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DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE RISE OF A FREE PRESS IN MEXICO

CHAPPELL LAWSON

Building the Fourth Estate



Mexico

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*Democratization and the
Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*

Chappell H. Lawson

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Preface

Vicente Fox's dramatic victory in Mexico's July 2000 presidential elections definitively ended the world's longest reigning authoritarian regime. It also definitively ended any lingering debates in academic circles about where Mexico's protracted political transition might lead—debates that had persisted in some quarters despite the ruling party's loss of Congress in 1997. Mexico's transition to democracy was no longer in dispute. As one senior scholar jocularly remarked, Mexicanists would now have to throw out their old syllabi and borrow copies from their colleagues who studied Western Europe.

Before they do, let me suggest that they amend those syllabi a bit. I believe that neither the process of democratization in Mexico nor Mexican politics today can be understood without reference to the mass media. Those who wish to explain how Mexico became a democracy or how its political system currently functions need to understand the remarkable transformation of Mexico's mass media during the last twenty years.

I also suspect that the transformation of Mexico's media can shed light on politics in other countries around the world, especially those countries touched by the most recent wave of global democratization. In other words, the broader theoretical conclusions drawn from Mexico's experience should offer insights for analysts of democratization in countries like Spain, Brazil, Taiwan, and Russia—perhaps even for countries in nascent stages of political transition, like China and Iran.

If this study proves valuable, it is largely because of the insight and

assistance that I have received from other quarters. Perhaps most importantly, I am grateful to those Mexican journalists, government officials, scholars, and activists who provided the bulk of the information on which this book is based. Without their trust, I could never have begun this project, much less completed it. I owe a special debt to the staff of *Reforma* newspaper, both for giving so generously of their time and for collaborating with me on survey research in 1997.

A number of academic mentors and colleagues provided crucial support throughout the project. I am especially grateful for the advice to Terry Karl, Larry Diamond, and Philippe Schmitter, my dissertation advisors at Stanford University, who read various earlier versions of this book. Roderic Camp of Claremont-McKenna College gave useful feedback on the structure of the manuscript and on a range of more specific points. Raúl Trejo of Mexico's National University (UNAM) offered insightful comments on several chapters, as did Carlos Gómez-Palacio of the Universidad de Anáhuac. At the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City, Federico Estévez, Alejandro Moreno, Denise Dresser, and Jeff Weldon provided good scholarly comradeship. Wayne Cornelius, Kevin Middlebrook, Peter Smith, Eric Van Young, Van Whiting, C. R. Hibbs, and my fellow Fellows at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies (University of California at San Diego) gave helpful and supportive feedback. My colleagues in the political science department at MIT—Suzanne Berger, Josh Cohen, Richard Locke, and Michael Piore—also offered enormously valuable comments. Finally, Reed Malcolm, Suzanne Knott, and Sue Carter of the University of California Press and three anonymous reviewers suggested a number of useful revisions to the original manuscript, virtually all of which were incorporated into the final version.

A number of institutions were reckless enough to provide me with funding for this endeavor. The Fulbright Foundation covered the costs of fieldwork in Mexico in 1996–97. The Academy for Educational Development provided financing for a 1997 panel survey of Mexico City residents. Stanford University's Department of Political Science, Center for Latin American Studies, Institute for International Studies, and Center for International Security and Arms Control provided research funds.

With all this support, any defects that remain are surely my responsibility.

J.C.H.L.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Introduction

In June 1995, President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico made a remarkable declaration while traveling near the capital. The president was hoping to reassure his fellow Mexicans that their country, then in the midst of deep economic and political crisis, was on the right track. In the course of his remarks, Zedillo made reference to a small group of “bad guys” (*malosos*) within the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). These officials, Zedillo implied, lay behind some of the country’s recent troubles—including the shocking 1994 assassinations of PRI leader José Francisco Ruiz-Massieu¹ and PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio.²

Mexican journalists responded vigorously to Zedillo’s comments. Did the president mean that men inside Mexico’s ruling party were responsible for the recent murders? Who, exactly, were the individuals in question? Could the country’s problems really be blamed on a small cabal of *malosos*, however nefarious? And was *malosos* (a somewhat puerile term) really the right way to describe such people, given that their activities apparently included drug trafficking and political assassination?³

The vehemence of journalists’ reactions surprised most observers. Traditionally, interactions between the president and the press in Mexico were carefully scripted affairs.⁴ Questions were often planted by government officials; independent newspapers were underrepresented if they were represented at all; and the entire performance was carefully edited before being rebroadcast by the country’s reliably pro-

government media conglomerate, Televisa. Aggressive and hostile inquiries were simply not part of the regularly scheduled programming.

Reporters' reactions to the *malosos* incident exemplified the changes that had taken place in Mexico's media. In the 1980s and 1990s, independent publications emerged and flourished, supplanting their more staid and traditional counterparts. Feisty talk-radio shows came to dominate the airwaves in Mexico's largest cities. Even broadcast television, once notoriously pro-government, began to devote more coverage to civic and opposition groups. These changes brought increased attention to the viewpoints of civil society, more even-handed coverage of electoral campaigns, and more aggressive investigation of potential scandals.

The changing role and growing importance of the mass media is not a uniquely Mexican phenomenon. In a range of new democracies, the media play an increasing role in giving voice to competing political perspectives and exposing the misdeeds of government officials. In Brazil—where the country's giant conglomerate Globo was once regarded as a right-wing ally of the country's military regime⁵—observers credited the media with bringing about the downfall of conservative president Fernando Collor de Mello. In the corruption scandal that led up to Collor's resignation, the media played a decisive role.⁶ As analysts of the Brazilian press put it, "By and large, other social institutions have been a major disappointment. . . Largely by default, the media have assumed. . . the role of inquisitor, auditor, and goad."⁷ In recent years, such impressions of media influence have resonated throughout the region.⁸ As one authority on the Latin American press suggested, in countries where dissatisfied political actors once knocked on the back door of the barracks, they now knock on the back door of the newsroom.⁹

Nor is the media's newfound influence limited to Latin America. In a range of other fledgling democracies, the media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and—at least in theory—guaranteeing the accountability of government officials.¹⁰ The media's role is particularly crucial in countries where traditional intermediaries (such as political parties and interest groups) remain underdeveloped and where social movements that blossomed during democratic transition have begun to shrink or disappear.

Over the last two decades, scholars have devoted a tremendous amount of attention to the spread and deepening of democracy around the world. Despite this burgeoning literature on democratization, however, there has been little serious research on the emergence of independent media. How does a free press, presumably one of the most vital

ingredients in modern democratic governance, develop? What role does it play in promoting democratic transition? While theorists of democratization have lavished attention on constitutional design, electoral systems and political parties, social movements, interest groups, civilian control of the military, and related topics, they have left such questions about the media not simply unanswered but virtually unaddressed.

This omission is puzzling, given the crucial role that the mass media play in modern democracy. Without a relatively diverse and independent press, it is difficult to see how citizens can acquire sufficient information to make meaningful political choices or hold government representatives accountable for their decisions. If the information on which citizens base their political attitudes is censored or distorted, proper evaluation of official decision making becomes difficult, and mass opinion itself appears increasingly manufactured.

For these reasons, scholars generally acknowledge that the mass media represent a crucial element of democratic governance.¹¹ Media freedom is a core ingredient both in theoretical conceptions of democracy (e.g., Dahl's) and in empirical measurements of it (such as the Freedom House index).¹² But analysts do not understand what factors contribute to the emergence of independent media. Nor do they understand the political consequences of changes in media coverage on democratizing countries. How, exactly, does a free press arise? How does it escape from, evade, or resist official control? And what effect does its success in doing so have on political transition?

LOCOMOTIVE OR CABOOSE?

Although little explicit research has been done on these questions, there is a default hypothesis that answers them both: the emergence of a free press is simply a product of broader opening in the political system. Political reforms reduce censorship, and full-fledged democratization ultimately guarantees media freedom. From this perspective, the media exert little real influence over the course of regime change; any role they play is essentially epiphenomenal. Media opening—the process by which mass media become more representative of societal viewpoints and more independent of official control—is thus merely a by-product of democratization.

There is an important element of truth to this argument: political liberalization does promote media opening. By itself, however, political liberalization does not guarantee independence or diversity in the media.

Or, to put the matter more bluntly, a free press does not appear, like Aphrodite on the waves, in the wake of regime change. Many new democracies have emerged from political transition with media that are hobbled by politicized state ownership (Hungary and the Czech Republic),¹³ corruption (Korea),¹⁴ private concentration in the hands of like-minded entrepreneurs (Brazil and Russia),¹⁵ and other unsavory inheritances. Official tolerance and political reform are at best necessary conditions for media freedom, not sufficient ones.

To really understand the emergence of independent media, scholars must look elsewhere—to a number of other variables that shape media coverage. Aside from political liberalization, factors like commercial pressure, journalistic norms, and (less frequently) new communications technologies can also prove powerful in promoting independence and diversity in the media. In Portugal and Spain during the late 1970s, for instance, market competition between different outlets led to significant changes in coverage without full liberalization of the political environment. In Taiwan, the spread of illegal cable television systems frustrated official attempts at censorship long before the end of martial law.¹⁶ And in Communist East Germany, much of the population could receive nightly broadcasts in their native language from West German stations well before the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹⁷ In other words, the “Aphrodite-on-the waves” argument overlooks a series of other factors that encourage media freedom. Political opening may be an important contributor to the emergence of an independent press, but it is not the only one.

Even more seriously, though, models in which changes in press coverage depend on political reform misstate the relationship between media opening and political transition. They portray the press as a sort of free rider on democratization—as one Mexican journalist put it, not a locomotive of change but a caboose of the state.¹⁸ Rather than promoting regime change, the media are simply dragged along by larger political developments over which they have little influence. This interpretation, of course, does not accord with the salient role that mass media have played in democratization in countries from the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in Philippines to the campaign for direct elections in Brazil to the failed Soviet coup attempt of August 1991.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that both pieces of the traditional argument are wrong. First, political liberalization is not the sole or even the most important driver of change in the media. Journalistic norms and commercial competition between media outlets also play powerful roles in shaping the behavior of the press. In Mexico, for instance, jour-

nalists' views about their role in society were a decisive factor in the establishment of independent publications. Subsequently, competition for readers proved crucial in strengthening these publications and putting pressure on more traditional dailies to change their coverage. Throughout this process of opening in the print media, political pressures frequently worked to stifle changes in the media that were occurring for other reasons. By the early 1990s, Mexico's emerging Fourth Estate had gone well beyond what the government deemed acceptable. At that point, however, many independent publications were sufficiently well established to fend off official assaults.

Market competition plays a powerful role in encouraging the press to experiment with more independent coverage. Even in an authoritarian system, private media may face powerful incentives to meet audience demands. In Mexico, for instance, television was long dominated by a single private network (Televisa) that consistently supported the ruling party and limited opposition access to the airwaves. In its capacity as ruling party cheerleader, Televisa helped sell PRI to an increasingly dubious mass public. Following the privatization of government-owned television channels in 1992–93, however, competition between television networks led to greater coverage of civic groups and opposition parties on the once reliably pro-regime network.

Second, I argue that changes in media coverage themselves exert a powerful influence on politics and political transition. In Mexico, for instance, independent publications declined to play the role of official scribe for the political elite, turning their attention instead to newly formed civic organizations. Beginning in the mid-1980s, media attention helped to legitimize these new groups by developing a new vocabulary for describing the Mexican political context. Media opening thus contributed to the resurgence of civil society during the early phases of Mexico's political transition.

Another typical consequence of media opening is increased scrutiny of government actions and decisions. In Mexico, for instance, more aggressive coverage of previously "closed" topics by elements of the print media produced a series of revelations that reverberated throughout the Mexican political system. Even broadcast media, locked in competition for market share, began to cover potentially shocking political events. The ensuing scandals helped to delegitimize Mexico's authoritarian regime in the eyes of the mass public.

Yet another common consequence of media opening is greater coverage of opposition parties during election campaigns. In Mexico, cov-

erage of campaigns became substantially more equitable during the 1990s, contributing to opposition victory in the watershed legislative elections of 1997. The repercussions of more equitable media coverage continued to be felt in the presidential elections of 2000, in which opposition candidate Vicente Fox finally defeated the PRI.

Media opening and democratization are thus best conceived as interacting and mutually reinforcing processes. Political liberalization leads to a relaxation in censorship, constrains the arbitrary use of power against independent media outlets, and encourages reform in the legal structure governing the press. At the same time, independent coverage promotes civic mobilization, increases public scrutiny of official actions and decisions, and levels the electoral playing field. Although political liberalization undoubtedly promotes media opening, changes in the media also propel political reform. Because the causes of these changes in the media often lie outside the political system itself—in the competition between rival media outlets and in the changing norms of journalists themselves—media opening is not simply a function of political reform.

These findings have a number of implications for newly democratic and democratizing countries. First, they suggest the circumstances under which tentative initial gestures toward political liberalization are likely to unleash a cycle of political change. Specifically, when media outlets are forced to compete for audiences and journalists have already developed their own internal professional standards, even modest liberalization in the political environment can trigger rapid and thorough transformation of reporting. Changing media coverage in turn exercises a powerful influence on political life, stimulating civic mobilization, triggering scandals, and facilitating opposition electoral victory.

Second, the role of market competition in transforming the media suggests one mechanism by which economic liberalization leads to democratization. By stimulating competition, market-oriented reforms encourage media outlets to take into account the demands of their audiences, rather than the preferences of official censors. In general, these changes in coverage help to legitimize opposition forces, delegitimize the old regime, and generate support for political alternatives. They thus increase the odds of regime change.

But the importance of market competition also underscores the dangers that high levels of media concentration pose for many new democracies. Lack of market competition makes it easier for media owners to introduce their own biases (or those of their political allies) into news coverage. One typical result is a status quo slant to news coverage, which

generally discourages civic mobilization, conceals potential scandals, and favors the political establishment in election campaigns. Where neo-liberal reforms have proceeded without much oversight of monopolistic commercial practices, media monopolies and cartels are likely. The persistence of these monopolies and cartels, especially in broadcasting, have lamentable consequences for the quality of democracy in societies that have recently undergone transitions from authoritarian rule.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The bulk of the study focuses on the mass media in a single country: Mexico. This approach was based on the presumption that only careful examination of a particular case could successfully untangle the reciprocal relationship between changes in the press and changes in the political system. (That presumption was amply confirmed in the course of research for the project, a result that highlights the continuing value of case studies for comparative social science.) The broader motivation for this case study, however, was to identify patterns and relationships that may be generalizable to other countries. In this sense, the Mexican experience is most valuable to the extent that it sheds light on media opening and democratization elsewhere.

As a case, Mexico offered several theoretical and practical advantages over other countries. First, Mexico's press contained substantial internal variation across time, region, and type of outlet (print, radio, television, etc.). Such variation allows for a number of intra-country comparisons, thus adding some measure of robustness to findings culled from a single case. To the extent that the conclusions reached here hold across different regions, time periods, types of media, and firms—albeit within one country—they are more likely to represent a general dynamic.

Second, the history of Mexico's media made that country an important test case for any argument that changes in media coverage can exercise an independent influence on political transition. For years, the Mexican media were harshly (and justly) criticized for their association with the old regime. Television, in particular, was subjected to almost ritual pillory by a range of opposition and civic groups for more than a decade. If Mexico's media were able to act as forces for political change, it seems likely that the mass media can play a similar role in other countries.

Third, Mexico offers—or rather, at the time the study was undertaken, offered—a unique opportunity to observe media opening and

democratization in real time. For subjects as difficult to analyze as the role of the mass media in political transition, being on the ground at the right moment afforded crucial advantages. Interviews recorded people's actual thinking, rather than their recollections and confabulations after the fact; surveys documented opinions that would otherwise never be known; content analysis salvaged material that might have been discarded or destroyed. In short, real-time observation captured the contingencies and complexities of the moment. Ex-post explanations of other cases may be simpler, but they are rarely more informative and are liable to miss crucial features of the context.

Finally, though perhaps least important from a comparative perspective, is the attention that the transformation of Mexico's media has received in recent years. In part, this attention is due to the remarkable scope of change in the media over the past fifteen years. Whatever its flaws, the current media environment is one of the elements of Mexican social life that most gives politics in that country a modern, democratic hue. How Mexico's press liberated itself from a dense thicket of institutional and cultural constraints, and what effect its liberation had on democratization, is simply a remarkable piece of political history. Quite apart from its broader applicability to other countries, the story of media opening in Mexico deserves to be told.

Part 1 (chapters 2–4) provides the background for this story by describing the old system of media control in Mexico. Chapter 2 offers a thumbnail sketch of the rise and fall of the “perfect dictatorship” that ruled Mexico from the 1930s until the mid-1990s. Chapter 3 discusses the old system of corruption and censorship that governed most of Mexico's media establishment until the 1990s. Based on dozens of interviews with journalists and government officials, it describes how the Mexican regime relied on subsidies, bribes, and the manipulation of broadcasting concessions to create a relatively docile and dependent press. Chapter 4 then analyzes the consequences of media corruption and censorship for news coverage. In general, reporting under the old regime was marked by (1) official control of the public agenda, (2) selective silence on issues of particular sensitivity to the government, and (3) partisan bias in favor of the ruling party. The net effect of media coverage was thus to marginalize regime opponents and legitimize authoritarian rule.

Part 2 (chapters 5–6) analyzes the breakdown of the old system of media control. Chapter 5 relies on interviews, content analysis of Mexico City newspapers, and comparisons across different cities to trace the process of opening in Mexico's print media. It explains how independent

publications emerged outside the traditional system of press control and how they were subsequently able to resist official pressures. Animated by a new journalistic ethic and sustained by a growing readership base, these periodicals formed the core of Mexico's nascent Fourth Estate. Chapter 6 repeats this analysis for Mexico's broadcast media, based on interviews, ratings data, and content analysis of leading television programs. It shows how market competition helped pry open Mexican radio and, to a lesser extent, television. By the late 1990s, Mexican broadcasting was governed primarily by commercial rather than political considerations. Together, chapters 5 and 6 document how market competition and journalistic professionalism led Mexico's media to become (1) more open to opposition and civic perspectives, (2) more assertive in covering touchy subjects, and (3) more impartial in electoral reporting.

Part 3 (chapters 7–9) traces the political consequences of media opening in Mexico. Chapter 7 describes the role of two independent publications—*La Jornada* newspaper and *Proceso* magazine—in the rebirth of Mexican civil society during the second half of the 1980s. It argues that media opening played an important role in legitimizing the civic groups that emerged during this period and in encouraging political organization outside of the regime's traditional state-corporatist apparatus. Although changes in press coverage were not the sole cause of civic mobilization during this period, they did help reinforce mobilization that was already under way.

Chapter 8 analyzes how increased assertiveness in the media triggered a series of political scandals. Based on a review of twelve shocking political events, it argues that media opening was the primary cause of the devastating scandals that rocked Mexican politics during the mid-1990s. These scandals helped to delegitimize Mexico's crumbling authoritarian regime in the eyes of the mass public and to increase support for political change. At the same time, scandals signaled to elites that the rules of the political game were changing. Increased media coverage of previously closed topics thus propelled Mexico's democratic transition.

Chapter 9 analyzes a more familiar type of media impact: the role of the media in shaping public opinion and voting behavior. It focuses on the watershed elections of 1997, which cost the PRI control of Congress, drawing on a three-round panel survey of approximately 400 respondents over the course of the campaign. The results of this survey point to powerful media influences on electoral preferences. By eroding support for the PRI, changing media coverage propelled democratization.

The final section (chapter 10) returns to the broader, comparative issues that inspired the study. Chapter 10 first reviews the causes and consequences of media opening in Mexico. It then attempts to generalize from the Mexican case to media opening and democratization in other contexts. The chapter concludes by linking findings about the role of market competition to broader debates about the political impact of market-oriented reform. The Mexican experience strongly suggests that economic liberalization contributed to media opening, which in turn undermined Mexico's one-party regime. In at least one important way, therefore, market-oriented economic reforms promoted democratization. These same findings, however, also highlight the dangers that attend market-oriented reforms should unregulated competition lead to cartelization or monopolization—as in the case of Mexican television. In that case, economic liberalization may produce a media establishment that is relatively independent of government control but beholden to the interests of private actors. Such a media regime tends to diminish the quality of democracy, both in Mexico and in many other countries that have recently completed their transition from authoritarian rule.

PART I

The Old Regime and the Mexican Media

The Perfect Dictatorship

The “political miracle of Mexico”—until 1968—aroused the wonder of Mexicans and foreigners. It was said that De Gaulle considered it remarkable, that some African countries sent specialists to study the Mexican government with a view to adopting the system, and that it was the envy of the military “gorillas” of Latin America. There were professors in the United States who wound up viewing it as the politicians wanted them to see it: not as a sham but as a reality—an eccentric, revolutionary, one-party democracy. When the euphoria was over, when the miracle had shown its huge limitations, Gabriel Zaid . . . defined it precisely: “The Mexican political system is the greatest modern business that Mexican genius has created.”

—Enrique Krauze
Mexico, Biography of Power, pp. 549–50

Mexico’s peculiar political system was once characterized by Peruvian writer Mario Vargas-Llosa as “the perfect dictatorship.”¹ From the 1930s until the late 1990s, Mexican political life was dominated by a single “official” party, currently named the PRI. During this period, the PRI controlled Mexico’s most important political offices, and, through a series of state-corporatist institutions, its leading sectoral, professional, and civic organizations. True to the regime’s liberal facade, opposition parties were allowed some role at the margin of the political system, especially in municipal government and in the lower house of the legislature. But serious challenges to PRI rule were invariably thwarted through an elaborate system of corporatist co-optation, electoral “alchemy” (fraud), and selective repression. The net result of these institutions and practices was a durable, reasonably inclusive, autocratic regime.

Within the regime, political rifts were mitigated through widespread opportunities for graft and the principle of no reelection (which ensured elite turnover). Even Mexico's all-powerful president, who enjoyed the right to name his own successor, was never allowed to continue in office for longer than a single six-year term. The combination of corruption, one-party hegemony, and regular turnover assured politically ambitious loyalists a predictable and potentially lucrative career track within the party-state apparatus. Meanwhile, targeted social programs rewarded PRI supporters. The PRI's coalition was thus held together by corruption (which enriched the governing elite), patronage (which rewarded bureaucrats and party cadres), and pork barreling (which solidified the regime's mass base). Top levels of the regime were populated by rival political factions—vaguely associated with differences in ideology and background—who jockeyed for power and influence.²

Key to the durability of this political system was the peculiar nature of the Mexican presidency. Although the rules of the political game expressly forbade them from extending their tenure, Mexican presidents enjoyed untrammelled power during that time. They could reward friends, indulge their avarice, bask in public adulation, and craft national policies. They could even handpick their own successor (the famous *dedazo*)—a right that helped ensure them protection from punishment after they left office. Presidents could thus stamp their imprimatur on Mexican history, acquire enough wealth to assure themselves comfortable retirement, and retire without fear of reprisal against themselves or their (ill-gotten) property.

Three aspects of the Mexican regime, then, made it “perfect.” First, its facade of liberal-democratic institutions and its elaborate network of state-corporatist associations helped fragment and isolate opposition groups. Second, its concentration of authority in one institution, the presidency, provided a mechanism for the definitive resolution of conflict between members of the ruling elite. Third, its institutionalized mechanisms for power transfer—no reelection plus the *dedazo*—solved the succession problem that has historically plagued authoritarian regimes. Mexicans could thus experience a change of *government* (with all that that implied) without a change of *regime*. Periodic changes in government in turn made it all the more difficult for opposition groups to mount sustained protests against the system.

THE RISE OF A RENT-SEEKING REGIME

Over the years, scholars have analyzed many aspects of this remarkable political system—its revolutionary origins, enduring legitimacy, state-corporatist pillars, one-party dominance, institutionalized mechanisms for leadership succession, hyper-presidentialism, and liberal trappings.³ One underemphasized element in most academic analyses, however, is the rent-seeking nature of Mexico's old regime.⁴ The regime was, from its inception, a vehicle for dividing up the economic pie among its leaders and supporters.

Founded in the aftermath of the assassination of strongman Alvaro Obregón, Mexico's ruling party represented an attempt to distribute the spoils of victory among surviving leaders of the Mexican Revolution. In 1928–29, President Plutarco Elías Calles hit upon the inspired idea of creating a single political party that would serve as a sort of coordinating committee for the country's leading revolutionary generals. Rival chieftains would cede direct control over their areas in exchange for personal security, dominance of the local party structure in their area, and a share of the national spoils. The main purpose of this arrangement was to moderate elite conflict over national office and restore political stability.

The system was consolidated after President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) broadened the state's role in the economy and nationalized the petroleum industry. Increased federal revenues and patronage opportunities permitted the party-state to co-opt local elites in some areas and to buy off potential rivals. Social reforms and land redistribution introduced by Cárdenas, which purported to make good on the promises of the revolution, legitimated the regime and assured it a mass base of support. Meanwhile, the expansion of the state's economic role provided a career path for party loyalists and circumscribed the social space in which autonomous centers of power could emerge.⁵

By the 1940s, then, the basic features of Mexico's rent-seeking regime were in place. Most potential opponents (such as the Church and the private sector) made their peace with the ruling party in exchange for some measure of autonomy and protection. Groups with preferential access to the state apparatus (ruling party politicians, local power brokers, government employees, large-scale quasi-monopolistic enterprises, the establishment media, the labor aristocracy, peasant communities aligned with the PRI, etc.) benefited from a broad array of state subsidies. Groups without this access (owners of small and medium-size

businesses, professionals, non-union laborers, urban marginals, peasants in villages not favored by the PRI, consumers, etc.) paid the direct and indirect costs of these subsidies.

In this sense, Mexico's party-state acted as a gigantic, pork-barreling political machine, soaking the bulk of population and selectively rewarding its leaders and adherents. The fundamental division in authoritarian Mexico was thus not between rich and poor—or even between different classes and economic sectors—but rather between groups and communities that were allied with the ruling party and those that were not. The regime's political coalition cut across classes, sectors, regions, and the traditional ideological spectrum.⁶ So did cliques (known as *camarillas*) within the regime itself.⁷

None of this is to deny that the distribution of economic resources in Mexico was extraordinarily unequal or that some factions within the ruling coalition were more sympathetic to state intervention in the economy than others. Ideological cleavages did exist, both inside and outside the regime. But in authoritarian Mexico, they were secondary to the fundamental division between regime (with all its penetrating tentacles) and the rest of society.

For this reason, criticisms of the government from a leftist or even radical perspective were not systematically persecuted. Marxist publications were sometimes tolerated, and Mexico's leftist intelligentsia were allowed to play the role of domesticated critics, mouthing tired paradigms and predictable laments. In fact, their laments constituted an important part of the system itself. They distracted attention from the real nature of the Mexican regime and helped the political establishment to frame every issue in terms of "Left" and "Right" (with the PRI, of course, near the center). As long as critics limited their analyses to this familiar ideological dimension, their erudite tracts were permissible; often, they were even rewarded or brought into the system in formal ways.⁸ In other words, ideological criticisms of the regime were tolerated precisely because they missed the fundamental dynamics of the system. By contrast, direct criticism of the president or documentation of the extent of official corruption struck at the heart of the regime and was sternly punished.

THE BREAKDOWN OF A RENT-SEEKING REGIME

Mexico's old regime proved remarkably stable and resilient. It lasted so long because its various pieces reinforced each other and because no

foreign powers intervened to dismantle it. Two factors, however, placed increasing and ultimately fatal strains on the rent-seeking system.

The first of these was economic crisis brought on by the exhaustion of the regime's nationalist-populist economic growth model. Initially, revolutionary institutions—social reform, the absorption of local elites, state corporatism, etc.—ensured political stability. As a result, investment (public, private, and especially foreign) increased, and the Mexican economy grew steadily. For a thirty-year period known as the Mexican Miracle (1940–70), living standards for the bulk of Mexico's population improved.

But corruption and statism had inevitable costs. Businesses (both state monopolies and protected private firms) became uncompetitive internationally; subsidies defied economic rationality; investment decisions followed a political rather than a financial logic. Because the system contained no firm internal checks on corruption, even the portions of public administration that had originally been insulated from political manipulation—such as macroeconomic policy—were ultimately colonized and politicized. These problems were exacerbated by the expansion of the state apparatus during the administration of Luis Echeverría (1970–76), only temporarily deferred by the oil boom of the late 1970s, and exacerbated again by fantastic overborrowing during the López-Portillo administration (1976–82). By the early 1980s, fifty years of graft, cronyism, patronage, and pork barreling had sabotaged Mexico's economy. As memories of the revolution faded, and with it the regime's historical source of legitimacy, these economic problems loomed even larger.

Although it was triggered in part by falling oil prices and rising international interest rates, the national bankruptcy of 1982 symbolized the collapse of the old economic model. For much of Mexico's business community, insolvency demonstrated the necessity of fundamental reforms in the country's debt-ridden and state-dominated economy. For Mexicans in general, it underscored the extent of economic mismanagement under PRI rule. And for Mexico's ruling elite, it highlighted the magnitude of the economic problems they confronted.

In the context of structural crisis, the PRI's heterogeneous coalition became hopelessly expensive. No longer could the regime afford to extend subsidies to broad sectors of society. Consequently, it began to deal out certain elements of the old growth coalition: peasants, organized labor, and eventually employees of state-owned companies and the federal bureaucracy. Ensuing clashes over leadership selection, political re-

form, and economic policy provoked a schism in the regime, leading to the defection of a portion of the PRI's leftist-nationalist wing in 1987–88. Headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of former president Lázaro Cárdenas, and veteran politician Porfirio Muñoz-Ledo, this group launched an independent presidential bid in 1988. Eventually, it formed the nucleus of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).⁹

The second factor working against the system was also rooted in economic changes. Like authoritarian governments in a number of other countries (Spain, South Korea, etc.), Mexico's regime was partly undone by its own initial successes.¹⁰ Although economic growth helped maintain the regime's legitimacy for several decades, it also wrought a series of demographic transformations that made one-party rule less tenable: urbanization, increasing literacy and education, the expansion of mass communication, and other changes that political scientists have long associated with democracy.¹¹

In Mexico, these demographic shifts directly undermined the regime's state-corporatist instruments of social control. Urbanization and the growth of the service sector, for instance, created new social classes that were not linked to the PRI.¹² By the 1980s, when economic growth collapsed, Mexico was no longer a nation of hapless peasants easily manipulated by a paternalistic state, as the country's political leadership continued to behave.

The same demographic changes that eroded state corporatism also encouraged dealignment from the PRI on the electoral front. The ruling party's share of the vote began a long secular decline in the 1960s, especially among urban, well-educated, and politically informed voters frustrated with one-party rule.¹³ The main beneficiary of these defections was the conservative National Action Party (PAN), which had strong roots in certain parts of the country. But detachment from the ruling party ultimately benefited virtually *any* opposition party that seemed to have a chance of defeating the PRI, regardless of its ideological orientation.¹⁴ By the 1980s, ruling party officials frequently had to resort to electoral fraud to defend themselves from increasingly vigorous opposition challenges. Fraud in turn exacerbated criticism of the regime from opposition parties, civil society, and the Catholic Church.¹⁵

MEXICO'S POLITICAL TRANSITION

The contested elections of 1988—in which PRI candidate Carlos Salinas was declared the winner over Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas amid widespread

allegations of fraud—represented a crucial turning point for Mexico's political system. The regime's legitimacy had been eroding steadily; it now collapsed. The alleged fraud of 1988 triggered mass protests and increasing social mobilization.

In this context, President Salinas was forced to seek an accord with the PAN in order to pass a series of dramatic social and economic reforms. These revisions swept away most core elements of PRI doctrine and committed the country's leadership to a policy of market-oriented reform and political restructuring. Constitutional amendments ended land reform and repudiated the PRI's traditional anti-clericalism. Neo-liberal measures like privatization and the negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement signaled the abandonment of the country's nationalistic development model. Internal changes within the ruling party undermined its corporatist pillars by attempting to replace functional with geographically based membership. Finally, selective recognition of opposition electoral victories—aimed at securing foreign and PAN support—eroded the PRI's monopoly over public office and thus the regime's internal system of reward and punishment. By the early 1990s, then, the old post-revolutionary regime was gone. The fight was on over what would replace it.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW INSTITUTIONS

Salinas sought to modernize the country's economy and rejuvenate its institutions in order to retain power, not surrender it to opposition parties. His goal was to rebuild the ruling party on a new social foundation, securing support for the regime through renewed economic growth and the investment of privatization proceeds in politically targeted community projects (the Solidarity program).¹⁶ In other words, his objective was to replace an ossified, decrepit set of authoritarian institutions with a new set of authoritarian institutions based on different economic fundamentals.

His efforts proved temporarily successful. The PRI swept Mexico's 1991 midterm legislative elections with 61% of the national vote, and one year later, the president's approval ratings reached 80%. The PRI even managed to win the 1994 presidential elections without systematic recourse to fraud.

Salinas' attempts at authoritarian rejuvenation, however, ended in failure. Economic growth remained sluggish, and market-oriented reforms exacerbated already sharp socioeconomic inequalities. Opposi-

tion and civic mobilization accelerated throughout the country; the mass media became increasingly independent; and the regime—dependent on foreign capital flows to maintain macroeconomic balance—proved reluctant to employ widespread repression. Meanwhile, an armed guerrilla movement emerged in Chiapas, and political infighting culminated in the assassination of two senior ruling party officials in 1994. Finally, precipitous devaluation of the Mexican peso at the end of 1994 plunged the country into renewed economic and political crisis. By late 1995, newly inaugurated President Ernesto Zedillo faced political cannibalism within the ruling party, mass unrest, guerrilla insurgency, mounting violence, and—for the first time in over two decades—rumors of a military coup attempt. In the words of journalist Andrés Oppenheimer, Mexico was “bordering on chaos.”¹⁷

In this context, the Zedillo administration agreed to negotiate a series of sweeping constitutional reforms with the country’s main opposition parties. Most significantly, these measures (known collectively as the “Reform of the State”) guaranteed the autonomy of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), a virtual fourth branch of government in charge of supervising elections. They thus committed the regime to fairer political competition and paved the way for opposition electoral victory at the national level.

The Zedillo administration accepted opposition demands for political reform reluctantly and grudgingly. Nevertheless, it did accept them. Mexico’s rulers *could* have resisted meaningful political reform at the risk of igniting a social conflagration. Indeed, PRI hard-liners repeatedly attempted to block political reform, using ruling party control over Congress to reject some of the measures to which the president and the opposition parties had previously agreed. Under the circumstances, a different Mexican president—one more intimately linked with nefarious practices of the old regime—might well have made a different decision. In that case, mounting conflict might well have plunged the country into massive violence, as it did at the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

Instead, elite compromise led to democratization. In the legislative elections of 1997, the first held under the new rules of the game, opposition parties wrested control of the lower house of Congress from the PRI. Their victory ended nearly seventy years of one-party rule and ushered in a new era of multi-party government. Three years later, the dramatic triumph of opposition candidate Vicente Fox in the presidential elections of 2000 confirmed Mexico’s transition to democracy.

THE PECULIARITIES OF MEXICAN DEMOCRATIZATION

This thumbnail sketch sacrifices much of the context and nuance of Mexico's political transition. Future studies will fill in its gaps and add nuance to certain points. But several elements of Mexico's political transition deserve special emphasis.

First, democratization did not proceed at the same pace across all regions and institutions in Mexico. In some areas of the country, the political environment was quite open and competitive by the end of the 1980s.¹⁸ In other zones, however, repression remained palpable, and the PRI's old clientelistic network continued to operate throughout the 1990s. Ironically, these regional disparities were sometimes exacerbated by the breakdown of the old regime at the federal level, which gave local bosses (known as *caciques*) the opportunity to solidify control over their fiefdoms.¹⁹

The pace of political change also varied substantially across different spheres of governance. Although Mexico's electoral regime was quite fair and competitive by 1996–97, other institutions of governance remained much less open. The federal judiciary and bureaucracy, for instance, remained firmly under PRI and presidential control through December 2000 (when Fox took office).

As a result of this patchwork pattern of democratization, the elections of 1997 did not represent the end of Mexico's political transition. A range of political actors—opposition party leaders, civic activists, PRI hard-liners, technocratic reformers, independent journalists, and leftist insurgents—continued to contest exactly what type of democracy would ultimately take root in Mexico. At stake in these struggles was how fast the process of institutional restructuring would proceed and how far it would ultimately go.

A second aspect of Mexico's transition that deserves attention is the role played by particular catalytic events. Economic modernization from 1940 to 1970 clearly provided the social basis for regime change, and economic crisis in the 1980s undoubtedly increased popular disenchantment. But there was an important step between these two larger structural influences and political mobilization. In the Mexican case, the timing and intensity of popular protests was often shaped by dramatic events that highlighted the regime's failings. These events provided a crucial linkage between underlying structural changes and organized political action.

One notorious such event was the 1968 massacre of student dem-

onstrators in Tlatelolco Plaza, on the eve of the Mexico City Olympics. The massacre convinced a segment of Mexico's intelligentsia that the regime was fundamentally incapable of accommodating pressures for reform. Many would subsequently seek avenues for political participation outside the regime, in independent newspapers, social movements, and even guerrilla groups. Tlatelolco also had an important polarizing influence within Mexico's ruling elite, contributing to more intense conflict within the PRI and the politicization of previously insulated sections of the bureaucracy.²⁰

A second watershed event was the national bankruptcy of 1982, which contributed to the defection of a portion of the business and professional class.²¹ In response to the bankruptcy, and to the nationalization of the banks that followed it, some businessmen who had previously avoided electoral politics definitively cast their lot with the PAN.²² These included figures like Manuel Clouthier, the PAN's charismatic 1988 presidential candidate, who in turn recruited a previously apolitical Vicente Fox.

A third crucial event was the devastating 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, which galvanized Mexican civil society. Over the next decade, *capitalinos* (residents of the metropolis) would found dozens of civic organizations, many of which had their roots in the self-help groups that sprang up after the quake. The earthquake also had an important effect on perceptions of Mexican society by elites both inside and outside the regime, leading them to rethink their beliefs about potential for spontaneous popular mobilization.²³

The 1988 campaign, and the fraudulent elections that concluded it, represented a fourth catalytic event. Increasing numbers of Mexicans became engaged in the political process in a way that directly challenged the system. This was true not only for leftist followers of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, but also for those activists who had been lured into electoral politics by the candidacy of Manuel Clouthier. The disastrous failure of the regime to secure a credible victory also gave rise to Mexico's main electoral watchdog groups, most notably Alianza Cívica (Civic Alliance).

The tumultuous events of 1994 played a crucial role in turning Mexican public opinion decisively against the regime. The January uprising in Chiapas struck a chord with leftists in civil society and the press. The assassinations of PRI candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio and PRI general secretary José Francisco Ruiz-Massieu—crimes in which the complicity of other ruling party officials was widely suspected—heightened mass

suspicion of the PRI. The Mexican peso crisis and ensuing recession demolished public faith in the Salinas administration's program of economic reform. Finally, the scandals that followed many of these events in 1995–96 helped to delegitimize the regime.

A third noteworthy aspect of Mexico's political transition concerns the role of mass pressure and popular organization. Political elites forged Mexico's new political system through negotiation, deliberation, and compromise—often in private and sometimes in secret. But opposition leaders were only able to insist on democratic reforms because the specter of mass unrest compelled moderate elements of the old regime to seek an accommodation with their political adversaries.²⁴ It would be misleading, therefore, to view democratization as a gift to the Mexican people from an enlightened ruling establishment. Rather, it was the product of mobilization by millions of ordinary Mexicans who pushed forward a process that had stalled several times before.

One final feature of Mexico's political transition that bears mention is the role of chance (*fortuna*). Despite the ex-post reasoning that sometimes characterizes analysis of democratization, outcomes in Mexico were simply not predetermined or even predictable a priori. In 1988, the notion that Mexico's old regime was to become a democracy within a decade would have sounded far-fetched at best. As late as 1995, many observers were forecasting a political train wreck rather than a peaceful political transition. The point is not that most Mexicanists were especially bad at making predictions; rather, it was simply impossible to predict how regime change in Mexico would play out. This is particularly true of the second piece of Mexico's political transition—the establishment and consolidation of democratic institutions. By 1988, the breakdown of Mexico's old regime was likely, perhaps inevitable. But nothing guaranteed that it would be replaced by a functioning democracy. Under only slightly different circumstances—for instance, had Salinas chosen a different man to replace Colosio in 1994—Mexico's political transition could well have ended in ungovernability or even civil war. A healthy dose of luck played an important role in ensuring that the outcome was democracy instead.

CONCLUSION

Mexico's political system grew out of the exigencies of the post-revolutionary period, when rival *caudillos* (strongmen) dominated different regions of the country. Through the creation of a single coordi-

nating institution—the ruling party—local bosses and military chieftains were lured into a national system in exchange for a share of the spoils. Spoils were in turn secured by an enormous expansion of the state's economic role, including land reform and the nationalization of the oil industry.

This system lasted because its various elements reinforced one another, and because no foreign power intervened to dismantle it. But it began to break down when economic stagnation caused by statism, corruption, and a changing world economy undermined economic growth, thus limiting the regime's capacity to co-opt potential opponents. The combination of this new economic constraint with the social consequences of modernization plunged the system into crisis and, ultimately, political transition. A number of factors, including increasing independence in the media, then shaped the course of that transition.

Even under the weight of these forces, though, the old regime proved remarkably resilient. Mexico's political transition did not really begin until 1988, when Carlos Salinas won the presidency over leftist candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas amidst widespread allegations of fraud. And it was not until the political reforms of 1996, the PRI's loss of the lower house of Congress in 1997, and its defeat in the presidential elections of 2000 that a democratic system was truly established. In the meantime, government officials often continued to rely on traditional political practices—including those practices that concerned the media.

Media Control under the Perfect Dictatorship

I do not ask for silence, the accomplice of the negative. I ask, simply and straightforwardly, that importance be given to what is most important: the positive . . . Let's not hear any more about disorders and crimes in Mexico. . . . Let's hear, alongside this distressing news, about the brilliant successes, the accomplishments, the steps we have taken on the road to progress.

—President Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz, Speech to the National Congress of Provincial Publishers on Freedom of the Press Day, June 7, 1968, cited in Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida*, p. 119

All the essential traits of Mexico's political system were reflected in the country's press. Early on during the period of authoritarian rule, the media were colonized and used as a vehicle for private gain and political legitimization. Lucrative broadcasting concessions were doled out to regime supporters with the dual purpose of benefiting political insiders and ensuring favorable coverage. Meanwhile, different factions of the political elite founded or purchased their own newspapers to advance personal and policy agendas, supporting them through an array of government subsidies. In this environment, a wide range of ideological perspectives and a certain amount of criticism "within the system" were tolerated, even encouraged.¹ Even anti-system rhetoric occasionally surfaced, as everything from religious radio programs to radical leftist publications (including at times the Communist Party newspaper *El Machete*) were allowed to present their points of view.² But core features of the political system—presidential authority, official corruption, electoral fraud, etc.—remained decidedly off-limits to the press. Mexico's

media thus mirrored the PRI's amorphous political coalition, covering a broad ideological spectrum without jeopardizing the fundamentals of the regime.

Mexico's old system of media control has antecedents that stretch back to the pre-revolutionary era, when the daily *El Imparcial* succumbed to the blandishments of then-president Porfirio Díaz and accepted government "subsidies." But the current system really dates from the early post-war period, when presidents Manuel Avila-Camacho (1940–46) and Miguel Alemán (1946–52) encouraged the corruption of news media and the consolidation of media ownership in the hands of sympathetic private owners. As a result, Mexico's media regime gravitated toward more subtle types of control, rather than traditional forms of censorship (as in the early post-revolutionary period) or overt state ownership (as President Lázaro Cárdenas might have preferred).³ As in the larger political system, the flexibility and effectiveness of this style of media control made it sustainable: it permitted ideological pluralism and occasional criticism of the government without compromising official control of the press.

As with other institutions in Mexico, control over the press was achieved mainly through co-optation. Although Mexico's political leadership sometimes employed more direct instruments of manipulation and repression, it used these instruments with greater reticence than most autocratic regimes. As one analyst put it in 1995:

Like most institutions in the country, the Mexican news media is nominally regulated by legal tenets, but it functions within a system of ill-defined practices. Such a system creates an inconsistent environment of informal rules whose net result is the promotion of self-censorship. This atmosphere is fed by a mixture of negative practices such as stringent regulations, threats against journalists and occasional physical intervention in news organizations. More often, however, persuasion hinges on positive incentives, including subsidies and economic rewards to journalists and media owners in exchange for favorable coverage of government policies and actions.⁴

In other words, Mexico's system of media control was skewed toward less vicious forms of censorship. Physical repression, direct government ownership, and official punishment for receiving banned information were all rare. By contrast, corruption and manipulation of broadcasting concessions were extremely common.⁵ While relatively mild—most of the time—these forms of media control in Mexico proved remarkably effective. As a senior editor at Mexico's principal newsmagazine, *Pro-*

ceso, put it in 1987, “The government is like a defender in a soccer game. He stays on the man with the ball all the time, making sure he never scores a goal. It’s not necessarily a dramatic thing, but it’s constant.”⁶

This peculiar system of media control persisted for at least five decades, with different elements of emphasis and intensity.⁷ Particular presidents, interior ministers, and press secretaries added their own idiosyncratic twists to the system, and certain elements evolved over time.⁸ The tenures of Mexican presidents in the early post-war era, for instance, were marked by the systematic corruption of news media and the concentration of television in the hands of pro-government entrepreneurs. State control tightened after a series of strikes at the end of the administration of Adolfo Ruiz-Cortines (1952–58) and also during the presidency of Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz (1964–70). The administration of leftist president Luis Echeverría (1970–76) was characterized by generalized intolerance of dissent and official attempts to assert control over privately owned media.⁹ President José López-Portillo’s (1976–82) attitude toward the media reflected the rise and fall of his political reformist initiatives, oscillating between openness and censorship.¹⁰ President Miguel de la Madrid (1982–1988) focused on constraining media coverage of potentially damaging topics: popular discontent with economic austerity, the spread of drug-related corruption, the growing mobilization of civil society, and the regime’s increasing recourse to electoral fraud. President Carlos Salinas’ term (1988–1994) witnessed incipient liberalizing measures that followed from his political and economic reforms. But liberalization was accompanied by a pervasive preoccupation with the president’s image and agenda that dictated thorough and meticulous “management” of the news media.¹¹ As a result, salient features of the old system remained intact, and traditional rules of the game continued to govern chunks of the media into the first half of the Zedillo administration (1994–2000).

The cozy relationship between establishment media owners and political leaders was occasionally disrupted by factional disputes within the ruling coalition. Sometimes, government officials also deliberately punished rivals who happened to be media owners, conveying the illusion of conflict between the press and the regime. For instance, private media owners associated with conservative factions of the PRI came into conflict with the Echeverría administration in the 1970s. Typically, however, such factional disputes were resolved through collusive bargains between media owners and government officials. In the case of television

in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, the conflict did not end in nationalization, stricter state regulation, or a greater public orientation in Mexican television. Rather, it led to an arrangement in which Mexico's dominant private network (Televisa) agreed to provide the government with 12.5% of all airtime in lieu of paying taxes.

More problematic for the old system of press control was the emergence of independent media who chose to reject government subsidies and proved they could survive without them. Where the old rent-seeking regime failed to secure compliance with official demands, Mexico's political elite relied on a different set of tools. Predictably, these included more traditional forms of censorship and press control: manipulation of access, blacklisting, harassment, and outright repression. Both the typical and exceptional mechanisms are discussed below.

A CULTURE OF COLLUSION

About thirty to forty families own the Mexican media and they are predisposed to agree with the PRI. They are conservative, status quo businessmen who basically concede, "This system works for me."

—Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis
Changing Patterns, p. 21

One of the most powerful elements of government control was the confluence of interests between media owners and PRI leaders.¹² Media owners wanted, above all, a hospitable business environment in which they could prosper economically and protect their status as members of the country's elite. In order to prosper economically, they needed the state to provide them with broadcasting concessions, subsidized inputs, government advertising, protection from competition, and lucrative business opportunities—including those outside the media itself. To safeguard a system that met these requirements, and to protect their own position within it, they were willing to serve as the regime's chief informational vehicle. As Mexican editor Raymundo Riva-Palacio reflected on this generation of media owners: "I believe that the media, in general . . . wished to maintain the status quo, which for the owners and a good number of directors, has produced a substantial amount of income, a very comfortable lifestyle, and a privileged place among the elites."¹³

Some of Mexico's leading establishment papers, such as *Excelsior* and *El Universal*, were founded during the revolutionary period and tradi-

tionally maintained close ties to the PRI.¹⁴ Others—the *El Sol* chain, *Novedades*, *El Diario de México*, *El Día*, *El Heraldo de México*, etc.—have been intertwined with the regime since their inception or repurchase by members of the political elite over the last few decades. Gabriel Alarcón's conservative *El Heraldo de México*, for instance, was born *oficialista*: its first issue featured official praise for the new paper and displayed an oversized picture of then-president Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz on the front page.¹⁵

Collusion between media owners and the PRI was especially pronounced in broadcasting, where concessions could be divvied up among political allies and sympathizers. When television emerged in the early 1950s, for instance, President Miguel Alemán (1946–52) and several of his associates obtained the original licenses.¹⁶ With the absorption of another television channel owned by a group of Monterrey-based industrialists in 1972, the consortium officially became Televisa.¹⁷

Televisa flourished under authoritarianism. The company remained a virtual monopoly until the 1990s, claiming over 80% of the television audience and almost that much of television advertising revenue. Over the years, successive concessions helped Televisa reinforce its hegemony in television and establish a secure position in related industries.¹⁸ In 1974, the company was awarded Mexico's first cable television licenses, a technology it continues to dominate through its subsidiary Cablevisión. In 1980–82, Televisa secured control of 158 government-built satellite signal-capturing stations, as well as access to the government's Morelos satellite (which was launched in 1985). In December 1992, Televisa was awarded sixty-two vacant television frequencies without a competitive tender, allowing the corporation to complete a second national network.¹⁹ And in 1994, Televisa received two channels for high-definition television (HDTV) in Mexico.²⁰ Critics referred to the corporation as a private "Ministry of Education," "Ministry of Information," and even "Ministry of Truth."²¹

To be sure, Televisa's relationship with government officials was sometimes stormy. Closely aligned with the Alemán clique within the ruling party, Televisa came into conflict with the government whenever the PRI's left wing controlled the presidency. During the administrations of Luis Echeverría (1970–76) and José López-Portillo (1976–82), Televisa had to fend off various government threats to tax, regulate, and even nationalize the television industry. But rather than being viewed as conflicts between regime opponents and supporters, or between the private sector and the state, these disputes are best seen as the product of

ongoing rivalry between competing factions of Mexico's ruling elite. For more than two decades, Televisa and the PRI were deeply intertwined, with the network depending on the regime for concessions and infrastructure development, and the regime relying on Televisa for political marketing.²²

These links became even tighter during the administration of President Carlos Salinas (1988–94). Televisa launched an all-out defense of Salinas during his contested 1988 presidential bid and relentlessly supported his administration's modernizing, pro-business policies. At a fund-raising dinner in February 1993, when several leading Mexican businessmen were asked to donate \$25 million each to the PRI's 1994 presidential campaign, Emilio Azcárraga Jr. responded that he had made so much money during Salinas' term that he was prepared to contribute even more.²³ With public statements like "I am the number two *priista* (PRI supporter) in the country," "We are soldiers of the PRI," and "Televisa considers itself part of the governmental system," Azcárraga personified the collusion between media owners and the regime.²⁴

In this environment, official control over the media was generally assured without familiar forms of censorship. Direct state ownership of the media, for instance, was relatively limited. The state did manage Mexico's principal news agency, Notimex, as well as a daily newspaper, *El Nacional*, and (until the 1990s) public television and radio stations. But Mexico's one-party regime normally preferred to sponsor sympathetic private media or, when necessary, to replace independent owners with pro-regime individuals. During the Echeverría administration, for example, the government underwrote the purchase of a television network belonging to Monterrey-based industrialists, as well as the acquisition of the *El Sol* newspaper chain by its current owner, Mario Vásquez-Raña. Subsequent administrations supported the founding of pro-government papers in Mérida, Monterrey, and other provincial cities by providing credit, technical assistance, and subsidized newsprint to sympathetic dailies.

The Salinas years provide a series of classic examples. In 1989, Salinas successfully coerced Manuel Becerra-Acosta, director of the semi-independent daily *unomásuno*, into selling his newspaper to a more sympathetic owner.²⁵ Three years later, one apparent condition of the privatization of Mexico's state-owned television network—now Televisión Azteca—was the acceptance by the network's new owners of Raúl Salinas (President Carlos Salinas' elder brother) as a silent partner. And during the last year of Salinas' administration (1993–94), approximately

three-quarters of radio concessions were awarded—either directly or through front men—to Raúl himself.²⁶ Although the primary purpose of such machinations was often personal gain, they had the additional benefit of keeping the media in friendly, private hands.

THE PHILANTHROPIC OGRE

Pay for them to beat up on me? Gentlemen, I think not!

—President José López-Portillo, announcing the withdrawal of government advertising from independent periodicals, on Freedom of the Press Day, June 7, 1982, cited in Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida*, pp. 217–18

In addition to structuring the media market so as to benefit pro-government owners, Mexico's "philanthropic ogre" also channeled funds directly to the press in exchange for favorable coverage.²⁷ One of the most important ways it did so was through the selective allocation of government advertising. Official publicity was the mainstay of most pro-government periodicals throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and despite the Mexican state's perennial fiscal crisis, government advertising remained substantial in the 1980s and 1990s. In the print media, the state provided about half of all advertising revenues—whether through parastatal companies, state-corporatist bodies, the official party, or federal, state, and local government agencies.²⁸ In the broadcast media, the PRI and a series of separate state agencies traditionally ranked among the top advertisers in the country.²⁹ Furthermore, because Mexico's largest private companies were semi-monopolistic enterprises whose competitive position depended in large measure on government policies, a portion of purely private sector advertising remained susceptible to political manipulation. Leading Mexican banks and firms—including Telvisa itself—were major advertisers in pro-government newspapers and magazines, including publications whose limited circulations would have hardly recommended them as marketing vehicles. The party-state thus retained broad direct and indirect control over advertising revenues.

Perhaps the most striking form of official advertising was the *gacetilla*, a paid insert typically prepared by the government and disguised

as a bona fide newspaper article. *Gacetillas* varied in cost, depending on (1) the importance of the medium in which they were published, (2) the extent to which they were disguised, and (3) the importance of the political moment in which they appeared. In the 1990s, for instance, a *gacetilla* might cost some \$2,000 for a quarter of a page in the political section of a medium-size capital daily; an equivalent spot on the front page would run approximately four times as much.³⁰ Front-page *gacetillas* with bylines and photographs, however, could be worth as much as \$30,000 in larger publications, and some papers even sold their lead headlines for far more. Coupled with other forms of official subsidy, these sums provided substantial rewards for publications that maintained a pro-establishment line.

Government largesse meant that a plethora of pro-government newspapers could operate without serious regard to circulation, commercial advertising, or other normal requisites of financial viability.³¹ These “ghost papers”—including at least seven Mexico City dailies still in circulation—were published and displayed in newsstands every day but had very few real readers.³² Even in the 1990s, only about a dozen of Mexico’s 250-odd newspapers could have survived without direct or indirect government assistance.³³

The dependence of most newspapers on official advertising rendered them extremely vulnerable to government pressures. Not surprisingly, the government frequently used its ample advertising budget to castigate independent publications and reward sympathetic ones. One of the most celebrated episodes occurred on June 7, 1982, when President López-Portillo announced that the government would no longer advertise in periodicals deemed hostile to the regime. The regime also employed partial or selective boycotts against the leftist newspaper *La Jornada* (in 1991 and 1994), the conservative magazine *Impacto* (in 1986), and other publications.³⁴ During the Salinas administration, for instance, Banamex withdrew advertising from *El Economista* after the paper criticized government economic policies on its front page.³⁵

Where advertising revenue alone was not a sufficient incentive, the government often supplemented it with other enticements. Tax forgiveness, subsidized utilities, free service from the government-owned news agency Notimex, bulk purchases by government agencies, credit at below market rates, and cheap newsprint were all rewards for suitably pliant periodicals.³⁶ The provision of subsidized credit to Mexico’s most well-known establishment paper, *Excelsior*, is a case in point. On April 8, 1986, the Banco Nacional de Obras y Servicios Públicos (BanObras)

loaned *Excélsior* some 1.4 billion pesos (more than \$1 million) at subsidized rates to buy a new printing press. During the first fifteen months of its sixteen-month repayment schedule, *Excélsior* managed to make only two monthly payments. Nevertheless, the government loaned *Excélsior* another 3 billion pesos in July 1987, and by February 28, 1992, the paper owed some 16 billion pesos. Three years later, the ailing cooperative signed a promissory note for just over 16 billion pesos. With *Excélsior* now quite bankrupt, that sum is unlikely to be repaid. Consequently, these successive loans represented a total transfer of more than \$3 million to that decaying, outdated enterprise. Smaller loans to other pro-government papers were also arranged through BanObras and other government lending agencies.³⁷

In the print media, even more powerful than control over credit was the government's ability to provide subsidized newsprint. Until the initiation of full-scale economic reform under President Carlos Salinas in the 1990s, production and importation of newsprint remained under the monopoly control of a parastatal company, PIPSA.³⁸ Outside Mexico, the cliché was that PIPSA provided the government with a crucial lever of control over the print media by restricting the supply of newsprint to anti-government publications. PIPSA was used in this way occasionally, typically as part of a broader government campaign against specific publications: the weekly *Presente* under President Miguel Alemán in 1951; the Cuban-subsidized *Política* in June 1962; a synarchist publication called *Orden* in 1969; the independent daily *El Norte* during 1979; and the conservative weekly *Impacto* (as well as allied magazines *Valle de Lágrimas* and *Alarma*) from April 26 through June 1986.³⁹ But like most traditional mechanisms of control, PIPSA was used more often as a carrot than as a stick. Following its creation in 1935, PIPSA provided subsidized newsprint through a variety of formal and informal means: offering generous terms of credit, absorbing the costs of shipping and storage, or simply selling paper at reduced prices. An ingenious array of financial devices were employed to disguise these subsidies, from indexed prices during inflationary periods to tax exemptions to creative depreciation schedules to manipulation of the exchange rate. All told, the scope of subsidy to pro-government papers sometimes reached fantastic proportions—*Excélsior*, for instance, was often deeply in debt to PIPSA.

