolis.⁵¹ In the city's poorest areas, the government and the PRI would combine reform and heightened controls. On the one hand, elections were instituted for block chiefs (*jefes de manzana*) and neighborhood association (*colonia*) presidents. By the late 1990s the Federal District would elect its mayor and legislative assembly. But the budget resources available to neighborhood association presidents was minimal; their role remained principally to solicit services from higher authorities in exchange for political support. These new local officials could not be reelected, thereby preventing them from building a stable political base of their own. Indeed, Susan Eckstein found that the government and the PRI exerted tighter control over urban poor neighborhoods in the late 1980s than when she had earlier done field research there in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵²

The persistence and toughening of old-fashioned controls may have backfired on the PRI. Beginning with the 1988 presidential election, opposition parties outperformed the PRI in the Federal District. In 1997, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was freely elected to govern the city; his party would lead the electoral results in each subsequent national and local election in the Federal District. By the 2003 elections for the legislative assembly, the PRI was relegated to the status of a minor party in the Federal District; the PRD won fourteen counties (*delegaciones*) and the PAN won the other two.

There was also substantial rural popular mobilization.⁵³ The single

orden," in *La reconstrucción del Estado: México después de Salinas* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998), 147-61.

51. Paul Lawrence Haber, "The Art and Implications of Political Restructuring in Mexico: The Case of Urban Popular Movements," in *The Politics of Economic Restructuring: State-Society Relations and Regime Change in Mexico*, eds. Maria Lorena Cook, Kevin Middlebrook, and Juan Molinar Horcasitas (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1994), 277-303.

52. Susan Eckstein, "Formal Versus Substantive Democracy: Poor People's Politics in Mexico City," *MS/EM* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 213-39.

53. See Michael W. Foley, "Agenda for Mobilization: The Agrarian Question and Popular Mobilization in Contemporary Mexico," *Latin American Research Review* 26, no. 2 (1991): 39-74.

most dramatic instance of a new organization was, of course, the Zapatista insurgency, which made its public appearance on January 1, 1994, the same day as the NAFTA went into effect. A vast number of publications, most of them polemical or journalistic, have described, analyzed, praised, condemned, and interpreted this set of events. Four of them (two of which were published in this journal) deserve highlighting. In 1987, George Collier called attention to the increasingly complex social and political processes in the State of Chiapas. He argued that the state encouraged the long-standing process of peasantization—the shift of identity from "Indian" to "peasant" as part of a process to create a unified Mexico. The state also systematically fragmented local communities, seeking to weaken class-consciousness and to foment clientelism. The remaining indigenous communities were cast as clients of the state for schools, health, agricultural support, and so forth, whose fate was entrusted to "brokers" for resources.⁵⁴

In 1994, Collier added to that analysis to highlight the weak institutional presence of the state and the PRI in the eastern lowlands of Chiapas where the Zapatista insurgency first developed. Eastern Chiapas, he showed, had been a colonizing frontier relatively "unpeopled" as recently as the 1930s. In subsequent decades, it witnessed substantial immigration, deforestation, the development of alternative peasant organizations, and strong proselytizing by Evangelicals. The region's economy had been further hurt when the world price of coffee plummeted in the late 1980s at the same time as the Salinas administration was dismantling agricultural price support schemes, dissolving INMECAFE whose job had been to stabilize coffee prices in a recession.⁵⁵

The key role of Roman Catholicism, and in particular of Samuel Ruiz, long-time Bishop of San Cristóbal, features in nearly all accounts of social processes and events in Chiapas prior to the rebellion. John Womack gives a nuanced and far-ranging account of this notable bishop and his role. Womack emphasizes the conversion of Samuel Ruiz and the subsequent conversion of the people with whom he worked. Ruiz was not the "questioning kind" of bishop when he first arrived in Chiapas in 1960; he had not been predisposed to challenge the social order. But the experience of change in worldwide Roman Catholicism, including the Second Vatican Council, in which he participated personally, compelled him to re-think his premises. Ruiz learned about the conditions of his people, fostered their own understanding of their circumstances, and helped to

54. George Collier, "Peasant Politics and the Mexican State," *MS/EM* 3, no. 1 (1987): 71-98.

55. George Collier, "The Rebellion in Chiapas and the Legacy of Energy Development," *MS/EM* 10, no. 2 (1994): 371-82.

empower them to organize socially and politically. "Bishop Ruiz then proved himself a formidable manager," argues Womack. His promotion of catechism with a social conscience and the experience of participation in the life of the church would eventually foster the shift in the local and political fabric that would become the EZLN even if the bishop himself did not call upon his people to bear arms.⁵⁶

