

POLITICS IN MEXICO

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Country Bio

MEXICO

Population
108.6 million

Territory
761,602 square miles

Year of Independence
1810

Year of Current Constitution
1917

Head of State
President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa

Head of Government
President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa

Languages
Spanish, Mayan, Nahuatl, Zapotec, and many other regional, indigenous languages

Religions
Nominally Roman Catholic 88%, Protestant 7%

It is election night. Friends and family gather around televisions to watch the returns as computer-generated graphics showing vote trends flash on and off the screen. Mirroring the final preelection surveys, exit-poll results show a presidential race that is too close to call. A few hours after the polls close, both major candidates appear on television to claim victory. More than a month passes, but the election outcome remains in doubt. Millions of votes are recounted. Election officials are accused of incompetence and bias in the vote-counting. It is up to the lawyers and the courts to determine who will be the country's next president. More than two months after the election, the court finally declares a winner.

What is striking about this picture is that it occurred not in the United States (2000, Bush vs. Gore), but in Mexico (2006, Calderón vs. López Obrador). For more than six decades, the outcomes of Mexican presidential elections had been known the moment that the ruling **Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)** announced its nominee. Since the hotly contested but fraud-ridden presidential election of 1988, however, Mexico has experienced a remarkable passage from a political system in which systematic

manipulation of elections by the ruling party was condoned by senior political leaders and cynically accepted by the general public to one in which government respect for voters' preferences is expected—indeed, demanded. This and other key elements of modern democratic politics have become routinized in Mexico.

Recurrent economic crises (1976–1977, 1982–1989, and 1994–1996) were among the most powerful catalysts for this revolution in citizen expectations. The vast majority of Mexicans suffered severe economic pain during these decades, directly attributable to government mismanagement of the national economy. Millions of jobs were lost, real wages were stagnant or declining in all but a few years of the period, savings and businesses were decimated by inflation and currency devaluations, and government benefits for the middle and lower classes were slashed in the austerity budgets necessitated by the economic crises. These economic shocks set the stage for massive anti-PRI voting that eventually broke the party's seventy-one-year hold on national executive power in 2000. But by 2008, a severe global recession was dragging down Mexico's economy and testing the resilience of "opposition" rule.

CURRENT POLICY CHALLENGES

Mexico had entered the twenty-first century with huge social and economic problems: an economy that produces far too few jobs to accommodate the young people entering the labor market each year; an educational system sorely in need of modernization; a growing impoverished population, with close to half of all Mexicans still living below the official poverty line; a highly unequal distribution of income; a huge developmental gap between the affluent, urbanized, economically modern Northern states and the poor, rural, heavily indigenous South; acute environmental problems that damage the health of both rural and urban dwellers; and a criminal-justice system that barely functions, routinely violates the human rights of citizens, and is heavily corrupted by drug trafficking. The PRI lost its grip on the Mexican political system in large part because it had failed to deal effectively with these problems. The democratic "opposition," now in power, has been able to manage them with only marginal success.

Several emerging economic policy challenges will be no less daunting. As a developing country, Mexico has to deal more directly with the global economic system; it must play catch-up with its international trade partners and competitors. The rise of China as a key competitor in global markets has had a particularly strong impact on Mexico. China has displaced Mexico as the second-largest exporter of manufactured goods to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) market, and Chinese producers offer stiff competition to many Mexican firms within their domestic market. Mexico must modernize its agricultural sector to allow it to survive competition from the United States and Canada, where subsidies and more efficient methods make agricultural goods cheaper. This vulnerable sector was further challenged when trade barriers were eliminated completely under NAFTA in 2008.

Mexico needs to replace its antiquated and inefficient labor law with new statutes that both protect workers and encourage job creation. It must renovate the energy sector—oil, electricity, and natural gas—either by increasing government spending or by allowing more private or foreign investment, which would require controversial constitutional amendments. An unfamiliar demographic problem is beginning to emerge—an aging population—and the Mexican

people must soon bolster the funding of private and government-sponsored pension plans. Finally, the government must expand the tax base to provide the resources needed to address all of these challenges.

On the political front, additional changes in electoral rules are needed to close loopholes concerning the financing of campaigns to make it more difficult for elected officials to use government resources to promote their party's candidates and to allow the immediate reelection of legislators, which would make them more responsive and accountable to their constituents. But in terms of consolidating a fully democratic system, these refinements may be less important than the rapidly spreading belief that alternation in power among Mexico's main parties, at all levels of governance, is both desirable and achievable. In the national elections of July 2010, PRI candidates won a majority of the state governorships being contested, but a center-right/center-left coalition won three states—Oaxaca, Puebla, and Sinaloa—previously held only by the PRI. The prospect of additional, successful left-right coalition candidates in 2011 and 2012—a presidential election year—to block the PRI's return to national power has injected a new source of dynamism and uncertainty into Mexico's electoral politics.

Mexico's politics are also being influenced powerfully by the government's campaign against drug trafficking, which since 2006 has become the single most salient public issue. The 2010 national elections were the first that Mexico's drug lords made a sustained effort to disrupt. They sought to do so by intimidating poll-watchers, depressing voter turnout, and assassinating a gubernatorial candidate less than a week before election day. Since 2006, when President Calderón called out the military to wage all-out war on narco-traffickers who posed a national security threat and had compromised countless public officials and police, Mexico has been gripped by pervasive, drug-related violence. From December 2006 through December 2010, nearly 30,000 Mexicans died in such violence, including innocent victims as well as narco-traffickers eliminated by their rivals in the industry.

But most voters in July 2010 seemed determined to deny the traffickers a victory. They showed up at the polls, even in the most dangerous parts of the country, and punished candidates who were perceived as having ties with drug trafficking. In short, most Mexicans seem to have concluded that it is time to get on with the business of modern democracy.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Colonialism and Church-State Relations

Long before Hernán Cortés landed in 1519 and began the Spanish conquest of Mexico, its territory was inhabited by numerous indigenous civilizations. Of these, the Mayans on the Yucatán peninsula and the Toltecs on the central plateau had developed the most complex political and economic organizations. Both of these civilizations had disintegrated, however, before the Spaniards arrived. Smaller indigenous societies were decimated by diseases introduced by the invaders or were vanquished by the sword. Subsequent grants of land and native labor by the Spanish Crown to the colonists further isolated the rural native population and deepened their exploitation.

The combined effects of attrition, intermarriage, and cultural penetration of native regions have drastically reduced the proportion of Mexico's population culturally identified as indigenous. According to 2005 census figures, 7.5 percent of the nation's population speak a native language.¹ The indigenous minority has been persistently marginal to the national economy and political system. Today, the indigenous population is heavily concentrated in rural communities that the government classifies as the country's most economically depressed and service-deprived, located primarily in the Southeast and the center of the country. The indigenous population is an especially troubling reminder of the millions of people who have been left behind by uneven development in twentieth-century Mexico.

The importance of Spain's colonies in the New World lay in their ability to provide the Crown with vital resources to fuel the Spanish economy. Mexico's mines provided gold and silver in abundance until the wars of independence began in 1810. After independence, Mexico continued to export these ores, supplemented in subsequent eras by hemp, cotton, textiles, oil, and winter vegetables.

Since the Spanish conquest, the Roman Catholic Church has been an institution of enduring power in Mexico. Priests joined the Spanish invaders in an evangelical mission to convert the natives to Catholicism, and individual priests have continued to play important roles in national history. For example, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla helped launch Mexico's War of Independence in 1810, and Father José María Morelos y Pavón replaced Hidalgo as spiritual and military leader

of the independence movement when the Crown executed Hidalgo in 1811.

During Mexico's postindependence period, institutional antagonisms between the Church and the central government have occasionally flared into open confrontations on such issues as Church wealth, educational policy, the content of public school textbooks, and political activism by the Church. The Constitutions of 1857 and 1917 formally established the separation of church and state and defined their respective domains. Constitutional provisions dramatically reduced the Church's power and wealth by nationalizing its property, including church buildings and large agricultural landholdings. Government efforts during the 1920s to enforce these constitutional provisions led to a civil insurrection that caused 100,000 combatant deaths, uncounted civilian casualties, and economic devastation in a large part of central Mexico. The settlement of this "Cristero rebellion" established, once and for all, the Church's subordination to the state, in return for which the government relaxed its restrictions on Church activities in nonpolitical arenas.

This accord inaugurated a long period of relative tranquility in church-state relations, during which the government and the Church ignored many of the anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution (such as the prohibition on Church involvement in education). The central Church hierarchy—among the most conservative in Latin America—seethed at anticlerical and socially liberal policies (such as divorce, birth control, and the tolerance of the growth of evangelical movements), yet cooperated with the government on a variety of other issues, and the Church posed no threat to the ruling party's hegemony.

Revolution and Its Aftermath

The nationwide civil conflict that erupted in Mexico in 1910 is often referred to as the first of the great "social revolutions" that shook the world early in the twentieth century. Mexico's upheaval, however, originated within the country's ruling class. The revolution did not begin as a spontaneous uprising of the common people against the entrenched dictator, Porfirio Díaz, nor against the local bosses and landowners who exploited them. Even though hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants ultimately participated in the civil strife, most of the revolutionary leadership came from the younger generation of middle- and upper-class

Mexicans who had become disenchanted with three and a half decades of increasingly heavy-handed rule by the aging dictator and his clique. These disgruntled members of the elite saw their future opportunities for economic and political mobility blocked by the closed group surrounding Díaz.

Led by Francisco I. Madero, whose family had close ties with the ruling group, these liberal middle-class reformers were committed to opening up the political system and creating new opportunities for themselves within a capitalist economy whose basic features they did not challenge. They did not seek to destroy the established order. Instead, they sought to make it work more in their own interest, rather than that of the foreign capitalists who dominated key sectors of Mexico's economy during the Porfirian dictatorship.

Of course, some serious grievances had accumulated among workers and peasants. Once the rebellion against Díaz got underway, leaders who appealed to the disadvantaged masses pressed their claims against the central government. Emiliano Zapata led a movement of peasants in the state of Morelos; they were bent on regaining the land they had lost to the rural aristocracy by subterfuge during the Porfiriato. In the north, Pancho Villa led an army of jobless workers, small landowners, and cattle hands, whose main interest was steady employment. As various revolutionary leaders contended for control of the central government, the political order that had been created and enforced by Díaz disintegrated into warlordism—powerful regional gangs led by revolutionary *caudillos* (political-military strongmen) who aspired more to increasing their personal wealth and social status than to leading a genuine social revolution.

The first decade of the revolution produced a new, remarkably progressive constitution, replacing the Constitution of 1857. The Constitution of 1917 established the principle of state control over all natural resources, subordination of the Church to the state, the government's right to redistribute land, and rights for labor that had not yet been secured even by the labor movement in the United States. Even so, nearly two decades passed before most of these constitutional provisions began to be implemented.

During the 1920s, the central government set out to eliminate or undermine the most powerful and independent-minded regional *caudillos* by coopting the local power brokers, known as *caciques*. These local political bosses became, in effect, appendages of

the central government, supporting its policies and maintaining control over the population in their communities. By the end of this period, leaders with genuine popular followings (like Zapata and Villa) had been assassinated and control had been seized by a new postrevolutionary elite bent on demobilizing the masses and establishing the hegemony of the central government. The rural aristocracy of the Porfiriato had been weakened but not eliminated; its heirs still controlled large concentrations of property and other forms of wealth in many parts of the country.

The Cárdenas Upheaval

Elite control was maintained during the 1930s, but this was nevertheless an era of massive social and political upheaval in Mexico. During the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), peasants and urban workers succeeded for the first time in pressing their claims for land and higher wages; in fact, Cárdenas actively encouraged them to do so. The result was an unprecedented wave of strikes, protest demonstrations, and petitions for breaking up large rural estates.

Most disputes between labor and management during this period were settled, under government pressure, in favor of the workers. The Cárdenas administration also redistributed more than twice as much land as that expropriated by all of Cárdenas's predecessors since 1915, when Mexico's land reform program was formally initiated. By 1940, the country's land tenure system had been fundamentally altered, breaking the traditional domination of the large haciendas and creating a large sector of small peasant farmers (*ejidatarios*)—more than 1.5 million of them—who had received plots of land under the agrarian reform program. Even Mexico's foreign relations were disrupted in 1938 when the Cárdenas government nationalized oil companies that had been operating in Mexico under U.S. and British ownership.

Mexican intellectuals frequently refer to 1938 as the high-water mark of the Mexican revolution as measured by social progress; they characterize the period since then as a retrogression. Certainly, the distributive and especially the redistributive performance of the Mexican government declined sharply in the decades that followed, and the worker and peasant organizations formed during the Cárdenas era atrophied and became less and less likely to contest either the will of the government or the interests of Mexico's

private economic elites. De facto reconcentration of landholdings and other forms of wealth occurred as the state provided increasingly generous support to the country's new commercial, industrial, and financial elites during a period of rapid industrialization.

The Cárdenas era fundamentally reshaped Mexico's political institutions. The presidency became the primary institution of the political system, with sweeping powers exercised during a constitutionally limited six-year term with no possibility of reelection, the military was removed from overt political competition and transformed into one of several institutional pillars of the regime, and an elaborate network of government-sponsored peasant and labor organizations provided a mass base for the official political party and performed a variety of political and economic control functions, using a multilayered system of patronage and clientelism.

By 1940, a much larger proportion of the Mexican population was nominally included in the national political system, mostly by their membership in peasant and labor organizations created by Cárdenas. No real democratization of the system resulted from this vast expansion of "political participation," however. Although working-class groups did have more control over their representatives in the government-sponsored organizations than over their former masters on the haciendas and in the factories, their influence over public policy and government priorities after Cárdenas was minimal and highly indirect.

The Era of Hegemonic Party Rule

The political system shaped by Lázaro Cárdenas proved remarkably durable. From 1940 until the late 1980s, Mexico's official party-government apparatus was the most stable regime in Latin America (see Box 11.1). It

had a well-earned reputation for resilience, adaptability to new circumstances, a high level of agreement within the ruling elite on basic rules of political competition, and a seemingly unlimited capacity to coopt dissidents, both within and outside of the ruling party.

With the fall of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1991, the PRI became the world's longest continuously ruling political party. Since 1929, when the "official" party was founded, both political assassination and armed rebellion had been rejected as routes to the presidency by all contenders for power. A handful of disappointed aspirants to the ruling party's presidential nomination mounted candidacies outside the party (in the elections of 1929, 1940, 1946, 1952, and 1988), but even the most broadly supported of these break-away movements were successfully contained through government-engineered vote fraud and intimidation.

In the early 1970s, concerns had been raised about the stability of the system, after the bloody repression of a student protest movement in Mexico City by President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games. The student massacre marked the opening of a "dirty war" in which the army and police forces are believed to have executed, without trial, more than seven hundred alleged enemies of the state. Many analysts at that time suggested that Mexico was entering a period of institutional crisis, requiring fundamental reforms in both political arrangements and economic development strategy.

The discovery of massive oil and natural-gas resources during the late 1970s gave the incumbent regime a new lease on life. Continued support of the masses and the elites was purchased with an apparently limitless supply of petro-pesos, even without major structural reforms. The government's room to maneuver was abruptly erased by the collapse of the oil boom in August 1982, owing to a combination of

Mexican Presidents and Political Parties

1940–1946	Manuel Avila Camacho (PRI)	1976–1982	José López Portillo (PRI)
1946–1952	Miguel Alemán (PRI)	1982–1988	Miguel de la Madrid (PRI)
1952–1958	Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (PRI)	1988–1994	Carlos Salinas de Gortari (PRI)
1958–1964	Adolfo López Mateos (PRI)	1994–2000	Ernesto Zedillo (PRI)
1964–1970	Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (PRI)	2000–2006	Vicente Fox (PAN)
1970–1976	Luis Echeverría (PRI)	2006–2012	Felipe Calderón (PAN)

BOX 11.1

adverse international economic circumstances (falling oil prices, rising interest rates, recession in the United States) and fiscally irresponsible domestic policies. Real wages and living standards for the vast majority of Mexicans plummeted, and the government committed itself to a socially painful restructuring of the economy, including a drastic shrinkage of the sector owned and managed by the government itself.

The economic crisis of the 1980s placed enormous stress on Mexico's political system. In the July 1988 national elections, the PRI suffered unprecedented reverses in both the presidential and congressional races. The vote share officially attributed to Carlos Salinas was more than 20 percent below that of PRI presidential candidate Miguel de la Madrid in the 1982 election. Ex-PRIista Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of the much-revered former President Lázaro Cárdenas, heading a hastily assembled coalition of minor leftist and nationalist parties, was officially credited with 31.1 percent of the presidential vote—far more than any previous opposition candidate but probably much less than he would actually have received if the vote count had been honest.² A diminished PRI delegation still controlled the Congress, but the president's party had lost the two-thirds majority needed to approve constitutional amendments.