Unsurprisingly, whenever PIPSA's legal mandate expired, most newspaper owners pleaded for its continuation.⁴⁰ Without PIPSA to act as intermediary, Mexican newspapers would have had to face the vertigi-

nous fluctuations and generally higher newsprint prices of the international market. As a result, the threat to withdraw this subsidy in itself proved an important tool of government influence, similar to the selective use of official advertising. On several occasions, overly feisty papers suddenly lost drawing rights on PIPSA's account and were presented a bill for their accumulated debts—a legitimate commercial response masking the underlying political rationale. Some publications, such as the semi-sensationalist *Rumor* and leftist *Motivos*, permanently lost drawing privileges on PIPSA accounts.⁴¹ Others were threatened with official reprisals on particular issues of pressing concern to the government. During President Carlos Salinas' tenure, for instance, one independent provincial daily published a front-page story implicating the government-owned oil company, Pemex, in a massive industrial accident. In the midst of sensitive trade negotiations touching on Pemex's future status, the federal government feared that such incendiary reporting would provoke a popular response and ultimately jeopardize its bargaining position. The newspaper's owner was summoned to Mexico's Interior Ministry for a thorough dressing down, and PIPSA suspended credit and newsprint delivery. Facing a one-month wait for imported newsprint, the publication found itself without enough paper to publish its next edition. Fortunately for the publication, the sort of popular protest against Pemex that the government had anticipated never materialized, and PIPSA ultimately relented.⁴²

As with government advertising, accepting special favors from PIPSA in the form of credit or pricing potentially compromised newspapers' autonomy. Slippage in payment at independent newspapers like *La Jornada* and *El Financiero*, for instance, sometimes cost these publications editorial maneuvering room. As a result, independent periodicals (such as the *El Norte-Reforma* group) preferred either to pay their bills religiously or to use imported paper. For the traditional press, subsidized newsprint was just another element of collusion.⁴³

CORRUPTION OF THE RANK AND FILE

For the bulk of Mexican journalists, the concept of "conflict of interest" does not exist in theory or practice. . . . The absence of this concept is a fundamental ingredient in the collusion between the media and the authorities. It blurs the line that should separate journalists from government spokesmen. Its absence

from journalists' code of conduct generates a chain of corruption and obligations that limits and circumscribes a reporter's everyday work.

—Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites*, p. 113

The corollary to buying off media owners was buying off their staff. Just as most publishers received ample subsidies that aligned their interests with those of the regime, so most reporters in both the print and broadcast media accepted official bribes and favors. Print reporters, for instance, traditionally depended on three sources of income.

First, and normally least important, journalists received a base salary from the medium at which they worked. These salaries were poor for most reporters and abysmally low for correspondents outside their firm's home base. One reporter formerly employed by a leading Mexico City daily described his salary there as a sort of stipend that served more to indicate institutional affiliation and gain him access to other sources of remuneration than it did to provide a living.⁴⁴

The second source of income consisted of commissions (typically between 8% and 15%) from advertising revenues procured by the reporter.⁴⁵ Journalists in the print media were thus encouraged to regard their beat as a vehicle for soliciting advertising—including the lucrative *gacetillas*—and to treat their sources as potential customers. As Raymundo Riva-Palacio noted, this practice had predictable effects on coverage: “In this way, reporters are transformed into ‘page-salesmen,’ watchful of the treatment of the sources to which they have been assigned—out of fear of losing their advertising revenue—and vulnerable to any pressures or complaints from them.”⁴⁶

The third source of income was even more compromising: the vast majority of Mexican journalists also accepted regular cash payments from the government agencies they covered. Until the 1990s, these payments—known as *embutes*, *chayotes*, or simply *chayos*—were normally passed directly to journalists once a month in plain white envelopes by officials at the agencies they covered. *Chayos* varied from \$75 to \$1,500 per month, but they normally totaled a few hundred dollars—more than the average reporter's salary.

As with *gacetillas*, the exact amount of the bribe depended on several factors: (1) the prominence of the outlet, (2) the reputation of the individual journalist, and (3) the importance of the “political moment” or the event covered. Favorable, well-placed articles extolling the virtues

of a potential presidential contender prior to the selection of the PRI's candidate could produce large bonuses. Sympathetic photographs or television images also netted relatively large sums. Presidential campaigns and trips were famously extravagant, with reporters receiving approximately \$100–\$300 at each stop and sumptuous accommodations throughout.⁴⁷

Some outsiders argue that institutionalized corruption began to unravel when President Carlos Salinas ended cash payments to journalists from the Office of the President in December 1992.⁴⁸ Chayos did decline, principally as a result of general cutbacks in government spending. But corrupt practices hardly disappeared. Payments continued at other levels of government, and bribery took on more sophisticated forms. In many cases, government functionaries simply found less transparent ways to funnel cash. For instance, officials at the Interior Ministry and Office of the President sometimes hired prominent media figures as “political consultants,” lending the ensuing payments an aura of propriety. At other times, government officials purchased advertising in low-circulation magazines owned by prominent columnists and created by them at least in part as a receptacle for official funds.⁴⁹

Some reporters who considered themselves above simple bribery, therefore, could still be won over through favors, blandishments, access to information, or similar offers. As one official at the Interior Ministry put it, “the trick to controlling the media is knowing *whom* rather than knowing *how*.”⁵⁰ For this reason, direct cash payments were only the most blatant form of official compensation. Gifts and favors—lavish Christmas baskets, plane tickets, electronic appliances allegedly related to journalistic work, etc.—often complemented *chayos*. So did the provision of scarce government services: medical procedures for family members, scholarships, public housing, etc. In March 1996, for instance, the independent daily *Reforma* published a list of reporters and columnists who enjoyed personal police protection, a prized commodity given Mexico City's crime rate. Few of those on the list had received the sort of threats that might merit such special police attention.⁵¹

In addition to gifts and favors, the government also used its control over awards and appointments to bless favored editors and ostracize critics. Reliable journalists won fame and prizes at the annual banquet held to celebrate “Freedom of the Press Day” (June 7)—an event that developed into a sort of Academy Awards for the pro-government media.⁵² Sometimes, government favors, awards, gifts, and monies became so extensive that they were difficult to distinguish from the type of col-

lusion that characterized the relationships between the regime and media owners. In its more profligate moments, the regime sprinkled cars, homes, publishing contracts, import licenses, and business concessions (such as the duty-free stores in Mexico's airports) among prominent members of the media establishment.

Certain cases of venality are legendary among reporters. One telling inventory comes from well-known journalist Raymundo Riva-Palacio:⁵³

1. The news chief of an important Mexico City daily also manages the public relations of various state governors.
2. A well-known journalist frequently mentions a particular politician in his reports because that politician has helped him finance a movie. The journalist used to do the same for a union boss that kept him on his payroll.
3. Some respected journalists do not accept cash, but they do receive honoraria for "meeting" with other famous journalists. They may also ask for favors, such as government positions for their friends and relatives.
4. A reporter assigned to cover the Commerce Department sometimes receives export-import licenses.
5. An important political columnist regularly begins his article by transcribing note cards that arrive from the Office of the President, the Interior Ministry, or the PRI.

Although bribery of journalists was never a particularly efficient form of censorship, it nevertheless represented a key component in the generalized venality that characterized Mexico's system of media control. Corruption of the rank and file thus helped to ensure official influence over the news media.⁵⁴

MANIPULATION OF ACCESS

The total subordination [of journalists] to official information has given rise to some incredible and aberrant cases. For instance, there was a radio reporter assigned to the Office of the President, who trotted behind officials every time they traveled to ask them for their comments. On one occasion, the reporter approached a Cabinet officer and requested a statement.

"What do you want me to say?" the Secretary replied. "Whatever you want," begged the reporter, "but say something!"

—Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites*, p. 106

Traditional media in Mexico practiced press-release journalism, in which reporters simply chronicled government announcements and activities without attempting independent verification or follow-up. Occasionally, however, Mexican officials were confronted with journalists who adopted a more skeptical or investigative posture. In those cases, the regime's control over information and access was crucial for maintaining its spin on events and denying copy to independent journalists. As elements of the old regime broke down and independent publications grew more prominent, manipulation of access to information and sources became an increasingly important tool of official control.

In the late 1990s, Mexican journalists often drew a distinction between (1) the government's willingness to tolerate criticism and (2) its willingness to furnish the media with information that should reasonably be considered public. In a system where judges sometimes claimed copyright over their legal decisions and presidential approval ratings were considered a state secret, this second component of press freedom remained even less developed than the first.⁵⁵ Although Mexico had no legal classification system for government documents—thus implying that all documents were legally public—in practice most touchy information was treated as if it were highly classified.⁵⁶ Basic financial data (foreign exchange reserves, government interest rates, equities trading volumes, etc.) were closely guarded, and the figures that journalists did receive were sometimes massaged to support official pronouncements.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, reporters independent enough to seek information on revenues and expenditures for government agencies (such as the National Lottery), bureaucratic operations (such as land title registration), or any subject relating to the Mexican military rapidly ran into an impenetrable wall of official silence.⁵⁸ As one editor at a semi-independent newspaper lamented in 1996: "In the United States or Europe, you can usually find someone who will answer your questions. Maybe they won't really tell you much, but after some digging and pushing, you will get some kind of response. Here, not only do they not answer your questions, they don't even answer your phone calls."⁵⁹

Predictably, access to the president and control of the president's im-

age were especially strict. Candid photographs were rare and public appearances carefully scripted.⁶⁰ As one observer described the situation:

for years, television media were not allowed to film the president. All images of the president would come from the presidential office, edited to put the best face on him. If an unflattering image slipped through, such as a blemish or a drop of saliva on the president's lip, television networks were sometimes called and asked to return the tape of the president for further editing. When the president's office is happy with a tape of the president, they can be relentless in calling the station and demanding that they air at least five minutes of a fifteen-minute speech.⁶¹

Although former president Carlos Salinas was Mexico's undisputed master of image management, earlier chief executives were also assiduous about protecting their images. For instance, when a leading Spanish journalist sought to interview former president Miguel de la Madrid, the president's press secretary struck from the pre-set agenda any reference to corruption charges against high-ranking officials, allegations of embezzlement by the president himself, and the unresolved murder of Mexico City columnist Manuel Buendía.⁶²

As with access to official advertising and other funds, access to official information was granted selectively in order to reward sympathetic media and punish independent ones. Overly frisky newspapers were expelled from the press pool and Mexico's most revered independent journalist, Julio Scherer, was banned from the presidential palace. At a crucial 1990 press conference given by former president Carlos Salinas, for instance, reporters from independent-minded publications like *El Financiero*, *El Economista*, and *Proceso* were not allowed in, and *La Jornada* was limited to one of twelve spots. Most places were awarded to reliably pro-government newspapers or broadcast media. In 1996, in a similarly glaring example of heavy-handed spin control, Mexico's Interior Ministry reportedly drew up a short "blacklist" of journalists whom government officials were expected to shun.⁶³ Such machinations encouraged press-release journalism in the pro-government media and gave the state yet another club with which to bludgeon recalcitrant, independent-minded reporters. In other words, manipulation of access complemented the array of favors and bribes that tied Mexico's media to the regime.

MONITORING AND HARASSMENT

On May 18, we published the letter of a reader that . . . questioned the current president [Carlos Salinas] . . .

On Monday, May 22, I met with Otto Granados, the President's Director of Social Communications, to discuss the issue. The atmosphere was tense and the conversation sharp. The crucial moment came when he explained to me: "I will tell you the rules under which we operate. They are respect for the President, respect for the President's image, and professionalism in your work. These are the sensible, rational rules, on the basis of which we can do business—but if you prefer others, we can work with those as well."

From that moment on, there were a number of pressure tactics. We were systematically denied accreditations; advertising orders were withdrawn, and finally, in September, even though it was impossible to prove where the order came from, we suffered severe blows to our finances when two service contracts were canceled: one for advertising and the other for machinery.

—Jesús Cantú, editor of Monterrey's *El Porvenir*, describing the circumstances that led up to his resignation in 1991, cited in Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa venida*, pp. 345–46

Most of the time, corruption and other subtle measures proved effective in controlling the media. Problems arose, however, when independent-minded media proved capable of surviving without government assistance. To rein in these renegade elements of the press, the political elite resorted to rougher methods. As Jesús Cantú's experience suggests, more overt forms of harassment sometimes supplemented government influence over advertising, newsprint, and distribution.

From the 1970s until 1996, official monitoring and disciplining of the media at the federal level were carried out by two directorates of "social communications" located within the Interior Ministry and the Office of the President.⁶⁴ Because these two entities had parallel structures and shared similar objectives, the organizational boundaries between them were not always clear.⁶⁵ In general, though, the Interior Ministry was in charge of identifying potential problems and troubleshooting, while the presidential staff handled relationships with media owners. Particularly nettlesome or intractable issues were thus passed from the Interior Ministry to the Office of the President.⁶⁶

Typically, government monitors paid as much attention to the “spin” on a story as they did to the story’s actual appearance. In 1987, for instance, Luis H. Alvarez of the opposition National Action Party (PAN) declared a hunger strike to protest electoral fraud. At a subsequent meeting of opposition political parties, a group of right-wing extremists broke into the room demanding airtime. The government promptly phoned a number of reliable media to suggest that the “real story” was the behavior of a few fanatics, rather than the widely acknowledged electoral fraud that had triggered Alvarez’s announcement and the PAN’s protest.⁶⁷

Similar “suggestions” and “reminders” were common in both the broadcasting and print media. As one analyst relates:

Generally, a call from a high-ranking government official to a media owner suggesting that a station or paper cover a story in a particular way, emphasize a certain aspect or drop a particular angle suffices. The military, for instance, was recently concerned that its image was suffering at the hands of the media. One Mexico City television news bureau said that it received a videotape this past December [1992] showing soldiers handing out Christmas presents to children, accompanied with a polite letter explaining that the military wanted to polish its image and requesting that it run the tape as a news story.⁶⁸

The same tactics were occasionally used to kill potentially damaging stories outright. One particularly notorious incident occurred as *Proceso* magazine was preparing to publish a report that lambasted then-interior minister Manuel Bartlett for alleged abuse of authority.⁶⁹ *Proceso* editors Julio Scherer and Vicente Leñero were treated to a visit from José Antonio Zorrilla, then head of Mexico’s federal police. Holding a bottle at the edge of the table, Zorrilla told them: “*Proceso* is here. Do you want it to fall off?”⁷⁰ Given Zorrilla’s reputation—he was later arrested (in June 1989) for the murder of Mexico City columnist Manuel Buendía—the warning carried some weight. *Proceso* opted not to run the story.

Phone calls and summons after the fact were more worrisome and normally indicated intense official displeasure. Editors at one provincial paper recounted how they received two separate telephone calls from the state governor over a cartoon lampooning Mexican political culture. In the course of his harangue, the governor ominously denounced the paper as an “obstacle to the governability of the state”—a charge he repeated publicly thereafter.⁷¹

One common outcome of ex-post reprimands was for the medium in question to offer (or the government to demand) the dismissal of a par-

ticular reporter or editor. Most senior journalists—even those regarded as corrupt or sympathetic to the regime—were fired at some point in their careers, and many were fired more than once. Raúl Trejo, Benjamín Wong, Manú Dornbrierer, Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, Enrique Quintana, René Delgado, and numerous others were all sacrificed by the owners of the news organization for which they worked. Wong's case is illustrative: after Mexico City's devastating 1985 earthquake, reporters examining the basement of the collapsed city attorney general's building found the bodies of at least two people with their hands tied behind their backs. The individuals in question, allegedly criminals linked to the Colombian drug cartels, had clearly not died in the earthquake. In fact, subsequent investigations suggested that they had been tortured to death. Wong, then editor of *El Universal*, ran the story on the front page and was promptly sacked.⁷²

Such dismissals were equally common in broadcasting. The 1993 campaign against independent media, orchestrated by the Salinas administration in preparation for the announcement of the PRI's next presidential candidate, is an excellent case in point. Harassment began in earnest when Enrique Quintana was fired from Stereo Cién after interviewing Eduardo Valle, a former government official who had accused the PRI of links to narcotrafficking.⁷³ In April, veteran journalist René Delgado was removed from the morning news show *Para Empezar*.⁷⁴ Only four months later, independent political activist Adolfo Aguilar-Zinzer was fired from Radio Fórmula.⁷⁵ And in September, Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, host of Radio Mil's news program *The City*, was forced to resign after he interviewed leftist opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.⁷⁶

Delgado's case offers unique insight into the difficulties that confronted truly independent-minded journalists in Mexico. Delgado began his broadcasting career in 1978 at the government-run Channel 11, but after covering a strike at General Motors two years later, he was promptly shown the door. From 1980 to 1984, he drifted between the semi-independent newspaper *unomásuno*, the University-run television station (Channel 13), and a weekly magazine called *Seminario*. Frustrated with frequent dismissals and reportedly blacklisted on government orders, Delgado withdrew from journalism entirely for nearly four years. He reemerged to join the leftist daily *La Jornada* in 1987, leaving in 1990 to help launch *El Independiente* newspaper (a project which ultimately never came to fruition). After a brief return to *La Jornada* in 1991, he moved on to the semi-independent specialty magazine *Este País*

and then to the daily radio program *Para Empezar*. At the behest of Interior Minister Patrocinio González, Delgado was sacked in 1993—not for any one incident, he believes, but simply because he was too outspoken at a time when the regime was striving to impose tighter control over the electronic media. Delgado again found refuge in the print media, this time as a columnist at the independent center-right daily *El Financiero*. In October 1994, he joined the newly launched independent daily *Reforma*, which had poached many of the top staff from *El Independiente* and *El Financiero*. Finally, in 1995, he was invited to restart *Para Empezar* (while still an editor at *Reforma*).⁷⁷

Precisely which of Delgado's frequent job changes and dismissals were the result of government pressure is difficult to determine. As one radio journalist put it, "you never know why they fired you. They say it's because of your ratings, or sometimes because your views don't correspond with the station's editorial line. But they don't tell you that such-and-such minister called and ordered the owner to run you out."⁷⁸ The capricious environment in which journalists operated thus encouraged circumspection and self-censorship—which was, of course, the ultimate goal.

Relatively gentle forms of harassment were enough to keep most errant media in line. But such tactics could take a harsher edge if they failed to have the desired effect. In broadcasting, the regime's ability to withdraw operating licenses hung like a sword of Damocles over the heads of radio and television owners. Given the Byzantine legal structure that governed Mexico's electronic media, the regime could readily find a pretext for withdrawing the license of an unruly radio or television station. A host of apparently trivial regulations, seldom enforced, could always be dredged up to serve political ends. Rules governing national content, educational programming, and commercial advertising, for instance, could all be invoked to justify government intervention. For the broadcast media, this sort of intervention (or potential intervention) was probably the most powerful instrument of government control. Although this tool was rarely used, the mere threat was extremely successful in inducing broad self-censorship.⁷⁹

In the print media, the government lacked such ready points of access once other controls had broken down. Consequently, government reprisals were more noisy and threatening. These included tax audits, threats, and overt intervention in the media themselves. Between 1950 and 1990, a handful of publications were persecuted to the point of closure: *Presente* after running afoul of President Miguel Alemán; *Pol-*

ítica after a string of government harassments and economic problems in 1966;⁸⁰ *Diario de México* in 1967, after reversing the captions on two photographs and thus portraying President Díaz-Ordaz as an ape in the zoo;⁸¹ the Communist Party's *Voz de México* in July 1968 in response to student protests; the radical leftist magazine *Por Qué?* in 1974;⁸² *ABC* of Tijuana in the second half of 1979;⁸³ and *Impacto* in 1986. One of the most celebrated cases of direct government intervention occurred in July 1976, when President Luis Echeverría orchestrated a coup at *Excelsior* (then Mexico City's leading newspaper), ejecting Julio Scherer and his team of independent-minded editors. Another significant incident came in the wake of President José López-Portillo's bank nationalization in 1982, when *El Norte* publisher Alejandro Junco was temporarily compelled to leave the country with his family.⁸⁴ Although no one was physically harmed in these interventions, they represented clear cases of official censorship.

Hard-line tactics were more common in the provinces, where local bosses (known as *caciques*) often exercised strict authoritarian control over their fiefdoms. As one editor at an independent provincial daily explained, governors who were both repressive and intelligent could exact a terrible toll on insufficiently pliable media. Repeated tax audits, capricious enforcement of industrial relations laws and building codes, indirect pressure through private advertisers, and a host of other harassment techniques—all technically legal—usually proved fatal to targeted publications.⁸⁵ And when they did not, *caciques* could resort to more brutal forms of control, including assaults by mobs and other physical attacks.⁸⁶

The vitriolic conflict between the independent *El Diario de Yucatán* and Yucatán's former governor Dulce María Sauri offers a telling example of organized harassment of the media by local bosses. For years, *El Diario de Yucatán* was the focal point for conservative opposition to the PRI in Yucatán state. Nevertheless, the extent of its conflicts depended in large measure on who occupied the governor's mansion. The replacement of Governor Victor Manzanilla—with whom *El Diario* had a difficult but relatively civil relationship—by Sauri in February 1990 spelled trouble for the paper. The new governor's husband had once been active in Mexico's leftist underground, and *El Diario*—probably wrongly—linked him to the notorious abduction and murder of Monterrey industrialist Eugenio Garza-Sada twenty years before. That allegation provoked a full-fledged attack on the publication. Over the next two years, the state government financed a series of competing news-

papers and magazines, most importantly the leftist daily *Por Esto*. It also cut off all access to reporters from *El Diario*, suspended official advertising, and initiated a generalized propaganda campaign against the paper in the electronic media. For its part, *El Diario* launched a vituperative campaign against the governor herself, exaggerating corruption and repression during her administration. Conflict culminated in an anonymous bomb threat at the paper's offices and an attack on the owner's home. Despite electoral victory by the PAN in the state's 1991 legislative elections, the situation continued to deteriorate. A visit by President Carlos Salinas and his chief political fixer, José Córdoba, in 1993—during which Córdoba made a point of conveying the president's concern over the situation to both sides—led to a temporary *modus vivendi*. But the conflict was not really resolved until Sauri was subsequently replaced by a new interim governor.⁸⁷

LA MANO DURA

In Mexico a writer is free to say whatever he wants until censorship commands the opposite, and censorship appears in various forms. . . . Juan Miguel de Mora is . . . a journalist, a theater critic, and a novelist, and in his free time he writes books on Mexican presidential administrations. . . . The limits to de Mora's freedom became apparent in the 1970s when, after a few attempts to corrupt him by buying him off, it was indirectly suggested that he leave the country to stay alive. While he was driving south in Mexico, after two overnight stops, strange things began to happen: all the nuts in one wheel came loose at the same time, and his trailer inexplicably became unhooked from his car while on a difficult mountain road. I always thought that de Mora's international and national reputation would protect him from repression, but that does not seem to be the case. . . .

—Samuel Schmidt, *The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency*, p. 10

Relatively mild punishments were usually sufficient to drive independent media into compliance or out of business. As a consequence, organized official repression against the media was seldom necessary. Nevertheless,

what Mexicans call *la mano dura* (the iron hand) remained available when other tactics failed. In the 1980s and 1990s, independent newspapers emerged that were able to resist traditional enticements and to survive the regime's attempts to pummel them into submission. In response, corrupt officials fearing exposure by the country's increasingly assertive media turned to overt repression to keep the press in line. Precisely as a result of the declining efficacy of familiar instruments of official control, physical attacks on the media increased.

Perhaps sixty Mexican journalists were murdered between 1980 and 1996—a striking figure even if many of the murders were not related to the journalists' work.⁸⁸ Repression intensified in the 1980s, a period which coincided not only with the emergence of independent papers but also with the thorough penetration of drug-related corruption in Mexico's political establishment. Indeed, many of the killings were related to drug trafficking or to graft stemming from the drug trade. Mexico's most infamous case—the 1984 assassination of Mexico City columnist Manuel Buendía—resulted from Buendía's investigations of drug-related corruption in the federal police.⁸⁹

The politically motivated murder of journalists was normally the work of vindictive middle-level government officials, rather than any premeditated strategy by the federal government. Journalists in Mexico City in the mid-1990s rarely mentioned physical threats as a serious concern, and even provincial reporters placed much greater emphasis on other forms of state control. One editor of a prominent provincial daily explained that his fears centered on the misguided “loyal friend” of a high-ranking official, or the overzealous “subordinate with initiative,” whose actions would rarely be endorsed by higher authorities.⁹⁰ In this sense, the most worrisome issue for Mexican journalists was a climate of impunity that permitted violent retaliation against the media by corrupt officials. Although physical assaults on journalists were not a standard element of official policy, their infrequent occurrence had a chilling effect. The fact that not all attacks were solved and assailants were rarely brought to justice served as a reminder that more forceful methods of media control existed. As Mexico's press became more assertive and less corrupt, overt repression increased.

CONCLUSION

Mexico's old system of press control relied on pervasive corruption of the media. As a result, there was rarely sustained pressure from the

traditional media to investigate controversial topics and publish sensitive information. Rather, most Mexican publishers, broadcasters, editors, reporters, and distributors were part of the old system of rent seeking, which benefited them as well as the country's political leadership. Given the scope of positive incentives, the overt and brutal methods of media control found in most autocratic political systems were largely redundant. These measures were normally reserved for independent media that chose to reject the financial beneficence of the state and consequently might be tempted to disseminate damaging information.

What were the consequences of this form of press control for media coverage in Mexico? How did newspapers, radio stations, and television news shows cover politics under the old regime? How much leeway did different media enjoy? And what were some of the consequences of news coverage for political life?

Media Coverage under the Perfect Dictatorship

A despot doesn't fear eloquent writers preaching freedom—
he fears a drunken poet who may crack a joke that will
take hold.

—E. B. White

In general, Mexico's system of media control proved remarkably effective in producing a relatively docile and domesticated press. Opposition voices rarely appeared to challenge official paradigms; government abuses were ignored; and the ruling party received lavish coverage during election season. The old regime thus helped to guarantee positive coverage in three senses: (1) official control of the public agenda, (2) selective silence on issues of particular vulnerability for the government, and (3) partisan bias in favor of the PRI during election campaigns. At the same time, though, the flexible character of the regime and the subtle nature of most forms of press control left some space for alternative views.

OFFICIAL AGENDA CONTROL

Mexican officials have long evinced a profound preoccupation with what they call "governability"—that is, convincing an allegedly benighted or unruly population to endorse official points of view. Consequently, government functionaries sought to assure regular media coverage of high-ranking members of the party-state, and of their proposals. For the officials in the Office of the President and the Interior Ministry, maintaining this sort of agenda control was at least as important a goal as restricting criticism of the political establishment.¹

Corruption and manipulation of access were highly effective in pro-

ducing a captive media that faithfully reported what government officials said and did. Although the media in Mexico were never converted into purely propagandistic instruments, coverage under the old regime tended to reflect official priorities. Newspaper headlines, for instance, consisted of nothing more than assertions by prominent members of the political elite. In television, anchors read official press releases word for word as the text appeared on the screen. And in both print and broadcast media, each presidential activity and every new government initiative was reported with appropriate deference and fanfare. Even supposedly non-political broadcasts, like soap operas, were occasionally enlisted in support of assorted government initiatives—birth control, literacy, women's education, etc.—thus contributing to the PRI-inspired myth of affirmative state action.²

Televisa's news coverage was particularly *oficialista* in the agenda-setting sense. Instead of rallies, strikes, or demonstrations, Televisa tended to focus on reports by commissions of "leading citizens" and comments from pro-government experts or politicians. Press releases and official declarations were given prominent attention, but representatives of Mexican civil society rarely figured in news reports. For instance, a lengthy television story on distance learning in 1994 did not include a single interview with teachers, students, or parents, nor a single image of a classroom. It did, however, feature several self-congratulatory statements by government officials (as well as commentary on Televisa's own role in the expansion of educational television).³ The net effect of such coverage was that Mexico's public agenda was set in government offices and disseminated downward by a captive press.

Equally crucial to maintaining control of the public agenda was ensuring the right spin on political coverage. Thus government officials were not only the main subjects of most reports, they were also the main sources. Newspapers, for instance, reflected an overwhelming dependence on officialdom. Such a reliance on official sources helped ensure that events were framed in ways that reflected ruling party paradigms. Articles on drug trafficking, for instance, devoted ample ink to Mexican "successes" in interdiction and to ritual denunciations of U.S. international counter-narcotics policy. Stories about the Mexican military focused on relief and rescue operations, ceremonial events, and patriotic paeans to the national army. Mexico's political system was invariably presented as a democracy (albeit a special brand of democracy uniquely suited to the Mexican context). And Mexican society was portrayed as divided mainly along economic lines, in a way that mapped neatly onto

the PRI's state-corporatist sectors and presented the state as a neutral arbiter between feuding social classes. Alternative political viewpoints—such as those that portrayed political contestation as a struggle between organized groups in civil society and an entrenched authoritarian regime—were studiously avoided.

SELECTIVE SILENCE

With their silence about the 1968 massacre of student demonstrators in Tlatelolco Plaza, Mexico's traditional media earned a well-deserved reputation for avoiding touchy issues.⁴ According to one maxim, there were three "untouchables" in Mexico: the president, the army, and the Virgin of Guadalupe. As far as the regime was concerned, however, touchy issues included those sorts of topics that exposed the true workings of Mexico's old political system. Consequently, subjects like economic mismanagement, official corruption, drug trafficking, electoral fraud, opposition protest, political repression, and the Mexican military were ignored or downplayed. In certain cases, media silence reached absurd proportions. According to one account, during a particularly bad period of economic crisis in the 1980s the National University's radio station in Mexico City (Radio UNAM) was forbidden from even using the word "inflation."⁵

As opposition leaders were quick to point out, Mexican television coverage was particularly "Orwellian."⁶ According to one observer: "Regular viewers of Televisa are more likely to know about unrest in Madrid, Bogotá, or Chicago than about domestic problems. The picture of Mexico normally presented on its main news program is that of a calm, democratic nation where bullfights are about all that ever turns bloody."⁷ Until recently, sensitive topics were simply not part of television news. Street demonstrations, for instance, were typically reported only in the context of the traffic congestion they provoked.⁸ Coverage of the economy was normally very positive, even during rough periods, and electoral irregularities (which became increasingly regular) were studiously ignored.⁹ After the 1994 presidential election, for instance, the National Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry (CIRT) circulated a letter to its members instructing them to refrain from any mention of fraud or coercion. Broadcast media also refused to interview Sergio Aguayo, leader of the nonpartisan electoral watchdog group Alianza Cívica and prominent critic of the electoral process.¹⁰

Equally telling was Televisa's avoidance of particular individuals—

typically, leading members of the political opposition. Televisa traditionally maintained a list of two to three dozen “vetoed” personages, mainly leftist opposition figures, whom reporters were not allowed to interview. During the Salinas administration, for instance, this list allegedly included leftist opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, deposed Pemex union boss Joaquín Hernández-Galicia (a.k.a. “La Quina”), former Mexico City mayor Manuel Camacho (after his defection from the PRI in 1994), and human rights activist Rosario Ibarra.¹¹

The emergence of independent sources of information during the 1980s and 1990s—and the continual operation of a popular rumor mill—often made complete silence about particular issues or events an untenable strategy. In such circumstances, one familiar pattern for dealing with damaging material was to report official responses to the events in question without providing any orienting context. Consequently, passionate denials of official corruption would appear out of nowhere in the political sections of major capital city papers, as if the charges that originally provoked them had previously been reported. These denials might be accompanied or followed by reports of remedial government action. Thus, spectacular episodes of graft were gently alluded to through the announcement of new anti-corruption initiatives. Coverage of stolen elections typically consisted of official retorts, asseverations, and pledges of clean elections in the future.

Establishment media adopted this approach with a number of salient but delicate stories: allegations that President Miguel de la Madrid had deposited approximately \$162 million in foreign bank accounts in 1984; the 1991 ambush (by members of the Mexican army) of federal police agents pursuing drug traffickers in Veracruz; and electoral fraud in Chihuahua in 1986. One classic example was Televisa’s handling of the PRI’s secret fund-raising banquet (at which Televisa owner Emilio Azcárraga Jr. pledged more than \$25 million to the party’s 1994 campaign). Not only did Televisa’s principal news program *24 Hours* never mention the dinner itself, it devoted three days of sustained coverage to spinning the ensuing scandal. The network broadcast a lengthy story comparing the fund-raising activities of different political parties around the world, followed by a brief “investigative” report revealing that Mexico’s Communist Party had previously received money from the Soviet Union. Additional reporting was devoted to campaign finance reforms proposed by an embarrassed Salinas administration in the wake of the scandal.¹²

The net effect of such coverage was that potentially shocking events

were reported without much in the way of attention, analysis, or follow-up. Consequently, episodes of official misconduct tended to surface fleetingly and then disappear, rather than snowballing into scandal. After a day or two in the back pages, the real story would simply fade away amidst a cacophony of conflicting claims and explanations, never having reached the electronic media or the front pages of traditional newspapers.

ELECTORAL BIAS

Selective media silence and disproportionate attention to official voices went hand-in-hand with blatant partiality toward the ruling party during electoral campaigns. During Mexico's 1994 presidential election, for instance, the PRI received approximately 50% of television coverage, 89% of advertisements, 50% of front page newspaper space, and 66% of newspaper photographs.¹³ These figures represented only a limited improvement over Mexico's 1988 elections, in which coverage of the PRI reached over 80% of total campaign coverage in most media.¹⁴ Bias was even more outrageous in earlier contests, in which opposition parties' shares of campaign airtime were essentially rounding error on that of the PRI.

The tone of coverage, as well as the quantity, also varied dramatically across parties and candidates. In the 1988 campaign, broadcasters reading news about the ruling party tended to be enthusiastic and respectful; footage featured large crowds and patriotic symbols. By contrast, news about the opposition was usually read in a flat or sarcastic tone with few favorable supporting images.¹⁵ One particularly striking example came during the closing period of the campaign, when candidates traditionally hold mass rallies. Jacobo Zabludovsky, anchor of Televisa's principal nightly news broadcast, described a Salinas rally in Veracruz as "more than a traditional political act tonight . . . [it was] an artistic spectacle, full of colors, human warmth, and spontaneity."¹⁶ The rally in question was certainly colorful, featuring local folk dances and related pageantry. And Salinas' reception there was noticeably warmer than at his previous tepid campaign appearances. But it is difficult to imagine a more carefully scripted and less spontaneous event than a PRI rally at the close of a presidential campaign.

The counterpart to favorable coverage of the PRI was derogatory coverage of the opposition. As one observer described coverage during the 1988 campaign:

Televisa's main anchorman, Jacobo Zabludovsky, ignored the opposition except for one occasion, when the image of the late Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was superimposed next to the image of right-of-center candidate Manuel Clouthier delivering a campaign speech. Another segment portrayed left-of-center candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas alongside photographs of Fidel Castro, Salvador Allende, and Nikita Krushchev as the announcer asked rhetorically which historical figures Cárdenas admired most. The two opposition candidates demanded equal time on the network as compensation for slanted coverage. Neither action was acknowledged by Televisa, and the print media ignored the story after one day.¹⁷

One classic example of partisan bias occurred during Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas' trip to Veracruz in September 1993, when local PRI bosses paid a group of transvestites to hug and kiss the leftist opposition leader. Photographs and footage of the event subsequently appeared in the captive local press, as well as in some dependent publications in the capital (e.g., *unomásuno* and *Excélsior*), with captions like "Cárdenas' girls." Both of Mexico's major television networks covered the manufactured incident on their main evening news programs.¹⁸

In addition to such flagrant acts of bias, pro-government media sometimes played a crucial role in facilitating more sophisticated PRI electoral strategies. For instance, Televisa gave disproportionate coverage to minor political parties at the expense of both the conservative PAN and the Cárdenist left. Coverage thus reinforced the notion that the PRI confronted a fragmented opposition of fringe political groupings. Moreover, because many smaller parties were actually PRI satellites whose representatives voted consistently with government once in office, coverage of them aided the ruling party in its strategy of political brand proliferation.

Manipulation of polling results in the press also supported ruling party strategies. Throughout the 1990s, pro-government media suppressed surveys that showed the major opposition parties running well. Not only did such biased information prevent bandwagoning by opposition and independent voters against the PRI, it made PRI claims of victory on election day appear more credible.¹⁹

One intriguing example of subtle media bias occurred during the 1994 presidential election, which took place in an atmosphere of increasing political instability. Throughout the campaign, Televisa gave copious coverage to instances of political violence in other countries (including Guatemala, which happens to border the turbulent state of Chiapas).²⁰ Subsequent studies have lent credence to the notion that fear of violence was a crucial factor in generating support for the PRI, long

viewed as a guarantor of political stability.²¹ In other words, by selectively accentuating the threat of upheaval and implicitly framing the election in terms of “stability” versus “instability,” Televisa helped generate electoral support for the ruling party. Such framing played especially well against the Left, which Mexican television and official propaganda during the Salinas years had attempted to associate in the public mind with polarization and violence.

Another telling example of manipulation was economic reporting under the Salinas administration. Together with expert image management on the part of the president’s staff, careful media framing of key events successfully conveyed the impression of rapid social and economic progress. These media campaigns contributed to a sweeping PRI victory in the 1991 legislative by-elections and a solid PRI win in the 1994 presidential contest.

The media’s role in the electoral process, however, went beyond acting as a cheerleader and strategist for the ruling party. The press was also a crucial participant in the rituals of power transfer that legitimized the PRI’s hegemonic rule. This role was particularly obvious before the 1990s, when the PRI faced no serious electoral competition. Unlike many autocracies, the Mexican political system did not derive its legitimacy from a single dominant set of norms or institutions. Its claim to political authority rested on a peculiar combination of revolutionary heritage, state-corporatist intermediation, electoral victory, economic stewardship, and simple tradition. For decades, therefore, elections in Mexico served a different function from the competition and choice associated with established democracies. Rather, they formed part of a complex political pageantry that simultaneously invoked the PRI’s varied sources of legitimacy.

As Ilya Adler argued in his penetrating analysis of the 1988 presidential elections, the media helped generate an aura of suspense, drama, and vicarious participation around the unveiling of the PRI’s chosen presidential candidate (who was assured of electoral victory).²² During this pre-election period, the media provided a forum for contending factions within the ruling party—technocrats and politicians, rightists and leftists, peasants and laborers, etc.—to advance their positions and mobilize support for their favored contenders (known as “pre-candidates”). Once the official PRI candidate was chosen by the outgoing president, the media scrupulously recorded his activities and prepared the rest of the country for his ultimate ascension to power. The establishment print media acted as a sort of royal scribe, accompanying the official candidate

on his campaign tour and chronicling the activities of his court.²³ At the same time, saturation coverage in the broadcast media built the candidate up from a mere political operator to an individual of national and historic stature, worthy to be invested with the vast power of a modern Mexican president.

Even in the 1990s, traditional elements of the media continued to play this sort of role. Daniel Hallin's analysis of campaign coverage during the 1994 presidential elections revealed that—in addition to favoritism for the PRI—Televisa's reporting nurtured existing authoritarian paradigms. Televised images of future president Ernesto Zedillo typically portrayed him distributing land titles and similar patronage to duly submissive groups of peasants or poor urban dwellers. These images, and others like them, tended to reinforce a traditional notion of political participation, in which "citizenship" consisted of waiting passively for clientelistic benefits handed down by a paternalistic state.²⁴ In other words, television coverage attempted to legitimate key elements of a system viewed as anachronistic even by many of its own supporters.

THE LIMITS OF MEDIA CONTROL

Media control in Mexico was thus quite effective in generating coverage that legitimized the one-party regime. But the relatively mild nature of most instruments of control, and their somewhat selective application, left Mexico's media with a modicum of openness even during the heyday of the old regime. Certain types of diversity were tolerated in a political system renowned for its flexibility and sensitivity to nuance.

First, the politically amorphous nature of the PRI permitted an impressive degree of ideological diversity within the media. Leftist-nationalist newspapers like *El Día* coexisted with right-wing dailies like *El Heraldo de México* and *El Economista*. The rhetorical range of opinion in the media thus reflected the broad extent of the PRI's sprawling political coalition. Moreover, because various PRI factions had links outside the ruling party, and because the regime attempted to maintain the illusion of a free press, even anti-regime voices were sometimes tolerated. These included leftist opposition papers like *El Popular*, *Punto Crítico*, *Corre La Voz*, and *El Machete*, as well as various publications by intellectuals, labor unions, and the Church.²⁵

Second, inter-governmental, regional, and personalistic divisions also encouraged official toleration. The government-owned *El Nacional*, for instance, enjoyed periods of relatively greater autonomy when its bu-

reaucratic principals (the Interior Ministry, the Office of the President, the PRI, etc.) disagreed.²⁶ Some periodicals were also able to preserve a measure of independence by playing on Mexico's federal-state cleavage.²⁷ The Mérida-based daily *El Diario de Yucatán*, for instance, survived conflicts with local bosses because it rarely came into conflict with federal-level authorities.²⁸ Conversely, *Proceso* magazine enjoyed good relations with certain PRI figures at the state level, even though it remained locked in perpetual conflict with the national political establishment. And all media were granted greater leeway whenever the regime undertook reformist initiatives, usually at the start of each president's term.

Third, the regime showed remarkable sensitivity to the style and timing of critical reporting. Ritual laments (such as leftist condemnations of economic inequality and rightist complaints about official treatment of the Church) were more acceptable than focused assaults on subjects of greater vulnerability (e.g., official corruption or electoral fraud). Reasoned, erudite critiques couched in respectful tones met with greater tolerance than bawdy or humorous denunciations that might have mass appeal. Personalized barbs lobbed at particular officials were treated with greater indulgence than incisive criticism of the system as a whole, especially when these ad hominem attacks represented part of the cyclical jockeying for power between rival cliques within the elite. As Ilya Adler pointed out in his analysis of media criticism of the government during the 1980s: "apparent criticism by the press is the vehicle that allows competing factions within the system to carry out their political struggles . . . Therefore, criticism in the press serves a central function for the PRI, a party that has to maintain a system of representation of many factions and diverse ideologies under a single body of politics by maintaining a system of negotiation in a public arena."²⁹

Finally, for government officials the medium mattered as much as the message. Compared to radio and television, for instance, the regime accorded print media greater maneuvering room—both because state intervention was easier to conceal in broadcasting and because certain print media, with their rather limited and targeted circulation, were deemed less threatening. Within the print media themselves, back-page articles were accorded much greater leeway than front-page stories, photographs, political cartoons, or opinion columns.³⁰ And within all types of media, minor reports were granted more leeway than lead stories. Publishers and broadcasters thus confronted a hierarchy of official shibboleths.

UNDERSTANDING THE OLD REGIME: AN EXAMPLE

One case that captured the nuances and ironies of media control in Mexico is *La Jornada*, the main voice of Mexico's anti-system Left. From its creation in 1984, the paper had a complex relationship with Mexico's political establishment. Some of the paper's contributors occupied high-level posts in the regime; others were imprisoned by that same regime. Its funding sources were equally schizophrenic: although it was consistently one of Mexico's most independent dailies, for much of its life *La Jornada* depended on government advertising for close to half of its revenues. As one prominent journalist put it in the mid-1990s, "*La Jornada* is a quintessentially Mexican phenomenon: it is dogmatically anti-government, and it lives off the government."³¹

To survive, the paper's editors cultivated protectors in the ruling party and picked their battles with some care. For example, the paper participated in government-orchestrated campaigns against the PAN but, in keeping with its progressive editorial line, gave favorable coverage to leftist reformers and opposition groups.³² Moreover, its criticisms of the regime tended to be ideological and reflexive, rather than investigative (and thus especially threatening). *La Jornada* routinely denounced government policies, invoked radical rhetoric, and registered social opposition to the regime. But, at least until the mid-1990s, it did not lavish too much attention on touchy subjects like drug trafficking and official corruption.

La Jornada's savvy longtime editor-in-chief, Carlos Payán, proved especially clever at covering the paper's operating costs without sacrificing too much of its editorial independence. In one remarkable instance, the newspaper was offered a large sum of money—reportedly as much as several hundred thousand pesos—in return for favorable coverage of the PRI's 1994 gubernatorial candidate in Tabasco, Roberto Madrazo. Madrazo, a PRI hard-liner, was at that point in the midst of a tight race against the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which *La Jornada* normally supported. With the paper in tight financial straits at the time, Payán reportedly accepted the money. He ran Madrazo's *gac-etillas* as promised—along with real articles from the paper's correspondent in Tabasco that excoriated Madrazo and highlighted the PRD's struggles.³³ Madrazo won the election (or so he claimed), but it is hard to imagine that his investment in *La Jornada* had much to do with it.

CONCLUSION

In general, the PRI was able to manipulate Mexico's media through corruption, selective allocation of broadcasting concessions, and occasional doses of overt repression. As a result, media coverage tended to support existing political institutions. First, by granting extensive coverage to government officials, traditional media ensured official domination of public discourse. Second, by maintaining a studied silence on potentially damaging topics, the old system of press control helped to prevent or stifle political scandals that would expose the way the system worked. Third, by favoring the official party over its electoral rivals, pro-government media made it difficult for opposition parties to transmit their messages to the mass public.

In a relatively loose authoritarian system like Mexico's, of course, media control was never complete. Semi-independent media could often operate without official interference if they refrained from direct challenges to the political system. Even explicitly political challenges were sometimes tolerated if the scope of the medium in question was sufficiently limited or if reporting indirectly reinforced PRI paradigms.

In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, however, independent journalism began to go well beyond acceptable limits, becoming an increasing source of strain and irritation for Mexico's "perfect dictatorship." What happened to trigger these changes in the Mexican press? How did some media manage to get out from under the regime's multi-layered system of control?

PART 2

Media Opening in Mexico

Opening Mexico's Print Media

You ask me what relationship we have with the authorities. I don't know. But I do know one thing: if I pay my taxes, if I pay for my newspaper, if I have no outstanding debts to the government, no one can tell me how to run my newspaper.

—Carlos Payán, former editor-in-chief, *La Jornada*,
Mexico City, August 14, 1995, interview with
author

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, Mexico's old system of media control gradually broke down. Halting political reform rendered the use of certain coercive mechanisms—direct censorship, physical repression, etc.—more problematic. Changing professional norms within Mexico's journalistic ranks promoted independent reporting. Publishers and broadcasters capitalized on the increasing receptiveness of media audiences to more assertive coverage, and the financial success of independent media earned them a great deal of autonomy. Ultimately, commercial competition between an emerging Fourth Estate and Mexico's traditional media establishment encouraged diversity and independence in the press.

These changes began in Mexico's print media. Although their reach is not as pervasive as television—only 10–15% of Mexicans get their news primarily from newspapers and magazines—the print media are important for three reasons.¹ First, Mexico's print media moved further and faster toward independence than the country's broadcast media. Their transformation is thus particularly relevant for any analysis of changes in the Mexican press. Second, newspapers and magazines are widely read by the nation's elite, including “opinion leaders” and political decision makers. Therefore, the political influence of the print media

is disproportionate to their readership. Third, and related, increasing openness in the print media has had potent political consequences. For instance, independent publications have played a crucial role in legitimizing civic activity, altering elite discourse about politics and exposing scandalous examples of official misconduct.

MEXICO'S PRINT MEDIA

At first glance, Mexico's print media have long appeared vital and pluralistic. In the mid-1990s, the country boasted over 200 newspapers and several newsmagazines, with divergent ideological perspectives and, according to self-reported circulation figures, relatively high levels of readership. In reality, however, only about twenty of these papers and one newsmagazine (*Proceso*) sold more than 30,000 copies per issue; the rest were essentially ghost publications that survived on government subsidies or grants from wealthy benefactors affiliated with the ruling party.

The larger publications—themselves still rather small by international standards—were concentrated in Mexico City and a handful of provincial cities (Monterrey, Guadalajara, Mérida, etc.). These included most of the country's independent publications: *Reforma* (Mexico City), *El Norte* (Monterrey), *La Jornada* (Mexico City), *El Financiero* (Mexico City), *El Diario de Yucatán* (Mérida), *Siglo 21* (Guadalajara), *El Imparcial* (Hermosillo), *La Crónica* (Mexicali), and *Zeta* (a weekly newspaper based in Tijuana).² They also included several traditionally pro-government papers—*Excélsior* (Mexico City), *El Informador* (Guadalajara), *El Occidental* (Guadalajara), and *Por Esto* (Mérida)—and a few publications that fell somewhere in between these two categories, such as *El Universal* (Mexico City) and *El Porvenir* (Monterrey). Pro-government newspapers spanned the ideological spectrum, but they did not vary much in their attitude toward Mexico's political leadership.

Figure 1 relies on several indicators of independence and ideological orientation for the main news-oriented dailies in Mexico City in 1995–96—the country's largest media market and home to all the publications that claimed a “national” readership.³ The size of each circle in Figure 1 represents the average daily circulation of each paper in the mid-1990s, including both subscriptions and single-copy sales but excluding copies returned to the publishers through the distribution network.⁴ These figures are necessarily estimates, as declared circulation figures for most publications were wildly exaggerated.⁵ But they capture

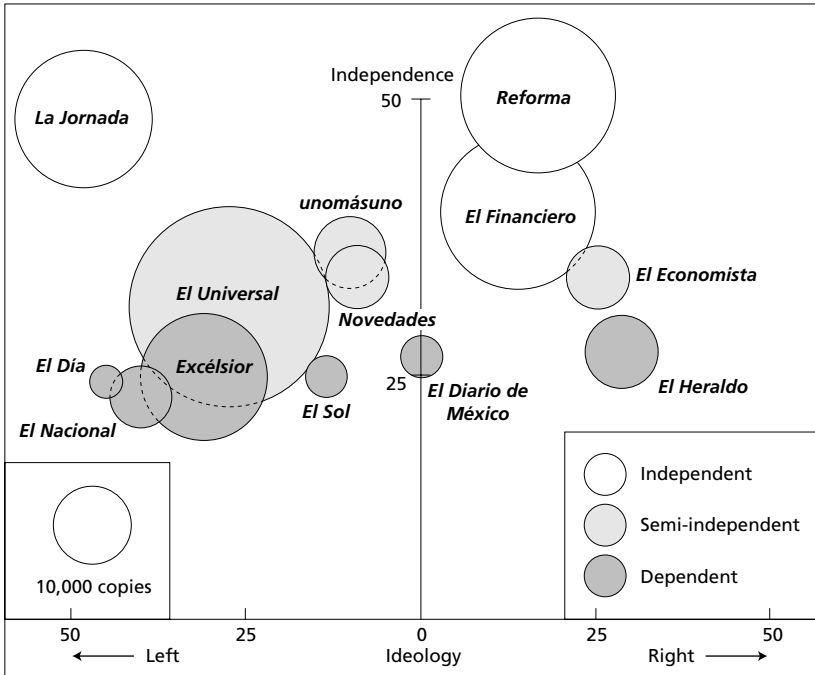


Figure 1. Independence, ideology, and circulation of Mexico City newspapers, 1995–96.

the basic fact that Mexican newspapers tended to have very limited readerships—in most cases, below 10,000 copies per day.

The horizontal axis (indexed from -100 to +100) measures ideology in the traditional left-right sense. It represents the average of two different indicators of ideology: (1) front-page mentions of traditional leftist and rightist buzzwords, such as “imperialism” and “private enterprise,” and (2) evaluations of a few key issues on the front page and editorial pages.⁶ As the graph indicates, Mexico’s print media were ideologically diverse.

The vertical axis (also indexed to 100) combines nine measures of independence in reporting. These nine measures were grouped into three general indicators: (1) agenda setting, (2) assertiveness, and (3) partisan posture. Aggregate independence scores for each newspaper represented a straight average of agenda setting, assertiveness, and partisan posture.

Agenda setting was measured by an average of the percentage of front-page sources that were PRI or government officials, the percentage of news section photographs that portrayed PRI or government officials,

the percentage of front-page headlines that consisted of the pronouncements of PRI or government officials, the percentage of back-page headlines that consisted of the pronouncements of PRI or government officials, and the percentage of lead stories that were the same as the lead story of the government-owned newspaper *El Nacional*.⁷ Collectively, these measures attempted to capture the extent to which publications simply regurgitated on cue the opinions and perspectives of government officials.⁸

Assertiveness was measured by the percentage of news stories devoted to the following themes: drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protests, state repression, and the Mexican armed forces. All of these were issues whose coverage the regime consistently tried to discourage, and increasing reporting on them often led to damaging revelations and scandals.

Finally, partisan posture was measured by the percentage of lead articles critical of the government or ruling party, the percentage of editorials critical of the government or ruling party, and the percent of political cartoons that lampooned the political system or the PRI. This indicator represented the degree to which a publication was willing to criticize the regime rather than act as its cheerleader. It was thus a general measure of attitudes toward the ruling party.

As Figure 1 shows, Mexican newspapers varied considerably in overall levels of independence. Ghost papers tended to be pro-government; larger papers were generally more independent. Although there was a weak correlation between conservatism and independence, both independent and pro-government papers could be of any ideological tendency. Mexico's pro-government press thus reflected the ideological range of the PRI's amorphous political coalition.

Finally, Figure 1 rates the papers in terms of relative independence: the darker the shading of the circle, the less independent the newspaper. As the graph indicates, there is a close correspondence between the conventional wisdom about particular papers and the independence rating obtained on the basis of content analysis. Once again, there is little correspondence between independence and ideology.

What Figure 1 depicts is a media system in transition. At the bottom of the graph, the row of dark circles represents Mexico's old system of corruption and control. Most of these publications were aligned with particular factions of the PRI for years and financed their operations through various forms of subsidy. Predictably, journalistic standards at ghost papers were low: scanty training, nonexistent stylistic and ethical

guidelines, press-release journalism, sloppy editing, and unconstrained sensationalism were all common. Although these defects might sometimes be mistaken for the excesses of a free press, they were intimately connected with the old system of corruption and state intervention. In fact, what Mexican editor Juan Luís Concheiro called the “*periodismo de golpeteo*” (beat-’em-up journalism) often represented the flip side of the “*periodismo de chayote*” (bribery journalism), since dependent newspapers sometimes hounded prominent individuals simply in order to extort payoffs from them.⁹ For papers with a generally pro-regime posture, then, revenues from payoffs or official advertising were typically the most promising way to make money. Similarly, recourse to sensationalism, stridency, and slander was sometimes the optimal sales strategy in an environment where a newspaper’s political allegiances precluded credible or investigative reporting. Mexico’s system of media control thus offered incentives for pro-government publishers to enrich themselves with subsidies and bribes as the quality of their newspaper deteriorated, making Mexico a land of rich owners and poor papers (*dueño rico, periódico pobre*).

Just above these dark circles on the graph lies the middle swath of “semi-independent” papers. This group included publications that were attempting to make the transition from traditional to independent, but whose pro-government ownership retarded their adoption of a more aggressive stance. Although they had modernized and professionalized their product in order to compete with more independent rivals, they were reluctant to abandon the old rules of Mexican journalism. This group also included (in the case of *unomásuno*) a formerly independent-minded publication that succumbed to government pressure.

Finally, the top band of larger, unfilled circles represents Mexico’s emerging Fourth Estate—an ideologically diverse collection of independent dailies. For publications like these, the challenge was to carve out an autonomous space for financially viable, professional journalism. By adhering to a new set of journalistic norms and expanding their financial base, these papers attempted to push back officially imposed boundaries to critical and assertive reporting. Their independent posture in turn permitted them to grow and to displace traditional media. The growth of these independent publications—and their provincial counterparts—lies at the heart of the changes in Mexico’s print media. As it turns out, their rise to prominence was the product of more than two decades of learning and struggle.

THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS

On June 10, 1971, government-sponsored thugs known as the Falcons attacked a group of leftist demonstrators in Mexico City. When questioned about the episode, officials issued the sort of blanket denial familiar to reporters in autocratic political systems around the world. The officials did not, however, receive the familiar response. Reporters who had witnessed the violence firsthand insisted that police vehicles had carried Falcons to the scene and that ambulances had later carried away a number of bloodied and dying protesters. Some newspaper reports the next day reflected their eyewitness accounts, marking the end of the old policy of complete cover-up.¹⁰

What had changed in Mexico's media? Among journalists, editors, and publishers—as among all politically oriented Mexicans—the massacre of student demonstrators at Tlatelolco Plaza three years before had provoked a certain amount of soul-searching. In the weeks before and after October 2, 1968, “magazines and newspapers restricted, manipulated, and qualified information” about the student movement and generally adopted a pro-government perspective on the ensuing repression.¹¹ But the events at Tlatelolco proved to be an important turning point for Mexico's media. Stung by student shouts of “*prensa vendida*” (sell-out press) that greeted their news reports, the press began to show embryonic signs of restiveness.¹²

Restiveness was particularly pronounced at Mexico's flagship newspaper, *Excélsior*, which had come under the direction of independent-minded editor Julio Scherer in the late 1960s. A complex and reticent man, Scherer became one of the most important figures in Mexico's independent press.¹³ His tenure at *Excélsior* began a long period of learning and gestation, during which Mexican journalism became more vibrant, more investigative, and more professional.

In contrast to the official myth of social progress fostered by Mexico's leaders, under Scherer's direction *Excélsior* adopted a more muckraking tone. As one observer recounts:

The period from 1966 to 1968 was the first two years that Julio Scherer took over the management of *Excélsior*, and Scherer introduced a social dimension in coverage of political and economic affairs. He made Mexicans discover the existence of a poor Mexico. *Excélsior*, under Scherer, began to depict a bitter Mexico of landless peasants, deprived workers, and the dispossessed—that unruly Mexico of constant struggle and conflict—

that had been missing from the pages of the country's newspapers. This new coverage significantly changed the parameters of reporting in Mexican newspapers. It began to assign responsibility, and assigning responsibility led to the identification of those among the authorities who were guilty of fraud, negligence, and abuse.¹⁴

The new style of journalism met with a predictable response from Mexican authorities. Official harassment began in earnest in 1971, culminating in the government-orchestrated expulsion of Scherer and his cohort of collaborators five years later. At a stormy cooperative meeting on July 8, 1976, *Excélsior*'s top editors were relieved of their posts, and a more pliable, pro-government team was installed in their place. Over 200 employees, including 150 members of the news staff, quit in protest.¹⁵

The coup at *Excélsior* would later be recognized as a watershed in Mexican journalism. Those who were expelled from the paper subsequently helped found a series of publications that became the core of Mexico's independent print media. Rather than extinguishing Mexico's new style of journalism, therefore, the reorganization of *Excélsior* spread sparks of independence and professionalism across Mexico's journalistic landscape.¹⁶

Of the original group that left *Excélsior*, about forty remained with Scherer. This crew subsequently became the nucleus of one of Mexico's most successful periodicals. On July 19, 1976, just six weeks after their expulsion, the group held a meeting of 2,000 potential investors at Mexico City's Hotel María Isabel to raise capital for a new journalistic enterprise. By August 2, they had created a news agency (known as APRO) and begun plans for a publication. The first issue of *Proceso*, soon to become the country's premier newsmagazine, appeared on November 6, 1976. For the next seventeen years—until the appearance of *Reforma* newspaper in 1993—*Proceso* would be the only medium to consistently investigate and report on what the regime regarded as “closed” topics.¹⁷

In addition to *Proceso*, refugees from *Excélsior* helped launch a number of other media. Octavio Paz and about twenty intellectuals whom Scherer had attracted to *Excélsior* formed the literary magazine *Vuelta* in December 1976, which remained influential in creative circles.¹⁸ About ten reporters accompanied Angel Trinidad-Ferriera to the government-run cultural Channel 13.¹⁹ An equal number, including columnist Francisco Cárdenas-Cruz, left for *El Universal*, *El Diario de México*, and other papers. Still another group under Héctor Aguilar-

Camín founded the more scholarly political magazine *Nexos*. But the most substantial and impressive faction not included in *Proceso* joined Manuel Becerra-Acosta to form a new paper that would pick up where *Excélsior* had left off. This band, approximately two dozen strong, included several of *Excélsior*'s best reporters and a handful of talented editors: Carlos Payán, Carmen Lira, and Becerra-Acosta himself.²⁰ Founded in a house owned by Manuel Moreno-Sánchez in Mexico City's Prado Norte de las Lomas neighborhood, their paper—the French tabloid-style *unomásuno*—first appeared on November 14, 1977.

The founding of *unomásuno* added a new element of diversity and professionalism to Mexico's press. Though initially ignorant of investigative journalism, the paper's reporters began to specialize and acquire beat-specific skills. Photographs took on an aesthetic and informative character; opinion was replaced by fact-based reporting; editorial pages, the treasured preserve of traditional publishers, disappeared; and private advertisements expanded.²¹

Rifts within *unomásuno* soon spawned yet another newspaper. During 1983–84, growing dissension over Becerra-Acosta's management of *unomásuno* led to the resignation of approximately ninety people.²² The principal defectors, led by Payán and Lira, formed a rival daily that first appeared on September 19, 1984. The new paper, *La Jornada*, soon became the voice of Mexico's anti-regime left. Although *unomásuno* faded into irrelevance, the project it had begun continued under a new standard.²³ Figure 2 summarizes the evolution of Mexico City's press. As it indicates, the original *Excélsior* cohort ended up producing at least four news-oriented publications (as well as *Vuelta*). Two of these—*La Jornada* and *Proceso*—remain crucial pieces of Mexico's Fourth Estate. In addition, staffers from *La Jornada* have gone on to spawn further independent publications (such as *El Sur* in Acapulco).

Not all the journalists who left *Excélsior* in 1976 remained in journalism.²⁴ Some dropped out of circulation, took positions in the government, or retreated into more stable private sector careers.²⁵ But those who did remain fortified independent journalism across a range of existing media. Through the periodicals they subsequently established, this cohort of reporters and editors kept alive Mexico's strand of socially progressive, independent journalism. Initially linked to a portion of Mexico's intelligentsia, they ultimately expanded their pool of contributors and their appeal. Although periodic ruptures and schisms cost these individuals substantially in personal terms, the same crises also pushed forward a long process of professionalization. Both *Proceso* and

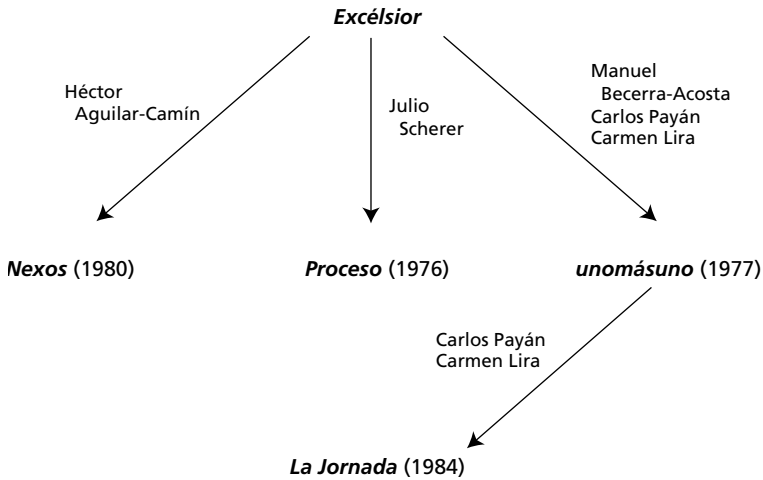


Figure 2. The post-1976 diaspora.

La Jornada, for instance, represented a substantial improvement over the original *Excelsior* project. As one editor put it: “We ended up, inadvertently, creating a much better type of journalism than we could ever have at *Excelsior* . . . and the government, inadvertently, helped us do it.”²⁶

The 1982 Boycott

Serendipity did not end with the coup at *Excelsior*. A second crucial turning point came in 1982, when a frustrated José López-Portillo declared that his administration would no longer advertise in publications deemed hostile to the government—in the now-legendary phrase attributed to him, *no pago para que me peguen* (I won’t pay them to beat me up). The main target of López-Portillo’s wrath was *Proceso*, which was driven to near bankruptcy and forced to lay off more than thirty employees. By boosting sales and subscriptions, however, *Proceso* was able to compensate for the loss of government revenue, and it emerged as an even more independent publication. By the 1990s, the magazine depended on sales for approximately 80% of its revenues. Although the withdrawal of government advertising managed to suffocate a number of smaller periodicals, *Proceso*’s editors drew an enormously empowering lesson: independent media could survive without financial support from the regime.²⁷

The Awakening of Civil Society

The ability of independent periodicals to achieve financial success was enhanced by a series of changes in the Mexican reading public. Starting in 1982, economic crisis, government corruption, increasing recourse to electoral fraud, and mounting social mobilization increased popular receptivity to independent reporting. The devastating Mexico City earthquake of 1985 and the presidential elections of 1988 were crucial catalysts for the emergence of Mexico's new civil society.²⁸ By the end of the decade, a more demanding readership had created the audience base for Mexico's emerging Fourth Estate. Although the largest capital papers (*Excélsior*, *El Universal*, etc.) remained pro-government, a handful of publications began to register the changes in Mexican society and exploit the growing market for independent journalism.

One of these was *La Jornada*, heir to part of the original *Excélsior* cohort. Figure 3 traces *La Jornada*'s gradual evolution from its founding in 1984 to 1996.²⁹ The top line shows the extent to which "official agenda setting"—measured here by the percentage of photographs and front-page sources that are of government or PRI officials—declined over time. As the graph indicates, *La Jornada* increasingly gave prominence to Mexican civil society rather than to representatives of the party-state. The lower line (assertiveness) measures the percentage of news articles devoted to drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protest, state repression, and the Mexican military. As the graph suggests, increased assertiveness accompanied the decline in official agenda setting. Although levels of assertiveness fluctuated with political events and with the paper's financial condition, the general trend was upward. Thus the "valley" in 1995 was higher than the "peak" in 1988, a year marked by intense opposition protests against alleged electoral fraud.³⁰ In other words, on two crucial dimensions *La Jornada* became a much more independent newspaper.

The second paper to capitalize on Mexico's changing circumstances was *El Financiero*, founded in 1981 to meet perceived demand for financial coverage in response to the country's incipient economic crisis. Originally targeted at the business community, *El Financiero* started operations with a mere twenty-seven employees and only \$250,000 in operating capital. At the time, *El Financiero* could not even afford its own printing press and was forced to use that of the leftist-*oficialista* daily *El Día*. But former government employee Rogelio Cárdenas Sr. had discovered a new market, and his paper grew steadily. In 1984, in

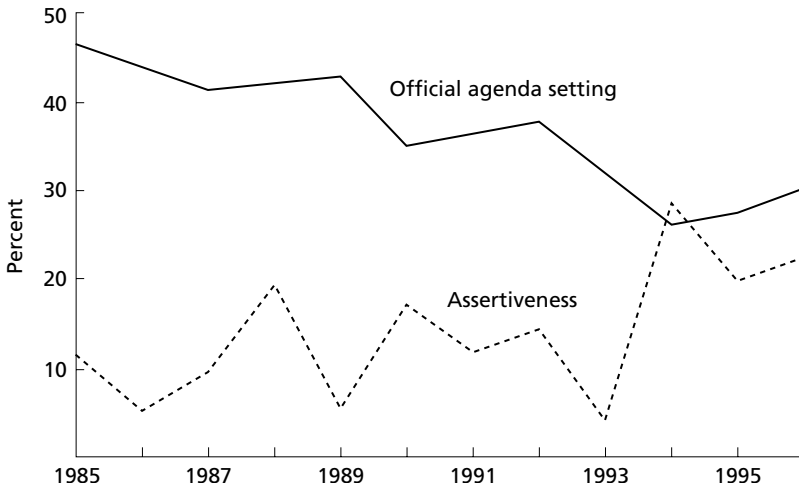


Figure 3. Increasing openness at *La Jornada* newspaper, 1984–96.

what became a crucial shift of orientation, the paper introduced sections for political and social news. To cover this new subject matter, *El Financiero* recruited a number of noted Mexican journalists and intellectuals, including several *Excelsior* refugees: Carlos Ramírez, Francisco Gómez-Maza, José Reveles, Jorge Rodríguez, and Rodolfo Guzmán. Through what editors describe as “a gradual process of organic growth,” the paper eventually became one of Mexico’s most reliable and independent media outlets.³¹ From 1985 to 1993 (when *Reforma* appeared), *El Financiero* published a series of stories on economic policy, drug trafficking, official corruption, and electoral fraud that no other national daily would carry.

Rebellion in the Provinces

As Mexico City’s press was undergoing its protracted evolution, a handful of provincial papers were also learning to survive on their own. One of these was Mérida’s *El Diario de Yucatán*, which achieved remarkably high sales and developed a diverse base of local advertisers that kept the paper financially buoyant. As early as 1970, *El Diario de Yucatán* was selling some 45,000 copies daily in a small, predominantly rural state where half the population spoke only an indigenous language.

Originally linked to Mérida’s business elite, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and PAN, the paper began to evolve in the 1980s into a

more representative vehicle for local public opinion.³² The paper's publishers (the Menéndez family) dropped their reflexive conservatism and their habit of labeling all progressive political forces "Marxist." Today, *El Diario de Yucatán* remains one of the larger newspapers in Mexico, and it exercises an enormous political influence within Yucatán state.³³

Even more important for the evolution of Mexico's press was the success of another provincial newspaper, *El Norte*. Begun in the late 1930s, *El Norte's* origins and ownership were in many ways similar to those of *El Diario de Yucatán*. Its rise to prominence began in 1972–73, when a twenty-four-year-old Alejandro Junco de la Vega inherited the paper from his father and grandfather. The first member of his family trained as a journalist, Junco soon set about modernizing and professionalizing the publication. From 1972 to 1978, *El Norte* recruited a cohort of younger people to replace the collection of frustrated lawyers and accountants that had previously constituted its staff. These new reporters were treated as career professionals; they were trained, paid, promoted, and managed accordingly. Journalists received no commissions from advertising, and government sources were kept at arm's length. Reporters were forbidden from accepting bribes under pain of dismissal, and gifts from government officials had to be returned.³⁴ The newspaper even paid for its reporters' accommodations on some official trips, rather than relying on government largesse. Over time, this new vision of journalistic professionalism became part of the newspaper's culture, and veteran staffers came to display what one foreign observer characterized as "a virtually Pavlovian response to corruption."³⁵

In addition to professionalizing *El Norte's* staff, Junco modernized the paper's physical plant and upgraded its technology. In 1984–85, *El Norte* developed an electronic library and shifted its staff to personal computers, allowing reporters to work more swiftly and autonomously. Beginning in 1981, the paper also reoriented its format and content to meet the demands of Monterrey's burgeoning middle-class readership. In contrast to the complex layouts, drab formatting, and politics-cum-sports focus of establishment Mexican papers, *El Norte* introduced sections on fashion, food, automobiles, real estate, and suburban life, as well as a Sunday supplement. Sales responded dramatically, boosting newspaper penetration rates in Monterrey to levels approaching those in the developed world, and the paper added staff to keep up. Figure 4 depicts the increase in *El Norte* staff since 1973, including the addition of personnel that accompanied the 1993 launch of a sister paper, *Re-*

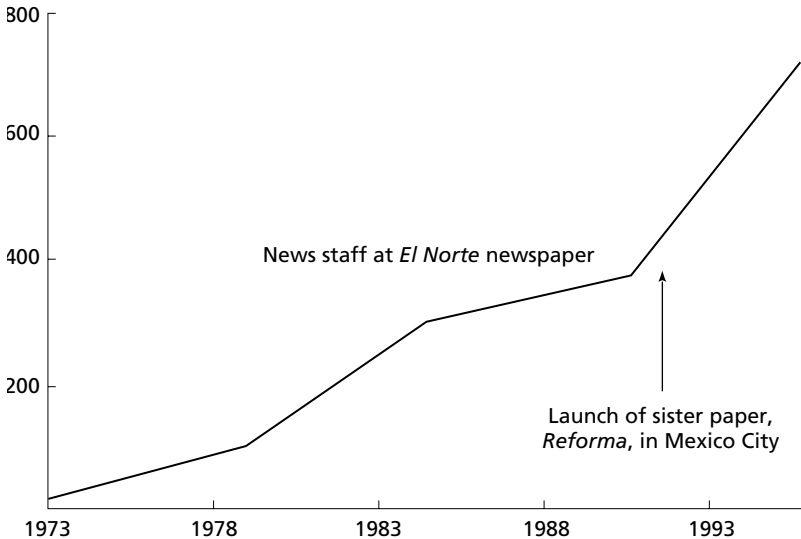


Figure 4. The growth of *El Norte* newspaper, 1973–95.

forma, in Mexico City.³⁶ As the graph indicates, Junco's innovations in format and coverage paid off.

Like *Proceso*, *El Norte* learned that independent, professional journalism could be profitable. Junco was soon approached by a number of businessmen with proposals to launch similar newspapers elsewhere—Tamaulipas state, Guadalajara, and the Federal District itself. By the early 1990s, the real question was whether *chilango* journalism in Mexico City would recover in time to resist the imminent northern invasion.³⁷

A third independent daily to emerge in the provinces was Guadalajara's *Siglo 21*, based in Mexico's second largest media market. In 1990 former PRI politician Alfonso Dau, then sixty-one years old and retired, decided to realize his long-standing dream of publishing a newspaper. The initial team he selected included two Argentines with experience in journalism, one Spanish editor, and two local professors—one of whom, Jorge Zepeda, became the editor-in-chief. Zepeda ultimately supplied the vision for a paper that "was neither at the service of the state nor against it, but rather in favor of and at the service of the community."³⁸

In seeking to avoid the traditional vices of Mexican journalism by not hiring old-school journalists, *Siglo 21*'s management initially went too far in the other direction. With the exception of news editor Diego

Peterson (who had previously managed his own weekly) and a handful of talented reporters poached from other papers, few of the original staff were journalists. Most were academics or students recruited directly out of college. As Peterson put it, “it was complicated to make a newspaper without reporters.”³⁹ Launch, initially scheduled for October 1991, was delayed until November; its dense, European-style format (modeled after Spain’s *El País*) did not appeal to Guadalaran readers, and the paper soon exhausted most of its \$3 million in start-up capital.

Siglo 21 faced other obstacles as well. The PRI establishment of Jalisco state (of which Guadalajara is the capital) had little use for a new paper that would be “in favor of and at the service of the community.” Meanwhile, the city’s two established dailies, *El Informador* and *El Occidental*, joined forces to squeeze *Siglo 21* out of the market. Firms that advertised in one of the established papers—which at that time had a combined circulation more than fifty times that of their new competitor—were generally not permitted to advertise in *Siglo 21* as well.⁴⁰

As a result of these obstacles, the new paper rapidly approached bankruptcy. In December 1991, there was no money for customary Christmas bonuses; by January, there was none for salaries. Facing the prospect of closure, the paper endeavored to reorient itself, abandoning its “academic vices” and seeking out more hot news. The changes appealed to younger readers and women, who felt underserved by the city’s traditional dailies. Readership began to grow slowly, increasing further when the paper gave special coverage to a March vigil by middle-class women to protest the rise in street crime. But despite its reorientation, the paper remained in the red in April, after two years of planning and six months of operation.⁴¹ Circulation hovered at around 1,500 copies per day.

Then, on April 22, 1992, twelve kilometers of city sewer in Guadalajara suddenly exploded, killing 198 people. In the aftermath of the explosion, the thoroughly *oficialista* orientation of its competitors gave *Siglo 21* a golden opportunity. While *El Occidental* ran a front-page interview with the president of Georgia and *El Informador* ran a note about then-president Carlos Salinas’ visit to the region, *Siglo 21* covered the blast. For the rest of the week, the paper focused on the tragedy, as well as the government corruption and negligence that had helped to cause it. By April 30, the paper’s investigations had forced the resignation of a number of senior government officials, including the governor. International journalists who poured into Guadalajara to cover the explosion stationed themselves in *Siglo 21*’s news room, and the young

paper won an international award for its photographs of the tragedy. In a matter of weeks, *Siglo 21* had gone from irrelevance and insolvency to become Guadalajara's most influential paper. Its circulation increased with its stature: by mid-May, sales had soared from 1,500 copies per day to a peak of 25,000, before receding to a stable circulation of 12,000.⁴²

Siglo 21's next big boost came approximately one year later, with the assassination of Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas-O'Campo, archbishop of Guadalajara. Once again, other dailies reacted slowly to the news and timidly accepted the highly implausible official version of events. (Although the government claimed that the cardinal had accidentally been caught in a crossfire, *Siglo 21*'s coverage revealed Posadas had been shot at close range while clad in clerical garb.) Circulation leapt to 20,000.⁴³

A second high-profile political assassination one year later—that of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio—had an even more potent effect. In the week that followed Colosio's murder, 38,000 Guadalaran readers hungry for accurate reporting turned to *Siglo 21*. The paper passed *El Informador* to become Guadalajara's second-largest daily, and despite an expected ebb, readership remained high.

Siglo 21's last major jump came with the PAN's gubernatorial victory in Jalisco's February 1995 state elections. The final vote tally agreed with a costly and much-criticized poll that *Siglo 21* had published before the elections, predicting the PRI's defeat. After reaching a high-water mark of 45,000, the paper eventually settled down to a stable circulation of 30,000–35,000 copies per day.⁴⁴

By this time, local businessmen had followed readers and, with certain exceptions, had begun to advertise regularly in the new paper.⁴⁵ The combination of sales and advertising revenues finally gave *Siglo 21*—then three-and-a-half years old—financial viability. Meanwhile, the threat of politically motivated harassment receded after the PAN's victory. With opposition representatives in the governor's mansion, the paper no longer had to fear official reprisals for its independent stance. By the middle of the 1990s, then, *Siglo 21* was well established in Guadalajara.

Ultimately, the paper fell victim to serious internal divisions between its independent-minded staff and its more traditional owner, Dau. In a replay of the split at *unomásuno*, these conflicts led to the defection of the bulk of the editorial staff and the formation of a new paper, *Público*, in the late 1990s. Thus, although *Siglo 21* suffered the fate of *unomásuno*, the project it had begun continued under a new standard. Soon

thereafter, *El Norte* publisher Alejandro Junco launched a new paper of his own in Guadalajara (*Mural*), giving the city two independent papers.

This process of emergence, conflict, and growth repeated itself in other provincial cities. Several publications—such as *El Imparcial* of Hermosilla and its sister paper, *La Crónica* of Mexicali—followed the model of *El Diario de Yucatán* and *El Norte*. That is, they were owned by conservative publishers who tried to maintain an independent line from the PRI. Others—such as *Zeta* in Tijuana, founded in 1979—were started by journalists who deliberately sought to create professional, independent publications after quitting or being expelled from more traditional dailies. Invariably, the new style of journalism practiced at all these papers brought them into conflict with political authorities. But that same style also helped bring financial independence from the regime.

Salinastroika

Economic reforms under Carlos Salinas in the late 1980s and early 1990s tended to enhance that financial independence.⁴⁶ Although the reforms that Salinas' government enacted were designed to fortify Mexico's ruling party, they had a number of unintended positive consequences for press freedom. One important cluster of Salinas-era reforms involved placing state-media relationships on a more "modern" footing. Between 1991 and 1993, Salinas (1) restricted the time-honored practice of paying for reporters' accommodations on presidential trips; (2) stopped distributing bribes from the presidential palace; (3) mandated a minimum wage for journalists; (4) reduced official advertising and redirected it toward publications with larger circulations; (5) cut several long-standing subsidies such as tax deferments, utilities, and credit; (6) extended the value-added tax to newsprint; and (7) forced newspapers to pay their Social Security taxes in cash instead of in advertisements.⁴⁷ Such fiscally minded, rationalizing measures forced newspapers to rely more on commercial sources of revenue.

Second, Salinas' administration pursued a vigorous program of privatization. Because many of the newly privatized firms—banks, airlines, telephone companies, and television stations—were major advertisers, the state effectively abdicated substantial control over newspaper revenues. Salinas also attempted to privatize both PIPSA and the government-owned daily *El Nacional*. PIPSA's privatization was so vigorously resisted by the traditional media (which depended on PIPSA for

subsidies) that Salinas postponed its sale, and bids for *El Nacional* failed to reach the government's minimum asking price. Nevertheless, the expectation that PIPSA would eventually be sold encouraged its evolution toward a more purely commercial enterprise.⁴⁸

A third set of reforms involved increasing openness to foreign trade and investment: securing Mexico's membership in GATT, soliciting American investment, and joining the U.S.-Canadian free-trade zone. These policies encouraged coverage of Mexico in the North American press, which inevitably eased pressure on domestic media that sought to cover controversial topics. Mexican newspapers could (and did) run controversial stories published by the international wire services or follow up on investigative reports in the foreign press.⁴⁹ Equally important, deepening integration with the international market facilitated the importation of crucial inputs (like newsprint). Publishers and broadcasters became less dependent on government distribution and importation monopolies (e.g., PIPSA), and consequently less vulnerable to official manipulation of exchange rates or import licenses. Coupled with Salinas' rhetoric of reform, the change in PIPSA was crucial in convincing *El Norte*'s owner to launch a sister publication in Mexico City.⁵⁰

The Barbarians of the North

Reforma, Alejandro Junco's foray into the capital, appeared on November 20, 1993—the anniversary of the start of the Mexican Revolution. It was destined to be Mexico's finest and most influential newspaper. Despite the collapse of a proposed partnership with the Dow Jones Corporation (owners of the *Wall Street Journal*), Junco managed to raise \$50–\$60 million in start-up capital through earnings from *El Norte* and loans from commercial banks. The new paper, like *El Norte* under the day-to-day management of Ramón Alberto Garza, recruited most of its initial 220-person staff in much the same way as *El Norte* had done before: hiring cub reporters directly from the universities, training them internally, and paying them above-market salaries. But *Reforma* also poached a number of veteran editors and columnists from Mexico papers, especially *El Financiero*. These individuals—among them Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Enrique Quintana, and René Delgado—proved critical in making the editorial side of the paper work.

On the business side, *Reforma*'s management team evinced a devotion to their paper's financial performance that allowed the publication to survive several potential catastrophes. As Junco put it: "in this business

we have only one god, the reader, and he demands regular worship.”⁵¹ Despite initial planning errors, *Reforma* was able to adjust its scope and orientation to the tastes of a Mexico City audience.⁵² The paper also successfully weathered a conflict with the PRI-dominated street vendors’ guild (*Unión de Voceadores*) in October 1994 by creating its own distribution network.⁵³ Finally, *Reforma* managed to compensate for the wrenching economic crisis that came only a year after its founding. By March 1995, the paper had rescheduled its debt, locked in long-term advertising, trimmed its staff by 12%, reduced the paper’s length by 30%, and doubled its street price.⁵⁴ The combination of astute business management and journalistic talent allowed the paper to flourish where earlier, similar projects failed.⁵⁵

Reforma’s success provoked a great deal of unsympathetic scrutiny. Reporters at rival publications poked fun of the paper’s extensive internal security and its allegedly excessive employee background investigations. Critics lamented the paper’s *USA Today*-style format, its apparent sympathy for the PAN, and its generally favorable coverage of the business community. Some portrayed *Reforma* as an informational appendage of northern industrial interests and claimed its *regiomontana* (northern) tendencies even extended to partiality for Monterrey’s soccer team.⁵⁶ Although the paper had no editorial page and its opinion pieces covered the political spectrum, the paper’s editorial direction was not actually separate from its ownership. The alleged result was biased and excessively commercialized reporting.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *Reforma*’s arrival changed the rules of Mexican journalism. Previously touchy stories on government corruption and electoral fraud were spread across its front page.⁵⁷ Several more traditional papers—including *Novedades* and *El Universal*—responded to its arrival by upgrading their physical plants, layouts, and journalistic standards.⁵⁸ *Reforma*’s hiring practice also helped drive up journalists’ salaries across the board, presumably reducing the temptation to corruption. These contributions to Mexican media independence alone probably outweighed any corollary defects.

Boom and Crisis

Despite Carlos Salinas’ prognostications, the year 1994 did not deposit Mexico at the threshold of the First World. Instead, it brought armed uprising in the southern state of Chiapas, political assassinations, vigorous electoral challenge, and a precipitous devaluation of the peso.

Ironically, this turbulent and uncertain environment provided Mexico's emerging independent press with one of its biggest boosts to date. As with Mexico City's 1985 earthquake, the contested presidential election of 1988, and similar episodes in the provinces, the urgency and scope of Mexico's 1994 political crisis made independent reporting a prized commodity. In the weeks following the assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luís Donaldo Colosio, for instance, sales of independent publications surged 200–300%. Although it proved temporary, “el boom” (as independent journalists speak of that period) had an undeniable impact on the survival and expansion of existing independent media. *La Jornada*, for instance, was suffering financially in late 1993; it may not be hyperbole to claim that the Chiapas uprising saved the publication.⁵⁹ *Reforma* also benefited from the surge in newspaper sales, which began just a few months after its launch.

The economic crisis that followed Mexico's political implosion had more mixed consequences for independent newspapers. Street sales slumped and advertising revenues shriveled, while the cost of inputs rose precipitously. Wire service reports and other international suppliers continued to charge in dollars (which meant that peso prices effectively doubled almost overnight). Newsprint prices on the international market skyrocketed, increasing 43% in dollar terms (and more than twice that much in pesos) during 1995 alone.⁶⁰ These unexpected shocks cut into the revenues of virtually all Mexican publications. But the crisis hit traditional newspapers much harder than their independent counterparts.⁶¹ Because of the relative popularity of independent publications, most of the sales declines came out of traditional media. *La Jornada* lost only 10–20% of its readers during the first year of the crisis, in contrast to 40–50% for more dependent papers; *Reforma* actually showed positive sales growth for 1995. Even more important for the press overall, the government's near-bankruptcy led it to curtail subsidies and official advertising.⁶² Faced with the loss of staple government revenue, at least thirty Mexican newspapers (15% of the total) folded between March 1995 and January 1996. The crisis thus had a mildly purging effect on Mexico's increasingly competitive newspaper market.

Expansion and Consolidation

In the years following the peso crisis, independent journalism in Mexico continued to expand. New independent publications sprouted up across the country—*Público* and *Mural* in Guadalajara, *Frontera* in Tijuana,

Milenio in Mexico City, *El Sur* in Acapulco, and a number of others. At the same time, prominent semi-independents (*El Porvenir* in Monterrey, *El Universal* in Mexico City, etc.) successfully completed a process of modernization and professionalization, becoming virtually indistinguishable in their operation and coverage from the papers that originally pushed them to adopt a more independent posture.

Professional norms also continued to develop, with bribery decreasing at a rapid rate. In Mexico City, for instance, a decisive majority of journalists in Mexico City had come to reject *chayotes* by the end of the 1990s.⁶³ Other elements of professionalism deepened as well, with independent reporters at a series of newspapers founding an association of investigative journalists and publishers across the country who increasingly collaborated on how to raise reportorial standards. These changes even shone through in cosmetic ways, as typographical errors diminished and most major newspapers adopted color layouts. Whereas only one or two newspapers in Mexico City used color in 1992, virtually all did so by the end of the decade.

In short, professional norms and journalistic content continued to evolve in ways that made Mexico's newspaper market look increasing familiar to visitors from established democracies in the developed world. Although pressure from the government continued, and assaults against individual journalists occurred at approximately the same rate as in the previous decade, reporting became increasingly assertive and professional. By 2000, independent publications were competing not only against the remnants of the old regime but increasingly against each other, as multiple independent papers appeared in each major media market.

THE CAUSES OF MEDIA OPENING

From 1976 to 1996, a series of independent publications emerged in Mexico. Animated by a professional journalistic ethic and supported by a growing readership base, these newspapers and magazines successfully expanded the boundaries of Mexican reporting. Their pages broached previously closed subjects (like official corruption and electoral fraud) and gave prominence to the opinions of diverse sectors of society. What factors were responsible for the emergence of independent journalism in Mexico? How did the press transform itself from corrupt, fawning chroniclers of Mexican officialdom to a reasonably vigorous and professional Fourth Estate?

Political Liberalization

One tempting explanation for the changes in Mexican journalism is the general mellowing in Mexico's political climate over the last two decades. In theory, without this political thaw, the government could have squashed any independent publications—as it did with *Excélsior* in 1976. In this sense, a modicum of political liberalization was probably necessary for Mexico's independent media to endure.

The experience of certain provincial newspapers provides some evidence to support this contention. In the case of *Siglo 21*, for instance, the PAN's victory in Jalisco's 1995 gubernatorial elections was a god-send. On shaky financial ground throughout its first two years of operation, the paper could probably not have survived protracted conflict with hard-liners at the state level.⁶⁴ A certain amount of political space was thus a necessary background condition for media opening.

At the same time, it would be simply inaccurate to portray political reform as the principal driver of media independence in Mexico. Although Mexico's political environment changed radically between 1976 and 1996, the PRI retained control of all branches of the federal government through 1997, and it dominated the upper house of Congress, the executive branch, and the federal judiciary for three years after that. Nor did federal laws governing the media change; as late as 2000, Mexico's print media were still operating under a highly authoritarian press statute dating from 1917.⁶⁵ Informal federal practices also changed little until the inauguration of Ernesto Zedillo, by which time several independent publications were already well established. And even the Zedillo administration was not above taking repressive measures against recalcitrant publications, as when it arrested the publisher of the increasingly independent *El Universal* on tax evasion charges in 1996.⁶⁶ What changed was the effect of such official tactics on journalists' behavior.

It is also worth noting that physical repression against journalists increased substantially during the opening of Mexico's print media. Assaults on the press rose precipitously in the 1980s and remained high until the mid-1990s; in 1986, for instance, Mexico earned the unenviable distinction of having the highest number of journalists killed of any country in the world.⁶⁷ Although most of these murders were unrelated to journalists' professional activities, the extent of the violence is striking. It certainly does not suggest official benevolence. Rather, it indicates that journalists increasingly challenged the old rules of the media game despite violent reprisals. The most generous thing one can say about

official attitudes toward the press through 1996 was that the regime failed to effectively repress a series of independent publications that had emerged for different reasons. Increasing official tolerance thus explains little of the variation over time in media openness at the national level.

Nor, despite the experience of *Siglo 21*, do differences in official tolerance explain most of the variation in media openness across Mexican states. Until 1999, for instance, Tijuana lacked an independent daily despite the fact that it had been under PAN control for a decade.⁶⁸ By contrast, one of Mexico's most independent newspapers continued to survive in Yucatán state despite systematic harassment from the governor's mansion. Independent publications even emerged in states like Guerrero, which remained under the firm control of PRI *caciques* throughout the 1990s.

By itself, then, political decompression cannot explain media opening. Although some modicum of political space was needed for an independent press to emerge, changes in Mexico's political context were not the primary cause of media opening. Rather, a series of other factors allowed Mexico's independent media to transform their country's halting, protracted political transition into an opportunity for autonomous journalism.

Journalistic Norms

Mexico has seen a number of newspapers emerge over the last sixty years, most of which did not survive for long. Often, journalists from these publications succumbed to political pressure after the first serious episode of official harassment; in any case, they rarely continued their attempts to challenge the system. Corruption of journalists and publishers—in the broadest sense of that term—continued, and the old system of rewards and punishments persisted.

For this reason, the year 1976 represented a crucial turning point in the Mexican print media. Central to the developments that followed were the actions and decisions of the original *Excélsior* cohort, who followed Scherer out of the newspaper. Even though some of the publications they founded were suppressed and others (such as *uno-másuno*) subsequently lost their independent orientation, the original journalistic vision that inspired them survived in new publications run by many of the same individuals. The original *Excélsior* cohort thus helped sustain and nurture independent journalism despite the subsequent fate of particular outlets.

Even the publications not created by this group (such as *Reforma* and *El Financiero*) were strongly influenced by it through the transfer of journalists or the emergence of younger journalists trained by the original cohort. As Figure 5 indicates, Mexico's elaborate process of cross-fertilization ultimately touched all of Mexico City's independent papers.

These publications and their progeny also provided moral guidance and trained personnel for a second wave of independent papers that emerged in the 1990s—*Siglo 21* and *Público* in Guadalajara, *El Sur* in Acapulco, *Milenio* in Mexico City, etc. Time and again, the fate of independent journalism depended on the decisions of a cluster of people who were sufficiently committed to their professional vision as to resist official blandishments or reprisals. This vision led them to launch newspapers with independent editorial lines, founding new publications when the old ones were closed or corrupted. Ultimately, their example encouraged others to follow suit.

If Mexico's independent papers had been founded with the primary goal of making money, one might discount the influence of journalistic norms. Explanations based on vision, commitment, identity-defining personal experiences, or the creation of a new journalistic culture could then be replaced by models based exclusively on commercial motives. In most cases, however, adherence to a particular journalistic vision was more influential in the decision to found independent publications than desire for financial gain. Had money been the goal, it would have been much easier to join or found a traditional publication, or at least to quickly reorient an independent publication along pro-government lines once it had been established. The old system of co-optation and corruption clearly promised more enticing rewards than the uncertain proposition of independent journalism under an authoritarian regime.

The initial discovery that independent journalism in Mexico could be profitable was, like many great discoveries, frequently accidental. Journalists began with a different end in mind, and ultimately discovered that—despite the risks—it could bear fruit. In cases like *Proceso*, in fact, full-fledged reliance on the market was not even the preference of its editorial board. Rather, it was thrust upon them by the regime when their pursuit of a new journalistic vision cost them access to official advertising. Most independent journalists in the 1980s and early 1990s thus did not begin with the goal of exploiting a previously untapped market for assertive reporting. If they had, they probably would not have begun at all. Rather, they began by asking themselves how they

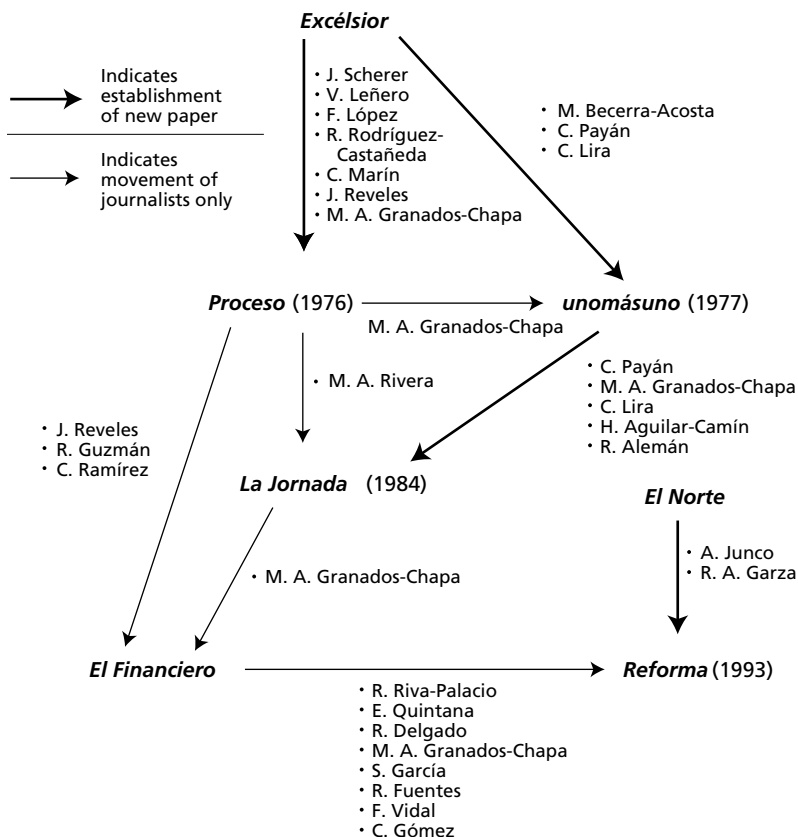


Figure 5. Journalistic professionalism and the founding of independent newspapers.

might satisfy an altogether different goal: to be a real journalist, to give voice to those without voice, to serve as a vehicle for civil society, to provide accurate and timely information, etc.

These goals were not always the same. For journalists at *Proceso*, confronting the political establishment and puncturing official myths were crucial defining objectives. For *unomásuno* and *La Jornada*, advocating social reform and registering the changes in Mexican civil society were important orienting frameworks. At *Reforma*, by contrast, editors focused on providing what they considered fair and balanced information—the who, what, when, where, and how of newsworthy events. And at conservative provincial publications like *Diario de Yucatán*, advancing the interests of local elites against the predations of a

centralized authoritarian system initially constituted an important objective.

All of these visions, however, inevitably led to conflict with the regime. When they did, journalists had to decide how committed to their vision they really were. For most of the publications discussed here, the choice was in favor of adherence to their vision. To be sure, independent-minded journalists did not adopt uncompromising stances; they did not invariably stand up to official threats nor systematically avoid all the traditional vices of the Mexican media. But they did consistently attempt to create a new kind of journalism. And in doing so, they pushed out the boundaries of the system.

The founding of independent publications animated by a new journalistic vision was repeated in most large media markets. This was true of Mexico City (with *Excélsior-unomásuno-La Jornada-Milenio*), Tijuana (with *Zeta*), Mérida (with *El Diario de Yucatán*), Guadalajara (with *Siglo 21-Público*), Acapulco (with *El Sur*), and a series of others. In each case, the common denominator in the opening of Mexico's print media was the emergence of a cohort of journalists with a broader vision about the role of the press in society. Without reference to these journalistic norms and visions, it is simply impossible to explain when and where independent newspapers arose in Mexico.

This point is nicely illustrated by a comparison of two states—Nuevo León and Jalisco—whose printed media opened at radically different rates, despite apparent structural similarities. Both included a major metropolitan region that could support several newspapers (Guadalajara in Jalisco and Monterrey in Nuevo León); both developed a local business elite that was sometimes at odds with Mexico City;⁶⁹ and both were the sites of PAN gubernatorial victories in the mid-1990s. From the perspective of political liberalization and commercial motivation, one might actually have expected Jalisco's press to develop faster, given that Guadalajara represents a larger market than Monterrey and that the PAN triumphed in Jalisco two years before it did in Nuevo León. Yet the press climate in Monterrey was quite pluralistic by the end of the 1980s, with several independent or semi-independent papers competing for readers. By contrast, Guadalajara's first independent newspaper, *Siglo 21*, did not emerge until 1991, almost two decades after Alejandro Junco took over at *El Norte*. In 2000, Monterrey boasted five major dailies, all of which could plausibly be considered independent. Guadalajara, by contrast, had only two independents—*Público* (the successor to *Siglo 21*) and

Mural (launched by Junco in the late 1990s)—and traditional papers were still adjusting to the new competition.

The principal explanation for this difference across states, of course, lies in when committed and independent-minded journalists arrived on the scene. In Monterrey, the team Junco assembled made *El Norte* Monterrey's leading local publication by the early 1980s. Not only did *El Norte* help transform the Monterrey market directly, its presence also compelled other newspapers in the vicinity to experiment with more critical coverage. This same process ultimately occurred in Guadalajara, but with a substantial time lag. And when it did occur, it was the result of commitment and vision by a small cluster of journalists. Were it not for the actions of people like Jorge Zepeda, Diego Peterson, and their associates, Guadalajara would have remained dominated by pro-government dailies until even later in the 1990s.

Differences in journalistic norms also explain much of the variation in levels of independence within the same media market. This finding is perhaps best illustrated by the case of Mexico City, where journalistic norms were perhaps the best predictor of independent coverage across major newspapers. For instance, the correlation between independence in coverage (as measured in Figure 1) and the estimated percentage of reporters who regularly receive bribes at thirteen Mexico City dailies was -0.76 .⁷⁰ The more publishers, editors, and reporters shared particular professional norms, the more independent was their coverage.

In short, professional norms were a powerful predictor of variation across time, media markets, and publications. The vision and commitment of particular individuals were crucial in creating a new culture of journalism outside the traditional rent-seeking system. Without that commitment and vision, independent papers would never have been established in the first place.

Given the importance of journalistic norms, it seems appropriate to inquire about the origins of these norms. One important source was Mexico's changing political, economic, and social context during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. For most of this period, the political system was in a state of perennial crisis. Economic modernization during 1940–70 had eroded the PRI's original social base, and economic crisis after 1982 had sapped its legitimacy. The period of media opening was also punctuated by a series of shocking events that highlighted both the regime's declining legitimacy and the changing nature of Mexico's population. The 1968 massacre at Tlatelolco Plaza, for instance, underscored the regime's authoritarian features and pushed many intellectuals

into active dissent.⁷¹ The national bankruptcy of 1982 and ensuing economic collapse called attention to the regime's incapacity to manage the economy. The growth of civic groups, the increasingly vigorous electoral challenge of opposition parties, and the spread of popular protests all reinforced the notion that Mexico's political system needed to change. Finally, the tumultuous political events of 1994—peasant rebellion, political assassination, and peso devaluation—plunged the country into renewed political and economic crisis. Each fresh crisis or calamity signaled to publishers that Mexico's social and political context had changed in a profound way that was simply not reflected in traditional newspaper coverage.

The effect of these events was magnified by journalists' roles. Mexican journalists had to confront the contrast between the official reality they were expected to report and the actual reality that they viewed every day. The cognitive dissonance this clash produced constituted a powerful impetus to consider alternative approaches to journalism.⁷²

This context of social ferment undoubtedly explains much of the secular increase in independent journalistic norms in Mexico. It may also account for obvious cohort effects, as younger journalists in Mexico tended to be decidedly more independent than their counterparts of previous generations. Those Mexicans who were socialized in a period of economic crisis and political unrest approached their profession with a different mind-set—a fact that became immediately apparent in conversations with Mexican reporters.

Changes in the political and social context in which journalists operated do not, however, explain the variation across different media outlets within the same time period. And this variation remained substantial throughout the 1990s, as the disparate behavior of Mexican newspapers in 1996 suggests. What, then, made certain journalists more likely than others to respond to changing social circumstances with a search for alternative professional visions?

One source of new journalistic visions was from abroad. Many of the individuals who became such important figures in reorienting the Mexican press—such as Alejandro Junco and Raymundo Riva-Palacio—had spent time in the United States. Others, such as *La Jornada* and *Siglo 21*, were inspired by European examples, especially Spain's *El País*. Jorge Zepeda, for instance, had spent a great deal of time abroad, and his initial team included one Spaniard and two Argentines. In most cases, journalists who were heavily exposed to international journalistic norms

regarded these experiences as highly influential in their own thinking. For instance, Junco placed *El Norte*'s summer training program under the direction of his own former journalism professor, Mary A. Gardner.⁷³

It is by no means clear, however, that simple contagion from the United States and Western Europe can explain what was overwhelmingly a local process. Most independent journalists in Mexico had not been exposed to foreign models in any great depth, and even those who had been exposed needed to face the difficult task of translating those models to the very different Mexican context. Moreover, this process of translation often involved serious effort and sacrifice on the part of the individuals involved. There thus remains an important element of choice and will in the creation of new journalistic norms.

The issue of human agency deserves attention, because the types of decisions that gave rise to Mexico's Fourth Estate were not regarded as obvious or even normal at the time. Rather, they were viewed as the actions of abnormally committed individuals at moments when the natural or logical choice might have been quite different. In this sense, Mexico's independent journalists followed the historical example set by the Flores Magón brothers, who met with repeated harassment from the pre-revolutionary regime of Porfirio Díaz after the launch of *El Hijo de Ahuizote* in 1903. Julio Scherer, for instance, could easily have lapsed into bitterness, obscurity, or collusion with the regime following the government-orchestrated coup at *Excélsior*. Alejandro Junco did not have to launch a new publication in Mexico City's notoriously saturated newspaper market. Nothing made *Siglo 21*'s original crew stay on during the paper's early months, when salaries were not being paid and readership remained pathetically small. And every day for two decades, scores of journalists had to decide for themselves whether to accept or decline an array of official favors. It would be wrong to regard these individual decisions as entirely divorced from larger structural variables (such as political crisis, social change, and exposure to foreign models), or to claim that a handful of individuals determined the entire trajectory of Mexico's print media. But it would be equally foolish—indeed, the height of academic hubris—to argue that the opening of Mexico's print media can be explained without reference to human agency.

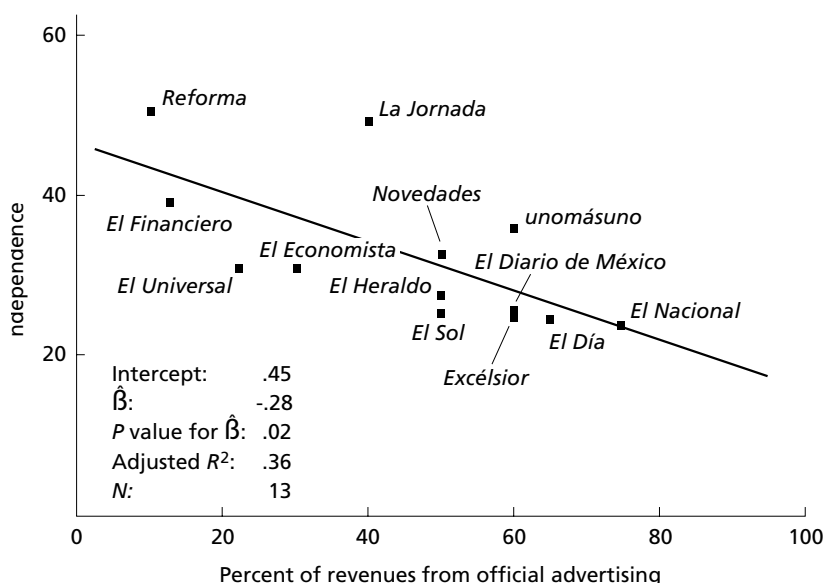
Market Competition

Journalistic norms and vision were thus crucial for the founding of independent publications. But equally crucial for their long-term survival was their ability to compete successfully against their traditional counterparts. Independent papers needed a replacement for government subsidies, on which they would have otherwise been forced to depend (and which would surely have corroded their sense of mission). This alternate stream of revenues came from readers and private sector advertisers, who themselves responded to readership. Independent newspapers cultivated this new source of revenue, and it in turn made them better able to resist official blandishments and reprisals.

One case in point was *Proceso* magazine, which was forced to make do without official advertising after President López-Portillo's boycott in 1982. Despite the best efforts of the government, the magazine not only survived but also became even more resistant to official threats and enticements. Short of physically intervening in the paper—something that became increasingly costly as the magazine's readership and reputation grew—there was little the government could do. As Mexican periodicals gradually learned to fend for themselves, then, they became increasingly independent.

The relationship between financial autonomy and independence also holds across publications, as well as over time. Figure 6 shows the relationship between journalistic independence (as measured in Figure 1) and financial autonomy (as measured by the percentage of each newspaper's revenues that come from official advertising) for Mexico City's thirteen leading news dailies.⁷⁴ The more newspapers relied on government advertising, the less independent they were likely to be. This relationship is captured by the downward sloping regression line; the principal output from this regression is also shown.

Eventually, market forces encouraged the notion that, as one journalist at *La Jornada* put it, "telling the truth is a good business." Entrepreneurial publishers soon saw the opportunities that independent reporting offered, and competition encouraged previously sleepy or *oficialista* media to adopt more independent postures. The success of *Reforma*, for instance, stimulated more aggressive reporting at other papers (like *El Universal*). During the second half of the 1990s, this process accelerated and spread throughout the country. In a sort of cascade effect, the initial success of independent publications encouraged the gradual transformation of the press as a whole.



SOURCES: Consultores Internacionales, 1995; Metromedia INRA.

Figure 6. Financial autonomy and independence in Mexican newspapers.

For this cascade effect to occur, of course, market forces had to operate. Consequently, economic reforms that enhanced market competition had an important effect on media opening. This was true of the budget tightening under Ernesto Zedillo that followed the 1994 peso crisis, which led to cutbacks in government advertising and encouraged many previously *oficialista* publications to seek higher circulations. But it was also true of the Salinas-era reforms of the early 1990s. Thus, while Salinas showed little fondness toward Mexico's emerging Fourth Estate, his economic policies did indirectly encourage media opening by promoting market competition.

Other Factors

In addition to political liberalization, market competition, and journalistic norms, a series of other factors encouraged the emergence of independent media in Mexico. Although not as important as the variables discussed above, they did exercise a modest influence over the transfor-

mation of Mexico's print media. Increases in literacy and market size during the Mexican Miracle, for instance, probably expanded the potential readership base for independent publications. Scrutiny of the Mexican government by foreign media and watchdog groups helped to limit violent repression by the regime. Increased penetration by the foreign press sometimes expanded Mexican publications' maneuvering room—as in the case of electoral fraud in Chihuahua, when stories originally broken by foreign reporters could then be followed up by the local press.⁷⁵ Technological innovation and diffusion also played a role, especially in the case of the Zapatista rebel movement, in ensuring a more balanced representation of events. In fact, a descent into the details of the Mexican case reveals a number of influences that might have seemed unlikely candidates to promote media opening. Even repressive actions by the regime—such as the 1976 coup at *Excelsior* or the 1982 cutoff of subsidies to *Proceso*—sometimes had unintended positive consequences for the emergence of Mexico's free press.

CONCLUSION

In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, journalists with a different vision of their profession founded a series of independent publications: *Proceso*, *El Financiero*, *La Jornada*, *Reforma*, *Siglo 21*, and others. Because these publications were more popular than their traditional counterparts, they were able to attain some measure of financial autonomy. Financial autonomy, in turn, enabled these publications to better resist official pressures and encouraged other papers to follow suit. Ultimately, independent journalism spread to virtually all major media markets. By the late 1990s, Mexico's Fourth Estate was firmly established in the print media.

Some measure of political space was required for this transformation. Nevertheless, official attitudes and behavior toward the media changed little until well after a number of independent publications were established. Nor did factors like economic development, technological diffusion, or globalization play decisive roles. The most important causes of change in Mexico's print media were changing journalistic norms, which encouraged and sustained new styles of reporting, and market competition between different media outlets. It was these forces, ultimately, that propelled increasing independence and diversity in Mexico's print media.

This process of opening was repeated in Mexican radio and television. Although opening came later than in print, it occurred for many of the same reasons. Ultimately, commercial competition, political liberalization, and changing journalistic norms helped transform broadcasting into a zone of relative pluralism and independence.

Opening Mexico's Broadcast Media

Civil society and the market are much stronger now and they will be the ones that, more and more, impose their criteria and styles.

—Enrique Quintana, Channel 40, cited in
Elias Parra, “¿La censura está en el aire?”
Expansión, March 15, 1995, p. 44

On April 16, 1997, media magnate Emilio Azcárraga Jr.—known as “the Tiger”—died of cancer on his yacht off the coast of Miami.¹ His demise provoked a predictable range of reactions across the Mexican political spectrum. Executives and financiers paid tribute to one of the country's richest men, who had presided over the remarkable development of Mexico's television industry.² Politicians from the ruling party mourned the passing of a longtime ally who had openly proclaimed his partisan sympathies. Meanwhile, civic and opposition groups expressed the hope that Azcárraga's demise would stimulate further opening in Televisa, the multi-billion-dollar media conglomerate he controlled.³ In all, it was a fittingly mixed tribute for a man who was simultaneously “visionary and authoritarian, magnanimous and dictatorial, ubiquitous and reserved. . . a living symbol of the combination of modern high technology and the archaic concentration of power and ownership in a single man.”⁴

With the Tiger's death, control of Televisa passed to his twenty-nine-year-old son, Emilio Azcárraga (known as Azcárraga-Jean), and a crew of predominantly younger executives.⁵ Open and informal, Azcárraga-Jean presented a stark contrast to his father (who never granted interviews). Optimists viewed the changing of the guard as a crucial step in Televisa's painfully slow evolution toward greater independence.

The evolution of Mexican broadcasting from 1985 to the late 1990s highlights the importance of market forces in prying open a once highly controlled media regime. In radio, dramatic events (such as the 1985 Mexico City earthquake) and format changes on certain talk-radio programs encouraged the emergence of high-quality, independent news programming. The financial success of these programs guaranteed their persistence, and competition for advertising revenues forced other stations to follow their lead. Consequently, from 1985 to 1996 Mexican radio evolved steadily toward independence.

In television, commercial competition following the privatization of government-owned channels in 1993 put pressure on the country's dominant network, Televisa, to introduce a measure of independence in news coverage. The effects of commercial competition were reinforced by economic crisis, which forced Televisa to search out novel strategies to protect its ratings. Attempts to change the network were also propelled by public criticism of Televisa from opposition activists and by the same dramatic events that encouraged opening in print and radio. Each new shock—the Mexico City earthquake, the contested presidential elections of 1988, the tumultuous political events of 1994, and the presidential elections of the same year—highlighted the extent to which Televisa's *oficialista* news coverage was out of step with both the changing reality of Mexican politics and the tastes of its audience. In response to these pressures, Televisa's news coverage became more representative and impartial.

But the recent history of Mexico's broadcast media also highlights the limits of change. For most of the last decade, the evolution of Mexican television did not keep pace with the transformation of Mexican civil society. Televisa's enduring hegemony constrained market competition in television broadcasting and thus retarded media opening. It was not until 1997, when leadership turnover at Televisa led to more balanced coverage of the main opposition parties, that television began to make a positive contribution to Mexican democratization.