María Concepción Obregón synthesizes the factors that came together in the making of the Zapatista insurgency—the structural conditions, the migratory inflow, the drop in the international price of coffee along with INMECAFE's dismantling. She also explores conscious human action, including the role of the Roman Catholic Church, while highlighting the simultaneous role of Evangelical communities. Protestant religious practices were democratic and participatory; Evangelicals fostered literacy, translating the Bible into indigenous languages. In response, the Roman Catholic Church had to compete, triggering the behavior just described. Obregón describes as well the state's heightened repression of peasant movements in Chiapas in the 1980s and the state's attempt to build new clientele patterns in the early 1990s. Finally, she discusses the rise of the EZLN and its distinctive traits. Its use of violence has been limited and self-restrained, albeit important to advance its aims; it effectively used political symbolism, especially the values of dignity and respect for indigenous peasants; and it masterfully employed the mass media and the Internet.⁵⁷

Finally, Neil Harvey has provided a comprehensive historical account of the origins, evolution, and effects of the Zapatista insurgency. He focuses on how peasants contest the terms under which the political system has rendered them subordinate, exploring their challenges to material, political, and cultural circumstances. The construction of citizenship is the centerpiece of his analysis, calling proper attention to the agency of peasants themselves and noting the salience of concepts such as dignity. He emphasizes that the political mobilization associated with the Zapatista insurgency opened new political spaces, what he calls the "right to have rights" for peasants but also for others hitherto subordinated in Mexican politics and culture.⁵⁸

Urban social movements decisively accelerated Mexico's democra-

56. John Womack, Jr. *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader* (New York: The New Press, 1999), Part I; quotations from 24, 30.

57. María Concepción Obregón, "La rebelión Zapatista en Chiapas," *MS/EM* 13, no. 1 (1997): 149–200. On the role of Protestantism in Chiapas, see Jean-Pierre Bastian, "Violencia, etnicidad y religión entre los mayas del estado de Chiapas en México," *MS/EM* 12, no. 2 (1996): 301–14.

58. Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998).

tization. The Zapatista insurgency—dramatic, responsive to genuine social grievances, tactically impressive—had less clear long-term impact on Mexico's democracy. The insurgency neither spurred nor derailed the process of democratization, though it facilitated some electoral reforms in 1994. It has had little lasting effect on the balance between the major parties,⁵⁹ and it did not create a new party. Civic engagement and protest is, however, at the very core of democratic politics. Mexico's challenge is to permit, harness, and respond to urban and rural politics that affect public life beyond elections.

The Transformation of Political Institutions: Congress, the Supreme Court, and State Governments

The new political economy, the decline of the old regime's central political institutions, and the rise of new urban and rural protest movements set the democratic stage for the transformation of some long-existing but de facto impotent political institutions: the Congress, the Supreme Court, and state governments. The weakening of the imperial presidency and the PRI went hand in hand with the rise of the role of Congress. The changed role for the Supreme Court was part of a design to strengthen constitutional processes. The territorialization of politics also weakened the presidency and undermined the long-standing way of doing *all* politics in Mexico, namely, from Mexico City.⁶⁰

Congressional subordination to the presidency, noted earlier, was a long-standing trait of decades of PRI rule. The reasons for such an outcome became clearer once the president could no longer amend the constitution by relying only on PRI votes (1988), and even more so once the president's party no longer commanded a majority in one of the Congressional chambers (1997). Jeffrey Weldon's argument regarding the process of budget approval in Mexico applies more generally to executive-legislative relations. Weldon calls attention to the components of "metaconstitutional presidentialism," that is, the long-standing prevalence of unified government (one party controls the presidency and both chambers in Congress), a high level of party discipline, and presidential leadership of his party. The prevalence of metaconstitutional conditions greatly improved the likelihood that the president would channel his ini-

59. Cárdenas' attempt to show support for the Zapatistas seems to have backfired in Chiapas in the 1994 presidential elections, however. More Chiapanecos were attracted to Zedillo's slogans of peace and negotiation. See Suzanne L. Fiederlein, "The 1994 Elections in Mexico: The Case of Chiapas," *MS/EM* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 107–130.