Carlos Salinas breathed new life into the creaking PRI apparatus. His brand of strong presidential leadership and his accomplishments—especially the toppling of corrupt labor union bosses, a sharp reduction in inflation, and the National Solidarity Program, a new-style antipoverty and public works program that increased government responsiveness to lower-class needs—sufficed to rebuild electoral support for the PRI and to paper over the cracks within the ruling political elite. Salinas opened the Mexican economy to foreign trade and investment and privatized hundreds of inefficient state-owned companies. While political liberalization had proceeded slowly and unevenly under Salinas, far behind the pace of his sweeping free-market economic reforms, Mexico appeared to be coasting inexorably toward a transfer of power to yet another PRI national government in 1994.

The illusion of proximate economic modernity and political inevitability was shattered on New Year's Day 1994 by a "postmodern" peasant revolt in Chiapas, Mexico's most underdeveloped and politically backward state. An estimated 2,000 primitively armed but well-disciplined indigenous rebels seized

control of four isolated municipalities and declared war on the central government—something that had not happened since 1938. Their demands for social justice and democracy resonated throughout Mexico, long after the initial skirmishes with the Mexican army had claimed at least 145 lives and a cease-fire had been negotiated. Suddenly, middle- and upper-class Mexicans, as well as foreign governments and investors, were reminded of the persistence of political repression, human-rights violations, extreme poverty, and inequality in Mexico. The impoverished natives who took up arms against the state in Chiapas symbolized the many millions of Mexicans who had been left behind in the drive for economic modernity and internationalism.

Less than three months after the Chiapas rebellion erupted, President Salinas's hand-picked successor, Luis Donaldo Colosio, was assassinated while campaigning in Tijuana. With a last great exertion of presidential will, Carlos Salinas imposed on the PRI another hand-picked successor, economist-technocrat Ernesto Zedillo, to replace the slain Colosio. In August 1994, in a high-turnout election that was judged by most independent observers at the time to be the cleanest in Mexico's postrevolutionary history, the opposition parties were soundly defeated. Not only did the PRI retain control of the presidency (albeit with just a plurality of 48.8 percent of the total votes cast), it also maintained an ample majority in the federal Congress.³

The End of PRI Dominance

The appearance of restored stability created by the ruling party's impressive performance in the August 1994 elections was short-lived. In December 1994, a militarily insignificant renewal of the Zapatista rebels' activities in Chiapas, followed immediately by a sustained speculative attack on the overvalued peso by short-term foreign and domestic investors, opened a Pandora's box of economic and political troubles. What began as a currency and financial liquidity crisis quickly evolved into a massive capital flight and a deep recession.

By the late 1990s, the PRI once again appeared to be in a state of accelerated decomposition. Divisions within the party were deeper than at any time since the mid-1930s. The results of the 1997 elections for Congress were a stunning setback for the PRI, which

lost 112 of 300 single-member districts. For the first time since 1929, the PRI had to surrender control of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Congress) to a coalition of four opposition parties. The PRI also lost its two-thirds majority in the Senate, which is needed to approve constitutional amendments.

In the 2000 election, voters were furious at having been deceived twice by their government, first during the oil boom era of 1977 through 1981 and then during the Salinas presidency (1988–1994), periods when the government created an illusion of prosperity and boundless future economic gains. For the first time in seventy-one years, the voters soundly rejected the presidential candidate of the PRI, turning to Vicente Fox, a maverick former-Coca-Cola-executive-turned-politician who ran under the banner of **Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)**. With the defeat of its presidential candidate in 2000, the PRI lost control of the vast patronage resources of the central government, which were crucial to keeping it in power for more than seven decades.

The presidential election of 2006 featured three strong candidates and a highly divided electorate. Roberto Madrazo, the PRI's president (2002–2005), became the leading candidate for that party's 2006 presidential nomination. However, not all PRIistas favored Madrazo. Four candidates ran against him in an August 2005 first-round "primary," which consisted of a series of public-opinion polls. The former governor of the state of Mexico emerged as the winner, but he was forced to withdraw after media reports revealed that he had acquired a suspiciously large fortune in real estate. Madrazo quickly gained the PRI nomination in a virtually uncontested primary election.

Felipe Calderón was an underdog to become the PAN's 2006 candidate. Santiago Creel, the interior minister in the Fox administration, had been the front-runner since 2001. The PAN scheduled three regional primaries, with the rule that the candidate who won the most votes across the three primaries would win the nomination. The race turned out to be more competitive



Contested Presidential Election Brings Losing Candidate's Supporters into the Streets
López Obrador's supporters demonstrate in Mexico City's Zócalo (central plaza), August 2006.

Imelda Medina/epa/Corbis

Felipe Calderón (Mexico's Current President)

BOX 11.2

Felipe Calderón's biography is a blend of "traditional politician" experiences with those of the modern Mexican technocrat who makes much of his career within the federal bureaucracy. He earned master's degrees in economics and public administration, the latter degree from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

He was twice elected to a seat in Congress and once to the legislative body of Mexico City. Calderón also served as national chairman of his party, the PAN. He later served as director of BANOBRAS, a federal development bank, and as Secretary of Energy in President Vicente Fox's cabinet.

than expected. Calderón surprised nearly everyone by winning all three (see Box 11.2).

The *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD)'s candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador—the mayor of Mexico City from 2000 to 2005—began campaigning in fall 2005 with a considerable lead; Calderón started out in third place in most polls. In 2004, the federal attorney general's office began investigating López Obrador, who was accused of violating a court order arising from a land-use dispute in Mexico City. Because he was an elected official, he had the benefit of immunity from prosecution, and a ruling by the federal Chamber of Deputies was required to remove that immunity. After the attorney general formally sought an indictment against López Obrador, the chamber voted to remove his immunity (the PRI and the PAN voted in favor and the PRD against). People who are under indictment or are serving sentences after convictions are ineligible to run for federal office, so the removal of his immunity made López Obrador ineligible to run for president. His supporters claimed that the true rationale for the indictment was to remove the leading candidate from the presidential race. His opponents claimed that the charges were genuine and demonstrated his lack of respect for the separation of powers and the rule of law.

Responding to mounting domestic and international criticism of the López Obrador indictment, President Fox fired the attorney general and dismissed the charges against the mayor. This episode increased the popularity of López Obrador, who portrayed himself as the victim of a conspiracy organized by the Fox government, the PAN, the PRI, and the private sector. He returned to his job as Mexico City mayor, resigning a few months later to run for president. From that point, López Obrador maintained a lead in the presidential trial heats all the way through April 2006.

After beating Madrazo in a nationally televised debate, Calderón overtook López Obrador in most polls, with the PRI's Madrazo in third place. After a second debate and an extraordinarily negative campaign, Calderón and López Obrador were tied in all of the polls. On Election Day, July 2, 2006, the race was so close that both López Obrador and Calderón claimed victory. On July 5, the formal count of the votes began in each of the 300 electoral districts. The next day, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) announced that Calderón had won by 0.58 percent, or about 244,000 votes out of nearly 42 million cast (see Table 11.1). López Obrador immediately claimed that there had been electoral fraud, orchestrated by the PAN, the PRI, the Federal Electoral Institute, and the business community. To pressure the electoral tribunal to order a complete recount, the PRD launched a civil disobedience campaign in Mexico City. Thousands of protesters set up tents along the principal boulevard and the *Zócalo* (the central plaza), blocking all traffic in the heart of Mexico City. The partial recount and the subsequent nullification of some disputed precincts shifted only about 14,000 votes to López Obrador. Calderón's victory was certified by the electoral tribunal in early September. Nonetheless, López Obrador refused to recognize the "spurious president," and in November 2006 inaugurated himself as "the legitimate president of Mexico" before 100,000 of his supporters in the heart of Mexico City. He vowed to lead "years of resistance" throughout the country and to pressure the Calderón government into adopting his legislative proposals, including measures for breaking up business monopolies and creating a universal health care system.

The election results divided Mexico in two, with the PAN winning most of the Northern states (except Zacatecas and Baja California Sur, both governed by the PRD). The PRD won every state to the south,

2006 Presidential Election Results

The election produced a highly contested, razor-thin victory for PAN's candidate, while PRI's candidate finished a distant third.

TABLE 11.1

Candidate	Votes	% of Valid Votes
Felipe Calderón (PAN)	15,019,300	36.70
Andrés Manuel López Obrador (PRD-PT-Convergencia)	14,767,438	36.09
Roberto Madrazo (PRI-PVEM)	9,302,801	22.73
Patricia Mercado (PASC)	1,129,737	2.76
Roberto Campa (Nueva Alianza)	401,932	0.98
Nonregistered candidates	298,018	0.73
Invalid votes	937,735	
Total votes	41,856,961	100.00

Source: Instituto Federal Electoral (www.ife.org.mx), 2006 (official district counts, including voters abroad).

except Yucatán (governed by the PAN) and Puebla (where the PRI governor was under the clouds of scandal). Calderón and López Obrador each won sixteen states. Madrazo, incredibly, won not a single state.

After its disastrous, third-place finish in the 2006 presidential election, and with its delegation in Congress reduced to about a fifth of the lower chamber, the PRI seemed to be retreating into its regional strongholds. However, in subsequent gubernatorial elections, the PRI recovered states that it had previously lost to the opposition (see Table 11.2). By 2010, the PRI was well-positioned to retake the presidency in 2012, fueled by a stagnant economy and public disapproval of President Calderón's aggressive, violence-producing war against drug traffickers.

POLITICAL CULTURE

Most of what we know empirically about Mexican political culture is based on research completed during the period of sustained economic growth and virtually unchallenged one-party rule in Mexico, from 1940 through the mid-1970s. The portrait of Mexican political culture that emerges from these studies can be summarized as follows: Mexicans are highly supportive of the political institutions that evolved from the Mexican Revolution, and they endorse the democratic principles embodied in the Constitution of 1917. However, they are critical of government performance, especially in creating jobs, reducing social and economic inequality, fighting crime, and delivering basic public services. Most government bureaucrats and

politicians are viewed as distant, elitist, and self-serving, if not corrupt. Mexicans traditionally have been pessimistic about their ability to affect election outcomes, anticipating fraud and regarding attendance at campaign rallies and voting as ritualistic activities.

On the surface, this combination of attitudes and beliefs seems contradictory. How could Mexicans support a political system that they see as unresponsive or capricious at best, in which they are mere "subjects" rather than true participants? Historically, popular support for the Mexican political system derived from three sources: the revolutionary origins of the regime, the government's role in promoting economic growth, and its performance in distributing concrete, material benefits to a substantial proportion of the Mexican population since the Cárdenas era. Each of these traditional sources of support has been undermined to some extent since 1976.

The official interpretation of the 1910 revolution stressed symbols (or myths), such as social justice, democracy, the need for national unity, and the popular origins of the current regime. The government's identification with these symbols was constantly reinforced by the mass media, public schools, and the mass organizations affiliated with the official party. Over the years, the party's electoral appeals were explicitly designed to link its candidates with agrarian reform and other revered ideals of the revolution, with national heroes like Emiliano Zapata and Lázaro Cárdenas, and with the national flag. (The PRI emblem conveniently has the same colors, in the same arrangement.) However, President Salinas broke decisively with so many tenets of "revolutionary ideology"

Partisan Control of Mexican States
Parties now alternate in power at the state level.

TABLE 11.2

**States not lost
by the PRI**

Campeche
 Coahuila
 Colima
 Durango
 Hidalgo
 México
 Oaxaca
 Puebla

**States won by the PAN
and held by the PAN**

Aguascalientes
 Baja California
 Guanajuato
 Jalisco
 Morelos
 Sonora*

**States won by the PRD
and held by the PRD**

Baja California Sur
 Chiapas
 Distrito Federal
 Guerrero*
 Michoacán
 Zacatecas

**States won by the PAN
and recovered by the PRI**

Chihuahua
 Nayarit
 Nuevo León
 Querétaro
 San Luis Potosí
 Yucatán

**State won by the PRD
and taken by the PAN**

Tlaxcala

*States still in first term of opposition control.

(strict church–state separation, land reform, economic nationalism, etc.) that the PRI's claim to the revolutionary mantle became tenuous. Indeed, since the late 1980s, that mantle has been claimed by the PRD.

Relatively few Mexicans based their support for the system primarily on its revolutionary origins or symbolic outputs, however. For most sectors of the population, symbols were supplemented with particularistic material rewards: plots of land or titles to land that had been occupied illegally, schools, low-cost medical care, agricultural crop price supports, government-subsidized food and other consumer goods, and public-sector jobs. For more than forty years, the personal receipt of some material "favor" from the official party–government apparatus, or the hope that such benefits might be received in the future, ensured fairly high levels of mass support for the system.

Even now, Mexicans' concept of democracy emphasizes economic and social outputs rather than procedural liberties, and the electoral strategies of all parties reflect this element of political culture.⁴ For example, in the 2006 election, many voters were

attracted to PRD candidate López Obrador by his performance as Mexico City mayor, delivering high-visibility public works and monthly payments to senior citizens. PAN candidate Felipe Calderón promised to reduce social inequality through a major expansion of Oportunidades, a federal welfare program already benefiting 5 million low-income families. While not on a par with traditional vote-buying by the PRI—trading specific material payoffs for votes at the individual level—such campaign strategies clearly resonate with an electorate whose concept of democracy is still largely distributive.

Despite their growing distrust of key political institutions (especially Congress and the political parties), a plurality of Mexicans have remained "system loyalists." For example, while they may be frustrated by interparty bickering within Congress, most Mexicans do not view their national legislature as obstructing unduly the ability of the president to accomplish his objectives. As shown in Table 11.3, Mexicans in 2008 were less likely to view Congress as obstructionist than citizens of all but three other Latin American countries (Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile).

Does the National Legislature Obstruct the Power of the President?¹

Mexicans do not see Congress as obstructionist compared to other Latin American nations.

TABLE 11.3

Country	National average
Argentina	39.9
Belize	39.0
Honduras	37.9
Nicaragua	37.7
Haiti	36.5
Paraguay	32.8
Jamaica	31.6
Uruguay	30.4
Dominican Rep.	29.7
El Salvador	28.1
Guatemala	27.1
Panama	26.4
Peru	25.8
Ecuador	24.8
Colombia	24.2
Costa Rica	23.8
Mexico	23.0
Brazil	21.3
Bolivia	20.8
Chile	17.1

¹The survey question was: "To what extent does the National Legislature obstruct the power of the President?" Responses were given on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 meant "not at all" and 7 meant "a lot." These responses were then recoded on a scale of 0 to 100 to facilitate comparison across questions and survey waves. A national probability sample was surveyed in each country. Nonresponse was 14.8 percent for the sample as a whole.

Source: Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, *AmericasBarometer Insights* 26 (2009).

Nevertheless, most Mexicans today do not hesitate to criticize the way in which local, state, and national government function, and many more feel free to demonstrate their dissatisfaction by voting to throw the rascals out.

Historically, most Mexicans tolerated corruption in government as a price to be paid in order to extract benefits from the system or to deal with police harassment. But the unbridled corruption of the López

Portillo and the Salinas administrations drastically reduced such tolerance, and an upsurge in drug-related corruption in the 1990s—reaching into the highest levels of the government bureaucracy and the national security apparatus—angered many Mexicans. They feared that their government had been taken over by *narco-políticos*—public officials in league with corrupt police and drug lords. The slowness of the Vicente Fox administration to root out government and police corruption, despite its independence from the structure of corruption created under PRI rule, was a source of public anger by the end of Fox's term.

Despite much more competition in the electoral system since the 1980s, the average Mexican remains relatively uninterested in politics. At the beginning of the bitterly fought presidential election campaign of 2006, two-thirds of the interviewees in a national survey expressed little or no interest in politics, and 55 percent said they rarely or never discussed politics with other people. These percentages are essentially unchanged since the 2000 presidential campaign.⁵

In the last two national elections, however, Mexicans have shown themselves to be sensitive to short-term campaign stimuli, such as presidential candidates' debates, negative television ads, and news coverage. In fact, Mexicans appear more susceptible to persuasive campaign appeals than voters in the United States and other established democracies. Relatively more Mexicans change their party identification during the course of a campaign.⁶ While such findings may indicate the absence of a core set of stable political beliefs, they reveal that Mexicans are paying close attention to the options provided by political competitors, at least during hard-fought national election campaigns.

MASS POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

How do Mexicans form their attitudes toward the political system? In addition to the family, the schools and the Catholic Church are important sources of preadult political learning. All schools, including church-affiliated and secular private schools, must follow a government-approved curriculum and use the same set of free textbooks, written by the federal Ministry of Education. Although the private schools' compliance with the official curriculum is often nominal, control over the content of textbooks gives the government an instrument for socializing children to a uniform set of political values.

Under PRI rule, school-based political learning stressed the social and economic progress accomplished under postrevolutionary governments. The president was depicted as an omnipotent authority figure whose principal function is to maintain order in the country. Thus, despite the many egregious failures of presidential leadership that Mexicans have witnessed since the mid-1970s, many continue to express a preference for strong presidentialist government. However, mass public education has increased criticism of partisan politics and poor government performance. Higher levels of education are also associated with stronger support for the right to dissent and other democratic liberties.

The Catholic Church has been another key source of values affecting political behavior in Mexico. Church-run private schools have proliferated in recent decades. Along with secular private schools, they provide education for a large portion of children from middle- and upper-class families. Religious schools and priests have criticized anticlerical laws and policies, promoted individual initiative (as opposed to governmental action), and preached against abortion and gay marriage. They have also stressed the need for moral Christian behavior in public life.

