
MEXICAN POLITICS IN TRANSITION

THE BREAKDOWN OF A
ONE-PARTY-DOMINANT
REGIME

WAYNE A. CORNELIUS

MONOGRAPH SERIES, 41
CENTER FOR U.S.-MEXICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

CENTER FOR U.S.-MEXICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Cite #2
item

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	vi
<i>Mexico Map</i>	viii
SHATTERED ILLUSIONS: THE BREAKDOWN OF A ONE-PARTY-DOMINANT REGIME	1
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	11
Legacies of Colonialism	11
Church and State	12
Revolution and Its Aftermath	14
The Cárdenas Upheaval	16
THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT	21
POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONS	25
Political Centralism	29
The Presidency	33
Camarillas and Clientelism	39
RECRUITING THE POLITICAL ELITE	45
INTEREST REPRESENTATION AND POLITICAL CONTROL	51
Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	56
The Opposition Parties	67
CAMPESINOS, ORGANIZED LABOR, AND THE MILITARY: PILLARS OF THE REGIME?	77
State-Campesino Relations	77
The State and Organized Labor	81
The Military in Politics	85
POLITICAL CULTURE AND SOCIALIZATION	89
Mass Political Socialization	91
Political Participation	96
GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE	99
Economic Growth and Inequality	99
Controlling Population Growth and Creating Jobs	107
Financing Development and Controlling Inflation	109
MEXICO'S POLITICAL FUTURE: TRANSITION TO WHAT?	115
<i>For Further Reading</i>	120
<i>About the Author</i>	123

THE CENTER FOR U.S.-MEXICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

All rights reserved. Published 1996

Printed in the United States of America

Cover photograph by Francisco Mata Rosas; by permission of
Secretaría de Gobernación, Mexico.

ISBN: 1-876367-29-3



PAN presidential candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos greets supporters at a campaign rally in the run-up to the 1994 election. Source: Patricia Aridjis, by permission of Secretaría de Gobernación, Mexico.

Yucatán. In these places, the PAN has managed to create a *de facto* two-party system, in which the PRI is clearly vulnerable to defeat. The margins of victory for the PAN's gubernatorial triumphs in the states of Baja California (in 1989) and Jalisco (in 1995) were so large that postelection protests by local PRI leaders were effectively preempted. In 1995, the PAN retained control of the governorship in Baja California, thereby accomplishing something that no opposition party had previously achieved: the transfer of power from one elected opposition governor to another.

President Zedillo found it expedient to appoint a prominent PAN leader, Antonio Lozano, to the most politically sensitive post in his cabinet, that of attorney general, and to make him responsible for implementing the new administration's top-priority political project: cleaning up the nation's police and judicial system and establishing the rule of law in all aspects of public life. Thus Lozano, who previously headed the PAN delegation in the federal Chamber of Deputies, became the first member of an opposition party to receive a cabinet appointment in a PRI administration.

While clearly the leader among Mexico's opposition parties in terms of organizational strength and ideological coherence, the PAN is a party with several major 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. The moderate-progressive faction, which advocates strategic alliances with the government on various issues, has clearly been in control of the party since 1989. The PAN has relatively few leaders of national stature, and since the mid-1980s it has had difficulty defining a national project or set of economic policies that constitutes a clear alternative to the government's programs. Under Presidents de la Madrid, Salinas, and Zedillo, the PAN saw many of its banners stolen by the PRI-government apparatus: free market-oriented economic policies, privatization of state-owned enterprises, closer ties with the United States, improved church-state relations, and authentic federalism.

Since the early 1980s, and particularly in its stronghold regions like the North, the PAN has made considerable progress in broadening its sources of support beyond its core constituency of younger, better-educated, city-dwelling, middle-class voters. In the 1988 national elections, the PAN won only 17 percent of the votes in small and medium-sized cities and 7 percent of the rural votes; in 1994, it took 26 percent of the vote in small and medium-sized cities and raised its share of the rural vote to 15 percent.²⁸ However, the PAN still has not penetrated deeply into isolated rural areas and impoverished urban neighborhoods, accounting for its reputation as the "asphalt party" (a party whose support extends only to the end of paved roads or streets). In the 1994 elections, for example, the PAN had poll watchers stationed in only one-third or fewer of the polling places in the country's most rural municipalities.²⁹

The constraints on development of the leftist opposition parties in Mexico are rather different and more severe. Before 1988, the left had spawned political parties like the Partido Popular Socialista (PPS), which for decades served as a home for moderate 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 collaborate 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 its

²⁸ See Eric Magar Meurs, "Elecciones municipales en el norte de México, 1970-1993," *Tesis de Licenciatura en Ciencia Política*, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, México, D.F., 1994; and Pacheco Méndez, "El nuevo mapa electoral," pp. 14-15.

²⁹ Fox, "National Electoral Choices in Rural Mexico," p. 20.