60. For a first-rate case study of the loss of power of one important regional *cacique*, see Romana Falcón, "Esplendor y ocaso de los caciques militares. San Luis Potosí en la Revolución Mexicana," *MS/EM* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 265–93.

tiatives through Congress and that the latter would approve them; once these weakened, the ease of legislative approval declined.⁶¹

Increased opposition representation in Congress in 1988 and the installation of divided government did matter, as María Amparo Casar's evidence shows. Presidents became less inclined to submit bills to Congress; Salinas sought other ways to advance his program while Zedillo simply became much less active, focusing on the management of economic policy. The Salinas presidency, fresh from the PRI's first-ever loss of its capacity to amend the constitution on its own, in its first three years submitted only half as many bills to Congress as had the de la Madrid administration during its first half. The Zedillo presidency was the first to lose the PRI's majority in the Chamber of Deputies at mid-term. During its second half, Zedillo also submitted half as many bills to Congress compared to the Salinas sexenio's second three years. From the early to the late 1990s, the number of opposition-initiated bills tripled. Nonetheless, a countervailing custom helped to facilitate Congressional comity: In 1997–2000, 43 percent of all bills were supported by an oversized coalition that included the PRI, the PAN, and the PRD.⁶²

The Congress, an institution as old as Mexican constitutionalism, came alive at long last when the PRI lost the power to amend the constitution entirely on its own and required cooperation from at least one other party, usually the PAN. The Congress came into its own in 1997 when the PRI lost its majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Since then, no single party has gained the majority in the Chamber, and no single party has had a majority in the Senate since 2000. The Congress had to adapt its old rules and fashion new ones. It had to learn to live with budget procedures that required the enactment of the budget by December 31 and that lacked normal parliamentary instruments to negotiate over the regular budget, such as temporarily extending the life of the current budget past its termination deadline or enacting short-term budgets. It had to breathe new life into dormant congressional committees and find ways to obtain expertise notwithstanding the no-immediate-reelection rule for all members of Congress. It had to learn to live with presidents unaccustomed to being ignored or defied. The

61. Jeffrey Weldon, "The Legal and Partisan Framework of the Legislative Delegation of the Budget in Mexico," in *Legislative Politics in Latin America*, eds. Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 383. For additional evidence of Congressional weakness relative to the executive, see Luis Carlos Ugalde, *Vigilando al ejecutivo: El papel del Congreso en la supervisión del gasto público, 1970–1999* (Mexico: Instituto de Investigaciones Legislativas, Cámara de Diputados, Congreso de la Unión, 2000).

62. María Amparo Casar, "Coaliciones y cohesión partidista en un congreso sin mayoría: La Cámara de Diputados de México," *Política y gobierno* 7, no. 1 (2000): 183–202.

Congress did this, as Benito Nacif has well shown, by substituting disciplined party rule for presidential *dictat*.⁶³ Party leaders and politicians in each party's national executive committee behaved as tactical gladiators at the legislative arena. It was a new role for parties and the Congress.

The Supreme Court of Mexico oversaw the legal order of the authoritarian system while also providing some means of protection against abuse. As Pilar Domingo has shown, until 1996 the Supreme Court ruled that it had no jurisdiction over electoral codes and it declined to take on any cases perceived to be "political;" in these ways, it deferred to the powers of the omnipotent presidency, which controlled the appointment of justices and the budget of all the courts. The judicial system's scope for review had been based on *amparo* suits, designed to protect individual rights but also available to contest the legality or constitutionality of a law or other decisions. Supreme Court rulings in *amparo* cases, Domingo has noted, lack *erga omnes* effect; that is, they do not abrogate the law or act in question but only protect the affected plaintiff. "Only when the Court makes the same ruling for five consecutive cases is jurisprudence established, whereby lower courts must apply the same conclusion to all similar future cases."⁶⁴

In December 1994, President Zedillo's first legislative proposal was a constitutional reform to expand substantially the Supreme Court's judicial review powers and to accord it greater independence. In 1996, another reform gave the Supreme Court the authority to rule in cases pertaining to electoral codes. The impact of these reforms on the Supreme Court has been substantial, as Miguel González Compeán and Peter Bauer show.⁶⁵ There were only 42 constitutional controversies brought before the Supreme Court between 1917 and 1994, but 116 such controversies came before the Court between 1994 and 1997. One innovation was to enable different government units to sue each other before the Supreme Court. Between 1995 and 1998, 44 of those constitutional cases entailed a suit brought by a municipal government against a state government. After the 1996 reform, the Supreme Court also began to rule in cases involving electoral codes. In 1997, it ruled for the

63. Benito Nacif, "Para comprender la disciplina de partido en la Cámara de Diputados de México: El modelo de partido centralizado," *Foro internacional* 42, no. 1 (January–March 2002): 5–38.