MEXICAN BROADCASTING

In contrast to magazines and newspapers, Mexico's electronic media have a pervasive scope. Since the 1960s, the multiplication of transmitters and the proliferation of handheld radio sets have made radio signals available to virtually all Mexicans. And over the last two decades, the expansion of television broadcasting has also carried visual signals

within range of over 95 % of the population. Although limited purchasing power means that only about half of all households actually own a television set, many Mexicans have access to television at the homes of friends and relatives, as well as at local community centers. As a result, most Mexicans receive their information about politics and current events through television.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of Mexican media audiences by print, radio, and television. As the first column indicates, most Mexicans rely either on television exclusively or on television and a smattering of other media. Audience breakdown by education level (the second column) shows that even college-educated Mexicans rely mainly on television. Data from other sources suggest that, if anything, even more Mexicans depend on television for news. According to most surveys, between two-thirds and three-quarters of Mexicans rely primarily on television for information about politics.⁶

From the 1970s to the mid-1990s, that medium was dominated by a single private company, Televisa. Comparable in size to Brazil's Globo corporation and the major American networks, Televisa produces world-class news, sports, and entertainment programs. The corporation's most lucrative programs are its *telenovelas*, or nightly soap operas, which are exported around the world. Its interests also extend to a range of media-related industries (newspapers, magazines, radio, film, billboards, public relations, etc.), as well as new technologies like satellite and cable.

Televisa's main competitor is Mexico's only other national broadcasting network, Televisión Azteca. Televisión Azteca was formed when the government-owned Imevisión chain (itself created when President Luis Echeverría took over several private channels in 1972) was sold to a consortium led by Monterrey-based businessman Ricardo Salinas-Pliego for \$641 million. With two channels capable of reaching 94 % and 97 % of Mexican households, Televisión Azteca has the technical scope and broadcasting capacity to compete against Televisa.

In many respects, Mexico's two networks are fairly similar. Both offer commercially oriented products, and both focus principally on entertainment. Azteca's main news programs—*Hechos*, *Esté Enterado*, *A Quien Corresponda*—were generally designed to match Televisa's. During the 1990s, the two networks became more similar still, with paired "soft news" programs like *Ciudad Desnuda* (TV Azteca) and *A Sangre Fría* (Televisa), as well as "hidden camera" programs like *Te Caché* (TV Azteca) and *Cámara Inflagrante* (Televisa).⁷ The two networks even own

TABLE 1: MEDIA USE IN MEXICO, MID-1990S

Medium	Overall (%)	College educated (%)
Print	10.1	28.1
Radio	16.7	10.5
Television	58.6	45.3
All	6.2	15.4
Other/none	8.4	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: IFE/Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, UNAM. "La reforma electoral su contexto sociocultural," Cuadro 1.4 (1996); question asked was, "Through which medium do you principally receive your information about politics?"

rival soccer leagues, reinforcing the Coke-versus-Pepsi flavor of their competition.

Probably the biggest difference between the two networks is not their news content but the source of their non-news programming. With some 14,000 employees and a world-class production infrastructure, Televisa develops its own entertainment programs. Televisión Azteca, by contrast, maintains a staff of fewer than 3,000 permanent employees and depends on imported programming, mainly from the U.S.-based National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). Azteca owns few other enterprises, even in media-related industries, and concentrates almost exclusively on broadcast television.

In addition to Mexico's two principal networks, a number of other broadcasters play a role at the margin of Mexican television. The most important of these is Multivisión, a microwave-based pay-television system. With several hundred thousand subscribers, Multivisión is Mexico's largest pay-television system—about 50% larger than the other major industry player, Televisa's Cablevisión.⁸

During the second half of the 1990s, Multivisión sought to expand and diversify its media holdings. It bid (unsuccessfully) for the government-owned television network in 1992–93, expanded its radio holdings, and joined a regional satellite television venture. As the Mexican media market has grown more technologically sophisticated, therefore, Multivisión has become an increasingly relevant alternative source of information. The company offers independent political commentary and news coverage through both talk shows and regular newscasts. The potential impact of these programs, however, is limited by Multivisión's limited penetration and upscale client base; most subscrib-

ers are wealthy households that already have access to diverse sources of information, including independent publications and foreign media.

Another player in the 1990s was Channel 40, which began broadcasting in Mexico City during 1995–96. Channel 40 was the brainchild of Javier Moreno-Valle, son of the former governor of Puebla state and a businessman with broadcasting interests in Argentina and Spain.⁹ Together with his associate Hernán Cabalceta, Moreno-Valle helped found *El Financiero* before selling his interest to the Cárdenas family in the early 1980s. Moreno-Valle also led the ill-fated effort behind *El Independiente* newspaper (many of whose staff subsequently ended up working for *Reforma*). In many respects, Channel 40 was an extension and continuation of previous projects. Several leading journalists involved with the independent media, most notably news editor Ciro Gómez-Leyva, joined Channel 40, and the station remains oriented toward news coverage. News reporting originally comprised 51 hours per week, in addition to 21 hours of special reports and documentaries and 12 hours of the feisty debate program *Sin límites* (No Limits).¹⁰

Although the company officially began to broadcast full coverage in June 1995, signal problems impeded transmission until early 1996.¹¹ But the network proved strikingly independent. In its first year of operation, the station broadcast investigative reports on Pemex and the assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, as well as shorter news reports on topics like election-related violence in Morelos and interviews with “vetoed” political figures like PRI defector Manuel Camacho-Solís and former union boss Joaquín Hernández-Galicia (“La Quina”).¹² Although Channel 40 allegedly appeared on an “enemies” list drawn up by the Zedillo administration, government pressure was relatively light.¹³ Possibly because of Channel 40’s relatively limited audience, the network was not threatened with the withdrawal of its concession.¹⁴ More threatening was a libel lawsuit from a local businessman that ended up plunging the station into financial crisis. As a result of its financial difficulties, the station entered into an alliance with Televisión Azteca, reducing its capacity to act as an independent source of news.

Another independent broadcaster to arrive on the scene in the 1990s was Channel 22, a cultural station that began transmitting on June 23, 1993. Also viewed as a potential threat by the government, Channel 22 resembled several other smaller television stations (e.g., Chihuahua’s Channel 11) that became increasingly independent in the second half of the 1990s.¹⁵ Other local stations also began to emerge around the country during the same period. Although their limited viewership makes

them rounding errors on the two national networks, local television offers some potential for diversity in Mexican broadcasting.

One final emerging source of television transmissions during the 1990s was foreign—both from satellite systems and from international spillovers. Mexican airwaves were increasingly filled with pay signals beamed from Univisión (a U.S.-based Spanish language network formerly owned by Televisa), Telenoticias (a Florida-based consortium of Reuters, Telemundo of Miami, and Spain's Antena 3), Corporación Medcom, and other international broadcasting ventures. In addition to these high-end broadcasts, cross-border spillovers represent an important new element along the U.S.-Mexico frontier. During the 1990s, burgeoning demand within the United States for "Latino television" produced a number of Spanish-language broadcasts that reach into Mexico. Throughout the northern maquiladora belt—which includes cities like Tijuana, Mexicali, and Juárez—Mexican citizens could receive local U.S. broadcasts in their native tongue. The result was a fairly pluralistic and independent broadcast media along the frontier, irrespective of any official attempts at control.

Compared to Mexican television, Mexican radio remains a much more limited source of political information. Despite the resurgence of talk radio over the last decade, most stations devote themselves exclusively to music, sports, and, to a lesser extent, radio soap operas. Only about 15–20% of Mexicans rely on radio for news and political information—slightly above the percentage for print media. These listeners are an eclectic assortment of urban commuters, people from geographically isolated rural communities, and poorer Mexicans without access to television.

Mexican radio began much as television did, with private barons dominating the industry. The government later founded its own stations for propaganda purposes in the 1930s and doled out concessions to cronies, political supporters, and established private broadcasters.¹⁶ The Azcárraga family, for instance, began as radio entrepreneurs.¹⁷ Today, a few large chains dominate Mexico's radio industry, though many cities also have several unaffiliated local broadcasters, typically friends of government officials who acquired their concessions through political and personal connections.

Despite the large number of stations, news broadcasting is somewhat more concentrated. Programming is dominated by Mexico City talk-radio hosts, whose shows now reach a national audience through syndication and chaining. Of these, the most influential are Pedro Ferriz de

Con's *Para Empezar* (of Estereo Rey, owned by Multivisión), Ricardo Rocha's *Panorama Detrás de la Noticia* (broadcast by Televisa), and José Gutiérrez-Vivó's *Monitor* (of Radio Red, now owned by Radio Centro).¹⁸ Local radio shows, usually quite pro-PRI, also reach most cities and towns.

As with the press, Mexico City's news radio market is one of the most dynamic. The leader in the 1990s was undoubtedly Radio Centro, which produced world-class music and information programming.¹⁹ The company's August 24, 1994 acquisition of Radio Red (for \$135 million) left it with 40% of the capital's overall market and perhaps 70% of its news market.²⁰ In the 1990s, reporting on Radio Centro was not as detailed, rigorous, or independent as was political coverage in Mexico's independent newspapers, but it was nevertheless remarkably assertive. The story of how it got that way begins in the mid-1980s.

TURNING POINTS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF MEXICAN BROADCASTING

On September 10, 1985, an earthquake registering 8.1 on the Richter scale rocked Mexico City. Government officials reported that 8,000 people died in the disaster, but unofficial estimates of the death count ranged in the tens of thousands, and Mexico City's incessant rumor mill churned out truly apocalyptic figures. One of the reasons that damage from the earthquake was so extensive, of course, was widespread lack of compliance with building codes and safety regulations—itsself a product of pervasive graft within the Mexican bureaucracy. Although few politicians were bold enough to state such a conclusion publicly, it soon became clear that official corruption was indirectly responsible for countless deaths and widespread devastation.²¹ The 1985 earthquake was one of a series of events—like the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, the national bankruptcy of 1982, the contested presidential elections of 1988, the 1994 Chiapas uprising, and the bungled peso devaluation of 1994—that helped crystallize popular dissatisfaction with the regime.

Public resentment was further aroused by the government's failure to provide a coordinated and rapid response. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, President Miguel de la Madrid failed to appear in public to reassure the nation or announce the government's relief efforts. Rescue operations were slow and spotty; repairs were slower still. In the absence of immediate government assistance, citizens rapidly took mat-

ters into their own hands. Neighborhood organizations sprang up around the city to distribute water, care for the injured, and dig out the survivors. Although these associations were rapidly dismantled by the government once official relief efforts got under way, their unexpected efflorescence signaled the rebirth of Mexican civil society.²² As one journalist put it—echoing similar comments by several colleagues—the earthquake “woke a sleeping country.”²³

Seismic Change

The earthquake had a series of direct and indirect impacts on Mexico’s broadcast media. Perhaps most importantly, public reactions signaled to media owners that the Mexican population was no longer a politically inert mass; the market for accurate information was there to be tapped if broadcasters were willing to experiment in news coverage. As José Gutiérrez-Vivó, anchor for Radio Red’s *Monitor*, put it, “from 1973 [when *Monitor* began] to 1985, the electronic media were asleep.” Like the rest of the country, they were jolted from their slumber by the earthquake.²⁴

Audience responses to reporting of the disaster reinforced this impression. In the aftermath of the earthquake, several radio stations rushed to provide timely assessments of the damage and placed themselves at the disposal of popular relief efforts. The result was a radio boom which gave Mexican radio new influence as an informational medium.²⁵ In particular, this boom rewarded a handful of more assertive and professional radio stations—such as Radio Red—upon which people came to rely for accurate updates about the disaster.²⁶ For the next decade, independent radio stations were consistently the first media to break important news.²⁷

For Mexican television, which clung to *oficialista* patterns of reporting, the results were reversed. Televisa continued to transmit mild reports of the damage—up until its own tower collapsed and it was forced off the air. The credibility of Televisa’s newscasts suffered both with the public at large and inside the corporation itself (where a large number of employees were killed).²⁸ In this sense, the earthquake was one of the first events that led Televisa to reconsider its Orwellian coverage of “bad news.” In the 1990s, perhaps in an attempt to atone for past sins, coverage of earthquakes and other natural disasters was extensive and graphic.²⁹

The 1988 Election

The electronic media's next step toward independence came in 1988, with the independent candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the contested election of Carlos Salinas. As with the 1985 earthquake, radio proved much more even-handed in covering the PRI's electoral challengers.³⁰ Television coverage of the campaign, by contrast, remained profoundly biased, shunning Cárdenas and painting PAN candidate Manuel Clouthier as a dangerous megalomaniac. Television bias was so notorious that it became a campaign issue. Clouthier repeatedly denounced Televisa reporting, while PAN activists called for a boycott of Televisa products, passed out bumper stickers lambasting *24 Hours* anchor Jacobo Zabludovsky, and organized demonstrations outside Televisa's headquarters.³¹ The corporation became identified with the old regime precisely when that regime was coming under its greatest stress.

In response to these events, Televisa initiated a limited opening in 1989, allowing some coverage of controversial topics and opposition figures. But change was both circumscribed and ephemeral. Rising Televisa star Guillermo Ochoa, host of *Hoy Mismo* (Today) and the symbol of recent changes, was fired after interviewing jailed labor leader Joaquín Hernández-Galicia (whom President Salinas had arrested early in his term).³² The corporation also launched a systematic campaign to discredit PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and to sell President Carlos Salinas' program of economic reform.³³

The Talk-Radio Renaissance

As Televisa was withdrawing its first tentative gestures at opening, Mexican radio was continuing its evolution toward greater independence. Talent from print media and television—including those purged from Televisa—trickled into the radio industry.³⁴ Radio broadcasters, increasingly aware of the profit potential in news radio, welcomed the new professionals. Meanwhile, radio hosts themselves continued to experiment with changes in format and presentation.

The most successful of these experiments was Radio Red, one of the original stations to broadcast accurate updates on the 1985 earthquake. José Gutiérrez-Vivó, the host of Radio Red's leading news program (*Monitor*), radically restructured the style of radio news, expanding the time allotted to interviews and introducing listener call-ins that gave

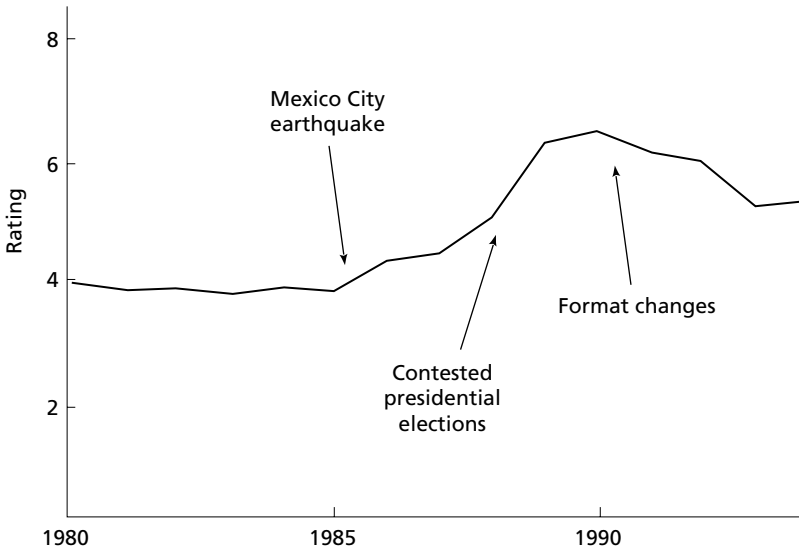
radio an interactive flavor. Public reaction to the changes was dramatic, and *Monitor* quickly came to dominate the capital's airwaves. By the mid-1990s, *Monitor* had captured approximately 56% of the Mexico City news market.³⁵

Figure 7 traces Radio Red's ratings (as a percent of all households with radios in Mexico City) since 1980. As the graph indicates, the company's ratings were more or less static until the Mexico City earthquake. Over the next five years, however, they surged from 4% to over 6%. Though ratings slipped in the early 1990s, when other stations began to mimic Radio Red's innovations, the station's popularity remained high.

With ratings came advertising revenues. Because talk-radio audiences are less fickle than music audiences, promotional time on news shows is substantially more valuable. In Mexico City, for instance, advertising during talk programs paid, on average, more than three times as much as advertising during all other types of programming.³⁶ The scarce supply of advertising revenues and the lucrative opportunities presented by news programs made commercial pressure particularly keen. Talk-radio programs soon surged across Mexico City's airwaves, reviving a stagnant AM dial and breathing new life into the news/information side of radio. In this sense, the changes at *Monitor* were comparable to those introduced by Julio Scherer at *Excelsior* or Alejandro Junco at *El Norte*, elevating the most independent radio programs and triggering a cascade effect throughout the industry.

By the middle of President Carlos Salinas' term, then, Mexican radio was becoming increasingly pluralistic and independent.³⁷ Despite its propaganda campaign against Cárdenas, Televisa was also showing incipient signs of openness. Starting in 1990–91, it began to mention opposition parties, to refer to “vetoed” persons, and occasionally to report on government corruption.³⁸ Television lagged behind radio—with every two steps forward accompanied by another step back—but it too was inching toward independence.

Increasing openness, of course, owed little to government tolerance. Even the economic reforms President Salinas introduced in the print media were absent in radio and television for most of his term. Mexican radio was still the victim of regular censorship, which increased sharply in second half of Salinas' term with the firing of several prominent independent journalists at the behest of the government.³⁹ Concessions continued to be doled out to regime supporters rather than politically



SOURCES: Consultores Internacionales, 1995; Metromedia INRA.

Figure 7. Ratings at Radio Red, 1980–94 (as a percent of all Mexico City households with radios).

nonpartisan entrepreneurs.⁴⁰ And Mexican television remained dominated by an openly pro-government monopoly.

Privatization (at Last)

President Salinas' program of economic liberalization, however, finally reached broadcasting on August 2, 1993, with the privatization of government-owned television channels. Televisión Azteca, as the new network was baptized, introduced an element of competition into Mexican broadcast television. To be sure, Azteca was initially hobbled by the usual legacies of public sector ownership and management: low ratings, high costs, technological obsolescence, administrative incompetence, and a corporate culture that celebrated organizational slack.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it had important financial backers: two Texas-based banks, two Mexican banks (Atlántico and Bancomer), and NBC (which sold Azteca programming and reserved the right to purchase up to 20% of the new network).⁴² For the first time in over two decades, Televisa would face real competition from a well-financed national broadcaster.

As discussed below, it later transpired that the privatization process was deeply compromised by business connections between the Salinas family and Azteca's new owners. The development of Azteca undoubtedly suffered from these connections: reporting was not dramatically different from Televisa's, and Azteca broke no records for journalistic assertiveness. Focusing primarily on entertainment, the new network's editorial decisions initially placed little pressure on Televisa for more authentic news coverage. Critics soon dismissed the network as "Televisa Lite"—a more sensationalist but equally pro-government version of Mexico's long-standing broadcasting hegemon.⁴³

Nevertheless, Azteca's audience did grow steadily. From a base of 1–2% in October 1993 (when the new team took over), ratings climbed to 8–10% two years later. Most of this growth came in news reporting, as Azteca's softer, yellower style proved popular and early perceptions of independence worked to the network's advantage. By late 1996, executives were claiming 40% of the viewing audience.⁴⁴ Even though Azteca's real share was probably closer to 30%, its rapid expansion was still impressive.

Equally important, Azteca's orientation began to evolve. Stimulated by the shocking political events of 1994–95, including the arrest of Raúl Salinas for the murder of his former brother-in-law, the new network began to concentrate more on news coverage. It retained Sergio Sarmiento, respected former editor of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, as its news chief, and experimented with "yellow" reporting. As a result of these innovations, its news ratings climbed rapidly toward those of Televisa. By 1995, the network's flagship nightly news program, *Hechos*, rivaled Televisa's *24 Hours*. Figure 8 summarizes the rise in the popularity of Azteca's newscasts from January 1995 to January 1997. It shows Azteca's share as a percentage of the two main networks.

The Television Wars

Televisa responded to market competition in a number of ways. First, the company adopted a host of sniping commercial tactics intended to lock in advertising and harm Televisión Azteca.⁴⁵ Softer and more "yellow" news programs were launched; sports and entertainment assumed greater prominence. Coverage also changed on Televisa's established news programs, including the traditionally staid *24 Hours*.⁴⁶ Not only did Televisa devote more time to accidents, crime stories, and natural disasters (earthquakes, storms, floods, fires, etc.), it also presented more

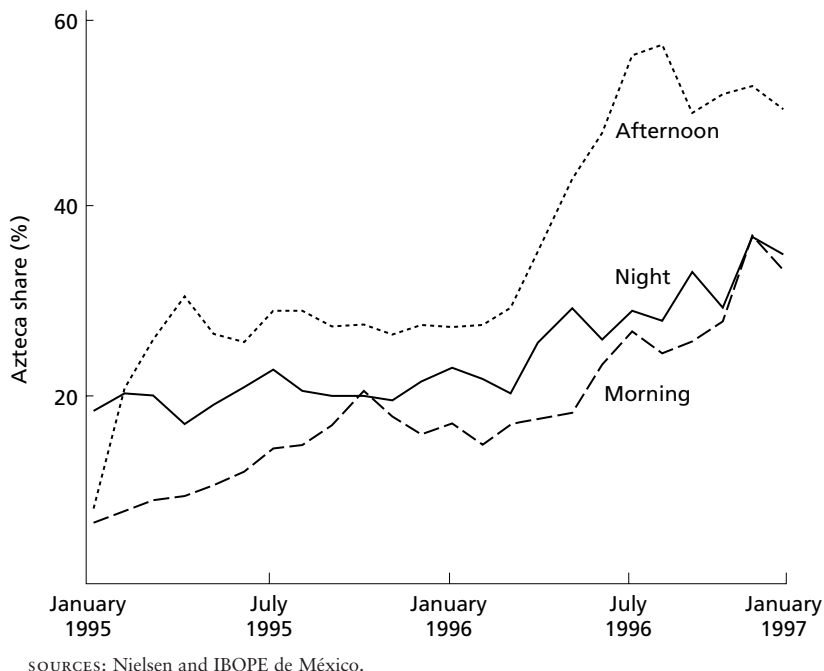


Figure 8. Growth of Televisión Azteca, 1995–97.

graphic and grisly images than before. Blood made its debut on *24 Hours* in 1995, just as Azteca's ratings were catching up.

Second, the network also reoriented its “cultural” news reporting. In the 1980s and early 1990s, *24 Hours* appeared to aim at an erudite and sophisticated segment of the Mexican population that would appreciate abstruse artistic, literary, and intellectual topics. Beginning in 1994, programming became substantially less highbrow, with popular music replacing the book reviews and ballet performances that had sometimes closed the program. Footage became slicker, livelier, and more visually appealing.

Third, and most importantly for media opening, Televisa also experimented with greater independence in news coverage. To be sure, this process was tentative and halting. Little progress was made in reporting of touchy or sensitive themes, such as official corruption, drug trafficking, electoral fraud, anti-government protests, and the Mexican military. As late as 1996, only a small fraction of news coverage was devoted to such “closed” topics. But the network became less relentlessly pro-

government in its reporting of the economy and the political opposition. Negative economic news began to appear, and opposition parties (especially the PAN) were occasionally presented as responsible political actors with legitimate social agendas.

Figure 9 tracks the percentage of time devoted to the government and the PRI on *24 Hours* from 1986 to 1995. As the graph shows, Televisa's reporting changed relatively little until 1993.⁴⁷ At that point, the time devoted to officialdom (as a percent of total nightly news coverage) dropped precipitously. In other words, Televisa evolved from a completely closed and *oficialista* medium to a partially independent one following Televisión Azteca's appearance.

Crisis and Compensation

The effects of commercial competition on Televisa were reinforced by two factors. First, economic crisis triggered by the precipitous devaluation of Mexico's peso on December 19, 1994 placed the company in real financial difficulties.⁴⁸ To address its immediate cash flow problems, Televisa was forced to downsize drastically. The company sold off several foreign businesses, including its majority stake in Peruvian broadcasting and its minority share of PanAm Sat, and reduced its holdings in Chile's Red Televisa Megavisión from 49% to 10%. Within Mexico, it jettisoned its video distribution subsidiary, ceded 49% of its cable company to Sercotel (a subsidiary of Telmex) for \$211 million, and closed forty money-losing publications.⁴⁹ Televisa also laid off approximately 6% of its workforce; coupled with attrition, reductions totaled 3,000 employees. Finally, the corporation reduced investment by 78% (to \$80 million), restructured its debt, and raised advertising rates in an effort to lock in needed cash. All of these financial adjustments drove home the fact that Televisa was now vulnerable in a commercial sense and heightened the corporation's sensitivity to the threat of competition.

Second, increasing public pressure by civic groups and the political opposition increased the odds that Televisa's credibility (and thus its market share) would suffer. Independent watchdog groups like the Civic Alliance (Alianza Cívica) and the Mexican Academy of Human Rights comprehensively documented Televisa's bias in electoral coverage in the 1994 presidential campaign, confirming opposition allegations from the presidential elections of 1988. Independent print media like *Proceso* magazine featured regular cover stories on Mexican television; opposition legislators and politicians routinely denounced the network. In the

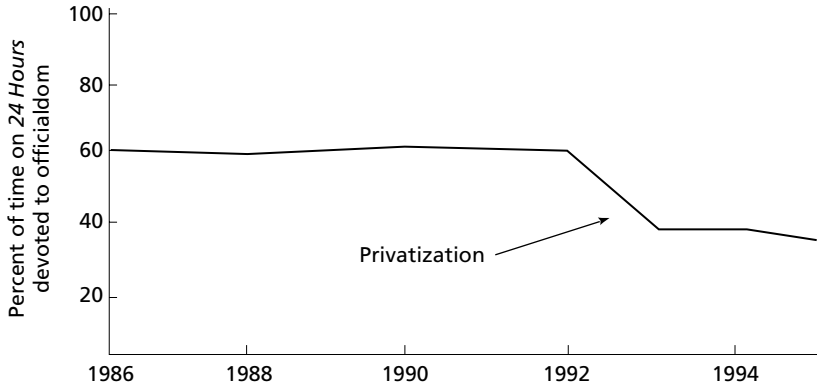


Figure 9. Decline in percentage of time devoted to officialdom at Televisa, 1986–95.

middle of the 1994 presidential campaign, for instance, PAN candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos wrote to the Interior Ministry to warn that his party would not recognize the election results if more balanced coverage was not forthcoming. As Fernández put it: “It should be clear: if things continue the way they are going, I will not be able to accept the triumph of anyone in the presidential elections, because there is not equity or objectivity in the information on television.”⁵⁰ Coverage actually represented a dramatic improvement over past campaigns. As a percentage of airtime devoted to the elections, opposition parties received more than twice the exposure they had in previous elections.⁵¹ Television networks and other media published opinion polls, which despite their controversial nature helped to define the realistic margin of victory that any candidate could claim.⁵² The first live, televised presidential debate took place (an event that proved almost lethal for the PRI).⁵³ Despite noticeable improvements in television coverage over previous elections, however, pressure continued to mount on the networks to provide truly balanced reporting. By the end of the campaign, Televisa had become the subject of ritual pillory by a range of opposition and civic groups.

For Televisa, Mexico’s protracted political transition only exacerbated the impact of civic pressure. Negotiated political reform and a string of opposition electoral victories at the state and local levels clearly indicated that the country’s long-standing authoritarian system was crumbling. Public opinion surveys, often published in the independent press both during and in between election campaigns, confirmed mass skepticism toward the regime. Mexico was changing, the argument

went, but Televisa was not—or at least, not rapidly enough to keep pace with its audience. Instead of a professional news network or an apolitical source of entertainment, the company came to be perceived as a key obstacle to democratization in Mexico.⁵⁴

A private company facing economic crisis and commercial competition can ill afford to be a political lightning rod. As a result, Televisa moved in the direction of greater independence. The company's most substantial shift came in early 1995, with the return of news director Alejandro Burillo-Azcárraga from a year-long sabbatical. Viewed as a reformist and modernizer, Burillo was respected by both principal opposition parties (the PAN and the PRD). Televisa's new news director further enhanced his stature by attending meetings with non-governmental representatives to the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE).

Within Televisa, Burillo recruited a new crop of professional journalists, several of whom had a record of conflict with the government. These included Federico Reyes-Heroles, Tomás Mojarro, Rodolfo Guzmán, José Reveles, and most importantly, newscaster Ricardo Rocha.⁵⁵ In February 1996, Rocha was given his own show, *Detrás de la Noticia* (Behind the News), which quickly became one of Mexico's most well regarded television news programs. Collectively, these changes represented an attempt to reposition Televisa's news coverage.

Unfortunately for Televisa's critics, the opening proved limited. Internal censorship persisted, and the bulk of the journalists recruited under Burillo soon quit the network, citing professional "obstacles" and "barriers." Several firings followed, including that of independent journalist Carlos Ramírez, who was dismissed from his position as head of Televisa's radio news division in 1996. Even Burillo himself was forced to resign in March 1996, after news anchor Ricardo Rocha aired (with Burillo's approval) grisly footage of a massacre carried out by Guerrero state police. The network's gradual evolution toward independence continued, but with Burillo's departure Televisa appeared to back away once again from radical changes in coverage.⁵⁶

The Changing of the Guard

On March 3, 1997—two weeks after medical tests revealed he was dying—Emilio Azcárraga Jr. turned over operational control of Televisa to his son. On the commercial side, generational transition was accompanied by corporate restructuring, the continuing sale of peripheral busi-

nesses, and a renewed emphasis on entertainment programming. It was also accompanied by a decisive shift in news coverage.

In contrast to his father, Azcárraga-Jean presented himself as a businessman without meaningful political attachments. Where Azcárraga Jr. had been openly supportive of the PRI, his son adhered to a different philosophy:

I am not a politician—what's more, I don't understand politics. . . . I am a businessman. I like entertainment, I like to make television; that's what I do. . . . More than that, I don't believe that having a good relationship with political figures is going to benefit us in terms of what matters. I believe in the ratings. I don't think that having a good or bad relationship with the Interior Minister is going to change my rating, which in the end is what I care about—getting the best rating possible. . . . I can vote for the PRD; nevertheless, the PRI and the PAN are still news and still have things to say. I don't mix my ideology with the screen.⁵⁷

With the generation change at Televisa, reverence for the political establishment was replaced by genuflection to an even more jealous god—that of the marketplace.

The Elections of 1997

The extent of change at Televisa became apparent shortly after Azcárraga Jr.'s death, in the watershed elections of 1997. In contrast to previous election campaigns, where the PRI dominated television coverage, opposition parties were finally given a real chance to present their views. From March 16 (just after the official start of the campaign) to June 21 (two weeks before the election), the PRI garnered only 23% of all television coverage devoted to electoral issues.⁵⁸ The shift in reporting was particularly pronounced in Televisa, which ended up providing somewhat more favorable coverage of the PRD than its rival, Televisión Azteca.

Commercial competition, civic pressure, political reform, and generation change within Televisa combined to produce this long-awaited shift. Watchdog groups and opposition parties mobilized to ensure that regular news coverage treated the opposition more fairly. The Mexican Academy of Human Rights, for instance, recorded in meticulous detail not only how much time was devoted to each candidate or party but also the tone of the coverage. So did the newly autonomous IFE. In 1997, therefore, Televisa confronted a highly mobilized civil society that was carefully scrutinizing its every move.

Election day—July 6, 1997—was a study in how much Mexican television coverage had changed. Televisa anchors Jacobo and Abraham Zabłudovsky exhorted the population to vote for the party “of their own choosing” and presented timely and accurate accounts of the electoral returns. At three in the afternoon, the ever-formal Jacobo removed his jacket on national television to preside over a series of live updates. By the next morning, Televisa viewers could see for themselves that the PRI had fallen short of the votes it needed to capture a majority of seats in the lower house of Congress. Just as Mexican voters were ending almost seventy years of one-party rule, Televisa had completed a crucial step in its own long process of transformation.

The Consolidation of Commercialism

The trend toward openness in Mexican television continued apace after 1997. Although the federal executive retained power over broadcasting concessions, opposition scrutiny and civic mobilization made it difficult for the government to exercise this power in a capricious way. Meanwhile, commercial pressures within the broadcasting industry encouraged increased attention to Mexican civil society, greater reporting on scandals, and more equitable coverage of elections. Televisa’s Jacobo Zabłudovsky was replaced as anchor; the main nightly newscast was renamed, and his son (Abraham) subsequently left the network after being passed over for promotion. In the 2000 elections, coverage generally retained the balance it had acquired in 1997.⁵⁹

To be sure, biases against leftist opposition groups remained—as illustrated by television reporting on the 1999 student protests at the National University (UNAM) and coverage of the PRD’s administration in Mexico City. Nevertheless, the scope and depth of the change in coverage since 1985 was striking. This was especially true of Televisa, so long associated with Mexico’s one-party regime. By the late 1990s, Televisa had evolved from a private Ministry of Truth into a more typical commercial network.

THE CAUSES OF MEDIA OPENING

What forces shaped opening in Mexico’s electronic media during the last decade? As with more extensive opening in the print media, changes in Mexican broadcasting were the product of a number of factors operating together. Political reform, commercial competition, journalistic

norms, and other factors all helped to stimulate greater independence in news coverage.

Political Liberalization

As one might expect, Mexico's protracted process of political transition encouraged greater diversity in the electronic media. These influences were most important after the inauguration of President Zedillo in late 1994, the political reforms of 1996, and the watershed elections of 1997. Although the Zedillo administration hardly encouraged independent reporting, it refrained from systematically threatening or abusing broadcasters. This ambivalent approach produced a more permissive atmosphere than had existed under most previous administrations and thus facilitated experimentation with independent coverage.

Perhaps the most important element of political liberalization was the reform of 1996, which guaranteed the autonomy of the IFE. The IFE consciously attempted to ensure balance in electoral coverage on radio and television during the 1997 and 2000 elections (and to a lesser extent, during the 1994 elections as well). Although it had no direct authority to reward or punish the networks, its mandate to guarantee the overall integrity of the electoral process gave it substantial indirect influence. In addition, the enormous public funds that the IFE provided to political parties after 1996 potentially gave them greater leverage with television networks who were competing for their business. Along with the efforts of civic and opposition groups, these changes in Mexico's political context undoubtedly contributed to more balanced reporting on the major networks.

Nevertheless, crucial changes occurred in Mexican broadcasting before the Zedillo administration even took office, and it is simply impossible to give the regime much credit for these changes. Old laws remained on the books, concessions were still doled out to political cronies, and new developments in radio were systematically resisted by the government. As Radio Red's José Gutiérrez-Vivó argued, "The media did not get opened from above. We opened it. We broke the limits."⁶⁰ Broadcast journalists are especially adamant about the negative influence of the Salinas' administration, which was never sympathetic to Mexico's emerging independent press and became increasingly abusive toward the end of its tenure. Even journalists sympathetic to Salinas' economic reform program—Rosanna Fuentes, Raymundo Riva-Palacio, José Gutiérrez-Vivó, etc.—had little nice to say about his attitude toward

the press.⁶¹ To cite Gutiérrez-Vivó again: “Salinas was the president who was hardest on the media. He was the one who sought the most control over the media.”⁶² The most important drivers of media opening, then, lay outside the political establishment.

Competition, Competition, and More Competition

It is difficult to overstate the effect of market pressures on changes in Mexico’s electronic media.⁶³ Even more than publications, electronic media compete fiercely for ratings and the advertising revenues they bring. Although a few Mexican broadcasters had alternate streams of revenue—such as Televisa’s sales of programming abroad—most were completely dependent on publicity to make money. In broadcasting, there were no equivalents of *Proceso* magazine, which derived the bulk of its revenues from subscriptions and single-copy sales.⁶⁴ Consequently, the struggle to capture audiences and advertising revenues was particularly intense.

The effects of commercial competition were most evident in radio. From a commercial perspective, feisty, irreverent, incendiary, and critical radio personalities were gems. Their commercial value also made them hard to fire when they displeased government officials, as owners could not easily dismiss independent-minded announcers who maintained high ratings. In other words, the financial contribution of news shows to a station’s bottom line gave popular radio commentators substantial bargaining power vis-à-vis broadcasters who might otherwise fold to government demands. Just as the financial autonomy of independent newspapers afforded them the ability to withstand official harassment, so the profitability of independent news programs gave radio broadcasters an incentive to resist government pressures. As one foreign observer put it: “Because private-sector advertising depends heavily on ratings, and because stations find that ratings rise with candid discussions of the news and controversial public issues, they have been increasingly willing to sacrifice public revenues in return for market-based rewards.”⁶⁵

Once one station garnered high ratings for its news program, however, other stations had to copy the innovator or risk losing their own advertising revenues. In radio, the presence of multiple stations in every major market meant that commercial forces worked relatively rapidly. For instance, even though only a minority of radio stations in Mexico City offered regular news programming, there were still four or five

competitors at any one time. Furthermore, any of the stations without news programs could theoretically have entered the talk market at a moment's notice. Commercial pressures were thus even more intense than they appeared. For these reasons, the format changes introduced by José Gutiérrez-Vivó at Radio Red not only endured there but also swept across Mexico's airwaves.⁶⁶ By the mid-1990s Mexican radio had become a reasonably open medium.

In television, real commercial competition began with privatization. Although the emergence of other broadcasters using new technologies had already introduced an element of competition into television, it was the creation of a second private broadcasting network that truly provoked changes. For the first time, Televisa's core business was threatened, and falling credibility suddenly took on commercial significance.

The threat to Televisa's core interests was moderated by a number of factors. First, the multiple-media nature of Televisa's holdings ensured that its advertising revenues did not fall nearly as fast as its ratings. Because Azteca could not match Televisa's promotion campaigns, Televisa was able to protect a large portion of its advertising base. Second, Azteca failed to present a radical alternative to Televisa in terms of news coverage. Consequently, Televisa was never confronted with the visual equivalent of a Radio Red. Third, Azteca was the only full-fledged rival that Televisa had to face. As long as it did not lose viewers to Azteca, it would not lose them at all. Consequently, Televisa could mitigate the Azteca threat by discrediting its new competitor, as it did when it reported the links between Azteca and the Salinas family. Because of these moderating factors—all of which concern the weakness of market competition—Mexican television did not transform itself immediately into a more independent medium.

On the other hand, other factors sharpened the effects of commercial competition and compelled Televisa to introduce certain changes. Azteca's reorientation toward news coverage following the calamitous events of 1994 meant that some changes in news coverage would have to be made for Televisa to keep pace. Mexico's economic crisis of 1995–96 highlighted this commercial threat. Televisa suddenly confronted market competition in the context of falling revenues. By 1995, Televisa was compelled to experiment with a range of tactics that would safeguard its ratings.

Even more important was the harsh criticism that Televisa received from civic and opposition groups. Such criticism threatened Televisa's credibility and encouraged viewers to switch to different media, even if

they were only marginally more independent.⁶⁷ In this sense, the indirect influences of political liberalization were much more important than the direct influences. Television networks did not have to fear punishment by the IFE or the government if they maintained pro-PRI coverage; on the contrary, political pressures to favor the PRI continued. But knowledge that the IFE and civic groups would call the networks to account for any flagrant bias did play a role in the networks' calculations. Close scrutiny of their behavior accentuated the risk that biases would be perceived and denounced, ultimately undermining credibility and thus market share.

Privatization

The potent consequences of privatization inevitably raise the question of why the regime decided to privatize Mexico's state-owned network in the first place. From the perspective of media control, privatization represented an obvious danger. Not only might the new network act more independently itself, but increased commercial competition could also trigger a cascade effect that would lead to more critical coverage in other media. Officials in the Salinas administration, who had devoted a tremendous amount of energy to media management, could hardly have been unaware of this risk.⁶⁸

Undoubtedly, a number of factors contributed to the government's decision. International pressure, strong private sector interest in purchasing the state-owned network, and ideological favoritism for economic liberalization within Mexico's technocratic elite all argued for privatization. But these factors, by themselves, are probably not sufficient to explain why television was sold off. Nor can they explain why Imevisión was one of Mexico's last privatizations, when economic logic suggests it would have been a good "quick hit."

The best explanation probably lies in the specific interest of the Salinas family, which was not exactly the same as the interest of the regime as a whole. From the president's perspective, privatization represented a marvelous opportunity. Not only did it offer tantalizing pecuniary rewards, privatization provided the outgoing president with an opportunity to establish a foothold in Mexico's country's principal medium. By late 1992, it had become clear that Salinas did not have the political clout to amend the constitution and secure his own reelection.⁶⁹ A foothold in television would enhance his influence after he left office and possibly allow him to continue to play a significant political role.

At the time it was conducted, the privatization process appeared clean and straightforward: Salinas-Pliego's group won out over three other consortia, including Televisa.⁷⁰ Salinas-Pliego's bid was reported to have been substantially higher than the others, making his consortium the legitimate winner. Moreover, the fact that Televisa was not awarded the concession was viewed at the time as an indication that the Salinas administration intended to introduce some measure of competition into a previously protected sector.

Unfortunately, the real history of television privatization was radically different. Although the connection was not revealed until 1996, it eventually leaked out that Raúl Salinas, elder brother of the president, had manipulated the process in favor of Salinas-Pliego. It also transpired that Salinas-Pliego had agreed to invest some \$29 million for Raúl on the eve of the privatization.⁷¹ The nature of the "Azteca connection" became clearer when Joaquín Vargas, leader of the Multivisión consortium, announced that Raúl Salinas had indicated to him that he wished to be "partners" with whomever won the concession—a relationship Vargas apparently preferred to avoid.⁷²

The exact nature of the Salinas family's stake in Televisión Azteca has been the subject of intense controversy. In November 1996, after the controversy broke, Salinas-Pliego explained the situation as follows:

It is clear that the gentleman [Raúl] invested in the form of a loan of \$29 million and is not a partner, because does not own a single share of stock. I would like to point out two things: in the first place, the total sum of the transaction was \$650 million and the loan was \$29 million; in other words, not a significant figure in the overall context. Second, it can't be that because you obtain a loan from the bank for a house that you are the bank's partner? No. Listen: you have a relationship with the bank, yes, because it lent me money. Well, that's literally the way this supposed relationship is. . . .⁷³

Pressed about the details of his "supposed relationship" with Raúl, Salinas-Pliego added:

I always had a friendly relationship with Raúl. He was always cordial with me. He seemed like an intelligent person who loved Mexico, liked Mexican things, liked rodeos, liked horses,⁷⁴ liked to read, liked the company of his friends. On some occasions he invited me to social functions, where there were lots of people from politics and the business community; it never went beyond that. And I am not going to say that he was my close friend, because it's not true, but for me it was important to be the friend of the brother of the president. The man knew things, was privy to information,

talked to me about things to which I had no access. . . . It was interesting for me to know details of how politicians thought and what they were doing and what they were not doing. So he was cordial with me, and it's a pity that he and his family find themselves in this situation. [Raúl was incarcerated, facing charges of corruption and murder.]. . . . And as far as President Salinas goes, I never knew him until after this was privatized. I believe it was a surprise for him that another man named Salinas from Monterrey won the bid. I never had a personal relationship with him, since we only saw each other on various public occasions. On two or three occasions he invited me to his office to chat about the political situation in the country, or its effects on television coverage, but no more. . . .⁷⁵

It is entirely plausible that Salinas-Pliego and Raúl Salinas were not close friends and that Salinas-Pliego never knew the president himself very well. It is even conceivable that neither Raúl nor Carlos ever actually owned any part of *Televisión Azteca*. But it is clear from Salinas-Pliego's own statements that he and Raúl were in business together and that the president subsequently gave him suggestions about how to cover key political events. These admissions reinforced the general impression that the privatization was a "filthy" affair, in which "everyone knows the Salinas family has a big stake."⁷⁶

In the end, the links between the Salinas brothers and Salinas-Pliego were similar to those between other members of the political elite and leading businessmen; privileged information, influence peddling, and corruption were the currency of those relationships. In this case, Raúl secretly "lent" Salinas-Pliego a large sum of money—itself of rather dubious origin—on the eve of the privatization. In return, he presumably expected to receive a cut from the proceeds of the business, or at the very least, to have a larger (and cleaner) sum of money returned to him later.⁷⁷ As one Mexican government official involved in communications regulation put it: "When I heard Salinas-Pliego describing what he did with the money that Raúl lent him, I thought, my God, he's telling us how to launder money. That's all they were doing."⁷⁸

Given the subterranean connections between the Salinas family and *Televisión Azteca*, the decision to privatize is more understandable. In essence, President Salinas waited until the end of his term, manipulated the process in favor of one bidder, and then left office with enhanced agenda-setting power. The unintended consequence of privatization, however, was a partial opening in Mexican television. What is perhaps most remarkable is the fact that commercial competition encouraged media openness despite a series of obvious limitations: the existence of

a duopoly rather than a truly competitive market, the corruption that characterized the privatization process, and Televisión Azteca's links to one of the most nefarious political operators of the old regime.

Other Commercial Factors

In addition to privatization, a smattering of other market-oriented reforms contributed to commercial competition (and thus to opening) in the broadcast media. First, international trade and investment reinforced the dynamics of market competition, sometimes in unanticipated ways. For instance, multinational penetration of the Mexican economy exposed local advertisers to more professional foreign advertising agencies. Whereas before 1990 many advertisers had relied on the claims of broadcasters themselves, or on poorly developed market research data, NAFTA brought demands for greater accuracy and reliability. Local businesses promptly became more sensitive to the audience levels and profiles of the media in which they advertised. Advertisers' savvy sharpened competition and rewarded more independent media, whose shares were growing relative to their traditional counterparts.⁷⁹

Second, radio concessionaires themselves became more aggressive and professional. The discovery that money could indeed be made from radio broadcasting stimulated many owners to reorient their stations along commercial lines or sell their concessions to those who would. In other words, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, radio broadcasters began to behave more like real businessmen.⁸⁰

Third, the combination of technological innovation and economic liberalization encouraged competition in broadcasting by opening new markets. For instance, the withdrawal of the ban on private satellite dishes opened Mexico's high-end television market to international broadcasters. Although the ban itself had never been enforced, official deregulation enlarged the market by encouraging foreign broadcasters to invest in direct-to-home transmission in Mexico. In addition, government concessions in UHF (e.g., Channel 40) and pay television created new competitors in certain segments of the electronic media. Even in broadcast television, Salinas-era reforms made possible investment by companies like NBC, which helped make Televisión Azteca a commercially viable competitor of Televisa. Thus, an array of market-oriented reforms and market-induced changes reinforced media opening.

Journalistic Norms

As with opening in Mexico's print media, the transformation of Mexican broadcasting was also shaped by the actions and decisions of particular individuals. The creativity and innovation of men like Gutiérrez-Vivó, Moreno-Valle, and others, for instance, were undeniably responsible for a series of positive changes in the electronic media. As in the print media, the gambles they took mattered.

But, in the electronic media, the aspirations and choices of broadcasters and journalists usually worked against opening. Mexican broadcasting produced individuals of enormous talent and energy, but these individuals directed their talents and energies primarily toward commercial ends. The most notorious case, of course, was Emilio Azcárraga Jr. As the majority owner of an immense and profitable corporation, the Tiger enjoyed a substantial amount of maneuvering room. Had the Tiger's political vision matched his business acumen, Televisa could have become a much more independent outlet much sooner. Unfortunately, Azcárraga's personal predilections sometimes left Televisa more pro-PRI than the PRI itself. Substantial changes in the network's orientation thus had to wait until his death in 1997. At that point, a man with different ideas about the philosophical and commercial appeal of democracy assumed control of the network.

The Tiger's influence may have been unique, but his posture was not. In general, Mexican broadcasters proved circumspect, even pusillanimous, in dealing with the government. Unlike their crusading counterparts in certain magazines and newspapers, Mexico's radio concessionaires tended to cave in rather rapidly to government demands. Missing from most of the history of Mexican broadcasting are the direct challenges to PRI authority—and ensuing reprisals—that characterized the transformation of Mexico's print media. The fact that no major radio or television network ever lost its license suggests that broadcasters never really tested the limits of the system.⁸¹

It would be incorrect to view media owners' decisions as being purely products of official pressure. Both journalists and government officials agree that many Mexican broadcasters enjoyed an unexploited margin of flexibility—especially in the post-1990 environment when international scrutiny and popular mobilization would have made overt censorship extremely costly for the government. Part of the reticence that media owners showed is undoubtedly attributable to personal and political allegiances; after all, many broadcasters received their concessions

from friends and associates in the government. But a portion is less explicable—probably best chalked up to a lack of entrepreneurial talent and imagination among a group of people who in many cases were not professional businessmen. In all, the combination of broadcasters' personal biases with their commercial myopia undoubtedly made opening in Mexico's electronic media a more halting and protracted process than it would have been under different management.

Not only were norms weaker among owners of broadcast media, a culture of independence developed more slowly among rank-and-file journalists as well. A comparison with print media suggests that one reason lies in the professional environment in which journalists operated. Because the failings and vices of traditional news coverage were different in print and broadcasting, the types of alternative norms and visions that emerged were also different.

In the print media, traditional journalism was corrupt, dull, inaccurate, and politically partisan. Nontraditional journalism, therefore, had to be honest, factual, balanced, and interesting. As a consequence, qualities like accuracy, fairness, integrity, and even creativity in format tended to go together in the minds of independent journalists.⁸² They collectively became part of a professional ethic that distinguished new publications from their pro-government counterparts. Independent journalism thus took on a particular meaning in the print media—a meaning that bore the indelible stamp of journalists' personal experiences.

The development of journalistic norms was somewhat different in broadcasting, where reactions focused on Televisa. There, journalists were relatively well paid and not as outrageously corrupt as their counterparts in the pro-government print media. Coverage was certainly biased, but it was also technically well executed and highly profitable—an important contrast with reporting at traditional publications. To the extent that Televisa news was bland or dull, these qualities sometimes seemed to be the product of excessive professionalism—i.e., a refusal to pander to lowbrow audiences by providing sensationalist or gory coverage. Indeed, as Mexican television has become more independent, it has largely lost this sort of professionalism. Coverage is now yellower than it ever was under the old regime, as attempts to gain ratings through unrestrained reporting on crime and scandals become much more obvious. The links between technical competence, honesty, and independence, therefore, were much less clear in television than in the print media. Professionalism did not carry the same notions of challenging the system, and a culture of independent journalism did not develop

among reporters in the same way. Journalists' norms were thus influenced by their professional context, which was itself partly a function of different styles of media control under the old regime.

Other Factors

In addition to political reform, market competition, and journalistic norms, several other factors also contributed to opening in Mexico's broadcast media. Most notable among these was the impact of globalization—in the form of international investment, cross-border transmissions, and the diffusion of new communication technologies. Although Televisión Azteca probably would have survived anyway, its alliance with NBC and its funding from foreign banks gave the new network a useful boost. Similarly, satellite broadcasts and international spillovers from the United States gradually pried open pieces of the Mexican market. These changes were especially relevant for affluent consumers, who could afford pay-television systems. Compared to the direct effects of market competition, however, the overall influence of globalization was modest. As one journalist put it, technological innovation and cross-border transmissions “irrigated” Mexican broadcasting, even if they failed to “inundate” it.⁸³

CONCLUSION

From 1976 to 1996, Mexico's media evolved from a closed, corrupt, establishment-oriented press to a reasonably vigorous Fourth Estate. In the print media, changing journalistic norms and market competition gave rise to a diverse and independent press. In broadcasting, which generally lagged behind print, market competition and civic pressure combined to force changes in coverage. First radio, then television, grew increasingly open. Beginning with the 1985 earthquake, and continuing through the death of Emilio Azcárraga Jr. in 1997, Mexican broadcasting became more independent and diverse.

Although some measure of political freedom was necessary for media opening to proceed, and although political reforms helped that process along, the real story of changes in the Mexican media lies in market competition and changing journalistic norms. Under these pressures, a system once characterized by official dominance of the public agenda, selective silence on issues of particular sensitivity to the regime, and

partisan bias in favor of the ruling party during election cycles gave way to radically different styles of reporting.

Chapters 5 and 6 have thus summarized how Mexico's old system of media corruption and control broke down. But what about the effects of changes in media coverage? How did media opening affect political transition in Mexico? What were the consequences of (1) increased attention to the viewpoints of civil society, (2) more intense scrutiny of official conduct, and (3) greater balance in coverage of opposition parties? The next three chapters address each of these three consequences in turn.

PART 3

The Political Consequences of Media Opening

Media Opening and Civil Society in Mexico

On September 19, 1985—the same day that a devastating earthquake rocked Mexico City—*La Jornada* newspaper celebrated its first anniversary. It was an appropriately symbolic pairing, linking the event that triggered a rebirth of Mexican civil society with the birthday of the newspaper that served as the principal forum for that same civil society. Over the next decade, *La Jornada* attempted to “give voice” to Mexico’s emerging non-governmental organizations. NGOs thus saw their views and actions reflected back to them as they attempted to democratize the Mexican political system. This dialogue between civil society and the independent press created a new political discourse that encouraged social mobilization. Press coverage did not single-handedly propel mass organization in Mexico or transform the way people thought about politics. But it did make these outcomes more likely.

One of the main features of news coverage under Mexico’s old media regime was official dominance of the public agenda. Not only did the president and other officials garner the lion’s share of news coverage, they also served as the primary sources for news reports. Consequently, establishment figures were permitted to interpret and frame virtually all newsworthy events. The discourse presented in the news media was thus the discourse of Mexican officialdom. Coverage of everything from natural disasters to political protest reflected the language and spin of the regime.

The independent publications that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s devoted less coverage to officials of the ruling party and the state, shifting their attention instead to Mexico’s emerging civil society. They also

adopted a different tone in their coverage—one that conferred legitimacy on emerging civic groups and reframed the terms of political debate in Mexico. This new discourse subsequently came to dominate elite-level discussions of Mexican politics.¹

THE EMERGENCE OF A CIVIC DISCOURSE

In the early 1980s, most of the press adhered to what might be termed an “old regime” framing of politics. Mexico’s political system, according to this perspective, constituted a unique species of democracy suited to post-revolutionary Mexican society. This peculiar system was the only legitimate form of government for Mexicans, and the ruling party was the only valid representative of the Mexican population as a whole. From this perspective, press coverage naturally focused on Mexican officials and PRI-affiliated associations, while largely ignoring independent civic organizations. When these other entities were discussed at all, they were typically presented as isolated pressure groups with rather parochial agendas.²

Of the few journalists who offered different perspectives, most invoked leftist framings of politics. Although they might not have accepted all elements of the Marxist credo—e.g., Communist teleology or the necessity of violent revolution—they tended to analyze politics in terms of class conflict.³ This framing of political contestation, of course, had the automatic effect of marginalizing the people who adopted it. Because the PRI already occupied the social reformist position on the ideological spectrum, it was easy for the PRI to paint opponents on the Left as irresponsible, extremist, or simply out of touch with the views of the majority of the population. Moreover, ideological framings of politics conferred little legitimacy on civic groups that did not endorse a leftist social agenda, including those organizations aimed at promoting electoral integrity, political democracy, or human rights.

In the 1980s, however, independent journalists reporting on Mexico’s emerging civic movements began to look at politics and society from a different perspective. A new political framing emerged from their reports and commentaries—one quite distinct from both the old regime framings and leftist-ideological framings in traditional media coverage. In this new presentation of politics, organized segments of society were described less in terms of PRI sectors or social classes and more in terms of “civil society.” Political contestation ceased to be a battle between the forces of the Mexican Revolution and the forces of reaction, or even

between the rich and the poor. Instead, it was portrayed as a struggle between Mexico's emerging civic groups and Mexican officialdom, represented by the state and the ruling party. By 1988, such civic interpretations of politics were common at independent publications like *Proceso* and *La Jornada*.

The trend toward a new framing of political contestation continued throughout the next decade. PRI perspectives were virtually abandoned, while ideological framings remained constant or declined. The result was a convergence around civic paradigms in the independent press. By the late 1990s, PRI jargon in *Proceso* even began to appear in quotation marks—a conscious attempt to distinguish it from what was by then the normal way of talking about political life.

Content analysis of both publications, presented below, documents these trends. For *La Jornada*, the following content analysis relies on newspaper editorials for the days September 19 through September 30 in 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, and 1996—that is, twelve editorials every other year for the period from the newspaper's founding to the 1996 political reforms.⁴ *Proceso* magazine contains no editorials as such. It does, however, publish a number of editorial columns written by well-known political activists, writers, and pundits. Though somewhat skewed to the Left, this forum included many of Mexico's most respected political commentators during the 1980s and early 1990s. To maintain comparability with the *La Jornada* sample, content analysis of *Proceso* covered the last issue in the month in September for each of the same years.

Characterizations of Mexican society and politics were categorized in one of three ways. First, characterizations were coded as “old regime” if they used PRI terminology, portrayed Mexican society as a collection of state-corporatist sectors, presented politics as a struggle between the nation and foreign foes, described the regime as a neutral balancer of rival classes and sectors, or characterized Mexico's political system as a democracy. Second, characterizations were coded as “ideological” if they relied on Marxist jargon or if they portrayed political competition as primarily a contest between Left and Right (with economic redistribution as the primary axis of politics). Finally, characterizations were coded as “civic” if they presented Mexican society as a pluralistic collection of autonomous social groups or if they portrayed political conflict in Mexico as a struggle by organized civic groups against the regime.

