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BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN MEXICO

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To: Dean Arthur W. Herriott
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Lourdes Villalobos Torres, and entitled Building Democratic Institutions in Mexico, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN MEXICO

by

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Professor Eduardo Gamarra, Major Professor

The purpose of this study is to explore the process of building democratic institutions in Mexico, to examine how political parties shape the process of democratization, and how this process determines the degree of party system institutionalization.

The appearance of competitive politics brought new challenges and opportunities to parties in Mexico. The aim was to identify how the broader political and economic environment has challenged Mexico's political party system, and specifically the transformation of Mexico's political party system.

This research illustrates the logic of the deductive model, beginning with general, theoretical expectations about democratization and the economic reform. The empirical data were analyzed to determine whether the deductive expectations were supported by empirical reality. This study offers a comprehensive analysis that conciliates the 'political opening' that has produced favorable conditions for democratization and social integration, and the 'economic opening' that has counteracted since it generated social exclusionary processes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CNC	Peasants National Confederation
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FDN	National Democratic Front
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
PAN	National Action Party
PARM	Mexican Revolution Authentic Party
PCM	Mexican Communist Party
PFCRN	National Revolution Cardenist Front Party
PMS	Mexican Socialist Party
PMT	Mexican Workers Party
PNR	National Revolutionary Party
PPS	Socialist Popular Party
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PRM	Party of the Mexican Revolution
PSUM	Mexican Unified Socialist Party
Pronasol	National Solidarity Program

INTRODUCTION

My research will focus on building democratic institutions in Mexico, including an emphasis on legitimacy and efficiency. This research proposal looks mostly at the ways party system influence political outcomes, how political parties shape the process of democratization, and how building democratic institutions in Mexico will be the next environment facing and shaping Mexican politics.

My aim is to identify how the broader political and economic environment has shaped or challenged Mexico's political party system to understand the process of political and economic change in Mexico, and specifically the transformation of Mexico's political party system. This analysis purports to explain how political parties shape the nature of interests in society and respond to demands and interests of societal groups, and how they shape the political arena and are shaped by the political system as a whole. Following Mainwaring:

> "Parties shape how democracies function in a variety of ways. Even in cases where a party system is not institutionalized, parties reveal much about the political system, and elections are organized to a large degree around competing parties. They are the main agents of political representation and are virtually the only actors with access to elected positions in democratic politics. Parties dominate electoral politics, and democratic governments are elected through parties. As the primar actors in the electoral arena, parties provide access to government." [1]

An institutionalized party system makes a big difference in the functioning of a democratic polity. It is difficult to sustain modern mass democracy without an institutionalized party system. The nature of parties and party systems shapes the prospects that stable democracy will emerge, whether it will be

[1] See Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, Building Democratic Institutions.Party Systems in Latin America, Stanford University Press, California, 1995, p. 2 (We are not arguing that parties are the only agents of representation within democracy. Nor are we saying that parties dominate the policy-making process in every issue area. Popular interests can be voiced through a panoply of mechanisms, including unions, social movements, and corporatist arrangements. But parties continue to be the most important mechanism of mediation between society and the state. Where parties are weak, traditional forms of elite interaction tend to prevail, enabling powerful elites to 'capture' the state apparatus.)

shapes the prospects that stable democracy will emerge, whether it will be accorded legitimacy, and whether effective policy-making will result. The notion of an institutionalized party system is important here, in the words of Samuel P. Huntington:

> "Institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability... An institutionalized party system implies stability in interparty competition, the existence of parties that have somewhat stable roots in society, acceptance of parties and elections as the legitimate institutions that determine who governs, and party organizations with reasonably stable rules and structures." [2]

Therefore, it is appropriate to examine how the broader political environment has shaped and challenged political parties in Mexico since the 1980s. Undoubtedly, Mexico's political system has been affected by broader changes that take me to analyze how the party system in Mexico has affected the process of democratization, being less interested in how broader social and economic forces shape institutions, although Mexico at the same time also experienced the most severe economic crisis in memory, undermining efforts to shore up the often fragile democratic institutions.

Following a century of ostensible democracy in Mexico, democratic institutions in Mexico are still unfolding. As late as the mid-1980s, the PRI appeared to be the largest and strongest, certainly the most durable political party in Latin America. But the recent wave of democratization in Latin America created unprecedented opportunities in Mexico for parties to articulate their linkages with social and political actors, and thereby establish themselves as the primary mechanisms to express and channel interests in society.

Parties organize groups; or, because they are central to the competition for state power, their presence encourages groups to organize along party lines. The PRI in Mexico was almost rocked to its foundations as it attempted to respond to the demands of an unforgiving and interdependent world economy.

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[2] Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 12, in Mainwaring and Scully, Op. Cit., pp. 4-5

Since parties are constantly shaped by and respond to environmental challenges, it is not surprising that parties and party competition have undergone the striking changes analyzed here. It is also not surprising that the PRI was so affected by the economic and political crises of the 1980s and 90s.

My approach does not deny that party patterns reflect broader social, economic, or cultural processes, but it examines parties more as independent variables, that is, as institutions with important consequences for how political systems function. This study is organized in a sequence that will unify several reflections that have been already analyzed by Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully. They address the degree of party system institutionalization noting five key changes and the way they have affected parties. [3]

In the 1980s in most Latin American nations, the appearance of competitive politics brought new challenges and opportunities to parties. The first hypothesis deals with democracy that emerged in the 1980s in more Latin American nations creating new opportunities for parties. The second hypothesis is about the weakening of parties partially caused by the unprecedented economic crisis in the region. In Mexico the economic crisis promoted dissatisfaction with the PRI, which had dominated the political arena for more than half a century. A third major development that affected party politics in much of the region was the crisis and redefinition of the left. In most countries the traditional left faced profound dilemmas as the failures of real socialism that became too apparent to ignore. The fourth hypothesis has been the resurgence of a new anti-statist neoliberalism, opening new opportunities for other parties, like the PAN. The fifth hypothesis is the emergence of the electronic media, in particular television, which burst onto the scene as a major factor in political campaigns, in many cases reinforcing populist proclivities and weakening the control of party organizations over the electorate.

The last hypothesis, from my point of view, the political environment of democratization leads to fragmentation of the single party and the emergence of

[3] Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, Op. Cit., pp. 459-460

new parties, like the PRD in Mexico in 1988.

The issues mentioned above have reshaped party politics in Mexico and I will analyze the way these broad challenges, opportunities, and developments have affected parties and party competition in Mexico. I primarily emphasize how parties shape the process of democratization. In Mexico the exclusionary effects of extreme elite cohesion, along with reduced space for the discretionary enforcement of legal and administrative rules associated with economic liberalization introduced significant tensions in the basic structure of the Mexican political system.

The first hypothesis shows us how democracy emerged and its advent created new opportunities for parties during the 1980s. Mexico experienced in 1988 its most open and competitive elections in decades. It had contested the not completely fair elections in the early 1990s. Sometimes party behavior contributed to the crisis, and political leaders lost opportunities to strengthen democratic institutions. In the absence of reasonably coherent parties and an institutionalized party system, that capacity for response was weakened. Political parties, in spite of increased visibility, remained weak, and advances in citizen-based forms of political interaction occured in a highly fragmentary and unequal fashion.

The second challenge in the 1980s was the worst economic crisis of the twentieth century creating hard times and significant readjustments for the parties, especially the governing party, the PRI. The PRI had always used its close relation with the state to buttress its organization and garner mass support while limiting opportunities for other parties. However, by 1988 the PRI was weakened by nearly a decade of economic crisis and by its ties to the government's unpopular neoliberal economic policies. The party's leadership was unable to contain intraelite tension within its institutional boundaries. The PRI's abrogation of its informal social welfare pact with its traditional constituencies culminated in a rupture in the PRI leadership, an exceptionally

conflictive presidential campaign, and an election whose legitimacy has been disputed. In the immediate aftermath of the 1988 election, it was widely assumed that the door had been opened to a much more competitive, multiparty system.

The third point is when the traditional left faced a profound crisis. In Mexico, the opposition parties, especially on the left, have had great difficulty consolidating the gains they made in 1988. On issues like electoral reform, they have lost ground nationally while achieving some important state and local victories in their regional strongholds. Vote fraud has persisted in many parts of the country, and election outcomes are still negotiated between the government and the opposition parties.

> However, "there is a strong social democratic Left in Mexico, a party firmly committed to the democratic system, and with significant electoral support. It has a popular leader, though not policies for dealing with economic and social issues which are substantially different from the predominant free market ones." [4]

The fourth issue is after decades in which few political actors questioned the state's central role in promoting development, a new anti-statist neoliberalism emerged opening new opportunities for some parties. Now, to maintain governability without repression, the party system must either effectively channel the demands of social movements and other organized segments of society through competing political parties, or secure state-mediated concertation among conflicting organized interests. Moreover, the PRI must compete for power under a new set of electoral rules, enacted by the Congress in 1989-1990, that make it more difficult for the party to ensure its victories through fraud. Any significant deepening of the political reforms undertaken to date will require coherent and adaptable opposition parties with the capacity to negotiate with prospective constituents as well as with the

[4] Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, "Constructing Democratic Governance. Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1990s." The Johns Hopkins University Press, United States of America, 1996, p. 10

government and the ruling party's various factions.

The fifth hypothesis about the emergence of the electronic media, and in particular television, burst onto the scene as a major factor in political campaigns, in many cases reinforcing populist proclivities and weakening the control of party organizations over the electorate. Television also become increasingly important in shaping party competition in the 1980s and 1990s. The growing prominence of electronic media in campaigs presents new challenges to parties. The last hypothesis, the political environment of democratization leads to fragmentation of the single party and the emergence of new parties.

The particular way that parties and party leaders responded to each of these developments in the 1980s and early 1990s varied and the degree to which the party system is institutionalized has shaped the ability of key institutions and leaders to respond effectively to a rapidly changing environment. As electoral democracy becomes accepted as the mode of forming government, and as the enormous cost of weak party systems become apparent, perhaps leaders will pay more attention to the challenge of building democratic institutions and will govern through parties and with them. Despite the profound changes, parties remain crucial institutions in shaping the contours of democratic politics. The role of parties in Mexico has changed in key regards in the late twentieth century, but without a reasonably institutionalized party system in Mexico the future of democracy is bleak.

Today a new political thinking is an imperative of the times; pluripartidism in Mexico has been making dialogue capable to make analysis all the more important, and this analysis will be a contribution to it. The composition and consolidation of a democratic polity tell us that it must entail serious thought and action concerning the development of a normatively positive appreciation of the core institutions of a democratic political society, political parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, interparty alliances, and legislatures, by which society constitutes itself politically to select and monitor a democratic

government. Mexico's political party system could lead to a new political formula to restore some form of democracy.

Parties have not effectively used new opportunities for institution building. Personalism, unbridled clientelism, and corruption have eroded the legitimacy of political parties and often of democratic institutions more broadly. Parties and party systems shape democratic politics and sustained open political competition encouraging the institutionalization of a party system. In Mexico, the fact that competitive elections determined access to state power provided unprecedented opportunities for building democratically oriented parties.

A political change in Mexico will not come easily in a country that lacks a tradition of democratic accountability and self-reliance; but a working democracy will come and it will have two main objects of government. The organization of stability and the organization of change for institution building. This theoretical framework will highlight the distinguishing features of uncertainty inherent in Mexico's democracy, some theoretical issues about democratization as the experimentation with different types of controlled elections and with the partial restoration of the party system in Mexico.

Chapter One

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

The period that began with the recent wave of democratization during the 1980s has been a mixed blessing for party building: on the one hand, unprecedented opportunities created by democracy; on the other, unprecedented difficulties created by a severe economic crisis that discredited governing parties. Dominguez and Lowental are relevant here:

> "The appearance of competitive politics brought new challenges and opportunities to parties...The turn to democratic government in the 1980s meant a return to open elections and party competition involving real stakes. Open political competition encourages party building, since it gives political actors strong incentives to care whether they win or lose elections. No single factor is more propitious for the successful institutionalization of party systems than continuously having elections that are the principal route to state power." [5]

Yet, if the process of democratization brought new hopes for citizens and new opportunities for parties, it has also generated frustration and cynicism among citizens and created new responsabilities for and demands upon parties. Citizen frustration can be traced largely to economic failures, a theme we address in the next chapter. The weakening of parties was partially caused by the unprecedent economic crisis in the region.

Perhaps, parties have not met the challenges of representing interests, providing sustained support for governments and generating legitimacy. Rather than helping to resolve problems, parties exacerbated them. Historically, electoral and party reforms were employed as tactical devices to maintain the legitimacy of the system and the hegemony of the governing elite and the dominant groups within their instrument, the PRI. The PRI was designed as a clientelistic machine that distributed benefits to loyal organized groups and

[5] Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, Op. Cit ., p. 460

regional power brokers, thereby ensuring political control at the local level. Dominguez and Lowental also argue that:

> "In Mexico the PRI has been a way of life: a system of formal and informal rules, elite circulation, patronage distribution, and clientelist practices. Economic reform during the 1980s and 1990s, however, challenged traditional sources of power by redefining relations among all social, economic, and political forces in the country. Structural reforms including trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization led to the appearance of new players, to the decline of corporatist structures, and to the weakening of the PRI." [6]

Nevertheless, since the 1960s -especially since the violent suppression of the student protest of 1968- the Mexican system has been undergoing a process of gradual, accelerating erosion. Between 1978 and 1988 Mexico may be beginning a transition from a civilian form of organic authoritarianism to a more genuinely liberal form. At this time, Mexico lived under the rule of law and a system of government that, with only a little stretching, can be called democratic.

Coming off a period of rising expectations spawned by the oil boom of the late 1970s/early 1980s, the economic downturn seriously undermined the PRI and the political system, causing major divisions within the ruling elite, weakening corporatist controls over society, and giving rise to a growing number of independent popular movements and a surprising political opposition. As the regime lost its ability to reward the populace materially, its legitimacy and system of control weakened. This disintegration was marked by cycles of crisis and reform.

Rather than addressing the fundamental problems undermining the system, reforms were designed to buy time, and the result by the 1980s was a generalized crisis encompassing the entire system. The democratization wave since 1980 was dominated by analysts upon definitions and fundamentals on different patterns about democracy, along with the relationship between the actions of political actors and the kind of democratic institutions that arise from it.

6 Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, Op. Cit., p. 159

Cornelius, Gentleman and Smith assume that the 1980s brought a qualitatively different set of challenges to the system:

> "Mexico's leaders have brought their political system through a slow but significant process of transformation. This process came to be marked by several key characteristics: governmental control of the pace and direction of change, deliberate compacts between the state and the opposition, and a preference for gradualistic, incremental change." [7]

In 1982 the most powerful catalyst in the Mexican escalating process of political decay was its economic crisis. Until then, the legitimacy of the system had been based not only on its capacity to maintain order and security, to provide real increases in living standards. The literature analyzing Mexican political phenomena has focused largely on the official party system and its various dimensions, the recent political transition and the outcome toward democracy. According to Rogelio Hernandez:

> "The sharp fluctuations in support for the PRI and its opposition since 1988 are evidence of the persisting weakness of all parties and the continuing volatility of Mexican electoral behavior, which is influenced not by party ideology or policy proposals but by presidential activism and short-term government performance in solving economic and social problems." [8]

In the past, the principal function of the party system was to legitimize the regime by creating the appearance of competition against the ruling party, and by giving controlled voice to social forces willing to contest in the electoral arena. However, economic problems created new electoral opportunities for opposition parties such as the PAN and the constituted PRD crystallized principally around the popular figure of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas. They had a net effect of weakening the governing party withouth resulting in the

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[7] Wayne A. Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, Peter H. Smith, "Mexico's Alternative Political Futures," Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1989, p.12

[8] See Rogelio Hernandez Rodriguez, "La Reforma Interna y los Conflictos en el PRI," Foro Internacional 32 (1991), pp.222-49. In: Mainwaring and Scully, Op.Cit., p. 251

institutionalization of new ones.

By 1988, the PRI was weakened by nearly a decade of economic crisis and by its ties to the government's unpopular 'neoliberal' economic policies. Political control mechanisms developed over rmore than fifty years had lost much of their effectiveness in an increasingly complex, urbanized society. And also charismatic, populist oppostion party candidates on the left and right confronted the PRI's presidential candidate. New popular movements made claims against the state -and the party of the state- but were exceedingly skeptical of affiliating with any political party. In the immediate aftermath of the 1988 elections, it was widely assumed that the door had been opened to a much more competitive, multiparty system.

If, it is true that parties and party systems shape democratic politics, it is also true that sustained open political competition encourages the institutionalization of a party system. In Mexico the fact that competitive elections determined access to state power provided unprecedented opportunities for building democratically oriented parties.

Mexico is in a complex historical transition that let it go in the last decade through a profound and enormous search to transition to democracy; but the current democratic trend in Mexico raises many questions. A system of authoritarianism, corporatism, elitism, clientelism, and other nondemocratic features provided a strong justification and legitimacy for some not very democratic practices. William Smith, Carlos Acuna and Eduardo Gamarra argue that:

> "The critical importance of patron-client relations in Mexican politics historically lay in the centrality of political fragmentation...In a fragmented polity, governance as a whole tends to rely primarily upon hierarchical and segmented networks of patronage whose reproduction is critically contingent upon the discretionary exercise of state power. Power relations tend to be grounded in hierarchical ties that insure loyalty and obedience in exchange for protection against equal legal treatment." [9]

[9] William C. Smith, Carlos H.Acuna, and Eduardo A. Gamarra, "Democracy, Markets, and Structural Reform in Latin America," North-South Center, University of Miami, 1993, p. 268

This was the predominance of PRI's rules until political reforms came into the scene. Mexico underwent not only a transition to democracy in order to open the political system, but also a transition from the Keynesian model, known as industrialization by import substitution to the neoliberal model of economic opening and internationalization of economy. The target of this process was the liberalization of markets, to increase the efficiency of the economy through the reduction of the state's size and its regulatory function. A new model based more on private initiative and market principles became fashionable, the neoliberal policies shaped by the new orthodoxy. At least rhetorically, Mexican government has committed itself to carrying out economic reforms based upon the market and reemphasizing the private sector.

The resurgence of economic liberalism had an important impact on party politics, especially on the right side of the political spectrum that has to consolidate its political project. It often remains divided between a traditional right that is statist in policy orientation, and the new liberal right, which is generally younger, more aggressive, and self-confident.

Despite the prominence of a renewed liberal discourse, a policy orientation and the efforts of many leaders to undertake state reform, the right has not made great electoral inroads. In Mexico, the PAN, the standard-bearer for the new liberalism had stalled by the late 1980s after a period of dynamic electoral growth. Even so, the combined effect of the shift among parties of the left toward more moderate politics, together with a revitalized right, indicates that the center of political gravity within party systems shifted to the right during the 1980s. Much of its thunder had been quelled by the PRI, whose eagerness to adopt the opposition's free-market policies has made the PAN less attractive.

In early Mexico,1988, the PRI's hegemony was crumbling under pressure from diverse political forces both from within and without the party. The appearance of the opposition brought political consciousness of Mexicans. In the 1990s some of the challenges confronting democracy in Mexico had been the

persistence of traditional power structures, the inequality and traditional elite that limited mass political representation through coercive labor systems and various formal and informal political mechanisms.

The most recent PRI schism occurred in 1988 elections, choosing the party's presidential candidate. It proved to be the most consequential division in party history. It led to the formation of a broad electoral front on the left in support of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas candidacy, a crisis of regime legitimacy in the months following the dispute, the formation of a neo-Cardenista opposition party to the left of the PRI in 1989, and some potentially significant changes in the federal electoral laws. Part of what distinguished 1988 from previous schisms in the party was that the neo-Cardenistas had a perceptibly different political and economic agenda and a social base that included key elements of the PRI's traditional constituencies (peasants and, urban workers). Together, this represented a more fundamental threat to party unit than any in the past.

Among the three sectors of the official party, the agrarian sector suffered the most precipituous loss of mobilizational capacity, as it was demonstrated by the 1988 elections. While Salina's margin of victory in his presidential elections came from the country's most rural electoral districts, analysis of the election results shows that the PRI had its greatest difficulties in those districts where party's congressional candidate was affiliated with the CNC (as opposed to the labor or popular sector) and where the Cardenista front had a presence. Mainwaring and Scully are relevant there:

> "Although an electoral opposition was necessary to legitimate the PRI, the past two decades of electoral fraud, manipulation of the electoral rules, and the PRI's treatment of opposition parties have actually eroded the regime's legitimacy." [10]

To increase the regime's legitimacy, a protagonist of state-sponsored development was President Carlos Salinas -1988 to 1994-, who initiated

[10] Mainwaring and Scully, Op. Cit., p. 267

sweeping state reforms and undertook the most thoroughgoing restructuring of the Mexican economy. Salinas also was identified unambiguously with the PRI's reformists and criticized electoral fraud perpetrated by the PRI calling for a major strengthening of congressional power vis-a-vis the executive branch, and advocated fundamental changes in the relationship between the state and society.

Salina's provocative proposals for modernizing Mexico's political life went far beyond anything attempted in De la Madrid's administration. Salina's promise of 'electoral transparency', a clean, credible electoral process, could be kept only with the cooperation of skeptical elements of the party's leadership, most of whom had a perceived personal stake in maintaining the status quo in matters of electoral management. In many ways, the 1988 elections marked the opening of a new era in Mexico's political history.

President Salinas successfully governed Mexico for six years by fueling expectations of better things to come; he offered visions of a first world Mexico propelled into modernity by the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Those expectations became a powerful political tool for the ruling party. Many voters were afraid that the Salinista economic reform and its expected benefits would be thwarted by the arrival of the opposition into power. In this context, Donald Schulz and Edward Williams describe this process in Mexico as follows::

> "Democratization poses serious risks and costs for both the PRI and the president... At some point, the PRI might become just another party, one of several contending for public office... There is a temptation to limit, halt, or reverse the reform process. There is a great deal of ambivalence about democracy in the mexican political culture. There is an attraction based on an idealized notion of democracy and the benefits often associated with it, but there is also a deep fear of the unknown and the destruction of a political arrangement that has maintained order and security for a long time." [11]

[11] Donald E. Schulz and Edward J. Williams, Mexico Faces the 21st. Century, Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., U.S.A., pp.188-189.

In this context, the current process of democratization in Mexico occured simultaneously with a deep legitimacy crisis of its political system, which is necessary to solve in order to give stability to the political regime to increase the legitimacy of the state, and the democratization process per se. The most difficult task will be that of critiquing existing institutions and developing new ones within the new democratization process. Although, according to Denise Dresser:

> "Clean elections are a necessary condition for democracy, but they are not sufficient. Mexico must confront other structural issues. Free elections cannot assure democratic consolidation if the playing field among political parties is not level... It is unclear that democracy will emerge if there is no commitment to an open debate over policy issues, and if there are no mechanisms by which to hold government officials and other political actors accountable to society and the law." [12]

Reviewing Mexico's predominant political style, it has been presidentialist, clientelist, and patronage-driven. This style has created a world antithetical to democracy, where personal relationships prevail, and the logic of representation functions intermittently. Presidentialism in Mexico has been very unique, within an authoritarianism model of governing, Mexico developed a highly centralized state with a strong presidency that dominated the system at all levels. Mainwaring specifically affirms that:

> "Presidentialism may negatively affect the possibilities for democratic consolidation, especially in multiparty systems, and excessive focus on institututional analysis that underplays issues of domination.[13]

Mexico's president now is being pragmatic and moderate in both domestic and foreign policies. Hence the opportunities exist not only for a new democratic era, but also for the United States to cement its relations with a

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[12] Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, Op. Cit., p. 163

[13] Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela,"The Failure of Presidential Democracy," The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1994, p. 220.

whole new generation of centrist democrats. Zedillo's administration (1994-2000) has been recognizing opposition victories in several states but has also failed to punish PRI governors who have committed electoral fraud or resorted to repression and intimidation to maintain themselves in office.

In reference to opposition, the conservative National Action Party (PAN) emerged as the short-term beneficiary of the economic collapse and used popular disaffection with the ruling party to make significant electoral inroads. President Zedillo expressed commitment to reform the judiciary with a prominent member of the PAN as attorney general. But the tardiness of these efforts and the difficulty of overcoming decades of distrust and opacity explain the lack of public confidence in state institutions and political parties.

During the past ten years Mexico has witnessed the emergence of autonomous nongovernmental organizations and informal networks devoted to monitoring elections and promoting governmental accountability. The political activism of these groups has revealed a burgeoning process of citizen participation and consciousness, but also reflects public distrust with established political parties, inherited from decades of authoritarian rule. Following Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully:

> "When a party system is not fullly institutionalized, a multitude of actors competes for influence and power, often employing non-democratic means. Democratic legitimacy rests on claims that cannot be established without parties and elections... Elections must be fair and must be the means of constituting governments... Parties give people a channel for political participation, establishing a linkage between citizens and government." [14]

President Zedillo promised to delink the party from the government and to reform the PRI. Zedillo may be too constrained by political commitments and institutional legacies to push forward a significant political modernization agenda. Mexico has embarked upon a path that may lead to more liberal,

[14] Mainwaring and Scully, Op.Cit., p. 24

competitive, and participatory democracy. The time that will take is uncertain, but the process already started, to choose the best path to democracy. Democratization is a significant topic of critical importance to Mexico, especially at the present time, and a first-order priority is to be clear about what Mexicans have in mind when they speak of democracy. Przeworski's purpose is clear when he states the origins and nature of the uncertainty generated by democracy:

> "Democracy is a system in which the politically relevant forces subject their values and interests to the uncertain interplay of democratic institutions and comply with the outcomes of the democratic process... when most conflicts are processed through democratic institutions..., within some predictable limits, and they evoke the compliance of the relevant political forces." [15]

In politics, the forces between the principal political parties have changed substantially. The efforts by Mexico to devise democratic structures constitute a hopeful and a progressive sign. The new choice is a new political profile to strengthen the Mexican political system, a qualitative change; and, this is precisely the issue Mexico face today.