64. Pilar Domingo, "Judicial Independence: The Politics of the Supreme Court in Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32 (2000): 705–35, quotation from p. 716. For an excellent summary of the Supreme Court's many institutional deficiencies before the 1990s, see Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo A.C. (CIDAC), *Reforma del sistema político mexicano* (Mexico, DF: Editorial Diana, 1990), chap. 6.

65. Miguel González Compeán and Peter Bauer, *Jurisdicción y democracia: Los nuevos rumbos del Poder Judicial en México* (Mexico: Cal y Arena, 2002), chap. 3.

PRD in this party's challenge against the electoral code of the State of Oaxaca and, in 1998, it ruled again for the PRD in its challenge against the electoral code of the State of Quintana Roo. At long last the Supreme Court fostered and upheld Mexico's democratic constitutionalism.

There have always been *Many Mexicos*, as Lesley Byrd Simpson's apt 1941 book title put it well.⁶⁶ Federalism is thus also an heir of the early Mexican republic, yet it was born anew in 1989 when the first-ever governor was elected from an opposition party—the PAN's Ernesto Ruffo in Baja California Norte. The Mexican constitution, on paper, gave considerable power to the state and municipal levels but, in fact, power in Mexico had been centralized in Mexico City and the presidency. In the 1980s, from time to time opposition parties won municipal elections but not until Governor Ruffo's election did the tide turn. In the early 1990s, the PAN won also the governorships of Chihuahua and Guanajuato and countless municipalities; the PRD won many municipalities, too. By the mid-1990s, Peter Ward and Victoria Rodríguez have shown, the new PAN state officials demonstrated greater concern with government efficiency and transparency in public budgeting than the PRI politicians they had replaced. In part because of the lack of resources of their own or transfers from the central government, opposition-party state officials enjoyed more autonomy from Mexico City than PRI local officials did.⁶⁷

In 2000, the PAN and the PRD governed eleven states (including the Federal District) that accounted for one-third of Mexico's population and nearly half of its gross domestic product. Adding municipal governments, PAN and PRD subnational executives governed two-thirds of Mexicans.⁶⁸ During the 1990s, the gradual spread of PAN and PRD subnational governments slowly accustomed Mexicans to rule from non-PRI politicians, persuading many that there was no risk of catastrophe—and possible improvement—from choosing as president someone not from the PRI.⁶⁹ In this way, democratizing changes at the national and subnational levels reinforced each other.

66. Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (New York: Putnam, 1941).

67. Victoria Rodríguez and Peter Ward, *Opposition Government in Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), chaps. 9 and 10. See also their *Political Change in Baja California: Democracy in the Making?* (La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1994), and *New Federalism and State Government in Mexico: Bringing the States Back In* (Austin, Texas: Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, Austin, 1999).

68. Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico: The Democratic Transformation* (Fourth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 180–81.

69. For studies of the risk aversion of Mexican voters, see Alberto Cinto, "Uncertainty and Electoral Behavior in the 1997 Congressional Elections," and Beatriz Magaloni,

The path from the end of the 1980s to the end of the 1990s was not always smooth, however. President Salinas undercut the very meaning of federalism because, as Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez has shown, he removed more state governors through dismissal or appointment to other jobs than any other Mexican president since the Mexican regime's consolidation in the 1930s. By dismissal alone, Salinas deposed twice as many state governors as any president since the early 1950s.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the deposed were all PRI governors; this exercise of presidential clout undermined the PRI at the state level. Salinas was also the first president to recognize opposition gubernatorial victories. Yet, magnanimity did not characterize all acknowledgements of opposition victory; in the early 1990s, the opposition had to win twice: first on election day, and then in the subsequent informal negotiations required to obtain national government recognition of these victories, as Todd Eisenstadt has shown.⁷¹

Throughout the 1990s there was also extraordinary variation in the extent of democratic practice across the thirty-one states of the Mexican federation, as Alfonso Hernández Valdez has noted. The regional range in the likelihood of democratic practices was best explained by the extent of income inequality within each state: the more unequal, the less democratic. States with significant indigenous populations and states where inter-party contestation was not yet based on agreed upon rules of the game are also less likely to feature democratic practices.⁷² Mexico was still riddled with authoritarian enclaves.⁷³ Democratization struggles had to be waged state by state at times, as in Yucatán, in battles against abusive state-level bosses.⁷⁴

Some of the local struggles to democratize politics achieved epic

"Is the PRI Fading? Economic Performance, Electoral Accountability, and Voting Behavior in the 1994 and 1997 Elections," both in *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion*, Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1999).

70. Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, "Inestabilidad política y presidencialismo en México," *MS/EM* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 187–216.

71. Todd A. Eisenstadt, "Thinking Outside the Box: Informal Electoral Institutions and Mexico's Political Opening," *Latin American Politics and Society* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 25–54.

72. Alfonso Hernández Valdez, "Las causas estructurales de la democracia local en México, 1989–1998," *Política y gobierno* 7, no. 1 (2000): 101–44.

73. For a general discussion of the problem of authoritarian enclaves, including but not limited to subnational problems, see Chappell Lawson, "Mexico's Unfinished Transition: Democratization and Authoritarian Enclaves in Mexico," *MS/EM* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 267–87.

74. Brian Turner, "Liberating the *Municipio Libre*: The Normalization of Municipal Finance in Yucatán," *MS/EM* 18, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 101–31.

proportions. Vikram Chand has well analyzed the transformation of civic society, the role of the Roman Catholic Church, and the grass-roots movement that took the PAN, first to fight electoral fraud in the 1980s, and eventually to victory in municipal and state elections in Chihuahua. In Chihuahua, this process changed the PRI as well, which successfully reorganized and repositioned itself to win back the governorship in the 1998 election—the first time in its history that the PRI had won the governorship in free and fair elections from the opposition. Chihuahua's state and municipal politics had multiple repercussions on both major political parties at the national level, leading the nation's democratization by example.⁷⁵

There are, finally, two paradoxical elements in the role of state and more general subnational politics in Mexico. First, José Sosa has demonstrated that Mexicans think about government by focusing first on the national government, which is understandable given a highly centralized tradition of rule. Citizens are twice as likely to know the name of the president of Mexico as they are to know the name of the local mayor, and they are also more likely to attribute capacities and responsibilities to the national than to the local governments; they are also more likely to blame the national government when things go wrong. Yet Mexicans also believe that the local government is the "closest" to them—even when they do not even know the names of these local officials.⁷⁶

Second, as Victoria Rodríguez has argued, PRI Presidents de la Madrid, Salinas, and Zedillo all pursued varying policies of decentralization to find new means to govern and retain power for their political parties (since they were ineligible for reelection)—what Rodríguez calls "retaining power by giving it away."⁷⁷ In unanticipated ways, this strategy served the PRI well in the long run. Old PRI bosses reviled President Zedillo for sharing power via decentralization. Yet, once the PRI no longer held the presidency after the 2000 elections, the party's best chance for survival, recovery, and patronage for its supporters was to hold on to state and local governments, newly empowered by Zedillo with authority and resources. The PRI, long the guardian angel of centralized power, welcomed the twenty-first century as an apostle of decentralization, federalism, and gubernatorial authority.

75. Vikram K. Chand, *Mexico's Political Awakening* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

76. José Sosa, "El gobierno más cercano: Percepciones ciudadanas sobre la administración pública en México," *Foro internacional* 42, no. 4 (October-December 2002): 809–30.

77. Victoria E. Rodríguez, *Decentralization in Mexico: From Reforma Municipal to Solidaridad to Nuevo Federalismo* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 140–51.

Parties, Public Opinion, and Elections

Since the late 1980s, the most noteworthy change in the political science research agenda on Mexico has been the sustained and expanded study of its parties, public opinion, and elections. Research on this topic did not just begin in the recent past, but the change in the meaning and significance of Mexican elections transformed the content and quality of the scholarship on Mexican elections.⁷⁸ The substantive change in the object of study elicited the scholarship; the available methods to study elections, drawn from elsewhere in North America and Western Europe, could at last be applied in Mexico.