Figure 10 records the use of civic framings of politics at *La Jornada* (lighter bars) and *Proceso* (darker bars) from 1984 to 1996. Although

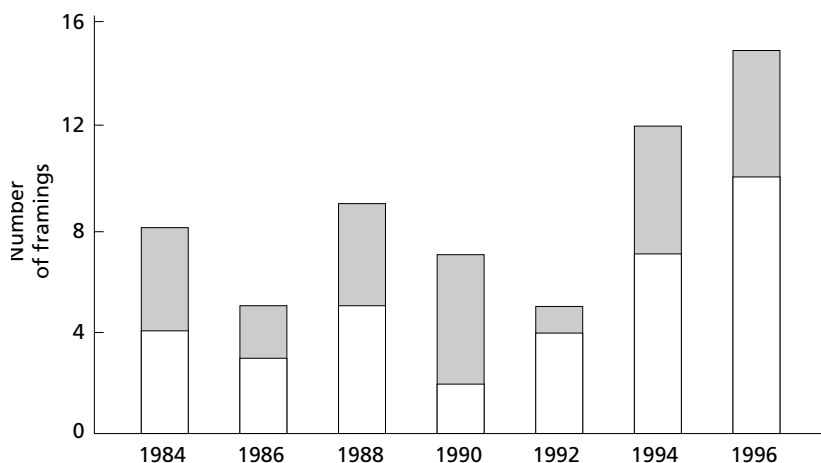


Figure 10. Civic framings of politics in *Proceso* and *La Jornada*, 1984–96.

there is some variation from year to year, the overall trend is upward. Both publications experienced a mild retrogression during the Salinas years—when the regime made a vigorous effort to relegitimize itself and to develop its own novel discourse of “social liberalism”—but they had more than recovered by the end of Salinas’ tenure in 1994.

This trend becomes even clearer when “civic” frames are compared to other political perspectives. Figure 11 shows the percentage of frames that were “civic” and the percentage that relied on PRI terminology and categories. As the graph shows, both types of framing were about equally common before 1988, when they coexisted with ideological perspectives. After 1988, however, a gap opened between civic and official framings that persisted over the next decade, with civic framings clearly dominant. The caesura of the Salinas years is still perceptible in Figure 11, but it is not as pronounced.

In sum, then, the tone of coverage in the independent press shifted decisively during the second half of the 1980s. Not only did Mexico’s independent publications devote more attention to civic groups at the expense of the regime, the nature of their coverage also changed. Periodicals like *Proceso* and *La Jornada* began to offer a different interpretation of political contestation in Mexico that legitimized and encouraged mobilization outside the regime. Rather than conflict between different classes or sectors, this interpretation went, Mexican politics concerned efforts by autonomous groups in society to hold rulers accountable to popular demands.

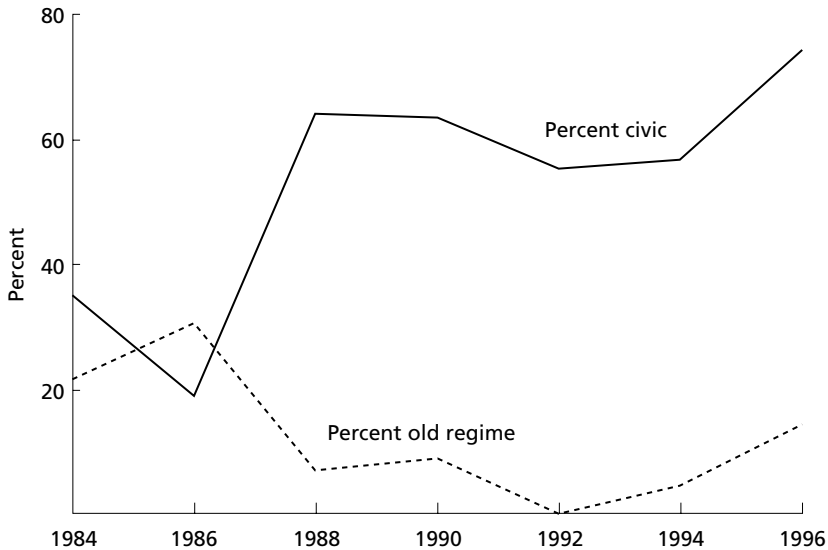


Figure 11. Civic and old regime framings of politics in *Proceso* and *La Jornada*, 1984–96.

Important for this reframing of political debate was the defection of some of Mexico's leading intellectuals—many of them driven away from the regime by events like the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968 and the coup at *Excélsior* in 1976. Independent publications gave these intellectuals—including men like Carlos Monsiváis and Héctor Aguilar-Camín—an opportunity to express themselves on social issues. The independent press thus became a forum where disaffected intellectuals, journalists, and activists from Mexico's emerging civil society could articulate a new political vision.⁵

THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CIVIC DISCOURSE

Civic paradigms implicitly delegitimized Mexican officialdom, legitimized emerging civic groups, reframed political contestation in Mexico, and provided a rationale and strategy for concerted action against the system. Equally importantly, they legitimized political alliances between actors in civil society that had little in common from an ideological perspective. The new language thus encouraged certain types of political collaboration that would simply have been ruled out by older paradigms. Put differently, the development of a new civic discourse in the independent press did not reshape Mexico's political landscape, but it

did provide actors with a new map of that landscape—one that altered their perceptions of routes, distances, and obstacles on the road to democratization.

One obvious example concerns cooperation among Mexico's opposition parties. As recently as the mid-1980s, alliances by opposition parties of different ideological tendencies were somewhat difficult to rationalize. The PAN, conventional wisdom held, represented Mexico's reactionary social forces—the Catholic Church, the bourgeoisie, etc. More specifically, it represented opposition to the Mexican Revolution (or at least to its most rabidly statist and anti-clerical strains). The Left, by contrast, viewed itself as the legitimate heir of the revolution, which had promised social justice for Mexico's poorest citizens. From an ideological perspective, these two factions had less in common with each other than either had with the PRI.

Not surprisingly, unity between rightist and leftist opposition groups was rare. Even on issues of electoral procedure, opposition parties of different ideological tendencies generally declined to make common cause against the regime. One classic example was the Left's reaction to a particularly egregious instance of fraud against the PAN in Chihuahua state in 1986. Although *Proceso* columnist Heriberto Castillo was one of the few on the Left to publicly protest the fraud, even he denounced the PAN when it appealed the case to the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights for assistance. In other words, instead of supporting the cause of electoral integrity, Castillo retreated behind an old regime framing of jingoistic hostility: "If [José] López-Portillo or Miguel de la Madrid, or any other president signs accords obliging the Mexican government to respect the rulings of international organizations with regard to internal Mexican political issues, they should be condemned for violating the Constitution, and these treaties should be rejected with all the means in our possession."⁶ Other intellectuals and political figures at the time adopted a similar posture, emphasizing the ideological chasm that separated the PAN from the Left (though generally without Castillo's incendiary rhetoric).

Given such framings of politics and society, it was difficult to imagine serious or sustained collaboration between Mexico's main opposition parties. Although groups adhering to divergent ideological tendencies occasionally formed electoral alliances in the 1970s and 1980s, these alliances were invariably opportunistic, tactical, and tem-

porary. No unifying perspective or worldview underlay them, and they could easily be attacked by ideologues on either side of the Left-Right divide. As long as Mexican society was portrayed as fundamentally divided by class and ideology, alliances between the anti-system Left and the PAN would never be viewed as fully legitimate, even by the parties involved.

Once political contestation in Mexico was reconceptualized along civic lines, however, the distance between the main opposition parties diminished while the gap between both of them and the ruling party correspondingly widened.⁷ From this new “civic” perspective, alliances between the two main opposition parties seemed normal and natural. As civic framings came to dominate elite thinking, opposition collaboration became more legitimate. By the mid-1990s, Mexico’s main opposition parties were much more likely to forge electoral alliances with each other (at the state level), and both were utterly opposed to forming electoral alliances with the ruling party. This was true even when alliances with the PRI would have yielded clear benefits in terms of votes (as in the case of the PRD in Mexico’s northern border states). Eventually, the difficult thing for PAN and PRD leaders to justify was not the formation of alliances with other opposition parties but rather a failure to form such alliances. During the 2000 presidential campaign, for instance, this was precisely the issue that commanded public attention. Party representatives, civic leaders, and the independent media did not question why Mexico’s two main opposition parties would have any interest in forming an electoral alliance. Rather, they asked who was to blame for the failure of the PAN and the PRD to unite behind a single presidential candidate.

In short, the adoption of a “civic” lens changed the way elites viewed their political environment and their place in it. Alternatives that one would not have thought to raise under the old framework became obvious options whose rejection required forceful justification. What was once exceptional (opposition unity) became natural, while what had previously been commonplace (opposition disunity) became aberrant and dysfunctional. The views of hard-liners within the PRD and PAN lost their natural appeal, while the views of alliance-builders in both parties gained currency. Civic framings of political contestation—originally developed by intellectuals in the independent press—thus opened up previously unexplored options, discredited traditional responses, and redistributed legitimacy among existing political actors.

CIVIC DISCOURSE AND CIVIC MOBILIZATION

In addition to its effects on political strategies, civic discourse also opened up spaces for non-partisan political action. This space was quickly filled by organizations like *Convergencia* (Convergence of Civic Organizations for Democracy), the Civic Alliance, the Mexican Academy of Human Rights, and other pro-democracy groups—associations that formed the backbone of popular efforts to monitor electoral conditions in Mexico after the 1988 election. Although sympathetic to opposition parties—especially the PRD—these organizations chose to avoid electoral pacts. The result was the creation of a nonpartisan, civic, pro-democracy movement in Mexico reflecting many of the paradigms developed in the independent press.⁸

Independent media were vital to these groups' operations. One obvious example concerns the role of the mass media in disseminating public opinion polls. In the 1994 presidential campaign, for instance, independent media acted as a counterweight to traditional papers like *Excélsior* and *Universal* (then highly pro-regime), which published predictions of PRI victory.⁹ The dissemination of polling data proved crucial to efforts by civic and opposition groups to monitor elections and prevent electoral fraud.¹⁰

Independent media also aided pro-democracy groups by lending legitimacy and constancy to civic struggles.¹¹ In the case of Mexico City-based social movements in the second half of the 1980s, for instance, favorable press coverage helped to recast particularistic demands as broader aspirations of civic groups and thus to legitimize their activities. As one expert put it with regard to Mexico City-based advocacy groups: "The opening and closing of media access and attention are crucial for shaping a government response to social movement activity. . . . In the case of the Earthquake Victims' Movement [*Movimiento de damnificados*], the media were centrally involved in redefining the residents of Mexico City under a democratic code. The press emphasized the deplorable distance between the symbolic and institutional levels of civil society and thus created a cultural climate conducive to change."¹² As with electoral watchdog organizations, the result of media framing was to encourage civic mobilization and political reform.

Existing data support this conclusion. The following comparison relies on content analysis of *La Jornada* newspaper from 1985 to 1994. It records an average of (1) the percentage of front-page photographs in *La Jornada* that are not of government or PRI officials and (2) the per-

centage of front-page sources in *La Jornada* that are not government or PRI officials.¹³ In other words, it documents the extent to which *La Jornada* increasingly gave attention to the perspectives of civil society over those of the regime. The results are shown in the solid line in Figure 12. As the graph indicates, non-official sources and photographs rose from approximately half to approximately three-quarters of all photos and sources on the front page.

Figure 12 also includes data on the formation of human rights organizations compiled by the Mexican Academy of Human Rights. These data are well suited to assessing the impact of a new civic discourse. First, they are relatively reliable and comprehensive—something that cannot be said for most indicators of social mobilization. Second, given the work most human rights organizations in Mexico performed, the data comprise groups with inevitably political agendas (rather than sports leagues or organizations focused on provision of basic resources). Third, the data focus almost exclusively on independent organizations in Mexico, rather than PRI-affiliated guilds or associations. Finally, human rights organizations were leading elements in the democracy movement of the 1980s and 1990s. The Academy data thus afford a reasonably reliable and valid measure of independent political organizing related to the issue of democratization during the period in question.

These data reveal that Mexicans formed increasing numbers of human rights groups in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As the dashed line in Figure 12 indicates, social mobilization continued throughout the turbulent period of 1985 to 1994, in response to such episodes as the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the contested elections of 1988, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the shocking political events of 1994. Overall, the number of human rights groups more than tripled from 1985 to 1994.

As Figure 12 suggests, there is a strong empirical relationship between increasing journalistic attention to the viewpoints of civil society and the organization of civil society itself. This relationship also holds when different indicators of press coverage are used, such as calls for political reform and explicit endorsements of civic mobilization in independent publications.¹⁴ Civic groups thus emerged and grew at roughly the same time that media outlets like *La Jornada* gave them greater attention.

This relationship does not, of course, prove that Mexico's new journalism caused social mobilization. It may have been the other way around, or some third factor may have caused both phenomena. For instance, both press coverage and civic organization could have been the

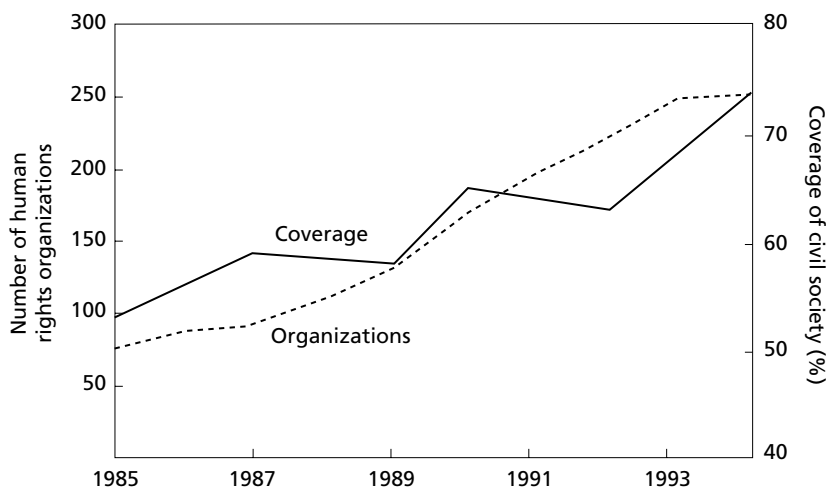


Figure 12. Civic mobilization and coverage of civil society, 1985–94.

product of political liberalization, economic development, economic crisis, or some similar set of variables.

The timing of changes, however, does not suggest a decisive role for any of these factors. In the case of economic conditions, for instance, mobilization and press coverage follow a more linear trajectory than that hypothesis would predict. Although the economy crashed, soared, and crashed again, both social mobilization and press coverage of civil society grew steadily. Nor does political liberalization provide much of an explanation. As discussed in chapter 5, the notion that official tolerance was responsible for increasing independence in the media strains credulity. At no time in the 1980s or early 1990s was Mexican officialdom particularly tolerant of independent media, and even the periods of slightly less hostility were not correlated with changes in framing or coverage of civil society. For instance, the political environment hardly liberalized between 1985 and 1987, a period during which press coverage became noticeably more civic. What is true of the official attitudes toward press coverage is at least as true of attitudes toward independent popular organizing. The great majority of human rights organizations included in Figure 12 emerged in the face of tremendous official resistance. The same was true of most independent civic groups in Mexico. As late as the mid-1990s, for instance, only 1 of the 140 organizations that made up the *Convergencia* had received a license from the government.¹⁵ Moreover, as with media coverage, there is no correlation

between official attitudes during the administrations of Miguel de la Madrid (1982–88) and Carlos Salinas (1988–94) and the rate of independent civic mobilizing. Although government policy varied from systematic demobilization under De la Madrid to official sponsorship of certain community-based organizations at the height of Salinas' Solidarity Program, the formation of new human rights groups increased at a relatively steady rate throughout the period in question. In short, it seems highly unlikely that changes in press coverage or in popular mobilization were the result of changes in official tolerance for independent political activity.

A second possibility is that press coverage drove social mobilization in Mexico, but that increasing mobilization had little influence on press coverage. In other words, an emerging Fourth Estate led Mexico's civic charge, stirring up would-be democracy activists and stimulating mass mobilization. The bulk of the evidence, however, does not support this interpretation either. Although it is true that many activists read independent media, these media were rarely the original motivator for their political activities. Rather, many had begun their political work in response to events like the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968, the economic crisis of the 1980s, the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, and the contested 1988 presidential election.¹⁶ Nor did Mexico's independent press see itself as the primary engine of social mobilization. *La Jornada's* goal, for instance, was more modest: to "respond in the journalistic context to the demands of a participative society."¹⁷ In other words, the paper sought to serve as a mirror for emerging sectors of society and as a chronicler of their activities. As an editorial on September 19, 1990 put it: "We appeared with the purpose of contributing to the strengthening of civil society, its organizations, its plural and democratic aspirations, [and] offering a podium to those who lacked one." This interpretation of the paper's mission endured through the 1990s. On September 19, 1996, for instance, *La Jornada's* editors reported that their goal was "to echo social pluralism [and] to strengthen civic and participative culture, so as to obtain the full democratization of the country." In other words, *La Jornada* saw itself more as a reinforcer of changes already occurring in Mexico than as the original author of those changes. Its mission involved legitimizing and reinforcing independent political activity, rather than creating civil society from whole cloth. This viewpoint was even clearer in the case of *Proceso*, which considered itself as much a watchdog of the government as a voice of Mexico's emerging social groups.

Reporting and editorializing in both periodicals reflected these agen-

das. In general, coverage of civic organizing and popular protest came after people organized or protested; rarely did either publication report in advance on groups' plans to demonstrate or exhort their readers to join organizations or protests. Rather, they gave ample coverage to those groups that did mobilize and endorsed their actions after the fact through favorable reporting.¹⁸

A third explanation, then, is that Mexico's independent media were simply passive observers whose scribblings exerted no influence on the process of social mobilization. In other words, Mexico's emerging Fourth Estate was the beneficiary of changes in Mexican society, but those changes would have proceeded at the same pace and on the same scale had the press remained a lap dog of the political establishment. This explanation, however, is at odds with the expressed views of both organizers and journalists.¹⁹ As two prominent human rights activists argued, coverage by the independent press played a crucial role in the rebirth of Mexican civil society: "... important [for the growth of civil society] was the simultaneous emergence of other organizations, among them independent communications media. In the field of human rights and non-governmental organizations, the appearance of *Proceso* magazine and *La Jornada* newspaper was crucial. These media took as one of their editorial lines the defense and promotion of human rights, and from the beginning granted legitimacy to non-governmental organizations."²⁰ The result was a "symbiosis between certain sectors of society and those media."²¹

A final explanation for the relationship between media coverage and popular mobilization, then, is that press coverage reinforced pro-democracy activity. Social mobilization gave independent media something to write about, and this coverage in turn contributed to the persistence and growth of popular organizing. Reporting in the independent press thus encouraged civic activists, gave them a broader sense of mission, and enhanced the legitimacy of their claims against the state.²² Although perhaps the least elegant explanation, this interpretation of the media's role is the most empirically compelling. It is consistent with the nature of media messages and the recollections of civic activists and journalists. It also makes theoretical sense, to the extent that organizers are in part motivated by the social standing their activities bring. Presumably, favorable attention from the press conferred upon activists a measure of prestige they would not otherwise have had. At the same time, increased publicity gave activists a sense of heightened security in the face of potential repression from the regime. Press coverage thus

raised the perceived benefits of organizing and lowered the perceived risks of getting involved.

CONCLUSION

During the 1980s and 1990s, increasing attention by independent media to the viewpoints and activities of civil society reinforced Mexico's civic awakening. Interactions between civil society, intellectuals, and the independent media created a new political discourse that challenged the old regime, encouraged opposition collaboration, and legitimized popular organizing. Independent journalists who traced their own journalistic vision to the "then-incipient expressions of civil society" of the early 1980s sought to reinforce these "expressions" in their reporting.²³ The result was greater coverage in the media of the perspectives of newly mobilized social groups. Press attention in turn encouraged popular organizing. During the 1980s and 1990s, therefore, media opening and social mobilization reinforced one another. By the mid-1990s, the ruling party confronted both an increasingly vigorous independent press and an increasingly vocal, well-organized civic movement.²⁴

It also confronted a mass public that was increasingly disenchanted with Mexico's political system. Just as the erosion of official agenda control contributed to the rebirth of Mexican civil society, so increasing assertiveness in coverage of previously closed topics helped to delegitimize the old regime. As the next chapter discusses, independent media played a crucial role in the new politics of scandal that gripped Mexico during the mid-1990s.

Media Opening, Scandal, and Regime Delegitimation

On June 28, 1995, Guerrero state police ambushed a group of peasant activists passing through the hamlet of Aguas Blancas on their way to a political rally. Videotaped images of the massacre, subsequently aired on television, revealed a grisly scene: seventeen people were killed in the attack, several shot at point-blank range. Despite months of official denials and doctored evidence, the ensuing scandal would culminate ten months later in the resignation of Guerrero's governor, Rubén Figueroa Jr., and the prosecution of over two dozen state government officials.

The Aguas Blancas scandal, like a series of other political scandals that rocked Mexico in the 1990s, was a direct product of growing assertiveness in the mass media. As the decade progressed, stories about drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, government repression, and similar subjects appeared with increasing frequency in certain publications, radio shows, and even television programs. In other words, selective silence on issues of particular sensitivity to the government was no longer automatic or guaranteed. These changes in press coverage led to the efflorescence of scandal, with significant consequences for Mexican political life.

Before the emergence of an independent press in Mexico, outrageous behavior by government officials occurred regularly but went largely unreported. Potentially shocking revelations would surface fleetingly, accompanied by vigorous denials, and then disappear—or they would not surface at all. Throughout the 1990s, Mexico's pro-regime media

continued to play by these old rules, reporting potential scandals in a constrained fashion and with the appropriate spin. What was different about the media environment in that period was the existence of new, independent outlets that attempted to uncover and follow up on scandalous incidents. Thanks to these media, damaging revelations about drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protests, and government repression began to appear in certain media.

The discovery that Mexican audiences devoured scandalous information only encouraged greater reporting of incendiary and shocking events. For media owners, scandals sold newspapers and boosted ratings; for reporters, they helped make careers and satisfied personal desires to participate in a new kind of journalistic enterprise that would expose the failings of authoritarian rule. Market forces and journalistic norms thus encouraged Mexico's media to expose spectacular instances of government abuse. After 1994 this trend accelerated, and reporting on scandals became commonplace.

By 1996, press coverage of shocking events was beginning to take on the "feeding frenzy" quality that distinguishes reporting of scandals in open media systems. Each new revelation regarding the assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, the personal finances of Raúl Salinas, or the massacre of peasants in Guerrero state was gobbled up by a hungry press. No longer could government functionaries distract the press from potentially incendiary revelations and refocus them on official achievements.

One truly remarkable example came after the passage of Mexico's 1996 political reform, which guaranteed the autonomy of the country's electoral monitoring organization and paved the way for the PRI's historic loss of the lower house of Congress in 1997. The reform was big news—it gave Mexico an electoral system worthy of emulation by many established democracies and offered the country's political opposition a level playing field for the first time. It was also the centerpiece of President Ernesto Zedillo's reformist administration, and the government-owned paper *El Nacional* accorded it an eight-column, front-page headline for three straight days. Unfortunately for the president, other capital city newspapers made political reform their principal story the first day, but then moved on to juicier topics (such as official corruption and anti-government protests). The result was a marked change in Mexico's political context.

Throughout the 1990s, Mexican political leaders regularly accused the independent press of yellow journalism and scandal mongering. Al-

though this charge had some merit, the fact remained that everyday news during Mexico's political transition, fairly and accurately reported, *was* often scandalous. During a single ten-day period in February 1997, for instance, Mexico's independent media had to contend with credible allegations that (1) several senior figures in the previous administration were involved in the drug trade; (2) the country's drug czar was in the pay of a notorious trafficker; and (3) an assistant attorney general had manufactured evidence in the murder investigation of Raúl Salinas.

Although not every instance of official abuse was reported or given the prominence it deserved, changes in Mexico's media dramatically increased the likelihood that serious violations of political norms would be exposed.¹ As a result, scandals became a recurring feature of Mexican political life. In fact, it is not hyperbole to say that during the mid-1990s, Mexicans witnessed a Watergate-sized scandal every few months.

TURNING POINTS

On November 7, 1991 near the hamlet of Viborilla (in the municipality of Tlaxicoyán, Veracruz state), elements of the Mexican military ambushed a planeload of federal agents in pursuit of drug traffickers. The incident was widely—if fleetingly—reported on Mexican radio, and Mexico's independent daily *El Financiero* was particularly vigorous in following the story. Despite official claims that the confrontation was an accident, it soon became clear that top army officers in the pay of the Matamorros-based Gulf Cartel had ordered the ambush to protect fleeing drug traffickers. A report by the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) in December 1991 eventually led to the conviction of six people, including three senior military officers, in October 1992.

Several factors distinguished the events at Viborilla from previous incidents. First, the media—especially *El Financiero*—successfully pursued a story that simultaneously dealt with *three* “closed” topics: (1) drug trafficking, (2) corruption by high-ranking officials currently serving in the government, and (3) the Mexican military. Second, inquiry into the affair was followed up not only by the independent media but also by the newly created National Human Rights Commission. Third, largely as a result of the first two changes, initial accounts of the event proved unsustainable. The government was forced to revise its story and admit that the scandalous charges were true. Ultimately, official investigations led to the conviction of officials currently serving in the government (in this case, military officers). The Viborilla affair thus had all

the hallmarks of political scandal, along with its attendant consequences. Behavior that contravened widely held norms of acceptable conduct in the political realm was exposed, provoking public outrage. Further investigations then led to the punishment of at least some of those responsible. Although it was not recognized at the time, the new politics of scandal had made its debut in Mexico.

Less than two years after the Viborilla incident, Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas-O'Campo was shot to death in his car at the Guadalajara airport.² The official version of events—that Cardinal Posadas was caught in cross-fire between rival drug gangs—was quickly discredited by press reports that the cardinal had been dressed in clerical garb and shot several times at close range. Over the next three years, investigations by the media revealed that his assassins, well-known members of the Tijuana drug cartel, had left the scene under police protection.³

The Viborilla incident demonstrated that drug trafficking had penetrated one sacrosanct Mexican institution (the military). Now, compelling evidence had surfaced that high-level clergy might also be involved in (or victimized by) the drug trade.⁴ The fact that traffickers were able to buy police protection for so flamboyant an assassination further demonstrated the pervasiveness of drug-related corruption.

Cardinal Posadas' murder was only the first in a string of high-profile assassinations apparently connected to the drug trade. On March 23, 1994, PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio was shot to death while campaigning in Lomas Taurinas (Baja California state). Gunman Mario Aburto was immediately arrested, but various eyewitness accounts, videotapes of the incident, media investigations, and substantial physical evidence suggested a broader conspiracy. Over the next three years, several other people—including members of Colosio's security detail—were arrested but eventually released. Speculation persisted that drug traffickers and their political allies (including then-president Carlos Salinas and members of his senior staff) were responsible for the crime.

Colosio's assassination was followed (on September 28, 1994) by the murder of José Francisco Ruiz-Massieu, president of the ruling party. Despite President Salinas' characterization of the murder as an aberrant incident, it soon became evident that rival politicians within the ruling party were behind the murder. Assistant Attorney General Mario Ruiz-Massieu, brother of the victim, consistently claimed that high-level officials were obstructing the investigation; he eventually resigned.⁵ In January 1995, newly inaugurated President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the

arrest of Raúl Salinas, elder brother of the former president, for the murder.⁶ Raúl was ultimately convicted of first-degree murder—albeit on scant and suspect evidence—in January 1999.

In the meantime, government investigations of Raúl soon led to a flurry of related scandals. During the months following his arrest, rumors began to circulate that Raúl—long considered one of the most corrupt power brokers in Mexico's political elite—had accumulated a vast fortune during his brother's tenure in office. The scandal finally burst when Swiss authorities arrested Raúl's wife, Paulina Casteñón, as she attempted to access an \$80 million account created by Raúl under a false name.⁷ It eventually transpired that a number of leading PRI figures, including at least one member of the Zedillo cabinet, were linked to Raúl through a convoluted series of shady financial transactions. Independent publications like *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, and *Proceso* aggressively followed up on those leads and gave widespread coverage to the burgeoning scandal.

Ripple effects from the investigations soon touched another former high-ranking official in the Salinas administration. Shortly after resigning from his post as assistant attorney general, Mario Ruiz-Massieu was arrested in the United States for failing to declare a large quantity of cash he was bringing into the country. U.S. authorities subsequently determined that Ruiz-Massieu held deposits worth several million dollars in the Texas Commerce Bank, and that these funds derived from the drug trade. Judicial proceedings in the United States to seize Ruiz-Massieu's assets eventually illuminated the extent of corruption during the Salinas administration—including hush money apparently intended to prevent the investigation of his brother's assassination, pervasive graft related to the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and protection payments to the Salinas family from leading drug traffickers. Again, independent media proved aggressive in pursuing the story, and even some traditional publications began to join in the frenzy.⁸

In the meantime, other events had also highlighted the extent to which drug money had penetrated Mexico's political establishment. On June 24, 1995, a private plane carrying fugitive drug lord Héctor Luis ("El Güero") Palma crashed in Nayarit state. Palma was subsequently detained in Guadalajara, along with a number of agents from the Mexican Federal Judicial Police who were then serving as his bodyguards. Independent media, most notably *Reforma* newspaper, soon revealed that Palma had paid millions of dollars annually for political protection and that the federal Attorney General's office and National Institute for the

Combat of Drugs had known the location of his residence for over a year.⁹

The sea change in media coverage of these scandals was truly striking. Before 1991, drug trafficking was a forbidden subject in Mexico. Despite the fact that Mexico had been a significant producer of heroin and marijuana since the early 1970s, news reports were limited to government “successes” in interdicting contraband shipments. Even after the growth of the cocaine traffic in the 1980s brought widespread corruption and shocking crimes (such as the torture and murder of U.S. drug enforcement agent Enrique Camarena in 1985), drug trafficking remained off-limits. By 1996, however, Mexico’s independent press had documented the penetration of drug-related corruption at all levels of government.

Unfortunately for the ruling party, revelations of drug-related corruption were only some of the shocking political events that became public during the mid-1990s. On February 23, 1993, Mexican financier Antonio Ortiz-Mena hosted a private dinner party for President Carlos Salinas and some thirty Mexican executives. Businessmen invited to the dinner, many of whom were prominent beneficiaries of the Salinas administration’s privatization program, were each asked to donate \$25 million to the PRI’s 1994 electoral campaign. News of the fund-raiser appeared a week later, when *Economista* newspaper—whose publisher had originally learned of the dinner through personal connections—broke the story.

As journalist Andrés Oppenheimer put it, the banquet was the sort of event that existed only in the minds of conspiracy theorists—except that it was all true.¹⁰ The incident confirmed the opposition’s most outrageous charges about PRI campaign spending and fund-raising tactics. Furthermore, by calling into question the integrity of an electoral process that had not yet even begun, the scandal belied President Carlos Salinas’ promises of political reform. Government spokesmen devoted several days to “spinning” the issue—pointing out that at least the PRI was no longer relying on public funds, calling attention to how parties in other countries raised money, “exposing” the fact that the Communist Party of Mexico had once received money from the Soviet Union, and claiming (falsely) that guests were only asked to raise \$25 million each rather than donate it themselves.¹¹

Subsequent scandals, however, confirmed the PRI’s proclivity for vast and illegal campaign expenditures. In June 1995, leaders of the PRD charged that the PRI governor of Tabasco state, Roberto Madrazo-Pintado, had spent between \$40 and \$80 million on his contested gu-

bernatorial campaign in 1994—at least two dozen times the legally allowable amount. Copious documentation of the allegations, including official receipts and payments to journalists for favorable coverage, were presented over the next several months. The revelations led PRD leaders to threaten to withdraw from national-level negotiations over political reform (a threat which was rescinded after the federal government promised legal investigation into the affair).¹²

Scandals over drug money, assassinations, and electoral irregularities were deeply damaging to the government and the ruling party. But they were not the only incidents that provoked public outrage during the mid-1990s. These revelations were accompanied by other scandals that focused on individuals whose actions seemed to typify the worst aspects of the old system. Each of these scandals was provoked and propelled by Mexico's increasingly assertive press.

The first came on December 9, 1994, when *Reforma* newspaper reported that newly appointed Secretary of Education Fausto Alzati had never received the Harvard doctorate he claimed on his resume. In fact, as further reports by *Reforma* and *La Jornada* revealed, Alzati had never completed his undergraduate degree.¹³ The charges were particularly ironic because in his previous post at Mexico's National Science Commission (CONACyT), Alzati had been known for his insistence on academic titles and for the strictness with which he scrutinized the credentials of fellowship applicants. Journalists and commentators soon dubbed the unfortunate minister "Falzati" in wry tribute to his false credentials. Following opposition from the PRD, the Parents' Association, and the Teachers' Union, Alzati finally resigned on January 22, 1995—only fifty-three days after taking office.

Alzati's scalp turned out to be the first of three that the media would claim during the first eighteen months of Zedillo's term. The second came on March 12, 1996, when Rubén Figueroa Jr. requested a permanent leave of absence from his post as governor of Guerrero state. Figueroa's virtual resignation followed months of investigations by the independent media and various government agencies into the massacre of seventeen leftist activists by Guerrero state police in June 1995, in which Figueroa was heavily implicated. Widespread revulsion following the broadcast of a videotape of the massacre by Televisa eventually provoked federal intervention and Figueroa's ouster.

Figueroa's demise was followed only one month later by that of Socrates Rizzo-García, governor of the northern industrial state of Nuevo León. Rizzo's downfall was tied to a protracted controversy over the

diversion of water to neighboring Tamaulipas state and to a series of minor corruption and influence-peddling scandals. But perhaps the most important factor in Rizzo's removal was his administration's failure to solve the assassination of controversial attorney Leopoldo del Real Ibáñez four months before, in which several high-level state government officials were implicated. In the months following the murder, opposition legislators in the state assembly and journalists from the Monterrey-based daily *El Norte* mounted a sustained campaign to dethrone Rizzo.¹⁴

Collectively, the twelve scandals described above struck at the heart of Mexico's decaying one-party system. Two dealt with electoral integrity (or lack thereof), detailing the truly fantastic scope of the PRI's campaign expenditures. Six called attention to the spread of narcotics trafficking and the pervasive penetration of drug-related corruption at all levels of government. Two (Mario Ruiz-Massieu's declarations in the United States and the Ortiz-Mena fund-raising banquet) shed light on the graft and influence peddling that characterized the Salinas administration's privatization program. Almost all called attention to the shocking mendacity of Mexico's political leaders and the utter impunity with which they discharged their duties. Events leading up to the resignations of governors Rizzo and Figueroa—not to mention the revelations that followed the assassinations of Luis Donaldo Colosio and José Francisco Ruiz-Massieu—demonstrated that this impunity extended to repression and murder.

None of these features of the PRI-dominated regime were particularly new: repression, corruption, lying, impunity, and electoral fraud had long been staple ingredients in Mexican political life. What was new in the 1990s was that these issues received regular public treatment. As investigative journalist Roberto Zamarripa put it with regard to the Aguas Blancas affair, "Massacres in Guerrero are not new. What is new is that they are broadcast on television."¹⁵

THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

A review of recent events suggests that the proliferation of political scandals in Mexico is primarily a function of changes in the country's media. There are, however, three rival explanations that deserve attention. Scandals may have become more prevalent because (1) the number of scandalous events increased, (2) public standards of behavior became more stringent, or (3) changes in other institutions besides the media facilitated the diffusion of damaging revelations.

More Raw Material

First, scandals may have become more frequent in the 1990s because there was simply more scandalous material to report. If corruption, repression, and electoral fraud increased, then scandals would occur more often even if media coverage remained unchanged. In other words, Mexico's new politics of scandal might simply have been a result of the fact that Mexican political figures were taking increasing license with the public trust.

The bulk of the evidence, however, indicates that Mexico's new politics of scandal was not a function of the amount of sleaze. The actions that provoked scandal in the 1990s—drug trafficking, corruption, electoral fraud, government repression, etc.—occurred in previous years as well but typically went unreported. Graft stemming from Mexico's oil boom during the López-Portillo administration, for instance, was comparable in magnitude to the corruption surrounding the Salinas administration's privatization program. Links between leading drug traffickers like Rafael Caro-Quintero and senior officials of the De la Madrid administration were probably as well developed as those between Juan García-Abrego of the Gulf Cartel and the Salinas family. Episodes of electoral fraud in San Luis Potosí in 1961, Yucatán in 1969, and Chihuahua in 1986 were just as outrageous as irregularities in Tabasco in 1995, if not much more so. The government's dirty war against leftist guerrillas in the 1970s and 1980s was as brutal as anything that happened in Guerrero and Chiapas during the 1990s.¹⁶ The difference is that these earlier events did not receive nearly the same degree of press scrutiny as similar events in the 1990s.

In fact, precisely the opposite was true: by the mid-1990s, comparatively minor events regularly received saturation coverage in Mexico's independent media. For instance, police repression of demonstrators protesting the construction of a golf course in the town of Tepoztlán, south of Mexico City, in 1996 received as much press coverage as the notorious massacre of student activists in October 1968. Tepoztlán was a relatively minor affair, but its bloody finale was front-page material in virtually every capital city daily—even *oficialista* papers like *El Día* and *Excélsior*. The same results held for reporting on other incidents, such as electoral irregularities in the municipality of Huejotzingo (Puebla state) and accusations against President Ernesto Zedillo for relatively minor conflicts of interest. In short, events that would have gone unre-

ported before the emergence of an independent press began to receive regular attention.

One variant of the “more raw material argument” is that, though the degree of corruption may not have increased, the quality of corruption did change. This variant acknowledges that bribery and sweetheart deals characterized one-party rule in Mexico, but it argues that the spread of drug trafficking during the 1980s and 1990s altered the nature of corruption. Thus, what U.S. politician George Washington Plunkett once called “honest graft”—epitomized in Mexico by slogans like “The politician who is poor is a poor politician” and “Don’t give me it, but put me where it is”—gave way to much more daring, outrageous, or violent forms of venality. As one noted analyst of political corruption in Mexico put it:

Corruption has long been considered a characteristic feature of the Mexican political system. From the payment of the *mordida* (literally, “bite,” a term used to refer to lower level bribes and extortions) to police and bureaucrats, or the purchase of an *amparo* (a type of injunction) from judges, to the pocketing of millions by high-ranking government officials, contemporary Mexican history is full of scandals and anecdotes. . . .

Yet, despite the apparent continuity, recent corruption scandals, particularly the high-profile case of the former president’s brother, Raúl Salinas, suggest that corruption may have overstepped the level and boundaries of the past, striking a sensitive public nerve and undermining political stability.¹⁷

It may be true that drug-related corruption was more pervasive in the early 1990s than at any previous period in Mexican history. From one perspective, then, the character of graft did change. But it is important to note that not all recent scandals in Mexico were related to drug trafficking, or even to corruption in general. Many of the most notorious recent events, such as Aguas Blancas, had little to do with corruption at all. Focusing exclusively on graft, therefore, may mislead analysts about the roots of scandal in Mexico. Although drug-related corruption probably increased, other abuses of power did not. And yet scandals related to those abuses exploded in just the same fashion as scandals stemming from drug-related corruption.

Shifting Public Standards

A second explanation for the new politics of scandal is that norms of acceptable conduct have evolved. According to this argument, audiences

simply began to interpret the same sorts of incidents differently than they had previously done. In other words, the Mexican people became less tolerant of practices they once viewed as relatively benign.

For most of the incidents discussed here, the notion that public norms evolved over time is highly dubious. Drug trafficking, murder, and corruption on a massive scale were never viewed as acceptable conduct in Mexico; for this reason, Mexican officials went through elaborate machinations to ensure that their actions remained secret. Some contemporary headlines do suggest that public tolerance for sweetheart deals and other familiar forms of “honest graft” began to erode in the mid-1990s. But much of this change is really a media phenomenon: journalists on the hunt for scandals now question public officials much more aggressively about potential conflicts of interest.

In fact, it is not always clear that public reactions have kept pace with those of journalists. One case in point was the 1997 charge that the leading opposition candidate for mayor of Mexico City, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, had sold public land to his mother at below-market prices during his tenure as governor of Michoacán twenty years earlier.¹⁸ Although the media gave substantial play to the revelations, they failed to make a dent in Cárdenas’s popularity. (He went on to win the mayoral race in a landslide.) The standards that changed were the media’s, not necessarily the public’s.

Democratization

A third rival explanation is that Mexico’s new politics of scandal represents the product of a panoply of changes in the Mexican political system as a whole, rather than simply increased assertiveness in the press. According to this explanation, political transition and institutional reform led to greater exposure of scandalous acts. In other words, Mexico’s general process of democratization, rather than media opening, was responsible for the efflorescence of political scandal in the 1990s.

It is undeniable that changes in a number of Mexican institutions contributed both to scandals and to their political consequences. The rebirth of Mexican civil society in the second half of the 1980s led to greater pressure on the government to investigate shocking events. Scrutiny by foreign media and governments propelled investigations into certain incidents. Nascent assertiveness by the judiciary meant that officials could no longer count on political manipulation of the law; the

creation of the National Human Rights Commission by President Carlos Salinas fortified the government's self-investigative apparatus;¹⁹ and the appointment by President Zedillo of political outsiders to the post of attorney general increased the independence of legal investigations in 1995–96.²⁰ Finally, the increasing representation of opposition parties at all levels of government helped to expose certain unsavory practices.

In short, Mexico's media were not the only actors that contributed to the new politics of scandal. Opposition political parties, state and federal law-enforcement agencies, social movements, Congress, the courts, foreign actors, and defectors from the political establishment all played a role. In cases like the Ortiz-Mena fund-raising dinner and the Falzati affair, for instance, revelations in the media were subsequently pursued by opposition parties and civic groups.

Nevertheless, it is important to separate the causes of scandal from its political and legal consequences. Often, scandals defy legal resolution and the individuals involved evade punishment. This does not mean, however, that scandals have not occurred. It simply means that the official investigative and juridical apparatus is too weak, incompetent, corrupt, or politically compromised to act on public revelations. Without prosecutors and judges, scandals produce no arrests or convictions; without political parties and social movements to capitalize on popular dissent, scandals may not translate swiftly into changes in government policy and personnel. Thus, the constellation of institutional changes that took place in Mexico during the 1990s shaped the way scandals played out in the legal and political realms.

In terms of triggering scandals in the first place, however, Mexico's media played a paramount role. Following the ambush at Viborilla and the capture of "El Güero" Palma, for instance, reporting by Mexican radio and independent newspapers turned the event into an exposé of drug-related corruption. In the Colosio assassination, press investigations by *La Jornada* and other publications suggested the presence of a second gunman, and subsequent news reports (including various televised videotapes of the incident) also reinforced the impression that a conspiracy was at work. One month later, prosecutors announced that there had in fact been two shooters (although the government later reversed itself and retracted this claim). Coverage of the assassinations of José Francisco Ruiz-Massieu and Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas-O'Campo had a similar effect, discrediting the official version of events.

In three of the twelve examples discussed above, the media was not only the most important player in provoking the scandal but also the

most important in maintaining public pressure. Socrates Rizzo's demise may have been abetted by opposition legislators from the PAN, but it was first and foremost a product of *El Norte's* relentless investigations. Likewise, the fall of Fausto Alzati was assisted by the Parents' Association, Teachers' Union, and PRD, but the origins of the scandal itself lay in the press rooms at *Reforma* and *La Jornada*. And the scandal surrounding the PRI's fund-raising banquet was a direct product of reports in *El Economista*. Government investigators, opposition legislators, and civic activists played little role in exposing these incidents.

Perhaps the most striking case, however, was the massacre at Aguas Blancas. Many of Mexico's media pursued the affair with assertiveness and vigor, with newspapers like *La Jornada* and *Reforma* giving saturation coverage to the massacre and subsequent cover-up. Their front-page news reports and hard-hitting opinion pieces were accompanied by investigative reporting that consistently yielded new revelations of official complicity. Interviews with local eyewitnesses and government sources had thoroughly discredited the official version long before the CNDH, the state special prosecutors, the Mexican Supreme Court, or the Organization of American States concluded their investigations. Although these investigations also produced leads for the media to follow up, as often as not it was the press that uncovered new information and propelled legal inquiries. Whenever there were no specific leads tying high-level officials to the massacre, the independent press followed circumstantial ones—such as the fact that police officers charged in the massacre were receiving special treatment in prison and that the state special prosecutor and Governor Figueroa were linked through business dealings. Eventually, it became clear to government agencies and opposition parties that the best way to stimulate action on the case was to leak material to the media—including the unedited video of the massacre itself. As one newspaper columnist concluded: “Who provoked the resignation of Rubén Figueroa: the PRD and ‘civil society,’ or Televisa? The mobilizations and protests did not accomplish much in over two hundred days; the broadcast of the video, by contrast, achieved in less than a month what looked impossible: it forced the president of the republic to request the intervention of the Supreme Court and led to the resignation of the governor.”²¹ Governor Figueroa himself certainly had no doubts about the identity of his principal tormentor. As he told two senior journalists from *Reforma* newspaper shortly after the massacre, “It is, fundamentally, an affair of the press, the media.”²²

In summary, a number of institutional changes contributed to the rise

of scandals in Mexico. The growing power of opposition parties and civic groups, increasing autonomy of government agencies and the courts, and heightened official sensitivity to foreign pressure and facilitated the investigation and punishment of public officials. But the most important contributor to Mexico's new politics of scandal was increasing assertiveness in the mass media.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SCANDAL

How the rules of politics in Mexico have changed!
Now being a friend of the president is a point against
you.

—Rubén Figueroa, quoted in
Reforma, March 13, 1996

To date, most scholarship has held that the political consequences of scandals are largely ephemeral.²³ Officials may resign or be indicted; politicians may back away from particular initiatives; and political parties may even lose elections. But underlying partisan alignments are unlikely to change. Thus, the Profumo affair cost Britain's Conservatives their hold on power temporarily, but they soon returned with a cabinet full of fresh faces. According to this view, Mexico's recent wave of scandals might affect popular perceptions of particular leaders, including the Salinas and Figueroa families. It might even encourage opposition voting in the short term (as in Guerrero in the wake of Aguas Blancas or nationally in the wake of the Salinas scandals). But it would not alter long-term public attitudes toward Mexico's political system.

Evidence from the Mexican case, however, suggests exactly the opposite; scandals during the 1990s had two salient political consequences. First, they undermined the legitimacy of the old regime among the mass public. Because scandals followed each other in rapid succession and appeared to indict the system as a whole, this delegitimation was especially profound and widespread. Second, scandals signaled to political elites that the rules of the game had changed and that certain older practices would now be exposed to public scrutiny. More aggressive media coverage thus created a new context for political decision making.

Mass Delegitimation

One noteworthy feature of recent scandals in Mexico was their capacity to illuminate the true workings of Mexico's one-party regime. In other

words, they revealed the dark underside of Mexican authoritarianism—corruption, cronyism, drug trafficking, murder, and repression. And in doing so, they served to delegitimize that regime and its electoral arm, the PRI. Although the cumulative weight of recent scandals might have had crucial consequences on its own, even more devastating for the regime was their increasingly web-like interconnectedness. Each new scandal in Mexico confirmed that corruption and other abuses were institutionalized, and that the political system was rotten to its core. The effects of recent scandals in Mexico thus went far beyond the public outrage that follows occasional reports of official misconduct. The problem was not just that Raúl Salinas' Swiss bank accounts held enough money to buy milk for every schoolchild in Mexico for a year, as PAN leader Felipe Calderón pointed out in 1997.²⁴ Nor was it simply the fact that a number of high-level officials and businessmen were linked to Raúl through suspect financial dealings. Rather, it was the sense that Raúl Salinas' ill-gotten fortune and a dozen other scandals like it captured the essence of the way the system operated. By shining a light on the graft, cronyism, back-scratching, nepotism, and sweetheart deals that long characterized Mexico's political system, independent media exposed the inner workings of a rent-seeking regime. The saturation coverage these events received in the media made them impossible to deny, ignore, or downplay.

In the case of corruption, the effect of scandals was magnified by the recession of 1994–96. Indeed, in a sense the crisis itself was a scandal, as it followed Carlos Salinas' extravagant projections of economic growth and Ernesto Zedillo's electoral pledge of "well-being for your family." Mexicans who voted for the PRI with the expectation of further economic growth were destined to be deeply disillusioned, and the severity of the crisis that followed the bungled devaluation of the Mexican peso in 1994 presumably made revelations of corruption all the more potent. Not only were officials profiting through abuse of power, they were doing so in the midst of massive hardship.

Media coverage of scandals thus painted a convincing, coherent picture of the regime that was strikingly different from the official portrait. In the new picture, politicians seduced voters with tantalizing promises of economic growth, only to plunge the country into renewed crisis. They conspired with their cronies to steal money and buy elections, and when these tactics failed, they cheated opposition parties out of victory. They promised clean government, but then abused their offices, and—

given the country's undemocratic political system—were never held accountable. Opposition activists and political rivals who threatened their power were silenced. This was a picture that ordinary people could understand and even corroborate based on their own experience.

Documenting the role of scandals in delegitimizing Mexico's political system is a daunting task. Despite years of research, scholars do not agree on a definition of legitimacy, let alone how to measure it. To begin with, any attempt to measure legitimacy using survey data would be suspect wherever respondents were afraid to answer questions truthfully. Although such forms of response bias are no longer a problem for pollsters in most of Mexico, they probably were as little as ten years ago. Given these obstacles, it is hardly surprising that reliable time-series survey data on governmental legitimacy are scarce.

Given these limitations, what information can be culled from existing surveys? In general, survey data suggest three conclusions, all of which are consistent with the notion that recent scandals contributed to regime delegitimation. First, Mexicans tend to remember scandalous incidents. According to private polls conducted by the Office of the President in 1995–96, news about drug trafficking, official corruption, opposition protest, and political violence have high recall rates (20–50%)—similar to those for major accidents and natural disasters. Other political events, such as summits, presidential activities, policy initiatives, and similar events have much lower recall rates (around 5–15%). By itself this fact does not prove that scandalous events eroded public perceptions of regime legitimacy, but it at least demonstrates that the events in question were widely enough known to have had a broad effect.

Second, public perceptions of official corruption and system illegitimacy in the late 1990s were quite high. Most Mexicans, for instance, believed that their government was corrupt and that corruption was not just the product of a few rotten individuals. Large majorities of the population also believed the system required substantial reform.

Third, public perceptions of government corruption increased during the same period as recent scandals. After 1991 and especially after 1994, the percentage of Mexicans believing that their government was honest, supporting the PRI, favoring one-party rule, and feeling that the political system worked well dropped substantially.²⁵ Even more significantly, most Mexicans felt that corruption increased in the second half of the 1990s, despite the fact that public administration was almost certainly *less* corrupt under Zedillo than it had been during Salinas' tenure.²⁶

These findings suggest that public impressions of official misconduct were driven more by media coverage of misconduct than by misconduct itself.

In other words, survey data do not permit us to say definitively that recent scandals undermined regime legitimacy in Mexico. But they do indicate that Mexicans remembered the events that provoked political scandals, that popular perceptions of legitimacy were low, and that disenchantment with the regime increased during the same period as recent scandals. Circumstantial evidence thus supports the notion that successive scandals eroded the legitimacy of Mexico's old regime.

Elite Calculation

As with mass opinion, documenting the impact of scandals on elite attitudes and behavior is a difficult task. Interviews with Mexican politicians and government officials do, however, suggest that scandals in the 1990s had a dramatic effect on how political elites perceived their environment and their place in it. Moreover, actions by political elites in the wake of scandals suggest that these perceptions influenced their behavior. During the "Falzati" affair, for instance, many aspiring functionaries quickly drew the conclusion that old-style mendacity entailed substantial political risks. As the scandal was breaking, *Reforma* received a flurry of letters from other high-level government officials, calling attention to "typos" in their own resumes. Other scandals—such as those involving Raúl Salinas—underscored in an even more dramatic fashion the fact that high-level officials (including close relatives of former presidents) were no longer untouchable.

Perhaps the most striking example was the Aguas Blancas scandal. What Mexican politicians noticed was not the relatively light punishment that Governor Figueroa received. (He was never prosecuted and even remained governor, the fig leaf of a "permanent leave of absence" standing between him and resignation.) Rather, officials registered the fact that he was forced to step down in the first place. Figueroa was, after all, a friend and political ally of the president; in fact, he was the only one of Mexico's thirty-one governors who could really be considered a member of Zedillo's political clique. The spectacle of such a well-established and well-connected political figure being pursued by a swarm of hostile journalists was truly novel in Mexico. In this sense, Aguas Blancas focused elite attention on the increasing pluralism of Mexico's changing political system. Mexico had not completed its tran-

sition to democracy by 1996, but the behavior of key political actors during the Aguas Blancas affair highlighted for all to see that the rules of the game were changing.

CONCLUSIONS

During the 1990s, independent newspapers, radio shows, and television programs began to cover topics that were previously off-limits: drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, and government-sponsored repression. The result was a series of devastating political scandals that exposed the darker side of authoritarian rule. Recurring scandals in turn undermined support for existing institutions, generated pressure for reform, altered elite calculations, and generally drove forward the process of political transition.

In reflecting on these consequences, it is worth noting that scandals also provoked a range of reactions in the short run. In general, coverage of previously closed topics tends to promote more accountable behavior by political elites. But in the short run, the reaction of political elites to media scrutiny was sometimes precisely the opposite—namely, vigorous attempts to silence the media through repression. In Mexico, for instance, much of the resistance to democratization from hard-liners in the PRI (the “dinosaurs”) undoubtedly stemmed from a fear that traditional ways of doing business would be publicized, raining public opprobrium and even legal sanctions on tainted officials. Scandals thus polarized and divided the ruling elite as much as they nudged it toward more accountable norms of behavior. Although this process of elite polarization was ultimately supportive of political transition, separating hard-liners from reformers, it sometimes proved extremely messy in the short run.

In both cases, increasing coverage of previously closed topics had powerful political consequences in Mexico. Although aggressive media reporting sometimes triggered reprisals from government officials, these reprisals failed to prevent Mexico’s emerging Fourth Estate from covering potential scandals. Media coverage thus contributed to a new political context marked by mass disenchantment with the regime and more extensive surveillance of elite behavior. Just as growing coverage of civil society promoted social mobilization, so increasing scrutiny of previously closed topics prompted political scandal.

The breakdown of Mexico’s old system of media control, however, had still further consequences for political transition. In particular, more

balanced coverage of election campaigns offered opposition parties the chance to compete on more equal terms against the ruling party. What were the effects of media opening in the electoral sphere? How did increasing independence in the mass media influence Mexican voting behavior? The next chapter takes up these questions.

Media Opening, Campaigns, and Elections

On July 6, 1997 something remarkable occurred: Mexican voters went to the polls to choose their representatives in a truly free and fair election. Aside from scattered reports of fraud and violence, balloting was generally orderly. Indeed, in many parts of the country the process seemed downright mundane.

The results, however, were not. Soon after the voting stations closed, initial returns and exit polls indicated an unmistakable trend: the PRI was losing, and in some places, losing badly. At nine-thirty in the evening, Alfredo del Mazo, PRI candidate for mayor of Mexico City, officially conceded the election to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. His speech was followed shortly afterward by a televised address from President Ernesto Zedillo, who also recognized Cárdenas' victory.

In the streets of Mexico City, PRD activists had already begun to celebrate their triumph. After losing two bids for the presidency, Cárdenas had won the next best thing—a highly publicized contest that was widely viewed as a dry run for the presidential elections in 2000. PRD supporters swarmed Mexico City's central plaza, demanding that their candidate make an appearance. They then dragged an exhausted Cárdenas from one fiesta to another.

Meanwhile, academics and journalists remained fixated on the results of legislative contests that would determine the composition of Mexico's lower house of Congress (the Chamber of Deputies). Under the country's new hybrid electoral system, the PRI had to win 42.2% of the national

vote to be assured of retaining control of the Chamber. Initial returns and exit polls indicated that the PRI's share hovered around 40%. By eleven-thirty in the evening, small clusters of people at the IFE's headquarters in Mexico City began to toast to the successful conclusion of the campaign, and privately, to the PRI's apparent defeat. Just after midnight, IFE head José Woldenberg set aside his trademark cigar long enough to certify the electoral process. Amid the cacophony of squawking cell phones, official announcements, and spontaneous applause from the assembled guests, Woldenberg thanked the candidates, the voters, and the media for guaranteeing a free and fair election. Although the results were not yet final, everyone understood what had occurred: the PRI had lost control of the Chamber of Deputies. Mexican voters had thus ended nearly seventy years of one-party rule and ushered in a new era of multi-party government.

Nine years before, in the presidential elections of 1988, Mexicans had trudged to the polls to vote against economic austerity, corruption, and authoritarianism. To the chagrin of many voters, however, that contest proved neither free nor fair. Not only was the campaign marked by radical inequalities in resources, the ballots themselves were not counted honestly. As initial returns began to suggest a disconcertingly close race, Mexico's Interior Minister announced that the computer system for tabulating votes had "broken down."¹ The phrase itself—*el sistema se cayó*—later became a symbol of the PRI's increasing recourse to electoral fraud. Many suspected that the "system" which had broken down was not the computer system at all, but rather the PRI's vast, vote-getting machine.