As adults, Mexicans learn about politics from their personal encounters with government functionaries and the police. They also learn from participating in local community-based organizations and popular movements that seek collective benefits or redress of grievances from the government. There has been an impressive proliferation of popular movements in Mexico since 1968, when the student protest movement was violently repressed. The catalysts for this new wave of popular movements included gangsterism in government-affiliated labor unions, increasingly blatant PRI vote fraud in state and local elections during the 1980s, environmental disasters, and the implementation of neoliberal economic policies that adversely affected low- and middle-class segments of the society. While most of these popular movements are quite localized in scope and concerns, a few have grown to embrace thousands of Mexicans in many different states. The Civic Alliance—a coalition of hundreds of NGOs, independent labor unions, and popular movements—has mobilized tens of thousands of Mexican citizens and hundreds of foreign observers to scrutinize the conduct of every national election since 1994 and publish reports on election irregularities. Nevertheless,

nongovernmental organizations remain heavily concentrated in the Mexico City metropolitan area, where nearly 30 percent of the country's NGOs are registered. By contrast, the state of Chiapas hosts only 0.3 percent.

For seven decades, the PRI-government apparatus systematically used the mass media as an agent of political socialization. Although the government did not often directly censor the media, there were significant economic penalties for engaging in criticism or investigative reporting that seriously embarrassed the president. Since the PRI lost control of the presidency in 2000, the mass media have been much more openly critical of government performance. Many newspapers and news magazines retain their PRI partisan bias and energetically criticize the president and other PANista officials. The independent media have kept up their intense scrutiny of the executive branch and are also highly critical of what they see as incompetence and inefficiency in Congress.

The print media reach only a tiny fraction of the Mexican population (even the largest Mexico City newspapers have circulations under 100,000). As of 2003, newspaper circulation was just 93.5 per 1,000 Mexicans. Until recently, television was virtually monopolized by a huge private firm, Televisa, which had a notoriously close working relationship with the PRI-government apparatus and invariably defended the incumbent president's performance. One consequence of the Salinas administration's privatization program was the breakup of Televisa's virtual monopoly. A formerly government-owned television channel in Mexico City has grown quickly into a rival network, TV Azteca, and Televisa itself adjusted to the competition by giving much more coverage to opposition voices. In 2006, Congress approved a bill that would end government discretion in the awarding of specific parts of the television broadcasting spectrum. The Interior Ministry had in the past used its control of these concessions to guarantee positive media treatment of the government. The television spectrum would be auctioned off to the highest bidders. Opponents criticized this reform, claiming that it would exacerbate Televisa's monopoly because the corporation could often end up being the highest bidder. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that the new law unconstitutionally abdicated the State's authority over telecommunications. It became a question of weighing pluralism in the government against pluralism in the market.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

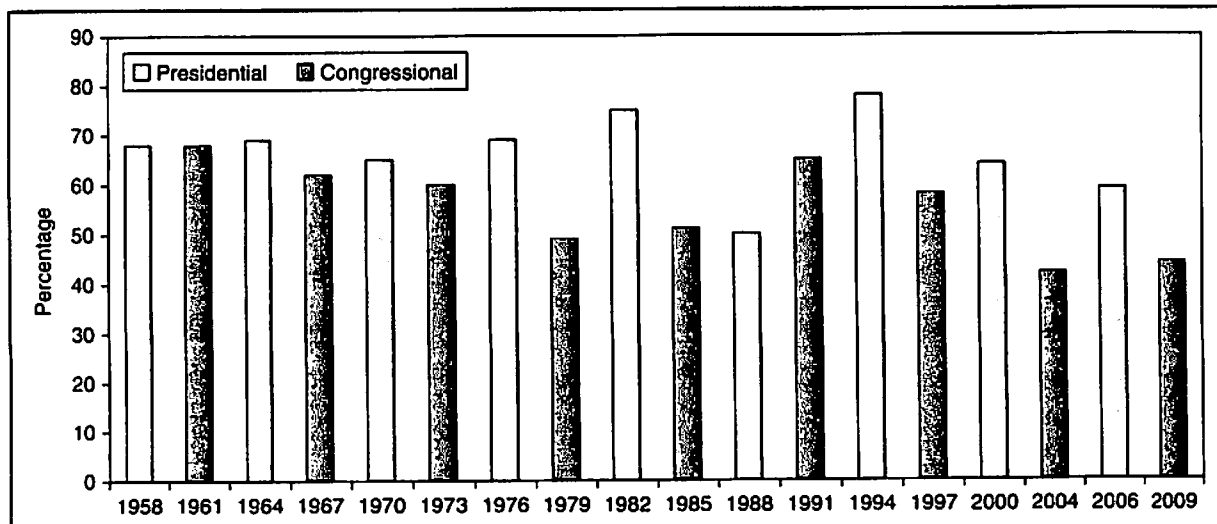
Traditionally, most political participation in Mexico has been of two broad types: (1) ritualistic, regime-supportive activities (for example, voting, attending campaign rallies) and (2) petitioning or contacting of public officials to influence the allocation of some public good or service. By law, voting is obligatory in Mexico, though there are no civil penalties for not voting. Evidence of having voted in the most recent election has sometimes been required to receive public services. People participate in campaign rallies mostly because attending might have a specific material payoff (a free meal, a raffle ticket, a T-shirt), or because failure to do so could have personal economic costs. In the past, as they went to the polls, Mexicans knew that they were not selecting those who would govern but merely ratifying the choice of candidates made earlier by the PRI-government hierarchy. Some voted because they regarded it as their civic duty, others because they wished to avoid difficulty in future dealings with government agencies. Some voted in response to pressures from local *caciques* and PRI sector representatives. And some, especially in rural areas, freely sold their votes in return for handouts from local officials.

As elections have become moments of genuine political confrontation in most parts of Mexico, the

ritualistic quality of voting and participating in campaign activities has diminished. Since 1994, Mexico has experienced an explosion in political participation, evidenced not only by the virtually nonstop protests of citizens' movements of all types, but also by a sharp rise in turnout in federal elections. The turnout of registered voters rose from 49 percent in the 1988 presidential election, to 61 percent in the midterm 1991 elections, to 78 percent in the 1994 presidential election. In the highly competitive 2006 presidential election, over 41,800,000 Mexicans cast their votes, a turnout rate of 59 percent (see Figure 11.1). The total included 33,131 Mexicans abroad who were permitted to vote absentee in the presidential election for the first time.

Unfortunately, valid comparisons with electoral participation rates in the pre-1988 period are impossible, since the 1988 presidential election was the first for which reasonably accurate turnout figures were made public. In all previous national elections, the government inflated turnout statistics in an effort to convince Mexicans and the outside world that it had succeeded in relegitimizing itself in impressive fashion.

As long as electoral politics remain as competitive as in the period since 1988 and potential voters continue to believe in the security of the electoral system, we can expect further, gradual movement toward a genuinely



Turnout of Registered Voters in National Elections, 1958–2009*

Beginning in 1991, turnout rates reflect real increases in voter participation, not government padding.

FIGURE 11.1

*Beginning in 1970, the legal voting age was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen years.

Source: Data from Comisión Federal Electoral for 1958–1991; from Instituto Federal Electoral for 1994–2006.

participatory political culture in Mexico. In the 2010 national elections, voter turnout increased in all five states where the PAN and PRD ran coalition candidates to block PRI victories. It is reasonable to expect that left-right coalitions, by increasing competitiveness, will create stronger incentives to vote in future elections.

Rising educational attainment also will be crucial to boosting participation, as will greater involvement in nonpolitical, community-level organizations. Participation in such organizations builds **social capital**—the social networks, norms, and trust that enable people to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. Research has shown that Mexicans who are active in their communities and thereby connected to their neighbors are far more likely to participate politically.⁷

POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONS

Mexican politics has long defied easy classification. In the 1950s and 1960s, some U.S. political scientists depicted the regime as a one-party democracy that was evolving toward “true” (North Atlantic-style) democracy. They recognized certain imperfections, but in the view of these analysts, political development in Mexico was simply incomplete. After the government’s massacre of student protesters in 1968 and 1971, most analysts described the system as authoritarian, but even this characterization was subject to qualification.

By the 1990s, Mexico seemed to belong to a rapidly expanding category of hybrid, part-free, part-authoritarian systems that did not conform to classical typologies. Such labels as “selective democracy,” “hard-line democracy,” *democradura* (a Spanish contraction of “democracy” and “dictatorship”), and “modernizing authoritarian regime” have been applied to such systems. These are characterized by partly competitive (though not necessarily fair and honest) elections that install governments more committed to maintaining political stability and labor discipline than to expanding democratic freedoms, protecting human rights, or mediating class conflict.

Since the democratic breakthrough election of 2000, tolerance of undemocratic practices (for example, electoral fraud, selective repression of dissidents, and heavy-handed control of mass media) has declined. The functioning of all political institutions is scrutinized intensely, and they are held to much higher

standards than ever before. The political design issue is no longer regime transition but how to improve democratic institutions already in place, especially to eliminate the structure of corruption that still supports abuses of authority and the electoral process at the local level in some parts of the country.

On paper, the Mexican government is structured much like the U.S. government: a presidential system, three autonomous branches of government (legislative, executive, and judicial) with checks and balances, and federalism with considerable autonomy at the state and municipal level (see Figure 11.2). Until the late 1990s, however, Mexico’s system of government was in practice far removed from the U.S. model. Decision-making was highly centralized. The president, operating with relatively few restraints on his authority, completely dominated the legislative and judicial branches. Supreme Court justices were presidentially appointed and confirmed by a simple majority of the PRI-dominated Senate. Each incoming president replaced most justices, which made the judges agents of the executive branch. Until 1997, the ruling PRI continuously controlled both houses of the federal legislature. Opposition party members could criticize the government and its policies vociferously, but their objections to proposals initiated by the president and backed by his party in Congress rarely affected the final shape of legislation. Courts and legislatures at the state level normally mirrored the preferences of the state governors, many of whom themselves were handpicked by the incumbent president.

Since 1997, the government has lacked a majority in either or both chambers of Congress. President Vicente Fox had to lobby and negotiate with Congress on a routine basis to pass legislation, as does President Felipe Calderón. The era when Congress’s sole functions were to serve as a debating arena for the opposition parties (and for factions within the ruling party until the whips were applied) and as a rubber stamp for decisions already taken by the president has clearly ended.

Federalism: A Double-Edged Sword

Despite the federalist structure of government that is enshrined in the 1917 Constitution and legal codes, with their emphasis on the *municipio libre* (the concept of the free municipality, able to control its own affairs), in practice, the Mexican political system has

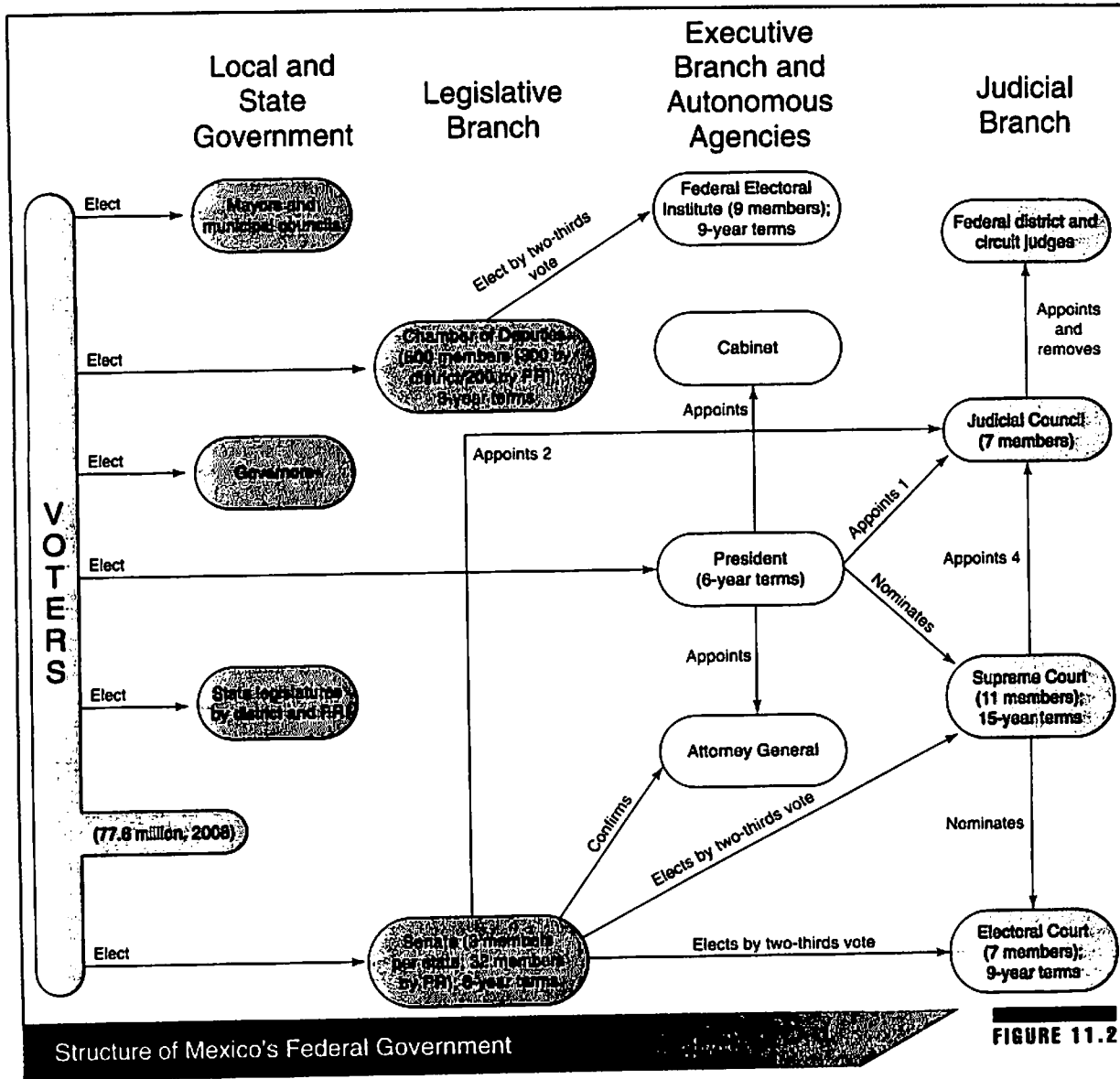


FIGURE 11.2

usually functioned in a manner best characterized as political centralism.

From the 1920s through the Salinas presidency, the concentration of decision-making power at the federal level in most policy areas was continuous. Control over the preparation, conduct, and validation of elections—placed entirely at the municipal and state levels by the initial postrevolutionary electoral code, enacted in 1918—also passed to agencies that were part of the federal government apparatus or state-level entities controlled by federal authorities. A high degree of political centralism has been considered one of

the main factors underlying Mexico's long-term political stability, although research at the state and local levels has demonstrated that political control by the center has been far less complete than is commonly assumed.⁸

Mexico is divided into thirty-one states and the Federal District, each one divided into *municipios*—politico-administrative units roughly equivalent in size and governmental functions to county governments in the United States. Each of the country's 2,378 *municipios* is governed by an *ayuntamiento*, or council, headed by a *presidente municipal* (mayor). Municipal

officials are elected every three years. Each successive layer of government in Mexico is significantly weaker, less autonomous, and more impoverished than the levels above it. In recent years, the federal government has raised well over 90 percent of total public revenues—one of the highest degrees of fiscal centralization in Latin America.⁹ State governments now spend more than half of total revenues, but this is mainly because of federal revenue-sharing that provides the states with much of their budget.

All of Mexico's seven most recent presidents entered office pledging to renew the "struggle against centralism," but serious efforts to decentralize have been made only since 1984. Under de la Madrid and Salinas, a limited form of revenue-sharing was implemented, and the federal Constitution was amended to enhance the capacity of local governments to raise their own revenues. Partially successful efforts were also made to shift decision-making authority over public education and health care from the federal government to the states.¹⁰ President Zedillo went so far as to sign an agreement with the country's state governors and mayors calling for constitutional amendments that would provide the legal framework for "a new Mexican federalism." Zedillo implemented a more equitable distribution of federal funds to the states and devolution of some functions that had been usurped by the federal government.

The state governors themselves represent a potential obstacle to the "new federalism." They retain control over all resources transferred from the federal government, and effective administrative decentralization down to the *municipio* level would require them to relinquish a major portion of their political power—something that they have successfully resisted. It is clear that, even under a president strongly committed to redistributing resources and sharing power with subnational units of government, movement toward U.S.-style federalism in Mexico will meet with opposition from many different quarters, including federal government agencies and the states themselves.

State-level elections have not democratized at the same pace as federal elections. Since the 1990s, governors of predominantly rural, PRI-dominated states like Tabasco, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz have attempted to keep tight control over local candidate selection and the state's electoral apparatus, often using state government resources to assure victory for

the ruling party. One of these PRI governors, Manuel Bartlett of Puebla, secured passage of a law enabling him to divert the state's share of increased revenue-sharing funds approved by Congress from cities controlled by the opposition PAN to rural areas where the PRI was stronger. This mechanism was soon copied by other PRI governors across the country.