The new Mexican democratic trend, its dynamics, will show how permanent it is likely to be, the form of democracy that takes place in Mexico, the elements of historical Mexican political culture that operates in favor of a democratic transition and those that continue to impede it. About the contemporary social movements and institutions that support democracy will see whether these are stronger and better institutionalized now that in earlier epochs.

The 1994 presidential election marked a significant step forward in Mexico's unfinished transition to a more competitive, democratic system of governance. However, even though the critical importance of elections was

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15 Adam Przeworski, "Democracy and the Market," Cambridge University Press, United States of America, 1991, p. 51.

widely recognized, one of the major parties (the PRD) did not accept the results and several groups including the Zapatista rebels, continued to disqualify the rule of law and reject established institutions and political organizations. Although the 1994 elections were generally perceived as clean and free, the structural inequalities of the political system persisted.

The beginning of the EZLN and the Chiapas conflict had determinant influences in the transformation of the political panorama. Thus, the changes do not imply per se a democratic transition, the State reform requires a dialogue with the predominant political parties: PRI, PAN and PRD to guide the country.

The new modernization is coming with a new electoral process without clientelist effects, as it happened in the last political and electoral reform in the federal elections of July 6, 1997, that implied a new process and a change in the political parties system of ordering and strengthening their own institutions. The political system in Mexico will need to face the new millenium focused in a strictly change, a legitime institutionalization with a solid, rigurous and stable politics.

Particular fears have been expressed for the future of newly established democracies, which are rather consistently described as 'fragile,' and lacking in legitimacy. Theoretically 'democratic stability' has to be implanted encouraging persistence and durability to follow, and it requires a widespread belief among elites and masses in the legitimacy of the democratic system. Following Ernest Bartell:

> "Only a vigilant and competent government, capable of astute strategy and artful negotiation with business leaders and their adversaries, will be able to assure democratic equilibrium." [16]

The new presidential pre-candidates for the year 2000 is an issue that will be addressed. How they will contend within their political parties that they are representing, and whether it is a new beginning in the Mexican democratic life.

[16] Ernest Bartell, at.al., Op.Cit., p. 289.

They will have to formulate new answers, to get new projects, and to know which men proposed by the political parties are the most capable, with the idea of strengthening several aspects of Mexican political life.

Predominant Behavior in Political Parties and Political Leaders.

We related above to parties and party systems as institutions and procedures that remain fundamental for democratic practice. This chapter intends to address several issues about the political parties debate that is taking place in Mexico. It leads also to a detailed scrutiny of the events which occurred in Mexico throughout 1994 and early 1995, with emphasis on the new electoral opportunities. I also analyze the predominant behavior in the main political parties and their political leaders in Mexico.

Parties differ sharply according to ideology, organization, degree of discipline and cohesion, and linkages to the state and society; however, there is a strong correspondence between ideology and type of party, and parties are taken as bridges between state and society. Pzeworski mentions the importance of political parties participation:

"Democracy is a system in which parties lose elections." [17]

The transition to democracy in Mexico in such a decade is nothing short of remarkable indeed, how did such a remarkable transition to democracy in Mexico come about? The power dispute by the political parties with the view to the year 2000 has to have a real legitimation to find the best answer for a nation; the political parties and confrontation has to bring alternatives of government, or overcoming deeply rooted authoritarian legacies, which encompassed a prolonged period of a lonely political party tutelage, the PRI that has been

[17] Adam Przeworski, "Democracy and the Market," Cambridge University Press, USA, 1991, p. 10.

governing Mexico since 1929. From the left, dissident former members of the PRI were joining socialists, populists, and nationalists to form a Frente Democratico Nacional (National Democratic Front, or FDN) in support of Cardenas' presidential candidacy. Parties are fundamental actors in shaping the political landscape, they also shape the social structure, economy and culture. Mainwaring is relevant there:

> "Parties shape how democracies function in a variety of ways. Even in cases when a party system is not institutionalized, parties reveal much about the political system. They are the main agents of political representation and are virtually the only actors with access to elected positions in democratic politics. [18]

When headlines everywhere announced that Cuauhtemoc Cardenas was winning in the crucial voting of Mexico City, July 6, 1997, it was known that it may not be the last PRI government in modern Mexican history, but it may very well be a transitional one. When parties fail, just long-standing democracies can give the presence of alternative organizations in society that can act as representatives; and, weak ties between parties and social classes continue to pose a structural impediment to democratic stability. Following Mainwaring:

> "Democratic consolidation requires the establishment of political parties that offer competing choices, political parties that really compete for the popular vote, and that afford the relative stability necessary for democratic accountability." [19]

The possibility that PRD leaders Cardenas or Munoz Ledo might win the presidential election of 2000 cannot be disputed, and this could be said of Vicente Fox, panista leader too. They had a share of this singular and historic opportunity in his hands. Their role, however, is intimately connected to this ability to control and direct a motley group of supporters.

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[18] Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, Op. Cit., pp. 399--400.

[19] Scott Mainwaring, "Political Parties and Democratization in the Southern Cone," Comparative Politics, Volume 21, Number 1, October, 1988, p. 98.

Many analysts argue that a definitive constitutional framework about democracy is needed, others feel that democracy will come through doing things together than by signing pacts. The competitive electoral politics will make a major comeback in Mexico with the presidential election of the 2000. As an institutional requirement of democratization we could see the increasingly open nature of electoral contests that will bring new opportunities for building democratic institutions. Following Mainwaring:

> "Institutionalizing a party system is important to the process of democratic consolidation...is difficult to sustain modern mass democracy without an institutionalized party." [20]

It is also important to mention that Mexico has no real history of party politics. In the nineteenth century, two movements or sets of ideas, subsumed under Liberal and Conservative labels, emerged. Their confrontation was often violent and uncompromising, provoking long periods of civil war. Although many incipient parties were founded, they were short lived and lacked any significant organizational structure. In democracies, parties are established to obtain political power. Mexico has little historical experience prior to 1988 with party competition. I will analyze the present PRI, PAN and PRD, as the major parties in Mexico's political party system.

The PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Electoral Trends

In 1929, most parties were squelched by the emergence of the government-controlled National Revolutionary Party (PNR). The factions came together to form the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), a party that has dominated Mexican politics ever since. General Lazaro Cardenas (1934-1940), furthered the development of the PRI in three ways. First, he cemented popular

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[20] Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, "Building Democratic Institutions," Stanford University Press, United States of America, 1995, p.1.

loyalty to the revolution by pushing through major reform measures such as an extensive agrarian reform, labor reforms, social welfare measures, and the nationalization of foreign-owned petroleum companies.

Second, he organized the official party to incorporate its constituents into sectoral organizations based on occupation (i.e., peasant, labor, 'popular,' or state employee, and military groups; Third, by his own behavior after leaving office, he established the norm that past presidents do not continue to rule behing the scenes. Cardenas's decisive actions during his presidency reconstituted the most basic structures of Mexican politics.

After Cardenas, the Mexican political system entered a prolonged era of political stability, lasting from 1940 to 1968. The prolonged crisis of the Mexican regime began with a clearly defined event, the massacre of students in the Plaza of Tlatelolco, Mexico City, in 1968. Tlatelolco showed the regime reduced to the use of massive force to control the public arena and further displayed the regime using such force against demands that were central to the legitimacy of the revolutionary heritage.

The PRI sought to preserve the progresive elements of the revolution, while institutionalizing them and making government coherent and predictable. It held firmly to the reigns of power in Mexico, preserving stability. PRI leaders serve six-year presidential terms and generally handpicked their successors, who, having the support of the PRI political machine were able to count on electoral success.

The PRI has variously been known as a nonpolitical technocratic elite that runs Mexico -embracing both the right and left of the political spectrum- in the absence of multiparty democracy. From 1929 to the present day, the PRI, the longest governing party in the world, has pursued moderate land reform, capitalist development and industrialization, while vigorously fostering Mexican nationalism. In Mexico, the party was established to retain (not acquire) political power. This simple fact suggests that the PRI does not truly qualify as a political

party, it redefines the role of political parties in Mexico and affects democratization. Following Gil:

> "The PRI is not a party; we consider it to be a placement agency that does outreach work at election time. It is not a party, because a party gambles its fortune at election time, so to speak. The PRI does not do this, because it uses government monies; it doesn't jeopardize its own funds. This is why it is not a party but a mere government agency." [21]

However, the PRI was structured to dominate the political spectrum for a long time. During the presidency of Luis Echeverria (1970-1976), to maintain political stability, he sought to cover with the tried and true tactics of 'populist philanthropy,' spending heavily on agrarian reform, food, education, housing, and health while also promoting economic expansion. These positive policies, combined with repression, indeed seemed to have brought the situation under control by the mid-1970s, without the need for substantive political concessions.

Lopez Portillo's administration (1976-1982) was saved from having to impose an unpopular austerity program by the very timely confirmation of massive petroleum deposits along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. His government borrowed heavily on projections of growing oil production and rising prices, and prosperity continued into the early 1980s. Then, as petroleum prices unexpectedly entered a severe slump, Mexico found itself unable to service its international debt.

The strategy of overextending economically to confront the crisis of political legitimacy reached its limit; and the Mexican crisis ripped the cover off what came to be known as the Third World debt crisis. When Lopez Portillo designated his successor Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-1986), he began the process of reorienting Mexican economic policy from the politically driven populism of the 1970s toward an increasing commitment to neoliberal orthodoxy. Neoliberal adjustment was painful in Mexico, the costs were born

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[21] Carlos B. Gil, Hope and Frustration. Interviews with Leaders of Mexico's Political Opposition.A Scholarly Resources Inc., U.S.A., 1992, p. 126

disproportionately by the poor, the peasants, and the workers. The rich got richer and inequality increased.

By the 1980s, pressures to reform the PRI system intensified. The one-party system was increasingly revealed to be rife with corruption, while opposition parties, such as the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) on the left and the National Action Party (PAN) on the right, complained of electoral fraud.

The economic crisis and the neoliberal response were the progenitors of a renewed political crisis that emerged in 1988. Salinas entered office with less political legitimacy than the PRI had had at any time since 1970 but without the economic means to spend his way out of the hole, as Echeverria had done.

Under these conditions of chronic crisis and endemic corruption,on January 1994, just as NAFTA was going into effect, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) initiated an armed uprising in the most southern state of Chiapas. In the space of a few months, assassination claimed the lives of an archbishop; the PRI's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, and a former PRI party chairman. Salinas replaced him with another economic technocrat, Ernesto Zedillo, who paced strong opposition from the PAN (Diego Fernandez) and the PRD (Cardenas). These were important signs of the continuing decline of the PRI's hegemony at the local and the regional levels. As John Peeler confirms:

> "Corruption, deception, and incompetence seemed to be the trademarks of the PRI regime." [22]

In January 1995, in addition to coping with the peso crisis and its political fallout and continuing inconclusive negotiations with the Zapatistas, the Zedillo government also sought and secured a pact with the principal opposition parties to guarantee the credibility of future elections.

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[22] John Peeler, "Building Democracy in Latin America," Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. United States of America, 1998, p. 123

Nevertheless, the Mexican party system and the political system as a whole has been clearly changing. The PRI is without doubt losing ground, and the PAN and PRD are gaining it. Mexico cannot longer be regarded as a hegemonic party regime, even though the PRI remains the ruling party nationally and in most states.

As we can see in figure number 1, as the PRI's power decreased in society, the opposition became stronger, changing the behavior of the Executive, Judicial and Legislative powers, and the federal government. The PRI's period with high stability was since its formation until the students' movement in 1968, when it suffered a prominent lack of credibility. Then came a period of moderate stability during the 1970s with some reforms toward a new political democratic tendency.

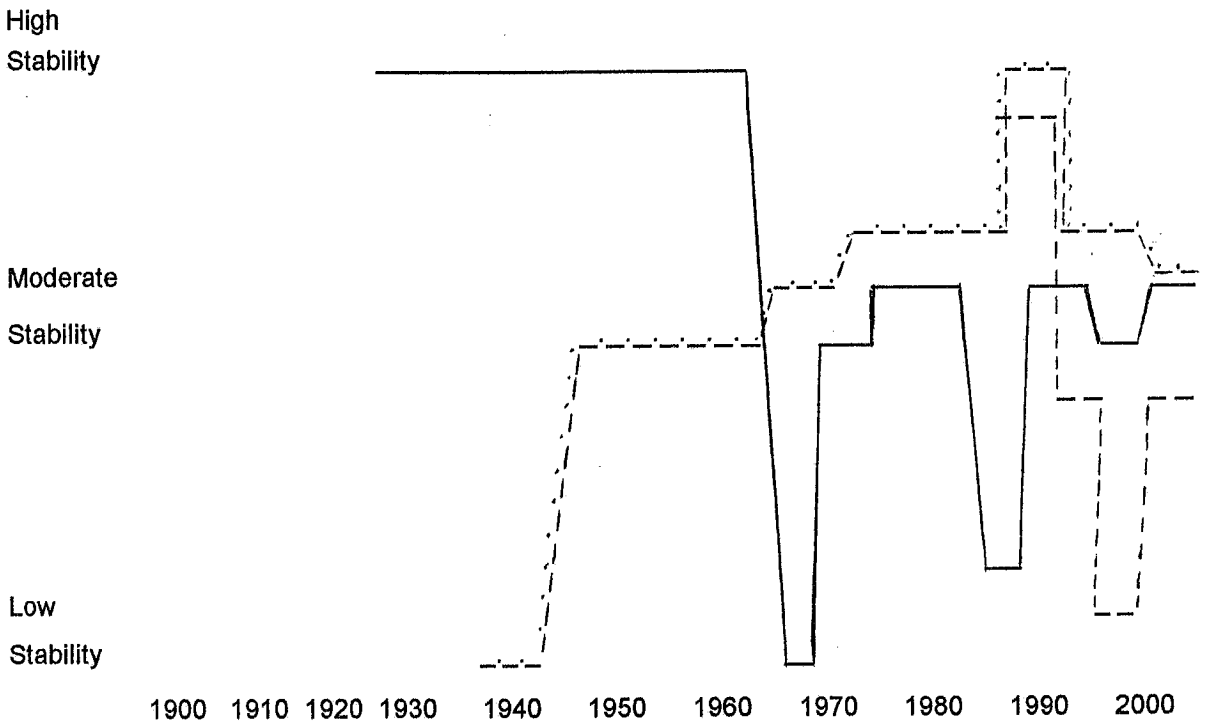
The PRI's actions in 1988 revealed that it was tacitly and ideologically slipping to the right of the political spectrum., which caused some internal factions to dissociate themselves further. Members of the PRI's center-right and center-left began to identify more with thinkers in the PAN and PRD. Then, electoral reforms became powerful political tools for the ruling party, and just in the new presidential candidacy in the 2000, the PRI will have to work hard in order to get votes and reestablish its credibility.

Considering the PAN in the figure since its formation in 1939, it had moderate stability, and specifically in the 1980s it was an uncontainable advance of the right, giving this party the possibility of coming to power in the year 2000.

Meanwhile, the PRD became a new party, that it seemed to be stronger than it was in the presidential elections in 1988, when it presented high stability. Its most difficult task will be to persuade the Mexican left into one single, cohesive body, as a vehicle to make leftist unity, a reality in the 2000 presidential elections.

FIGURE # 1

MEXICAN POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. *



* This figure corresponds to a political prospective with the major political parties in Mexico today: PRI, PAN, PRD.

The power role being played by political parties in Mexico, is perhaps more formal than real, particularly since 1990. Mexican people have a clear inclination toward change, and in this sense Mexico is not a conservative society. There is dissatisfaction and Mexican society does not seek radical changes; rather it prefers gradual ones. The most appropriate characterization of

Mexican society today within the figure would be moderate stability. Majority characterize politics as moderates.

It is within this larger historic framework that the history of the political parties has taken place in Mexico. As the diagram shows above, before 1988 the conservative National Action party was the most successful long-term opposition party. Despite their intense ideological disagreements, leaders of PAN, PMS, and FDN joined together in the Democratic Assembly for Effective Suffrage to organize a natonwide opposition poll-watcher system. The National Democratic Front (FDN) coalition, offered in 1988 by PRI dissident Cuauhtemoc Cardenas a nationalist, populist alternative to government policies, and the conservative PAN focused his criticism by Manuel Clouthier on PRI's corruption, electoral fraud, and economic mismanagement.

The electoral context in Mexico, as in any other polity, determines the function of parties. Parties reinforce the democratization process, which typically must incorporate the concept of party competition and exchange of power if elections are to determine who governs. If elections only provide a means to legitimize government leadership, withouth allowing for much change in actual leaders, then parties can contribute little to democratization.

The decision about whether to become more democratic or to retain authoritarian features from the past usually has been left to the incumbent leadership. Mexico presently is characterized by a semiauthoritarian political system, whose powers lie primarily within the executive branch, in the hands of the president. Opposition parties, primarily the PAN and the PRD, ensure constant pressure to democratize the system. But until very recently, the president has been unwilling to respond to the pressures.

The president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon has been a weight on the democratization process, apart from managing difficult crises, faces other long-term challenges in Mexico -to reform the judiciary, to foster a free and open media, to insure clean elections and to root out corruption in politics. The

upcoming year will tell us if Zedillo succeed in bringing about true multiparty democracy while protecting the political stability and economic growth that Mexico needs.

THE PAN (National Action Party). Electoral Trends

The founder of the PAN, Manuel Gomez Morin saw the human person as the pillar of society. This gave political activity a special meaning. He spoke of democracy in its widest sense by recognizing the equality and the dignity of the human being. He spoke of democracy as a logical derivation of this. Democracy needed to be grafted onto the political structure. The PAN represents an organization based on doctrinal values, whereas the official party is largely pragmatic, the PRI acts in order to maintain itself in power. Some links between the PAN and Christian Democracy have taken place. Folowing Carlos Gil:

> "The PAN arose as a response to what was already becoming a one-party system...., 1939 when the PAN was organized. The first person who foresaw what the one-party system was going to be like was Jose Vasconcelos, who decided to oppose the official party candidate in the election of 1929." [23]

The only serious opposition was from the rightist National Action Party (PAN), founded in 1939. It sought to draw various strands of consevative opposition to the revolutionary regime: religious people and the clergy, business people, and in general anyone disillusioned with the regime but it was rarely an electoral victor. One reason was that the PRI machine was quite capable of controlling electoral outcomes whenever necessary. It took four decades for the people to begin to understand what the PAN represented. To the superficial observer, Mexico might have appeared a democracy before 1968. The PAN is the only party that has grown constantly since 1979 when the electoral laws

[23] Carlos B. Gil. Op. Cit., p. 106

were reformed, even though other parties have grown too.

The PAN has censured intervention in the region not only by the United States but also by Cuba and by the Soviet Union. The PAN was born in opposition to Lazaro Cardenas's land reform and the defense of the workers. The PAN doesn't offer socialism of any kind, it offers cooperatives instead, it offers itself to the United States as a potential ally, one that won't cause embarrassments.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, business took to increasingly open forms of political mobilization through interest associations and support for the growing party of opposition, the PAN. Dissidence within the PRI grew much stronger under De la Madrid's government (1983-89) and its neoliberal policies. Disillusionment with poor economic conditions, social injustice, and political corruption reinforced Manuel Clouthier's appeal, nominee of the PAN. Dominguez and Lowenthal describe that:

> "In Mexico, the defection to the PAN by important national business interests after the 1982 nationalizations solidified neo-panista control over the party and gave major credibility to the party's pro-democracy and pro-free market challenge against the governing party. During the 1980s the PAN became a serious electoral contender in a number of regional elections and, for the first time in its history, presented a credible national challenge to the governing PRI in the 1989 electoral campaign." [24]

The PRI saw a long-term decline in the proportion of congressional districts that were safe. In 1994, sixty-four senators were chosen in single-member district, plurality elections; PRI won them all. Thirty-two were chosen by proportional representation (twenty-four to PAN, eight to PRD). Three hundred deputies were chosen by single-member district, plurality elections, and PRI won 275. In 1997, PRI won only 164 single-members seats. Two hundred deputies were chosen by proportional representation, again allocated mostly to PAN and PRD. In the 1997 congressional electons, the PRI finally lost its majority in the

[24] Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, Op. Cit., p. 35

Chamber of Deputies, receiving 38 percent of the vote and 239 of 500 seats. The PRD and the PAN each received about one-quarter of the votes; together with the Greens and the Workers Party, the combined opposition was able to organize the new Chamber. The use of proportional representation is an electoral reform adopted in 1997 to increase the presence of opposition parties in Congress, while continuation of the majority of seats under the single-member district, plurality rule assures the PRI a majority as long as it holds a plurality in most places. [25]

The party system has become more differentiated regionally (the PAN especially strong in the north, and the PRD in the Federal District and the south). PRI's hold on rural districts has weakened notably. In May of 1995 the PAN captured its first governorship in the state of Guanajuato. Since then, the future of democracy in Mexico entails channeling the process of change in a clear direction and assuring effective institutionalization. Mexico still lacks the institutions and attitudes that characterize a true democracy. Dominguez and Lowental affirm that:

> "The prospects for democratic governance will be enhanced when the PRI, the PAN, and the PRD recognize the verdict of the polls and commit themselves to legal and institutional routes of political competition. The country's political parties must also transform the sphere in which the majority really counts (the electoral sphere) into a critical locus of decision making regarding the important issues facing the country." [26]

The PAN has applied significant pressure on the Zedillo administration to implement a 'new federalism,' and the growing number of PAN governors could lead the central government to commit itself to greater descentralization. In the future, the PAN will have to extend its support beyond the confines of the urban middle class and anchor its platform in an unique economic and social agenda.

The PAN will have to discern the reasons why the party lost in the regions

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25 See Statistics. Latin American Weekly Report, 15 July 1997, p. 326

26 Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, Op. Cit., p. 178

where it had been in power for the first time, such as the case of Chihuahua and Baja California states. The Zedillo term could witness the radicalization of intemperate sectors within the party possibly led by the governor of the state of Guanajuato, Vicente Fox, for whom the costs of perpetuating conciliatory tactics outweight the benefits of a frontal attack on the Mexican state. Vicente Fox has been working hard for the next presidential candidacy in the 2000, in order to strengthen his party.

The PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). Electoral Trends

It has been a party represented by Cuauhtemos Cardenas Solorzano, son of Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico's most revolutionary president. Cardenas separated from the PRI in 1987, and in 1988 he led the most powerful political movement ever to compete with the PRI for the direction of the nation's future. Their latest political organization is known as the PRD or the Party of the Democratic Revolution, the vehicle that is supposed to carry them on to 2000 and beyond, depending particularly on the strength and efficacy of the PRD. The cohesion of the party will be determined partly by the ability of its members to shed prior partisan loyalties, since almost all of them began their political lives in preexisting organizations, particularly the PCM, PSUM, and PMT.

Cardenas' phenomenon in the late 1980s was aimed originally with young members of the left who had become alienated by the repressive dimensions of the PRI and the government in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cardenas served as governor of Michoacan from 1980 to 1986, and the rise of the Corriente Democratica around August of 1986 coincided with the last days of his governorship. The Corriente Democratizadora began by calling for some fundamental changes in the government's economic policies, including a different way of handling the foreign debt problem, employing resources to raise employment levels and thus reactivate the economy. In order to bring about

those changes, the politics of the nation had to be democratized. The party itself needed to become the instrument for the political reorientation of the state.

Cardenas rejected the party president's authoritarianism and the party's lack of democracy, he decided to leave the party when he accepted to run as the presidential candidate for the PARM, and the Democratic Current made the decision to participate in the coming elections, and it did so by seeking the convergence of nationalist, revolutionary, and democratic forces.Cornelius, Gentleman and Smith are relevant there:

> "The growing involvement of the independent left in the cardenista mobilizations provided excellent opportunities for advancing debate beyond the narrow limits of revolutionary nationalism. It is too early, though, to ascertain how successfully these opportunities of the left were exploited." [27]

The Democratic Current and its leading propagandists indeed do not define themselves as socialists, but the Mexican Workers Party (PMT), which was one of the major parties which merged to form the PMS with his leading figure, Heberto Castillo, he was the PMS presidential candidate until he withdrew in favor of Cardenas in May 1988.

By July 1988, the presidential candidacy of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas garnered the support of four registered political parties (PPS,PMS, PARM, PFCRN) and twenty-five organizations and movements. The nearly six million votes for Cuauhtemoc Cardenas certainly represent a protest against the neoliberal strategy of modernization which has had disastrous consequences for popular living standards.

Porfirio Munoz Ledo joined the Cardenista movement; he became president of the Group of 77 and started the Contadora process in June 1982. He began to study the domestic scene and became acutely aware of the limitations of our economic policies. Munoz Ledo looked for a change in the

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[27] Wayne A. Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, Peter H. Smith, Op. Cit., p. 377

balance of political forces, and this change implies a transformation of the party system in Mexico, creating a new party as a result of party fusions, and the party would definitely be democratic and nationalist. Porfirio Munoz Ledo believes that:

> "The Mexican system did represent a system of consensus and that an internal equilibrium did exist among various political actors. Some refer to this as the "revolutionary family,".... The Mexican system had its ups and downs like any other.....All systems need to have their own built-in checks and balances, to be open to new elements, and to give people with new ideas a chance to try them out. [28]

He also has pointed out that they want to fortify the federal system, true state and municipal autonomy, an authentic division of power, as well as a strong national Congress within the state. A rationalization of the state so that it will become stronger, more agile, and more responsible. A new electoral code, the creation of local and regional parties, and the restoration of conditional status for emerging political parties.