Soledad Loaeza's magisterial document-based historical study of the PAN sets a new standard for scholarship on parties in Mexico.⁷⁹ She traces the PAN's origin and evolution from its birth in the late 1930s until its transformation in the 1990s as a fully competitive party capable of challenging the PRI in national and subnational elections. Loaeza probes the role of Roman Catholicism in the PAN's ideas, leadership, and membership over time and its complex relationship with entrepreneurs at various moments. She distinguishes between the PAN as a small protest party until the 1970s and its reshaping during the 1980s. The "new PAN" (*neopanismo*) featured the leadership of entrepreneurs and a much more politically active set of Roman Catholic lay people, especially in the north of Mexico and the Bajío region. She explores in some detail the importance of the territorialization of Mexican politics for the rebirth and growth of the PAN. She calls the PAN the "party of the regions" because of the differential and specific sources of the PAN's growth and transformation in Chihuahua, Baja California, Nuevo León, Sonora, Guanajuato, and Jalisco, notwithstanding commonalities in their shared opposition to rule from Mexico City and the important entrepreneurial and Roman Catholic core of the PAN's social base.⁸⁰ She explores as well the ideological pulls that contribute to the PAN's internal divisions, one in

78. For examples of previous research on Mexican elections, see Rafael Segovia, "La reforma política: el ejecutivo federal, el PRI y las elecciones de 1973," *Foro internacional* 14, no. 3 (1974); Rafael Segovia, "Las elecciones federales de 1979," *Foro internacional*, 20, no. 3 (1980); Silvia Gómez Tagle, "Balance de las elecciones federales en México," *Revista mexicana de sociología* 54, no. 1 (January-March 1992); Soledad Loaeza, *El llamado de las urnas* (Mexico: Cal y Arena, 1989).

79. Soledad Loaeza, *El Partido Acción Nacional: La larga marcha, 1939–1994. Oposición leal y partido de protesta* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999). See also her "Acción Nacional en la antesala del poder: 1994–2000," *Foro internacional* 43, no. 1 (January-March 2003): 71–102.

80. For differences in the styles of rule between PAN governors in Baja California and Chihuahua, see Yemile Mizrahi, "Dilemmas of the Opposition in Government: Chihuahua and Baja California," *MS/EM* 14, no. 1 (1998): 151–89.

the direction of becoming a full-fledged Christian Democratic party and another that would move the party toward anti-statist populist appeals characteristic of a neoliberal Right. Finally, she notes that the party has chosen to remain relatively small, concerned about its admissions criteria and practices, and zealously devoted to the political education of its members. Even as it held presidential power after the 2000 elections, the PAN was torn between its commitment to its ideals and the realities of politics—was it a sect or a party?

The PRD, as noted earlier, was born of the split within the PRI. The ex-PRIistas first coalesced with existing small leftist parties, eventually founding the PRD as a new party that soaked up many votes on the leftist end of the political spectrum. Kathleen Bruhn and Jean-François Prud'homme, each separately, have analyzed the PRD as it moved beyond the dazzling accomplishment of the Cárdenas candidacy in the 1988 presidential election in order to study why the party performed less well in the decade that followed.⁸¹ Each shows that the PRD retained substantial internal divisions that cost it several state and municipal elections. The PRD also lacked a strong party organization, which hindered attempts to develop more programmatic platforms, conduct poll-watching activities, organize campaigns, and govern effectively once elected. The PRD continued to defer to Cárdenas' towering presence despite his defeat in three consecutive presidential elections. Nonetheless, the PRD—along with Brazil's Workers Party (PT) and El Salvador's FMLN—is one of only three significant leftist parties founded in the last fifth of the twentieth century that demonstrated resilience and enjoyed substantial electoral results. It demonstrated a capacity to learn and to respond strategically in the Federal District elections of 1997 and 2003. It became a fixed star on the firmament of Mexican parties, creating a stable three-party system in the wake of decades of single-party dominance.

The scholarship on Mexican public opinion and elections has grown quickly.⁸² Some of its key findings can be summarized. Mexico has de-

81. Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997); Kathleen Bruhn, "The Resurrection of the Mexican Left in the 1997 Elections: Implications for the Party System," in *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion*, Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 88–113; and Jean-François Prud'homme, "El Partido de la Revolución Democrática: Las ambivalencias de su proceso de institucionalización," *Foro internacional* 43, no. 1 (January–March 2003): 103–140.