Rejuvenated federalism can thus be a double-edged sword, with the potential to consolidate authoritarian enclaves at the state and local levels. Even in the federal government's war against narco-traffickers, decentralization has had unintended consequences. President Calderón's strategy of breaking the cartels into smaller components supposedly manageable by local authorities has spawned greater competition among competing drug lords and, hence, more violence. In Mexico, less central control does not necessarily translate into more electoral democracy, better governance, and greater public security.

The Legislative Branch

Mexico's political system has been commonly described as presidentialist or presidentially centered. Nonetheless, these characterizations were based on observed practices in a dominant-party regime, in which the institutional rules of the party had overwhelmed the formal constitutional rules. A careful examination of the Mexican Constitution reveals a president who is among the more constitutionally constrained in Latin America and a Congress with strong, sometimes dominant powers over the other branches of government. The difference between the informal and formal institutions is the history of the PRI government.

The federal Congress has two houses: a 128-member upper chamber, the Senate, and a 500-member lower house, the Chamber of Deputies. Both chambers employ a mixed-member system in which some of the members are elected by plurality vote in single-member districts, while others are elected by a system of compensatory proportional representation on closed-party lists.¹¹ The current electoral rules for the Senate, dating to 1996, call for plurality elections in each of the thirty-two states whereby each party nominates a slate of two Senate candidates. The party that wins a plurality elects both candidates from the slate to the Senate. The party that places second sends the first candidate on the list to the upper chamber. Furthermore, thirty-two senators are elected by proportional representation on closed

national lists, so that each party that wins at least 2 percent of the national vote elects its proportional share of the thirty-two list senators. The rules prevent any party from winning more than two-thirds of the seats in the Senate except under extraordinary circumstances (a party would have to place first in every state and win more than two-thirds of the national vote).

For the Chamber of Deputies, 300 members are elected by plurality in single-member districts, and an additional 200 deputies are elected by proportional representation in five regional closed lists. Each party that wins at least 2 percent of the national vote is entitled to its proportional share of the list deputies with a few restrictions. First, no party can ever have more than 300 total seats, which restricts the largest party to less than the two-thirds majority required for constitutional reforms. Second, no party's share of the total number of seats can exceed by more than 8 percent its share of the national vote. This means that in order to win a majority in the lower chamber, a party must win more than 42 percent of the vote and a sufficient margin of victory

over the second-place party (usually around four percentage points) to win enough plurality districts.

The mixed-member system directly affects the party system. Usually, plurality systems lead to two-party systems, as the voters find that it is better to coordinate their votes toward one of the two leading parties rather than waste them on third-party candidates. PR systems tend to create multiparty systems, because votes for the larger minority parties are not wasted. In Mexico, the mixed-member system has yielded a three-party system, in which most regions now have two-party systems (respecting the tendencies of the plurality system), but nationally, the vote is split into three main blocs. The three parties with significant representation in the Mexican Congress in the Sixty-First Legislature (2009–2012) are the PRI (with 49 percent of the seats), the PAN (with 29 percent), and the PRD (with 14 percent). The low threshold allows small parties to attain representation in the Chamber of Deputies, as well; four small parties won seats in the Sixty-First Legislature (see Table 11.4).

Party Composition of the Congress

TABLE 11.4

	Seats Won by Plurality Vote	Seats Won by PR System	Total	Percentage
Chamber of Deputies				
Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	184	53	237	47.4
Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)	70	73	143	28.6
Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)	39	32	71	14.2
Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM)	4	17	21	4.2
Partido del Trabajo (PT)	3	10	13	2.6
Nueva Alianza	0	9	9	1.8
Convergencia	0	6	6	1.2
Total	300	200	500	100
Senate				
Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)	41	11	52	40.6
Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) ²	27	6	33	25.8
Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) ¹	23	6	29	21.9
Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM) ²	2	4	6	4.7
Convergencia ¹	3	2	5	3.9
Partido del Trabajo (PT) ¹	0	2	2	1.6
Nueva Alianza	0	1	1	0.8
Total	96	32	128	100

¹Alianza por el Bien de Todos.

²Alianza por México.

The mixed-member system complicates creating majorities in either chamber. Since the 8-percent rule on maximum overrepresentation was established in the lower house, no party has been able to achieve a majority. The Senate rules went into effect fully for the first time in the 2000 elections. Now, when the race is close between the first- and second-place parties, it is also unlikely that a majority party will emerge in the Senate. This means that the party of the president will rarely have a majority in Congress, thus creating a situation of divided government.

Like the U.S. Constitution, the 1917 Mexican Constitution lists the legislative branch first. The

Congress is primarily responsible for enacting nearly all public policy, with only a few exceptions. The president has constitutional decree powers only over questions of land reform (expropriation decrees) and tariffs and quotas in international trade (in which he can unilaterally adjust tariffs and quotas if the circumstances call for modifications). All regular legislation must be approved by both chambers in the same form, and then submitted to the president for publication. The president must publish the bill within ten days or return the bill to the chamber of origin (see Box 11.3).

A presidential veto can take two forms: One is a regular veto, in which the president expresses his

How a Bill Becomes a Law

BOX 11.3

- Bills can be introduced by federal deputies, senators, the president, or the state legislatures. All revenue bills, regardless of the sponsor, must be introduced in the Chamber of Deputies. Therefore, the president's annual economic package is sent to the Chamber of Deputies. However, senators can introduce revenue legislation directly in the Chamber of Deputies. All other legislation can begin in either the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate. The federal bureaucracy assists the president in preparing executive bills for introduction.
- All bills are sent to committees. There are twenty-nine committees in the Chamber of Deputies and thirty in the Senate. Committees amend most legislation before reporting it to the floor (77 percent in the Chamber of Deputies, and 67 percent in the Senate). The federal bureaucracy often sends commentary on pending legislation to the relevant committees. The legislators are not required to heed these opinions.
- All legislation reported by committee is voted on the floor. The chamber can amend legislation from committees, but only 32 percent of the legislation is amended on the floor in the Chamber of Deputies, and only 17 percent on the floor of the Senate. If a bill is approved by the first chamber, it is sent to the other chamber for approval.
- In the second chamber, bills are sent to committee. Routine legislation is usually reported to the floor without amendment. Important bills are usually amended in committee. If the second chamber approves the bill on the floor without amendment, it is sent to the president; if the bill is amended, it is sent back to the first chamber for approval. Bills can be considered twice by each chamber before a final version is settled on.
- The president must sign or veto a bill within ten days, unless Congress has ended its session. In those cases, the president must dispatch the bills before the next session begins. The federal bureaucracy usually makes recommendations to the president on whether to sign or veto a bill. If the president vetoes a bill, it is sent to the first chamber for reconsideration. If the first chamber rejects the veto by a two-thirds vote, it is sent to the other chamber. If the second chamber also rejects the veto by a two-thirds vote, the president must publish the law. The president also has a corrective veto, in which he can return a bill to the first chamber, suggesting amendments. Each chamber may accept these amendments by a majority vote or reject the amendments by a two-thirds vote.
- The annual appropriations bill is considered by only the Chamber of Deputies. The president sends the appropriations bill to the chamber by September 8. The chamber must approve the bill, with or without amendments, by November 15, sending the bill back to the president. If the president vetoes the bill, the Chamber of Deputies can accept his suggestions by a majority vote or reject them by a two-thirds vote. The Senate never considers appropriations.

rejection of a bill, and the second is a corrective veto, in which the president requests that Congress amend the bill, usually because of technical errors in the text. In either case, Congress can insist on the original text of the bill by a two-thirds vote, after which the president must publish the legislation. In case of corrective vetoes, Congress often modifies the bill as requested and sends it back to the president for promulgation.

Each of the two chambers has exclusive powers and areas of specialization. The Chamber of Deputies specializes in fiscal legislation. All revenue bills must originate in the lower chamber. The Chamber of Deputies first approves the revenue and tax legislation, sending it to the upper chamber for Senate approval. However, only the Chamber of Deputies approves the appropriations legislation. This gives the Chamber of Deputies extraordinary influence over the federal public administration. Likewise, the lower chamber has exclusive powers over budgetary oversight and approves the public accounts.

The Senate has exclusive power to oversee foreign affairs. The upper chamber has the power to monitor foreign affairs, and it approves treaties submitted by the president by a majority vote. It approves presidential appointments of ambassadors and consuls, also by a majority vote. The Senate also has the power to remove state governors and depose state legislatures. The Constitution allows the Senate to topple state governments when it recognizes that the state can no longer provide for domestic security. This requires a vote of the upper chamber; afterward, the president proposes a list of three candidates from which the Senate elects the interim governor by a two-thirds vote. Prompted by PRI presidents, the Senate deposed many governors during the twentieth century, though usually for political reasons rather than for security motives. The Senate also regulates pacts between the federal and state governments concerning revenue-sharing and program administration.

Federal deputies and senators have shown extraordinary levels of party discipline in recent years (see Table 11.5). For example, during the last two years of the Fifty-Seventh Legislature (1997–2000), on average 99.6 percent of the PRIista deputies voted together on party bills. After 2003, PANista deputies voted together more than 98 percent of the time, nearly equaling the levels of PRI discipline when it held the presidency. High party discipline in Mexico has two main sources.¹² First, consecutive reelection for deputies and senators is

Party Cohesion in Congress
Parties stick together in Congress on major party votes.

TABLE 11.5

Legislature	PRI	PAN	PRD
Fifty-Seventh (1997–2000)	99.6	92.0	93.5
Fifty-Eighth (2000–2003)	89.3	93.6	92.5
Fifty-Ninth (2003–2006)	90.5	98.3	95.8
Sixtieth (2006–2009)	94.4	98.8	95.2
Sixty-First (2009–)	93.3	94.6	80.6

Note: Data for the Fifty-Seventh Legislature begins October 8, 1998; data for the Sixty-First Legislature ends April 29, 2010. Major party votes are roll calls in which at least one of the three parties dissented from the rest. Party cohesion is the percentage of the party voting with the majority of that party.

Source: For the Fifty-Seventh Legislature, Jeffrey A. Weldon, "Institutional and Political Factors in Party Discipline in the Chamber of Deputies, 1998–2002," presented at the First Latin American Political Science Congress, Salamanca, Spain, July 2002. Data for the last four legislatures calculated from the *Diario de los Debates* and the *Gaceta Parlamentaria* of the Chamber of Deputies.

prohibited. This nearly eliminates accountability of the representatives to their constituents. Voters can neither reward their legislators for good performance nor punish them for bad representation. Since federal legislators are not required to seek cues from their electorate, they look elsewhere for guidance, and the party leadership is more than willing to provide it.

Second, nomination procedures in each of the parties are relatively closed, with party leadership usually selecting candidates directly. This further focuses the legislators on party leadership, because without the support of the party elite, their political futures would be dismal. Each party generally votes as a bloc in Congress, which creates incentives for the leaders of each of the parties to negotiate bills among themselves rather than allow the rank-and-file members to work out compromises in committee. Together, these institutions create a highly centralized legislative branch.

The Executive Branch

Despite the constitutionally limited powers of the executive branch, no one would dispute that the president was the dominant political actor in Mexico for the greater part of the twentieth century. In addition to his rather modest constitutional powers, the

Mexican president possessed a broad range of unwritten but generally recognized "metaconstitutional" powers that traditionally ensured his dominance over all of the country's other political institutions.¹³ Mexicans use the term *presidencialismo* to connote this extraordinary concentration of powers, formal and informal, in the hands of the president, with the implication that incumbents frequently abuse these powers in pursuit of personal and political ends.

On any issue of national political significance, the federal judiciary would take its cue from the incumbent president. Until very recently, the Supreme Court never found presidential decisions or legislation enacted at the behest of the president to be unconstitutional, and Congress never challenged presidential appointments to the federal judiciary. The president had the informal power to seat and unseat state governors, mayors, and members of Congress. From 1929 through 1994, the president also functioned as the "supreme head" of the official party, choosing its leaders, dictating his legislative proposals to the PRI delegation in Congress, shaping the party's internal governance, imposing his personal choices for the PRI's gubernatorial and congressional candidates, and—most important—controlling the selection of the party's next presidential nominee.

The absence of a rigid, fully elaborated political ideology made it possible for a Mexican president to have a pragmatic, flexible program and style of governance. The so-called ideology of the Mexican Revolution was never more than a loosely connected set of goals or symbols. The only "revolutionary" ideology that has been scrupulously observed is the constitutionally mandated no-re-election principle for the presidency: The president is limited to a single six-year term.¹⁴

During the PRI's seven decades of rule at the national level, three factors were required to create strong presidentialism.¹⁵ First, the president's party had to have a majority in both chambers of Congress. Under **divided government**, the opposition majorities in Congress are unlikely to follow the dictates of the president. Second, there must be high levels of discipline in the majority party of Congress. Third, the president must be the leader of his party. In the 1930s, the first two factors were in place, but the leader of the party, Plutarco Elías Calles, received all of the benefits of the disciplined party, not the president. After Cárdenas reorganized the official party along lines of authority that led directly to himself, strong *presidencialismo* was finally achieved.

Executive--Legislative Relations

The dynamics of executive-legislative relations in Mexico used to be determined by the metaconstitutional powers of the president. The operation of the three key factors outlined earlier—unified government, high party discipline in the ruling party, and the recognition of the president as the *de facto* head of the party—explained a compliant Congress. Today, the first and third factors no longer hold. Executive-legislative relations follow constitutional rather than partisan norms, and Mexico either enjoys or suffers from the everyday republican conflicts of separation of powers.

Comparing levels of productivity during specific Congressional periods allows us to evaluate the executive's influence over the legislative branch under varying conditions of the metaconstitutional conditions listed earlier, as well as the relative strength of the president's party in the lower chamber (see Table 11.6). During the Fifty-Fourth Legislature (1988–1991), the PRI held a small majority of 52 percent of the lower chamber. Despite the marginal majority, 98.6 percent of the executive's public bills were approved. Of the 110 bills approved during the Fifty-Fourth Legislature, nearly two-thirds originated in the executive branch. In the Fifty-Seventh Legislature (1997–2000), divided government prevailed for the first time since 1928. The PRI held just under 48 percent of the seats in the lower chamber, while the PAN and the PRD each had about a quarter of the seats. Thus, the first of the conditions for metaconstitutional power—unified government—was eliminated. Under divided government, 90 percent of the president's bills were approved—a decline of nine percentage points from the previous legislature. Since 1928, a majority of the bills that the Chamber of Deputies approved had originated in the executive branch. In the Fifty-Seventh Legislature, this trend was abruptly reversed; only 31 percent of the bills approved in the term had been introduced by the executive, while nearly 60 percent had been sponsored by deputies.

By the time that the Fifty-Eighth Legislature had convened in 2000, metaconstitutional presidentialism had ended. The first condition—unified government—remained unfulfilled. President Fox's PAN held only 41 percent of the seats in the lower chamber. Nor was Fox treated as the head of his party. Nearly 90 percent of Fox's bills were approved during the 2000 to 2003 term.

Presidential Party Strength and Executive Bills

TABLE 11.8

The president now initiates much less legislation than members of Congress, and fewer of his bills are approved.

Legislature	% of Deputies from President's Party	% of Total New Bills Introduced	% of Total Bills Approved	% of President's Bills Approved
Fifty-Fourth (1988–1991)	52	22.8	65.1	98.6
Fifty-Fifth (1991–1994)	63	42.4	62.6	98.5
Fifty-Sixth (1994–1997)	60	33.8	74.2	98.9
Fifty-Seventh (1997–2000)	48	10.1	31.0	90.0
Fifty-Eighth (2000–2003)	41	6.8	23.7	89.9
Fifty-Ninth (2003–2006)	30	2.8	8.6	73.2
Sixtieth (2006–2009)	41	2.2	10.4	70.4
Sixty-First (2009–)*	29	2.1	11.3	61.9

*Data for the Sixty-First Legislature through April 29, 2010.

Source: Data compiled from *Diario de los Debates* and the *Gaceta Parlamentaria* of the Chamber of Deputies.

However, nearly every bill that Fox had sent to Congress had been extensively amended in at least one of the chambers. Never before had a higher percentage of executive bills been amended, either in committee or on the floor.

Mexico's first "opposition" president had difficult relations with a Congress in which the opposition parties—when united—had majority control. During the Fifty-Ninth Legislature (2003–2006), only 73.2 percent of the president's bills were approved, and a mere 8.6 percent of the bills approved by the Chamber of Deputies originated in the executive branch. Twice Fox attempted a tax reform, which would have increased the base of the value-added tax. Both times he was defeated.