The major opposition parties still have their own internal problems that leave them at a disadvantage. The left suffers from two major weaknesses. First, many voters who supported it in 1988 and 1994 did so out of a personal allegiance to Cardenas and what his name represents. Consequently, the PRD or its successor party on the left will not necessarily inherit that support when he leaves the political stage.

Equally important, Cardenas's initial popularity tended to cover up the ideological divisions that have long plagued the left. As his star has begun to fade, the PRD and other left political parties have once again found it difficult to formulate a unified agenda. Leftist support in the 1988 and 1989 elections was closely linked to the country's severe economic crisis. Survey data revealed that the more optimistic voters were about the economy, the more they were prone to

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[28] Inteviews with Leaders of Meixico's Political Opposition, this was with Porfirio Munoz Ledo, Hope and Frustration, Carlos B. Gil, A Scholarly Resources Inc., United States of America, 1992, pp. 188-189

vote for Salinas, while pessimists tended to prefer Cardenas. Following Dominguez and Lowental:

> "In order to assure political stability in the context of economic austerity, the Zedillo administration will need to work out some form of peaceful coexistence... A critical variable for the establishment of democratic normalcy will be to institutionalize the PRD as a credible opposition force that participates in 'normal' politics, provides representativeness to the party system, demands greater microlevel government intervention, and exerts useful pressure for deepening the process of political reform." [29]

Not surprisingly, the economic recovery in the early 1990s restored faith in the system and weakened opposition parties, at least temporarily. But the PAN, rather than the PRD, has been the major beneficiary of their discontent. Since the PRD associates corporatism with authoritarianism, it has sought, as Stephen Morris suggests that:

> "To build a party of individuals, one that has no institutional place for social organizations or movements. This is not only a difficult process, but runs against the grain of political experience and culture in Mexico." [30]

This explains why the PRD has confronted so many internal problems and difficulties. Although it is too soon to evaluate the party's ability to achieve such a structure, a shift by Mexican political organizations to relying on an individual rather than a corporate basis of membership has broad implications for economic reform. The Mexican political system is clearly outmoded.

The increasing plurality in Mexican society has generated greater competition between the political parties, but the existing political model has to be designed for alternation in power. After having reviewed the major political parties in Mexico, the next diagram (number 2) specifies the importance of the political reform in Mexico toward a transition to democracy.

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29 Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, Op. Cit., p. 181

30 Stephen Morris, Salinas at the Brink, p. 34, in: Riordan Roett, Political and Economic Liberalization in Mexico, Lynne Rienner Publishers, United States of America, 1993, p. 29

It seems that the PRI ruling party has to recognize the opposition parties; the PAN became an active political force, and a determining factor in the gradual dismantling of the PRI's hegemony. The same with the Party of the Democratic Revolution. PRD that sprung from the 1988 elections and became the Mexico left's main representative force.

FIGURE # 2

REFORMISM AND TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

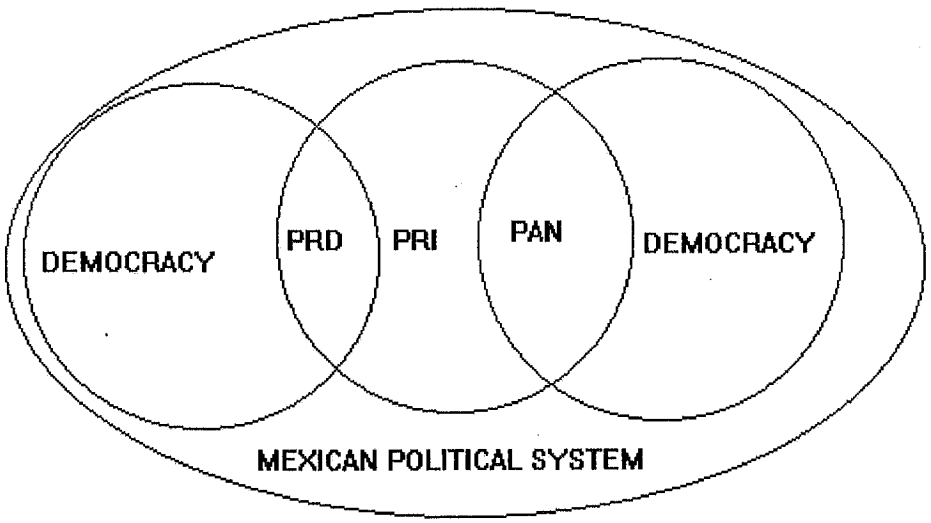

Figure number 2 shows the call to form a new political party to consolidate and organize the potential forces with an intensive and systematic process of electoral reforms, that will create much better conditions for the new presidential elections in the year 2000.

The new political system in Mexico is reforming its structure to build democratic institutions. Political reforms represent the change for Mexico's political system. The ideological and political spectrum in Mexico is formed for two issues. The first is religion and state control of education, which caused the right, the PAN to be distinguished as more conservative than the rest of the parties. The second is socioeconomic development policy, and the leftist parties

as being more radical than the PRI. The evolution of the left-to-right arrangement of the electorally relevant parties would look something like in Figure number 2.

Mexican society supports political reform but differs on the pace of implementation and in the willingness to risk adverse reaction from economic reform. The Mexican government, large business, and conservative elements in the catholic church and the United States advocate slow and cautious progress toward political reform. Medium-sized business and progressive elements in political parties, the catholic church, and the United States desire more expeditious movement toward democracy.

So far the military has stayed out of the political debate. In general terms, society is somewhat ahead of the government and the parties. It seems that the gradual changes that have occurred in the infrastructure and values of Mexican society are now transforming into calls for political as well as economic reform. Next chapter I will review the origins of the economic crisis of the 1980s and its impact on the governing party.

CHAPTER TWO

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the origins of the economic crisis of the 1980s and its impact on the governing party -the PRI in Mexico. The main argument developed in this chapter is how the economic crisis in Mexico during the 1980s promoted dissatisfaction with the PRI party which had dominated the political arena for more than half a century. How economic problems created new electoral opportunities for opposition parties such as the PAN and the PRD which had a net effect of weakening the governing party without resulting in the institutionalization of new ones.

Although the newly constituted PRD remained institutionally weak, crystallizing principally around the popular figure of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas. It will be my purpose to analyze the institutional reform initiated in the mid-1980s, the political change and the process of transition underway in Mexico, and to assess the implications of these changes for Mexico's future.

Likewise the case of Mexico does not fit easily into one of the patterns of transition witnessed elsewhere. Its political system has been not a dictatorship but a combination of corporatist and semiauthoritarian political structures. Furthermore, in Mexico the thrust of reform up to now has been largely economic, and the weakening of the governing party in Mexico was partially caused by the unprecedented economic crisis in Mexico during the 1980s. Riordan Roett is relevant there:

> "In Mexico, throughout the 1980s, elite consensus and PRI unity were ruptured by bitter public debates over privatization, subsidy reductions, and public spending cuts. These policies were considered heretical to the PRI's revolucionary heritage and ultimately inspired the defection of former Priistas Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and Porfirio Munoz Ledo. Their defection led to the creation of the left-leaning PRD." [31]

[31] Riordan Roett, Op. Cit., p. 53

Mexico's pursuit of economic liberalization is having and will have profound political consequences; and, political reform, in turn, will affect the economy. According to Eduardo Gamarra:

> "The notion that to govern is to manage the economy effectively was one of the most powerful views to emerge in Latin America during the 1980s. Armed with the legitimacy of elections and democratic institutions, governments throughout the region opted to pursue decision-making styles which excluded broad sectors of the population and implemented 'correct' economic measures. The tensions emerging from this managerial view of democracy may have implications for the process of democratization now unfolding." [32]

In addition, Mexico still lacks many modern institutional arrangements that could facilitate democratic consolidation by providing predictability and stability in the political arena. In Mexico, most institutions are not neutral frameworks for containing and channeling political change but rather PRI domination. Existing institutions -the judiciary, Congress, business associations, unions- have been kept frozen in the past and are inadequate to address present problems. In the absence of well-developed institutional checks and balances, patrimonialism and clientelism continue to prevail.

Since 1940 until the early 1970s in Mexico took place a rapid and sustained economic growth that provided opportunities for social mobility and significant resources to sustain and reproduce the patronage networks that supported the government. As economic conditions deteriorated and as effects of social and economic modernization became evident, traditional political structures and institutions were caught between growing demands and reduced resources. Serious strains also appeared between the main tasks of the electoral system: the distribution of power shares among political elites and the democratic legitimation of the regime. Riordan Roett argues that:

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[32] William C. Smith, Carlos H. Acuna, and Eduardo A. Gamarra, "Latin American Political Economy in the Age of Neoliberal Reform," North-South Center Press, University of Miami, United States of America, 1994, p. 2

"The economic reform could and should have been initiated during the 1970s to avoid a future economic collapse and to cope with the political demands that had surfaced with the 1968 student movement...The Echeverria administration (1970-1976) was indeed the first one to advocate reform...He could afford not to reform simply because the economy kept growing at about 6 percent, albeit ominously fueled largely by increasing foreign borrowing after the first oil shock in 1973. In that context, inducing a recession for the sake of reform was logically considered to be political suicide." [33]

Toward the end of that period, highly liquid international financial markets provided resources which were argumented by the huge oil revenues that became available. Sharp deterioration of administrative competence caused by the formidable growth of the public economy, extreme economic dependence upon oil revenue, and continued access to foreign credit made the economic system particularly vulnerable to the extremely adverse international economic conditions of the early 1980s. Rising interests rates and shrinking oil prices marked the end of the attempt to reproduce authoritarian rule by means of an economic growth strategy premised on the rapid expansion of state intervention in economic life. During the 1980s, in the midst of the deepest recession in Mexico's recent history, the reform was launched, but not without hesitation. Eduardo Gamarra offers a clear assessment here:

"Although domestic policy makers may have played an important role in crafting economic policies, external conditions imposed by international financial institutions caused a severe loss of autonomy. ..while international and structural factors were important determinants of the direction of the regional political economy in the mid-1980s, the specific history of each Latin American case was driven by the dynamics of coalition formation and competition." [34]

The multiple tensions derived from economic instability and the

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[33] Riordan Roett, "Political and Economic Liberalization in Mexico. At a Critical Juncture?, Lynne Rienner Publishers, United States of America, 1993, p. 36

[34] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit.,"Latin American Political Economy...," p. 6

emergence of more vocal demands for new forms of political participation were basically met by the expansion of the political elite. New groups were incorporated into the political system through the expansion of direct state intervention in economic and social life and through the partial liberalization of electoral competition. Following Blanca Heredia:

> "Crisis and adjustment also acted as catalysts of longer-term processes of social transformation and translated into heightened degrees of electoral conflict and competition at the regional level, while increasing tensions in the overall relationship between federal and local levels of government." [35]

As a result, in the course of the 1980s, intraparty and electoral conflict increased in many states. Opposition parties, particularly the PAN, obtained important wins in regional electoral contests, and the need for overt intervention by the president in regional affairs became more frequent.

Sharp deterioration of administrative competence caused by the formidable growth of the public economy, extreme economic dependence upon oil revenue, and continued access to foreign credit made the economic system particularly vulnerable to the extremely adverse international economic conditions of the early 1980s. William Smith and Carlos Acuna are relevant there:

> "Authoritarian rule gave the Mexican state a broad range of options in managing sociopolitical conflicts in the wake of the debt crisis and the first stages of economic liberalization... As Blanca Heredia convincingly demonstrates, governability has certainly been strengthened, but the implications of neoliberal reform por the political liberalization of Mexican authoritarianism remain ambiguous...One of the unexpected consequences of these reforms has been the partial dismantling of the microfoundations of the pyramidal structure of authoritarian domination in Mexico." [36]

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35 William C. Smith, Carlos H. Acuna, and Eduardo A. Gamarra, "Democracy, Markets, and Structural Reform in Latin America," Lynne Rienner Publishers, United States of America, 1982, p. 282

36 Ibidem, p. 18

Rising interest rates and shrinking oil prices marked the end of the attempt to reproduce authoritarian rule by means of an economic growth strategy premised on the rapid expansion of state intervention in economic life. To describe the relative success of Mexican reform efforts closely related to the peculiar characteristics of a long-lived civilian authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism has been significant, and one of its outcomes has been a deterioration at a fast pace in some parts of the country of the traditional linkages provided by PRI-sponsored corporatism and patronage politics, and in other parts still prevails the PRI's traditional structure. In states where the PRI has lost ground, alternative forms of mediation between state and society have yet to emerge. The strength and coherent internal functioning of opposition parties and popular movements remain unclear, and as a result Mexican society lacks organization for effective representation of interests.

When Carlos Salinas de Gortari assumed the presidency in December 1988, he inherited both the successes and the costs of the economic policy of his predecessor. Changes in the electoral and partisan arenas included two basic components, the incorporation of opposition parties -most notably the PAN- and the subordination of the official party to the executive in the provision of goods and services to popular sectors. At the height of his power and popularity in 1991, President Salinas attempted to modernize the party, but internal resistance was too great, and the project was abandoned.

The most significant change was the relationship between the executive and the official party with the launching of the Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (PRONASOL). The Salinas administration used PRONASOL to address some of the accumulated costs of the crisis for the poorest sectors of Mexican society and also managed to refurbish the government's capacity to manage the electoral front. The executive' s direct control over the program proved crucial to the program's political and electoral effectiveness. Endowed with its own administrative structure and placed under the firm financial and political control

of the executive, PRONASOL turned into a strategic instrument for generating new patronage netsworks directly responsive to the executive.

Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon became Mexico's president on December 1, 1994, following a year of extraordinary political turmoil in Mexico. It began with the sudden appearance of an armed guerrilla group in Chiapas, the country's most southern state. Although the July presidential elections were peaceful and more open than ever in Mexico's history, within three weeks of President Zedillo's inauguration the peso collapsed. As soon as President Zedillo was in power, he promised to implement a democratizing reform within the party and he pressured into creating linkage formulas beyond clientelism. Mexican society became more complex and diverse, the balance of power among social groups within the party and outside it underwent significant transformations.

The new Mexican president therefore began his six-year term confronting an extremely serious economic crisis that threatened the stability of the country's political system as well. Despite many dire predictions, however, the economic reforms begun in the 1980s remained largely intact, and economic growth has resumed. Perhaps even more surprising, the political system today is considerably more democratic in the aftermath of the July 1997 midterm elections, which deprived the governing party of its traditional control of Congress and put an opposition party leader in control of Mexico City. Now, the attention is focused on the presidential election of 2000.

Although the PRI has depended on patronage to assure its predominance, in any process of economic stabilization and adjustment, the most politically influential losers have been the officials of the ruling party and their closest allies. Mexico is not exception.

The Economic Crisis and Institutional Reform

The coincidence between the explosion of the crisis and the beginning of

a new presidential term were particularly significant in Mexico, the wide array of formal and informal discretionary faculties with which the Mexican presidency is endowed, the historical hegemony of public financial institutions in the definition of macropolicy, and the PRI's virtually monopolistic control over the electoral process. Another feature that marked the beginning of the worst economic crisis in Mexico since the 1930s was the explotion of the debt crisis in 1982. Following statistics:

> During that year, the GNP experienced a negative growth rate of -0.5 percent, inflation reached 98.9 percent, the value of the peso was devaluated 466 percent, and the government increased its foreign debt by almost $6 billion. By the end of 1982, total foreign debt amounted to $84 billion (89.9 percent of GNP) and interest payments absorbed 43.6 percent of total export value.For government finances, 1982 was equally stark. After several decades of relatively small fiscal deficits the budget deficit jumped from 6.5 percent of GNP in 1980 to 15.6 percent in 1982 (NAFINSA 1989). Since the deficit exceeded total public investment, its rise indicated that the government's foreign loans were financing not only investment but also current expenditures. [37]

When Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) assumed power, he faced a chaotic economic situation and a political system beset by strains and tension at various levels. For the president and his economic advisers, the crisis provided the opportunity to overcome obstacles to promote growth through the elimination of conditions that had made possible the 'excesses' of the two previous administrations.

Thus, the economic stabilization and structural reform undertaken by President De la Madrid destabilized three key features of the traditional political system. First, economic reform undermined unity among elites within the ruling party. Second, the multiclass pacts and corporatism that had harnessed the better part of Mexican mass society to the PRI since the era of Lazaro Cardenas were eroded by economic reform. Third, economic reform reduced the resources

[37] Presidencia de la Republica, (1982-1988, 19-25), in: William C. Smith, Carlos H. Acuna, and Eduardo A. Gamarra, "Democracy, Markets...," ***Op. Cit.***, pp. 272-273

available to the political system to continue the economic dependence and subordination of civil society.

The liberalization of the Mexican economy began in 1986 with President de la Madrid's unilateral decision to make Mexico part of the GATT and furthered by President Salinas's move in 1990 to seek a free-trade agreement with the United States, that constituted the biggest gamble PRI leaders have ever taken. All of the opposition leaders agree that the economy was in dire jeopardy in the l980s because it had been gravely mismanaged.

The political turnover usually associated with a new administration was particularly important because it entailed a major transformation of the ways in which new presidents traditionally coped with the need to assure renovation while at the same time ensuring the continued representation of major political forces and policy trends. Economic reform also in single-party regime provokes internal division within the ruling elite, and these divisions sowed the seeds for political pluralism and incipient multiparty tendencies. Overall, Blanca Heredia, analyst on business and politics in Mexico states that the program had two basic dimensions: macroeconomic stabilization and structural adjustment. And, it encompased three major phases:

> "From December 1982 through 1985-1986, economic policy addressed price stabilization and relied heavily upon both fiscal and monetary retrenchment. During the second phase from 1985 to 1987, advances toward structural adjustment -specially in the area of foreign trade- were made along with efforts to mitigate the recessionary effects of orthodox stabilization measures. The third phase, from December 1987 to 1988 began with the launching of the Economic Solidarity Pact, which incorporated both and orthodox (fiscal discipline) and a heterodox (incomes policy) component as well as a decisive move toward trade opening. The third phase was also marked by the deepening of privatization and deregulation and entailed a more integrated approach to fiscal and structural dimensions of economic reform." [38]

[38] Ibidiem, p. 273

The political imperative was no longer to ride the wave of growth, but to do anything necessary, including the destruction of vested interests, to revitalize the country's economy. In fact, De la Madrid is the author of opening up Mexico and tying it to the decisions of the great financial and international centers of the world. Lopez Portillo took actions that demonstrated a certain progressivism. His nationalization of the banks and his inclusion of progressive officials within his administration demonstrated it.

The return of public financial institutions to the center of policy formulation was bolstered by acute financial scarcity and the need to reestablish relations with international creditors. Private economic elitists also closed ties to public financial institutions. They were also instrumental in reestablishing cooperative relations with major business groups. But, for labor as a whole, crisis and adjustment entailed enormous costs in terms of both wages and employment. From 1983 to 1988, real wages were between 40 percent and 50 percent and employment grew by an average annual rate of only 0.4 percent, increasing corruption during these years. Nevertheless, Joan Nelson assured politicians that stabilization was a necessary, but not sufficient measure to respond to the profound economic crisis facing Latin America. Nelson argues that:

> "Stabilization policies were viewed as a prerequisite, while public sector reform became the long-term ingredient of the battle cry against the ills facing the entire region." [39]

Finally, the continued discretionary enforcement of legal and administrative rules for those directly involved in government facilitated the reproduction of significant levels of intra-elite cohesion. Since 1985 the economic reform has been impressive, competition has become the driving force of the economy. Following Blanca Heredia:

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[39] Joan M. Nelson, "A Precarious Balance. Democracy and Economic Reforms in Latin America," International Center for Economic Growth and Overseas Development Council, United States of America, 1994, p. 77

> "The combination of a fragmented polity and an executive endowed wit formidable discretionary powers made it possible for the Mexican government to carry out a very severe process of economic adjustment without having to incur the costs of widespread social and political mobilization. The successful implementation of stabilization and adjustment itself allowed regime elites to recuperate control over the state apparatus and major economic forces reinforcing the political system's capacity to provide both stability and effective governance." [40]

Many firms and sectors have succeeded in the new environment, although others have failed miserably. The adjustment has entailed bankruptcies, temporary unemployment, and shifts in the relative economic strength both of regions and industrial sectors.

The Interaction of Economic and Political Processes

The political reform process initiated during the Lopez Portillo administration was postponed to allow the government to recover control of the electoral sphere and to continue using the distribution of electoral posts as a key means to retain the loyalty of sectoral party elites. In exchange for their cooperation with adjustment measures, labor, peasant, and popular sector leaders gained continued representation within the government. The continued discretionary enforcement of legal and administrative rules for those directly involved in government facilitated the reproduction of significant levels of intra-elite cohesion.

Over the last few years, increasing changes in the domestic economic scene in Mexico, following a series of major economic shocks during the 1970s and 1980s, have led to a deepening political debate. Political consciousness of the nature of the economic crisis of the 1980s and opinions about solutions to it have proliferated. The dynamic of the last few years -economic reform along with contested elections- reflects the awakening political consciousness.

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[40] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit., "Democracy, Markets, and...," p. 279

The PRI also faced the extensive use of corporatist controls to contain popular sector demands and to repress growing social discontent further debilitated corporatist elites -especially in the cities- reducing their capacity to assure continued electoral support for the PRI.

During the presidential election of 1988, as it can be seen in Figure number 3, in approximately 85 percent of total urban districts, PRI candidates faced strong competition and sixty-six PRI congressional candidates (out of three hundred) were defeated by opposition parties. The largest losses were experienced by labor-sector candidates, followed by the subgroup incorporated within the popular sector of the party.

The extreme inequality in Metropolitan Mexico City was associated with highly polarized voting patterns as well; only about 30 percent of the vote for the PRI and 50 percent for the united left opposition candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the National Democratic Front (FDN), with a heavy bias toward the lower-income districts. Twenty percent, with strong representation of suburban middle- and upper-income groups, voted for the colorful opposition candidate of the right Manuel Clouthier of the PAN. In other words, polarization in productivity (and income) in Metropolitan Mexico City, one of the most heavily politicized locales in Mexico, was associated with political polarization as well.

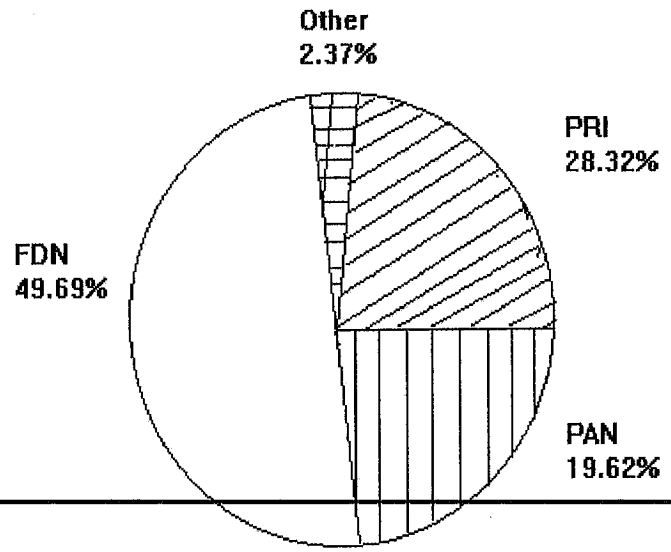
Lack of convergence in productivity and income, characteristic of Mexico's overcrowded major city, could have severe repercussions for the PRI. If the country's macroeconomic strategies continue to lead to polarization, associated with a period of severe adjustment and stabilization, the upper middle-class voters would be expected to move toward the PAN and the large and swelling proletariat toward the FDN or its component parties. [41]

Large income losses in the middle class were also important in eroding the PRI's electoral strength. Many in this sector became independent voters. Middle class sectors now constitute the bulk of the PAN's electoral base, and their vote tends to respond either to ideological considerations or to short-term

[41] See Figure 5.5 in: Riordan Roett, Op. Cit., p. 84

cost-benefit calculations. As a result, in the course of the 1980s, intraparty and electoral conflict increased in many states. Opposition parties, particularly the PAN, obtained important wins in regional electoral contests.

FIGURE # 3
METROPOLITAN MEXICO CITY VOTING
1988 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



As Mexico has been moving toward economic liberalization, the question is about the political implications of the economic change. Today, Mexico is involved in a transition process from one stage to another. The relevant question then becomes whether Mexico's political structures hold, even while they themselves are in transition. In some measure, according to the analyst Eduardo Gamarra, Mexico and each country in the region underwent a learning process that occurred within a framework of limited options; thus, under different circumstances they might have opted for a softer approach because, at the threshold of crisis, their options were limited. When Carlos Salinas de Gortari assumed the presidency in December 1988, he inherited both the successes

and the costs of the economic policy of his predecessor. Following Gamarra:

> "Latin Americans displayed a capacity to learn from previous experiences with political instability, inflation, and economic crises...Early heterodox responses to the crisis were simple stabilization measures aimed at controlling short-run disequilibria in the balance of payments and fiscal accounts. As the crisis deepened toward the middle of the decade, Latin Americans provided a great deal of the intellectual and technical expertise that thrust the economies of these nations in the direction of the liberalization." [42]

He took the lessons of 1988 to recognize that market reforms tend to stimulate political liberalization and completed the privatization and deregulation processes and the tax reform efforts initiated during the last administration. Salinas also had to deal with the political and social costs associated with six years of adjustment. His highly visible role in the economic reform, along with his technocratic background, alienated important segments of the political class.