82. Jorge I. Domínguez and James A. McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Alejandro Moreno, *El votante mexicano: Democracia, actitudes políticas y conducta electoral* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003); Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds.,

veloped a national electorate. Over time, serious differences in terms of education and gender have narrowed. Broad orientations toward democratic politics increasingly permeate the polity. By the late 1980s, Mexicans were polarized in their assessments of various government policies, especially those bearing on the economy. Yet, while the level of issue polarization was high, the level of issue consistency was not. Attitudes toward some issues, such as the privatization of state enterprises, were not well related to other issues that are ordinarily considered to be part of the same economic worldview (attitudes toward free trade or foreign investment). In this sense, Mexican public opinion was not particularly ideological. Demographic variables explained little about the policy preferences of Mexicans.⁸³ Moreover, attitudes toward specific issues explained little about the voting choice on election day. Nor did demographic variables explain much about Mexican voting behavior—not even religiosity helps to distinguish between PAN and PRI voters. Long-standing practices to buy votes or coerce voters had not disappeared by the 2000 presidential election, but had become ineffective.⁸⁴

Three variables have proven to be the explanatory "work horses" for Mexican voting behavior: partisanship, attitudes toward the incumbent president's performance, and some assessment of the prospects for

Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion (New York: Routledge, 1999); Jorge I. Domínguez and Chappell Lawson, eds., *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Jorge Buendía, "Economic Reform, Public Opinion, and Presidential Approval in Mexico," *Comparative Political Studies* 29, no. 5 (October 1996): 566–91; Roderic Ai Camp, "Learning Democracy in Mexico and the United States," *MS/EM* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 3–27; Kenneth Greene, "Opposition Party Strategy and Spatial Competition in Dominant Party Regimes: A Theory and the Case of Mexico," *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 7 (September 2002): 755–83; Joseph Klesner, "The Mexican Midterm Congressional and Gubernatorial Elections of 1997: The End of the Hegemonic Party System," *Electoral Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 1997): 567–575; Ana Lorena de la O and Alejandro Poiré, "La agenda de investigación en torno a la aversión al riesgo," *La gaceta de ciencia política* 1, no. 1 (Fall–Winter 2000): 5–22; Marco Fernández, "La democracia pensada por los Mexicanos," *La gaceta de ciencia política* 1, no. 1 (Fall–Winter 2000): 23–36; Joseph Klesner, "The 1994 Mexican Elections: Manifestation of a Divided Society?," *MS/EM* 11, no. 1 (1995): 137–49.

83. For arguments and evidence that demographic variables did matter, see Charles Davis and Kenneth Coleman, "Neoliberal Economic Policies and the Potential for Electoral Change in Mexico," *MS/EM* 10, no. 2 (1994): 341–70; and María Fernanda Somuano and Reynaldo Ortega, "La identificación partidista de los mexicanos y el cambio electoral, 1994–2000," *Foro internacional* 43, no. 1 (January–March 2003): 10–38.

84. Wayne Cornelius, "La eficacia de la compra y coacción del voto en las elecciones mexicanas de 2000," *Perfiles latinoamericanos* 10, no. 20 (June 2002): 11–31; Ricardo Aparicio, "La magnitud de la manipulación del voto en las elecciones federales del año 2000," *Perfiles latinoamericanos* 10, no. 20 (June 2002): 79–99.

the economy. At times, retrospective economic voting has also been significant, though prospective economic voting seems to edge it out in explanatory utility.⁸⁵ These variables are remarkably similar to those that scholars ordinarily employ to explain voting behavior in the rest of North America and Western Europe; Mexican voters were not unlike citizens in other countries.

These findings surprised scholars of Mexican politics. It had been reasonable to suppose that religiosity would distinguish PRI and PAN voters, given the history of church-state relations in Mexico and the origins of these two parties. It had been reasonable to expect that issue-based, consistent ideological differences would shape voting behavior because so much political discourse has expressed ideological content. It had been reasonable to expect that partisanship would not explain much about voting behavior because the PRD is a new party, the PAN remains a party with a small membership even if its voter base has grown, and the PRI had long eschewed direct membership to rely upon indirect affiliation via its feeder sectoral organizations. Instead, the first two variables turned out not to matter while it became evident that partisanship is the single strongest and consistent predictor of Mexican voting behavior. (The Left-Right ideological spectrum helps to explain voting behavior but not on the basis of cross-issue consistency. As Alejandro Moreno has ably shown, it does so in part by tapping the PRI vs. anti-PRI vote as well as through abstract positioning.)⁸⁶

The 2000 presidential election was somewhat different because, in addition to the three key variables that had helped to explain voting behavior since the 1988 election, attitudes toward individual candidates mattered more, as Beatriz Magaloni and Alejandro Poiré have shown persuasively. The PAN's Vicente Fox successfully portrayed himself as the agent of otherwise unspecified "change," effectively making use of a "valence issue" (that is, an issue favored by everyone). His personality was a magnet for votes. In contrast, the PRI's Francisco Labastida ran a poor campaign that failed to take advantage of PRI President Zedillo's high standing and the good growth rate of the economy and, instead, embraced the theme of "change," incredible as it was for a PRI candidate after this party and its predecessors had governed Mexico for seventy-one years.