In the fall 2004 term, the opposition coalition in the Chamber of Deputies amended Fox's federal appropriations bill, decreasing or eliminating a number of federal programs and increasing pork-barrel expenditures for PRI and PRD states. Fox vetoed the appropriations bill; this was the first budget veto cast by a president since 1933. The Chamber of Deputies disputed the veto by filing a suit in the Supreme Court, claiming that the president did not have the constitutional power to veto the budget (despite the fact that there had been forty-five vetoes of the budget between 1917 and 1933, none of which had been challenged on constitutional grounds by Congress). The Supreme

Court suspended the expenditures to which the president had objected, and later ruled that the budget veto was indeed constitutional. Such tests of will between the executive and legislative branches are increasingly common in Mexico's era of divided government, with the judicial branch assuming an increasingly important role as arbiter between the two branches.

Felipe Calderón enjoyed a legislative plurality in the Sixtieth Legislature (2006–2009), with the PAN holding 41 percent of the seats, and the PRI relegated to third place in the lower chamber. However, this was not enough to guarantee legislative success, as only 70.4 percent of his bills were approved in that term, representing only slightly more than a tenth of all of the bills approved. Nonetheless, the president has enjoyed legislative success despite divided government, accomplished by "logrolling" legislation with the PRI. For example, Calderón and the PAN won a major victory in tax reform through the creation of two new taxes.

Simultaneously, the PRI won an electoral reform to its liking. Party influence over the electoral authorities was increased, campaign financing was reduced, and officeholders can no longer promote themselves while in office. Negative campaign advertising (even if truthful) was banned. The law prohibits parties from buying television or radio time for their spots, instead using free media time allocated by the electoral

authorities (this was opposed by the private television networks). However, no other person or organization can buy time to promote political ideas or candidates at any time. The president also won a series of major reforms in public security and police and judicial procedures.

Calderón also won a legislative victory yearned for by both Presidents Zedillo and Fox—a comprehensive energy reform. The president had asked for new interpretations of the laws prohibiting private investment in the oil industry, though he insisted that neither PEMEX nor any part of the process would be privatized. The committee report was a watered-down version of Calderón's bill, but the PAN and PRI passed the law, along with part of the PRD. After suffering numerous defeats in the 2009 midterm elections, the PAN presence in the Chamber of Deputies was reduced to only 29 percent, and Calderón's legislative success rate quickly fell; in the first year of the Sixty-First Legislature, only about 62 percent of the president's bills were approved.

RECRUITING THE POLITICAL ELITE

At least since the days of the Porfiriato, the Mexican political elite has been recruited predominantly from the middle class. The 1910 revolution did not open up the political elite to large numbers of people from peasant or urban laborer backgrounds. That opening occurred only in the 1930s, during the Cárdenas *sexenio* (six-year term), and then mainly at the local and state levels rather than the national elite level.

In the last three PRI-dominated administrations (1982–2000), the national political elite was drawn heavily from the ranks of *capitalinos*—people born or raised in Mexico City. Postgraduate education, especially at elite foreign universities and in disciplines like economics and public administration, became much more important as a ticket of entry into the national political elite. Over half of the cabinet members appointed by Presidents de la Madrid, Salinas, and Zedillo had studied economics or public administration, and over half of those who received training in these subjects at the graduate level did so in the United States. The economic policy debacles presided over by technocrat presidents and cabinet ministers in the 1990s discredited this breed of Mexican officials

in the eyes of the public as well as the party leaderships. Significantly, a national PRI assembly in 1996 removed most technocrats from the line of presidential succession by requiring the party's future presidential nominees to have previously held elective office.

Relatively few card-carrying technocrats found their way into the cabinet of Vicente Fox, who favored persons with nongovernmental experience, with a bachelor's or master's degree in business administration, educated in Mexico—like himself. Nearly half (45 percent) of Fox's top fifty-two appointees—many of them recruited through professional head-hunting firms—had no previous public-sector experience. The involvement of persons with private-sector experience in the Fox administration (46 percent) was far greater than in any of the PRI governments since 1929. Fox also broke with his PRI predecessors in recruiting more top officials from outside of Mexico City (60 percent of his top officials were from the provinces), and more who had received their undergraduate education in private rather than public universities (54 percent). Most strikingly, 75 percent of Fox's original top fifty-two appointees had no known political party affiliation. Fewer than one-fifth were recruited from the PAN.¹⁶ Only four members of Fox's original cabinet had a history of militancy in the PAN, and the dearth of card-carrying PANistas was even more conspicuous at the subcabinet level. Some ministries were nearly devoid of PANistas.

In terms of professional background, Fox's successor, Felipe Calderón, is something of a throwback to the late technocratic PRI presidents. Calderón clearly had a *técnico's* skill set; he even had a master's degree from Harvard University. However, in contrast to the last five PRI presidents, Calderón also had extensive experience in party politics and elective office. His own economic cabinet was dominated by technocrats holding doctoral degrees from U.S. universities, including Chicago, Columbia, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Since the 1970s, kinship ties have become more important as a common denominator of those who attain top positions of political power. Increasingly, such people are born into politically prominent families that have already produced state governors, cabinet ministers, federal legislators, and even presidents. Two of the three major presidential candidates in 2006



**Mexicans Elect their Second Consecutive
"Opposition" President**

Felipe Calderón, presidential candidate of the PAN, celebrates his razor-thin election victory on July 5, 2006.

Wesley Bocxe/The Image Works

exemplify this pattern. Felipe Calderón's father was one of the founders of the PAN; Roberto Madrazo's father had been national chairman of the PRI. Only López Obrador was not born into a politically influential family.

These political families are increasingly interconnected: At least one-third of the government officials and politicians interviewed by one researcher for several books on the Mexican political elite were related to other officials, not counting those related through marriage and the traditional rite of *compadrazgo* (becoming a godparent to a friend's child).¹⁷ Family connections can give an aspiring political leader a powerful advantage over rivals.

The growing importance of kinship ties and other indicators of increasing homogeneity in personal

backgrounds causes some observers to worry that Mexico's political elite is becoming more closed and inbred. While its social base may indeed be narrowing, the modern Mexican political elite still shows considerable fluidity; the massive turnover of officeholders every six years is proof of that. This factor helps to explain why in Mexico—unlike other postrevolutionary countries, such as China and (until recently) the Soviet Union—the regime did not become a gerontocracy. In fact, the median age of cabinet members and presidential aspirants in Mexico has been dropping; in recent *sexenios*, most have been in their late thirties or early forties. Exemplifying this trend, Felipe Calderón was forty-four years old when elected to the presidency.

**INTEREST REPRESENTATION AND
POLITICAL CONTROL**

In Mexico's presidentialist system, important public policies used to be initiated and shaped by the inner circle of presidential advisors before they were even presented for public discussion. Thus, most effective interest representation took place within the upper levels of the federal bureaucracy. The structures that aggregate and articulate interests in Western democracies (the ruling political party, labor unions, and so on) actually served other purposes in the Mexican system: limiting the scope of citizens' demands on the government, mobilizing electoral support for the regime, helping to legitimate it in the eyes of other countries, and distributing jobs and other material rewards to select individuals and groups. For example, the PRI typically had no independent influence on public policymaking; nor did the opposition parties, except where they controlled state or local governments.

From the late 1930s until the PRI's defeat in 2000, Mexico had a **corporatist** system of interest representation in which each citizen and societal segment was expected to relate to the state through a single structure "licensed" by the state to organize and represent that sector of society (peasants, urban unionized workers, businesspeople, teachers, and so on). The official party itself was divided into three sectors: (1) the Labor Sector, (2) the Peasant Sector, and (3) the Popular Sector, a catch-all category representing various segments of the middle class (government employees, other white-collar workers, small merchants, private

landowners) and residents of low-income urban neighborhoods. Each sector in the PRI is dominated by one mass organization; other organizations are affiliated with each party sector, but their influence is dwarfed by that of the "peak" organization. Thus, the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) represents the Labor Sector, including most urban-dwelling labor union members. The *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) is the principal representative of the Peasant Sector, primarily *ejidatarios*—peasants who have received land through the agrarian reform program. The *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares* (CNOP) represents the Popular Sector, consisting of mostly urban-based service workers and small-business owners.

A number of powerful organized interest groups—entrepreneurs, the military, the Catholic Church—were not formally represented in the PRI. These groups dealt directly with the government elite, often at the presidential or cabinet level. They did not need the PRI to make their preferences known. They also had well-placed representatives within the executive branch who could be counted on to articulate their interests. In addition, the business community was organized into several government-chartered confederations. Since the Cárdenas administration, all but a small minority of the country's industrialists were required by law to join one of these employers' organizations, which channeled business interests into a few, well-controlled outlets. These confederations still exist, but the Supreme Court ruled in 1999 that compulsory membership was an unconstitutional restriction on the freedom of association.

Because the ruling party and the national legislature did not effectively aggregate interests in the Mexican system, individuals and groups seeking something from the government often circumvented their nominal representatives in the PRI sectoral organizations and the Congress, and sought satisfaction of their needs through personal contacts within the government bureaucracy. These *patron-client* relationships compartmentalized the society into discrete, noninteracting, vertical segments that served as pillars of the regime. Within the lower class, for example, unionized urban workers were separated from nonunion urban workers, *ejidatarios* from small private landholders and landless agricultural workers. The middle class was compartmentalized into government bureaucrats, educators, health-care professionals, lawyers, economists,

and so forth. Thus, competition among social classes was replaced by highly fragmented competition within classes.

The articulation of interests through patron-client networks assisted the PRI regime by fragmenting popular demands into small-scale, highly individualized, or localized requests that could be granted or denied case by case. Officials were rarely confronted with collective demands from broad social groupings. Rather than having to act on a request from a whole category of people (slum dwellers, *ejidatarios*, teachers), they had easier, less costly choices to make (as between competing petitions from several neighborhoods for a paved street or a piped water system). The clientelistic structure thus provided a mechanism for distributing public services and other benefits in a highly selective, discretionary (if not always arbitrary) manner. This system put the onus on potential beneficiaries to identify and cultivate the "right" patrons within the government bureaucracy. The prohibition on consecutive reelection prevented local elected officials from taking on the role of patron. As they could be neither punished nor rewarded for their performance, elected politicians abdicated this responsibility, and it was only natural that the bureaucracy would replace them in the role of patron.

Unquestionably, the PRI's vaunted political-control capabilities were weakened by the economic and political crises of recent *sexenios*. Nevertheless, the traditional instruments of control—patron-client relationships, *caciquismo* (local-level boss rule), the captive labor movement, and selective repression of dissidents by government security forces—are still effective in some PRI-controlled states.

In many of the states and localities where the PAN has come to power since the 1980s, officials have attempted to implement very different models of state-society relations aimed at increasing civic participation in public administration and placing greater reliance on public-private partnerships. For example, the Citizen Wednesday program, pioneered by the PANista mayor of León, Guanajuato, "encouraged citizens to make their particular needs and concerns known to the local government through weekly, one-on-one sessions with the heads of municipal departments for public lighting, paving, sewerage, water, public safety, and social welfare. . . . The program soon became the principal point of access between citizens and the government in León. It was quickly adopted by other PAN governments throughout Mexico."¹⁸

In other places, however, the limited success of PAN administrations in solving high-salience public-security and urban-development problems has undermined attempts to build new, enduring state-society relationships. For example, in 2004, disillusioned voters in the key Northern border city of Tijuana turned out the PAN after three terms, installing as mayor a traditional PRI politician with a reputation for corruption and authoritarianism. He quickly set about restoring the corporatist networks that his PANista predecessors had labored to dismantle.

POLITICAL PARTIES

The Partido Revolucionario Institucional

The PRI was founded in 1929 by President Plutarco Elías Calles to serve as a mechanism for reducing violent conflict among contenders for public office and for consolidating the power of the central government at the expense of the personalistic local and state-level political machines of the decade following the 1910 through 1920 revolution. Between 1920 and 1929, there had been four major rebellions against the national executive by these subnational political machines.

For more than half a century, the ruling party served with impressive efficiency, as a mechanism for resolving conflicts, for coopting newly emerging interest groups into the system, and for legitimating the regime through the electoral process. Potential defectors from the official party were deterred by the government's manipulation of electoral rules, which made it virtually impossible for any dissident faction to bolt from the party and win the election. Dissident movements did emerge occasionally, but before the neo-Cardenista coalition contested the 1988 election, no breakaway presidential candidacy had been able to garner more than 16 percent of the vote (by official count).

From the beginning, the official party was an appendage of the government itself, especially of the presidency. It was never a truly independent arena of political competition. A handful of nationally powerful party leaders, such as Fidel Velázquez, the patriarch of the PRI-affiliated labor movement until his death in 1997, occasionally constrained government actions, but the official party itself never determined the basic directions of government economic and social policies. Indeed, one of the key factors underlying the

erosion of party unity and discipline since the late 1980s and the PRI's overwhelming defeats in state-level elections beginning in 1995, leading to its loss of the presidency in 2000, was the party's inability to distance itself from the unpopular austerity policies made by the technocrats in the federal government.

The official party traditionally enjoyed virtually unlimited access to government funds to finance its campaigns. No one knew how much was actually being siphoned from government coffers to the PRI, because Mexico had no laws requiring the reporting of campaign income and expenditures. Reforms to the federal electoral code between 1993 and 1994 established minimal public reporting requirements for campaign income and expenditures, as well as Mexico's first-ever limits on individual and corporate contributions to electoral campaigns.

In the 1993 and 1994 electoral code reforms, ceilings on private contributions were set very high—the equivalent of \$650,000 for an individual contribution. With its privileged access to financing from big business, the PRI continued to outspend its opponents by a huge margin, even without cash from government sources. It had even more money to spend on its campaigns, at all levels, than ever before, despite the contribution limits included in the electoral code reforms. In the same year, Roberto Madrazo, the PRI candidate for governor in the state of Tabasco (and 2006 presidential candidate), spent in excess of \$50 million on his campaign—many times the limit for a gubernatorial race.

Yet another round of electoral reforms, passed by Congress in 1996, limited total private contributions to any party to 10 percent of the total amount of regular public financing to all parties, and no individual can contribute more than 0.05 percent of the total regular public financing. Also, the reforms greatly increased public funding for all parties. (In the 2006 presidential campaign, the three main candidates received and spent more than \$200 million in public funds.) The law also added a new prohibition on “the use of public resources and programs to benefit any political party or electoral campaign.”

Campaign finance abuses did not disappear, however. After the 2000 presidential election, the federal internal auditor discovered that the government-owned oil company, PEMEX, had made a \$140 million loan to the oil-workers' union, one of the two most important PRI-affiliated labor unions. These funds

were subsequently donated to the campaign of PRI candidate Francisco Labastida.

As the party in power, the PRI profited from a vast network of government patronage through which small-scale material benefits could be delivered to large segments of the population. The president himself controlled a large slush fund ("*la partida secreta*"), authorized each year by Congress as part of the federal government budget, that could aid PRI officials and finance the party's campaigns as needed. By the late 1990s, in the context of an increasingly competitive electoral system, such "incumbency advantages" were being intensely criticized by the opposition parties and the media. Responding to this pressure, Ernesto Zedillo virtually eliminated the presidential "secret budget."

Historically, the official party's most potent advantage over the competition was its ability to commit electoral fraud with relative impunity. A wide variety of techniques were used: stuffing the ballot boxes; disqualifying opposition party poll watchers; relocating polling places at the last minute to sites known only to PRI supporters; manipulating voter registration lists, padding them with nonexistent or nonresident PRIistas, and/or *rasurando* (shaving off) those who are expected to vote for opposition parties; issuing multiple voting credentials to PRI supporters; buying, "renting," or confiscating opposition voters' credentials, often in return for material benefits; organizing *carruseles* (flying brigades) of PRI supporters transported by truck or van to vote at several different polling places; and so forth.

Moreover, until 1996, the PRI held majority representation in all of the state and federal government entities that controlled vote counting and certification. The PRI could count on these bodies to manipulate the tallies to favor its candidates or, in cases where the opposition vote got out of control, nullify the unfavorable election outcomes. Adding votes to the PRI column, rather than taking them away from opposition parties, was the most common form of electoral fraud. In some predominantly rural districts, this practice led to election results in which the number of votes credited to the PRI candidate exceeded the total number of registered voters, or even the total number of adults estimated from the most recent population census. In a successful effort to build up domestic and international credibility for

the 1994 national elections, the Salinas government introduced a number of important safeguards against fraud (see Box 11.4).

The share of the vote claimed by the PRI had been declining for three decades, but until the mid-1990s, the erosion was gradual and did not threaten the party's grasp on the presidency and state governorships (see Figure 11.3). In the 1980s and 1990s, however, Mexican elections became much more competitive. The "Soviet-style" precincts that regularly delivered 98 to 100 percent of their votes to PRI candidates have disappeared.

In the four federal elections prior to 2006, the PRI did best among older voters, the less-educated, and low-income people. It has also held the loyalty of a plurality of union members. However, the corporatist vote in general is no longer a dependable source of support for the PRI, and the low mobilization of these voters was one of the major reasons for its defeat in the 2000 elections.