Following Eduardo Gamarra, Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the second generation of leaders came into office with as much inexperience and insecurity as the first. The relationship between patronage, democratization, and the implementation of neoliberal reforms was significant, and external influences offered a constant and somewhat increasing pressure favorable to expand democratization:

> "With democracy in its infancy, a crisis of governability and representation hovered over the region's political future. Specifically, political parties and legislatures revealed an incapacity to represent interests or to act as a crucial mediating linkage between society and government during the transition...This was the context that gave rise to the neoliberal 'medicine' prescribed throughout the region." [43]

In Mexican experience, political reform is not simply the effect of economic change. Rather, the engine of change seems to lie in society, and

[42] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit.,"Latin American Political Economy...," p. 4
[43] Ibidem., p. 5

economic modernization undertaken in propitious international conditions, has started up the engine.

The expansion of nongovernmental organizations also has been strong lately; it seems likely to encourage the growth and strength of political parties, as well as structural changes in the electoral process. They consciously designed a strategy to enable the PRI to meet the political challenges of market reform and survive in a more open electoral climate. This strategy included moving rapidly from economic stabilization to consolidation and growth. Economic growth would provide a more favorable backdrop in which to reconstruct a new multiclass alliance, update legitimating ideologies, elite defections, and overhaul the PRI's organizational and electoral techniques.

After the debacle of 1988, many would have been relieved to see the PRI merely survive as yet another competitor in a multiparty environment. The combined success of economic consolidation and the PRI's political renewal has been greater than even the most optimistic PRI reformers probably expected. The PRI may be poised to enter an era of electoral hegemony.

A review of PRI's recomposition in the 1990s bespeaks the impact of economic reform and consolidation. Salinas's top priority upon entering office was to end austerity and return to economic growth as quickly as possible. A rapid series of initiatives were implemented to achieve that goal. The Brady initiative removed the debt crisis from the agenda, the privatization of the banks began the process of capital repatriation, inflation was kept low, the peso was stable, and pursuing the NAFTA sparked and invested boom. The 1991 midterms took place against the backdrop of three years of growth, and the Mexican regained hope.

The apparent restoration of single-party dominance in Mexico's 1991 midterm elections created the deceptive appearance of continuity. In fact, the PRI had engaged in self-restructuring tailored to the realities of a market economy and the renovation of the PRI's modus operandi was combined with

economic restructuring as a historic self-transformation. As Mexican society became more complex and diverse, the balance of power among social groups within the party and outside it underwent significant transformations. Rapid industrialization, and an even faster process of urbanization, diminished first the relative weight of the PRI's peasant sector and, later, the position of the labor and popular sectors.

In addition to the strains associated with the internal recomposition of the balance of forces within the party itself, groups located outside the PRI gained importance, and changes in traditional patterns of political recruitment became more costly. In an effort to cope with these mounting electoral challenges, regime elitists introduced changes in electoral legislation and began implementation of a highly regulated process of electoral opening. Opportunities for competition were thereby moderately increased and the risks of non-institutionalized forms of mobilization and participation significantly reduced.

The government's need to respond to the demand for competitive and credible elections became increasingly incompatible with the need to insure elite consensus through power-sharing arrangements unrelated or insensitive to electoral competition as such. Therefore, crisis and adjustment throughout the 1980s magnified the social and political challenges generated by the long-term socioeconomic modernization and exacerbated tension within the ruling party. As a result, in the course of the 1980s, intraparty and electoral conflict increased in many states. Opposition parties, particularly the PAN, obtained important wins in regional electoral contests.

Changes in the electoral and partisan arenas included the incorporation of opposition parties -most notably, the Partido Accion Nacional (PAN)- as a subordinate partner of government. For the government, the most important cost was the ability of Accion Nacional to capitalize on widespread discontent generated by economic reform among small and mid-size regional entrepreneurs. As a vehicle for such discontent, the PAN acquired a crucial

asset in regional electoral contests and a major bargaining chip with government. Negotiations with the PAN were also decisively influenced by the reconciliation between big business and the state. This reconciliation deprived the PAN of the one constitutency it required to become an effective national contender.

The Salinas administration also used PRONASOL to address some of the accumulated costs of the crisis for the poorest sector of Mexican society and also managed to refurbish the government's capacity to manage the electoral front. According to Blanca Heredia, the effects of the subordinated incorporation of the PAN party into the electoral game and the creation of PRONASOL was not easy:

> "In the medium term the capacity of the regime to reproduce itself was diminished by: 1) the erosion of traditional authority relations, 2) the expansion of more purely instrumental clientelistic networks in the electoral terrain, 3) the growth of independent voters produced by long-term socioeconomic change, and 4) heightened levels of electoral competition." [44]

To these potential costs to regime stability, Blanca Heredia adds the potentially corrosive efects of economic liberalization (and tax reform, in particular) upon the operation of basic mechanisms by which political order has been historically generated and maintained in Mexico. Blanca Heredia also is particularly relevant there relating some potential effects:

> "1) The reduction of available funds and power positions to be shared and distributed among members of the political elite; 2) the increasing salience and importance of private circuits of political power in which economic or regional elites become less dependent upon central state authorities and acquire virtually full control over their sectors, regions, and constitutencies; and 3) the emergence or expansion of 'islands of equality' in a polity that continues to be marked by high levels of social heterogeneity and political fragmentation." [45]

[44] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit., "Democracy, Markets, and...," p. 286

[45] bidem, p. 286-287

Economic liberalization was made possible largely by a structure of political authority based on hierarchical patronage networks that cut across classes and sectors and by the unprecedented degree of elite cohesion that characterized the implementation of economic policy change. Reviewing those potential effects of economic liberalization, the first one may significantly affect traditional power-sharing arrangements through which order and cooperation within the political elite has been historically maintained, and the use of discretionary power in the construction of political support and mobilization of collective resources for general economic and political goals, will be reduced.

The second potential effect is already visible in many areas of the economy and in various regions of the country. It is also critically asociated with the highly unequal nature of Mexican society. The third likely consequence of economic change and, particularly, of tax reform is the growth of 'islands of equality' whose impact upon political stability and change is likely to be decisive, even if, at this point, highly uncertain.

Inflation also is the biggest economic problem that Mexico is facing today. It has become a tax which is paid by the poor, who already suffer from misery and starvation. Growing equality of condition before the law constitutes, perhaps, the single most important potential source of a transition to democracy in Mexico.

The Transition to Political and Institutional Change

During the 1980s the new governments in Mexico faced two simultaneous tasks: consolidation of fragile democratic political institutions and economic stabilization and reform. Change in Mexico's political system today has been ignited essentially by the implementation of an economic program aimed at making the country's economy competitive internationally. The economic program launched in the mid-1980s consisted primarily of the elimination of

regulations and bureaucratic procedures and other obstacles to trade (domestic and foreign).

These radical changes in the economic structure of the country have produced major alterations in economic, social and political relations. Indeed, as the economic adjustment is well under way, the big political issue in Mexico today is how to complete and consolidate the extraordinary process of change, that is, how to match economic liberalization with a similar political thrust and institutional change. Additional observations must be made regarding the moment of crisis and the solutions that leadership created. Following Eduardo Gamarra:

> "The strategies of the new leadership played an important role in overcoming the crisis. Restricted parameters limited political options available to decision makers, but the choices each made were crucial for the implementation of economic reforms... To govern in this political context involved addressing two key issues. Institutionally, the task of the second generation of leaders was to design and coordinate the institutions of a democratic regime, resolve executive-legislative impasses, exert governmental control over the state apparatus, and design effective electoral systems." [46]

Though innovative, the 1988 elections created a new set of political realities that the currrent structure of the PRI and the political system are ill equipped to handle. Society and the economy became increasingly decentralized, while the PRI and the political system, with the possible exception of Pronasol, were still heavily centralized and seemingly incapable of responding to the rapid changes taking place. The irony is that the economic reform is not the result of a social consensus, but of government initiative. It is in this context that the government's initiative to develop closer economic ties with the United States has more than economic significance. The outcome of the NAFTA will be crucial in the long-term consolidation of Mexico's reform. This is why the next step of the reform is likely to prove much more complicated, it involves not only

[46] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit., "Latin American Political Economy...," p. 6

economic consolidation but also political and institutional change.

In Mexico, high levels of elite cohesion, which derived from the marginalization of developmentalist currents within the state apparatus after 1982 and from the monopolistic power-sharing arrangements that have long governed relations within the political elite, allowed policy reformers to recast radically the institutional makeup of the Mexican economy without compromising political stability of regime continuity. Following Blanca Heredia:

> "The exclusionary effects of extreme elite cohesion, along with reduced space for the discretionary enforcement of legal and administrative rules were associated with economic liberalization, however, they have introduced significant tensions in the basic structure of the Mexican political system." [47]

As the reform advances, political change is also undermining traditional authoritarian culture. Unions and management, government and business, and political parties must cooperate, negotiate, and work in an open environment, thus creating the essence of a democratic process. Thus, while the economic reform is in fact laying the foundation for the emergence of a democratic society, the transition process is extraordinarily complex politically. According to Riordan Roett, for a transition to democracy to be possible and successful, three fundamental changes have to occur in the political system:

> "First, a democratic culture has to emerge and imbue society at large, despite the tradition of monopolies and monopoly practices in both the economy and the political system are still deeply embedded in most Mexican institutions. Second, all parties, including those in opposition, have to become real political parties, representing people rather than their own bureaucracies. However, in the absence of a democratic culture, competitive practices, and real incentives to develop a new political culture based upon constituencies rather than bureaucracies, competitive parties cannot emerge... for this to be viable a series of initiatives aimed at confidence-building would be necessary." [48]

[47] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit., "Democracy, Markets, and ....," p. 266.
[48] Riordan Roett, Op. Cit., p. 45

It is critical to understand the process of political and economic transition that Mexico has experienced in order to assess the odds for success in the next few years. The future of democracy in Mexico is still uncertain, changes in the economic, social, and political relationships brought on by the economic reform will lead to the development of a much more committed and responsible citizenry. The transformation of the political structures will then be hard to contain. Following Eduado Gamarra's previous analysis in the 1990s:

> "The policy-making process is more pluralistic, it is still exclusionary. Business and many other social actors have access. Yet the common factor is that both authoritarian and democratic rulers have determined the degree and the nature of that access. The key to democratic governance in this context rests with how rules frame access to the policy process." [49]

Gradual adjustments to traditional forms of governance are introduced that are simultaneously compatible with the emergence of liberal democratic procedures and able to provide anchor for effective governance. Only if such conditions are met will governability and democracy in Mexico cease to be polar opposites and will the prospects for an effective transition toward more civilized and less uncertain forms of political coexistence increase. In Gamarra's view:

> "To view democratization as a dynamic process enables assessment of how distinct political and social actors appeared and disappeared during the 1980s and early 1990s." [50]

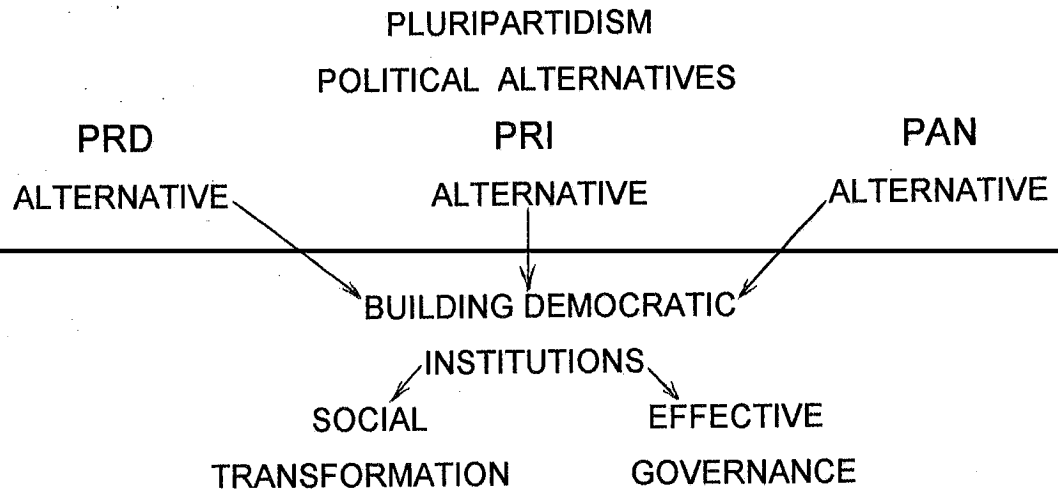
Analyzing as it was mentioned above, Mexico is well on its way in the transformation of its economy, while the transformation of its political processes is just beginning. These complex processes are likely to transform Mexico radically in this decade. coming decade. The problems of transition do not stem from the lack of movement, either in society or formal political institutions, but

[49] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit., "Latin American Political Economy...," p. 6
[50] Ibidem., p. 1.

from political parties and their lack of conviction in a democratic process.

The next Figure (number 4) shows the political alternatives in Mexico and the transition process to democracy. Today, Mexico faces a pluripartidism, an increasingly active polity made up of opposition parties. The major political parties are PRI, PAN, and PRD. Those represent a political alternative for democracy in Mexico. Although the PRI has further undermined governmental credibility, the PRI dominates the electoral process and it has the largest and best-functioning machine, meanwhile the opposition parties are organizing .

FIGURE # 4
BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS



Despite the inherent difficulties of such a building process, the gradual accumulation of practice, legislation and enforcement will build new democratic institutions. Today, a lack of confidence appears to limit the viability of a truly democratic process more than anything else.

The more the economic reform advances, however, the more irrelevant the traditional institutions, practices, and parties become. Hence, either as a result of a careful and sustained negotiating effort or by the sheer pressure of

the economic reality, Mexico will embrace democracy in the not-too-distant future. The path to this future, however, will make an enormous impact on the type of democracy that results.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CRISIS AND REDEFINITION OF THE LEFT

The crisis and redefinition of the left was the major development that affected party politics in Mexico and in many countries in Latin America. In Mexico the leftist parties joined together to form the National Democratic Front (FDN) in 1988. His candidate; Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, polled more votes in the presidential election of 1988 than any opposition party had since the Mexican Revolution. The PRI's image of invincibility was shattered, and dozens of its congressional candidates went down to defeat. The national disenchantment was most audible and visible among members of the middle class, particularly those in the cities that supported Cardenas. Mainwaring and Scully describe the left's event as follows:

> "The renovation of the left had two broad implications for party politics in Latin America. On the one hand, the stakes of party competition have been reduced. Politics is no longer conceived of as a war in which radically opposed sides try to vanquish each other. This salutary transformation favored the compromise and moderation that are necessary ingredientes in democratic politics...The moderation of the left resulted in quieting the voices that spoke for wider political participation and greater social equity in a region marked by egregious inequalities. Poverty and inequality in most countries remain more pressing issues than ever before, but they are less effectively voiced now." [51]

In the late 1980s, the magnitude of the PRI's generational problem was illustrated by several public opinion surveys, which showed that the party's support was increasingly in the older age groups while the opposition parties drew considerably more of their support from younger voters. It became obvious in the days following the election that Salinas had to struggle to prevent the PRI hierarchy from outrageously padding his own majority and to compel them to recognize opposition victories for numerous congressional seats.

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[51] See Mainwaring, Op. Cit, p.466

The debacle over releasing election resulted more dramatically than any previous development with Salinas group's lack of control over the PRI apparatus. Following several statistics:

> "A national pre-election survey in 1988 found that more than 50 percent of the Cardenista coalition's support base consisted of persons under thirty years of age, but 42 percent of the PANista base and only 35 percent of the PRIistas were in this age group. Althoug in the 1991 midterm elections, the PRI did well among younger voters: in the Gallup exit poll, 60 percent of voters under the age of thirty reported voting for the PRI. Again, the ruling party benefited from the personal popularity of a young, activist president. " [52]

The subsequent battle over the confirmation of the president-elect in the long placid and acquiescent Mexican Congress further revealed the erosion of the PRI's dominance, as Cornelius, Gentleman and Smith assert:

> "The cardenista coalition clearly was the most attractive vehicle in 1988 for Mexicans wanting to cast a protest vote against the economic crisis and the failure of the government's economic policies to deliver perceptible material benefits...In 1988, the cardenistas proved far more effective than the PAN in capturing the protest vote, especially in those parts of the country that have been most adversely impacted by the economic crisis of the 1980s, and especially among the urbar poor." [53]

As notable as the change in the ideology and practice of leftist parties was the change in the 1980s in their electoral performance. In these, and many other ways, the 1988 elections marked the opening of a new era in Mexico's political history. The left succeeded in mounting a major challenge to PRI dominance. A significant portion of Mexico's working people supported Cardenas mostly because they were rejecting the inappropriate management of the nation by an antiquated and corrupt party.

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[52] PREAC (Prospectiva Estatregica, A.C.), "Encuesta I: El Pais/Distrito Federal," Perfil de la Jornada, July 5, 1988. in: Ibidem, p. 264.

[53] Wayne A. Cornelius, Judith Gentleman and Peter H. Smith, Op. Cit., p. 23

The neocardenista left has for a long time been part of the intellectual and political baggage of a progressive member of the PRI and of large sections of the Mexican left. In mid-1986 a number of leading figures within the revolutionary nationalist current of the PRI formed a pressure group to press for a democratic modernization of the official party. The Democratic Current was the nucleus around which the center-left mounted its challenge to the PRI in 1988. The shifting contours of the left make it difficult to be precise, but we can identify at least the following clusters of forces:

The PSUM (Partido Socialista Unificado de Mexico). Jorge Alcocer Villanueva entered the Communist Party leading to the PSUM and finally to the PRD. Alcocer was representing a new generation of Mexico's leftist leaders; he became an important supporter of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas in 1988 and 1989 but separated himself from Cardenas and the PRD in December 1990.

The PPM (Partido Popular Mexicano) represents one of the parties that split from the PPS (Partido Popular Socialista) in 1977 and then fused into the PSUM in 1981. They helped make up the coalition of the left which later became the PSUM.

The Movimiento de Accion Popular is another movement that never belonged to the Communist Party, where Rolando Cordera and Arnaldo Cordoba, among others, form an entire generation of Mexican intellectuals who firmly contribute to the nation's political life and to the PSUM itself. The PSUM embraces a current coming from the Communist Party, a lombardista current from the PPS, and a stream that we could call a leftist-national current that came from the Movimiento de Accion Popular.

In the late 1980s many forces pressed the Mexican left into one single, cohesive body, and Heberto Castillo Martinez was one of the driving factors. His political pragmatism and his penchant for independent thought and action contributed significatly to leftist unity in Mexico. He founded the PMT (Partido Mexicano de los Trabajadores) on September 8, 1974, which he used as a

vehicle to make leftist unity a reality in the late 1980s. Today, the left faces a very tough challenge. First of all, the challenge consists in persuading all of the Mexican people of the importance of these issues, Narciso Bassols, a very distiguished man of the left during the Lazaro Cardenas period, identified that:

> "In Mexico, the problem of corruption is not a moral problem, it is an economic problem. Corruption represented a grease which oils the intrastate machinery serving the state and the private sector. By the way, the private sector in this country has never been free of corruption. If there is a sector that cannot wear the mask of honesty, it is the private sector, the bourgeoisie." [54]

He also stepped down in favor of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas's presidential candidature, but remained to serve as one of the top PRD leaders in mid-1991. The PMT's objective is to persuade the left on the need to fight for the rights of the workers. They believe the workers can be supported within their own unions when a strong leftist party can help them on the outside. The PMT says:

> "Don't pay the debt, and don't sell oil. PMT' position in foreign capital would welcome businesses that produce something we do not as high-tech field, like computers and industrial engines. They also support small- and medium-sized industries. "[55]

Despite the new space which the 1988 elections opened up in the electoral arena, the crucial test for the independent left will be whether or not it can extend its challenge to PRI hegemony to other areas of civil society, in particular the oficialista labor and peasant organizations. Running for president in 2000, the PRD promised to hold Norteamerican style open primaries for its presidential candidate. Although Mexico City Mayor Cardenas is the hands-down favorite to win the primary, insiders are calling current PRD national president Manuel Andres Lopez Obrador, a strong option for the PRD party. Besides, the

54 Inteviews with Leaders of Mexico's Political Opposition, this was with Jorge Alcocer Villanueva, Hope and Frustration, Carlos B. Gil, A Scholarly Resources Inc., United States of America, 1992, pp. 239 -240.

55 Ibidem, p.274

politician Porfirio Munoz Ledo that has gained a very important role as an opposition leader in Congress would be another PRD's possible presidential candidate. Lorenzo Meyer, a political analyst at the Colegio de Mexico in an interview with el Financiero International states:

> "There is a real possibility that an opposition-party candidate could win the presidency. For the first time ever, we are seeing that the president's will will not be imposed. He does not have the political force...is something absolutely unprecedented, a situation that is completely new for Mexico...Conditions that could contribute to a political change-up in Mexico include strong and credible opposition parties, an independent and capable elections board, and a weak president." [56]

There is another unknown factor, how the left would react in the face of the seemingly uncontainable advance of the right, specifically the possibility of the PAN coming to power in 2000; and how could the PRI encourage a large number of leftist members and voters to return to the PRI to hold its position in the center. There exists the hope that events will unfold peacefully and democratically.

The opposition in Mexico consists of two groups primarily: the members of the PAN, a conservative party that arose to counteract an early version of the PRI as early as 1939, and the followers of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, who came from various leftist parties and many community organizations in late 1987 to cast the highest opposition vote registered in Mexico in recent history.

About the progress of the PAN, this has been associated to economic difficulties and the government's unsatisfactory performance. Therefore, the expansion of Panismo seems to be primarily based on a rejection of the PRI. Nevertheless, the PAN has played a decisive role in this process of change. For most of its existence the PAN is the party that the popular political imagination identified with the catholic church, the bourgeoisie and United States imperialism and it had been almost marginal to general political balances.

[56] El Financiero. International Edition, March 2-8, 1998, p. 8

Moreover, for years, electoral processes were either symbolic or irrelevant in terms of the structure of power. The hegemony of the revolutionary discourse, the strength of the Mexican state, the overwhelming presence of the official party, the control of electoral participation and the prevalence of non-electoral mechanisms in the recruiting and selection of the political elite reduced opposition parties to the role of representatives of minor currents of opinion. This situation changed at the beginning of the eighties, when large middle-class groups expressed their dissatisfaction with the government's performance at the ballot-box, voting for the opposition.

From 1988 to 1994, more precisely during the Salinas administration, the PAN became an active political force, and a determining factor in the gradual dismantling of the PRI's hegemony. The PAN has been a leading actor in the evolution of the Mexican political system towards party competition. The party has also contributed to the transformation of political relations from preeminently collectivistic forms of organization and participation inherited from the post-revolutionary regime, to the individualized forms of political liberalism.

On the other hand, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD,1989) sprung from the 1988 elections and immediately became the Mexican left's main representative force. The other parties fell back to their traditional voting levels, while the PRD gained the majority support of the left-wing electorate. Cardenas discovered a way to exercise quite naturally and with convincing sincerity. His use of the inherited images contributed greatly to the popular support his candidacy attracted in 1988, not only among reformist priistas but also among the citizenry, especially urban workers and small-town farmers. The thrust of the cardenista campaign also throughout 1987-88 was unambiguously supportive of the need to recover the independence of the worker and peasant organizations.

However, in 1994 the call to form a new political party to consolidate and organize the potential force that had expressed itself on July 6, 1998 stumbled against an obstacle. The first three parties that had backed Cardenas in 1988

(PARM, PPS, PFCRN) decided to remain independent putting forward their own candidates, and only the PPS decided to dissolve and encourage its members to join the new party. Thus, 1994 was characterized by a series of intense, rapidly-changing political events for which the PRD was ill prepared.

Most important, however, the country's situation in 1994 had changed and both the PRD and its candidate's image had deteriorated considerably. This year was also marked by the armed uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas and by a deep-seated process of electoral agreements and reform that led to transparent but biased elections.