85. See, in particular, Beatriz Magaloni and Alejandro Poiré, "The Issues, the Vote, and the Mandate for Change," in *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000*, ed. Jorge Domínguez and Chappell Lawson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 293-320, and Alejandro Poiré, "Retrospective Voting, Partisanship, and Loyalty in Presidential Elections: 1994," in *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 24-56.

86. See Moreno, *El votante mexicano*, chap. 5.

Television and the mass media more generally played key roles in catapulting Fox. Chappell Lawson has explained the transformation of Mexico's mass media in the closing quarter of the twentieth century. He shows that journalistic norms changed and contributed to a more impartial and professional coverage of news. Commercial competition between media outlets also played powerful roles in shaping the behavior of the press and, more importantly, to experiment with more independent coverage. Changes in the media, in turn, affected political change because the media became decreasingly willing to play court jester to the PRI and began to cover the opposition and scrutinize government actions. "Media opening and democratization," Lawson argues, "are best conceived as interacting and mutually reinforcing processes."⁸⁷

In the 2000 campaign, viewers of Televisión Azteca formed a better opinion of Vicente Fox because, unlike Televisa, Televisión Azteca reported the news accurately and fairly. Television was also the venue for the two presidential debates that climaxed the campaign. The debates had little impact on informing viewers about the issues, but they solidified the Fox and Cárdenas vote while Labastida lost votes even from some in his core constituency. Negative political advertising also had a significant impact. Its effects resembled those of the debates: Fox's negative political advertising helped him solidify his vote base but Labastida's negative political advertising eroded some support within the PRIista base, as Alejandro Moreno has shown.⁸⁸

Finally, the emergence of a viable three-party system in 1988 made it possible for some opposition voters to behave strategically. Strategic opposition voting required a preference rank ordering whereby any outcome was preferable to PRI victory; strategic voters had to value the PRI's defeat above their own ideological preferences. Voters also had to assess the probability of victory of the different alternatives. The logic of the "useful vote" implied that voters defect from the trailing candidate in favor of the opposition front-runner. Strategic voting implies that there are two elections under way simultaneously: one between opposition candidates and another between the opposition and the long-ruling PRI. Beatriz Magaloni and Alejandro Poiré explore this issue convincingly for

87. Chappell Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), quotation from p. 6. See also Florence Toussaint Alcaraz, "Las campañas electorales del 2000 en televisión: El caso mexicano," *Revista mexicana de ciencias políticas y sociales* 44, no. 180 (September-December 2000): 39-56.

88. Alejandro Moreno, "The Effects of Negative Campaigns on Mexican Voters," in *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000*, ed. Jorge Domínguez and Chappell Lawson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 243-68.

the 2000 election and, in so doing, also shed light on a process that had led some opposition voters to swing between PAN and PRD voting for various national and subnational elections since 1988. Magaloni and Poiré show that a very small fraction of the electorate has the political savvy, information, and will to behave strategically. Nonetheless, that proportion nearly equaled Fox's margin of victory over Labastida in 2000 and was, therefore, highly important.⁸⁹

Thus, the Mexican voter was the hero of Mexico's democratization. No military coups, insurgencies, revolutions, back-room deals between politicians, or foreign intervention democratized Mexico. The voters gradually, prudently, and eventually decisively made the key decisions to open up Mexican politics and to do so on a schedule and manner of their choice—from single-party dominance to divided government at the federal level and between the center and the thirty-two units of the Mexican federation.

Conclusions

Mexico has vibrant politics and a long tradition of research in political science. This assessment of the scholarly study of Mexican politics has focused only on relatively recent research about political change in Mexico. The splendid contributions of scholars to the study of the *ancien régime* have regrettably not been discussed here. The results of the review, nevertheless, point to the magnitude of Mexico's recent political change and the achievements of a community of scholars within and outside Mexico in studying its politics. Scholarship on Mexico also has learned well from trends in political science research more generally. From the behavior of voters to the institutions of the national state, from the varieties of Mexico's regions to the intricacies of its labor politics, scholars of Mexican politics have recorded, described, and analyzed patterns of change with subtlety, clarity, and effectiveness.

89. Beatriz Magaloni and Alejandro Poiré, "Strategic Coordination in the 2000 Mexican Presidential Race," in *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000*, ed. Jorge Domínguez and Chappell Lawson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 269–92.