Another key factor accounting for the long-term decline in the PRI's effectiveness as a vote-getting machine is the massive shift of population from rural to urban areas that has occurred in Mexico. In 1950, 57 percent of the population lived in isolated rural communities of fewer than 2,500 inhabitants; by 2008, only 22.8 percent of Mexicans lived in such localities. The PRI is significantly weaker in cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants, where more than half of the Mexican population now lives. Mexico City has been a particular disaster area for the PRI in recent elections. The PRI lost the mayoral races in Mexico City by large margins in 1997, 2000, and 2006. Even in rural areas, however, the PRI's formerly safe vote continues to erode. While the PRI still gets a higher share of the vote in rural areas than any other party, the average vote for PRI candidates in rural precincts fell markedly from 1982 through 2006.¹⁹

The PRI has had to adjust from being an official party—a political machine based on incumbency advantages—to being a party out of power. PRI legislators for the first time have had to figure out how to vote without presidential leadership. The whole party has had to define its ideology as a political party, not as an instrument of power.

The PRI has recovered power since the 2006 debacle, when it found itself in third place in voter preference. It recovered the state of Yucatán from the PAN in 2007. In the 2009 midterms, the PRI and the Partido

In 1994, Mexico's electoral law was amended to strengthen greatly and grant more autonomy to the IFE, which organizes and conducts federal elections. The PRI and its government representatives were denied a majority on the IFE's decision-making board. A new system of independent electoral tribunals was established to adjudicate election disputes, and a special prosecutor's office was established to investigate alleged violations of the electoral laws.

The new federal electoral law defined a broad range of electoral offenses not previously subject to prosecution as electoral crimes (though the special prosecutor was appointed by the president and reported to the federal attorney general, who was unlikely to bring charges against important PRI leaders or government officials). The role of independent, Mexican citizen observers in monitoring the casting and tallying of votes was formally recognized, and the presence of foreign electoral observers (euphemistically termed "international visitors") was legalized. Exit polls of voters and "quick counts" of the actual vote in sample precincts by the IFE as well as private organizations were authorized and publicly announced on election night. New, high-tech, photo-identification voter credentials were issued to the entire electorate.

Taken together, these innovations, which cost the Mexican taxpayers more than \$1 billion, represented a major advance toward improving the security,

professionalism, and fairness of the Mexican electoral system. However, various types of irregularities—especially violations of ballot secrecy and efforts by local bosses to induce voters to support the PRI—were still widespread in the more isolated, rural areas. Subsequent state and local elections in various parts of the country have demonstrated that subnational PRI leaders continue to use direct threats and other forms of intimidation, particularly against peasant voters.

Another electoral reform, enacted in 1996, further increased the institutional autonomy of the IFE. The interior minister was removed as president of the IFE and replaced by a nonpartisan president and eight nonpartisan commissioners. These electoral commissioners are elected for a nine-year term by a two-thirds vote of the Chamber of Deputies. Since no party can control more than 60 percent of the seats in the lower chamber, the IFE commissioners are elected by consensus of all of the parties.

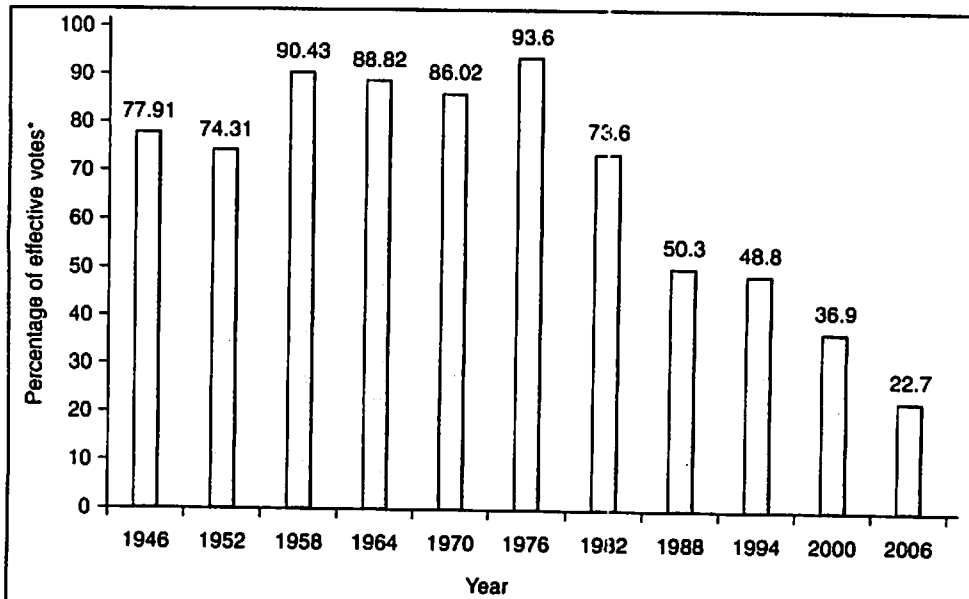
In the national elections from 1997 through 2009, there was very little evidence of systematic fraud. Since the IFE controls most of the process in a nonpartisan manner (for example, all poll workers are chosen at random from voter registration lists, as jurors are selected in the United States), the remaining sources of electoral fraud—still common in state elections—are vote-buying and the buying or renting of voter credentials. Both practices are illegal, but neither is easy for electoral authorities to police.

Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM) (the Green Party) together won an absolute majority of seats (258 of 500) as they campaigned against the ineffectiveness of the Calderón government in dealing with the worldwide recession that began in 2008. The PRI won back the states of Querétaro and San Luis Potosí, though it lost the Northwestern state of Sonora to the same party. It had also recovered many large cities from the PAN and PRD. In the 2010 gubernatorial elections, the PAN and PRD attempted to block the electoral recovery of the PRI. They formed left-right electoral alliances in five of the twelve states that were up for election, winning in three of them. However, the PRI recovered

Aguascalientes and Tlaxcala from the PAN, and Zacatecas from the PRD, all states without PAN-PRD alliances.

The Partido Acción Nacional

The PAN was established in 1939, largely in reaction to the leftward drift of public policy under President Lázaro Cárdenas, particularly his policies in support of socialist public education. Its founders included prominent Catholic intellectuals who espoused an early Christian democratic ideology, and the party has traditionally opposed government restrictions



Support for PRI's Presidential Candidate, 1946–2006.

PRI's vote share has declined in tandem with more competitive elections and electoral transparency.

FIGURE 11.3

*Percentage base includes annulled votes and those cast for independent candidates.

Note: The 1976 PRI candidate, José López Portillo, ran virtually unopposed because the PAN failed to nominate a candidate. The only other significant candidate was Valentín Campa, representing the Communist Party, which was not legally registered to participate in the 1976 election. More than 5 percent of the votes were annulled.

Source: Data from Comisión Federal Electoral, 1946–1988; and Instituto Federal Electoral, 1994–2006.

on church activities. The party attacked political centralism and advocated expanded states' rights long before it was fashionable to do so. The PAN's principal constituency has always been the urban middle class, but it has also attracted votes among socially conservative peasants and the urban working class.

Between 1964, when a primitive form of proportional representation increased opposition presence in the Chamber of Deputies, and the mid-1990s, when the PAN was governing many municipal and state governments, the focus of PANista representation was in the federal Congress, especially the lower chamber (the first PANista was elected to the Senate only in 1991). In these years, PAN deputies would typically begin their congressional terms fighting electoral fraud from the previous election in an attempt to increase the number of PANista deputies. Then they would settle in and begin to propose legislation. Until the Salinas years, these bills would almost always be ignored in the chamber at the time of introduction; but years later, most of the PAN's legislative proposals

were adopted by the federal executive and reintroduced and approved by Congress.

Among the PANista ideas later embraced by PRI governments were increased proportional representation in both chambers of Congress, autonomous electoral courts and electoral agencies, the permanent voting credential, increased municipal autonomy, increased autonomy and authority for the Supreme Court, increased self-governance for the Federal District (Mexico City), federal revenue-sharing with the states, liberalization of the social security systems, a national consumer-protection agency, and profit-sharing with employees.

The PAN's regional strongholds include the North, the Center-West, and some of the large municipalities of the states of México and Veracruz. Between 1989 and 2001, the PAN won gubernatorial elections in nine states (Baja California, Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Nuevo León, Querétaro, Aguascalientes, Morelos, and Yucatán). In 1995, the PAN retained control of the governorship of Baja California, thereby accomplishing something that no opposition party had

previously done: the transfer of power from one elected opposition governor to another. The PAN picked up the governorship of San Luis Potosí in 2003, and took Tlaxcala in 2004 and Sonora in 2010. During these years, the PAN governed nearly all of the twenty largest cities in Mexico, with the conspicuous exception of Mexico City, and it also governed most of the capital cities of the country.

The ideological position of the PAN has been relatively constant over the last six decades. It could be classified as the center-right, with strong elements of Christian socialism (which covers a wide range of policies, from center-left on labor issues to right-of-center on abortion), combined with traditional liberal attitudes on trade, municipal decentralization, and general democratization. The party is affiliated with international Christian Democratic organizations. The PAN's relative position on the ideological spectrum has depended mostly on the positioning of the PRI, whose pendulum has shifted to positions clearly to the left of the PAN (as in the 1970s) or to the right of the PAN (as was the case from 1988 to 2000).

Roll-call votes in the Fifty-Seventh Legislature (1997–2000) placed the PAN at the center of the political spectrum, to the left of the PRI. Congressional debates suggest that the PAN held a similar position for most of the Salinas and Zedillo years. Despite the nationalist and populist background of their party, PRI deputies found themselves voting to the right of the PAN because they had to support the neoliberal economic policies and austerity measures of PRI presidents. However, since 2001, under a PANista president, PAN members generally vote to the right of the PRI. Now it is the PAN deputies who must support the austerity programs of their president, while PRI deputies are liberated to vote their conscience and constituencies rather than take cues from the president.

The PAN has worked long and hard to develop a strong network of grassroots militants, though it has always had several major organizational weaknesses. Since the mid-1970s, it has been divided into moderate-progressive and militant-conservative ("neo-PANista") factions, which have jockeyed for control of the party machinery and carried out purges of opposing faction members when they were in power.

Vicente Fox's ideology was closer to the moderate-progressives than to the neo-PANistas. This helped the PAN gain control of the presidency in 2000 by

attracting an ideologically diverse group of voters, united mainly by their desire to remove the PRI from power.²⁰ During the Fox administration, the PAN continued its evolution toward a catch-all party, while still embracing with greater enthusiasm than its rivals the free-market, pro-foreign investment policies favored by the country's business community.²¹ However, since 2006, many local PANista leaders and militants have complained that Calderón has interfered too much in internal party affairs (through the imposition of national party leadership and several gubernatorial candidates), mimicking in some ways old PRI traditions.

The Partido de la Revolución Democrática

Before 1988, the Mexican left had spawned political parties like the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS), which for decades served as a home for socialists and other left-of-center politicians willing to collaborate with the government and even to endorse the PRI's presidential candidates, in exchange for a seat in Congress. The more independent left—that is, those who did not cooperate openly with the ruling party—was traditionally represented by the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM). The Communists were allowed to compete legally in elections during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, but their party was subsequently outlawed and did not regain legal representation until 1979, when its congressional candidates won 5 percent of the vote.

During most of the 1980s, even in the face of Mexico's gravest economic crisis since the 1910 Revolution, and despite a series of party mergers intended to reduce the fractionalization of the leftist vote, the parties on the left lost ground electorally. They were hampered by constant internal squabbling (motivated mostly by personalistic rivalries, and to a lesser extent by ideological cleavages), and an inability to do effective grassroots organizing.

The key to the left's rejuvenation in 1988 was a split within the PRI leadership—the most serious since the early 1950s. In August 1986, a number of nationally prominent PRI figures, all members of the party's center-left wing, formed a dissident movement within the PRI known as the *Corriente Democrática* (CD). The CD criticized the de la Madrid administration's economic restructuring program and sought a renewed commitment by the PRI to traditional principles of economic nationalism and social justice. Most

urgently, CD adherents called for a top-to-bottom democratization of the PRI, beginning with the elimination of the *dedazo* (the unilateral selection by the outgoing president) as the mechanism for determining the party's presidential candidate. The CD's proposals were widely interpreted as a last-ditch attempt by the PRI's traditional politicians to recover leadership of the party by influencing the outcome of the 1987 and 1988 presidential succession. The CD's demands for reform were resoundingly rejected by the PRI hierarchy, and its leaders formally split from the party in October 1987.

Confronted with the defeat within the PRI, Cárdenas accepted the presidential nomination of the Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM), a conservative, nationalist party established by another group of dissident PRIistas in 1954. Later, four other parties—all on the left and including the remnants of the old Mexican Communist Party—joined the PARM to form a coalition, the Frente Democrático Nacional (FDN), to contest the 1988 presidential election, with Cárdenas as their candidate. Soon after the 1988 elections, however, the left's long-standing ideological and personalistic cleavages reasserted themselves, and by 1991, when midterm elections were held, most of Cárdenas's 1988 coalition partners had gone their separate ways, leaving the newly constituted PRD as the principal standard-bearer of the left. Even within the PRD, serious disagreements emerged over such issues as the degree of democracy in internal party governance and strategies for dealing with the government (dialogue and collaboration on certain issues versus permanent confrontation).

The left's problems in the early 1990s were not all self-inflicted. Under Salinas, the government showed no inclination to negotiate seriously with the Cardenista left. Salinas showed much greater willingness to recognize electoral victories of the PAN than those claimed by the PRD. And when the PRD's victories (all at the municipal level) were recognized, the city governments under its control were punished and starved for resources by PRI state governors. Conflicts between PRD militants and local PRI *caciques* were bitter, with hundreds of PRD activists murdered during the first five years of the party's existence.

President Zedillo opened a new chapter in PRD-government relations, recognizing Cuauhtémoc

Cárdenas's overwhelming victory in the 1997 mayoral race in Mexico City. In 1998 through 1999, the PRD won gubernatorial elections in the states of Zacatecas, Tlaxcala, and Baja California Sur. In 2000, it picked up the state of Chiapas and again won the Mexico City mayoralty. In 2001, the PRD finally won Cárdenas's home state of Michoacán, after nominating his son, Lázaro, for governor. In all of these early victories, except for Mexico City and Michoacán, the PRD candidates were defectors from the PRI who had been passed over for the party's gubernatorial nomination. In 2005, the PRD continued its success by winning the southern state of Guerrero.

These outcomes illustrate a key advantage for the PRD in Mexico's current three-party competition: In places where the PRI organization is fractured by internal rivalries, where the local factions are unable to reach consensus on a candidate, the PRD is usually the main beneficiary. For PRIistas whose political aspirations are thwarted by their own party, the PRD—the party run by ex-PRIistas—is a natural new home.

Until 2000, the PRD continued to take policy positions to the left of the ruling party on some issues (for example, arguing against the use of any taxpayer money to bail out bankers who made bad loans during the Salinas *sexenio*). Its differences with most recent government policies were matters of degree, pacing, and how much was being done to ameliorate the social costs of these policies, rather than their basic direction.

In the Fifty-Eighth Legislature (2000–2003), the PRD took a more radical stance on policy issues and was more intransigent in its relations with the other parties. In part, this was due to the diminished presence of the party in the Congress—about 60 percent smaller than the PRD delegation in the 1997 through 2000 period. It introduced bills that, taken together, amounted to a sweeping restructuring of the Mexican political system, designed to weaken the federal executive. One bill would have introduced a parliamentary system with an elected president, akin to the presidential/premier system in France. In the Fifty-Ninth Legislature (2003–2006), the much larger PRD delegation increased its opposition to the federal government's economic policies. Once the party realized that it could win the presidency in 2006, it backed off pressing its bills to weaken the executive branch and to foment a parliamentary system.

In its early years, the PRD did a poor job of mobilizing previously uncommitted voters. It had retained many of the urban working-class voters who traditionally supported the parties of the independent left, but it was not very successful in establishing ties with the popular movements that had developed outside of the PRI-affiliated corporatist structures. However, its ties to the rural areas were underdeveloped, and the PRD had been dominated by Mexico City-based politicians and intellectuals for whom the provinces hardly existed. Central party leaders often shortchanged local organizers in their allocation of party funds. This trend was reversed in the 2006 election, when the PRD under

López Obrador proved much more effective at mobilizing rural voters.

Mexico's political left has yet to recover from the deep divisions within its leadership that emerged following López Obrador's narrow defeat in the 2006 presidential election. The tactic of forming coalitions with the PAN to block PRI victories, which the PRD pursued in 2010, may be its most effective electoral strategy in the short to medium term.

The Shifting Social Bases of Mexico's Parties

The social bases of political support for the parties shifted dramatically in the 2006 election (see Table 11.7).

TABLE 11.7

The Demography of Party Choice

Parties' supporters differ by where they live, gender, age, education, and income in 2006.

	PAN	PRI	PRD	Others
Type of Locality				
Urban	40	20	35	5
Rural	31	28	36	3
Region				
North	43	27	24	6
Center-West	46	20	27	4
Center	34	15	44	7
South	27	29	40	4
Gender				
Male	36	22	37	2
Female	38	23	32	4
Age				
18-29	38	21	34	6
30-49	38	21	35	4
50	34	26	37	2
Education				
None and primary	34	29	33	3
Secondary	37	21	35	5
University	42	14	38	5
Annual Income (dollars)				
Under \$2,161	31	30	34	4
\$2,162-\$4,321	32	24	39	4
\$4,322-\$7,021	36	21	37	5
\$7,022-\$9,938	43	16	36	4
Above \$9,939	50	14	30	5

Source: Nationwide exit poll conducted by *Reforma* newspaper (Mexico City), July 3, 2006.