In addition to the above, an intensive, systematic process of electoral reform was launched with the participation of the federal government and the PRI, PAN and PRD leadership; the reform drive was strongly motivated by the uncertainty caused by the uprising, and created much better conditions for the federal elections. These showed that Mexico does not follow a single party line and reflected the left's degree of appeal. Among the main goals of the PRD proposal for electoral reform Monica Serrano mentions:

> "The structure of an impartial electoral authority, the legal provisions regarding party finance and funding of campaigns, access to mass media, truly competitive conditions, and new formulas to integrate both chambers of congress... In such a framework the Mexican left would have wide-ranging prospects for multiplying its links with society, for gaining support among significant sectors of the population and to govern a larger number of municipalities and perhaps even state governments. At present this is a possibility and only a possibility, but it is essential for the left to contemplate this scenario if it wishes to normalise political relations in genuinely democratic terms." [57]

The party or parties of the left may find fertile ground for development with two conditions: first, that the left manages to accept that it is only part of the country and that it cannot represent the whole; and, second, if measures to ease the transition to a fully democratic regime are also implemented. And, following

[57] Monica Serrano, "Mexico: Assessing Neo-Liberal Reform," Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1997, pp. 47-48

Monica Serrano:

> "The Mexican left has a real and a potential social foundation. If it is to develop its potential support, it must become committed once and for all to a democratic institutional framework and accept that it is through democracy that it can become a 'hegemonic' force." [58]

The political reform and its dynamics unleashed a great impact on two main spheres of left-wing activity: the search for unity (or the attempt to stop the left from scattering), and its conversion to democracy. The debate that sought to define the left's role from 1978 to 1988 in the new setting, was a complex discussion, ultimately revolving around the need to replace revolutionary ideas with democratic ones. Carlos Gil assumes that:

> "Neocardenismo influenced Mexican politics considerably more than panismo between 1985 and 1990...Cardena's leadership is linked to the strength of his backers and his ability to direct them effectively...Lorenzo Meyer's contention that Cardenas is the leader of a movement instead of a party is more than a wise observation, but it does not necessarily negate the need for party organization to win in 2000 presidential election." [59]

Moreover, the enormous appeal of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas may very well have given a new lease on life to certain old left position; the biggest of the many challenges facing the left will be to build a consensus for a new modernization that is not predicated on privatization, blind acceptance of export-led growth, and attacks on the living standards of working people. This kind of modernization is clearly incompatible with a neoliberalism that preaches openess while its economic agenda demands the strengthening of repression and control. Regardless of the unpredictability of political struggle, it must ratify its commitment to democracy in at least three main areas. According to Monica Serrano:

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[58] Ibidem, p. 48

[59] Carlos B. Gil, Op. Cit., pp. 71-73, 92

"As a means of settling its internal differences, as a way of bringing about social change, and as a strategic commitment. In other words, it must banish the instrumental and circumstantial use of democracy and convert it into daily practice and a long-term commitment. In a country as abysmally unequal and polarised as Mexico, the capacity of the left to make more than a merely rhetorical commitment in the field of social equity could also significantly improve its medium and long-term chances. This must be carried out within the context of increasingly global markets and the structural restrictions they impose." [60]

Nevertheless, the most disturbing omission in the opposition's performance has been its failure to translate anti-PRI sentiment in the labor and peasant arena into actions that challenge the traditional power relations of corporativism. It must intensify its efforts to intersect labor and pesant organizations as well as the new social movements. It will have to overcome deeply rooted suspicion concerning political parties' involvement in the affairs of unions and popular organizations.

The Electoral Reforms

During the last two decades Mexico's leadership, whose direct antecedents dominated the political scene since the 1920s, tinkered win the electoral process as a way of encouraging political opposition and legitimizing their own rule. The government implemented a structural change through the 1977 Electoral Reform Law that has a significant impact on the Mexican recruitment process; and, it automatically expanded opposition representation in the Chamber of Deputies. Their adjustments to the electoral process came about because some establishment leaders believe the time has arrived for a more pluralistic system and others cynically used the reforms to perpetuate their own vested interests.

Regardless of the reasons for the electoral reforms, they altered the rules

[60] Monica Serrano, Op. Cit., p. 48

of the political game and the establishment has opened up electoral competition in order to channel opposition into the least offensive and uninfluential arenas. Mexican opposition party leadership needs to be examined and understood for several reasons. Organized political opposition plays an important role. Following statistics:

> "Beginning with the 1979-82 legislature, the first elected after the introduction of the reforms, the Chamber of Deputies contained 400 seats. Three hundred of these seats are based on districts, similar to the United States system, while one hundred are confined to minority parties only, distributed on the basis of a complex proportional voting system. Therefore, 25 percent of the seats are automatically given to opposition parties, plus whatever other seats they can win in the 300 majority districts. But, by expanding and legitimating their role, the government provided them with an official forum from which they can express their opinions." [61]

A second reason why the role of opposition leaders takes on added significance since 1977 is that the government increased the heterogeneity of groups having a legitimate political voice. In particular, the left has been given a more significant opportunity to express itself. A third reason why opposition leadership must be examined is that the role of the Chamber of Deputies itself has undergone subtle, but significant alterations. Because opposition party deputies participate in questioning cabinet members, their views have received far more attention than in the past in the national media.

Moreover, the Chamber of Deputies real role is one of contact and mediation with the masses. With political technocrats, who have few mass brokerage skills, dominating establishment leadership, deputies who have grass-roots contacts and experiences, whether they are from the opposition of the official party, will be in greater demand. Politically speaking, on the basis of leadership characteristics and ideological appeal , political opposition groups in Mexico compete strongly against one another in urban centers, where the

[61] Judith Gentleman, Op. Cit., p. 236

government is at its weakest.

In 1986 further changes in electoral laws increased the number of deputies from multimember districts (plurinominales) to 200 and there was introduced a 'governability clause' assuring that, in the event a winning party obtained less than 51 percent of the national vote and fewer than 251 seats (out of 500) in the Chamber of Deputies, the winning party would nonetheless still be assigned 251 seats. As a result of these reforms and the strength of the opposition in 1988, the PRI surrendered four contested Senate seats for the first time and more single-member district seats than ever before (66 of 300). The largest blocks of proportional representation seats (plurinominales) were awarded to the FDN and the PAN. These results meant that the PRI retained a majority, but lost its two-thirds advantage in the Chamber of Deputies.

Yet another set of electoral reforms, approved by Congress in July 1990, replaced the institutional mechanism for overseeing elections and adjudicating disputed returns, the Comision Federal Electoral (CFE), with a new entity and the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE).

The most recent package of electoral reforms, initiated by the Salinas government in July 1993, represents the most significant concession yet to the demands of opposition parties as well as the government's increasing need to preempt foreign criticism of Mexico's political system. Under the revised electoral code, each state will have three federal senators rather than the current two, with the new senator to be chosen from the opposition party winning the highest level of support. This will greatly increase the number of opposition senators. This reform expands the field of opposition politicians who could credibly run for state governorships.

The 'governability clause' effectively guaranteeing a majority for the ruling party in the Chamber of Deputies even if it wins less than 50 percent of the national vote was abolished by the 1993 reforms, which also set a limit of 65 percent of the 500 seats that can go to any single party. The 1993 reforms make

it more difficult for opposition parties of the left and right to join forces to defeat a specific PRI candidate in a state where no opposition party, alone, commands a plurality or majority of voter support. [62]

In 1994, the Chiapas rebellion and the Colosio and Ruiz Massieu assassinations again raised doubts about the political system's stability; the 1995 economic crisis has brought the government's current development model into question. Each crisis has seemingly placed the country at a crossroads, facing a choice between meaningful reform or dangerous decay. But through these challenges the nation's political elite has demonstrated tremendous resiliency and an amazing capacity to adjust, while still resisting fundamental change in the political order, no matter how advisable.

The 1982 debt crisis led Presidents De la Madrid and Salinas to abandon Mexico's failed industrial development model and restructure the state sector. Having implemented neoliberal reforms, Salinas created a popular, grassroots welfare and public works program to ameliorate the pain that restructuring invariably inflicts on the poor. And, following the Chiapas uprising, the government introduced limited socioeconomic changes in the state and substantial electoral reforms at the national level, making the next presidential election the cleanest ever. So, even though the EZLN rebellion and the Colosio murder staggered the PRI leadership, the party regrouped within months and swept the 1994 elections, this time without recourse to major fraud.

Like Carlos Salinas, the current president, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon, also began his term inauspiciously. Once again dealing with a crisis through conciliation, the government brokered a far-reaching electoral reform agreement with the major opposition parties. Announced at the close 1995, the proposed electoral law will likely move Mexico toward fair national and state elections.

Zedillo is not the first Mexican president to have argued for reform of the political system. Some state governors, used to taking their lead, if not their

[62] See Craig and Cornelius's ciphers, in Scully and Mainwaring, Op.Cit., pp. 285-288

orders, from the president, have become paralyzed. Others have gone to the opposite extreme, acting as local bosses and organizing their administrations as if their states were independent entities. The Congress has become ever more active, far form the old rubber stamp mechanism that it used to be. It has been liberalized, undermining the old mechanisms of control and creating new spaces in which individuals can test the political waters and launch initiatives that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

Zedillo introduced a new factor of uncertainty into the PRI. For the first time in their history, members of the party were given the message that they needed to reform themselves and become competitive in an open electoral regime; the president would no longer stand for fraud or other illegal means to grab or maintain power. Susan Kafman and Luis Rubio confirm that:

> "Zedillo announced that he would not appoint a succesor because he recognized that open electoral competition makes such procedures irrelevant... Zedillo claimed a peaceful democratic evolution of the country's politics. Zedillo abandoned the traditional powers of the presidency, thus forcing all other institutions, both new and old, to restructure. Zedillo succeeded in reducing the powers of the presidency, of liberalizing Mexican politics further, and of creating a broader space for the development of competitive politics." [63]

The question is how new institutions will be developed and whether they will succeed in meeting the objectives of representing society, channeling demands, promoting political participation and maintaining stability. Despite the inherent difficulties of such a building process, there is some evidence that the gradual accumulation of practice, legislation and enforcement will create new institutions.

In sum, the Zedillo administration introduced a strategy to deal with Mexico's political ills that, in theory, represents a radical departure from previous policy. This has led to dramatic transformations in some of the most critical

63 Susan Kaufman Purcell and Luis Rubio, "Mexico under Zedillo," Lynne Rienner Publishers, United States of America, 1998, pp.16-17

relationships that lie at the core of the political system, such as the one between the president and the PRI; it has strengthened the judiciary and encouraged an increasingly active legislature, and it has begun to bring the main opposition parties into the political system. These are significant accomplishments.

The current uncertainty that permeates Mexican society springs from many sources. An important factor is the emergence of an increasingly active polity made up of opposition parties, nongovernmental organizations, unions, and organized interests of all kinds. Behind this explosion of political action is a lack of credible institutional structures, an absence of consensus over what constitute the rules of the game and the damaged credibility of the government. In addition, the economic depression experienced by most Mexicans in 1995 and 1996 has further undermined governmental credibility and fueled the strength of opposition parties.

A rapidly changing society such as that of Mexico today requires different institutions. Some of them are beginning to emerge, such as a fairly independent Supreme Court and the Federal Electoral Institute; but, as important as these are, they are insufficient to channel demands from the population and to settle disputes.

The PRI had dominated Mexican politics for so long and is associated with so many vices that without alternation of parties in power, democracy would be left wanting. Ultimately, this goes to the core of Mexico's complex political moment: elections are a component of democracy but not its only feature; the PRI may very well dominate the electoral process in this new era, but that would not by itself bring democracy and all of its components. New institutions are in their infancy, and the old system persists even as the new one is emerging.

Moreover, there is no consensus on what the future should look like. But, in these and other ways, the most recent revisions of Mexico's electoral law are consistent with the thrust of previous reforms. To think with the rules of the electoral game has become a continuous process, used by governments after

government to co-opt opposition forces, preempt schisms in the ruling party, and restore the credibility of the electoral process, both at home and abroad.

The key to Mexico's political evolution lies in the accumulation of agreements on procedures, such as the recent electoral law, and on incremental successes by parties that today are in opposition, so that all build an allegiance to an institutional, as opposed to violent way of settling disputes. To the extent that political parties and other interested groups are able to agree on procedures, they will be able to shape the future one step at a time.

An important question in this regard is whether the two significant parties that today are in the opposition (PAN and PRD) have the skills to govern. Political agreements among parties are a necessary condition for economic development in Mexico today, but they are no substitute for the rule of law.

Finally, each of the changes described above have legitimated, institutionalized, and expanded the role of opposition parties. Surveys demonstrate that many Mexicans from all occupational backgrounds identify with the ideological positions of these parties. Hence, as politics gears up toward the presidential race of 2000, the big question is which party will be able to earn the confidence of the 30-40 percent of voters that have no party allegiance and that in both 1994 and 1997 determined the results of the elections.

Perspectives on the Political Opposition

Since the mid-1970s the formula for Mexican politics has taken on some new ingredients. Among the most important of these has been the expansion of opposition political parties. Mexican opposition leadership takes more importance because of the changing nature of the political system since 1977. Since 1968, Mexico's political system has undergone a severe crisis of legitimacy. As economic problems have become incresingly serious, political pressures have become difficult to contain.

At the center of the problem is the fact that one political party has dominated the process of decision-making for the whole nation, allowing only token participation in the process by other groups. The process has shown indications of accelerating, and no one seems sure of what the outcome will be. This does not mean that most Mexican citizens approve of all the official policies that restrict the opportunities to influence economic and political choices.

Those who disapprove, either individuals or organizations, are numerous, but they are disunited, some because of divergent definitions of the problems, others over the formulation of new goals, and in general because of uncertainty about where their true individual and class interests lie. It is impossible to calculate the strength of the opposition with accuracy because the term used in its broadest sense could easily apply to every member of the polity. Further, the use of the singular form of the word "opposition," according to Judith Gentleman:

> "Overlooks the proliferation of groups of opponents, each in conflict with the other groups, and many plagued by internal conflicts about ends and means..., "opposition" refers to any organized group that manifests a critical attitude toward national political and economic goals as they are defined and implemented by the state, formulates an alternative agenda emphasizing economic and social goals that differ significantly from those pursued by the incumbent regime, and recruits new adherents and actively strives to increase its share of political power for the purpose of implementing its own agenda." [64]

Although the result of the process in Mexican political life cannot be predicted with any certainty at this time, some of the participants can be described and the significance of their activities evaluated. There is a sense of urgency today about every discussion of Mexico's present situation and future prospects. The Mexican polity now stands on the brink of irreversible political and economic disaster, but no individual or group has stepped forward to lead

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64 Judith Gentleman, "Mexican Politics in Transition," Westview Press, Inc., United States of America, 1987, pp. 217-218

the nation out of the wilderness.

Reflected in the analyses of the problem is a conviction that the regime as presently constituted is incapable of devising and implementing effective remedies. Some sectors of society have for many years insisted that deeply rooted problems can be solved only by a realignment of political forces that will reorder national goals and implement new policies. These groups are the opposition from among which observers hope to discover evidences of effective action. During the Salinas administration Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the son of Lazaro Cardenas, one of the PRI's founders, defected from the ruling party and organized a large, left-of-center coalition that managed effectively to challenge the PRI's hegemonic electoral position for the first time since its creation. Considering that:

> "Mexican elections had historically two main functions: 1) to provide democratic forms of legitimation to decisions arrived at through nondemocratic mand and 2) to organize elite consensus through the periodic distribution and redistribution of power shares among its members." [65]

Here lies a dilemma involving questions to opposition parties' representatives about which opposition groups have formulated comprehensive analyses of the nation's problems, have prepared detailed programs of action to remedy them, and can count on politically competent individuals to implement a new program. Attention is now focused on the presidential election of 2000, which could produce the election of an opposition party candidate as president of Mexico.

There is no certainty, of course, that the opposition's victories in the July 1997 midterm elections mean that the PRI's candidate in the presidential elections of 2000 will lose. The PRI still has the largest and best-functioning political machine, with a presence in urban and rural areas throughout the

[65] William C. Smith, at. al., Op. Cit., "Democracy, Markets, and...," p. 280

country. The National Action Party (PAN), in contrast, is only well organized in the north and in other states. By July of 1998, of 31 Mexico's States, the PRI had 25 State's governors; the PAN was ruling six States: Baja California, Chihuahua, Jalisco, Nuevo Leon, Guanajuato and Queretaro, having lost Chihuahua and Baja California lately; and the PRD today gained Baja California Sur, Zacatecas and Tlaxcala. Although the PRD has the weakest organization, the party shows strong in the 1997 congressional elections and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas' election as Mexico City Governor, a key one for the center-left Party of the PRD in the nation's capital of Mexico City, the Federal District.

According to several analysts, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas' experience as Federal District's Governor, rising crime and city-wide problems arising from shaky relations with PRI-linked city workers unions and social groups, could affect his chances for the presidency. Nevertheless, this party has encouraged more Mexicans, including those from the left wing of the PRI who are unhappy with the liberal economic reforms made by a series of PRI presidents, to become active members of the PRD. Although the list of presidential hopefuls is growing longer, Cardenas would be willing to run for the next presidential elections, and the politician Porfirio Munoz Ledo said he would led the PRD victory also in the year 2000, the same that Barlett told PRI followers. Therefore, the possibility is open to any party, and an opposition candidate could win the next presidential elections.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL PARTIES AND STATE'S CENTRAL ROLE

For many years the state was the engine driving Mexico's rapid economic growth. This chapter will be addressed to the resurgence of economic liberalism and its impact on party politics, especially on the right side of the political spectrum. Since the 1980s with implications for party politics there has been the resurgence of an anti-statist, free- market economic liberalism.

From the 1930s until the 1970s, policy makers from widely divergent political perspectives agreed that the state needed to be an important agent of production and regulation. In Mexico, the country's most influential modern president, Lazaro Cardenas (1934-40), set the stage. His agrarian reform established rural tranquility, while the state took control of the agrarian economy, providing peasants with credit, technical assistance, and infrastructure. In subsequent years, however, the institutions that Cardenas created to assist the peasantry were used to control and exploit them. Mainwaring and Scully are relevant there:

> "Major social and political actors mistrusted foreign investments, especially after the international financial collapse precipitated by the Great Depression, and there emerged a consensus to regulate the operations of the market and of multinational corporations. Despite important differences in other respects, policy makers, whether of populist or developmentalist convictions, shared a faith that the state could be an efficient economic agent." [66]

Cardenas increased the state's economic power by nationalizing foreign petroleum firms. Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), became the country's largest corporation. From the time of Avila Camacho (1940-46) and Aleman (1946-52) administrations onward, the government actively promoted industrialization and economic development, largely by assiting the private sector; and, it promoted

[66] Mainwaring and Scully, Op. Cit., p. 468

import-substituting industrialization (ISI). The state nurtured industrialization subsidizing the private sector by providing rail transport, gasoline, and electric power at prices below their market value. However, the experience provided by the export-oriented economies of the East Asian "Tigers", South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia experienced some of the world's fastest growth rates, leaving most Latin American economies far behind.

Following the discovery of major petroleum reserves and the massive infusion of foreign credit, economic growth rebounded to even higher levels at the close of that decade. Despite its many accomplishments, the benefits of growth were very poorly distributed, Mexico's industrialization model eventually created economic inefficiencies, balance-of-payments problems, and monetary instability, most notably under President Echeverria. All of these factors contributed to Mexico's debt crisis in the 1980s.

Nevertheless, by then, Mexico City was the world's most heavily populated city. Modernization altered Mexico, as the result of extensive rural-to-urban migration and the country changed from a predominantly rural to a large urban society. Industrialization and urbanization increased the size of the working class and middle class substantially, with each group exercising significant political influence. Socioeconomic changes had important political consequences as the public's political awareness grows and new social groups gain influence.

Furthermore, Mexico's poverty and income inequality contributed to periodic political unrest, students, workers, peasants, and the urban poor protested economic injustices. While these protests were not sufficient to threaten the political system, they destabilized. The most recent manifestation is the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, a thorn in the government's side since the start of 1994.

By 1982, Mexico's excessive foreign debt plunged it into a deep

economic decline and convinced Presidents De la Madrid and Salinas to abandon state-centered ISI in favor of a more outward-looking, market-based development model. Their success left little doubt that the formula of import-substituting industrialization, based on high tariffs and a generally noncompetitive corporatist capitalism, would no longer work in the unforgiving global economy of the 1990s. These global trends influence policy makers the world over, and Latin America was no exception. Burdened by massive debts and seemingly incapable of attaining greater levels of productivity, the developmental state came under attack in Latin America during the 1980s.

A new model based more on private initiative and market principles became fashionable.The resurgence of economic liberalism had an important impact on party politics. By the early 1980s, many business leaders became active in the PAN. As Wayne Cornelius noted:

> "The collaborative state-private sector relationship began to deteriorate in the early 1970s and reached the breaking point with...the nationalization of the banks in 1982. De la Madrid...made no appreciable progress in repairing the breach, despite the fact that he...moved much farther than any of his predecessors in implementing the private sector's own primary agenda -setting market forces free in the Mexican economy." [67]

The departure of the center-left Cardenistas from the PRI and their unexpectedly strong electoral showing in 1988 further polarized an already deeply divided PRI. The traditional, nationalist-populist wing of the PRI sees itself reduced to permanent obsolescence and irrelevance by a more internationalist, technocratic political elite committted to neoliberal economic policies. In Mexico, the PAN, the standard-bearer of the new liberalism, stalled by the late 1980s after a period of dynamic electoral growth. Much of its thunder was quelled by the PRI, whose eagerness to adopt the opposition's free market policies made the PAN less attractive.Mainwaring and Scully argue that:

[67] Rodolfo O. de la Garza, et. al., Latino Voices (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992); New York Times, 15 December 1992. In: Howard Handelman, "Mexican Politics. The Dynamics of Change," St. Martin's Press, United States of America, 1997, p. 131

> "The change toward a more critical view of statist policies in the 1980s was not limited to the parties of the right. As Leninism collapsed in Eastern Europe, as the failure of developmentalist strategies became apparent throughout the Third World, and as Latin America heaved under the increasing burden of the debt, parties of the center and left also questioned state-centered development. In fact, most Latin American presidents who attempted state-shrinking policies in the 1980s and 1990s came, not from liberal or neoliberal parties, but from parties once know for statism." [68]

At the same time, the most conservative, politically hard-line elements within the party (represented especially by the labor sector) strongly resist making concessions to opposition parties and dissidents within the PRI. These conflicts greatly complicated the task of party reform.

The Mexican PRI, a protagonist of state-sponsored development since its inception, did an about-face under President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994), who initiated sweeping state reforms and undertook the most thoroughgoing restructuring of the Mexican economy. Salinas aggressively pursued political reforms within the party as a response to dismal 1988 electoral results. The CTM (Mexican Workers Confederation) resented these reforms because they were directed toward the corporatist structure that traditionally nourished its influence within the party. Monica Serrano describes in short:

> "The Salinas administration challenged the traditional influence of the CTM more broadly than the previous administration. Trade liberalisation and labour flexibility reduced union's industrial influence and increased the heterogeneity among CTM constituencies, threatening the encompassing nature of the organisation...The reform of the party and the decrease in labour representatives challenged the political influence of the CTM." [69]

However, the most fundamental policy changes initiated by De la Madrid

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68 Ibidem, p. 470

69 Monica Serrano, "Mexico: Assessing Neo-Liberal Reform," Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1997, pp. 60-61

and Salinas was dismantling the ISI model of development in favor of export-oriented growth. This initiative sybolized the opening of the country's economy to the world. In 1986, after four decades of sitting on the sidelines, Mexico entered GATT, the world's predominant trading group. Seven years later it helped create NAFTA, linking its economy to those of the United States and Canada.

Stripped of their protectionist trade barriers, Mexican firms were forced to become more competitive in the international market. However, by the end of Salinas's term the country once again suffered negative trade balances, this time due to mounting imports. Howard Handelman offer a clear assessment of how De la Madrid and Salinas administrations tried to restore the confidence mentioning three crucial constituencies:

> "The first was the Mexican private sector and the middle class. Sustained economic recovery required renewed business investment and the repatriation of capital from abroad. A second targeted group was foreign investors who could provide additional capital and technological skills. All of these groups needed to be convinced...and that the peso would stay fairly stable. A final objective was to reassure foreign governments (particularly the United States), international financial institutions (especially the IMF), and foreign private banks regarding Mexico's economic dependability." [70]

De la Madrid, Salinas, and, most recently, Ernesto Zedillo enlisted Washigton's support to restructure the debt and reassure international financial institutions. Although Carlos Salinas quickly won the confidence of the Mexican private sector and the international financial community, Salinas accelerated the privatization of state enterprises and other free market economic policies introduced by Miguel de la Madrid. Investors and international financial agencies were impressed by his bold initiatives such as NAFTA, by his consistent and clear policies, and, perhaps most important, by his economic team's seeming ability to always make the right moves. Only after Salinas left office did his administration's serious policy errors emerge. It was those errors that imposed a

[70] Howard Handelman, Op. Cit., p. 131

major financial crisis on his successor, Ernesto Zedillo. Roderic Ai Camp is relevant there:

> "The 1988 presidential succession took on great significance within the political leadership. In one sense, competition among contenders within the PRI represented a conflict between a more traditional economic philosophy, which favored state control and deficit-spending budget strategies, and the more orthodox private sector emphasis that De la Madrid had reintroduced. Although De la Madrid had improved the relationship between the private sector and the state, Salinas by his second year in office, had established a clear-cut policy incorporating many ingredients of international economic liberalism." [71]

In the early 1990s, even PRD leader Cuauhtemoc Cardenas softened his opposition to NAFTA and accepted some aspects of the new order. Salinas' administration achieved a surprisingly broad consensus over the outlines of economic reform. The United States did not play a direct role in the formulation of Mexico's economic policy. Nevertheless, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton actually have been pushing toward a more orthodox economic policy domestically and similar policies elsewhere, including Mexico. Throughout the 1980s the United States expressed serious concern about Mexico's stability, and its economic and political future. Roderic Ai Camp is relevant there:

> "Salinas saw capital as essential to Mexican economic recovery in the short term and international competition in the long term...Regardless of the weaknesses and strengths of the economic policies of Salinas, he has pursued a consistent economic strategy, composed primarily of privatization, internationalization, and foreign investment...It also can be argued that Salinas used his economic successes to bolster his political prestige. Unlike the goals of political modernization, one of which is the decentralization of authority, the results of the successes, according to some critics, were a strengthened presidency, enhanced centralized decision making, reduced electoral competition, and a leaner, stronger state." [72]

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[71] Roderic Ai Camp, "Politics in Mexico," Oxford University Press, New York, 1993, p. 167
[72] Ibidem, pp. 168-170

Salinas stimulated growth, reduced protectionism, and intensified the privatization of state enterprise. Impressed by these reforms, many Mexican businessmen repatriated capital from abroad. Foreign investment also grew, encouraged by a more stable peso and by Mexico's preferred access to United States markets through NAFTA.