Six years later, in the elections of 1994, Mexicans returned to the polls to choose a new president. This time, thanks to a tentative process of political liberalization, the election was relatively free of fraud and coercion. But it was by no means fair, as biased media coverage and radical inequalities in campaign resources made it impossible to know what voters' preferences would have been had they been exposed to a balanced presentation of political viewpoints. Nor was it certain whether the country's leadership would have accepted an anti-government verdict had the people delivered one.

The elections of 1997 were different, in large measure because of changes in the rules of the electoral game over the intervening three years. In 1995–96, Mexico's main political parties negotiated a series of sweeping constitutional revisions that guaranteed the autonomy of the IFE and provided opposition parties with extensive campaign funds.

Meanwhile, the development of Mexico's polling industry—and the enthusiasm with which some media gave survey results an airing—narrowed the realistic scope for fraud. Finally, the evolution of Mexican television meant that opposition parties would receive relatively balanced coverage in the media. All told, these changes created a context in which Mexico's opposition parties could expect to compete on a roughly equal footing with the PRI.

In 1997 this new electoral regime was put to the test, and it passed with flying colors. Mexican voters selected their representatives in a free, fair, and inclusive election that was endorsed by all major political actors. The ruling party competed, lost, and recognized the results. In short, by conventional definitions of the term, on July 6, 1997 Mexico became a democracy.

The mass media played a crucial role in Mexico's "founding elections."² In 1997, opposition political parties had their first real opportunity to present their message directly to voters through ordinary news coverage and televised advertisements. The results were telling, as shifts in coverage on Mexico's principal television network eroded support for the ruling party. Media opening thus facilitated opposition victory in a crucial election, accelerating Mexico's political transition.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS IN MEXICO

Until the 1990s, electoral coverage was heavily biased in favor of the ruling party. Opposition candidates were presented in an unflattering light, if they were presented at all, and PRI contenders received a much greater share of coverage than they did of the popular vote. Although opposition parties had won some access to modest public financing and airtime in the 1970s, and although the resources available to them had been increased in the early 1990s, in practice opposition parties received very little coverage until the 1990s. Consequently, Mexican voters were exposed to a fairly homogenous media message designed to generate support for the ruling party and discredit the political opposition.

All of these biases were especially pronounced on television. Because television was the medium through which most Mexican voters learned about politics, the effects of bias were potentially far-reaching. Most observers believed that Televisa played an important role in maintaining PRI dominance during a period of increasing civic mobilization and disenchantment with governmental performance.³

As chapter 6 discussed, however, television coverage shifted dramat-

ically in the 1990s. Market competition following the privatization of government-owned television channels in 1992–93 and the subsequent creation of Televisión Azteca led Televisa to experiment with more equitable coverage. By 1994, the PRI's share of airtime dedicated to the three major parties began to approximate its share of the national vote. Although the tone of most campaign coverage on television still favored the ruling party, opposition candidates were increasingly able to take their cases to voters over the airwaves. The changes culminated in coverage of the 1997 campaign, when reporting on television was relatively balanced toward the three major parties.

Figure 13 documents the changes in televised campaign coverage from 1988 to 1997. The shaded columns show total airtime devoted to the PRI and its candidates as a percent of coverage of the three major parties in the elections of 1988, 1994, and 1997.⁴ The black bars show the PRI's share of the vote (according to the official results). As Figure 13 reveals, the PRI's share of television airtime fell dramatically between 1988 and 1997. In 1997, the PRI received approximately 34% of coverage devoted to the three major parties—far less than in previous elections and even less than its percentage of the national vote (39%).

These changes in the volume of coverage were marked by an equally dramatic change in the tone of coverage. In 1988, television reports depicted the PRI as Mexico's only real political party, opposed by an assortment of fringe groups. Even in 1994, the PRI could count on special treatment—from receiving favorable visuals to appearing first virtually every time coverage of the presidential candidates was aired. During the 1997 campaign in Mexico City, however, all three major-party mayoral candidates were treated as serious contenders, and opposition parties were portrayed as responsible political actors with reasonable social agendas. Even issue-related coverage was not particularly favorable to the PRI, as it focused on lingering economic problems and a series of recent scandals. The net effect of these changes was to present Mexican audiences with a vastly different set of political cues than they were accustomed to receiving.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHANGING ELECTORAL COVERAGE

Anecdotal evidence has long suggested that media effects are pronounced in Mexico. Politicians, party activists, and journalists themselves all believe that the mass media, especially television, play a critical

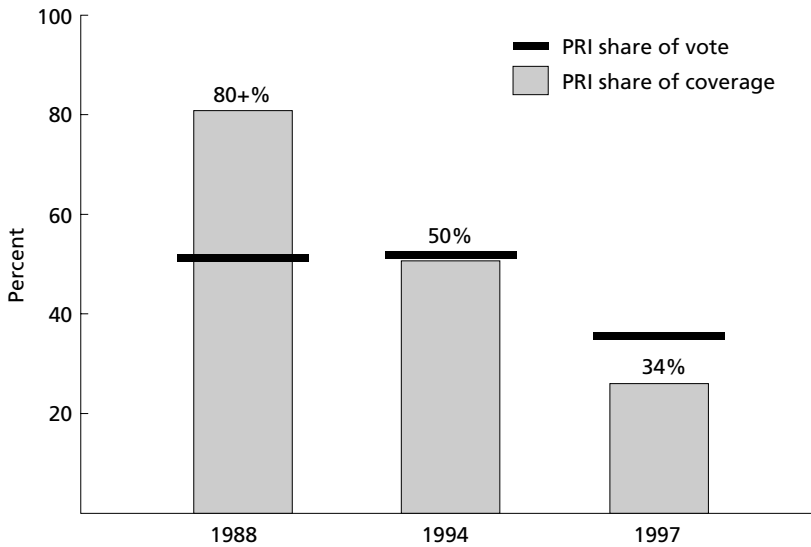


Figure 13. Changing coverage of the PRI on Mexican television, 1988–97.

role in shaping public perceptions of different candidates and parties. Precisely for this reason, opposition leaders consistently (if not always successfully) made access to the mass media a crucial issue in their negotiations with the regime.⁵

Unfortunately, statistical evidence in support of these perceptions is limited by the paucity of reliable data. Accurate polls—the traditional instrument for measuring changes in public opinion—did not really exist in Mexico before 1988, making it difficult to document the influence of television bias in earlier eras. Even polling data from the 1990s are of limited utility, as most surveys do not include even minimally adequate measures of media exposure.

Nevertheless, the data that do exist are highly suggestive of potent media effects. For instance, swings in public opinion during the 1994 campaign frequently coincided with changes in news coverage. One well-known episode was Mexico's first televised presidential debate in 1994, which many analysts credited with boosting PAN candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos and killing Cárdenas' presidential bid. As Domínguez and McCann describe it:

Eloquent, articulate, impressive, and aggressive in his demeanor, Fernández de Cevallos was the unquestioned winner of the debate. Nearly every week during the campaign, Miguel Basañez, on behalf of MORI de México

and the magazine *Este País*, had surveyed public opinion in five of Mexico's largest cities (including Mexico City). His polls had been showing Colosio, and then Zedillo, well ahead of the opposition, with Cárdenas and Fernández running neck and neck for the second spot. On the day after the debate, May 13, Basañez's poll showed that Zedillo's support had plummeted and Cárdenas's had dipped, with Fernández de Cevallos leading the race for the presidency (the number of undecided voters also increased sharply). Basañez's surveys would show Fernández de Cevallos and Zedillo disputing the lead in these five cities for the remainder of May and June. Other larger public-opinion polls reflected a similar trend. . . .⁶

Or, as one veteran observer of Mexican politics put it more bluntly: "After the presidential debate, when National Action Party (PAN) candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos jumped from 15% to 30% in the polls, it appeared that the Mexican electorate was extremely volatile and could be swayed overnight by a successful media performance."⁷

The impact of the 1994 debate on voting behavior has since been documented by more rigorous statistical analysis. As Alejandro Poiré has demonstrated, those voters who relied on television for political information and made up their minds in the period following the debate were significantly more likely to vote for the opposition. This effect was especially pronounced for the PAN—a predictable finding given that Fernández de Cevallos was widely viewed as the winner of the debate. Somewhat remarkably, though, the debate also benefited Cárdenas, whose performance that evening was widely regarded as disappointing.⁸ It seems that merely appearing on the same stage with the other candidates enhanced Cárdenas' standing. Voters who saw the candidate speak for himself, without the distorting filter of biased coverage, warmed to him. However limited his oratorical skills, he was clearly not the monster he had been portrayed to be. In other words, a level playing field—even one on which Cárdenas played badly—represented a profound improvement over earlier reporting.

Findings regarding the influence of televised debates seem to hold for television news more generally. In 1994, for instance, television bias against the PRD and in favor of the PRI encouraged voters who relied primarily on that medium to favor the ruling party over the leftist alternative.⁹ This effect was not found for the PAN, suggesting that either television coverage was not as biased against the PAN during the campaign or that pre-election anti-PRD biases on television had already made viewers especially hostile toward Mexico's leftist opposition.¹⁰

One limitation of these findings is that they rely on cross-sectional data. These data make it difficult to separate the impact of media mes-

sages from other variables that might be responsible for changes in public opinion. For instance, Mexicans who watched a televised debate might have been more likely to vote for the opposition, but it is not clear that they did so because they saw the debate. Rather, they might have watched the debate because they were already poorly disposed toward the regime and anxious to learn more about the opposition candidates. Teasing out these relationships is difficult, if not impossible, with cross-sectional surveys.

To more firmly establish the impact of media messages on Mexican voting behavior, the following analysis relies on a panel study of voters during the 1997 campaign in Mexico City. This study consisted of 402 adult residents of the Federal District who were each surveyed three times in the course of the campaign—in March, just after candidates were announced; in June, just after the mayoral debate; and immediately after the election in July. In each round of the panel, respondents were asked a series of questions about their backgrounds, political attitudes, voting intentions, and other issues. Many of the survey's 135 items were consciously designed to evaluate media influences in ways that previous polls had not.¹¹ Question selection and wording thus represented a substantial improvement over earlier studies.

Even more importantly, the panel nature of the survey controlled for the effects of self-selection. That is, survey data revealed not only whether people who watched a particular show were more likely to vote for the opposition, but also whether, controlling for other factors, they were more likely to switch to the opposition in the course of the campaign than people who relied on other media. It is precisely this aspect of panel surveys that makes them the instrument of choice for measuring media effects.¹²

The 1997 Mexico City data are extremely rich and provide support for a number of claims about media influence. For instance, voters who saw the televised debate between two of the three main candidates improved their opinion of the opposition (controlling for other factors). So did those who relied on newspapers for political information (again controlling for other factors).¹³ Perhaps most remarkable, however, was the effect of news coverage on support for the PRI.

In Table 2, which summarizes this finding, the sample is divided into three groups: those who relied primarily on the Televisa for their news; those who relied on the rival Televisión Azteca network; and the panel as a whole (including those individuals who did not rely on television for information about politics).¹⁴ The first column shows the percentage

TABLE 2: TELEVISION VIEWERSHIP AND
SUPPORT FOR THE PRI, 1997

	Percent favoring PRI (March)	Percent voting for PRI (July)
Televisa viewers ($n = 162$)	28	13
Azteca viewers ($n = 163$)	14	14
Overall sample ($n = 387$)	21	14

of each group that intended to vote for the PRI in March, at the beginning of the campaign. As this column indicates, the bulk of those surveyed in all categories intended to vote for an opposition candidate or were not sure whom they supported. Televisa viewers, however, were initially much more likely to vote for the ruling party (28%) than the sample as a whole (21%) or Televisión Azteca viewers (14%). This difference is hardly surprising, as Televisa has long been identified with the ruling party and many independent-minded voters abandoned the network when Televisión Azteca was created in 1992–93. It may also reflect the fact that Televisa viewers had previously been exposed to a thoroughly pro-government message and were consequently more sympathetic to the ruling party than other audiences.

The second column in Table 2 shows the percentage of each group that actually voted for the PRI in July.¹⁵ By July Televisa viewers were, if anything, slightly less likely to vote for the PRI than Televisión Azteca viewers or the background population.¹⁶ The magnitude of this swing in support is remarkable, and it deserves special comment for two reasons. First, the changes recorded here are extremely unusual in survey research, which has generally failed to corroborate the powerful media effects sometimes found in laboratory settings.¹⁷ In this sample, Televisa viewers were several dozen times more likely to defect from the PRI than viewers of Televisión Azteca, whose likelihood of voting for the PRI did not change significantly. In fact, virtually the entire net shift away from the ruling party in the course of the campaign comes from Televisa viewers.

Second, these effects are politically consequential. Because all Televisa viewers received the same nightly news broadcasts regardless of where they lived, changes in news coverage influenced people across the country. These viewers represented a substantial chunk of the electorate; in 1997, approximately 35% of the Mexican population relied primarily or exclusively on Televisa for news about politics. Huge vote shifts in this group

(e.g., a drop in PRI support of more than 50%) thus had the potential to alter the outcome of elections. In 1997 elections, for instance, the PRI lost control of the Chamber of Deputies by less than 3 % of the national vote. To the extent that the dynamics of attitude change discussed here are generalizable to the rest of the Mexican population, shifts in Televisa coverage were sufficient to change the outcome of the elections.

Because these findings are based on a panel survey, they control for self-selection. In other words, they control for the fact that Televisa viewers were more pro-government than Azteca viewers at the start of the campaign. They do not control, however, for other variables that could potentially influence the propensity of respondents to shift partisan allegiances during the campaign. For instance, Televisa viewers are, on average, less educated, less affluent, and less politically engaged than Azteca viewers. Perhaps these sorts of people were simply more likely to become disillusioned with the ruling party in the course of the campaign, regardless of which media they used.

Table 3 takes these potentially confounding variables into account. It shows the results of multiple regression on opinion of the PRI in July (on a scale of one to ten), controlling for opinion of the PRI in March and June.¹⁸ This analysis thus captures the change in respondents' attitudes toward the PRI during the final, television-intensive month of the campaign. The second and third columns in Table 3 show the standardized regression coefficients and probability values for each variable in the first column.¹⁹ Although not a direct measure of voting shifts, opinion of the ruling party is a useful proxy for voting. Moreover, because respondents rated the PRI on a ten-point scale, analyzing changes in opinion may allow us to capture more nuanced effects than would be possible through multinomial logit models of voting behavior.²⁰

Table 3 indicates that a number of factors influenced respondents' opinions of the PRI over the course of the campaign. Prior attitudes toward the ruling party at the beginning of the campaign, for instance, were important predictors of support for the PRI in July. Presidential approval and attitudes toward the PRI's mayoral candidate had a similar effect, as did attitudes toward the main opposition parties. Access to mass media in general tended to hurt the PRI—a natural finding given that knowledge about politics has long been a predictor of support for the opposition—but these effects were not statistically significant.

Televisa viewership, however, had a significant influence on voters' opinions of the PRI. Even controlling for other influences—such as education, socioeconomic status, exposure to radio and newspapers, and

TABLE 3: CAMPAIGN INFLUENCES ON
OPINION TOWARD THE PRI, 1997

	Standardized coefficient	<i>p</i> value
Opinion of PRI (March)	.19	.00
Opinion of PRI (June)	.08	.34
Opinion of del Mazo (June)	.18	.01
Opinion of the president (March–July)	.21	.01
Opinion of the PAN (March–July)	.14	.00
Opinion of the PRD (March–July)	−.02	.10
Ideological self-identification (higher is right)	.09	.17
Attitude toward economic reform (higher is left)	.03	.49
Attitude toward democracy (higher is favorable)	−.01	.92
Frequency respondent discusses politics	.01	.90
Church attendance	−.03	.92
Education	.01	.93
Socioeconomic status	−.01	.66
Age	−.04	.93
Gender (1 = female)	−.02	.38
Radio listenership per week	.04	.35
Newspaper readership per week	−.05	.34
Televisa viewership per week	−.15	.02
Television Azteca viewership per week	−.09	.15
Other TV viewership (mainly cable) per week	−.07	.18
Saw television advertisement	.05	.31
Saw televised mayoral debate	.00	.97
N:	364	
Adjusted R-squared:	.34	

interpersonal communication about politics—reliance on Televisa for news remained a powerful predictor of increasing distaste for the PRI. In fact, the results are exactly the reverse of what skeptics of large media effects would suspect. Not only does Televisa viewership remain significant once other variables are taken into account, its inclusion in the model wipes out the apparent influence of other factors. As Table 3 shows, *none* of the potentially confounding variables remained significant once patterns of media use were taken into account. Changes in attitudes appear to be the product of media influences, rather than hidden propensities within segments of the electorate.

EXPLAINING MEDIA EFFECTS ON VOTING BEHAVIOR

Why were Televisa viewers more likely to defect from the ruling party than Azteca viewers? Perhaps the most compelling explanation concerns

the changing nature of television coverage in Mexico. Televisa viewers, previously inundated with a relentlessly pro-government message, were presented with opposition perspectives for perhaps the first time in their television-viewing lives. The result was to bring their perceptions of the ruling party in line with the rest of the public's. By the end of the campaign, therefore, Televisa viewers had essentially the same attitudes toward the ruling party as users of other media.

By contrast, Azteca viewers changed their minds much less in the course of the campaign. They relied on a medium that was perceived to be slightly less biased than Televisa but in reality was not very different. In fact, Cárdenas himself interrupted supporters who were protesting Televisa at a campaign rally on April 29, 1997 to point out that the network's coverage had changed while that of Televisión Azteca had not.²¹ In retrospect, then, it is not altogether perplexing that viewers of Televisa deserted the ruling party more readily than viewers of Televisión Azteca.

The magnitude and robustness of these effects, as well as their direction, also require some explanation. All told, television influences in 1997 were impressive—possibly as large as those ever found in survey research on political communication. Assuming they are correct, what explains the susceptibility of Mexico City viewers to television cues in 1997?

There are two likely explanations for why the media effects presented here were so substantial: one methodological and one theoretical. According to the first explanation, media effects were not particularly pronounced in 1997; rather, a superior research design permitted documentation of media influences that are usually undetectable. The second explanation argues that these influences were the product of special features of the Mexican political context at the time.

Methodologically, the data were detailed and high quality. They permitted much more detailed analysis than would normally have been the case in survey research. This detail was particularly crucial to documenting the impact of Televisa coverage on attitudes toward the PRI. Overall media exposure, for instance, was not a statistically significant predictor of attitude change; overall exposure to television news was only marginally significant. Media effects only became evident once exposure was disaggregated and particular news outlets were considered separately. It is also worth noting that these findings could only have been uncovered through panel data. They would have been completely undetectable in post-electoral surveys, which would have shown that

different media audiences voted for the PRI in almost exactly the same proportions. Even a series of cross-sectional polls over the course of the campaign would only have revealed that the statistical significance of Televisa viewership as a predictor of PRI support gradually disappeared—a finding whose import could easily have been overlooked.

An alternative explanation focuses on aspects of the Mexican political context that made audiences especially susceptible to media messages. In other words, media effects may be equally large elsewhere, but only under similar conditions. According to this line of reasoning, four factors presumably explain the magnitude of the results.

First, Mexico is a country with high levels of media dependence. Most Mexicans rely primarily on television for information about politics, and for years they have had little choice about which news programs to watch. Widespread dependence on particular media outlets presumably gives those outlets a powerful influence over public opinion.²² Second, and related, most Mexican voters have relatively low levels of political engagement, political knowledge, and political interest—even by the standards of modern democracies.²³ Although Mexicans are well informed by comparison to voters in developed countries once overall levels of education are taken into account, education levels are substantially lower in Mexico. Thus, voters in Mexico may be more susceptible to media influences than voters in developed democracies like the United States.

A third factor that may have contributed to pronounced media effects is lack of knowledge about the political opposition itself. Lacking prior experience with opposition rule at the national level—experience that not a single Mexican voter had in 1997—people may have held malleable opinions of the opposition parties.²⁴ Although opposition governments at the sub-national level had given voters in some areas of the country a better sense of what opposition administration would feel like, voters in Mexico City had never before experienced opposition rule.²⁵ Lack of direct personal experience with the opposition was presumably accentuated by the relative newness of the PRD, which had only been formed a few years before, and by the paucity of previous coverage of the opposition in the media.

Fourth, the magnitude of media effects in 1997 appears to have been influenced by source credibility and perceptions of media bias. Televisa's coverage of the opposition in 1997 was distinctive precisely because it had never provided such balanced information in the past. Thus, the

one factor that might have constrained media effects in Mexico—perceptions of pro-government bias—actually accentuated those effects within a segment of the population.

This explanation underscores the notion that source credibility is not an absolute concept: sources are rarely seen as simply credible, not credible, or somewhere in between. Rather sources are credible when the messages that they convey depart from their perceived slant.²⁶ It is this “surprise factor” that makes a message particularly distinctive and credible. Thus, Televisa was believable when it presented opposition viewpoints; it might not have been as credible had it continued to regurgitate PRI propaganda. In that case, it is possible that neither Televisa nor Televisión Azteca viewers would have changed their preferences much in the course of the campaign. Media influences would then have been undetectable or, at least, not clearly separable from the effects of self-selection.

It is not possible to say which of the four factors discussed above—media dependence, low levels of cognitive sophistication, lack of information about the opposition, or source effects—were most responsible for media effects in 1997. Most likely, they were all important in differing degrees for different segments of the population. Among those voters who paid little attention to politics, for instance, lack of cognitive sophistication and high levels of media dependence may have been the most important factors in altering their views. For more educated voters, source credibility and lack of specific information about the political opposition probably played a larger role.²⁷

If the media influences identified here are the product of particular features of the Mexican context, they suggest some general conclusions about media effects that extend far beyond the 1997 elections in Mexico. Specifically, media effects will be strongest when (1) levels of media exposure and dependence are high, (2) levels of cognitive sophistication are low, (3) audiences lack other information about specific political issues or choices, and (4) media sources are viewed as credible in the particular message they deliver. Under these conditions, audiences will rely heavily on the mass media for information, and their views will be shaped accordingly. Because these conditions obtain more in new democracies of the developing world than in the established democracies of the developed West, media influence may be especially pronounced there—an issue discussed further in the final section of the book.

CONCLUSION

Changing media coverage in Mexico during the 1980s and 1990s had a number of salient political consequences. Increasing attention to civil society in the independent press reinforced popular mobilization; growing assertiveness in the coverage of previously closed topics undermined regime legitimacy; and more balanced coverage of campaigns eroded electoral support for the PRI. This last effect was particularly pronounced in 1997, when Televisa viewers defected from the PRI in record numbers. Other factors held constant, exposure to television news appears to have exercised a powerful effect on voters' attitudes in a crucial election.

Media opening thus had significant consequences for Mexico's overall political transition. Although changes in press coverage were hardly the only factor that shaped regime change, they nevertheless played an important role. The final section summarizes these changes, their causes, their political consequences, and their broader implications for the study of democratization.

PART 4

Media Opening and Democratization

Conclusions

The press knows that it cannot really oppose the government, which has a thousand ways of controlling or even destroying it. It also knows that many of these modes of pressure can have a legal or even elegant appearance. Consider, for example, a restriction on newsprint based on the scarcity of foreign currency; or a huge increase in tariffs on the importation of paper or machinery; or instigating a strike that is then legitimized by the labor courts with the vote of the governmental representative deciding the case, etc.

—Daniel Cosío-Villegas, 1966
Ensayos y notas, cited in Enrique Krauze,
Mexico, Biography of Power, p. 580

The main problem we journalists had in the 1960s and 70s was censorship. The point is that because of the opening of the Mexican economic system, it was impossible for the government to maintain the previous censorship structure. . . . It's clear that NAFTA is a defeat for the AFL-CIO. . . . but for a journalist who wants freedom of the press, it's a totally different story.

—Sergio Sarmiento, news director for
Televisión Azteca, cited in Ralph Izard,
Freedom Forum Online, May 16, 2000

For decades, Mexico's media were thoroughly intertwined with the country's one-party system. A web of subsidies, concessions, bribes, and perquisites created a captive media establishment that faithfully reflected ruling party priorities. Coverage was marked by official dominance of public discourse, spaces of silence on topics that were potentially damaging to the regime, and systematic favoritism for the ruling party during

electoral campaigns. The effect of this coverage was to legitimize Mexico's *ancien régime* and marginalize opposition groups.

All this began to change with the growth of independent publications in the 1980s and 1990s. Reporters and publishers with different journalistic goals and approaches challenged the traditional style of journalism and, with it, Mexico's broader political system. A more demanding public embraced this new journalism and shunned traditional publications. Mexico's emerging Fourth Estate had to overcome a host of obstacles erected by the regime, including sporadic repression directed at independent journalists and the enterprises that employed them. But journalists' desire to practice a new style of reporting, and the financial success this reporting brought, sustained independent publications. By the mid-1990s, independent journalism was well established in Mexico's print media.

Meanwhile, Mexico's electronic media had also begun to evolve. Starting with the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, a series of dramatic events made Mexican audiences particularly receptive to news styles of coverage. Assertive talk-radio shows captured a large audience, bringing them higher ratings and advertising revenues. Competitive pressures encouraged other broadcasters to introduce changes as well, and independent programming came to dominate Mexican radio news. Ultimately, political reforms in 1996–97 ensured independent-minded media a more permissive environment.

By the mid-1990s, even Mexican television—long a bastion of support for the one-party regime—was showing signs of openness. Pressure from opposition parties and civic groups encouraged the country's principal private network, Televisa, to experiment with more critical coverage. These public pressures became financial imperatives after the 1992–93 privatization of government-run channels, Televisa's loss of market share to its newly created rival (Televisión Azteca), and the economic crisis of 1995. Finally, in 1997, leadership changes within Televisa cemented the transformation of Mexican television from a private "Ministry of Truth" to a commercially oriented medium. Broadcast television remained a duopoly in which both major players had ties to the ruling party, and coverage was thus less open than it would have been under a more competitive system. Nevertheless, the degree of change in Mexican broadcasting was dramatic.

THE FUTURE OF MEXICO'S MEDIA

Trends over the two last decades offer grounds for optimism about the future evolution of Mexico's press. Continued market competition will further undermine official control. Opposition victories at the state and federal level will undoubtedly advance media opening by reforming the country's archaic media laws and restructuring the system for allocating broadcasting concessions (among other things). Even recapture of all branches of government by the PRI would make it hard to put the genie back in the bottle. Most of these media are economically solvent, even prosperous, and they evince little fear of the state. To quote José Gutiérrez-Vivó of Radio Red, "we have faced all manner of government pressures—audits, closings, threats, attacks, assaults, lawyers, public beratings, you name it—and we are still here."¹ Given the resilience of Mexico's independent media in the face of familiar regime tactics, it is virtually impossible to conceive of their being silenced.

As Javier Moreno-Valle, owner of Mexico City's Channel 40, put it in 1996:

The old rules don't operate. We are overcoming a political system and suddenly there are those who want it to work according to the old rules, but these no longer count. . . . We no longer remember control of the printed press through newsprint quotas from PIPSA; it's something that is no longer discussed. I believe that within a short time we will no longer remember discussing whether censorship applies or not, or pressures or similar things. We are in a process of modernization, and I don't believe that anyone can stop us—not from inside or from outside. There is a great deal of freedom in the print media, in the radio. And now we are starting to see it in television. . . . We are not worrying about what the government is going to think of what we are doing.²

By far the most likely scenario, therefore, is that Mexico's media will evolve toward further independence.

A more nettlesome question is how far it will go in that direction. Unfortunately for advocates of a free press, sizable barriers remain to a fully open media in Mexico. One problem is the persistence of statism in chunks of the Mexican economy. For instance, the maintenance of price controls on certain mass-consumption products, though potentially justified for reasons of social equity, had the side effect of constraining advertising spending by companies that would otherwise be crucial sources of revenue for the mass media. Given price controls, producers of staple products must cut their promotional costs to main-

tain reasonable margins.³ An artificially restricted supply of advertising revenues accentuates the influence of existing large advertisers, be they state-owned firms (such as Pemex, the country's oil-and-gas monopoly) or latter-day oligarchs.

These latter-day oligarchs represent another salient obstacle to media diversity. In Mexico, large swaths of the economy remain dominated by private cartels linked directly or indirectly to the state and the PRI. Mexican economist Rogelio Ramírez de la O aptly characterized this model as "concessionary capitalism," in which profits are privatized to owners of large corporations while losses are socialized through government subsidies and bailouts.⁴ Such a concentration of financial and industrial enterprises in the hands of like-thinking owners encourages indirect control over the media through control of advertising. The fact that many of Mexico's latter-day oligarchs are prominent beneficiaries of the Salinas administration's privatization program only exacerbates the potential threat they pose to media independence and pluralism.

Even more problematic for media openness in Mexico is the fact that some of these same businessmen are also media owners. The problem is especially pronounced in broadcast television, where competition is effectively restricted to two major networks. Such ownership patterns are especially problematic for media openness because the firms in question are not modern corporations but family-owned enterprises, whose editorial decisions may be particularly vulnerable to their owners' personal predilections. Although commercial competition and professional norms may restrain capricious intervention by owners in editorial decisions, it cannot remove the danger that media owners will manipulate coverage to serve personal ends.

Related to ownership patterns is Mexico's system for allocating and withdrawing broadcast concessions. This system is directly controlled by the executive branch, rather than by an independent regulatory agency, and remains vulnerable to political manipulation. Changes in the current system to clarify the grounds for withdrawal of a concession, and to separate the withdrawal of concessions from their issuance, would make it more difficult for authorities to influence private broadcasters. So would reforms that facilitated market entry by new firms, thus increasing competition.

Finally, vigorous enforcement of existing anti-monopoly regulations would help guarantee market competition in heavily concentrated industries. Enforcement would not only prevent firms from dominating markets at any one point in time; it would also prevent them

from monopolizing or cartelizing emerging communication technologies (pay television, Internet-based communication, etc.). Such a balanced interpretation of anti-monopoly laws will ultimately depend on the creation of competent, politically neutral state bureaucracies and courts.

Some of these obstacles to media opening will fade over time. New firms will emerge; the conversion of family-owned businesses into modern, publicly held corporations will limit politically motivated manipulation of advertising and news coverage; continued economic reform will erode statist barriers; and regulatory capacity may improve. But for the near future, these obstacles to media independence and pluralism will linger. As one journalist put it in 1997, Mexico's media would soon reach seven or eight on a ten-point scale of openness, but it would probably not get to ten.⁵

This caveat aside, the transformation of Mexico's media is impressive, and it seems fitting to conclude by emphasizing the positive. The difference between a two or three (as most journalists and politicians described the media before 1988) and a six or seven (as most described it in 1996) is the difference between Orwellian reporting and serious coverage with flashes of investigative brilliance; between a captive press that parrots official pronouncements and a reasonably vigorous Fourth Estate; between pusillanimous broadcasters who view their concessions as sinecures and private businessmen who fail to present all the facts; between a government that systematically abuses independent journalists and one that does not return their phone calls; in short, between a captive media and a much more open one. Taken together, the changes in Mexico's media over the past two decades represent a remarkable transition. Although this transition remains incomplete, its size and scope are striking. And so are its consequences for Mexican political life.

THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIA OPENING IN MEXICO

At first glance, the evolution of Mexico's media might suggest that political liberalization was primarily responsible for the emergence of a viable Fourth Estate. After all, Mexico democratized around the same time that independent media emerged and flourished. Independent provincial publications in different states found it easier to survive when representatives of opposition parties inhabited the governor's mansion, and mass mobilization during the 1980s and 1990s made it difficult for federal authorities to systematically repress independent media. Political

reforms, especially the 1996 reforms that made the Federal Electoral Institute fully autonomous in 1996, proved important in shaping television coverage of the 1997 and 2000 election campaigns. Although the IFE had no legal teeth regarding the media, it did have a loud bark—one that added to the howls of protest from Mexican civil society over the previous decade. All told, Mexico's halting, protracted process of political transition encouraged media independence.

Political liberalization, however, was hardly the main cause of media opening. The transformation of Mexico's media occurred despite harassment and resistance from the old regime at all levels of government and in all spheres of political life. It largely preceded the political reforms of the mid-1990s and subsequent opposition victories at the national level, not to mention reform of the country's antiquated media laws. In large measure, therefore, media opening was the product of a number of other changes in Mexican society that occurred prior to or independently of political liberalization.

Even if political liberalization is interpreted more broadly than official tolerance of press freedom—to include the mobilization of civil society, the growth of opposition parties, the erosion of regime legitimacy, and the discrediting of an authoritarian political culture—its role in the emergence of a free press should not be overstated. To begin with, not all of these developments correlated well with changes in media coverage. For example, the print media remained traditional in some areas where opposition parties did well (e.g., Baja California and Chihuahua), and independent publications sometimes substantially emerged before opposition parties won at the polls (as in Yucatán, Nuevo León, and the Federal District). More importantly, though, this interpretation misunderstands the relationship between media opening and political reform in Mexico. Much of what might be called political liberalization in the broader sense was actually the *product* of changes in Mexico's mass media. The rebirth of civil society, the erosion of regime legitimacy, and opposition victory at the polls were all deeply influenced by changes in media coverage during the 1980s and 1990s.

More important than political liberalization was the role of market competition. Where competition was most pronounced, as in the print media and radio, changes in the media advanced rapidly. Where competition was more constrained, as in broadcast television, opening was halting and protracted. And across all types of media, market competition explained much of the variation in coverage across regions and time.

In Mexico, neoliberal reform during the late 1980s and early 1990s played an undeniable role in promoting market competition. Economic liberalization reduced government subsidies for pro-regime publications, encouraged foreign investment in the mass media, broadened the pool of advertising revenues, allowed independent publications to import paper that was previously provided by the government, and created a new commercial competitor in television through the privatization of state-run broadcasting channels. The market-oriented reforms of the Salinas era thus became important indirect contributors to media opening.

Another decisive factor in the transformation of Mexico's media was the emergence of new journalistic norms and visions that clashed with reporters' traditional roles. This slow process of experimentation, learning, and identity formation within the Mexican press was rarely the result of political liberalization; on the contrary, it was typically a product of the regime's refusal to liberalize. But changing journalistic norms were a crucial condition for the emergence of a Fourth Estate, especially in the print media. In fact, no other factor or combination of factors can explain why independent publications emerged where they did and when they did in Mexico.⁶

The importance of norms is also illustrated by the negative case of Mexican broadcasting. Journalistic goals and visions did help create Mexico City's Channel 40 and, to a lesser extent, independent radio programs. But in general, lack of daring and imagination on the part of broadcasters stifled experimentation. In part as a result of owners' attitudes, opening in Mexican broadcasting proved much slower than in the print media. Had broadcasters like Emilio Azcárraga been braver, or had editors and publishers like Julio Scherer and Alejandro Junco been less brave, the evolution of Mexico's media would have been much different.

From where did these new norms arise? In the broadest sense, journalistic norms developed in reaction to the failings and vices of traditional Mexican journalism. Exposure to foreign models of reporting and to the example set by pioneering independent journalists highlighted these vices and failings. So too did increasing disenchantment with the regime in the wake of the Tlatelolco massacre of 1968, the national bankruptcy of 1982, the economic crisis of the 1980s, the Mexico City earthquake of 1985, the contested presidential elections of 1988, the Salinas reforms of 1990–92, and the tumultuous events of 1994. By the mid-1990s, Mexican journalists had radically different views of their role in society and their relationship to the regime.

TABLE 4: MEDIA OPENING AND ITS
POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

Coverage under old system	Coverage by Mexico's emerging Fourth Estate	Political consequences of changes in coverage
1. Official agenda control	1. Greater attention to non-official actors	1. Promotion of civil society
2. Selective silence	2. Investigation of closed topics	2. Scandals and regime delegitimation
3. Electoral bias	3. More balanced campaign coverage	3. Increased support for opposition parties

Rather than political reform, then, the Mexican case highlights the importance of commercial competition and journalistic norms in changing media coverage. Although some modicum of official tolerance was an important background condition for media opening, political liberalization was hardly the only factor responsible changes in the press. Instead, political liberalization and media opening reinforced each other.

The transformation of Mexico's media had powerful and far-reaching impacts on Mexican political life. Increasing coverage of Mexican civil society legitimized independent political activity and promoted collaboration between opposition groups. More aggressive investigation of official misconduct discredited Mexico's authoritarian institutions and created a new context for elite decision making. Finally, greater balance in electoral coverage—especially on television—transformed the nature of partisan competition in Mexico. These changes in the media, and their political consequences, are summarized in Table 4.

Media opening was not, of course, the only factor responsible for social mobilization, regime delegitimation, or opposition electoral victory. It was, however, an important contributor to all these developments. By the presidential elections of 2000, Mexico's Fourth Estate had emerged as a key player in the country's transition to democracy.

GENERALIZING FROM THE MEXICAN CASE

It may be that Mexico's experience with media opening and political transition is unique (or at least limited to certain very restrictive conditions). It is also possible, though, that conclusions about the causes and consequences of media opening drawn from Mexico can "travel" to other countries. If so, what are the main lessons from the Mexican case for scholars of other countries?

The transformation of Mexico's media suggests a series of broader claims about the causes of independence and diversity in the press. First, political liberalization is not the sole or even the most important ingredient in media opening. Second, market-oriented reform tends to encourage competition between media outlets and thus stimulates changes in coverage. Third, the emergence of a new cohort of journalists with different norms and visions can play a potent role in transforming the media (especially the print media). Fourth, the impact of technological innovation and foreign penetration, though undeniable, appears to be rather modest.

The transformation of Mexico's press also suggests several ways that media opening may influence political transition. First, by granting more coverage to unofficial actors, independent media contribute to the development of civil society. Second, by puncturing official myths and subjecting rulers to greater public scrutiny, independent media delegitimize authoritarian institutions and promote more accountable behavior by elites. Third, by leveling the electoral playing field, changing media coverage boosts support for the political opposition.

Finally, the Mexican case suggests two hypotheses about the pace and pattern of media opening. First, those media which are most exposed to market competition will become free and pluralistic most rapidly. Because competition is normally more limited in broadcasting than in newspapers and magazines, television is likely to lag behind the print media. Second, and especially important for students of democratization, the Mexican experience calls attention to the mutually reinforcing relationship between changes in the mass media and changes in other elements of a political system. Scholars of regime change cannot assume that the media will act as a "caboose of the state." Given market competition and the emergence of new journalistic norms, they can also be a locomotive of change.

One obstacle to drawing conclusions from a single country, of course, is that the country in question may be something of an exception. Indeed, the Mexican case has a number of special features that might limit analysts' ability to generalize from it. These features need to be addressed explicitly before the findings from that case can be blithely extended to other countries. First, Mexico's *ancien régime* was unique and had little in common with other autocratic regimes that were swept away by the most recent wave of global democratization. Mexico under the PRI was neither fish nor fowl: a one-party system that was not Communist; a Latin country where the military played no significant political

role; an autocratic regime that had held regular elections for much longer than most democracies; and a corrupt, rent-seeking state whose subjects were much richer and better educated than their counterparts in sub-Saharan Africa or Southeast Asia. The causes and consequences of media opening may well have been different in such a system. Second, and related, Mexico's system of media control was also uncommon: rarely have autocratic regimes achieved such extensive control over the media through relatively subtle means. If the instruments used to control Mexico's media were different, then the factors that contributed to media opening in Mexico may have been different as well. For instance, the Mexican government's reliance on corruption and subsidies may have made the development of journalistic professionalism and market competition a more important ingredient in media opening there than they would be in other contexts. Third, Mexican broadcasting was largely privately owned. Although private ownership of broadcasting ownership is the norm in Latin America, it has been less common under authoritarian regimes in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.⁷ If media are entirely state owned and new entrants are not permitted, either political liberalization or privatization may be required before much can be expected in the way of media opening. Fourth, the relationship between media opening and democratic consolidation may be different in other contexts. Media opening may hasten the decomposition of the old system, but it may not ensure what type of regime is established in its wake.⁸ In the Mexican case, increasing independence and pluralism in the press clearly promoted democratization. Although undemocratic groups attempted to capitalize on the weakening of the ancien regime, the principal beneficiaries of its decomposition were Mexico's civic organizations and opposition parties. The voices that emerged from increasing pluralism and independence were thus civic, reformist voices; they were not the voices of religious fundamentalism, ethnic hatred, or national chauvinism. In other contexts, the civil society encouraged by media opening might not be quite so civil.⁹ If so, political transition could end in dictatorship or war, rather than in democratization.¹⁰

Considerations like these require a more precise formulation of when conclusions about media opening and its consequences in Mexico can "travel" to countries with different authoritarian legacies, distinct styles of media control, dissimilar patterns of ownership, and undemocratic opposition groups. Are market competition and journalistic norms the main causes of media opening elsewhere? Is media opening likely to lead to civic mobilization, political scandal, and opposition electoral victory?

What is the likely relationship between media opening and democratization?

THE EMERGENCE OF AN INDEPENDENT PRESS

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings from the Mexican case concerns the relatively limited influence of political liberalization in explaining changes in the press. Although some measure of political openness was clearly a facilitating condition, other variables played a crucial role in encouraging media independence. Without these other factors (such as market competition), progress toward a more independent and diverse media would have been much slower, if it had taken place at all.

The Mexican case also suggests that much of the progress toward a Fourth Estate was made despite official attempts to restrict press freedom. Independent publications were typically met with official resistance and repression, establishing themselves only after repeated struggles against the government. A Fourth Estate emerged not because ruling elites encouraged its emergence, but rather because official responses proved inadequate to prevent it. Bribing journalists and publishers, closing nettlesome publications, and harassing independent reporters did not forestall changes in coverage. Journalists who were purged from pro-regime media or whose publications were shut down often started new outlets, and these outlets turned out to be as good or better than their predecessors. To really reassert control over the media in the face of increasing market competition and changing journalistic norms, the Mexican government would have had to kill journalists *en masse*, or at least exile or imprison large numbers of them for long periods of time.

Neither of these responses, of course, was really within the Mexican regime's repertoire. Officials were not above the systematic harassment of independent-minded journalists, or even the occasional murder. But a regime that encompassed a broad range of competing factions and based its legitimacy in part on republican principles was probably incapable of carrying out a sustained campaign of state-sponsored terror against the press. As a result, it was impossible for Mexico's political elite to rid themselves permanently of a growing cohort of independent-minded journalists.

These constraining features of the Mexican political system, of course, do not apply to certain authoritarian regimes. Military dictators from South America to South Korea, for instance, murdered, exiled, or imprisoned large numbers of their citizens, and many Communist sys-

tems penetrated virtually every nook and cranny of social life, leaving absolutely no space for independent political thought or activity. Perhaps the most notorious example was Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania, where control was so thorough that all typewriters had to be registered with the police.¹¹ It is hard to imagine how any degree of reportorial zeal could make much of a difference in these systems. Even market competition might not have had a decisive effect on media coverage in contexts of virtually complete political control. In totalitarian regimes, therefore, some measure of political liberalization remains a necessary background condition for media opening.

The more general argument to extract from the Mexican case, then, is not that political liberalization is irrelevant to media opening. Even in Mexico, some amount of political space was needed for a free press to emerge. Mexico's experience suggests, however, that the amount of political space required is not especially large. Given market competition and journalistic norms that favor independence, media opening can proceed in the face of official intolerance.

Market Competition and Neoliberal Reform

The Mexican case calls special attention to the role of market competition in prying open an otherwise captive and complacent press. Competition encouraged broadcasters and publishers to take into account the demands of their audiences under pain of losing market share. Competition was less pronounced in television than in radio, and in radio than in newspapers. But within each medium, increasing competition had an important influence on content.

Scholarly literature on the role of market competition in stimulating press freedom is relatively limited, but existing cases studies strongly support conclusions culled from the Mexican case. One example that neatly illustrates the importance of market competition is the transformation of television in Brazil. During the period of military rule, Brazil's dominant Globo network played an important role in supporting the military's ideological objectives by advancing an image of Brazil as an emerging economic powerhouse and thereby reinforcing efficacy-based claims of governmental legitimacy. In return, the network benefited from repeated allocations of broadcasting spectra and from the general growth of a heavily subsidized television market. It emerged in the 1980s as one of the world's largest media conglomerates. Predictably, Globo studiously ignored anti-government rallies and protests at

the beginning of the opposition's campaign for direct elections in 1983–84. By April 1984, however, public pressure and media competition from smaller rivals forced Globo to switch sides and broadcast images of mass opposition demonstrations across the country. As Joseph Straubhaar put it: "It must be remembered that although TV Globo contributes greatly to creating consensus by exercising ideological leadership in a variety of widely watched programming, the network is above all a commercial enterprise that could not, or would not, risk alienating much of its audience for a political cause that appeared to be failing."¹² As in Mexico, increasing market competition pushed a previously monopolized industry toward greater balance in coverage.

Market competition, or course, requires the existence of a market. It thus follows that in an entirely state-run economy, media opening will require the introduction of market-oriented reforms. These market-oriented reforms both weaken the levers of official control and permit commercial competition, thus contributing to media opening.

The Mexican case suggests five specific ways that market-oriented reform can help unravel authoritarian control over the media in heavily statist systems. First, economic liberalization limits official control over imported technology and materials, either directly (through lowering trade barriers and reducing import restrictions) or indirectly (through liberalization of exchange rate controls). In Mexico, for instance, accession to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) required authorities to end PIPSA's monopoly on importation of newsprint. The knowledge that he could always turn to imported newsprint should local supplies be denied was an important factor in encouraging *El Norte* publisher Alejandro Junco to launch *Reforma* newspaper. Examples of this type of impact have also appeared in other countries. In the Southern Cone of Latin America, for instance, military governments pursuing neoliberal trade policies permitted the free importation of items like microcomputers, faxes, VCRs, and satellite receivers. All of these potentially subversive devices were subsequently put to good use by non-governmental organizations in their attempts to mobilize opposition against military rule.¹³ More recently, new communication technologies like pay television, telecommunications, and the Internet have helped increase access to alternative sources of information in other countries.

Second, by lowering barriers to trade and investment, economic reform encourages direct foreign penetration of national media markets.

In Mexico, an alliance with NBC and other U.S. firms helped turn Televisión Azteca into a viable commercial rival of Televisa. Similarly, in Portugal during the 1970s, increasing foreign investment in media companies played a crucial role in promoting independence and diversity in the press. In the “stagnant conditions of [Antonio] Salazar’s New State,” newspapers were owned by “small, traditional, conservative, single enterprises, unconnected with outside interests. This structure of ownership did not encourage risk taking in either a commercial or a political sense.”¹⁴ A major change in the press’ posture toward the government came with the purchase of Portuguese newspapers by commercial conglomerates, many of which were tied to European businesses. As observers of this evolution pointed out, “a cushion of industrial ownership and wealth provided the necessary security for a degree of political and commercial innovation.”¹⁵ New ownership subsequently encouraged greater criticism of the ossified and decrepit Salazar regime in the period leading up to its collapse.¹⁶

Third, privatization of state-owned companies diminishes government control over advertising, allowing media to achieve some measure of financial autonomy from the state. This was especially obvious in the case of Mexican newspapers, but it also proved crucial to the evolution of Mexican radio. In both print and radio, independent media stole market share from their more traditional competitors, leading advertisers to seek them out as promotional vehicles. Analysts have also reached similar conclusions regarding the impact of economic liberalization on media opening in China. Over the last decade, commercialization of the Chinese press—and the firms on which the press relies for advertising revenue—has rendered newspapers less subject to ideological and bureaucratic control. Though not technically private, approximately one-third of China’s newspapers had achieved financial autonomy by 1992.¹⁷ These changes within the media mean the loss of certain traditional levers of official control. As one analyst of the Chinese media concluded:

as government subsidies are gradually reduced to unimportance [because of increased private advertising revenues and lower state expenditures], repressive mechanisms tend to become more clumsy and harder to implement. That the government has to resort to arrests, job suspensions, etc. to gain compliance carries with it the threat of popular backlash. For instance, as circulation-driven newspapers promote popular columnists, like the Hong Kong and American newspapers, it will become difficult for the central authorities to punish those columnists by firing, suspending, or arresting them, since this could trigger a reader boycott.¹⁸

Or, as one prominent study put it, commercial competition results in “the increasing tendency of mass media to create products that appeal to the assumed tastes of target audiences in society, as opposed to the tastes of the central party-state’s propaganda cadres.”¹⁹ This competition has already begun to have a potent effect on media coverage of a range of issues. Although censorship remains strict, financially autonomous media are now beginning to cover issues like crime, corruption, and local governance.

Fourth, privatization may also affect the media directly through the sale of broadcasting spectra, periodicals, wire services, publishing houses, and production companies. In Mexico, the most important privatization involved the sale of government-owned television channels in 1992–93. But less dramatic examples, such as the privatization of PIPSA in the late 1990s—and the knowledge on the part of its board for several years before that it would ultimately be privatized—also contributed to media opening. In combination with foreign investment, privatization has played an important role in guaranteeing media pluralism in other countries. In Hungary, for instance, economic liberalization permitted European and U.S. media conglomerates to buy into the local media, ensuring that politicized, state-run television stations would never enjoy a monopoly on domestically produced news programming.²⁰

Finally, economic liberalization tends to erode the strength and scope of state-corporatist organizations. Whatever its social consequences, this erosion reduces the influence of pro-government distribution syndicates, journalists’ associations, and publishers’ and broadcasters’ organizations over potentially independent media. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, strikes by unions affiliated with the ruling party could destabilize an independent-minded publication. So could action by the street vendors’ guild (*Unión de Voceadores*), which controlled newspaper distribution in Mexico City and sometimes followed official instructions rather than the demands of the marketplace in distributing independent publications.²¹ Because the capture and manipulation of such guilds was an important element of control in other contexts—Peronist Argentina, Sandinista Nicaragua, and Communist Eastern Europe—dismantling or weakening state-corporatist organizations is likely to contribute to press freedom.

In Mexico, the overall impact of different economic reforms was greater than the sum of their individual contributions, because competitive pressures in different parts of the economy reinforced each other. For instance, as foreign firms familiar with advertising in other contexts

moved into the Mexican market, they demanded better information about circulations, ratings, and audience shares. Such information invariably favored independent media, whose market shares were rising. At the same time, local advertisers under competitive pressure from foreign rivals also became more careful in their choice of promotional vehicles, moving their advertising dollars from one outlet to another with greater rapidity and ruthlessness. This, in turn, put even greater pressure on broadcasters to increase their ratings. Because independent and reliable news was an undeniable contributor to higher ratings, competition for audiences led directly to experimentation with more assertive, balanced, and critical coverage.

Increased competition also had an effect on the behavior of owners themselves. Because the newly competitive environment favored owners who understood how to make money according to the new rules of the media game, cronies who had received broadcasting concessions as political favors were motivated to sell their stations to profit-minded entrepreneurs—an increasingly common occurrence in Mexican radio during the second half of the 1990s. In other words, economic liberalization disrupted a somewhat sleepy business culture by raising the costs of ignoring market-oriented cues in a variety of ways. If Mexico's experience is any indication, then, rapid and sweeping economic liberalization may trigger cascade effects beyond what would be expected from sequenced or piecemeal reforms.

Of course, economic liberalization may have certain consequences for the mass media that work against media opening. One cautionary note suggested by the Mexican case is that unrestrained economic reform often leads to the establishment of private monopolies or oligopolies, including in the media. Mexican television, for instance, remains dominated by a duopoly that continues to constrain diversity and independence. The lesson of the Mexican case, therefore, is that neoliberal reform promotes media opening because it encourages competition among media outlets, not simply because it places certain media in private hands. Should economic deregulation lead to the concentration of mass media in the hands of a few like-minded owners, it is unlikely to promote much pluralism or independence in the media.

With this caveat, the Mexican case offers a powerful lesson about the impact of economic liberalization. In Mexico, neoliberal reforms undermined official control in a number of ways, from reducing the influence of state-corporatist guilds to creating new commercial media out-

lets. The overwhelming result of these changes was to promote media opening. This pattern seems generalizable to a range of countries.

Journalistic Norms

The Mexican case suggests that journalistic norms play a crucial role in the rise of a free press. This was especially clear in the case of the print media, where clusters of journalists driven by a new vision of their place in society founded and sustained a series of independent periodicals. Scattered evidence from other countries also suggests that the attitudes and decisions of journalists themselves are crucial to the subsequent transformation of the media.

The alienation of most journalists in Eastern Europe, and their rapid conversion to democratization once Communist controls were removed, bears witness to the power of change from within the profession.²² As Leonard Sussman wrote with respect to Czechoslovakia: "At a crucial moment, in Czechoslovakia as elsewhere in Eastern Europe in 1989, journalists on the government's payroll, i.e., civil servants, simply changed sides and became instruments of the popular clamor for democracy. Without their truthful reporting of the magnitude of the disillusionment and demand for reform, it would have been much more difficult to mobilize the entire population and replace the oppressive regime."²³ And after the demise of Communism, this newfound professionalism encouraged subsequent efforts to protect media autonomy. In Poland, for instance, print journalists set up a free press fund to support the founding of new newspapers and thus ensure media pluralism.²⁴ Most recently (in January 2001) the entire management team at Czech television barricaded themselves inside the station's headquarters to protest government attempts to assert control over coverage.

Examples are not limited to Eastern Europe. In Brazil, television journalists at Globo apparently threatened to strike if the network's management continued to oppose direct elections during the 1983–84 opposition campaign.²⁵ In Colombia, the entire staff of the state-run television authority resigned in protest over Liberal Party attempts to politicize news coverage in 1976.²⁶ In South Korea, journalists formed strong unions in an attempt to give them more clout vis-à-vis managers and editors—an effort epitomized by the July 1988 strike at Pusan Ilbo, in which labor demands included broad-based reforms in editorial policy and management.²⁷ And in Cameroon, journalists' desire to

challenge what they viewed as a corrupt political system proved crucial in sustaining an opposition press.²⁸ In each case, journalistic professionalism helped promote or safeguard media pluralism and independence.

The process of media opening in a country that relied extensively on media corruption illustrates the importance of journalistic norms in changing media coverage. In South Korea, an overwhelming percentage of reporters traditionally accepted payments—known as *chonji*—from the individuals, government agencies, and companies they covered.²⁹ These gratuities helped buy media silence on nettlesome issues and engender broadly positive coverage of official activities. For instance, the Education Ministry paid reporters not to report on low university examination results, and the Health Ministry paid them not to report outbreaks of disease in the summer months.³⁰ Coupled with outright repression and other mechanisms of official control, corruption of journalists co-opted much of the media. Consequently, once more severe government controls over the media—imprisonment, torture, etc.—were relaxed, journalists did not respond rapidly with criticism of the old regime. Bias and co-optation were lingering consequences of the old mechanisms of control.³¹

As in Mexico, the development of new journalistic norms and visions proved crucial to media opening. New media outlets inspired by these visions helped prevent the corruption and self-censorship that infected traditional media. In Korea, one such outlet was the left-leaning independent daily *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, which from its inception had rejected *chonji* journalism. In contrast to its traditional rivals, *Hankyoreh* was staffed by a younger cohort of journalists who viewed their profession and their paper with a sense of mission. Approximately 90 of *Hankyoreh*'s original 144 reporters, for instance, had quit or been purged from other leading dailies.³² As in Mexico, the vision and experiences of these journalists were crucial ingredients in the founding of independent publications.

Another case that speaks to the role of journalistic norms is the experience of Argentina in the late 1980s and early 1990s—a country with an entirely different political system and style of media control than Mexico. Perhaps surprisingly, the most salient influences on mass openness were more or less the same. As Silvio Waisbord asked in his seminal analysis of scandals in Argentina:

Why, amid the deterioration of press freedom, have some elements of the media been actively involved in the welter of scandals? To answer this

question, the argument that changes in the media landscape are directly responsible for this phenomenon needs to be considered. As put forward by media executives and journalists, the argument can be summarized as follows: by decreeing the privatization of two major television stations and bypassing the much-debated Article 45 of the 1980 broadcasting law, which barred newspaper companies from owning broadcasting media, the Ménem administration let the genie of competition out of the bottle. Former legal barriers hindering the . . . efforts by newspapers to expand into different media sectors were removed. The allocation of two Buenos Aires-based television stations, channels 11 and 13, to two media consortia validated and, in turn, stimulated competition among rising conglomerates.³³

Waisbord finds this stereotyped view overstated and stresses that it fails to provide a full account for which media remained independent in the face of government pressure. Even more important than market competition, Waisbord argues, was the emergence of *Página 12* newspaper, whose staff shared a professional self-image and ideology that undergirded their independent stance toward the government.³⁴ These different journalistic norms and visions led *Página 12* to cover events that would otherwise have gone unreported. Such pathbreaking reporting not only offered an example for other outlets, it also forced them to be more assertive under pain of losing market share. Journalistic norms thus worked together with market competition to keep segments of Argentina's media independent in the face of mounting official harassment.