Before 2006, the PRI's most dependable base was the rural voter. It also did relatively well with women and older voters. In 2006, the PRD's López Obrador did best among rural voters, and Madrazo of the PRI finished third among such voters, even behind Calderón (PAN). As in 2000, the PAN did best among urban voters, but the PRD finished ahead of the PRI for the urban vote in 2006.

There was a sizable gender gap in the 2000 election, with the PAN doing particularly well among male voters and the PRI relatively better among women. In 2006, the PRD took the male vote by a small margin, but Calderón did much better among women. In both cases, women tended to support the candidate who appeared to pose less of a threat to economic stability.

In 2000, the PAN did best among voters under age fifty, while the PRI was preferred by older voters. This was probably because this segment of the electorate remembered the social benefits and economic growth achieved in the better years of PRI rule. In 2006, the PAN again carried younger voters, but now voters over age fifty chose the PRD, possibly because, as mayor of Mexico City, López Obrador had introduced a pension plan for senior citizens.

In 2000, the PRI did better among voters with lower education, taking the vote among those with less than a secondary education. The PAN did best, by a large margin, among voters with higher levels of education. In 2006, education mattered less in determining the vote. Calderón attracted the most votes at all levels of education, and López Obrador placed second. López Obrador did relatively well among more highly educated voters because of the strong support that he received from public-university students.

In 2006, the PRD did best among the poor and the lower middle class. Both López Obrador and Madrazo promised reforms that would increase the spending power of voters with incomes below about US\$10,000 per year (the PRD through subsidies, and the PRI through income tax cuts). The PAN did much better among higher-income voters, who were attracted by its probusiness platform and frightened by the populism of López Obrador.

In general, however, social class was not nearly as important to voters' choices in 2006 as was the region in which they lived. The PRD was weak in most of the Northern and Central states but had strong support in the Mexico City metropolitan area and the South,

while the PAN's support was concentrated in the North and center of the country. In 2006, region was as powerful a predictor of party preference as all other demographic variables combined (age, gender, income, education, skin color, urban versus rural residence). Thus, the dominant cleavage in Mexico's electorate today is not social class but region—especially the North/South split.²²

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Promoting Economic Growth and Reducing Poverty

There is little debate about the importance of the state's contribution to the economic development of Mexico since 1940. Massive public investments in infrastructure (roads, dams, telecommunications, electrification) and generous, cheap credit provided to the private sector by Nacional Financiera and other government development banks made possible a higher rate of capital accumulation, stimulated higher levels of investment by domestic entrepreneurs and foreign corporations, and enabled Mexico to develop a diversified production capacity second only within Latin America to that of Brazil.

From 1940 until well into the 1970s, a strong elite consensus prevailed on the state's role in the economy. The state facilitated private capital accumulation and protected the capitalist system by limiting popular demands for consumption and redistribution of wealth, it established the rules for development, and it participated in the development process as the nation's largest single entrepreneur, employer, and source of investment capital. The state served as the "rector" (guiding force) of this mixed economy, setting broad priorities and channeling investment (both public and private) into strategic sectors. Acting through joint ventures between private firms and state-owned enterprises, the government provided resources for development projects so large that they would have been difficult or impossible to finance from internal (within-the-firm) sources or through borrowing from private banks.

The result, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, was the much-touted "Mexican miracle" of sustained economic growth at annual rates of 6 to 7 percent, coupled with low inflation (5 percent per annum between 1955 and 1972). By 1980, the GNP had reached \$2,130

per capita, placing Mexico toward the upper end of the World Bank's list of semi-industrialized or "middle-developed" countries. As sole proprietor of PEMEX, the state oil monopoly, the government was responsible for developing the crucial oil and natural gas sector of the economy. By the end of the oil boom (1978–1981), oil was generating more than \$15 billion a year in export revenues and fueling economic growth of more than 8 percent per year—one of the world's highest growth rates.

It is the distributive consequences of this impressive performance in economic development and the manner in which it was financed by the PRI governments of the 1970s and 1980s that have been harshly criticized in retrospect. From Miguel Alemán (1946–1952) to the present, all but one or two of Mexico's presidents and their administrations reflected the private sector's contention that Mexico must first create wealth and then worry about redistributing it—the belief being that the state would quickly be overwhelmed by popular demands that it could not satisfy. By the early 1970s, however, there was convincing evidence that an excessively large portion of Mexico's population was being left behind in the drive to become a modern, industrialized nation.

This is not to say that some benefits of the development process did not trickle down to the poor. From 1950 to 1980, poverty in absolute terms declined. The middle class expanded to an estimated 29 percent of the population. From 1960 to 2008, illiteracy dropped from 35 to 8 percent of the adult population, infant mortality was reduced from 78 to 15 per 1,000 live births, and average life expectancy rose from fifty-five to seventy-six years. Clearly, the quality of life for many Mexicans—even in isolated rural areas—did improve during this period, although several other Latin American countries (Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Venezuela) achieved higher rates of improvement on indicators of social well-being than did Mexico during the same period.

Poverty and socioeconomic inequality have remained stubbornly high, however. During the period of Mexico's "economic miracle," ownership of land and capital (stocks, bonds, time deposits) became increasingly concentrated. Personal income inequality also increased, at a time when, given Mexico's middle level of development, the national income distribution should have been shifting toward greater equality, according to classical economic development theory.

Indeed, Mexico apparently had a higher overall concentration of income in the mid-1970s than in 1910, before the outbreak of the revolution. By 2007, the poorest 40 percent of Mexican families received only 13 percent of household income, while the richest 20 percent of families received 53 percent of income. In one recent period, 2003 to 2006, income inequality did diminish, but only by an annual average of 0.5 percent—far less than in most other Latin American countries.²³

Moreover, by every indicator of economic opportunity and social well-being, there are vast disparities among Mexico's regions and between rural and urban areas. Unemployment and underemployment are concentrated overwhelmingly in the rural sector, which contains at least 70 percent of the population classified as living in extreme poverty. The rate of infant mortality in rural areas is nearly 50 percent higher than the national average. In 2006, 91 percent of urban-dwelling Mexicans lived in houses with a sewerage system connection, but only 48 percent of the rural population had improved sanitary facilities.

Interregional disparities in social well-being are equally extreme. In 2000, the percentage of persons with incomes lower than two minimum salaries (a bare subsistence level) ranged from 22 percent in Baja California to 76 percent in Chiapas. A composite index of social well-being in 2000 shows the Federal District (Mexico City) and the Northern border states as being the most privileged, and the Southern states (especially Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero) as the most marginalized. This pattern of extreme regional inequalities has remained essentially unchanged for several decades.

The policies and investment preferences of Mexico's postrevolutionary governments contributed much to the country's highly inegalitarian development. At minimum, the public policies pursued since 1940 failed to counteract the wealth-concentrating effects of private market forces. Evidence is strong that some government investments and policies actually reinforced these effects. For example, during most of the post-1940 period, government tax and credit policies worked primarily to the advantage of the country's wealthiest agribusiness and industrial entrepreneurs. Government expenditures for social security, public health, and education remained relatively low by international standards. By the late 1970s, Mexico was still allocating a smaller share of its central

government budget to social services than some countries, such as Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Panama.

The slowness with which basic social services were extended to the bulk of the population in Mexico was a direct consequence of the government's policy of keeping inflation low by concentrating public expenditures on subsidies and infrastructure for private industry, rather than on social programs and subsidies to consumers. Even during the period between 1970 and 1982, when populist policies were allegedly in vogue and government revenues were expanding rapidly because of the oil export boom, public spending for programs like health and social security remained roughly constant, in real per capita terms.

The economic crisis that erupted in 1982, after an unprecedented run-up in Mexico's domestic and externally held debt, made it impossible to maintain even that level of government commitment to social well-being. By 1986, debt service was consuming over half of the total federal government budget, necessitating deep cuts in spending for health, education, consumer subsidies, and job-creating public investments. Social-welfare expenditures per capita fell to 1974 levels. Mexico's macroeconomic adjustment program was considerably more severe than those in other major Latin American countries that also experienced debt crises during the 1980s.

The severity of the adjustment is reflected particularly in minimum real wages, which fell by two-thirds between 1980 and 1989. Despite a modest resurgence of economic growth in the early 1990s, by the end of the Salinas *sexenio*, real wages for most Mexicans had still not recovered their levels of 1981. The peso devaluation crisis of 1995 and 1996 caused most Mexicans to lose whatever ground they had gained during the Salinas years. By 2004, nearly half of Mexico's population (47 percent) was living at or below the World Bank's official poverty level, and one-fifth were living in extreme poverty.

Under President Fox, macroeconomic stability was maintained through a combination of fiscal restraint and good fortune; government revenues were boosted by rising oil prices in global markets, and the U.S. market for Mexico's exports was strong after the U.S. economy recovered from the 2001 and 2002 recession. The absence of a major, end-of-*sexenio* economic crisis—for the first time since 1970—was a key factor in Felipe Calderón's victory in 2006. Calderón could plausibly claim that he was better-equipped

than his opponents to continue the economic policies that had averted such crises under Fox. Government spending on his watch has remained under control (except for spending on the antidrug war, which has mushroomed to \$25 billion a year under Calderón), and inflation has been moderate (3.9 percent in 2010).

Under Mexico's four most recent presidents, the government has implemented a **neoliberal economic development model** stressing the need to give much freer rein to market forces. The primary objective of this "technocratic free-market revolution" has been to attract more private investment (especially foreign capital) and thereby push up Mexico's rate of economic growth. While drastically shrinking the public sector of the economy through a sweeping privatization program and opening up nearly all sectors of the economy to private investment (including those formerly reserved to the state), the technocrats were unwilling to completely surrender the government's traditional "rectorship" role in the economy.

This concern is reflected in the considerable spending by the last three administrations on social welfare initiatives, like Salinas's National Solidarity Program, Zedillo's PROGRESA program, and Fox's and Calderón's Oportunidades program—all efforts to construct a minimal safety net for the millions of low-income Mexicans who were the short-term "losers" from neoliberal economic policies and trade liberalization under NAFTA. But these carefully targeted social programs were not sufficient to offset the structural impoverishment caused by falling real wages, the elimination of millions of jobs, and the slashing of most consumer subsidies.

During the Fox administration, the government implemented a new health care program known as the **Seguro Popular** (Popular Health Insurance), designed to provide health services to people who were not covered by the Social Security Institute's health programs. Social Security in Mexico provides health coverage for salaried persons, but the unemployed, the self-employed, and many rural workers are excluded from the system. The Seguro Popular program requires beneficiaries to enroll in the program and pay relatively affordable premiums. The poorest Mexicans (the bottom 20 percent) do not have to pay premiums. The goal of the Seguro Popular is to achieve universal health-insurance coverage by 2013.

It is clear that the market-oriented development model of the past two decades has exacerbated—not

alleviated—Mexico's poverty and inequality problems, even when the model was apparently working well in macroeconomic terms (that is, from 1989 through 1992).²⁴ Moreover, Mexico's experience with rapid economic growth during the "miracle" years of the 1950s and 1960s and the oil boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s suggests that without strong, sustained government action to correct for market failures and improve human capital endowments through education and job training, income concentration and associated social problems will continue unabated.

Establishing the Rule of Law

The one area of performance in which the Mexican government has been failing most conspicuously, especially since the mid-1990s, is the administration of justice. From the poorest urban workers to middle-class professionals to the richest business tycoons, Mexicans are appalled and incensed that the government seems totally incapable of dealing effectively with street crime—armed robberies, muggings, kidnappings, rapes, and homicides. Surveys in the late 1990s found that virtually every resident of Mexico City had either been a crime victim or had a close relative or friend who had suffered the same fate in recent years.

Nationally, homicide rates rose by nearly 20 percent in the 1990s, and by far more in many of the states (for example, 230 percent in Guerrero and 211 percent in Chihuahua). Statistics on street crime (robberies, assaults, muggings) showed an even steeper increase in the mid-1990s. In Mexico City, the total number of crimes reported to police doubled from 1993 to 1997. And official crime statistics have understated the magnitude of the problem because of widespread underreporting. Three-quarters of crimes go unreported due to citizens' low expectation that the perpetrators will be caught and punished, and to fears of reprisals by either criminals or the police.²⁵

President Zedillo began tackling the rule of law problem by addressing the issue of the independence of the judiciary. In his first significant official act upon taking office in December 1994, he replaced all but two of the incumbent Supreme Court justices and reduced the size of the Supreme Court from twenty-four to eleven justices. He changed the terms of the justices from six-year periods, coinciding with the six-year presidential term, to fixed, fifteen-year terms. He also

changed the requirement for confirmation of Supreme Court justices by the Senate, from a simple majority to two-thirds of the Senate. This means that the president's nominees must attract at least some votes from the opposition parties; they cannot be rubber-stamped by a PRI majority. Finally, Zedillo expanded the judicial review powers of the Supreme Court by explicitly granting the Court the ability to declare acts of Congress and other federal government actions unconstitutional.

The 1994 reforms made it possible for the opposition parties to bring various laws and government actions forward to the Supreme Court for constitutional review. However, several of these cases were dismissed on legal technicalities. In other cases, a six-to-five majority of the justices ruled against the federal government's position, but under the 1994 judicial reforms, it would have taken a *supermajority* of eight out of eleven justices to strike down a law or official action as unconstitutional, so the Court's decision had no practical impact in these cases.

These outcomes illustrate a major limitation of Zedillo's 1994 judicial reforms: The requirement that laws can be declared unconstitutional only with a supermajority ruling of Supreme Court justices is a very high threshold, one that can stymie the Court in dealing with the most sensitive political issues rulings.²⁶ In short, while Zedillo was willing to expand the Supreme Court's powers of judicial review and thereby reduce its subordination to the executive, he wanted to keep the Court on a fairly short leash.

Another major limitation of the 1994 reforms is that they apply only to the top level of the federal judiciary; state-level courts continue to function as before, and the federal Supreme Court must still rely on state-level officials to implement its rulings. Until Court decisions based on abstract principles of law cannot be undermined by political actors whose interests could be damaged by those rulings, the goal of a "government of laws, not men" will remain elusive in Mexico.

To the average citizen, what matters most is being liberated from the constant preoccupation with matters of personal security: how to avoid becoming a victim of violent crime. The causes of rising crime rates in Mexico are not difficult to identify. In the 1990s, Mexico became an increasingly important conduit for illegal drugs destined for the U.S. market. In states where drug trafficking is concentrated (Baja California, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durango, Tamaulipas,



Mexican Military Assumes Larger Role in War Against Drug Traffickers

Shortly after taking office in 2006, President Felipe Calderón launched an all-out effort to break the power of Mexico's drug cartels. Seen here are Mexican army soldiers patrolling Reynosa, a Northern border city wracked by drug-related violence.

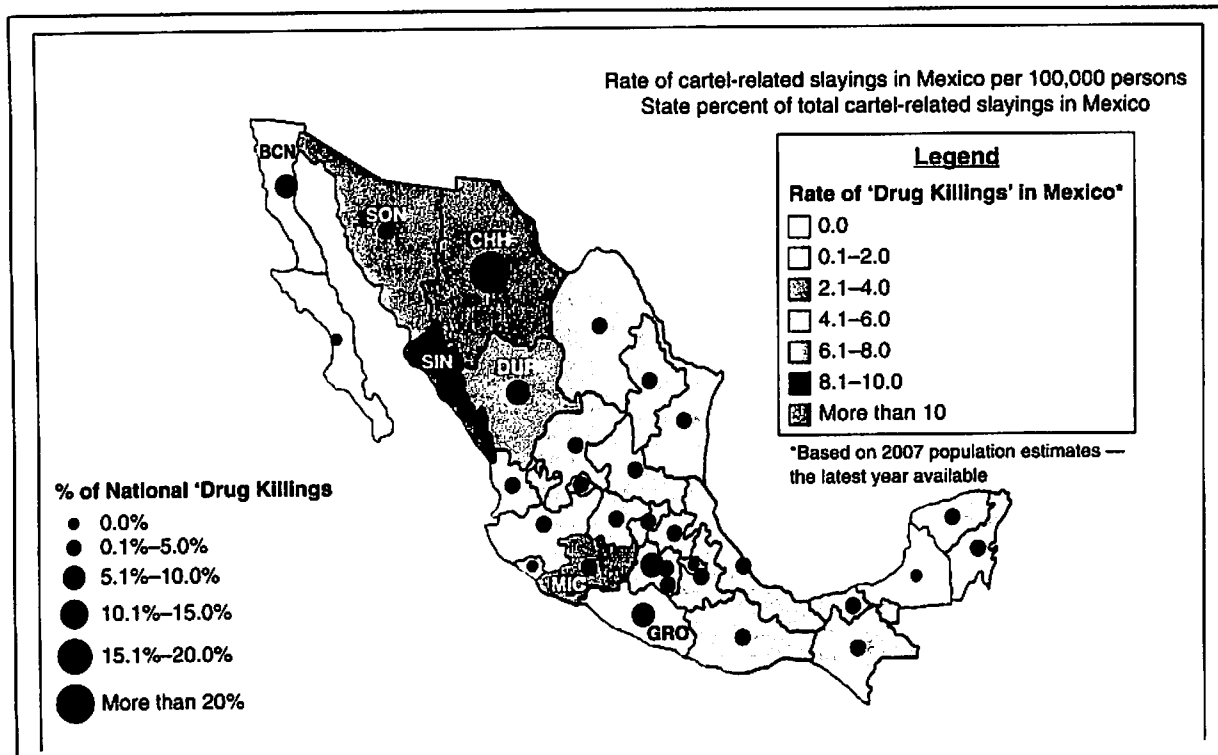
Adriana Zehbrauskas/The New York Times/Redux Pictures

Michoacán, Guerrero), a high percentage of homicides and other violent crime is related to the operations of drug cartels and the federal government's war on narco-traffickers. As shown in Figure 11.4, such states account for a disproportionate share of drug-related killings, but what stands out is the pervasiveness of **narco-violence**; hardly any part of Mexico has been spared in recent years. Drug trafficking has also contributed mightily to the corruption of police, prosecutors, judges, and military personnel.