In late 1991 and early 1992 the government began to sell off the banks it had nationalized a decade earlier. It put several major corporations owned by the government on the market, including Telefonos de Mexico (Telmex), which has a monopoly on telephone communications in Mexico, and Mexicana Airlines, one of the two major domestic lines. In fact, of the 1,155 firms that the government owned as late as 1987, it retained control of only 286 in 1992, a drop of 80 percent. [73]

In fact, the economy at the close of Salinas's term was in more fragile shape than most experts realized or, perhaps, wished to admit. In the run-up to the 1994 presidential election the administration enhanced the PRI's position by pumping up the economy through heavy government spending. Economists generally agreed that the peso was overvalued, and many members of Salina's economic team favored devaluation, but the president had no intention of announcing a politically unpopular devaluation shortly before the election.

It remained for Ernesto Zedillo's administration to devalue the currency after he took office in late 1994. Automatically foreign investors that had bought stock in Mexico while counting on a stable peso rapidly withdrew their funds, causing the Mexican stock market to plunge and the peso to weaken further; and, the president's credibility was undermined. The trend of recent years to reduce the size of the state has meant fewer positions for political allies and fewer resources to feed the client structure. In Mexico it is s remarkable how, within the space of a few years, political scientists who would once have concentrated almost entirely on impersonal questions such as 'the role of the state' are once again concerned with institutions, personalities and political

[73] See statistics in: Mexico Report, February 10, 1992, p. 6

tactics.

The Mexican system's dynamics involves an interaction -sometimes co-operative, sometimes creatively diverse, sometimes destructively confrontational- between state power and various forms of societal power. On the societal side, the dynamic is provided by the importation of new ideas from abroad, the continued process of socio-economic change, economic boom and setback -which are in at least some respects inherently unpredictable. On the side of state power is the presidential institution. Thus, the president Zedillo entered into a new political spectrum, the decline of the PRI and the local political elites which traditionally influenced the official parties. To some extent the PRI lost ground to the opposition parties. Far more important the PRI lost power vis-a-vis the agencies of central government; and, it did not focus in democracy as a form of governance.

Today, the current economic decline seems to be easing, a recession of unknown duration with extensive unemployment and a steep decline in living standards. This major recession badly shakes people's confidence in their political and economic systems.

THE PRESIDENCY AND THE STATE

The core institution of the political system after the 1920s was the presidency. Regardless of the formal structure of the system, the presidency was its centerpiece. Almost every institution and entity was built to interact with it, serving either as a mechanism through which societal groups negotiated with the president or as an instrument for presidential action. Around the presidency a host of formal governmental structures operated, from the legislature to political parties.

On the side of state power there is, more than anything else, the presidential institution. Mexican presidents serve for six years with no possibility

of re-election. While some presidents have sought to exercise power after the end of their term of office, these attempts have not generally been successful. When in office, however, they were subject to few if any legal of constitutional constraints. George Philip describes the president's authority:

> "What is true, however, is that the principle of presidential authority extends the benefits of non-accountability (of what the Mexicans call 'impunidad') to far more junior figures than the president himself. The main thing that these juniors have to fear is the wrath of a future president." [74]

It was the rule that the outgoing president choosed his successor. The successor was always a senior member of the Mexican cabinet, but the president chooses his cabinet. The presidential selection, the 'destape,' was one of the high points of the Mexican political calendar. For several years before, senior government ministers were seeking to catch the presidential eye, although this was a dangerous game. George Philip argues that:

> "While the outgoing president will normally seek to create an element of continuity, an incoming figure will often introduce some discontinuity." [75]

The new president placed his own friends and allies in senior cabinet positions; there may be one or two people left over from the previous administration but not many. State governors do overlap presidential terms, but central governmental positions rarely do. The Mexican public sector is clientelist. The president chooses his cabinet and selects people to fill a number of other offices; senior figures in the government will also expect to be able to appoint their juniors, and so the process continues downward.

This type of system generates groups (camarillas) who work together in order to give out such offices as they become available. It can generate inertia and inter-bureaucratic rivalry, it does not generally create any powerful

[74] George Philip, "The Presidency in Mexican Politics," St. Martin's Press, New York, 1992, p. 4
[75] Ibidem, p. 6

'bureaucratic ' interest in the way that a professional civil service does.

The system, yet, is too amorphous. Since the mid-1970s there has been a lot of discussion within Mexico about the rise of the so-called 'technocrats'. Technocrats worked their way into the top reaches of the Mexican system and now dominate it. Another development during the 1980s has been the relative decline of the PRI and the local political elite which traditionally influenced the official parties. To some extent the PRI lost ground to the various opposition parties.

From 1970 to 1982, the Mexican state sought to intervene far more in the industrial development process, but faced financial difficulties which neither foreign borrowing nor oil exports could ultimately alleviate. After 1982 the state had little option but to seek a resumption of growth through a renewed opening to the world economy with policies of trade liberalization, fiscal orthodoxy and cuts in public programmes.It is clear according to Susan Kaufman and Luis Rubio that:

> "The economic reform of the 1980s and 1990s proved to be insufficient to deal with Mexico's problems, even though they have indeed produce a strong economic rebound. The reforms were geared toward modernizing the system, not eliminating it; their ultimate aim was to maintain the political status quo. This inherent contradiction limited the potential success of reforms and, ultimately, produced the seeds of the debate that plagues Mexican politics today." [76]

The Mexican political system in many ways undergoing rapid change. It would be moderately optimistic to see these changes as heralding a move in the direction of greater pluralism. About presidential power, the Mexican president has the ability to clamp down on petty tyrannies and local abuses of authority. Moreover, the promise of an evolution toward greater pluralism is, for the moment, threatened far more by vested interests within the system than by any presidential excess. Successful political reform cannot be introduced in Mexico

76 Susan Kaufman Purcell and Luis Rubio, "Mexico Under Zedillo," Lynne Rienner Publishers, United States of America, 1998, p. 13

only from above, but pluralism under law cannnot possibly be achieved without presidential support. In a non-pluralist and often non-legal environment the practical alternative to presidential power is too often gangster power and even narco-power. Mexico needs high quality political leadership. At least until 1982 looked like a consistently deteriorating trend in presidential performance. There was not any serious likelihood that the PRI would be overthrown by force, that it would split so badly as to be unable to continue in power, or that it would allow itself to be defeated in presidential elections.

Despotic power in Mexico was in the hands of the president, while the system has maintained its control of despotic power. It has been unable to control or entirely cope with the fact that the amount of 'infrastructural' power in the hands of civil society has been increasing. This helps to explain why the Mexican system, authoritarian as it is in many ways, does not wholly have the feel of an authoritarian society. There is rather a great deal of competition and conflict but so far almost entirely at the infrastructural level.

Efforts by Mexican presidents to assert state power over the bourgeoisie essentially failed, it is highly unlikely that any Mexican president will in the foresseable future take measures which the private sector seriously resents. Instead Mexican presidents must seek to govern within this constraint. We do know that in 1988-9 President Salinas preferred to accept an opposition-controlled governorship in Baja California and a substantial opposition presence in the Mexican Congress rather than face the costs of continuing to rig ballots.

With PRONASOL Salinas went beyond his predecessors' attempts to secure an autonomous branch of welfare resources in the hands of the presidency. In fact, after shaking the corporatist structure of the PRI by imprisoning the once almighty boss of the national petroleum union and forcing the resignation of the teacher's union boss, Salinas launched an unprecedented attempt to use welfare resources to organize a presidentially controlled base of political support parallel to the PRI. This was the highest stage of Mexican

presidentialism, but PRI unions were able to arrest Salinas's attempt to detach the PRI from its corporatist roots. Kaufman Purcell and Luis Rubio has aptly describe Salinas's social mechanism:

> "PRONASOL emerged along three main lines: its real impact on poverty alleviation has been negligible; it has been used as a device to help the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) electorally; and, by creating a parallel mechanism to respond to social demands that bypasses municipal and state governments, it has contributed to the weakening of formal government structures." [77]

By the end of Salinas' administration, with the prospect of Mexico joining the ranks of industrialized nations, unusually high presidential approval rates, and an equally popular PRONASOL, Salinas faced no compelling incentive to push for the decorporatization of the PRI. He had the support of the PRI unions, being a key ingredient in the continuous success of the economic stabilization program. With no strong incentives to reform the PRI and clear constraints on his ability to do so, Salinas avoided launching a definitive reorganization of the party. For the welfare system, after the 1992 educational reform, the Salinas administration abstained from attempting any comprehensive institutional reform in other social areas, including health, social security, and housing.

Traditional presidential authority declined rapidly during the transfer of power from Salinas to Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon in 1994, triggered by the assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, and the fragmentation of the PRI political class. In over a decade of market-oriented reform, successive PRI administrations failed to devise a comprehensive strategy to cope with the social costs of economic transformation and to address growing poverty and inequality. From the outset of his term, Zedillo redefined the role of the presidency as well as its objectives. Through his campaign and in his inaugural address, he insisted on three principles that broke with the decades-long tradition of presidential dominance. First, he argued that the rule of law,

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[77] Susan Kaufman Purcell and Luis Rubio, ***Op. Cit.***, p.43

rather than unwritten rules, should guide Mexico's politics. Insisting that he would govern strictly according to the constitution; he relinquished extraconstitutional roles that had been adopted by all of his predecessors, such as leadership of the party and head of the nation's political class. He called for sweeping reform of the judiciary and the Supreme Court. And, he announced that he would maintain what he called a 'healthy distance' from the PRI and would refrain from intervening in the selection of his successor as Mexican presidents before him had always done.

Zedillo identified a series of problems and abuses in the traditional structure of the presidency. By relinquishing those privileges not expressly cited in the constitution, he radically displaced the center of gravity of Mexican politics from the presidency to the political parties and the governors.

The approach of every administration since 1982 has been shaped to a significant degree by immediate political and economic crises affecting the presidency, and the implementation of reforms has been dominated by the political constraints of Mexican corporatism. Moreover, governments from de la Madrid to Zedillo have been unable to deliver a comprehensive strategy of social sector reform or devise appropriate unemployment and income safety nets.

As a consequence there is now a genuine electoral dimension which is constraint on the policymaking autonomy of the Mexican president and a possible indicator of a fundamental future change in the nature of the political system. It is too early to say whether the PRI is likely to face, or would accept, electoral defeat in the year 2000.

CRISIS AND ALTERNATIVES OF GOVERNABILITY

Some analyses of Mexican politics emphasized the PRI's contributions to governability. The ruling party helped to defuse class tensions, using government policy and its own social composition to discourage the organization

of parties affiliated with classes of class fragments. It prevented overt regional conflict, even in the face of enormous social and economic disparities. Susan Kaufman and Luis Rubio are relevant there:

> "Rather than the political parties themselves, corporatist organizations, popular movements, and the bureaucratic elite were regarded as the key actors shaping Mexican politics. Among political parties, only the PRI was accorded national significance, with the PAN a distant second... the PRI's contributions to governability -it assured regular, nonviolent transfers of presidential power, organized mass political participation, and contained dissent." [78]

The PRI facilitated the expansion of the state and the centralization of decision-making power in the presidency. And, like political machines elsewhere, the PRI, jointly with government agencies, distributed public goods that contributed much to the regime's performance legitimacy.

Fundamental changes over the past two decades in the structure and organization of Mexican society, the spatial and sectoral distribution of the population, and the state's development model have made difficult for the PRI to sustain these contributions to governability. The accumulating costs of economic restructuring have fallen heavily on peasants, organized labor, and the urban middle class, as well as on some groups of private entrepreneurs.

All of these groups (except the entrepreneurs) have found that their corporatist organizations are no longer even symbolically effective intermediaries with the government. Numerous independent social movements have emerged outside the boundaries of political parties, especially the PRI. Thus, the party that earliest incorporated politically mobilized groups is now an ineffective institution for mediating between civil society and the state, and in many places this mediating role has been rapidly assumed by a parallel structure of interest representation and political control, like the National solidarity Program with Salinas administration.

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[78] Ibidem, p. 288

CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN MEXICO

Since the early 1970s, the ongoing discussion of the mass media and the government's role in communication has been one of the loudest and most extraordinary watersheds in Mexican politics. The Mexican experience of communication policies provides insights into a certain way of facing this challenge. Vanden Heuvel and Everette Dennis are relevant there:

> "The media is vital in two senses: They are a vital and robust industry that reflects the rapid changes these societies are experiencing, and they are a crucial instrument for building the public will to face the difficulties that lay ahead." [79]

Party politics in the 1980s were reshaped decisively by the expansion of the modern media and modern campaign techniques, just as has happened earlier in the United States. Television has enabled candidates to make direct appeals to large parts of the population, potentially displacing party organization as the primary means of getting the message out to voters.

Adopting a functional view of media presence for this study, it is important to question: What roles can be atttributed to the mass media in political parties? The general answer is that media can serve to help individuals manage wants and needs. Following Sidney Kraus:

> "People might be expected to make rather diferent sense of the news, especially political news, depending on their party affiliation, ideology, level of political sophistication, and other cognitive and structural variables." [80]

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[79] Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, "Changing Patterns. Latin America's Vital Media. A Report of the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center." Columbia University, New York, 1995, p. 17

[80] Sidney Kraus, "Mass Communication and Political Information Processing," Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, New Jersey 1990,p. 72

The media in Mexico have traditionally been a key part of the vertical, authoritarian political structure that has characterized the country during its recent history. Some analysts affirm that:

> "The media as media or 'the media per se' have been the focus of interest in mass communication research during recent years...'Fast media' like radio, television, newspapers, and news magazines, leaving out of context 'slow media' like films, exhibitions, language instruction, and academic/artistic exchanges." [81]

It is sometimes difficult to separate the media from the political structure in which they operate. The Mexican media has ben a partner of the existing powers. The governing PRI in Mexico naturally has leverage to control the media, but it only occasionally has to resort to leverage, because media owners in Mexico tend to be close to the political leadership in their outlooks. Kraus offers a clear statement there:

> "Political news is also peculiar as a stimulus because it has social importance for virtually everyone. People, events, and policies discussed in the news have direct or indirect consequences for our lives, but people vary in the degree to which they recognize this relevance...The result is that the news contains something for everyone, but to find the specific part that is most appropriate for any given person takes considerable effort...Media messages are thus important sources of mental activity for extraordinarily large numbers of people...The volume of news media messages is too great, and our time too limited, to use all of them. Thus, we come to adopt certain tactics for deciding which media to use and how to make sense of the ones we do use." [82]

The role ascribed to the media in the process of political development has fluctuated, mass media use provides a strong stimulus to individual political participation. Therefore, this chapter was begun by asking what role mass media might play in connection with political parties. Why is the audience for news and

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81 Sven Windahl and Benno H. Signitzer with Jean T. Olson, "Using Communication Theory," SAGE Publications, London, 1992, p. 151,154.
82 See Sidney Kraus, Op. Cit., pp. 72-73

public affairs down? Why is that the vast majority of political issues that affect our day-to-day lives fail to generate either public interest of understandings? Many have long suspected that the media play an important role in the growth of public cynicism. According to Vanden Heudel and Dennis:

> "The media in Mexico have traditionally adhered to a pro-government editorial policy. Most media owners are well-dispose to the governing PRI party and are status quo oriented. They generally discouraged oppositional journalism in their media outlets." [83]

Voter cynicism is indeed fueled by the manner in which the print and broadcast media cover political events and issues. Cynicism, regarding the governing PRI will grow, and the process of fragmentation and expanding openness, a process fostered in part by the PRI leadership itself will continue. The Mexican media will have major beneficiaries of that new climate. Cappella and Jamieson aptly describe this as follow:

> "The media'a heavy focus on the game of politics, rather than on its substance, starts the spiral of cynicism that erodes citizen interests. By observing voters who watched and read different sets of reports... some satured in strategy talk, others focuses on the real issues, this shows clear links between the ways in which media cover campaigns and level of voter cynicism. Spiral of Cynicism demands that the media take a close look at how they cover political events and issues, as well as at their degree of culpability with regard to current voter dissatisfaction and cynicism." [84]

Over the last I0 years Mexico has witnessed a great liberalization, the economy that was formerly state-controlled is being privatized, and free-market forces are gaining the upper hand. In the media, this process have seen a gradual movement toward greater political pluralism and media openness in Mexico. Following Cappella and Jamieson:

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[83]Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, Op. Cit., 9

[84] Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Spiral of Cynicism. The Press and the Public Good., Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 1-10

> "The cynic tends to hold that the political system is corrupt, its players are Machiavellian partisans uninterested in the public good, its process driven by a concern with winning, not governing...the cynic can interpret even selfless actions as calculated attempts to create an image of selflessness." [85]

Mexico looks with admiration on the North American free press system and profess a commitment to freedom of expression. Two important recent developments are the appearance of Reforma, and independent Mexico City daily, and the emergence of a private television network, TV Azteca, which may erode Televisa's broadcasting dominance.Following Timothy Cook:

> "The news media, instead of depending on the day-to-day sufferance of political patronage, access, and potential prosecution, entered a more stable era of political subsidies, indeed entitlements from government." [86]

Mexico has a hig-quality business press that has experienced vibrant growth in recent years. Mexico's El Financiero and El Economista are important business publications, but television viewing is the dominant medium, it became an institutional part of the life of the average Mexican.

The importance of media could be coverage, or 'gatekeeping' that implies in the movement of information from the ocurrence of an event somewhere in the world to the reporting of that event in newspapers, television, or radio, the information by necessity must pass through a number of gates. Soderlund and Surlin are relevant there:

> "In the process of information movement, some of the information is filtered out and discarded, while some information which does pass through the gate takes on the particular colour or flavour of a gate for having passed through it." [87]

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85 Ibidem., p. 19

86 Timothy E. Cook, "Governing with the News," The University of Chicago Press, United States of America, 1998, p.37

87 Walter C. Soderlund and Stuart H. Surlin, "Media in Latin America and the Caribbean: Domestic and International Perspectives," University of Windsor, Ontario, 1985, p.161

A great deal of what political elites, the mass publics and the academic community know about a given situation, is precisely what the media has told them, the reality presented by the media. According to Soderlund and Surlin:

> "A journalist's main task is to inform, to give his readers the facts. His secondary task is to interpret, to put the facts in their framework, and where possible to draw conclusions." [88]

Journalists are conscientiuously committed to high standards of impartiality and to excluding their own personal values from the newsmaking process. And, Philip and Golding are relevant there:

> "News is not simply a collection of raw facts about the world, reflecting events with debatable but empirically determinable accuracy. Rather it is an important part of the cultural system of modern society, particularly concerned with providing, in a preliminary fashion, frameworks for handling new and recurring problems for society." [89]

Cable television is emerging as a robust medium promises to increase pluralism in television programming. Companies like the Miami-based Univision became Pan-American cable television networks. Media critics summed up some myths supporting continued government regulation. Following Edwin Diamond:

> "The myth of spectrum scarcity...Cable television will spell the end of that notion...Newspapers also have limited resources... but the private market is allowed to operate without Government control... The myth that government rules ensure diversity of ideas, the airing of controversy, and the chance por 'both sides' to be heard on television... Diamond is defending the concept of 'open electronic publishing.' His target is the television pattern, the most visible centralized, limited-ownership information arrangement. It is the medium that could be most radically altered in an open electronic publishing environment." [90]

88 Ibidem, p. 95

89 Elliott, Philip, and Peter Golding, "Mass Communication and Social Change: The Imagery of Development and the Development of Imagery," in Sociology and Development. Emanuel DeKadt and Gavin Williams, eds. London: Tavistock, 1974, p. 230

90 Wilson P. Dizard, "The Coming Information Age," Longman Inc., United States of America, 1982, pp. 140-141

The reason is that a new pattern of competitive services -new forms of electronic publishing- are cutting into the TV networks' hitherto unchallenged ability to attract huge audiences. Increasingly, the audience is looking at and listening to a new range of attractive alternatives, such as feature films and information services on cable systems and specialized over the air television networks. The emergence of supranational media organization points to another positive development of the last decade, the growing economic integration. Agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement are evidence of cooperation in the political and economic spheres.

We have to recognize that Latin American social sciences in general, and communication studies in particular, have benefited from the input of the analytical frameworks and debates from a good part of the world, as long as they have been adopted critically, incorporated into our own intellectual baggage, and made pertinent to the understandings of our reality throught actual empirical research and practical action. Wilson Dizard offers a clear statement about:

> "Mexican media owners tend to see their media organs as a vehicle for advancing their political agendas or economic interests. Rather than taking a hands-off approach to journalism, they often insist on setting the editorial tone. This is particularly true in broadcasting, the medium that wields the most influence in Mexico.Television and radio are the dominant sources of information for the public. Mexico is not a country of newpaper readers...This cannot be blamed on illiteracy -Mexico has about 88 per-cent literacy rate." [91]

In a sense, Mexican society passed directly to a visual culture without passing through the stage of a written word culture. Huge, sophisticated broadcasting organizations came to capture the Mexican audience before daily newspapers became a household fixture for the average Mexican. In addition, papers are expensive in a country where many workers earn a minimun wage.

To consider the media source that truly sways millions of Mexicans, one

[91] Ibidem., pp. 21-22

must look to Televisa, a television empire huge even by U.S. standards. Televisa produces an enormous amount of programming and claims a dominant share of the viewing audience. What troubles many about Televisa was its open support for the PRI-led government by his extinct owner Emilio Azcarraga. As communication scholar James Carey argued:

> "The primary mode of explanation for journalists is one that focuses on motive. Politicians are agents with intentions. Their intentions explain their action. In this explanatory frame, what is seen most often to motivate politicians is gaining political power or political advantage." [92]

Print media has more variety, and press is less reluctant to criticize each other, to criticize the government's policies or to throw down the gauntlet. This semblance of pluralism in the print media can be deceiving. The print media, in many ways reflect various factions within the PRI. It has a left-wing calling for social welfare programs; a right-wing calling for accelerated privatization of state industries and unfettered free enterprise. Papers, which are largely owned by wealthy families are more interested in airing their opinions than in making a profit. Few papers are really oppositional in the sense that they call for removal of the PRI. Heuvel and Dennis are relevant there:

> "If a routine call to a media owner fails to bring the media in line, the government has a variety of weapons at its disposal with which it can punish media that offend it... Government-owned businesses advertise in the media, and the government can withhold ads from a paper that it deems insubordinate, and newspaper distribution is run by a government monopoly that can refuse to distribute an opposition paper." [93]

Alejandro Junco, president and general director of Reforma in Mexico City and El Norte in Monterrey, two papers that are regarded as blazing new trails in Mexican journalism, said that Mexican journalists suffered from two problematic

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[92] James Carey, "Why: The Dark Continent of American Journalism," in: Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Spiral of Cynicism," Op. Cit., p. 27

[93] Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, Op. Cit., p. 23

self-images. One is that of the journalist as crusader and the journalist propagating a political cause, pushing his own agenda and using the newspaper as a soap box for spreading a political outlook. Following Heuvel and Dennis:

> "The journalist might be poorly paid, but he sees himself as doing noble work, as fighting the good fight. The second, Junco said, was that of the journalist as a mercenary. This journalist sees himself as sort of a hired gun, willing to write on behalf of anyone who can pay the price. The journalist in this case sees himself almost as a politician -fighting for interests of one group, while combating the interest of another group." [94]

The gacetilla is another practice peculiar to Mexico that compromises journalist integrity. The gacetilla is a paid political announcement disguised as a bona fide journalistic article. For instance, one might see a front-page article in a Mexico City daily detailing a speech made by a provincial governor stating his support for a federal tax policy, and wonder whether it is really front-page news. The answer is that it is a gacetilla -the provincial governor may be up for re-election or he may want simply to reaffirm his loyalty to the president in a public fashion. Patterson characterizes strategy as 'gacetilla' almost to identical fashion, emphasizing that:

> "The game of the campaign provides the plot of a story; polls promote and support strategy coverage; the electorate is positioned as spectator of candidates who are performers. Because journalists are interested in stories, and since election campaigns evolve as the ebb and flow of position in the race, it is 'natural' to the journalistic endeavor that the happening that is the race is one of the primary objects of coverage." [95]

During Mexico's current economic crisis, economic information was closely guarded by the government, and journalists failed to dig up the truth before the crisis hit. Nevetheless, the media have been undergoing a slow transformation. Essentially reacting to a more pluralistic, multiparty political

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[94] Ibidem.

[95] See Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Op. Cit., p. 33

system, the press has followed the trend and become more open. The media are not the locomotive of the movement toward democratic pluralism but rather the caboose.

The interests of Mexico's ruling elites are increasingly divergent, the PRI, which was once able to satisfy both those who demanded state subsidies and ownership of the economy and those who demanded unfettered free enterprise; those who, on the one hand, wanted an autarkic Mexico, independent of the economic might of the colossus to the north, and those who, on the other hand, demanded free trade with the United States, is less able to keep these different groups under its one big PRI tent.

First, there has been the emergence of the PAN, a conservative opposition party that advocates free enterprise, low taxation, more federalism and a clean-up of a corrupt central government. Particularly strong in Mexico's conservative industrial north, the PAN demands more regional autonomy. The PAN's strong showing in the 1994 presidential elections and its capture of the governorship of Jalisco, an important state, seems to augur a serious rival to the PRI. A second cause of the crumbling of the PRI monolith has been the recent economic crisis, in which many of the country's economic elites and growing middle class felt betrayed by the PRI, which continually presented an optimistic picture of Mexico's economic situation.

Thirdly, the leadership of the PRI, especially Presidents Salinas and Zedillo, deserve credit for opening up Mexico's political culture and fostering pluralism. True reform seems to be coming and the PRI is more willing than ever to deal with political diversity. All these developments have altered Mexico's media environment over the past half decade. The coverage of the PAN and PRD has been better and more extensive than was previously ever imaginable for rival parties of the PRI.