As in Mexico, the norms that inspired independent journalists had a variety of sources, including disaffection with the political system and exposure to foreign models. But the development of journalistic norms also calls attention to a factor not adequately addressed in many studies of press freedom: human agency. Writing about the Third Wave of global democratization, Larry Diamond has noted that scholars often give too much weight to "structural" factors, underestimating the decisions and actions of individuals in civil society who converted theoretical opportunities into political realities. As he put it:

Democracy is not achieved simply by the hidden process of socioeconomic development bringing a country to a point where it has the necessary "prerequisites" for it [democracy]. It is not delivered by the grace of some sociological *deus ex machina*. And neither is it simply the result of the divisions, strategies, tactics, negotiations and settlements of contending elites. Political scientists who conceive of democratic transitions in this way miss an important element. That element is struggle, personal risk-taking, mobilization and sustained, imaginative organization on the part of a large number of citizens.³⁵

What is true of democratization in general is equally true of media opening. Mexico's Fourth Estate did not appear magically in the wake of political transition or economic liberalization. Rather, it depended on the imagination and risk taking of committed, perspicacious individuals in civil society. These individuals created something more than a series of new media outlets; they created a new journalistic culture outside of the old system of co-optation and control. Ultimately, they created Mexico's Fourth Estate.

*Globalization, Technological Innovation, and
Foreign Media Penetration*

Perhaps the most perplexing finding from Mexico concerns the relatively anemic influence of globalization. Technological innovation and foreign media penetration undeniably had some impact, as in the case of satellite transmissions and television broadcasts along the border. These media imposed limits on official control, making it impossible for the regime to maintain a monopoly over information. As Mexican journalist Raymundo Riva-Palacio put it: "With 500 channels of satellite television, real-time computerized communication, fiber optics that transmit information at speeds of less than one one-thousandth of a second, direct or indirect access to innumerable publications and databases around the world, the government cannot, as before, block the sun with a finger."³⁶ Indirect forms of international influence could also be found, such as the impact of increased scrutiny of Mexico in the U.S. press and Mexican journalists' exposure to international models. For the most part, however, the development of Mexico's Fourth Estate was a domestic process, responding more to its own rhythms and patterns than to practices or standards imported from abroad.

This finding from the Mexican case stands in contrast to the sometimes extravagant claims made about globalization and technological innovation in other contexts. Since the introduction of the printing press helped curtail the power of the pulpit in medieval Europe, social scientists have remarked on the liberating potential of new communications technologies. The modern array of fax machines, direct-dial telephony, wireless/cellular voice and data transmission, videocassette recorders, handheld video cameras, desktop publishing, direct broadcasting from satellite, and the Internet seems to herald an era of far lower barriers to the production and transmission of information.³⁷ As one observer put it: "The radiant arc of a communications satellite 22,300 miles above

the earth synchronized time and transformed the globe into one homogeneous space. With perfection of this technology, the conquest of time and space—the dream of nineteenth-century romantics—has now in a way been realized.”³⁸

Empirical examples of the political use of new information technologies are already legendary among students of political transition. In 1979, Iranian dissidents smuggled in audiocassettes of Khomeini's speeches, which were then played from mosques across the country.³⁹ A decade later, Czech dissidents were able to record Western television images of police clubbing student demonstrators in Prague and then to distribute copies to Civic Forum activists for viewing on VCRs across the country.⁴⁰ In 1988 in Panama and 1989 in China, opposition leaders communicated with each other and the outside world by fax;⁴¹ in the Soviet Union, faxes, electronic mail, and broadcasting on pirate television and radio were crucial in preventing the recentralization of the media and conveying information about centers of resistance to the August 1991 coup.⁴² Today, the prospect of global direct broadcast from satellite (DBS) threatens to make all these innovations pale by comparison. In China, five-foot dishes costing less than \$500 continue to sprout up across the country while corruption, local resistance, and divisions within the Communist Party leadership hamper any concerted attempt at a crackdown.⁴³ Given a contest between the strength of the state and the ever-shrinking size of the satellite dish, few would bet on the state.⁴⁴

The impact of satellite broadcasting and cable television in Taiwan suggests how technological change and international spillovers can combine to produce a more open media regime. From 1976 to 1993 in Taiwan, for instance, cable television served as an informal “fourth channel,” partially counterbalancing tight government control over the official three. By the time martial law was finally lifted in 1989, the island boasted some 400 illegal cable systems, and approximately 37% of all households had access to cable or satellite television.⁴⁵ A media regime that appeared to be firmly under the control of autocratic rulers was thus pried open by technological innovation and the penetration of foreign media.

Taiwan's experience is not unique. Most countries are vulnerable to cross-border transmission of radio and television broadcasts, contraband newspapers and cassettes, direct broadcasting from satellites, or some other form of international spillovers.⁴⁶ For some of them, as in the Taiwanese case, these information flows may compensate for the

effects of extremely tight control over domestic media. In the former East Germany, for instance, near saturation-level penetration of West German television—not to mention Voice of America, Radio Liberty, the BBC, etc.—gave inquiring East Germans a reasonably accurate picture of life on the other side of the Iron Curtain. International spillovers, then, may sometimes overwhelm government attempts at control through jamming and punishment of audiences that seek access to independent media.⁴⁷

The relatively limited influence of these factors in the Mexican case, however, suggests that such examples may be more the exception than the rule. If any country's media should have been transformed by globalization, it was Mexico's. Mexico was not only well integrated into the international economy as a whole, it was intimately connected to the most diverse and technologically advanced media system in the world. Most of this integration preceded the North American Free Trade Agreement, dating back to unilateral reductions of Mexican tariff rates during 1988–91 and to foreign investment in Mexican media businesses in previous decades. The relatively weak influence of technological innovation, foreign broadcasts, and international influences in Mexico thus serves as an important caveat to the sweeping prognostications of technophiles.

A crucial limiting factor in Mexico was the domination of new industries by old, quasi-monopolistic players with links to the old regime. Innovation and diffusion stimulated media opening only when new players (such as Multivisión and Channel 40) were able to exploit emerging technologies. One case in point is cable television, which was controlled by Televisa and whose coverage varied little from regular news.

The more general lesson may be that technological innovation is unlikely to lead to media opening if new technologies are captured by existing players and levels of concentration remain high. Interestingly, other analysts of media opening elsewhere seem to have reached similar conclusions. As Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimarães write with respect to Brazil: "There is no reason to believe that the introduction of new technologies, sophisticated or not, will necessarily contribute to the democratization of television. On the contrary, all indicators show a growing tendency toward increased concentration and corporate ownership of the media."⁴⁸ In other words, globalization may have little effect on media opening when it does not also promote market competition.

Economic Development

One likely source of change in the mass media concerns living standards: presumably, increases in market size should have positive consequences for media independence over the long run. In Mexico, economic development did not correlate well with media opening, either across time or across states. Mexican audiences did not become richer from 1976 to 1996, for instance, and it was during this period that a vibrant Fourth Estate emerged. Although larger cities were more likely to have independent newspapers than smaller ones, the influence of market size was much less important than the other factors discussed above.

In other contexts, however, economic growth may increase the size of the market, thus indirectly stimulating commercial competition and promoting media independence. As Vicky Randall has argued, larger, richer, more literate, more educated, and more urbanized populations mean larger markets for information and communication.⁴⁹ Consequently, modernization may ultimately influence pluralism and diversity in the press—sometimes in unexpected ways. Perhaps the most excellent empirical example comes from Elaine Potter's study of South African newspapers, in which white liberal periodicals were pushed to the left by the emergence of a literate black middle class.⁵⁰

By the same token, economic crises may retard media independence and pluralism. Although economic crisis was probably net beneficial for Mexico's free press, this result may have been the product of particular features of the Mexican context—such as the dependence of pro-government publications on official subsidies. Elsewhere, evidence suggests that economic decline can prove detrimental to independent media. In Bolivia, for instance, financial crisis strangled the miners' radio stations more effectively than the country's previous interregnums of military rule: while almost every mining district in the country had its own station in the mid-1970s, by 1988 only nine were still broadcasting.⁵¹ And in all countries, economic stagnation means a limited or shrinking pool of advertising revenues. In general, then, financial autonomy may make independent media harder to manipulate, and financial vulnerability may facilitate official control. Although these sorts of influences did not play a major role in media opening in Mexico, they may well do so in other countries.

Other Factors

In Mexico, certain unique and serendipitous factors contributed to the emergence of a free press. These included particular catalytic events like the 1985 Mexico City earthquake and the 1992 gas explosion in Guadalajara, which stimulated public interest in independent reporting and encouraged journalists to experiment with new styles of coverage. Other peculiar elements of the Mexican context may also have played a role. For instance, Carlos Salinas' calculations about television privatization might have been different in a system that permitted presidential reelection.

Just as Mexico had its own special conditions that favored or restrained media independence, so particular circumstances in other countries may also influence the rise of a free press. As the scholarly literature on media opening grows, analysts of other countries will inevitably identify idiosyncratic conditions that led to the emergence of independent media in the cases they study. In fact, the temptation may well be to tell *sui generis* stories about each country that do not travel to other contexts. From the perspective of comparative political science, however, these stories are likely to prove far less satisfying than explanations that rely on broader factors like market competition, journalistic norms, political liberalization, globalization, and economic development.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF MEDIA OPENING

Once independent media emerge, what role do they play in political transition? In Mexico, media opening meant greater coverage of non-governmental organizations, stricter scrutiny of public authorities, and more balanced electoral coverage. Again, lack of rigorous, scholarly research on the role of mass media in political transition makes the generalizability of these findings difficult to assess. A quick glance at other cases, however, suggests that promoting civil society, provoking scandal, and boosting support for opposition parties are typical consequences of media opening.

Civil Society

Independent newspapers played an important role in the rebirth of Mexican civil society during the 1980s and 1990s. From a theoretical perspective, there are compelling reasons to suspect similar results in other

contexts. To the extent that “civil society” means a nonpartisan public sphere outside of state control, independent media are likely to be important if not indispensable actors in its creation or rebirth.

Empirically, it is difficult to draw precise parallels between Mexico and other countries without systematic content analysis of press coverage. Growth in the *number* of papers in a country, however, may offer a fair proxy for increasing pluralism in the press. By this measure, there is an undeniable correlation between the transformation of the mass media and the rebirth of civil society in a range of countries. During Spain’s civic awakening from 1975 to 1977, for example, the number of papers rebounded from 115 to 143.⁵² In Romania, the number of publications soared from 495 at the time of Ceausescu’s downfall in December 1989 to 1,545 by the September 1992 elections.⁵³ In Hungary, almost 450 papers were added between 1986 and 1989.⁵⁴ In Taiwan, the total number of newspapers increased eightfold, from 31 at the end of martial law in 1987 to 249 by mid-1992.⁵⁵ In Korea, the number of dailies almost quadrupled from 28 in June 1987 to 100 six years later.⁵⁶ In Brazil from 1981 to 1986, 100 new papers were founded. In the Ivory Coast and Benin, 355 publications were launched during the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁵⁷ Even in China, where full-fledged democratization has so far been stymied, 500 papers were founded between 1991 and 1994, an overall increase of about one-third.⁵⁸

As in Mexico, the lines of causality are not clear. Popular mobilization may drive media opening rather than the other way around, or both may be the product of political reforms. Case studies of the media in particular countries bolster the impression that civic mobilization and media opening are interacting processes that jointly influence the pace and direction of political transition. In Taiwan, for instance, newspapers helped nurture emerging social movements, which in turn provided much of the readership base for independent publications.⁵⁹ Similarly, in Spain:

Greater media pluralism. . . contributed to democratization over the long term by delegitimizing the Franco regime, by providing a platform for the discussion of alternatives to *franquismo*, and by serving as the principal channel for the resocialization of “the attentive public.” A “reemergence” of civil society, featuring much greater ideological pluralism, also resulted. To some extent, this “reemergence” was facilitated by the preservation and intergenerational transmission of democratic attitudes which predated the Franco regime, but the articulation of these values in the press during the late 1960s and early 1970s appears to have significantly reinforced this attitudinal contagion and crystallization.⁶⁰

Not only did coverage in the independent media encourage and legitimize new forms of political activity, it also helped reframe political contestation in a way that favored democratization:

The media also placed a variety of important reforms on the agenda, and served as forums for political dialogue, which were necessary for the development and eventual institutionalization of political pluralism. In general, the media contributed to democracy by spreading the belief that a continuation of *franquismo* was untenable, and that democracy was the only viable alternative to that discredited political system. They presented a realistic and attractive model for the exit from authoritarianism based on pacts and transitions, on gradualism, and on the adaptability of the demands of political actors and social forces to greatly altered circumstances.⁶¹

As in Mexico, then, the rise of a free press helped to legitimize civic action and alter the terms of political debate.

Scandals

One crucial component of media opening in Mexico was increasing coverage of previously closed topics: drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, state-sponsored repression, and the like. Predictably, such assertiveness triggered a series of political scandals. Scandalous revelations in turn contributed to mass delegitimation of the regime and altered the context for elite decision making.

Again, there are strong theoretical grounds for expecting the same sort of results elsewhere. Because media reports on scandals often attract high audience ratings, there are powerful financial incentives to cover (and uncover) shocking instances of official misconduct. Although official reactions to increasing coverage of closed topics may be harsh, market discipline may be even harsher. In contexts where revenues and ratings are relevant considerations, then, media opening should lead to political scandals.

The available empirical evidence strongly supports these contentions. From South America to South Korea, media opening has helped trigger a series of scandals, typically related to corruption, often with potent political consequences. One dramatic example concerns the scandal that engulfed Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello in 1992. Throughout the period leading up to Collor's impeachment and ultimate resignation, Brazil's independent press led the charge. Allegations of influence peddling that initially triggered the scandal, for instance, were

first reported in the mass circulation magazine *Veja* in May 1992. Other publications—especially *Isto E* and *Folha de São Paulo*, which had already been investigating corruption in the Collor administration—soon followed suit. Brazil's *Bandeirantes* television network also covered the unfolding story, and after further revelations appeared in *Veja* on September 6, the country's largest media conglomerate (Globo) gave widespread coverage to pro-impeachment rallies around the country.⁶² An official impeachment hearing began, mass demonstrations continued, and Collor was forced to resign.

Recent research on press freedom in Benin also illustrates how increasing assertiveness in the media can trigger political scandals and delegitimize authoritarian rulers.⁶³ During 1988–90, newly formed independent newspapers like *La Gazette du Golfe* and *Tam Tam Express* began to investigate corruption and human rights abuses by the government of Major Mathieu Kérékou. These investigations “helped erode the legitimacy of the tottering regime, which effectively yielded its authority at the National Conference in 1990.”⁶⁴ Subsequent investigations by the press also exposed the nepotism of Kérékou's successor, Nicéphore Soglo, thus contributing to his electoral defeat in 1996 and signaling to political elites that abuse of power would have serious consequences.⁶⁵ Press independence and consequent scandals thus helped check official abuses of power and contribute to democratization.

As with corruption, media revelations about state-sponsored repression have had similar effects in other countries. In the southern cone of South America, for instance, investigations of human rights abuses under previous military regimes by the press and others have helped expose the terrible costs of authoritarian rule. Although the legal consequences of these investigations have often proven illusory, their political consequences have been profound. In addition, these same revelations served to remind potential coup-makers that they might one day be held accountable for their conduct. As in Mexico, then, scandals delegitimized authoritarian rule and altered the calculations of political elites.

Elections

In Mexico, television coverage played an important role in reshaping popular opinion toward the opposition and the ruling party over the last decade. In part, television was able to play such a powerful role because of the susceptibility of Mexican audiences to media messages—

itself a product of media dependence and related factors. To the extent that such factors are common to other new democracies, findings from the Mexican case are likely to apply there as well.

The combination of (1) low levels of education, (2) high levels of media exposure, (3) high levels of reliance on a single source of political information, (4) limited personal experience with political alternatives, (5) high levels of media bias, and (6) high levels of media credibility is rare in the developed West.⁶⁶ Audiences in the United States, for instance, typically rely on multiple sources for information about politics, including both interpersonal communication and a variety of media outlets. They are comparatively well educated and, despite the findings of “minimalists” over the last thirty-five years, possess a fair degree of information about their political environment.⁶⁷ Although levels of political knowledge often seem shockingly low, the great majority of Americans can recognize the two major parties, identify their main leanings, and report which one they favor with impressive consistency. Their ability to do so is also enhanced by the stability of their political environment, as well as by their personal experience with the way government runs under both parties.⁶⁸ Most voters have direct experience with both Republican and Democratic administrations at all levels of government, and the venerable age of these parties undoubtedly contributes to voters’ indirect knowledge of them.⁶⁹ Finally, despite the relative impartiality of most major news outlets, public skepticism of media messages remains fairly high. For instance, Americans tend to perceive a hostile media bias against their favored candidate or party, even when this bias is actually quite limited or nonexistent. Although certain audiences within the United States may fit a media-vulnerable profile, then, the electorate as a whole does not.

But what of new democracies in the developing world? In Brazil, approximately two-thirds of voters have only a primary school education or less, and one-third are functionally illiterate. Newspaper readership is predictably low. Most citizens, however, have access to television, and the great majority rely on television for news about their political world. Television coverage in Brazil, of course, has long been profoundly biased toward candidates of the Right. Under such circumstances, one would expect potentially powerful media effects to the benefit of conservative political forces.

The Russian case also fits this description fairly well. Although relatively high levels of education and growing skepticism of media coverage

confer a certain degree of immunity to media messages, other factors increase dependence on media coverage. Most parties are only a few years old, and even educated citizens have little information about them. Voters are thus potentially susceptible to cues from the mass media, especially from television (on which most people depend for political information).

In Russia, as in Brazil, the influence of television makes biased electoral coverage a serious cause for concern. In the 1990s, television coverage systematically favored “pro-reform” parties—a product of the fact that major media are either state run or owned by prominent beneficiaries of the privatization program. In Russia’s 1996 presidential race, for instance: “The coverage ranged from ignoring Zyuganov [the Communist candidate] to failing to comment on Yeltsin’s disappearance two weeks before the July election. Television stations even targeted entertainment programming as a medium for making this connection, including the scheduling of *Burnt by the Sun*—a film set in the worst period of the Stalinist purges—to air in the closing days of the campaign.”⁷⁰

In general, the combination of high levels of media exposure, high levels of media dependence, low levels of education, and lack of information about political alternatives is not so rare in the developing world, where the penetration of television has often expanded faster than formal schooling or the crystallization of mass opinion about politics. Across the developing world, large numbers of people who know relatively little about politics nevertheless receive a steady stream of (pro-government) messages from television. In Croatia, to cite one recent study, almost 60% of urban residents watch a single nightly news program (*Dnevnik*) every day, to the exclusion of most other news.⁷¹ Media effects may be particularly strong among such dependent publics.

In short, there are reasons to suspect that media effects may be more pronounced in newer, poorer democracies than in the established democracies of the developed world. As a result, media opening may have a much greater effect on public opinion and voting behavior than “minimal effects” theories of media influence would suggest. In that case, the Mexican experience would be a better guide for scholars of campaign effects in developing countries than models based on the United States or Europe.

Other Consequences

Social mobilization, scandals, and opposition electoral support are clearly important consequences of media opening. Presumably, though, they do not represent a comprehensive inventory of the effects of changing media coverage on political transition. Indeed, one can imagine a range of ways that media opening might shape regime change, from mobilizing populations at moments of crisis to constructing new political values to serving as a forum for inter-elite dialogue and negotiation.

The experience of other countries suggests that increasing media independence can have precisely these consequences for political transition. In the Soviet Union, for instance, newly independent media played a crucial role in foiling the Soviet coup attempt of August 1991.⁷² In China, foreign news broadcasts appear to play a significant role in promoting democratic cultural norms.⁷³ And in Argentina, films, newspapers, and other media have helped reshape elite attitudes toward military rule in the wake of the “dirty war” conducted by that country’s junta.⁷⁴ In other words, media opening may well promote democratization in ways that are not apparent from analysis of the Mexican case alone.

One intriguing possibility—utterly unexplored in this study—concerns the influence of entertainment programs on political socialization. Entertainment programs are often less subject to censorship than news coverage, but decisions about their content are deeply influenced by market pressures. Consequently, commercial competition may have potent political consequences that are not perceptible in analysis of news coverage alone. To the extent that entertainment programs contain implicit political messages, they may prove crucial in promoting democratization. Their influences would be all the more pronounced if entertainment programs were better able to shape opinion by the simple virtue of being entertainment programs—that is, if the political messages embedded in them aroused less instinctive audience resistance than the overtly political messages contained in news programming. Exploring such forms of socialization may prove useful in understanding the broader impact of media coverage on political transition.

PATTERNS OF MEDIA OPENING

From most of the literature on democratization, one might suspect that media are shaped by larger political events but themselves exercise only a trivial influence these events. A priori, this is certainly a plausible in-

terpretation of the media's role. It turns out, however, not to be correct. Mexico's experience over the last two decades is a story of interacting and mutually reinforcing changes in the country's press and its larger political system. The breakdown of Mexico's authoritarian regime undoubtedly facilitated media opening, but media opening also contributed to democratization. The Mexican case thus suggests a reciprocal relationship between political liberalization and the emergence of independent media.

Although the role of mass media in political transition has received remarkably little scholarly attention, the available evidence from other countries suggests that these conclusions hold there as well. One interesting example is Spain, perhaps the prototypical case of democratization in the late twentieth century. During the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, Spanish censorship was grounded in a 1936 media law. Although extremely strict in theory, its actual application was somewhat flexible and selective. Consequently, journalists remained constrained in what they could publish or broadcast, but they were not the victims of systematic, state-sponsored terror.

Changes in the media began with a 1966 legal reform (known as the Fraga Law), which allowed publications to appoint their own managers and editors. Although this reform did not alter the fundamental political rules of the game, it did encourage development of professional journalistic norms. The Fraga Law also stimulated market competition, which strongly favored independent publications at the expense of the old state-run press. Thus, tentative initial reform generated powerful pressures for media opening. As one study put it: "A growing segment of newspapers and magazines took advantage of Fraga's partial liberalization by expanding the informational content of their news reporting, adopting a common language of cautious (sometimes coded) political discourse, reporting on the increasingly frequent internal conflicts and external development that weakened the regime's hold on power. Some private radio stations behaved similarly, breaking the news monopoly that had been granted to the official RNE [Spanish National Radio]." ⁷⁵

Commercial incentives and journalistic norms came together in the founding of *El País* newspaper in May 1976 (before the appointment of reformist Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez). For the next several years, *El País* would remain at the forefront of the democracy movement. In addition, its presence had a powerful contagion effect on the rest of the Spanish print media—perhaps comparable to the combined effect of

Proceso magazine and *Reforma* newspaper in Mexico. Publications founded in its wake include such staples of modern Spanish journalism as *Diario 16*, *Informaciones*, and *Ya*. As in Mexico, these independent publications devoted attention to the viewpoints of emerging social actors, rejected official paradigms, and promoted political reform. Meanwhile, competitive pressures in radio continued to shape news coverage, and opening even spread to public stations. Ultimately, broadcast television began to transform itself from a “propagandistic tool at the service of the regime” to a more balanced medium.⁷⁶ Although a measure of political liberalization was initially important in stimulating professionalism and market competition, the consequences of media opening subsequently rippled back through the rest of Spanish society.

Another case that illustrates these same conclusions is Soviet Russia. During the initial period of *glasnost* (1986–90), most news outlets remained dependent on the state. Nevertheless, a nucleus of writer, intellectuals, and journalists emerged in the print media, and these individuals ultimately played a crucial role in the construction of Russia’s new media. Over the next few years, pioneering publications like *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* carved out a new mission centered on the notion of civic journalism.⁷⁷ Although the regime maintained control over broadcasting and over state institutions, incipient liberalization sparked important changes in the print media.

State control began to disintegrate following legal reforms in August 1990 that introduced private ownership of media. Private ownership meant market competition, and market competition soon stimulated some media to break official parameters. Independent publications, for instance, began criticizing Lenin as well as Stalin, thus contributing to the delegitimation of Gorbachev’s visions of a reformed Communist system. Although Soviet leaders attempted to reassert official control, with some success in state-run broadcasting, privately run media had already slipped out of their hands.⁷⁸

The effects of media opening became clear during the failed coup attempt of 1991. Newspapers and independent broadcasters vigorously opposed the coup, signaling opposition activists when and where to marshal their forces. Independent-minded journalists at the main television network rebuffed directives from top government officials and broadcast unflattering footage of the coup leaders’ August 19 press conference. Perhaps most devastating were the images of Vice President Gennadi Yanayev’s quivering hands as he fended off hostile questions from reporters. These news reports were accompanied by footage of

Boris Yeltsin rallying enormous crowds at the White House to protest the coup. Thus, media coverage helped to discredit the coup attempt and to propel democratization at a crucial moment.⁷⁹

Although subsequent developments in Russia conspired to create an oligopoly media, the initial Soviet/Russian experience from 1986 to 1991 is reminiscent of changes in Mexico.⁸⁰ Market competition and journalistic norms proved crucial in opening the media, which in turn reinforced political transition. The Mexican pattern of rapid opening in the print media, relatively tardy opening in television, and potent media influence on political transition thus appears generalizable to the Soviet/Russian case as well.⁸¹

If these conclusions are correct, they should help not only to illuminate previous episodes of democratization but also to predict patterns of media opening in the future. One intriguing case is that of Iran, now in the nascent stages of political transition. Although hard-line clerics still hold Iran's top political posts, reformist factions control a number of important institutions (including the presidency and the Congress). Reformers have attempted to advance their agenda of tentative political reform against the increasingly vociferous objections of hard-liners.

Over the last three years, a number of new publications have emerged to advance the cause of political change. The principal factor behind their emergence was a new journalistic vision, which included supporting the reformist agenda, challenging the theocratic state, and reflecting the impulses of Iran's incipient civil society. Predictably, independent journalists have faced systematic harassment from religious authorities, and hard-line elements have closed down a series of independent papers. Despite the closings, however, most of the original cadre of journalists has survived, and each closing has been followed by the founding of a new paper staffed by many of the same individuals.⁸²

If the Mexican experience is any indication, the actions of these pioneering journalists are likely to have powerful political consequences. One obvious result will be greater coverage of civic groups and legitimation of their activities, thus encouraging social mobilization in support of reform. Perhaps even more dramatic, however, will be increasingly aggressive media coverage of previously closed topics. The current Iranian regime is a religious theocracy: its legitimacy rests on the notion that Iran's clergy constitute a moral elite who will shepherd their people along a divinely ordained path to human betterment. Unfortunately for such utopian aspirations, a variety of all-too-human temptations appear to have gotten the better of most of the country's mullahs. Investigations

by independent publications have already begun to document examples of official corruption, and—should these investigations continue—they will ultimately trigger devastating political scandals.

These consequences will be exacerbated by the introduction of market-oriented reforms. If market competition takes hold, it will reinforce assertiveness in the print media and, ultimately, in the country's more cautious state-owned broadcasting networks. In that case, media opening will encourage social mobilization, undermine theocratic legitimacy, shape the outcome of increasingly competitive elections, and generally propel political transition.

Another case of interest is China. Over the last two decades, economic reforms have provoked subtle but significant changes in the Chinese press. As mass media have gained financial autonomy, traditional instruments of official control have gradually weakened, leaving the threat of repression as the principal weapon in the government's arsenal. Already, modest media opening has corroded centralized state control over information.⁸³ But changes in the media could prove even more potent if cracks were to appear in the Communist Party's repressive apparatus—brought on by divisions in the ruling authoritarian coalition, the ascendancy of reformist elements, or political crises provoked by domestic mobilization. Presumably, assertive coverage would in turn encourage wider protests, making repression all the more difficult.⁸⁴

ECONOMIC REFORM, MEDIA OPENING, AND DEMOCRACY

One of the most important findings from the Mexican case concerns the role of market competition in opening up the mass media. Commercial competition was a crucial ingredient in breaking down the old system of press control and strengthening independent media outlets. Because media opening itself encouraged political transition—and because pro-democratic forces were the beneficiaries of political transition—market competition promoted democratization in Mexico.

This lesson is theoretically valuable because it speaks to a larger debate about the role of market-oriented economic reform in promoting transitions from authoritarian rule. Advocates of "neoliberalism" in both the academic and popular press have long held that economic liberalization erodes state power and opens up spaces for autonomous groups to emerge. For authoritarian regimes, they claim, the result is democratic transition. On the one hand, critics of neoliberal measures argue that the links between economic liberalization and democratiza-

tion are at best ambiguous. They also point out that market-oriented reform can have a host of negative consequences for democratization, such as exacerbating social inequalities and enhancing the political clout of already privileged groups.

On balance, the experience of Mexico's media supports the notion that economic liberalization promotes the breakdown of authoritarian regimes. Successive reforms stripped the one-party system of crucial instruments of control and stimulated market competition among media outlets. The resulting changes in media content then rippled through the political system. By promoting media opening, then, economic liberalization played an important role in Mexican democratization.

The Mexican case also suggests, however, that economic reform *per se* is not the key to media opening. To the extent that state ownership is replaced by private monopolization or cartelization, economic reform is unlikely to promote dramatic changes in coverage. Instead, it will promote the concentration of mass media in the hands of a few media owners, who may themselves be linked to the regime. Put simply, the real guarantor of media opening is market competition, not economic reform. If privatization or deregulation fails to enhance competition, it is unlikely to lead to media opening and democratization. For this reason, complete abdication of the state's regulatory role in already competitive, liberal economies may undercut media pluralism as much as it enhances independence.

This issue is, of course, of more than theoretical concern. In a number of new democracies, the media are dominated by two or three privately owned firms. As two experienced observers of Russia's emerging political landscape warned in 1997:

one of the most troubling developments characterizing this "early middle" stage of Russia's transition [is]: a year after the presidential election, the continued retreat from developing a fair and unbiased media establishment to monitor this transition. What we're witnessing is a backpedaling away from a free press as a pillar of an informed society in favor of the increasing trend toward employing media outlets as an oligarchical tool for managing financial conglomerates and dictating political fortunes. Rather than the Fourth Estate, major newspapers and television networks are becoming merely estate holdings like oil companies and metals firms.⁸⁵

Oligopoly control has a number of predictable consequences for media coverage and, more broadly, for democratic governance. First, and most obviously, it leads to spaces of silence where the interests of media oligarchs may be involved. In Mexico, for instance, the interests and

practices of leading Mexican businessmen allied with the conservative faction of the regime—Miguel Alemán, Carlos Hank-González, Carlos Slim, etc.—were simply not legitimate subjects for reporting on Televisa. If corporate holdings are linked through extensive cross-ownership, interlocking directorates, or intricate financial networks, spaces of silence can be very large. Concentration thus protects and privileges media owners themselves, shielding them and their business partners from unwanted scrutiny.

A second likely consequence of oligopolization is collusion between media owners and government officials. Where a few individuals control the mass media, it is easier for political leaders to strike bargains granting publishers and broadcasters special privileges in exchange for favorable coverage. In theory, oligopoly owners may have greater bargaining power vis-à-vis the government than smaller firms, thus making it easier for them to retain their independence in the face of government pressures. In practice, however, the profits they can expect to reap from a close alliance with the government may outweigh the financial benefits they derive from journalistic impartiality. In a rapidly changing and increasingly global industry, media owners need government contacts to retain their concessions, protect their home markets, and exploit new technologies. Politicians, for their part, are less likely to worry about the long-term development of the commercial media than the outcome of the next election. If regulatory structures are too politicized or institutional checks too weak, oligopoly media owners and government officials are apt to strike collusive bargains. The result is pro-government bias during election campaigns, extensive coverage of major public initiatives, and constrained reporting on particularly touchy subjects. All these factors tend to increase incumbents' already substantial advantages and to insulate government officials from public scrutiny.

Third (and related), private media oligopolies typically inject a right-wing bias into political life. Media moguls tend to be conservative and to give preference to politically compatible forces over their progressive rivals, especially during electoral campaigns. Nowhere has this been clearer than in Mexico, where television coverage has been substantially more sympathetic to the PAN than to the PRD and remains constrained on any topics that might be construed as leftist.⁸⁶ Depending on one's orientation, such bias may seem an unfair disadvantage foisted upon progressive forces in bourgeois democracy or a healthy antidote to irresponsible populist appeals from the Left. Regardless, it means that the media are less diverse and pluralistic.

In recent years, many scholars have turned their attention from the spread of democratic institutions around the world to the deepening of those institutions. Though principally focused on the process of political transition, the findings of this study also speak to that new trend. In particular, they underscore the dangers of media oligopoly for emerging democracies in the developing world and thus raise unsettling questions about the quality of democracy in many countries that have recently completed transitions from authoritarian rule.

Appendix:

Data for Figures and Tables

DATA FOR FIGURE 1: INDEPENDENCE,
IDEOLOGY, AND CIRCULATION OF MEXICO
CITY NEWSPAPERS, 1995-96

Newspaper	Circulation	Ideology (%)	Independence (%)
<i>El Diario de México</i>	1,500	0	26
<i>El Economista</i>	4,000	-25	31
<i>El Día</i>	1,000	48	25
<i>Excélsior</i>	40,000	33	25
<i>El Financiero</i>	90,000	-13	37
<i>El Heraldo</i>	7,500	-26	28
<i>La Jornada</i>	80,000	52	49
<i>El Nacional</i>	3,000	41	24
<i>Novedades</i>	4,000	11	33
<i>Reforma</i>	85,000	-11	50
<i>El Sol</i>	5,000	10	25
<i>El Universal</i>	120,000	25	31
<i>unomásuno</i>	6,000	12	36

DATA FOR FIGURE 3: INCREASING OPENNESS
AT *LA JORNADA* NEWSPAPER, 1984-96

Year	Agenda setting (%)
1985	47
1987	41
1989	42
1990	35
1992	37
1994	26
1995	27
1996	31

Year	Assertiveness (%)
1985	12
1986	5
1987	9
1988	20
1989	5
1990	17
1991	12
1992	15
1993	4
1994	29
1995	20
1996	22

DATA FOR FIGURE 4: THE GROWTH OF
EL NORTE NEWSPAPER, 1973-95

Year	News staff
1973	17
1979	100
1984	280
1991	400
1996	730

DATA FIGURE 6: FINANCIAL AUTONOMY AND
INDEPENDENCE IN MEXICAN NEWSPAPERS

Newspaper	Average independence rating (%)	Estimated percent of revenue from government advertising
<i>El Diario de México</i>	26	60
<i>El Economista</i>	31	30
<i>El Día</i>	25	65
<i>Excélsior</i>	25	50
<i>El Financiero</i>	37	13
<i>El Heraldo</i>	28	50
<i>La Jornada</i>	49	40
<i>El Nacional</i>	24	75
<i>Novedades</i>	33	50
<i>Reforma</i>	50	10
<i>El Sol</i>	25	60
<i>El Universal</i>	31	25
<i>Unomásuno</i>	36	60

DATA FOR CHAPTER 5, NOTE 70: ESTIMATED
PERCENT OF REPORTERS WHO RECEIVED
BRIBES

Newspaper	Average independence rating (%)	Estimated percent reporters who received bribes
<i>El Diario de México</i>	26	90
<i>El Economista</i>	31	15
<i>El Día</i>	25	91
<i>Excélsior</i>	25	90
<i>El Financiero</i>	37	27
<i>El Heraldo</i>	28	91
<i>La Jornada</i>	49	28
<i>El Nacional</i>	24	90
<i>Novedades</i>	33	75
<i>Reforma</i>	50	8
<i>El Sol</i>	25	90
<i>El Universal</i>	31	53
<i>Unomásuno</i>	36	90

DATA FOR FIGURE 7: RATINGS AT RADIO
RED, 1980-94 (AS A PERCENT OF MEXICO
CITY HOUSEHOLDS WITH RADIOS)

Year	Rating
1980	3.90
1981	3.80
1982	3.85
1983	3.75
1984	3.85
1985	3.80
1986	4.30
1987	4.40
1988	5.00
1989	6.20
1990	6.40
1991	6.10
1992	5.90
1993	5.20
1994	5.30
1995	6.70

DATA FOR FIGURE 8: GROWTH OF
TELEVISIÓN AZTECA, 1995-97

Month	Night (%)	Morning (%)	Afternoon (%)
Jan 95	18	6	8
Feb 95	20	8	21
Mar 95	20	9	26
Apr 95	17	9	30
May 95	18	10	26
Jun 95	20	12	25
Jul 95	22	14	29
Aug 95	20	15	28
Sep 95	20	17	27
Oct 95	20	20	27
Nov 95	19	17	26
Dec 95	21	16	27
Jan 96	23	17	27
Feb 96	21	14	27
Mar 96	20	17	29
Apr 96	26	17	36
May 96	29	18	42
Jun 96	26	23	48
Jul 96	28	26	56
Aug 96	27	24	57

DATA FOR FIGURE 8: (*continued*)

Month	Night (%)	Morning (%)	Afternoon (%)
Sep 96	33	25	49
Oct 96	29	28	51
Nov 96	36	36	52
Dec 96	35	33	50

DATA FOR FIGURE 9: DECLINE IN
PERCENTAGE OF TIME DEVOTED TO
OFFICIALDOM

Year	Percent time
1986	63
1988	61
1990	64
1992	62
1993	41
1994	41
1995	37

DATA FOR FIGURE 10: CIVIC FRAMINGS OF
POLITICS IN *PROCESO* AND *LA JORNADA*,
1984-96

Year	<i>Proceso</i>	<i>La Jornada</i>
1984	4	4
1986	3	2
1988	5	4
1990	2	5
1992	4	1
1994	7	5
1996	10	5

DATA FOR FIGURE 11: CIVIC AND OLD
REGIME FRAMINGS OF POLITICS IN *PROCESO*
AND *LA JORNADA*, 1984-96

Year	Percent civic	Percent old regime
1984	35	22
1986	19	31
1988	64	7
1990	64	9
1992	56	0
1994	57	5
1996	75	15

DATA FOR FIGURE 12: CIVIC MOBILIZATION
AND COVERAGE OF CIVIL SOCIETY, 1985-94

Year	Coverage of civil society in <i>La Jornada</i> (%)	No. of civic organizations
1985	53	76
1986	56	87
1987	59	93
1988	59	111
1989	58	132
1990	65	170
1991	64	199
1992	63	223
1993	69	250
1994	74	253

DATA FOR FIGURE 13: CHANGING COVERAGE
OF THE PRI ON MEXICAN TELEVISION,
1988-97

Year	PRI share of television time for major parties (%)	PRI share of valid vote for president in 1988 and 1994, and for Congress in 1997 (%)
1988	80+	51
1994	50	50
1997	34	39

Notes

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Spanish-speaking societies employ a patronymic system in which matronymic names follow patronymic names. To avoid confusion for English-speaking readers, matronymics are either dropped or (for individuals with common names) hyphenated to the patronymic. Thus José Francisco Ruiz Massieu is written here as José Francisco Ruiz-Massieu and Luis Donaldo Colosio Murieta is written simply as Luis Donaldo Colosio.

2. Miguel Pérez, "Denuncia EZP a los 'Malosos,'" *Reforma*, June 24, 1995.

3. Author's interviews with Mexican journalists, especially Ricardo Alemán, Mexico City, August 12, 1995.

4. Here and elsewhere, "the press" is used to refer to all types of media rather than simply the print media.

5. See Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?" and Joseph D. Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Cavaliari Nunes, "The Brazilian Case: Influencing the Voter," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

6. For reports on the scandal, see William R. Long, "Brazilian Press Fans the Flames Threatening to Engulf the President," *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1992, p. 2; Isabel Hilton, "Dallas, Brazilian-Style," *The Independent*, November 8, 1992, p. 11; James Brooke, "The Media Business: A New Vigor in the Brazilian Press," *New York Times*, November 8, 1993, p. D6.

7. Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The Search for Rights and Responsibilities of the Press and Mass Media in four Latin American Nations*, IIE Research Report no. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 20.

8. See Thomas Skidmore, "Politics and the Media in a Democratizing Latin America," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Silvio Waisbord, "Television and Election Campaigns in Contemporary Argentina," *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1994, 44 (2):125-35; Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *American Nations*, IIE Research Report no. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995); and Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995); Ximena Ortúzar, "Guerra sucia del gobierno de Menem contra la prensa," *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 42.

9. Silvio Waisbord, "Knocking on Newsroom Doors: The Press and Political Scandals in Argentina," *Political Communication*, January 1994, 11 (1):19-33.

10. See Vicky Randall, "The Media and Democratisation in the Third World," *Third World Quarterly*, 1993, 14 (3):625-46.

11. Even Joseph A. Schumpeter, often credited with the original "minimalist" definition of democracy, acknowledged the danger that public opinion could be manipulated in the absence of press freedom. See *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 263-64.

12. Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 3. See also Terry Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "What Democracy Is. . . and Is Not," *Journal of Democracy*, Summer 1991, 2 (3):75-86; James W. Carey, "Mass Media and Democracy," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):1-21.

13. Ray Hiebert, "The Difficult Birth of a Free Press in Hungary," *American Journalism Review*, January 1994, 16 (1):34; Peter Elam, "Hungary: The Media—War by Other Means," *Index on Censorship*, February 1993, 22 (2):20-21; Ken Kasriel, "Hungary: Whose Voice? Who's Master? The Battle for the Media," *Index on Censorship* (February 1993); Elemer Hankiss, "The Hungarian Media's War of Independence," *Media, Culture, and Society*, April 1994, 16 (2):293-312; Richard W. Bruner, "Suppressing the Free Press in Hungary," *The New Leader*, November 15, 1993, 76 (13):7-9; Florian Mezes, "The Media War," *New Hungarian Quarterly*, Fall 1992, 33 (127):60; and Johnston M. Mitchell, "The Evolution of a Free Press in Hungary: 1986-90," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1990).

14. Kyu Ho Youm, "Press Freedom in 'Democratic' South Korea: Moving from Authoritarian to Libertarian," *Gazette*, January 1989, 43 (1):53-71; Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's Experiment with a Free Press," *Gazette*, January / March 1994, 53 (1-2):111-16; Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991; Peter Leyden and David Bank, "The Web of Bribery That Envelopes South Korean News Media," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16, 1990; Michael Breen, "'Scoop' Has Different Meanings for South Korean Reporters," *Washington Times*, April 8, 1991, p. A10.

15. Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimarães, "Media Monopoly in Brazil," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1994, 44 (4):26–38; Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?" in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Luiz Fernando Santoro, "The Promise of Democracy in the New Media Age: A Brazilian Point of View," *Intermedia*, October / November 1995, 23 (5):32–36; and Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995).

16. See Daniel K. Berman, *Words like Colored Glass: The Role of the Press in Taiwan's Democratization Process* (Boulder: Westview, 1992).

17. See George Quester, *The International Politics of Television* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, Lexington Books, 1990). It is possible that foreign radio broadcasts are having a similar effect on today in countries like Cuba (Radio Martí) and China (BBC and Voice of America).

18. Author's interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.

CHAPTER 2. THE PERFECT DICTATORSHIP

1. Mario Vargas-Llosa, "Mexico: The Perfect Dictatorship," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Winter 1991, 8 (1):23–24. The phrase had actually been in circulation for some time before Vargas-Llosa repeated it while on a visit to Mexico.

2. Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexico's Leaders: Their Education and Recruitment* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980); Roderic Ai Camp, *The Making of a Government: Political Leaders in Modern Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984); Roderic Ai Camp, "The Political-Technocrat in Mexico and the Survival of the Political System," *Latin American Research Review*, 1985, 20 (1):97–118; and Miguel Angel Centeno, *Democracy within Reason* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

3. See, among others, Pablo González-Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Martin C. Needler, *Mexican Politics: The Containment of Conflict* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995); Wayne Cornelius, *Politics in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1984); Kevin J. Middlebrook, "Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Mexico," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Daniel C. Levy, "Mexico: Sustained Civilian Rule without Democracy," in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989); George Grayson, *The Prospects for Democracy in Mexico* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1990); John J. Bailey, *Governing Mexico: The*

Statecraft of Crisis Management (New York: St. Martin's, 1988); Miguel Basañez, *El pulso de los sexenios* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1990); Héctor Aguilar-Camín and Lorenzo Meyer, *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); and Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

4. For a recent analysis from this perspective, see Roberto Blum, "Mexico's New Politics: The Weight of the Past," *Journal of Democracy*, October 1997. See also Pablo González-Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 149–50; Enrique Krauze, *Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810–1996* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), pp. 549–70; Gabriel Zaid, *El progreso improductivo* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1979); and Stephen D. Morris, "Corruption and the Mexican Political System: Continuity and Change," *Third World Quarterly*, 1999, 20 (3):623–43.

5. See Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 32–44.

6. Merilee Grindle, *Bureaucrats, Politicians, and Peasants in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

7. Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexico's Leaders: Their Education and Recruitment* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980).

8. On the co-optation of Mexican intellectuals, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), especially pp. 208–22.

9. Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 67–164.

10. At first glance, the notion that economic development contributed to the collapse of the old regime may seem to contradict the notion that its collapse was brought on by poor economic performance. In fact, the level of economic development (GNP_t) and the rate of economic growth $[(GNP_{t(m)} - GNP_{t(m)-1}) / GNP_{t(m)-1}]$ are two different variables with opposite effects on the stability of authoritarian regimes.

11. See Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," *American Behavioral Scientist*, March / June 1992, 35:450–99.

12. See Wayne Cornelius, "Urbanization as an Agent in Latin American Political Instability: The Case of Mexico," *American Political Science Review*, September 1969, 63 (3):833–57.

13. Joseph L. Klesner, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Participation and Official Party Support in Mexico," in Judith Gentleman, ed., *Mexican Politics in Transition* (Boulder: Westview, 1987); Joseph L. Klesner, "Modernization, Economic Crisis, and Electoral Alignment in Mexico," *Mexican Studies*, Summer 1993, 9 (2):187–223.

14. Jorge I. Domínguez and James A. McCann, “Shaping Mexico’s Electoral Arena: The Construction of Partisan Cleavages in the 1988 and 1991 National Elections,” *American Political Science Review*, March 1995, 89 (1):34–48; and Jorge I. Domínguez and James A. McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

15. On the reaction of the Church to fraud, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Crossing Swords: Politics and Religion in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 62–67.

16. See Carlos Salinas, “Political Participation, Public Investment, and Support for the System: A Comparative Study of Rural Communities in Mexico,” Research Report Series no. 35 (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1982); Carlos Salinas, *Political Participation, Public Investment and System Support: A Study of Three Rural Communities in Central Mexico* (Ph.D. dissertation, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1978); and Denise Dresser, “Neopopulist Solutions to Neoliberal Problems: Mexico’s National Solidarity Program,” Current Issue Brief no. 3 (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1991).

17. Andrés Oppenheimer, *Bordering on Chaos* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996).

18. For a more general argument about regional variation, see Jeffrey W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

19. Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1999).

20. See Miguel Basañez, *La lucha por la hegemonía en México, 1968–1990* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1990). Recent work by Jonathan Schlefer adds further credence to this contention.

21. See Roderic Ai Camp, *Entrepreneurs and Politics in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

22. Roderic Ai Camp, *Entrepreneurs and Politics in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), especially pp. 31, 34, 48, 113, and 132–38; John J. Bailey, *Governing Mexico: The Statecraft of Crisis Management* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988), p. 159.

23. See Ligia Tavera-Fenollosa, “The Movimiento de Damnificados: Democratic Transformation of Citizenry and Government in Mexico City,” in Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1999).

24. For this reason, the dichotomy that some scholars have drawn between “elite-led” and “mass-led” transitions may be a false one. Mass mobilization is what gives opposition representatives their bargaining power.

CHAPTER 3. MEDIA CONTROL UNDER THE PERFECT DICTATORSHIP

1. Ilya Adler, "Press-Government Relations in Mexico: A Study of Freedom of the Mexican Press and Press Criticism of Government Institutions," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 12 (1993):1–30.

2. *El Machete* was published both openly and, when banned, underground (as *El Machete Ilegal*).

3. Cárdenas greatly expanded state regulation of and involvement in the media as part of his revolutionary-nationalist program, though whether full nationalization was his ultimate goal is unclear. See Fernando Mejía-Barquera, *La industria de la radio y televisión y la política del estado mexicano, 1920–1960* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía, 1989); Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920–1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000).

4. Juan Carlos Gamboa, "Media, Public Opinion Polls, and the 1994 Mexican Presidential Election," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., September 28–30, 1995, p. 14.

5. Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists, publishers, broadcasters, and government officials.

6. Froylan López, editor of *Proceso* magazine, cited in *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1987.

7. See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993); Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 182–207; Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, 1972); and Marvin Alisky, "Government and the News Media: Mexico," in Dan Nimmo and Michael W. Mansfield, eds., *Government and the News Media: Comparative Dimensions* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 1982).

8. The personalities of these presidents and their stormy relationship with Mexico's most esteemed independent journalist, Julio Scherer, are the subject of Scherer's *Los presidentes* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1986).

9. For a discussion of the Echeverría administration, see Judith Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), pp. 147–80, and Samuel Schmidt, *The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

10. See Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 195.

11. Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists, publishers, broadcasters, and government officials.

12. See Raymundo Riva-Palacio, "A Culture of Collusion: The Ties That Bind the Press and the PRI," unpublished manuscript presented to the Committee to Protect Journalists, n.d.; William A. Orme Jr., *A Culture of Collusion: An Inside Look at the Mexican Press* (Miami: North-South Center, University of Miami and the Committee to Protect Journalists, 1997).

13. Cited in interview with Claudia Fernández, *Pulso*, “La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón. . . y la conciencia,” *Pulso*, July / September 1995, 23, p. 22.

14. *El Universal* was founded in 1916 and *Excélsior* was founded in 1917.

15. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 101.

16. See Fernando Mejía-Barquera and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, *Televisa: El quinto poder* (Mexico City: Claves Latinoamericanas, 1985). In 1955, according to one account, President Adolfo Ruiz-Cortines (1952–58) asked Emilio Azcárraga Sr., a radio pioneer and recipient of one of Mexico’s original television licenses, to form a partnership with two of the president’s friends who were losing money on their concessions. The friends in question turned out to be former President Alemán and Rómulo O’Farrill, another initial concessionaire and Alemán crony. Azcárraga Sr. wisely complied with the president’s request by merging the three men’s holdings into Telesistema Mexicano. (See Carlos Ramírez, “Indicador Político,” *El Universal*, July 1, 1996, p. 8. This account could not be independently confirmed.)

17. That same year, the Echeverría administration took over Channel 13, thus leaving Televisa (allied with the conservative wing of the PRI) and the government network (under the leftist wing of the PRI) in control of virtually all of Mexican television.

18. See Florence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y los medios: Un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: *La Jornada* and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), pp. 22–23.

19. International Press Institute Report (no author), December 1993, p. 40; Florence Toussaint, “La simbiosis entre el estado y Televisa,” *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 70; Fátima Fernández-Christlieb, “Los oficios políticos de la dinastía Azcárraga,” *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 7.

20. Florence Toussaint, “La simbiosis entre el estado y Televisa,” *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 70. The corporation did not always get its way. For instance, Televisa failed to obtain concessions for cellular phone communication and ultra-high-frequency (UHF) television. It also failed in its bid to purchase the government-owned television network in 1993. See Miguel de la Vega, “Azcárraga fue un socio a veces áspero, pero incondicional al gobierno: Trejo Delarbre,” *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, pp. 8–9.

21. Author’s interview with Amalia García, Party of the Democratic Revolution, August 15, 1995.

22. Infrastructure development includes both microwave and satellite links. In addition to Morelos, Mexico launched two other satellites (Solidaridad I and Solidaridad II) in November 1993 and October 1994.

23. Andrés Oppenheimer claimed that this sum was \$70 million. See *México: En la frontera del caos: La crisis de los noventa y la esperanza del nuevo milenio* (Mexico City: Javier Vergara, 1996), p. 119. Others have argued that Azcárraga contributed only \$30 million. See Agustín Ambriz, “Ante la Suprema Corte, la petición de Azcárraga y Cañedo White para no pagar impuestos por sus Mercedes Benz blindados,” *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 11.

24. See Flourence Toussaint, “Inequidad y democracia: Realidad en los medios electrónicos,” in Flourence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y medios de comunicación: Un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: La Jornada and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), p. 22.

25. This story has been famous among journalists since Becerra-Acosta recounted it to *Proceso* magazine several years later. In addition to being affiliated with rival factions of the political elite, Becerra-Acosta and Salinas apparently disliked each other personally. After taking power, Salinas arranged an audit of *unomásuno* that revealed a series of financial improprieties. Salinas then sought a buyer from among his staff and forced Becerra-Acosta, under pain of prosecution, into selling his paper and leaving the country. As Becerra-Acosta was packing, an official from the Interior Ministry arrived at his house with a suitcase containing \$1 million in cash, drawn from the state-run development bank BanObras. (Author’s interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.) See also Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 316–19.

26. Author’s interview with middle-level official in the Ministry of Communication and Transportation, March 18, 1996.

27. This phrase, a reference to the state, comes from Octavio Paz’s *El ogro filantrópico: Historia y política, 1971–78* (Mexico City: J. Montiz, 1979).

28. Estimates of official advertising have ranged from around 20–30% in 1964 to 35–80% in the mid-1990s. See Richard Ray Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, 1972), p. 79; John Virtue, “La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón. . . y la conciencia,” *Pulso*, July / September 1995, 23, p. 9; *Political Handbook of the World*, 1994, p. 576; *Business Week*, December 20, 1993.

29. See Flourence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y medios de comunicación: Un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: La Jornada and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), p. 23.

30. In previous eras (for instance, in 1970), prices for *gacetillas* were published. See Richard Ray Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, 1972), pp. 85–90.

31. As Alejandro Ramos, editor of *El Financiero* put it, the only thing one used to need to open a newspaper was five well-placed friends in the government who could secure advertising revenues from Pemex, Telmex, and other state-run enterprises (cited in John Virtue, “La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón. . . y la conciencia,” *Pulso*, July / September 1995, p. 15).

32. Circulation estimates in Mexico are wildly exaggerated. My own estimates for the average circulation of the morning edition of Mexico City’s principal news-oriented dailies in 1996—based on several dozen interviews with journalists, publishers, distributors, and government officials—include subscription sales but do not include devolutions; that is, they represent the number of copies actually sold: *El Universal* (105,000), *La Prensa* (95,000), *Reforma*

(80,000), *El Financiero* (75,000), *La Jornada* (65,000), *Excelsior* (30,000), *El Herald de México* (8,000), *unomásuno* (7,000), *El Sol* (6,000), *Novedades* (5,000), *El Economista* (4,000), *El Nacional* (4,000), *Diario de México* (2,000), *El Día* (1,000).

33. Raymundo Riva-Palacio offered an even lower estimate of eight in 1994 (*San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 1994). U.S. Information Agency officials at the U.S. Embassy estimated that only four or five of the capital's sixteen or so dailies (*La Prensa*, *El Universal*, *El Financiero*, *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, and perhaps *El Economista*) and very few provincial papers could pay their own way (author's interviews, Mexico City, April 1, 1996). My calculations suggest that the following daily papers could probably have survived a complete cutoff of government subsidies in 1996: *Reforma*, *El Norte*, *El Financiero*, *La Jornada*, *El Universal*, *El Economista*, *La Prensa*, *El Porvenir*, *El Diario de Yucatán*, *El Occidental*, *Siglo 21*, *El Imparcial* (Hermosillo), and *La Crónica* (Mexicali). Some other papers, including *Novedades*, *Ovaciones*, *The Mexico City News*, and several of the *El Sol* chain, were part of larger business groups and might have survived from intra-enterprise transfers.

34. Author's interview with Alfonso Sotelo-Valdés, chief financial officer of *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 8, 1995.

35. Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), pp. 30–31.

36. Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists and publishers. On the use of taxes as an instrument of harassment, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 201.

37. For more detail, see Julio Scherer, *Estos años* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995), pp. 43–47.

38. PIPSA is the Spanish acronym for Newsprint Producer and Importer, Inc.

39. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda discusses the cases of *Presente* and *Impacto* in *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 22 and pp. 275–77; for other cases, see Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), pp. 38–42. Information on *El Norte* was confirmed in author's interviews with Alejandro Junco, publisher of *El Norte* and *Reforma* (Mexico City, September 21, 1995), and Ramón Alberto Garza, editor-in-chief of *El Norte* and *Reforma* (Mexico City, April 17, 1996).

40. PIPSA's charter was originally granted in 1934; it was renewed twice in the 1960s and once during Salinas' tenure.

41. Author's interview with Juan Luis Concheiro, editor of *Motivos*, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

42. I asked the newspaper's editors what they would have done had PIPSA not restored the flow of paper. One told me that they might have been able to obtain enough newsprint from other papers to hold over until imports arrived. (These other publications could earn a profit by reselling at market prices the newsprint they had purchased from PIPSA.) At that time, however, the paper

was on shaky financial ground, and the additional cost of imported paper might have triggered bankruptcy.

43. Operating subsidies were not as crucial in securing official control of the broadcast media, but they were used occasionally. In addition, the low price of broadcasting concessions themselves represented a subsidy. See Flourence Tous-saint, ed., *Democracia y los medios: Un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: *La Jornada* and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), pp. 22–23.

44. Author's interview with former reporter for *La Jornada*, March 28, 1996. Salaries have increased substantially in the last few years, thanks to a minimum journalistic wage law passed by the Salinas administration and professionalization of the print media as a whole.