The Calderón government has invested heavily to bring the narco-traffickers under control, but progress has been halting. By 2010, as drug-related violence continued to rise, the government began to shift its strategy away from military operations and toward more spending on education and antipoverty programs to reduce opportunities for traffickers to buy local support, as well as efforts to reduce the demand for drugs within Mexico. A federal law was also enacted, decriminalizing the possession of small amounts of narcotics.

The police forces—federal, state, and local—themselves are a major source of Mexico's crime problem. Not only are they corruptible (because of low pay and low professionalization), they actually commit a sizable portion of crimes, especially in large cities. A remarkably large number of Mexican police officers are actually wanted for crimes, but the warrants for their arrest never get served because the offenders are protected by corrupt superior officers. Simply firing criminal elements in the police forces is not the solution, since they only return to the street as civilians, committing crimes with impunity. To help weed out corrupt officers and improve recruitment and training, in 2010 the Calderón administration proposed eliminating the nation's 2,200 municipal police departments and placing them under the command of state authorities, in coordination with the federal police.

Social and economic factors have also contributed powerfully to the recent epidemic of crime in Mexico. The rise in violent crime in the mid-1990s coincided with a sharp increase in the number of people living in



Drug-Related Killings in Mexico, 2009

Most drug-related violence occurs in northern states, but virtually no part of Mexico has escaped it entirely.

FIGURE 11.4

Source: State population figures for 2007 from Consejo Nacional de la Población (CONAPO). Statistics for 2009 on drug cartel-related slayings come from *Reforma* newspaper, Mexico City, compiled by the Trans-Border Institute, University of San Diego, San Diego, CA.

poverty and the number of unemployed and severely underemployed people—all consequences of the deep economic crisis that erupted in 1994. In a quantitative analysis of homicide rates in a national sample of 1,750 *municipios* in Mexico, a general index of poverty was, by far, the single most important predictor of homicide rates at the local level. Other indicators of economic distress—the unemployment rate and the degree of income inequality in a *municipio*—were also significant predictors. So were certain demographic variables, like the percentage of single mothers.²⁷

Finally, the inefficiency or malfunctioning of the criminal-justice system is a major contributor to crime in Mexico. The actual probability of being caught, convicted, and serving substantial prison time is far too low to serve as a significant deterrent to crime. For example, out of every hundred crimes committed in Mexico in 2001, only twenty-five were reported to police, only 1.2 went to trial, and only 0.4 cases resulted in a jail sentence of more than two years.²⁸

Potential remedies for Mexico's dysfunctional criminal-justice system include implementing tighter screening, testing, and monitoring of law-enforcement personnel; increasing the pay and improving the training for police; making criminal proceedings more transparent and efficient by introducing oral argument; giving public prosecutors greater autonomy to prevent undue interference from politicians; standardizing sentencing guidelines nationwide; making the corrections system more humane and effective in rehabilitation; and funding more ambitious crime-prevention programs aimed at young people. None of these possible remedies is a panacea, and most experts believe that real progress in reducing public insecurity will depend on addressing the root causes, including joblessness and extreme income inequality.

Nevertheless, significant reforms are being implemented. Oral trials before a trio of judges, open to the public, where forensic evidence is presented and crime victims and alleged perpetrators can confront each

other, have been introduced in four states and will cover all thirty-one states by 2016. For the first time, defendants will be presumed innocent until proved guilty, reversing the traditional assumption. Plea bargains and probation will be available to prosecutors and judges. Such changes are expected to speed court proceedings, increase public confidence in the criminal justice system, and reduce opportunities for organized crime to influence outcomes.

International Environment

Since independence, Mexico's politics and public policies have always been influenced by proximity to the United States. Indeed, this proximity has made the United States a powerful presence in Mexico. A wide array of factors—the 2,000-mile land border between the two countries; Mexico's rich supplies of minerals, labor, and other resources needed by U.S. industry; and Mexico's attractiveness as a site for U.S. private investment—has made such influence inevitable.

Midway through the nineteenth century, Mexico's sovereignty as a nation was directly threatened when the U.S. push for territorial and economic expansion met little resistance in northern Mexico. Emerging from a war for independence from Spain and plagued by chronic political instability, Mexico was highly vulnerable to aggression from the north. By annexing Texas in 1845 and instigating the Mexican-American War of 1846 to 1848, the United States seized half of Mexico's national territory: disputed land in Texas; all of the land that is now California, Nevada, and Utah; most of New Mexico and Arizona; and part of Colorado and Wyoming. This massive seizure of territory, along with several later military interventions and meddling in the politics of "revolutionary" Mexico that extended throughout the 1920s, left scars that have not healed. Even today, the average Mexican suspects that the United States has designs on Mexico's remaining territory, its oil, and even its human resources.

The lost territory includes the U.S. regions that have been the principal recipients of Mexican immigrant workers in this century. This labor migration, too, was instigated mainly by the United States. Beginning in the 1880s, U.S. farmers, railroads, and mining companies, with U.S. government encouragement, obtained many of the workers needed to expand the economy and transport systems of the Southwest and Midwest by sending labor recruiters into northern and central Mexico.

By the end of the 1920s, the economies of Mexico and the United States were sufficiently intertwined that the effects of the Great Depression were swiftly transmitted to Mexico, causing unemployment to rise and export earnings and GNP to plummet. As the depression moderated, Mexico tried to reduce its dependence on the United States as a market for silver and other exports. The effort failed. After 1940, Mexico relied even more heavily on U.S. private capital to help finance its drive for industrialization.

The United States experienced severe shortages of labor in World War II, and Mexico's dependence on the United States as a market for its surplus labor became institutionalized through the so-called *bracero* program of importing contract labor. Operating from 1942 to 1964, this program brought more than 4 million Mexicans to the United States to work in seasonal agriculture. After the demise of the *bracero* program, migration to the United States continued, with most new arrivals entering illegally (see Box 11.5).

By 2009, an estimated 11 percent of all Mexicans were living abroad, 93 percent of them in the United States. This represents a seventeenfold increase in the Mexico-born population of the United States since 1970. Fifty-five percent of Mexican immigrants in the United States were there illegally.²⁹ Unauthorized migration has become the single most contentious issue in the U.S.–Mexico relationship, despite a preponderance of evidence that its net economic impact on the United States is positive.

The U.S. stake in Mexico's continued political stability and economic development has increased dramatically since World War II. In recent years, Mexico has been one of the three largest trading partners of the United States (with Canada and Japan). Employment for hundreds of thousands of people in both Mexico and the United States depends on this trade.

Despite the sharp fluctuations in its economy since the early 1980s, Mexico is one of the preferred sites for investments by U.S.-based multinational corporations, especially for investments in modern industries (such as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, food processing, machinery, transportation, and athletic footwear). In recent years, 55 percent of total foreign direct investment in Mexico has come from the United States. Subsidiaries of U.S. companies produce half of the manufactured goods exported by Mexico. Firms in Mexico's own private sector have actively sought

Trying to Get In

Mexican Migration

BOX 11.5

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans set out on a dangerous journey to the United States. They are drawn by jobs that do not exist in Mexico or do not pay enough to support their families, and by the desire to reunite with family members already living in the United States. Most migrants will pay \$3,000 or more to a *coyote*—a professional people-smuggler—who will assist him or her in evading the U.S. Border Patrol. Most of this money is loaned by U.S.-based relatives—debts that take more than four months of work in the United States to repay.

Since 1994, the U.S. government has made it significantly costlier and riskier for Mexicans lacking legal entry papers to enter the country. Spending on border enforcement has quadrupled, and the Border Patrol has more than tripled in size. *Coyotes* have raised their prices in tandem with U.S. border fortification and because they lead their clients through increasingly remote and life-threatening areas; each year, more than eight hundred Mexicans perish in the deserts and mountains of the U.S. Southwest. More than 6,500 have died in border-crossing attempts since 1995.

foreign capital to finance new joint ventures and expand plant facilities.

Mexico's external economic dependence is often cited by both critics and defenders of the Mexican system as an all-encompassing explanation for the country's problems. In fact, economic ties between Mexico and the United States usually explain only part of the picture. And these linkages do not necessarily predetermine the choices of policy and development priorities that are set by Mexico's rulers. But Mexico's increasingly tight linkage to the U.S. economy limits the range of choices that can be made by Mexican officials, and economic fluctuations in the United States are a large source of uncertainty in Mexico's planning and policymaking. For example, the severe U.S. recession of 2007 through 2009 led to an even stronger economic contraction in Mexico, throwing millions of Mexicans out of work and sharply reducing the amount of money sent home by Mexicans working in the United States.

But unauthorized migrants have not been deterred. They keep trying to get in until they succeed. Field research has found that more than nine out of ten who go to the border are able to enter eventually. Their tenacity is illustrated by the story of Briseida, a twenty-four-year-old undocumented migrant from the impoverished state of Oaxaca, who was caught by the Border Patrol six times in the month before she entered the United States successfully.

"The Border Patrol told me the first time, 'If we apprehend you a second time, we are going to put you in jail for two weeks. If we apprehend you a third time, it is going to be a month; the fourth time, three months. You could be in jail for up to a year.' I told them, 'Well, I just have to cross.' They asked me if I was sure. 'Maybe you should just go home,' they said. 'But I have to cross,' I told them. No matter what, the majority of us Mexicans are going to keep trying." (Interview by Mexican Migration Field Research and Training Program, University of California, San Diego, February 2008.)

The international environment of Mexico's political system was transformed fundamentally by the signing of NAFTA in 1993. NAFTA made Mexico a much more attractive investment site for U.S. firms seeking low-cost labor and for Asian and European firms seeking privileged access to the U.S. market. The net macroeconomic impact of NAFTA has been positive for Mexico, as well as for the United States and Canada. However, NAFTA has not reduced the U.S.–Mexico income gap. GDP has risen in Mexico, but it has risen much more rapidly in the United States. Today, annual U.S. GDP per capita is more than six times that of Mexico.

If anything, NAFTA has increased unauthorized migration to the United States and made Mexico's economy more dependent on money remitted by its citizens working in the United States, who continue to send home more money each year than Mexico earns from any other source except oil exports. NAFTA created jobs in Mexico's manufactured-export sector, but

Migrant Deaths Escalate as U.S. Fortifies the Border

Coroner's staff remove the body of an undocumented Mexican woman who perished from dehydration while crossing California's Imperial Valley desert.

Peggy Peattie, San Diego Union-Tribune



competition from cheaper U.S. imports has put millions of small farmers out of work, and the nonagricultural jobs that have been created under NAFTA do not pay enough to lift most Mexican families out of poverty.

MEXICO'S POLITICAL FUTURE

In the months following Vicente Fox's victory in the 2000 presidential elections, there was a major debate among Mexican intellectuals and the political elite over whether the country had successfully completed its transition to democracy, with the alternation of power in the presidency, or whether further and deeper structural reforms would be necessary before Mexico should be classified as a democratic republic. In the aftermath of the 2006 election, particularly because of the disputed presidential result, precisely the same debates were reshaped.

It is certain that elections in Mexico at the federal level are now as democratic and transparent as nearly any other country in the Americas. Electoral law reforms have ended most forms of fraud that were typical in the past. The Federal Electoral Institute has a strong record as a guardian of democracy. Campaign-finance regulation is still deficient (disclosure rules for private contributions are very weak; the IFE can impose fines for violations only after the election), but

with generous public financing of all parties' campaigns, the playing field has been leveled. Considering that the PRI-government apparatus functioned as a political machine—in which maintaining power in the executive branch was absolutely necessary to maintain the incentive structure for the rest of the political elite—the end of PRI domination of the presidency arguably has concluded the authoritarian era of Mexican politics. At the same time, many argue that a mere alternation in power is insufficient to consolidate a democratic transition. They claim that structural reforms, especially a comprehensive state reform, are required before the transition to democracy can be completed.

The political strategies that follow from these two concepts of Mexico's political transition are very different. The notion that the transition was completed with the alternation in power in 2000 leads to political actors facing up to the problem of divided government, accepting that the electorate gave mixed signals on election day, and allowing each branch of government to make the best of the situation considering the constitutional powers that it holds. Therefore, the Congress should not consider executive bills to be untouchable (and considering the frequency with which they are amended in the chambers, this certainly seems to be the case). The president should use his constitutional decree powers and his veto as he sees

fit, and not worry that their use be considered an affront to the legislative branch. The Supreme Court should arbitrate. Both the president and the parties in Congress should use publicity in the media to get their message out and pressure the other branch to give in. The opposing camp calls for national political accords and consensus on all basic matters of governance. They believe that the constitutional boundaries between the branches must be redefined, again by consensus. Proponents want to create a strong, flexible presidency, while those opposed want congressional dominance or even parliamentary government.

Whatever the outcome of this debate, there is little doubt that Mexico should now be classified as a democracy in terms of electoral transparency and even personal freedoms. Despite all of the sound and fury between the executive and legislative branches under

divided government, there is little doubt that Mexico now has one of the best-functioning democratic political systems in Latin America—certainly closer to Chile and Costa Rica than to Brazil, Argentina, or Venezuela.

The results of the last three national elections suggest that the three-party system that took shape in the late 1980s, despite its imperfections, offers a solid basis for democratic consolidation. Mexican voters now seem quite comfortable with the idea of alternation in power, at all levels. Recent national elections have demonstrated that they are prepared to “throw the rascals out” for poor performance and corruption, regardless of party. Notwithstanding high levels of drug-related violence, Mexico is in little danger of becoming the “failed state” of which conservative U.S. critics have warned.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What explains the shift in Mexicans' party preferences between 2000 and 2006? Which parties benefit and which lose out in this change in public preferences?
- Have the 1996 electoral reforms been successful in stemming electoral fraud? What further reforms could improve electoral security and voter participation?
- What are the effects of the prohibition of immediate reelection of federal legislators? What are the effects of the absolute prohibition of reelection of the president?
- What are the benefits and costs of greater federalism in the Mexican political system? How can unintended consequences of decentralization be reduced?
- To what extent, and in what ways, do persistent poverty and socioeconomic inequality affect how democracy functions in Mexico today? What policies would be most effective in reducing such inequality?
- How does government performance in dealing with public security threats like drug trafficking affect political attitudes and behavior in Mexico? What is the trade-off between greater government control and public support for the government?
- What challenges do globalization and labor migration to the United States pose for Mexico's future development?

KEY TERMS

<i>caciques</i>	corporatist	Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)	<i>presidencialismo</i>
Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM)	divided government	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)	sectors (of the PRI)
Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC)	<i>municipios</i>	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	Seguro Popular
Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP)	narco-violence	patron-client relationships	<i>sexenio</i> (six-year term)
	neoliberal economic development model	political centralism	social capital
	North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)		<i>técnico</i>

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 Chamber of Deputies: www.diputados.gob.mx.
 Senate: www.senado.gob.mx.

National Statistical Institute: www.inegi.org.mx.
 National Population Council: www.conapo.gob.mx.
 Federal Electoral Institute: www.ife.org.mx.

ENDNOTES

1. This percentage represents an undercount, since the census identifies as Indians only people over age fifty. Indigenous peoples of all ages constitute an estimated 15 percent of the total population.
2. The actual extent of irregularities in the 1988 presidential vote will never be determined. Within a few hours after the polls closed,

with early returns showing Cárdenas ahead by a significant margin, top authorities ordered the computerized count to be suspended. When results for a majority of the country's polling places were announced six days later, Salinas had won. There is no corroborating evidence from exit surveys of voters, because the government denied permission for such surveys in 1988.



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48. See Susan Greenhalgh, Zhu Chuzhu, and Li Nan, "Restraining Population Growth in Three Chinese Villages, 1988-93," *Population and Development Review* 20, no. 2 (1994): 365-95.
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50. See Michael D. Swaine, "Perceptions of an Assertive China," *China Leadership Monitor* 32 (2010): 1-18.
44. See Barry Naughton, *Rowing Out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978-1993* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
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