In the coverage of the candidates for the 1994 presidential election, nongovernmental organization monitored and hectored the television networks

to give the rival parties even-handed coverage. The media's coverage of Mexico's economic crisis has also broken new ground in terms of criticizing the governing PRI. Economic papers like El Financiero and El Economista have blasted the government's handling of the crisis and its bungled devaluation of the peso, even Televisa has ventured some criticism on this count.

To some extent, the government has divested itself of the weapons it formerly used to influence the media. the newsprint company, PIPSA, once a government-owned monopoly that had the power to intimidate a feisty paper simply by threatening to withhold newsprint, was privatized by the Salinas government, and the state television company, Imevision, in 1993, and now Azcarraga's Televisa monopoly has been broken. The new private network, TV Azteca, has a long way to go, however, before it seriously challenges Televisa's dominance in the market, but the new network shows promise. According to Cappella and Jamieson:

> "We are in Mexico in the midst of the transition, and the media have a serious role to play in the transition. People need quality information to make political decisions and quality economic information to make the best economic choices." [96]

Transition is the key word on the Mexican media scene. Media is now beginning to operate in an open political climate that they have not yet gotten used to. And the political climate has a long way to go. Many in the government still believe that the government can dam the flow of information and influence the media to spin the story to their liking.

Calls from party officials still come in to radio and TV stations telling them how to handle a story. The media and the government are in a proces of push and pull -sometimes the media resist the government, sometimes they bargain and sometimes they compromise with it. A fully functioning multiparty democracy has not yet taken its place. The PRI's dominance will never be what it was and

[96] Ibidem, p. 25

one- party rule is most likely over but what will replace it is only gradually emerging.

Extraordinary events intervened. The Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, which began on January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA wento into effect. Despite Mexico's economic strides over the last decade, part of Mexican society was left behind. Although the Zapatistas never posed a military threat to the Mexican state, they exerted an enormous symbolic and psychological influence to the media. Mexico's democracy and justice for its Indian people, thereby energizing groups across the political spectrum.

Responding in part to pressure from the international community, the PRI implemented a series of political reforms involving the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), the government body responsible for overseeing the election. Mexico has virtually no tradition of impartial electoral officials, and historically IFE was controlled by the PRI. As a result of the reforms, the PRI' s candidate Ernesto Zedillo was forced to compete on a more level playing field against his opponents: Cuauhtemoc Cardenas of the left-leaning Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) and Diego Fernandez de Cevallos of the conservative National Action Party (PAN). While the reforms were unable to curb the PRI"s habit of outspending its opponents by huge margins, the citizen counselors did draw attention to an issue of great interest to the opposition: the PRI's almost total control of the media. The General Council of the IFE urged the networks:

> "To respect the right to information of the Mexican people, and to behave in a manner that is truthful, objective, balanced, plural and fair," adding that objective media coverage is a "necessary condition for the advanced of democracy." [97]

What has enabled the PRI to maintain itself as the world's oldest ruling party is its control over a bloated and corrupt government bureaucracy, its unique ability to co-opt political opponents and its innate instinct for self-

[97] Ibidem, p. 41

preservation in moments of crisis. Demands for impartial media coverage first arose during the contested 1988 presidential election, during which there were allegations of widespread fraud.On May 12, 1994, Zedillo, Fernandez and Cardenas met in a historic television debate for first time. It was a demonstration of the power of television to influence electoral trends, Fernandez's raitings soared overnight, sowing fear and confusion in the upper echelons of the PRI. In the weeks leading up to the election, Mexico City's leading newspapers and Proceso magazine reported exhaustively on the campaign, providing ample and balanced coverage of all the main candidates and assessing the political conditions in various regions of the country.

American news organization echoed the government's claim that the election was the cleanest in Mexican history. But Mexicans themselves were more cynical about the process, there were mobilization much less intense and widespread than those occurred after the contested 1988 elections and outraged supporters of the PAN and PRD organized demonstrations across the country.

The irregularities could not be minimized, although in the closing months of the campaign the citizen counselors of IFE applied enormous pressure on the media to treat the candidates equally. The brief period of media openness came to and end. Sergio Aguayo, a leading human rights activist, is the president of the academy and the leader of Civic Alliance, an umbrella group of more than 300 nongovernmental organizations that attempted to monitor the credibility of the electoral process by sending thousands of observers to polling stations around the country said he saw a clear pattern of intimidation. Cappella and Jamieson are relevant there:

> "After the elections, the media has gone back to its old habits: to complicity, to the distortion of the reality." [98]

Long time observers of the Mexican media, such as Ilya Adler of the University of Illinois at Chicago, noted that:

[98] bidem, p. 46

"At least three fundamental changes must take place for an independent media to emerge in Mexico. Realistic salaries must be paid to journalists so they will not be susceptible to co-optation; greater independence must be given to the news division of television and radio stations; and the monopolistic nature of the television industry must come to an end." [99]

Nevertheless, nearly everyone agrees that the media were far more open during the 1994 elections than those that took place in 1988, when the main opposition candidates were virtually barred from television. Some journalists attribute these changes to the free-market reforms unleashed in Mexico during the Salinas years.

Mathiason has extended the idea of the use of news to make an indirect link with political efficacy and more recently, the strenght of media influence has been called into question, the concept of political behavior has been a difficult one because of different definitions assigned to it. According to Mathiason:

"Mass media deserve to be considered as meaningful elements in the process of political change, and that they can serve such a function under certain conditions." [100]

Those conditions occur when the mass media are employed to help audiences overcome a sense of political powerlessness, the converse of political efficacy. Political knowledge appeared to play a significant role between media use and efficacy, the position of knowledge as the key link in the process, whatever the causal direction.

Media seemed to act as sources of informational mobility for less privileged members of that society in regard to knowledge of international affairs. This result is particularly true for the use of newspapers, radio and television. These media more than others assisted the lower-stratum group to overcome disadvantages of less formal education and less exposure to such matters

99 See Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, Op. Cit., p. 47

100 John R. Mathiason, "Patterns of Powerlessness among Urban Poor: Toward the Use of Mass Communications for Rapid Social Change," Studies in Comparative International Development 7, (1972), pp. 64-84

through interpersonal channel.

Efficacy concerns an attitude of power in which political activity is considered a worhwhile activity. Within this construct, media first produce an impact by making audiences aware of political problems. No contention is made that mass media serve as the only agents of political orientation. Rather, the goal is to determine how the mass media may contribute to the idea of political efficacy.

With the waning of the notion that the urban poor people are undifferentiates masses readily susceptible to outside manipulation, comes the assertion that the poor base their activities upon rationality and self-interest.

Proponents of the uses and gratifications approach adopt a functional position toward communication. The orientation is based upon one's social circumstances and roles, personality dispositions and capacities, and actual patterns of mass media consumption. As Swanson explains,

> "The uses and gratifications approach represents a break with the mass media effects traditions of the past, it concludes that people tend to behave in highly individualistic and self-concerned ways. When paying attention to the mass media, individuals perceive and use messages to fit their own needs. The utility of any given mass media message is judged by the degree to which it can gratify expectations brought to the act of receiving information." [101]

Another way to test contributions of mass media to political attitudes and behavior is to determine whether a functional or dysfunctional view of mass media is being proposed. The media role should be viewed as complementary. And in that light it may be remarkable that the media have impinged on the process of need satisfaction to the extent that they have. Also, firm evidence exists that public affairs media use precedes political knowledge, not the other way around.

The problematic nature of using predictors for mass media use has been

[101] David L. Swanson, "Political Communication Research and the Uses and Gratifications Model: A Critique," Communication Research 6, (1979), pp. 37-42

revealed by Chaffe and Iscaray, even though they were able to create reliable and valid measures for motivations for seeking out media messages, these measures were over-shadowed by media exposure to political content in accounting for knowledge about public affairs. [102]

MEDIA LAW

The primary controversy regarding media law is its sharply anti-clerical tone, which is a vestige of the Revolution of 1910. Article 130 of the constitution prohibits members of the clergy from writing on political issues, criticizing state institutions, voting or running for office. Mexico's Constitution, which dates back to the Revolution of 1910, provides that freedom of writing and publishing on any subject as inviolable. No law or authority may establish censorship. While freedom of the press is guaranteed by the constitution of 1917, in reality the government exercises an enormous influence over the media. John Hartley is relevant there:

> "The discussion of the State and the law is that both share with television news the mantle of 'impartiality'. Neither the State, nor the law, nor the news can work if they appear openly to serve a particular class or group; their credibility in each case is dependent on their being identified not with class or sectional interests, but with the 'general' or 'public' interest. Buy credibility is one thing, and power another. The 'public' is not made up of a mass of equal individuals, but of groups with unequal sources of power. The 'neutral' State, law and news are the means by which power interests are translated into 'general' or 'national' interests with a claim on everybody." [103]

The degree of media freedom depends more on the political environment established by the Mexican president than on specific laws. Statutes exist that prohibit desacato, or disrespect, for authority and national institutions. According

[102] Steven H. Chaffee and Fausto Izcaray, "Mass Communication Functions in a Media. Rich Developing Society," Communication Research 2, (1975), p. 385

[103] John Hartley, "Understanding News," Methuen and Co., New York, 1982, p.55

to Chaffee and Izcaray, the desacato statute dictates that:

> "Journalists must not maliciously excite hatred of the authorities, the army, the national guard or the fundamental institutions of the country." [104]

The relationship between the media and the government, like Mexican political culture in general, is filled with contradictions. The permanent and frequently open struggle to limit the private sector and strengthen the state-owned mass media. The purpose of this struggle, following the ideal of the Mexican Revolution, was for the state to recover its rights of guardianship over the culture and ideology of the people. The last decades were marked by the restoration of the previous relationship of the government and the private sector between 1971 and 1974, an attempt to reform this relationship between 1975 and 1981 and an attempt to reduce the scope of the reform and return the relationship to one of laissez-faire between 1982 and 1985. According to Elizabeth Fox:

> "Each of these stages consisted of different theories of the relationship between government and the media although none was mutually exclusive in its ideas or concepts. In each stage the main actor, although at times hesitant, was the government. Each administration, however, was egged on and eventually overpowered by technological developments in communications." [105]

The modern cultural industries disputed this right of guardianship, and after 1968 Mexican society itself began to distrust it. His administration was unable to perform this role in the communications industries in spite of the mixed nature of the Mexican economy and the government's important role in most other sectors.

The government was unable to implement a policy on media content for

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[104] Ibidem, p. 26

[105] See Elizabeth Fox, "Media and Politics in Latin America. The struggle for Democracy." SAGE Publications, Great Britain, 1988, pp. 69-71

private broadcasting and simply added more public media to counteract the private one. Mexico had changed, the last efforts of president Echeverria were directed towards the consolidation of the state security. Following Hartley:

> "The relations between news media and the agencies of State and capital is that both cases there are direct constraints operating in a climate of routine autonomy. The 'relative autonomy' of the news media is an important element in their relations with society." [106]

During Lopez Portillo administration, the president called in 1977 for the creation of a new participatory, democratic and egalitarian philosophy of communication for the national media. President Lopez Portillo wanted to make social communication part of hispoliticla reform, together with the development of nationaloil resources, sef-sufficiency in food and the increased participation of the opposition in the government. His communication proposal had its origin in a constituttional reform that added a new sentence to Article 6 concerning freedom of expression. Elizabeth Fox argues that:

> "The Constitutional Reform was intended to create new political institutions and forms of participation. The Mexican people, however, were far more interested in the democratization of the media, and in increasing their own participation in them, than in organizing a new political party. To most Mexicans, the democratization of the media was more important than the democratization of a political system that had long ago lost its relevance." [107]

The new phrase stated that the state would guarantee the 'right to information', it covered everything from corruption in news gathering, union-owned newspapers, TV violence and children, information and the secrets of state, the transnationalization of culture, the technology gap, professional training, truth in advertising, and satellites.

The right to information as well as the general political reforms were part

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[106] See John Hartley, Op. Cit., p. 55

[107] See Elizabeth Fox, Op. Cit., p. 75

of the political platform of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), for the period 1976-1982. It was a new dimension of democracy and an efficient way to respect ideological pluralism and the rich diversity of ideas, opinions and beliefs in society.

The government change its tactics and announced that it would hod a series of public sessions to inform about the positions of the political parties and of Mexican society in general regarding the new right. The first obligation to inform correctly fell to the government itself. Thus, the administration of Lopez Portillo was a period of prolific and ubiquitous government acting in social communication, but it was characterized by chaos, lack of consistency and a feudalistic structure of interests and resources.

The next adminstration returned a certain order to the daily management of social communication in Mexico, De la Madrid administration set up a new National System of Social Communication that consisted of three decentralized institutions of radio, television and film, but he did little to remedy thesaturation of the Mexican north and cable television by US television signals. Yet the new president soon abandoned a strong state role in the planning and development of the mass media.

THE PRESS

In the 1980s, Mexico embraced greater pluralism and freedom of expression, some oppositional journalism exists in Mexico, such as the magazine Proceso, that calls the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party to task for corruption and unfair dealing. The strident struggle between right and left, and the use of the media as mouthpieces in that struggle, have largely become things of the past.

New papers have emerged that strive for a nonideological professionalism, much like the best of the U.S. press. Papers like Mexico's Reforma or El Norte strive for journalistic professionalism and strong sales,

rather than the proselytizing for any particular political position.

In Mexico City there are approximately 25 daily newspapers, and about 285 nationally, Mexico is the largest Spanish-language newspaper market in the world. Its papers enjoy greater latitude than do television or radio, and the papers span the ideological spectrum from the right to the left and range from sophisticated economic papers to sensationalistic tabloids.

Mexican newspapers tend to resemble their European counterparts with a clear political outlook not only in their editorials but also in their reporting. They seek not only to inform the public but to shape public opinion. Yet at the same time, Mexican papers tend to be schizophrenic in outlook. There is an 'oppositional press' -led by the magazine Proceso and the daily newspaper La Jornada- but its circulation is small.

Some papers tend to be more often critical of the governing PRI party than others, and some more uniformily supportive, but positions shift depending on the particular issue, and thus it is difficult to define the political outlook of particular papers with any great precision.

El Universal is the leader among the capital's dailies, it generally takes a conservative tone -strongly backing the country's political institutions, tending to sympathize with the catholic church and supporting a strong presidency. Its editorial are considered to wield considerable political clout. The conservative PAN party gets good play in El Universal, and the paper does not hesitate to criticize the PRI.

Excelsior newspaper has something of the character of a paper of record, it has good reporters and contains an abundance of information on Mexican politics. Like El Universal, it can be critical of the government, but its criticism is within the context of overall acquiescence in the status quo. Unomasuno is another paper that generally backs the PRI, and is widely believed to enjoy the support of the Mexican army. El Nacional is a government-owned paper that serves as a mouthpiece for the PRI.

Reforma, it is an important daily owned by Junco family of Monterrey, it made a big splash on the Mexico City press scene in 1994. Junco insisted on what he calls journalistic professionalism and total independence and abjured pushing any particular political agenda.

Two important publications lean to the left of the political spectrum and are generally critical of the PRI, the daily La Jornada and the weekly magazine Proceso. La Jornada is regarded as having high-quality reporters and generally reaches an educated, professional readership. Along with El Sol, Unomasuno and Excelsior, La Jornada is also the recipient of a good deal of government advertisement. The fact that the PRI would give ads to a paper on the left illustrates the all-embracing nature of that party: The PRI itself has its rightists, centrists and leftists, all of which have a constituency in the press, and thus the PRI exercises some influence across the entire media spectrum.

Proceso is Mexico's most important news magazine. Its exposes on corruption within the governing party, inside information on the NAFTA negotiations and its frank coverage of the Chiapas story have tested the boundaries of freedom of expression in Mexico. Proceso, because of its style and relative expense reaches a mainly elite audience and has too narrow a readership to really damage the party. At the same time, Proceso can usefully be held up to the outside as an example of freedom of the press.

The press's wresting independence from the government is not a completed process. Many factors still impinge on the independence and objectivity of the print media. There is the practice of the gacetilla. Since gacetillas are often indistinguishable from a newspaper's own articles, it is difficult to state definitively what portion of a newspaper's revenue derive from gacetillas, and the continued practice of politicians and business leaders who keep the print media dependent on the public and inhibits frank and unbiased reporting.

BROADCASTING

Mexico has a large and complex broadcasting system. There are approximately 400 television stations and more than 1,000 radio stations that blanket the country. Despite the rugged terrain and relative underdevelopment in parts of the country, television penetrates about 80 percent of Mexican households and radio is virtually everywhere. The electronic media have a reach and impact that surpasses those of the print media. [108]

Television broadcasting is dominated in Mexico by Televisa, a huge media conglomerate with four channels in the capital. Televisa looms like a great giant across Mexico's media landscape. It is not simply a media company, it is in the entertainment business. Televisa's tendeny to tow the government line on all contentious issues has drawn even more criticism. To some extent the Mexican public has begun to see through Televisa's pro-government bias. The network's coverage of the 1988 elections was also widely perceived to be biased in favor of the PRI candidates. Clearly John Hartley states that:

> "Television news doesn't really tell us about society. It tells us quite a lot about certain aspects of society, and it tells us quite a lot about television... Part of what determines the discourse of the news is the way the news-makers themselves act within the constraints, pressures, structures and norms that bring the larger world of social relations to bear on their work. News is just one social agency among many -news organization are themselves determined by the relationships that develop between them and other agencies. Like signs, news organizations are largely defined by what they are not." [109]

The perceived bias of Televisa's 1988 coverage led to intense pressure in 1994 to give the opposition candidates fair coverage. Ricardo Salinas' purchase of channels 7 and 13, known collectively as TV Azteca, raised important gains in Mexico, since he had no experience in broadcasting. The network's coverage of the Chiapas uprising was similarly criticized for a lack of objectivity. Thus,

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[108] See Statistics in: Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, Op. Cit., p. 31

[109] See John Hartley, Op. Cit., pp. 47-48

Televisa's ability to manipulate public opinion may well be on the decline. Hartley is relevant there:

> "The idea of appealing to common sense, to what 'most of us' think, and to the 'common stock of knowledge' might seem at first glance to be a good one. Not only does it seem to avoid the pitfalls of politics, but it seems to ensure that the media don't get too far out of line with the 'real interests' of their viewers and readers." [110]

Whether Salinas' TV Azteca will develop into a viable rival to Televisa remains to be seen, but its debut won the Mexican airwaves. While Azteca's news cannot rival Televisa's in terms of technological sophistication, it has distinguished from Televisa editorially. Like all broadcasting in Mexico, TV Azteca must walk a fine line between what is appropriate and what might irritate the powers that be in Mexican society. Mexico has two public stations -Channels 11 and 22, which air high-quality cultural programs, films and news. Ratings for these stations generally lag behind those of TV Azteca and far behind Televisa's.

Cable television in Mexico is gradually developing, the average Mexican house-hold cannot afford monthly cable bills, and often households that can afford cable cannot get wired. There are more than 200 cable systems in Mexico. The two most important pay-television systems in Mexico are Multivision and Cablevision. Multivision holds the exclusive Mexican rights to ESPN, TNT and CNN, in addition to its domestic programming. Cablevision is part of the Televisa group, Televisa's most recent innovation in news coverage was its launching in 1988 of TV ECO, a sort of Spanish-language CNN. ECO hopes to rival Multivision's news programming.

Radio in Mexico is less concentrated in the hands of a few magnates than is television. In recent years, however, the trend has been toward increasing concentration. As in the United States, radio in Mexico is often regarded as the

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[110] Ibidem., p. 96

first source of news, the headline setter that television and the press follow throughout the day. Radio, roughly speaking, enjoys greater latitude to criticize the government than does television, but less than the press.

Radio and television are both government concessions, and the RTC, the regulatory body overseeing broadcasting, can use the concession as leverage to keep broadcasters form becoming too oppositional. The RTC is connected to all Mexican stations and can pre-empt broadcasts when it so desires.

MEDIA PERSPECTIVES

There are legitimate questions to which many seek answers: politicians and businessmen, scholars and journalists, teachers and physicians, clergymen, writers and students, workers and farmers. Many want to understand what is actually taking place in Mexico, especially since the media is not clear. So the current interest in Mexico is understandable, especially considering the influence it has in world affairs.

In countries where party organizations had historically been weak, television has dampened possibilities for their eventual emergence. There is less need to build disciplined and well-organized parties when television can project a sympathetic image of the individual candidate's personality. Television has become the primary medium for political information. The size of the audiences reached by the giant media networks of Mexico rivals those anywhere in the world. Despite abject poverty, more than half of all housholds have access to television today.

Television's impact in catapulting political unknowns backed by virtually existent parties to prominence was especially visible in the presidential elections of Mexico in 1988. Although there is no doubt that the use of television by candidates has changed the nature of party politics in many countries in Latin America.

Access to television and a successful television image have become increasingly important political resources in presidential campaigns, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for winning elections. Modern techiques, in particular campaign consultants and public opinion polling, have also changed campaigns. Candidates for executive posts are relying more on consultants and polls than ever before.

In many Latin American countries, campaign periods now feature ongoing 'battles of the polls,' often with heated debate about the reliability of different methods for survey sampling and data analysis. Opinion polling has revolutionized the conduct of electoral politics. Growing reliance on media experts and polls, combined with the power of projection offered by television, provides disincentives to party building in countries with weak parties.

The growing importance of television, polling, and media experts in election campaigns, with the attendant consequences for party organizations and party professionals is common to many democracies around the world. In some respects, the advent of mass media politics in Latin America might even be seen as salutary for democracy, as candidates are able to deliver their messages to larger and larger audiences.

However, the expanded role of the media in countries with weakly institutionalized party systems will probably weaken them further. The media must work to educate different classes of people -those who live in abject poverty and those who live in opulence dwell side-by-side- and to attempt to create consensus on how the tasks that lay ahead -building a functioning public sector, educating the citizenry and distributing wealth more equally- are to be accomplished.

Traditionally, the owner of a newspaper of broadcast property would set the political direction. The media were seen as a vehicle for advancing the owner's interests and propagating his political outlook. Mexico needs to develop a culture of professionalism, one in which journalists bring a professional ethic to

their work rather than a political agenda.

Coverage of foreign news is slowly expanding in Mexico, gradually that is changing, as Mexicans have become more acutely aware of their country's interdependence with the rest of the world, partly as a result of NAFTA and the U.S. led economic aid package given to Mexico. Media organizations are still developing an infrastructure for covering foreign news. In the years to come, Mexico's population may well demand reporting that is both more balanced and more aggressive. Many journalists remain cautiously optimistic. Enrique Quintana told La Jornada shortly after giving up his radio show that:

> "There is a very deep structural problem that has to be modified in order to really practice independent journalism. The situation will improve, but it will be a long process." [111]

The media must endeavor to root the governmental corruption so that Mexico can place their faith in the legal, economic and political institutions so necessary to constructing a prosperous future. Mexican journalism is going in new directions and developing new norms, but many traditional habits of journalism are still present.

[111] See Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, Op. Cit., p. 47

CHAPTER SIX
INSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY'S FRAGMENTATION

The main argument of the chapter is that Mexico has been experiencing profound change since the 1960s at all levels: in society, in the economy, and in political life. These changes result from both the normal evolution of society (demographics, increased levels of education, changes in the urban-rural balance, and increased availability of information) and government policy, particularly in the economy. These changes altered the traditional balance of a very steady political system but have failed to set Mexico on the path of sustainable economic growth.

The PRI, (Institutional Revolutionary Party) was conceived to aid Mexico's revolutionary family in the task of institutional construction; the party was designed to build durable links between elite and masses. It functioned successfully since its founding in 1929 as a pragmatic coalition of interests, based on the organized inclusion of the working class, peasants, bureaucrats, and the military.

However, as a result of the process of economic overhaul prompted by the debt crisis of the 1980s, the party began to fail in its historic role as interest aggregator, policymaker, and legitimator.

Unable to meet the demands of sectors accustomed to a flow of material benefits, the party lost representativeness among its bases. Displaced by a technocratic team intent on implementing economic reform, and wracked by internal factionalism, the party was increasingly marginalized from the decision-making process. Incapable of gurauranteeing mass support by electoral via, the party began to fail as a legitimator of the regime.

Following Table number 1, it shows a clear respond on the political environment in Mexico, the PRI's factions: Radicals, Moderators and Traditionalists. Reform-minded factions attempted to dismantle compulsory

sectoral affiliation and promote individual militancy in the face of a more competitive electoral scenario; traditionalists sought to maintain the party's old structures; reformists favored Salinas' economic liberalization policies, and conservatives decried the death of the interventionist state.

TABLE # 1
PRI'S FRAGMENTATION
DEMOCRACY OR DISINTEGRATION.

RADICALS	MODERATES	TRADITIONALISTS
Lack of Militancy	Governability Legitimation	Monopoly Restauration
Lack of represen-tativeness	Pacific Democratization	Stagnation
Favore economic reform	Gradual reformism	Patronage politics
Lack of credibi-lity.	Gradual transformation	Static Corporatism
Institutional risks	Constitutional Rupture	Interventionist State
Disintegration	Dominant Democratic Party	Disintegration

Following the economic modernization agenda, Salinas often resorted to discretionary postelection maneuvering that further contributed to deinstitutionalize the country's landscape. These are just some specificities

around the fragmentation of the ruling party today in order to circumvent party resistance and push forward his moderate transformation, that perhaps, will take it to the predominant democratic party that every one prefers as a positive outcome on the political spectrum.

Mexico's deinstitutionalization was also fueled by the growing tension between increasingly competitive state elections and the imperatives of presidentialist and centralized governance formula. Economic reforms were bold and ambitious, but more important, those reforms undermined or destroyed the old institutions that preserved stability and the PRI's monopoly of power. Thus, the old institutions have not been replaced by new ones capable of coping with the new political forces that the reforms themselves have unleashed. Denise Dresser describes the PRI as follows:

> "The Mexican party system is only partially institutionalized. The rules that govern interparty competition are unstable, and political elites do not share the expectation that elections will be the primary route to power. The electoral accords agreed upon before the 1994 presidential election suffered from several problems that hampered their effectiveness: they were not sufficiently inclusive or encompassing, and they were not sufficiently binding...The absence of clear rules to govern political competition among parties has made politics more erratic, governing more complicated, and the establishment of legitimacy more difficult." [112]

Political change in Mexico since the 1994 crisis has been characterized by the breakdown of centralized hierarchies and the dispersion of political power across regions. The first and most important source of decentralization emanates from the PRI itself: after Colosio's assassination, the presidency ceased to function as the focal point for the political class. Political careers of PRI politicians in the post-Salinas era have come to depend more on regional elite than on presidential will.

The second source of descentralization comes from the growing cadres of

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112 Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowenthal, "Constructing Democratic Governance," The Johns Hopkins University Press, United States of America, pp. 166-167

opposition governors and municipal presidents that have emerged since the early 1980s, particularly from the opposition, the PAN's electoral strenght is greatest in the northern states (a region especially influenced by American values), the western state of Jalisco (a bastion of conservative Catholicism), and the southern state of Yucatan.

The party's victory in 1994 elections was largely due to the belief of voters that the PRI could maintain political and economic stability, but the PRI was weaker than ever. It has become public knowledge that Salinas knew the crisis was brewing yet did nothing to avert it. That failure, which is widely viewed as a betrayal of the public interest, has seriously undermined the legitimacy of the regime. Following Miguel Angel Centeno:

> "The collapse of the *salinato* was not brought about by Chiapas or the dramatic rise in political violence, but by the regime's failure to take on the central structural weakness of the Mexican economy: low domestic savings and investments...The failure to do so may partly be explained by the ideological sympathies of the *tecnocratas* or even by their relative class position. More important, they refused to recognize that the solution to Mexico's dilemma had a political and social component. The key to collapse of the *salinato* lies in that refusal." [113]

Through the image of a strong and populist presidency, Salinas mobilized the energies and captured the imagination of the population for the modernization effort. By undertaking reforms on a broad spectrum of issues, the president garnered support among constituencies opposed to clientelism and corruption and in favor of change. Salinas was widely perceived as a president with initiative waging a war of modernity against the old Mexico. Upon his arrival in office on December 1, 1994, President Ernesto Zedillo was confronted with the institutional vacuum left by his predecessor and with widespread societal expectations about the need for a strong presidency. But, the president's personal style of governance instituted a form of decision making contrary to

[113] Miguel Angel Centeno, "Democracy within Reason.Technocratic Revolution in Mexico," The Pennsylvania State Univesity Press, United States of America, 1997, pp. 251-252

institutionalization. Finally, as Denise Dresser points out:

> "The events of 1994 contributed to the rapid unraveling of dominant-party rule and loosened the grip that the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) established since its inception in 1929...Decades of dominant-party rule created serious problems of institutional fragility and lack of representation. The 1994 election was won for the PRI by the poor. Large segments of the urban and rural population voted for the PRI, suggesting the effectiveness and popularity of the National Solidarity Program (PRONASOL) and PROCAMPO programs...It is not clear whether Salinas won his own election, but he won it for Ernesto Zedillo." [114]

Given the lack of institutional support, the new president's political clumsiness exacerbated the financial debacle and turned it into a perceived crisis of leadership. Since 1995, the ruling party is facing major challenges where the opposition is launching strong campaigns. Further pressure for political decentralization comes from the demands for regional autonomy for indigenous peoples emanating from the Zapatista movement. It was only when Zedillo launched a political attack on one of the 'untouchables' in the political system, the brother of former President Salinas, that public confidence in his ability to govern was partially restored.

The fragmentation and dispersion of political power also opened the door for the decentralization of the welfare system. Responding to mounting political pressures for welfare decentralization, and in an effort to dissociate Zedillo's administration from the discredited Salinas government. In Mexico, economic liberalization and political democratization have threatened powerful interests.

The emerging alliance between narcotraffickers and reactionary elements in the PRI will almost certainly lead to more violence and assassinations if Zedillo accelerates the reform process. Following Guillermo O'Donnell :

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[114] Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowenthal, Op. Cit., pp. 159 -164

> "The PRI's predominance has hampered fundamental conditions for democratic consolidation: the emergence of regularized and predictable practices, embodied in public organizations that process the demands of politically active sectors, in line with the rules of the competitive game." [115]

By these circunstances, in 1996 Zedillo agreed to transfer two-thirds of PRONASOL's resources to state and municipal governments. Unfortunately, putting poverty alleviation resources in the hands of PRI-dominated states is not likely to have dramatic poverty reduction effects. In the wake of the most severe economic crisis since 1929, and with poverty and income inequality on the rise, Mexico again finds itself with no effective strategy to cope with rapid social deterioration. One of the PRI's greatest strengths is the weakness of its enemies. Lacking a single, unified opposition party, the anti-PRI forces are divides between the right wing PAN, and the left wing PRD, making it difficult for either to amass enough votes to defeat the PRI on the national level. Schulz and Williams point out that:

> "Zedillo's initial approach to governing seems to be based on the premise that the solution to the problem of political instability is more democracy...Democray does not always work, and in any case it is not a cure-all. In this instance, democratization might actually weaken Zedillo's ability to govern by subverting his authority and encouraging the opposition to undermine his policies and further spread civil unrest...If the latter, the country could slide toward ungovernability." [116]

Zedillo's response to the political challenges created by the devaluation was to announce the 'modernization' of the Mexican presidency. Zedillo offered to reduce discretionary policymakig, promote a new federalist pact, decentralize power, and bring an end to the symbiotic relationship between the presidency and the ruling party.

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[115] See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Transitions, Continuities, and Paradoxes," in Mainwaring, O'Donnell, and Valenzuela, eds., "Issues in Democratic Consolidation" pp. 17-56

[116] Donald E. Schulz and Edward J. Williams, "Mexico faces the 21st Century," Praeger Publishers, United States of America, 1995, p. 202

Zedillo's substantive preference has been to achieve economic stabilization, and as a result hehas tended to neglect the political and economic needs of the unstable coalition on which his power is based. Mexican political elites have displayed a marked propensity for undemocratic decision making, especially in regard to economic policy. Mexcio's postdevaluation crisis has accentuated this trend. Following Denise Dresser:

> "The brief military incursion in Chiapas in February 1995 and the government's fitful position on a definitive electoral reform have deepened rifts between modernizing and traditional factions within the political elite. Negotiations over electoral reform have provoked as much polarization in the ruling party as they have in the opposition. Many members of the PRI feel that the party is paying at the polls for the Economic Cabinet's incompetence, and their loyalty to the new president is tenuous at best." [117]

Mexico's political and economic stability has been routinely jeopardized by the lack of rules to govern by and the absence of institutions to govern with. In the past, because of the unlimited power of presidency, Mexico had been unable to achieve democratic rule fully; in the future, presidential strenght will be required to carry on the critical task of institution building.

Zedillo will have to use the presidency to strengthen representative institutions that can order the country's political life and eventually act as counterweights to the presidency and to the PRI. Following Wayne Cornelius:

> "A consistent president committed to a profound modernization of the political system will be the key to a successful democratic transition." [118]

Zedillo faces the dual task of 'modernizing' the presidency and limiting its historically unbounded power, while at the same time controlling his party and demonstrating effective leadership in times of crisis. During the transition,

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117 Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowenthal, Op. Cit., p. 172

118 Wayne Cornuelius, "Mexico's Delayed Democratization," Foreign Policy 95 (Summer 1994): pp.53-71, in: Ibidem., p 173

presidential strength will be needed in order to rein in the rank and file of the PRI.

Zedillo may have to curb traditional patronage politics in the ruling party in order to enact further political liberalization while maintaining the PRI's unity and discipline.

INSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY'S LEADERSHIP RUPTURE

Mexico has for many years been in the process of abandoning its traditional structures, institutions, but these have not yet been replaced by a stable alternative. One Mexican government after another has tried to address these problems. Some of these efforts have made the problems worse or created new ones. By the 1960s the PRI no longer represented most of Mexico's organized constituencies, as it had since its inception in the 1930s, the first sign of growing disaffection was the student movement of 1968.

The economy deteriorated in the 1970s, incresing changes in the domestic economic scene in Mexico, following a series of major economic shocks during the 1980s, that led to a deepening political debate. Misguided government policies hindered the country's ability to adjust early on to changes in the international economy while increasing the external debt. The approach of the Echeveria and Lopez Portillo (1970-1982) administrations was to increase levels of public spending, financing this activity through foreign loans and inflation. Thus, political consciousness of the nature of the economic crisis of the 1980s proliferated.

Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-1988) and later Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) introduced far-reaching economic reforms that, in retrospect, signified the beginning of a shift from a government centered system to one with a higher degree of societal involvement. Their policies generally sound in the economic arena and failed to accomodate an increasingly active

society that lacked the institutional mechanisms to channel its grievances and demands.

The inflationary policies and economic isolationism of the 1970s coupled with the profound economic reforms from 1980 to 1995 removed most of the protections enjoyed by Mexican industry. The overall political environment laid the most significant change within the PRI, and led to the events that characterized the 1988 presidential election. Roderic Ai Camp is relevant there:

> "The 1988 presidential election illustrated a longtime pattern in electoral politics: the strongest opposition movements are often led by dissidents from within the Institutional Revolutionary Party. As will be seen in the brief histories of several major opposition parties, most were founded by persons who abandoned government leadership because of policy and personal disagreements." [119]

This further undermined Mexico's traditional political institutions without creating new ones. The dynamic of the last few years, economic reform along with contested elections, reflects the awakening political consciousness. Following Susan Kaufman and Luis Rubio:

> "The traditional political system is no longer representative, nor is it effective either in channeling demands or making decisions. The government has lost credibility, and Mexicans -from the Zapatista rebels to labor unions, from the PRI to the church- have found new ways to challenge its authority. Even the most loyal members of the old guard have sought to distance themselves from the government. This disaffection reflects the fact that, although Mexico has invested considerable effort in restructuring the economy, little attention has been given to addressing the political side of the equation. The hope has been that a successful economic revival will help the government weather the political storm or at least manage it from a position of strength." [120]

The political system today has been changing, the PRI does not

[119] Roderic Ai Camp, "Politics in Mexico," Oxford University Pres, United States of America, 1993, p. 151

[120] Susan Kaufman Purcell and Luis Rubio, Op. Cit., pp. 8-9

represent legitimately most Mexicans, as can be assessed by the growth of the National Action Party (PAN) and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) through the 1990s and, in particular, by the midterm federal elections of 1997. What has happened in Mexico both in the economy and in politics since reform began in the 1980s is not what the government expected, anticipated, or desired. The government aimed to produce a strong and sustained economic recovery while leaving the political system untouched, and if possible strengthened. Following Kaufman and Rubio:

> "Mexico's current turmoil had three broad sources: an unfinished economic reform agenda and its social consequences; a political system built in the 1920s for the conditions of that era, that has failed to come to terms with a new reality; and the clashes of ideologies, interests, and objectives among a growing number of social actors with ever wider agendas." [121]

The decline of the PRI is opening windows of political opportunity for opposition parties and societal actors who are taking advantage of the existing political vacuum to strengthen their positions in the political system. Both government and opposition forces confront the dual challenge of setting the economy on a path toward sustained growth while maintaining the impetus for democratic evolution.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW PARTIES

Political parties in Mexico leave much to be desired because of their lack of representativeness, credibility, organization, proposals, and clear identity. A crucial task for their leadership will be to recognize these flaws and undertake organizational, programmatic, and ideological efforts that might enable party consolidation. For the ballot box to become, both the PRI and the opposition will need to undergo a process of political maturation.

[121] Ibidem, p. 7

Reviewing political parties today in Mexico, the PRI continues to be the party which includes the greatest number of social organizations, over a varied spectrum, each with its own particular interests -in some cases contradictory- and with its own corporate representatives. Within the party there are workers, peasants, public employees and large segments of the middle and lower urban classes. However, the alliances with these groups have been weakened due to the economic crisis, the policies applied to stabilize the economy, as well as the many changes experienced by society and each of the sectors which make up the party.

If Mexico moves into a long period of economic growth and maturity, the development of multiparty political consensus on economic policy could promote the prospects for stable democracy. Economic consensus may be a precondition for stable multiparty democracy in Mexico.

Despite the strength of the PAN and the manifest weakness of the PRD, it is still too early to predict which is the reliable loyal vote of the three main political forces in the country. One significant section of the vote (the abstentionists) continues to be very volatile. This was clearly demonstrated in the 1994 federal elections, particularly if we compare them to the local elections which followed, and the drop in the PRI vote in the states can be explained as a vote of protest about the economic crisis, as was explained above.

To focus on the emergence of new parties, is basically to design new strategies to improve the political party system in Mexico, and to adjust our organizational structures so as to respond more fully to the aspirations of the new Mexican society. The splits that might take place could reshape the whole party structure. Members of the PRI left, for example, might negotiate a merger with the PRD. The opposite possibility -members of the PRI right merging with the PAN- looks less likely largely because of the very different nature of those entities. Yet, Mexico could end up with a modern party structure with parties on the left, on the right, and in the center, but all of them pretty well demarcated and

defined- which is not the case today.

The key to the future may well lie in this simple but extraordinarily powerful mix of values and perceptions. Mexicans realize that the PRI represents invaluable experience relative to the other parties, but they have been abused so long by the PRI governments that they are willing to try any alternative that is not committed to violence. In a way, the poll results may signal Mexicans' desire to scare the PRI into changing its ways, knowing full well that either the PRD or the PAN can serve as vehicles to attain that objective.

While parties build their consensus, I propose that we move forward in three fundamental aspects of political reform: making the sources of party financing transparent, placing limits on the cost of election campaigns, and working on the communications media and procedures that guarantee the impartiality of electoral processes to solve the emergence of new parties.

PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO

The future of democracy in Mexico, as elsewhere, entails channeling the process of change in a clear direction and assuring effective institutionalization. Mexico still lacks the institutions and attitudes that characterize a true democracy. Few political parties and actors could be described as 'democratic' in their every day activities.

Democratic evolution will require that Mexico's political forces fight against clientelist patterns of authority at all levels of society and isolate authoritarian actors. In the past, inclusiveness and patronage had functioned as critical sources of legitimacy. The historic stability of the Mexican political system resulted from the compromises and commitments agreed upon by winning elites. In the future, democratic governance will require political-ideological redefinitions, including the abandonment of an old formula that equated governability with the permanence of an hegemonic party. The task for Mexican

governability with the permanence of an hegemonic party. The task for Mexican leaders trapped in an uncertain transition will be to foster the development of a democratic culture while dismantling traditional structures of control and challenging powerful constituencies. This goes to the core of Mexico's complex political moment, and Kaufman and Rubio are relevant there:

> "Elections are a component of democracy but not its only feature; the PRI may very well dominate the electoral process in this new era, but that would not by itself bring about democracy and all of its components. New institutions are in their infancy, and the old system persists even as the new one should look like. This is why the key to Mexico's political evolution lies in the accumulation of agreements on procedures, such as the recent electoral law, and on incremental successes by parties that today are in opposition, so that all build an allegiance to an institutional, as opposed to violent way of settling disputes. To the extent that political parties and other interested groups are able to agree on procedures, they will be able to shape the future one step at a time." [122]

Basic problems in Mexican political system as the legacies of dominant-party rule, includig institutional fragility, centralized decision making, and economic and political polarization, constitute serious obstacles to the consolidation of democratic governance in Mexico. Thus, Mexico faces problems. Following Denise Dresser:

> "The Chiapas revolt, the growing infiltration of state institutions by drug traffickers, and the antisystemic attitude of many key players- are broader than those related to the transformation of the country's political regime and cannot be solved electorally. The country is moving toward political democracy, but effective power sharing and government accountability are still scarce commodities. What remains to be done is... institutionalizing new actors, practices, and rules, and engaging in a concerted transformation of the Mexican state. The twilight of the PRI will occur only when consensus building among elites and the people, pact making with opposition parties, and the universal application of the rule of law become a daily part of the country's institutional fabric." [123]

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[122] Ibidem, p. 31

[123] Jorge I. Dominguez and Abraham F. Lowental, Op. Cit., p. 160

The PRI has dominated Mexican politics for so long and is associated with so many vices that without alternation of parties in power, democracy would be left wanting. Democratization might be delayed, but not for long. The critical issues for Mexico: the PAN and PRD have signed on to the process of change through elections because they expect to reap direct benefits in the form of electoral victories for the nascent democracy. Mexican opposition party leadership needs to be examined and understood for several reasons, the government has introduced electoral reforms and this has opened up electoral competition in order to channel opposition into the least offensive and uninfluential arenas. According to Alan Angell the left has a dual task:

> "To seek a way of aggregating social demands into effective political ones in a way that consolidates the fragile democratic systems...unless the left is able to channel potentially explosive demands into reasonable political options, then the democratic systems will be further undermined...the evolution of the left will inevitable affect the nature of the transition to democracy, especially in regard to two central challenges: consolidating democratic rule and complying with popular demand for socioeconomic development and distributive justice. The left's response will influence not only the prospects for the survival of democracy, but also the type of democracy that emerges by shaping the character and content of socio-economic and political structures." [124]

The economic reform experience form 1982-1992 has undermined traditional pillars of Mexican authoritarianism and reinforce pre-existing social and political trends toward democracy. Nevertheless, economic reform is a necessary but nor sufficient condition for democracy to take root. It is only one of a mix of factors necessary to complete a Mexican democratic transition. Today, Mexico enters facing the question of whether economic reform and consolidation will push Mexico toward a democratic transition or facilitate the recomposition of the PRI's electoral strength.

The PRI regrouped its forces and made a surprisingly strong comeback in

[124] Ibidem, p. 25

the 1991 midterm elections. However, opposition party forces also have maintained their momentum and extracted grudging willingness on the part of authorities to recognize their electoral victories.

Democratization and the PRI's electoral recuperation need not be mutually exclusive. Nor is a violent rupture the only means to effect fundamental change. The PRI needs not be destroyed, but it must be transformed in order to effect a democratic transition; and, similarly, with opposition party forces which must develop a greater organizational maturity and political tolerance.

CONCLUSIONS

Having analyzed broad challenges, opportunities and developments that have affected parties and party competition in Mexico, and how the broader political environment has shaped and challenged Mexico's ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI and opposition parties; the Party of National Action, PAN and the Party of Democratic Revolution, PRD, since the 1980, I identified how democracy emerged and its advent created new opportunities for parties in Mexico during the 1980s.

Party competition encouraged party building, and afforded a relative stability necessary for democratic accountability. A climate of political controversy appeared in the 1980s in which popular expectations, almost without exception, surpassed the opposition's real possibilities of forming alternative governments.

There are three main sources of political change in Mexico today; First, it is the natural evolution of society, which, has resulted in a growing electoral challenge to the monopoly of the PRI manifested through protest, votes against incumbents and the development of independent labor organization. Since the 1960s, the PRI no longer represented most of Mexico's organized constituencies. The first sign of growing disaffection was the student movement of 1968. Further evidence of accumulated disaffection exploded in the federal elections of 1988. Mexico experienced in 1988 its most open and competitive elections in decades. The economic crisis of the 1980s accelerated the process.

The second source of political change, and probably the one with immediate consequences, was the stabilization program of the 1980s and the economic reform that followed. The third source has been the social forces unleashed by the economic reform, forces with their own dynamic, over which the government has no control.

Lack of success in economic reforms fundamentally altered the contours of Mexican politics. Economics suggests that they were dealing with a controlled

economy, while, in fact, they were faced with circumstances beyond their control, both within Mexico and in the world at large. The problem appears to be not just one of finding the appropriate policies; rather, Mexico lacks the institutions necessary to accommodate itself to a changing world. These complex processes are likely to transform Mexico radically in the coming century.

The economic crisis in Mexico during the 1980s promoted dissatisfaction with the PRI party, which had dominated the political arena since 1929. Economic problems created new electoral opportunities for opposition parties, and the economic downturn undermined the PRI and the political system, causing major division within the ruling elite.

The PRI will have to address the fundamental problems and effective reforms bringing about true multiparty democracy, and protecting Mexico's political stability. The PRI needs to bring into play the stability and legitimacy through democratic fundamentals, increasing the electoral process, maintaining a new system of control while the opposition becomes stronger.

The PRI's weakness during more than a decade of economic crisis will have to adopt new political control mechanisms in order to become more effective. Competitive and clean elections will provide unprecedented opportunities for building democratically oriented parties in Mexico.

The crisis and redefinition of the left as the major development that affected party politics, and the failures of real socialism became too apparent to ignore. In Mexico, the leftist parties joined together to form the National Democratic Front (FDN) in 1988. Its candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas had an important proyection in the presidential election of 1988, marking the opening of a new era in Mexico's political history. This event strengthened the opposition party, favoring the compromise and moderation that are necessary in democratic politics.

The left faces a very tough challenge, to make leftist unity a reality. The PAN also will have to play a decisive role in this process of change.

Dissatisfaction with the government's performance has been the strength of opposition, and its potential support, the youth. Cooperation or confrontation with the party in power will be the major challenge of the opposition through a democratic constitutional framework to become a unite force.

Today, opposition parties are already recognised as necessary for the maintenance of balance and stability. The opposition has governmental functions to perform. Despite the limitations on participation by the left, the Federal Congress is acquiring importance as a forum for discussion. The role of opposition is growing importance and a legitimate political voice. The fact that the opposition has acquired greater influence in local governments is due also to the active role played by the press, both domestic and foreign, the economic crisis and the political reform proposals of the last Presidents. Congress has become liberalized undermining the old mechanisms of control. Mexico's political system has to afront its severe crisis of legitimacy.

Neoliberalism also emerged, opening new opportunities for some parties, especially on the right side of the political spectrum. The resurgence of economic liberalism had an important impact on party politics. Parties of the center and left questioned state-centered development, making several concessions to opposition to enhance democratization.

The economic reform of the 1980s and 1990s proved to be insufficient to deal with Mexico's problems. However, these events marked the first path toward Mexico's political evolution. Some of the challenges confronting democracy in Mexico will be to conform new power structures, a fundamental threat to party unit and its constituencies (peasants, urban workers, etc.); to maintain order and stability in the political regime to increase the legitimacy of the state; and the democratization process per se.

The state reform will require dialogue and an open debate over policy issues and new institutions within the new democratization process. The task of constructing these institutions is the primary one facing Mexico's current and

future political leadership.

The political system is moving in the direction of greater pluralism. The single most important potential source of legitimation for democracy in Mexico is growing equality of conditions before the law. Mexico requires high quality political leadership that recognize opposition and reorganize the political system. Zedillo and the next president will have to follow identifying a new political structure, with new intitutions on a democratic base.

The PRI will have to encourage the organization of parties to contribute to the regime's performance legitimacy structure. Parties will have to assume an interest of representation to be able to build effective institutions for mediating both civil society and the state. To solve Mexico's persistent problems of poverty and income inequality, requires an effective state and a strong civil society.

An effective state capable of formulating and implementing policies must be open to society. An effective and egalitarian state will demand the continuous interaction of state and social actors at the federal and local levels. Market oriented reforms may be sustainable over the long run only if they are opened to wider social and political participation through democratic institutions.

Electronic media, in particular television, as a major factor in political campaigns, will reinforce or weaken the control of party organizations over the electorate. The Mexican media plays an important role on the game of politics, it is is experiencing an impressive qualitative transformation. Essentially reacting to a more pluralistic, multiparty system, the press has followed the trend and became more open.

This will have to be part of the cultural system of modern society, and it has to be accepted as an institutional part of the citizenry. Mass media will have to provide political knowledge and finally democratic political orientation.

Despite the profound changes, parties remain crucial institutions in shaping the contours of democratic politics; but, without a reasonably institutionalized party system, the future of democracy in Mexico is bleak. The

reinforcement of traditional mechanisms of electoral control provokes a profound crisis of credibility; which could produce a crisis of legitimacy or governability in the Mexican system.

The new players in the political process are not necessarily competing for power through elections, they have become critical components of the process itself. There are a large number of civic associations of all types: human rights, housing rights, antipoverty, environmental, and private companies lobbying for their interests. All these factors play a growing role in Mexican politics.

Besides these elements, a host of other factors, some conjunctural, others of longer duration but still recent phenomena on the polical scene, will contribute to the success of the political panorama. The development of greater competition among the different political parties has to demonstrate its capacity to afront particularly the next presidential elections in the year 2000.

In the absence of a consensus on the future, the country needs to build strong institutions to ensure that there is a process to which all political actors must subscribe. Only with true democratic institutions, Mexico will remain a stable nation, capable of advancing toward new stages of political and democratic development.

ACRONYMS

CNC	Peasants National Confederation
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FDN	National Democratic Front
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
PAN	National Action Party
PARM	Mexican Revolution Authentic Party
PCM	Mexican Communist Party
PFCRN	National Revolution Cardenist Front Party
PMS	Mexican Socialist Party
PMT	Mexican Workers Party
PNR	National Revolutionary Party
PPS	Socialist Popular Party
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PRM	Party of the Mexican Revolution
PSUM	Mexican Unified Socialist Party
Pronasol	National Solidarity Program

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