45. The January 25, 1988 issue of *Proceso* carried a list of salaries and commissions at major Mexico City periodicals. Since then, many papers have changed their payment regimes and eliminated or reduced commissions in an effort to stimulate professionalism (as in the most independent papers), increase revenue for the paper itself (as at *Excélsior*), or some combination (as at *El Universal*).

46. Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para el nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 119.

47. For practical purposes, reporters on such trips were normally divided into three tiers and paid accordingly. For further detail see Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 291–92, 229–30, 338–40, 346–48; *Proceso*, May 23, 1983; Julio Scherer, *Estos años* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995), pp. 46–47; Scott Morrison, “Read All about It! Local News Media Show a Pro-Government Bias,” *MacLean's*, August 15, 1994, p. 22; and Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, 1972), p. 87.

48. See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 367–68. President Ernesto Zedillo later revived the practice of paying journalists on presidential trips.

49. Author's interviews with Interior Ministry officials, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

50. Author's interview with Interior Ministry official, Mexico City, March 20, 1996.

51. Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, “Personajes protegidos,” *Reforma*, March 7, 1996, p. 7.

52. The evolution of this event is described in all its sordid details by Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda in *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993).

53. Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para un nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), pp. 114–15.

54. Corruption in Mexico's media has been so pervasive that the dividing line between bribes designed to perpetuate official control and other forms of corruption is blurry. For instance, a prominent pro-government capital city newspaper once allegedly sold its eight-column, front-page header to a group of sixty-two police chiefs fired for corruption. In exchange for up to \$10,000 each, the paper defended them as hard-working and effective officers. (Author's interview with former reporter at the paper in question, March 28, 1996.)

55. For more detail, see Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The Search for Rights and Responsibilities of the Press and Mass Media in Four Latin American Nations*, IIE Research Report no. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 63.

56. As Marco Antonio Rascón, a congressman from the PRD and an occasional contributor to *La Jornada*, put it, "here, everything is open and everything is secret" (interview on *Nuestro Tiempo*, Channel 11, March 18, 1996).

57. Author's interviews with Alejandro Junco, publisher of *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995; Jesús Sánchez, political news editor, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, September 20, 1995 and March 27, 1996; Rogelio Cárdenas, publisher, and Alejandro Ramos, news editor, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, March 27, 1996; Congresswoman Pati Mendoza, member of committee on media reform, Mexico City, August 11, 1995; Congresswoman María Teresa Gómez-Mont, leader of National Action Party (PAN) delegation of congressional committee on media reform, Mexico City, March 25, 1996.

58. Claudia Fernández, "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón. . . y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July / September, 1995, pp. 14–15. One senior journalist I spoke with described the Mexican military as "a tortoise with a very thick carapace" (author's interview with Jesús Sánchez, politics editor, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, September 20, 1995).

59. Author's interview with senior Mexican journalist, April 3, 1996.

60. Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000) was the first Mexican president to grant a live radio interview, to hold regular live press conferences, and to participate in a live television debate against his opponents.

61. Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 23.

62. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 249.

63. I discussed this alleged list with several prominent journalists, including René Delgado (*Reforma*), Carlos Marín (*Proceso*), Froylan López (*Proceso*), Roberto Zamarripa (*Reforma*), and Raymundo Riva-Palacio (*Reforma*). Interior Ministry officials (who were quite frank on other matters) acknowledged that such lists had existed in the past, but insisted that any list at that time would have been informal and unofficial.

64. In 1996, the Office of the President ceded much of the direct management of the media to the Interior Ministry, leaving the president's staff to focus on image management and other tasks associated with press relations in more democratic political systems.

65. Both groups were organized by region (Mexico City media, provincial media, and foreign media). Each regional subdirectorate was divided into print and broadcast media.

66. Author's interview with Interior Ministry officials, April 3, 1996.

67. Author's interview with Juan Luís Concheiro, editor of *Motivos*, August 15, 1995.

68. Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 22.

69. The article in question recounted how Bartlett had used his position to arrange for the rescue (or kidnapping, depending on whose account one believes) two younger relatives from a religious cult in Venezuela.

70. Author's interview with Carlos Marín of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996.

71. Author's interview with editor of provincial daily, April 2, 1996. Threats to the paper subsided when the governor was subsequently forced to resign for unrelated reasons.

72. Author's interview with Benjamín Wong, April 3, 1996. The same story is also recounted in Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993).

73. Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 46.

74. Roberto Zamarripa, "Manuel Villa sugiere, exige, ordena: Fuera del aire Castañeda, Aguilar Zinzer, Sodi, Delgado, Granados . . ." *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 14.

75. Carlos Marín, "El gobierno de México no admite voces contrarias: Jorge Castañeda," *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 10.

76. Roberto Zamarripa, "Vigilado, hostigado, insultado, prohibido, Cárdenas apela a la ética de los medios," *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, pp. 7–9. According to the *Latin American Weekly Reporter* (October 14, 1993), Granados-Chapa's ouster was the result of pressure from Interior Ministry official Manuel Villa.

77. Author's interview with René Delgado, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.

78. Author's interview with Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 22, 1997.

79. See Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), especially pp. 53–56. According to Alisky, the Mexican government did not permanently revoke a single broadcasting license between 1934 and 1981, though it did suspend some temporarily and several owners were unofficially pressured into selling their concessions. My impression is that this general trend has persisted, though one Interior Ministry official told me of a provincial radio station that lost its license during the Salinas administration after a series of nasty personal attacks on the local mayor.

80. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 71.

81. This famous story is recounted in Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political

Science, University of Minnesota, 1972), p. 78; and Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 106–8. The paper was subsequently revived in 1971 and has remained faithfully pro-government ever since.

82. See Kenneth Johnson, *Mexican Democracy: A Critical View* (New York: Praeger, 1984), pp. 156–62; Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 202–3.

83. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 197–98. In response to these pressures, the paper expelled its director, Jesús Blancornelos, who left with twenty-six other staffers. Blancornelos subsequently founded Tijuana's independent weekly, *Zeta*.

84. Author's interview with Alejandro Junco, *Reforma*, Mexico City; September 21, 1995. This event—discussed further in chapter 5—had a profound impact on Junco and his colleagues at *El Norte*. Senior managers at *El Norte* and its sister paper, *Reforma* (including Junco himself), invariably mentioned the de facto expulsion as a pivotal moment in their view of their role as journalists and their relationship to the political establishment.

85. Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief of *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996. *Siglo 21* was based in Guadalajara, Jalisco, a state controlled after 1995 by the opposition National Action Party. As one journalist at the paper put it, “if we were in Puebla, Tabasco, or Guerrero [states controlled by hard-line PRI governors], as you say in English, ‘we’d be history’” (author's interview, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996).

86. In such cases, the federal government has often intervened to prevent the escalation of confrontations between provincial media and provincial political leaders (author's interview with Interior Ministry officials, April 3, 1996, and with Hernán Casares, news editor of *Diario de Yucatán*, April 6, 1996). See also Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 264, 279–82.

87. Author's interview with Hernán Casares, news editor of *El Diario de Yucatán*, April 6, 1996.

88. Mexico had the highest rate of journalists murdered of any country in the world in 1986, and in 1988 was surpassed only by such paragons of press freedom as El Salvador, the Philippines, and Nigeria. See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 279; Report of the International Press Institute, December 1994, pp. 52–53; Article 19, *In the Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Article 19, 1989), appendix 1; Jonathan Alter, “Reporters under the Gun,” *Newsweek*, December 17, 1986, p. 62. According to a report published in *La Jornada* (August 3, 1992), some fifty-two journalists were murdered between 1982 and 1992. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, twenty reporters were murdered as a result of their work between 1985 and 1995. See Committee to Project Journalists, *Attacks on the Press in 1996: A Worldwide Survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists* (New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, March 1997).

89. Article 19, *In the Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Article 19, 1989).

90. Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief of *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

CHAPTER 4. MEDIA COVERAGE UNDER THE PERFECT DICTATORSHIP

1. Author's interviews with officials at the Interior Ministry, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

2. See Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), pp. 57–63. See also Victor Manuel Bernal-Sahagún and Eduardo Torreblanca-Jacques, eds., *Espacios de silencio* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1988).

3. *24 Hours*, March 7, 1994.

4. The media's reaction (or lack thereof) to the massacre figures prominently in various accounts of the tragedy and in the memorial that now stands in Tlatelolco Plaza. See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1993).

5. Author's interview with Juan Luis Concheiro, editor of *Motivos*, Mexico City, August 15, 1995. Others familiar with Radio UNAM have argued that the station enjoyed substantial freedom during most of the 1980s, both on economic matters and student activism (personal correspondence with Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, July 26, 2000).

6. Author's interview with Amalia García, Party of the Democratic Revolution, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

7. Anthony DePalma, "Mexican Press Docile on Revolt," *New York Times*, May 6, 1994, p. 4.

8. Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* (Televisa's main nightly news program) during the first two weeks of March for 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996. I am grateful to Televisa for the opportunity to use their extensive video archives for this purpose.

9. Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

10. See Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 46; *La Jornada*, August 27, 1994. Although Aguayo agreed that PRI candidate Ernesto Zedillo had won the election, he viewed the overall process as tainted by gross disparities in campaign resources and episodes of heavy-handed clientelism.

11. Author's interview with former reporters at Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996 and March 14, 1997.

12. See *24 Hours*, March 1–4, 1993.

13. See Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, "The Media and the 1994 Federal Elections in Mexico: A Content Analysis of Television News Coverage of the Political Parties and Presidential Candidates," May 19, 1994; Miguel Acosta-Valverde and Luz Paula Parra-Rosales, *Los procesos electorales en medios de comunicación* (Mexico City: Academia Mexicana de Derecho Hu-

manos and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1995); Miguel Acosta-Valverde, Manuel Martínez-Torres, and Luz Paula Parra-Rosales, *Las elecciones de 1994 en México vistas por los medios de comunicación* (Mexico City: Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, 1995); Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), Comisión de Radiodifusión, “Informe global sobre el monitoreo de noticiarios de radio y televisión de los linamientos sugeridos por la Comisión de Radiodifusión a la Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Radio y Televisión,” August 1994.

14. See Ilya Adler, “The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Pablo Arredondo-Ramírez, Gilberto Fregoso-Peralta, and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, *Así se calló el sistema: Comunicación y elecciones en 1988* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991); Scott Morrison, “Read All about It! Local News Media Show a Pro-Government Bias,” *MacLean’s*, August 15, 1994, p. 22.

15. Ilya Adler, “The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), p. 155.

16. *24 Hours*, March 8, 1988.

17. Murray Fromson, “Mexico’s Struggle for a Free Press,” in Richard R. Cole, ed., *Communication in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and Society* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996), p. 124.

18. See Ricardo Ravelo and Rodrigo Vera, “El gobierno veracruzano pagó a los travestis, porros, y teporochos que hostilizaron a Cuauhtémoc,” *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, pp. 6–7.

19. On the political use of polls, and the controversies that resulted, see Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, “The Worst Opinions: Public Opinion Polls, Elections, and the Media in Mexico, 1994”; Alejandro Moreno, “The Political Use of Public Opinion Polls: Building Popular Support in Mexico under Salinas”; and Juan Carlos Gamboa, “Media, Public Opinion Polls, and the 1994 Mexican Presidential Election,” in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Polling for Democracy: Public Opinion and Political Liberalization in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996).

20. Author’s content analysis of Televisa news coverage during the 1994 campaign; author’s interview with Miguel Acosta, director of media monitoring at the Mexican Academy of Human Rights, Mexico City, April 8, 1996; author’s interview with senior official at the Office of the President, March 20, 1996; see also Daniel C. Hallin, “*Dos instituciones, un camino: Television and the State in the 1994 Mexican Election*,” paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., September 28–30, 1995.

21. See Alberto Cinta, “Uncertainty and Electoral Behavior in Mexico,” and Alejandro Poiré, “Retrospective Voting, Partisanship, and Loyalty in Presidential Elections,” in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico’s Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

22. Ilya Adler, “The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential

Election,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

23. Ilya Adler, “The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), p. 164.

24. Daniel C. Hallin, “*Dos instituciones, un camino*: Television and the State in the 1994 Mexican Election,” paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., September 28–30, 1995, p. 14.

25. On intellectual publications, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), especially p. 141.

26. Author’s interview with Raúl Trejo, Mexico City, September 19, 1995. In absolute terms, of course, *El Nacional* was never very independent; Trejo himself, for instance, was forced to resign from his position at the paper in October 1992.

27. On local newspapers in Juchitán, Oaxaca, see Jeffrey W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

28. Author’s interview with Hernán Casares, *Diario de Yucatán*, Mérida, April 6, 1996; Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 195.

29. Ilya Adler, “Press-Government Relations in Mexico: A Study of Freedom of the Mexican Press and Press Criticism of Government Institutions,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 1993, 12:16.

30. According to Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief of *Siglo 21*, the government cares most about front-page articles, followed by photographs, political cartoons, opinion pieces, and back-page news—in that order (author’s interview with Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996). Government sources confirmed this basic hierarchy.

31. Author’s interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, September 18, 1995.

32. Author’s interview with reporter at *La Jornada*, Mexico City, July 18, 1995.

33. See *La Jornada*, June 15, p. 16; June 15, p. 22; June 23, p. 44; July 2, p. 37; July 17, p. 19; July 30, p. 20; August 5, p. 41; August 13, p. 24; August 14, p. 24; September 1, p. 14; September 8, p. 38; September 19, p. 22.

CHAPTER 5. OPENING MEXICO’S PRINT MEDIA

1. For media use patterns in Mexico, see Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America’s Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 40; poll by MORI of Mexico for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / PEAC, April 1993; the 1994 World Survey of Values in Mexico; and “La reforma electoral

y su contexto sociocultural,” IFE/UNAM, 1996 (Cuadra 1.4). Private polls from the Office of the President, as well as surveys by *Reforma*, give similar figures. See also, p. 96.

2. As discussed in subsequent chapters, *Siglo 21* lost most of its staff and readership to a new publication, *Público*. In the late 1990s, a number of other independent papers were founded which appear to have respectable readerships (such as Tijuana’s *Frontera*).

3. Author’s content analysis; all measurements are based on two one-week samples from the second full week in September 1995 and the second full week in March 1996.

4. My estimates are based on interviews with several dozen distributors, as well as private market research reports, estimates by Mexican journalists, claims by publishers, and (in some cases) conversations with the printing and maintenance staff in charge of operating the actual printing presses.

5. Even independently certified figures overstate circulations because they include a large number of unsold copies.

6. Leftist buzzwords included imperialism, socialism, working class (*clase obrera*, *obrero*, or *clase trabajadora*), social justice, unemployment (*desempleo* or *nivel de empleo*), the Zapatista National Liberation Army, the people (*el pueblo*), and social inequality. Rightist buzzwords include private property, private sector (*sector privado*, *sector empresarial*, *iniciativa privada*), the Catholic Church, communism, inflation (*inflación*, *subio de precios*, *crecimiento de precios*), and public order (*el orden* or *orden público*). The issues analyzed included the North American Free Trade Agreement, the United States, Cuba, neoliberal economic reforms, the Catholic Church, the National Action Party, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution. Favorable references to Cuba and the PRD—as well as unfavorable references to NAFTA, the U.S., the PAN, and the Catholic Church—were coded as leftist. The opposite were coded as right, and neutral evaluations were also recorded; the final score was a net of leftist or rightist references divided by the total number of references.

7. This last measure was omitted for *El Nacional* itself (which had the highest *oficialista* score).

8. It appears that the government also employs some of these measurements in monitoring the media. One editor in a provincial newspaper, for instance, mentioned to me that he received a phone call from the federal Interior Ministry criticizing him for not citing the president enough on the front page. My own interviews with officials at the Interior Ministry and the Office of the President indicate that these are the types of indicators that the federal government normally considered, even if it did not employ them systematically. See also Murray Fromson, “Mexico’s Struggle for a Free Press,” in Richard R. Cole, ed., *Communication in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and Society* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996), pp. 127–28.

9. Author’s interview with Juan Luis Concheiro, editor of *Motivos*, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

10. Author’s interview with Pablo Gómez, PRD, Mexico City, September 11, 1995; see also Judith Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), pp. 161–63.

11. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 119.

12. Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 119–23.

13. President José López-Portillo (1976–82) described Scherer in the following way after their meeting in 1978:

Anxious, nervous, with cold, sweaty hands . . . Intelligent, and even brilliant. Totally warped by his sense of self-importance. The country will only be saved if Julio and his group can do their jobs, with the fundamental help of the state, that is, a paper with complete freedom to strike at the state itself, on the altar of liberty and journalism, whose exercise is an end in itself, the supreme goal of society . . . as long as Julio is involved. (Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* [Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993], p. 188)

14. Raymundo Riva-Palacio, in interview with Claudia Fernández, *Pulso*, July / September, 1995, p. 20.

15. The coup at *Excelsior* and subsequent events are the subject of fictionalized accounts written by two of the men involved: Vicente Leñero's *Los periodistas* and Héctor Aguilar-Camín's *La guerra de galio*.

16. The following discussion of *Proceso*, *unomásuno*, and *La Jornada* is based on the author's interviews with a number of journalists in Mexico City, including Froylan López, editor, *Proceso*, March 26, 1996; Carlos Marín, editor, *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996 and March 26, 1996; Raymundo Riva-Palacio, news editor, *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 18, 1995 and March 21, 1996; and Carlos Payán, editor-in-chief, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 14, 1995.

17. Of the original *Proceso* group, a dozen or so remained in its top management (and, according to them, the pinnacle of Mexico's media). These included Julio Scherer, Vicente Leñero, Froylan López, Carlos Marín, Enrique Sánchez-España, Enrique Maza, and Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda. A handful, including Gastón García-Cantú, were lured back to *Excelsior* (and were regarded as sellouts by the *Proceso* elite). Approximately a dozen subsequently died, retired, or left journalism. Around ten—including such luminaries of Mexican journalism as Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, Elías Chávez, and José Reveles—left *Proceso* to cross-fertilize other independent media. Granados-Chapa, for instance, later worked for a number of print and broadcast media, including *unomásuno*, *La Jornada*, and *Reforma*.

18. On the relationship between Mexican intellectuals and the print media, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 129–32 and 176–89.

19. Many of them (including Trinidad-Ferriera, now a columnist at *El Universal*) would later reappear as the most pro-government of the original *Excelsior* exiles.

20. It also included a promising young reporter who had not worked at *Excelsior*, Raymundo Riva-Palacio.

21. In contrast to *Proceso*'s relatively uncompromising stance, *unomásuno* was identified with the liberalizing wing of the PRI, which saw the new paper as a vehicle for President López-Portillo's political reform program. According

to one former journalist there, its start-up capital came partly from entrepreneur José Solís (who retained 40% of the stock), partly from its own staff, and partly from government loans. The newspaper's first issue included a lengthy, front-page interview with Interior Minister Rodolfo González announcing the government's proposals for political reform. (Author's interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.)

22. A few departures were triggered in 1980, when Becerra-Acosta, Payán, and Lira converted *unomásuno* from a cooperative into a privately held company. However, the real hemorrhage began on December 2, 1983, when leading editors Payán, Lira, Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, and Héctor Aguilar-Camín gave notice. They were followed a week later by some forty-six others. A trickle of defections continued into 1984, effectively gutting *unomásuno*.

23. In 1989, President Carlos Salinas coerced Becerra-Acosta into selling *unomásuno* to a political ally, Angel Borja. (See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* [Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993], pp. 309–10, 316–19.) Since then, the paper's ownership has changed to former government official Luis Gutiérrez and later to businessman Jacobo Zaidenwebber. *Unomásuno* is generally aligned with the De la Madrid faction of the PRI.

24. My calculations suggest that about 60 of the original 150 members of the news staff who left with Scherer remained active in journalism in the mid-1990s.

25. One, José Dudet, even started a popular chain of bakeries in Mexico City known as *La Baguette*.

26. Author's interview with Carlos Marín, news editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996.

27. Author's interviews with Froylan López, editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 26, 1996, and Carlos Marín, news editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996 and March 26, 1996.

28. On the effects of the 1985 earthquake, see Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre: Crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987).

29. Data is based on two one-week samples from the second full week in September and the second full week in March. Assertiveness was measured every year; agenda setting was measured every other year.

30. My interviews suggest that this "valley" in 1995—and the contemporaneous increase in coverage of officials—was a result of the paper's worsening financial condition in the wake of the Mexican peso crisis. Its economic straits rendered the paper more vulnerable to official blandishments, especially *gacetillas*. Higher revenues in 1996 put the paper back on course toward increasingly assertive coverage.

31. Author's interviews with Rogelio Cárdenas Jr., publisher of *El Financiero*, and Alejandro Ramos, editor-in-chief of *El Financiero*, Mexico City, March 27, 1996; author's interviews with Jesús Sánchez, politics editor of *El Financiero*, Mexico City, September 20, 1995 and March 26, 1996.

32. Author's interview with Hernán Casares, news editor of *El Diario de Yucatán*, Mérida, April 6, 1996.

33. On the influence of *El Diario de Yucatán*, see Adolfo Aguilar-Zinzer,

Vamos a ganar! La pugna de Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas por el poder (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995), p. 77.

34. According to one study, three people have been fired for corruption in the history of the paper. See Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The Search for Rights and Responsibilities of the Press and Mass Media in Four Latin American nations*, IIE Research Report no. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 61. My interviews suggest that this is more a symptom of widespread rule acceptance than lax enforcement.

35. Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The Search for Rights and Responsibilities of the Press and Mass Media in Four Latin American Nations*, IIE Research Report no. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 62.

36. Data for this graph was provided by Ramón Alberto Garza, editor-in-chief of both *El Norte* and *Reforma* (author's interview, Mexico City, April 17, 1996).

37. "Chilango" is a somewhat pejorative term for a Mexico City resident.

38. Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

39. Author's interview with Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

40. Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, former reporter at *Siglo 21*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.

41. Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996; Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996. The phrase "academic vices" comes from Camarena.

42. Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996; Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

43. Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996, and Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

44. Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996; Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

45. One exception came after the paper published an allegedly obscene and sacrilegious cartoon. At the behest of the Church, local businessmen affiliated with the PAN briefly boycotted the paper. (Author's interview with Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.)

46. I owe the term "Salinastroika" to Denise Dresser, "The Impending Elections: The Only Certainty Is Uncertainty," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, July / August 1994:22–28.

47. See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), pp. 363–70. Salinas did not, however, force newspapers to pay the general 2% capital tax, nor did he end the practice of accepting television airtime in place of corporate taxes. See Claudia Fernández, *Pulso*, July / September, 1995, p. 22.

48. Under the leadership of a new management team that took over during the Salinas administration, PIPSA underwent a gradual transformation into a more normal business enterprise. According to Mexican newspaper editors, pre-

paring PIPSA for successful privatization was the “cherished dream” and “obsession” of PIPSA’s director, René Villarreal. Consequently, the company could not afford the kind of international opprobrium that would inevitably follow any blatant attempt to strangle Mexico’s emerging independent press. Furthermore, cutting off newsprint to independent and financially viable publications would cost a commercially oriented PIPSA valuable clients. To that end, PIPSA’s management attempted to limit subsidies and place relations with the print media on a strictly commercial footing.

49. See, for instance, Suzanne Billelo, “La prensa extranjera y las elecciones en Chihuahua, julio de 1986,” in Gerardo M. Bueno, ed., *México-Estados Unidos 1986* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México). In 1985, *Proceso* republished a series of criticisms of Mexico from *Newsweek*, *El País*, and *L’Express*. (See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa vendida* [Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993], p. 273.) As subsequent events made clear, however, Salinas proved extremely effective in managing the press in the United States, which proved substantially more sympathetic to his administration than most independent papers in Mexico.

50. Author’s interview with Alejandro Junco, publisher of *Reforma* and *El Norte*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.

51. Author’s interview with Alejandro Junco, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.

52. According to Junco, *Reforma*’s original prospectus called for a 32-page, financially oriented paper with an initial circulation of 35,000 copies. The paper he ultimately launched was 96 pages, with seven sections covering all types of news. (Author’s interview with Alejandro Junco, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.)

53. See Mark Fitzgerald, “Mexico’s Press: Ready for Freedom?” *Editor and Publisher*, July 8, 1995, 128 (27); author’s interviews with Ignacio Mijares, *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995; senior official at the Unión de Vocadores, Mexico City; July 25, 1995; Adalberto Santoya, Unión de Vocadores, Mexico City, July 26, 1995.

54. Claire Poole, *Mexico Business*, September 1995, pp. 56–58; author’s interview with Ignacio Mijares, director of planning and budgeting for *El Norte* and *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 26, 1995.

55. Javier Moreno-Valle’s 1990 plan to create a Mexico City newspaper, *El Independiente*, collapsed before a single issue was published, even though it included many of the same individuals. Another prior attempt by a different group, *El Centenario*, had also failed. Moreno-Valle later began Channel 40, now regarded as Mexico’s most independent television station, and many of the journalists involved in these projects joined other independent publications that appeared at the end of the 1990s (such as *Milenio*).

56. Author’s interview with former *Reforma* editor, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.

57. *Reforma*’s appearance also had certain negative consequences for independent journalism in Mexico City. *El Financiero* never quite recovered from the departure of so many influential staffers, and *Proceso* lost its claim as the leader in investigative reporting.

58. Author's interview with senior Mexican journalist, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

59. On media coverage of Chiapas, see Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, *Chiapas: La comunicación enmascarada* (Mexico City: Editorial Diana, 1994).

60. Author's interview with Ignacio Mijares, Mexico City, September 26, 1995; author's interview with Carlos Payán, Mexico City, August 14, 1995; author's interviews with PIPSA managers.

61. See Raymundo Riva-Palacio, "Update on the Mexican Press," *Nieman Reports*, Summer 1994, 48 (2):76–77.

62. The crisis did have uniformly negative consequences for the one independent newspaper that depended heavily on government revenues (*La Jornada*).

63. Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists and publishers. Recent research by Sallie Hughes of Tulane University confirms this trend.

64. Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996. As Zepeda narrated it, *Siglo 21* first confronted a governor who was intensely hostile toward the new paper but was forced to resign after the sewer explosion. He was replaced by an equally truculent interim governor who was (fortunately) too weak and ineffectual to do serious damage. Then the PAN won.

65. As *El Financiero* newspaper put it, Mexico was "one of the seven most backward countries with respect to communications law, comparable only to Libya, Iraq, Qatar, and Cuba, and behind countries like Paraguay, Colombia and Guatemala" ("Mexico, entre los siete países con las leyes mas atrasada en material de comunicación," April 24, 1998, cited in Javier Esteinou-Madrid, "Democracia, medios de información, y final del siglo XX en México," *Comunicación y Democracia*, October 1998 / January 1999, 12 [3]:5).

66. The charges were ultimately dropped and the owner, Juan Francisco Healy-Ortiz, was released.

67. See Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press: A Worldwide Survey* (New York: Committee to Protect Journalists), various years.

68. *Zeta*, the primary local independent publication, came out once per week. It was the only independent local publication until the launch of *Frontera*.

69. This was especially true in the case of the Monterrey Group companies, though a number of Monterrey-based businessmen became strongly identified with the Salinas administration.

70. I calculated the percentage of reporters who received bribes by averaging the estimates of fifteen leading Mexican journalists; to enhance reliability, I discarded journalists' ratings of the papers for which they worked. For results, see appendix.

71. For the classic study on intellectuals, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

72. Much the same sort of process made closet dissidents out of journalists in Eastern Europe (personal conversation with Jane Leftwich Curry).

73. Murray Fromson, "Mexico's Struggle for a Free Press," in Richard R. Cole, ed., *Communication in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and So-*

ciety (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996), pp. 131–32. Gardner retired as professor of journalism at Michigan State University in 1991.

74. Estimates of revenues from official advertising are based on author's interviews with newspaper publishers, editors, chief financial officers, and accounting staff.

75. Suzanne Billelo, "La prensa extranjera y las elecciones en Chihuahua, julio de 1986," in Gerardo M. Bueno, ed., *México-Estados Unidos 1986* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México).

CHAPTER 6. OPENING MEXICO'S BROADCAST MEDIA

1. See Carlos Puig, "La historia de Televisa: El aplauso sumiso al gobierno en turno," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 12.

2. In 1994, *Forbes* magazine listed Azcárraga as one of Mexico's wealthiest individuals, with a family net worth of \$5.4 billion. In 1995, following the sudden devaluation of the Mexican peso and ensuing economic crisis, *Forbes* estimated his family's assets at \$1.6 billion. (See *Forbes*, July 18, 1994, p. 194, and July 17, 1995, p. 194.)

3. See *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, pp. 6–16.

4. Carlos Monsiváis, "Azcárraga Milmo y la 'filosofía de Televisa,'" *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 58.

5. Carlos Marín, "Disputa familiar por el legado de 'El Tigre': Un emporio de 1,600 millones de dólares," *Proceso*, July 20, 1997, pp. 6–13; Carlos Puig, "La pugna llega a los noticiarios: Cómo humilló Ricardo Rocha a Zabludovsky el 6 de julio," *Proceso*, July 20, 1997, pp. 8–9.

6. Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995) cite a figure of 72% (p. 40). A poll by MORI of Mexico for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / PEAC in April 1993 claimed 74%. Polls by the Office of the President suggest slightly more modest percentages. The Mexico 2000 Panel Study (National Science Foundation grant SES-9905703) shows similar figures.

7. See Daniel C. Hallin, "La Nota Roja: Popular Journalism and the Transition to Democracy in Mexico," in Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, eds., *Tabloid Tales* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

8. Data from the CIRT (Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry) and Nielsen give similar information on the number of Multivisión subscribers.

9. In addition to Moreno-Valle and Cabalceta, the company also received start-up financing from Nacional Financiera (which controls 15% of stock) and Francisco Ibarra of Grupo Acir. (See ADCEBRA, October 1995, pp. 58–59.)

10. See ADCEBRA, October 1995, pp. 58–59.

11. It is not clear whether the problems in question were purely technological or whether they were also the result of government interference. The station had earlier faced problems in securing government permission to broadcast. (Author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.)

12. Following her report on Pemex, Gina Batista's car was shot at and she required police protection for the next year (author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997).

13. According to a number of journalists and government officials, other perceived "enemies" included Channel 11 of Chihuahua, Channel 22, and Mexico's principal independent publications (*Reforma*, *Proceso*, etc.).

14. Author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

15. Still another local broadcaster is Mexico City's Channel 11, owned by the government and managed by the National Polytechnic Institute since 1958. Modernized in 1989–92, Channel 11 provides news coverage similar to that of Televisa and Televisión Azteca. Its reach continues to be limited to the Mexico City metropolitan area, and even within that zone reception is sometimes poor.

16. Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920–1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000); Dinorah Zapata-Vázquez, *Genesis y desarrollo de la radio y la televisión en Nuevo León* (Nuevo León: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León / Centro de Información de Historia Regional / Editorial Gona, 1990); Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981); and Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1972).

17. Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920–1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000); *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, pp. 21–44; Marvin Alisky, "Radio's Role in Mexico," *Journalism Quarterly*, Winter 1954, 31(4):67–80.

18. Antonio Puertas, "¿Para Empezar, Monitor?" *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, p. 43.

19. María Antoineta Barragán, *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, pp. 21–44.

20. Private market research report prepared for Radio Red by Consultores Internacionales, 1995, p. 78; author's interviews with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, January 23, 1997 and March 18, 1997.

21. See Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre: Crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987), pp. 17–122; Elena Poniatowska, *Nothing, Nobody: The Voices of the Mexico City Earthquake*, trans. Aurora Camacho de Schmidt and Arthur Schmidt (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Daniel Cazés, *Volver a nacer: Memorias del 85* (Mexico City: Editorial La Jornada, 1995).

22. See Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre: Crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987), especially pp. 40–51; Ligia Tavera-Fenollosa, "The Movimiento de Damnificados: Democratic Transformation of Citizenry and Government in Mexico City," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1999).

23. Author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

24. Author's interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, Mexico City, April 18, 1996.

25. Almost ten years to the day after the 1985 earthquake, a series of tremors struck Mexico City. Although damage was minimal, the magnitude of the tremors was unsettling, and many residents refused to return to their homes for most of the day. I happened to be living in Mexico City at the time and was struck by the degree to which people turned to radio for updates rather than other media. Many ignored television sets placed in storefront windows in favor of radio announcements; others watched only muted television images while listening to radio reports.

26. Exactly the same sort of process occurred in Guadalajara after the explosion of twelve kilometers of city sewer in 1992. Once again, government incompetence and corruption were blamed; once again, timely and accurate reports on the radio earned a few stations a great deal of credibility.

27. Author's interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, September 18, 1995.

28. Author's interview with Benjamín Wong, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

29. Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

30. Author's interview with René Delgado, Mexico City, March 26, 1996.

31. Author's interview with Ricardo Alemán, columnist at *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 12, 1995; see also Pablo Arrendondo-Ramírez, Gilberto Fregoso-Peralta, and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, eds., *Así se calló el sistema: Comunicación y elecciones en 1988* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991).

32. Author's interview with former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996; see also Carlos Puig, "Mermada en sus márgenes de ganancia y de audiencia, enduedada y vendiendo parte de sus activos, Televisa prepara el conflictivo reemplazo de sus mandos," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 6; Carlos Puig, "En 1989, un primer intento de apertura informativa en Televisa terminó con el despido de Guillermo Ochoa," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 10; Alvaro Delgado, "No soportó el gobierno la apertura noticiosa: La 'primavera de Televisa,' efímera: Azcárraga se plegó y Burillo dijo adiós," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 9.

33. Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

34. These included men like José Cárdenas and Javier Solórzano, the latter of whom later joined Multivisión's *En Blanco y Negro*.

35. Private market research report conducted for Radio Red by Consultores Internacionales in 1995.

36. This figure represents my analysis of advertising rates at five of Mexico City's largest radio concerns. The rates themselves are taken from a private market research study by Consultores Internacionales, undertaken for Radio Red in 1995, p. 87.

37. On a scale of one to ten (with ten representing complete independence), Mexican sources rated radio between a three and a seven during 1990–94. The average rating was between five and six.

38. Author's interview with former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.

39. Those dismissed included Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, Enrique Quintana, Francisco Huerta, José Cárdenas, and René Delgado.

40. Author's interviews with María Teresa Gómez-Mont, PAN federal deputy on a congressional committee dealing with the media, Mexico City, August 11, 1995 and March 20, 1996.

41. ADCEBRA, October 1995, *Suplemento Público*.

42. Ultimately, NBC declined to exercise this option.

43. Author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

44. See Alvaro Delgado, "Nuevos episodios de la guerra por el 'rating': El 'descontón' de Rocha y la paz unilateral de Azcárraga," *Proceso*, November 3, 1996, p. 18.

45. For instance, Televisa initially threatened to blacklist artists who performed for the competition and to deny airtime to firms that advertised on other stations (see *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 5, 1993).

46. The following discussion is based on content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks in March for 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

47. Data for Figure 9 is from my content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks in March for 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

48. Claire Poole, Christina Adams, and Joshua Chaffin, "Mexico's Media Titans," *Mexico Business*, September 1995, p. 44. The company was insulated from the worst effects of the crisis because it had managed to convert its dollar-denominated debt into pesos on the eve of the devaluation, presumably exploiting information on the planned currency adjustments. See Carlos Puig, "La historia de Televisa: El aplauso sumiso al gobierno en turno," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997; Jack Virtue, "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón . . . y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July / September 1995, p. 16.

49. See Andrew Paxman, "A Media Blitzed," *Variety*, January 9, 1995, p. 47.

50. Cited in Fernando Mayolo-López, "Las elecciones del 94 no me la ganó Zedillo, sino Salinas, Pronasol, y Televisa: Diego Fernández de Cevallos," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 16.

51. Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), Comisión de Radiodifusión, "Informe global sobre el monitoreo de noticiarios de radio y televisión de los linamientos sugeridos por la Comisión de Radiodifusión a la Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Radio y Televisión," August 1994; Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, "Las elecciones federales de 1994 en México según doce medios de comunicación (enero-agosto de 1994)," report by Alianza Cívica / Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos / Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, Mexico City.

52. On the use of polls, see Alejandro Moreno, "The Political Use of Public Opinion Polls: Building Popular Support in Mexico under Salinas"; Juan Carlos Gamboa, "Media, Public Opinion Polls, and the 1994 Mexican Presidential

Election”; and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, “The Worst Opinions: Public Opinion Polls, Elections, and the Media in Mexico, 1994,” in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Polling for Democracy: Public Opinion and Political Liberalization in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996).

53. See Jorge I. Domínguez and James McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Alejandro Poiré, “Retrospective Voting, Partisanship and Loyalty in the Presidential Elections: Mexico 1994,” in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico’s Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

54. Author’s interview with former reporter for Televisa, March 21, 1996; author’s interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, March 14, 1997; author’s interviews with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, January 23, 1997 and March 18, 1997; author’s interviews with staff of U.S. Information Agency at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, April 1, 1996 and July 17, 1996.

55. Alvaro Delgado, “No soportó el gobierno la apertura noticiosa: La ‘primavera de Televisa,’ efímera: Azcárraga se plegó y Burillo dijo adiós,” *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 9.

56. Burillo subsequently sold his shares in the corporation.

57. Carlos Puig, “Azcárraga Jean: ‘Yo soy empresario; no creo que tener buenas o malas relaciones con el secretario de Gobernación vaya a alterar mi rating,’” *Proceso*, March 16, 1997, p. 31.

58. The 23% figure is based on the total time dedicated to political parties or candidates on sixteen different television programs in Mexico, as calculated by the IFE. Figures from the Mexican Academy for Human Rights are similar.

59. On the 2000 elections, see Chappell Lawson, “Television Coverage, Media Effects, and the 2000 Elections,” paper presented at the Mexico 2000 Conference, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, December 8–9, 2000.

60. Author’s interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of *Monitor*, Mexico City, April 18, 1996.

61. Author’s interviews. These same sentiments were echoed by other journalists with experience in the electronic media, including René Delgado (author’s interview, Mexico City, March 28, 1996) and Ramy Schwartz (author’s interview, Mexico City, March 18, 1997).

62. Author’s interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of *Monitor*, Mexico City, April 18, 1996. Attempts at control included substantial investment in public opinion polls. See Alejandro Moreno, “The Political Use of Public Opinion Polls: Building Popular Support in Mexico under Salinas,” in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Polling for Democracy: Public Opinion and Political Liberalization in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996).

63. The first person to emphasize to me the importance of market competition in explaining the evolution of Mexico’s broadcast media was Amalia García of the PRD (author’s interview, Mexico City, August 15, 1995).

64. The only electronic exceptions are pay-television firms, which derive a substantial portion of their revenues from subscriptions and thus may behave more like magazines.

65. See Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The Search for Rights and Responsibilities of the Press and Mass Media in Four Latin American Nations*, IIE Research Report no. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 59.

66. See market research study by Consultores Internacionales, undertaken for Radio Red in 1995, pp. 73–77; author's interviews with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, January 23, 1997 and March 18, 1997.

67. According to one poll, 31% found television news very credible, 41% somewhat credible, and 19% not very credible—very low for a visual medium that is well regarded in other countries. (See “Los números de los medios,” *Revista Especial*, no author, May / June, 1994, pp. 55–58; and *Reforma*, March 18, 1994.) A poll by MORI of Mexico for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes / PEAC, April 1993, revealed that 64% saw total or partial government control of television; a survey by Centro de Estudios Económicos del Sector Privado, in 1987, found that only 37% believed in the press. See Raymundo Riva-Palacio, “De cara al futuro,” *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación*, August 1990, p. 51; and Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para un nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 25.

68. Indeed, interviews with officials in the Zedillo administration confirmed that they recognized how the logic of commercial competition made government control more difficult.

69. Author's interviews with officials at the Interior Ministry and the Office of Technical Advisory to the President, Mexico City, 1995–96.

70. The most important rival group was led by Multivisión's Joaquín Vargas, Clemente Serna, and Adrián Sada, in partnership with America's Fox and Turner networks and with Mexico's Banco Serfín. The second dark-horse contender was Raymundo Gómez-Flores, a Guadalajara entrepreneur with help from Capital Cities / ABC and Paramount in the United States.

71. The charges were originally aired by Televisa on July 7, and followed up by newscaster Ricardo Rocha in his weekly television program *Detrás de la Noticia* on October 27, 1996. Several other media, especially *Proceso* magazine, subsequently pursued the story. See Alvaro Delgado, “Nuevos episodios de la guerra por el ‘rating’: El ‘descontón’ de Rocha y la paz unilateral de Azcárraga,” *Proceso*, November 3, 1996, p. 15.

72. Carlos Ramírez, “Indicador político,” *El Universal*, July 1, 1996, p. 8; Murray Fromson, “Mexico's Struggle for a Free Press,” in Richard R. Cole, ed., *Communication in Latin America: Journalism, Mass Media, and Society* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996), pp. 126–27.

73. Gerardo Galarza, “Salinas Pliego: Presentaré una demanda contra Ricardo Rocha por sus calumnias e infamias,” *Proceso*, November 3, 1996, p. 18.

74. During his brother's tenure in office, Raúl managed to scare off potential rival bidders for Mexico's equestrian league, which he sought to control. See Carlos Ramírez, “Indicador político,” *El Universal*, July 1, 1996, p. 8.

75. Gerardo Galarza, “Salinas Pliego: Presentaré una demanda contra Ricardo Rocha por sus calumnias e infamias,” *Proceso*, November 3, 1996, p. 18.

76. Author's interview with broadcast journalist, March 18, 1997.
77. Author's interview with officials at the U.S. Information Service, Mexico City, March 1997.
78. Author's interview with middle-level official, Ministry of Communication and Transport, Mexico City, March 18, 1996.
79. Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 18, 1997.
80. Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 18, 1997.
81. I have only heard of one case (a local provincial radio station) in which a broadcaster actually lost his license.
82. The one case where this was not true was in Mérida, where the independent *El Diario de Yucatán* had long dominated the market. There, it was the pro-government paper *Por Esto*, founded in the early 1990s, that first introduced most format changes.
83. Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 18, 1997.

CHAPTER 7. MEDIA OPENING AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN MEXICO

1. Author's content analysis of party platforms of the PRI, PAN, and PRD since 1980.
2. Author's content analysis of *Proceso* and *La Jornada* (described below). For further discussion of official agenda control, see chapter 4.
3. Author's content analysis of *Proceso* and *La Jornada* (described below). For a discussion of leftist intellectual discourse, see Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).
4. The last portion of September was chosen because it included the period immediately after the founding of the paper (and subsequent anniversaries), which generally led to greater coverage of Mexican politics. This period also included the aftermath of the 1985 earthquake (and subsequent anniversaries of the event), which provided the paper's editorial board with all the opportunity it needed to write about civil society. Finally, the same period followed the annual celebration of Mexican independence—including the president's reenactment of the *grito* (cry)—which gave editorial writers the opportunity to invoke PRI dogma and terminology. In other words, this period offered maximum opportunity for *La Jornada* to comment on Mexican politics using official, civic, or other frames.
5. See Roderic Ai Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985). Data from Camp's Mexican Intellectuals Biography Project (pp. 43–54) suggests that those intellectuals who became most involved in creating a new political discourse (Monsiváis, Aguilar-Camín, Vicente Leñero, Elena Poniatowska, etc.) were less likely to follow a public sector career, least likely to be mentioned by government officials as prominent, and likely to be mentioned as prominent by U.S. scholars.

6. *Proceso*, September 29, 1986, p. 38. Leftists would change their opinion on this issue and endorse international monitoring after the contested elections of 1988.

7. See Jeffrey Alexander and Ronald N. Jacobs, "Toward a Voluntaristic and Cultural Approach to Mass Communications: Elihu Katz and the Communicative Understanding of Civil Society," in Tamar Liebes and James Curran, eds., *Essays in Honor of Elihu Katz* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 16; Jeffrey Alexander, "Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society," in Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds., *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Ligia Tavera-Fenollosa, "The Movimiento de Damnificados: Democratic Transformation of Citizenry and Government in Mexico City," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1999), pp. 116–18.

8. Douglas A. Chalmers and Kerianne Piester, "Non-Governmental Organizations and the Changing Structure of Mexican Politics," in Laura Randall, ed., *The Changing Structure of Mexico: Political, Social, and Economic Prospects* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 253–61; Katherine M. Bailey, *Civic NGOs in Mexican Politics: A New Democratizing Force* (Master's thesis, Tulane University, 1998).

9. Juan Carlos Gamboa, "Media, Public Opinion Polls, and the 1994 Mexican Presidential Election," in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Polling for Democracy: Public Opinion and Political Liberalization in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996), pp. 22–23. Of course, handling of polls was often marked by distortions and errors by pro-regime media. See Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, "The Worst Opinions: Public Opinion Polls, Elections, and the Media in Mexico, 1994," in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Polling for Democracy: Public Opinion and Political Liberalization in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996).

10. Miguel Basañez, "Polling and the 1994 Election Results," in Roderic Ai Camp, ed., *Polling for Democracy: Public Opinion and Political Liberalization in Mexico* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996); Miguel Basañez, remarks at the Mexico 2000 Conference, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, December 9, 2000.

11. Joseph L. Klesner, "Broadening toward Democracy," in Laura Randall, ed., *Changing Structure of Mexico: Political Social, and Economic Prospects* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), p. 285.

12. Ligia Tavera-Fenollosa, "The Movimiento de Damnificados: Democratic Transformation of Citizenry and Government in Mexico City," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1999), pp. 120–21.

13. These data are thus the inverse of data presented in chapter 5.

14. Author's content analysis of both publications from 1985 to 1994.

15. Sergio Aguayo and Luz Paula Parra, *Las organizaciones no gubernamentales de derechos humanos en México: Entre la democracia participativa y la electoral* (Mexico City: Alianza Cívica / Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, 1997), p. 19. The Convergencia was created in August 17, 1990; it was a forerunner of the umbrella civic group Alianza Cívica.

16. For a summary of influences on Mexican human rights activists during the 1980s and 1990s, see Sergio Aguayo and Luz Paula Parra, *Las organizaciones no gubernamentales de derechos humanos en Mexico: Entre la democracia participativa y la electoral* (Mexico City: Alianza Cívica / Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, 1997).

17. *La Jornada*, editorial, September 19, 1988, p. 2.

18. Author's content analysis of *La Jornada* and *Proceso*, 1984–96.

19. Author's interviews with various Mexican activists and journalists.

20. Sergio Aguayo and Luz Paula Parra, *Las organizaciones no gubernamentales de derechos humanos en Mexico: Entre la democracia participativa y la electoral* (Mexico City: Alianza Cívica / Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, 1997), p. 29.

21. Sergio Aguayo and Luz Paula Parra, *Las organizaciones no gubernamentales de derechos humanos en Mexico: Entre la democracia participativa y la electoral* (Mexico City: Alianza Cívica / Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, 1997), p. 29.

22. See Ligia Tavera-Fenollosa, "The Movimiento de Damnificados: Democratic Transformation of Citizenry and Government in Mexico City," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Todd Eisenstadt, and Jane Hinley, eds., *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1999), pp. 120–23.

23. *La Jornada*, editorial, September 19, 1994.

24. On the role of civil society in Mexico's political transition more broadly, see Joe Foweraker, "Los movimientos populares y la transformación del sistema político mexicano," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 1989, 51 (4).; Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig, ed., *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico* (Boulder: Lynne Reiner, in association with the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1990); Ligia Tavera-Fenollosa, "Desafiando las bases simbólicas de la exclusión: Movimientos sociales y sociedad civil," *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, no. 14: Transición política y sociedad civil, January / June 1999.

CHAPTER 8. MEDIA OPENING, SCANDAL, AND REGIME DELEGITIMATION

1. Here, scandal is defined as public outrage to acts that are perceived as violating norms of conduct in the political realm. The more egregious and more widely known the violation, the greater the scandal.

2. The exact date was May 22, 1993.

3. Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, "Plaza pública: Secretos de confesión," *El Norte*, July 28, 1994.

4. For the conflicting views of clergy on the Posadas assassination, see Rod-
eric Ai Camp, *Crossing Swords: Politics and Religion in Mexico* (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 84 and 101 (n47).

5. See *Reforma*, September 29, 1994.

6. The shocking nature of the allegations was accentuated by the fact that
José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu had previously been married to Raúl's sister.

7. Swiss authorities eventually located over \$120 million of Raúl's fortune
and determined that much of it was drug related.

8. Mario Ruiz-Massieu, facing a lengthy prison term, eventually committed
suicide in the United States.

9. Roberto Zamarripa, "El Güero Palma protegido en Sonora desde 1993,"
Reforma, June 30, 1995; Irma Salas, Cayetano Frías, and Gerardo Román, "De-
tienen por complicés a funcionarios de la PGR," *Reforma*, June 25, 1995.

10. See Andrés Oppenheimer, *Bordering on Chaos* (Boston: Little, Brown,
1996).

11. 24 *Horas*, March 1–4, 1993.

12. The case was ultimately dropped in 1996, after an apparent reconcilia-
tion between Zedillo and Madrazo. See Ernesto Nuñez, "...Y dicen que es
caso cerrado," *Reforma*, June 1, 1999, p. 8A.

13. Alzati had, however, managed to receive a master's degree from Har-
vard's Kennedy School of Government.

14. See *El Norte*, August 17, 1996, p. 1; and *El Norte*, "Cae Socrates Rizzo,"
April 18, 1996, p. 1.

15. Roberto Zamarripa, "Guerrero: Una mirada especial," *Reforma*, March
17, 1996.

16. In September 1988, Mexican army defector Zacarias Osorio-Cruz re-
vealed that he had been a member of an army unit that murdered between 60
and 140 civilians between August 1978 and May 1983. He estimated the total
number of civilians eliminated at between 180 and 520. See Article 19, *In the
Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Ar-
ticle 19, 1989), pp. 15–16. Until the Chiapas uprising, counterinsurgency activ-
ities were not reported in Mexico, and Osorio-Cruz's testimony in 1989 was
published only by *Proceso*.

17. Stephen D. Morris, "Corruption and the Mexican Political System: Con-
tinuity and Change," *Third World Quarterly*, 1999, 20 (3):623–43, p. 623. See
also pp. 628–30.

18. See Carlos Castillo-Peraza, "Playa Eréndira, Michoacán," *Reforma*,
May 1, 1997, and "Playa Eréndira, Michoacán (II)," *Reforma*, May 8, 1997.

19. The commission was created by presidential fiat in response to an Amer-
ica's Watch report detailing the extent of human rights abuses in Mexico. Pres-
ident Salinas feared bad publicity surrounding the report might jeopardize the
approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement by the U.S. Congress.

20. Antonio Lozano-Gracia, a PAN legislator, was Zedillo's first attorney
general. He was replaced shortly before the 1997 elections by Jorge Madrazo-
Cuellar, a political independent.

21. Jaime Sánchez-Susarrey, "Aguas blancas," *Reforma*, March 16, 1996.

22. Raymundo Riva-Palacio and Ciro Gómez-Leyva, “Entrevista con Rubén Figueroa: ‘Esas preguntas me perjudican,’” *Reforma*, July 14, 1995.

23. See Andrei S. Markovits and Mark Silverstein, *The Politics of Scandal: Power and Process in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988).

24. See Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, “Plaza pública,” *Reforma*, July 3, 1997.

25. See, for instance, a poll of 1,500 Mexican adults by the *Los Angeles Times* (poll no. 381), in conjunction with *Reforma* and *El Norte* newspapers, August 1–7, 1996; the Belden and Russonello poll of 1,526 potential voters carried out on July 23–August 1, 1994 (press release: Results of a National Poll of Mexican Voters, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1994; Belden and Russonello y Ciencia Aplicada, “Resumen de una encuesta sobre preferencias electorales en México,” *Este País*, no. 44, November 1994, special supplement, p. 7); and the Belden and Russonello poll of 1,546 adults in September 11–October 2, 1991; poll by the *Los Angeles Times* of 1,835 Mexican adults, August 5–13, 1989.

26. The percent believing that bribery or corruption has increased in the last three years went from 41% in 1991 to 49% in 1994 to 69% in 1996. See a poll of 1,500 Mexican adults by the *Los Angeles Times* (poll no. 381), in conjunction with *Reforma* and *El Norte* newspapers, August 1–7, 1996. See also the Belden and Russonello poll of 1,526 potential voters carried out July 23–August 1, 1994 (press release: Results of a National Poll of Mexican Voters, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1994 and Belden and Russonello y Ciencia Aplicada, “Resumen de una encuesta sobre preferencias electorales en México,” *Este País*, no. 44, November 1994, special supplement, p. 7).

CHAPTER 9. MEDIA OPENING, CAMPAIGNS, AND ELECTIONS

1. See José Barberán, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and Alicia López Montjardín, *Radiografía del fraude: Análisis de los resultados oficiales del 6 de julio* (Mexico City: Nuestro Tiempo, 1988).

2. See Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 61–63. On the 1997 elections as “founding,” see Chappell Lawson, “Mexico’s New Politics: The Elections of 1997,” *Journal of Democracy*, October 1997, 8 (4):13–27.

3. Author’s interviews with journalists, academics, and officials of the PRD, PAN, and the Office of Technical Advisory to the President.

4. Data for 1988 are from Pablo Arredondo-Ramírez, Gilberto Fregoso-Peralta, and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, *Así se calló el sistema: Comunicación y elecciones en 1988* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991); and Ilya Adler, “The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore / Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press / Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993). Data from 1994 and 1997 are from the Academia Mexicana de Derecho Humanos (Mexican Academy of Human

Rights) and the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE). Data comprise only television programs based in the Federal District (essentially, the two main networks).

5. Author's interviews with journalists, academics, and officials of the PRD, PAN and the Office of Technical Advisory to the President.

6. Jorge I. Domínguez and James McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 190–91.

7. Denise Dresser, "Mexico: The Decline of Dominant-Party Rule," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Abraham F. Lowenthal, eds., *Constructing Democratic Governance: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in the 1990s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 162.

8. Alejandro Poiré, "Retrospective Voting, Partisanship, and Loyalty in the 1994 Presidential Elections," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

9. Alejandro Poiré, "Retrospective Voting, Partisanship, and Loyalty in the 1994 Presidential Elections," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, 1999). See also Adolfo Aguilar-Zinzer, *Vamos a ganar! La pugna de Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas por el poder* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995).

10. Content analysis provides ammunition for both interpretations. In the 1994 elections, the PRD and the PAN received about the same (limited) quantity of airtime during the campaign, but coverage of the PRD was slightly more hostile. However, the PAN also fared better than the PRD throughout the Salinas administration.

11. The survey was designed by the author and conducted by *Reforma* newspaper. Data is available upon request.

12. See Thomas E. Patterson, *The Mass Media Election: How Americans Choose Their President* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Thomas E. Patterson and R. D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Politics* (New York: Putnam, 1976).

13. Data not shown. Neither of these effects was statistically significant at the .05 level, presumably because of the small sample size.

14. Those who did not list their voting preferences or their media usage ($n = 15$) were excluded from the sample. The question on television news read as follows: "Do you watch any news program on television? [If yes] Which one do you watch most? [After reply] How many days per week do you watch it?"

15. Voters who declined to state a preference were excluded from the analysis.

16. The difference between these three groups in July (about 1%) is not statistically significant.

17. See Stephen Ansolabehere, Roy Behr, and Shanto Iyengar, "Mass Media and Elections: An Overview," *American Politics Quarterly*, 1991 (19):109–39; and Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

18. Data presented below are based on pairwise deletion.

19. By convention, coefficients with a p value of less than .05 are considered statistically significant. A p value of less than .05 means that the effect observed has less than a 5% probability of occurring by random chance.

20. Multinomial logistic regression revealed the same results: controlling for other factors, Televisa viewership was a statistically significant predictor of shifts away from the PRI and toward PAN, PRD, and minor parties or undecideds. Azteca viewership, by contrast, helped the PRI against both the PRD and minor parties / undecideds.

21. *Reforma*, April 30, 1997.

22. For the original media dependency argument, see Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur, "A Dependency Model of Mass Media Effects," *Communication Research*, February 1976, 3 (1):3–21.

23. See James A. McCann, "The Changing Mexican Electorate: Political Interest, Expertise, and Party Support in the 1980s and 1990s," in Mónica Serano, ed., *Governing Mexico: Political Parties and Elections* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998).

24. For a similar argument as applied to a different context, see William Riker's discussion of "minimax regret" in *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

25. From the 1920s to 1997, Mexico City mayors were appointed by the president.

26. See Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, and Steven Greene, "Voting in Context: Personal, Media, and Organizational Intermediaries and Political Behavior," paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28–31, 1997.

27. This claim finds recent support in a sophisticated study of media framing in Dutch elections by Jan Kleinnijenhuis and Jan A. de Ridder, "Effects of Strategic News Framing on Party Preferences," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28–31, 1997. Kleinnijenhuis and de Ridder found that politically unsophisticated voters responded to horse race coverage (through bandwagoning) and criticisms without taking full account of source credibility. The politically engaged, by contrast, tended to discount claims by rival parties.

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSIONS

1. Author's interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of *Monitor*, April 18, 1996.

2. Javier Moreno-Valle, quoted in Salvador Corro, "En televisión ya podemos hacer todo y decir todo; 'no creo que haya alguien que pueda pararnos': Moreno Valle, de Canal 40," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 12.

3. I thank radio journalist Ramy Schwartz for pointing this out to me (author's interview, Mexico City, January 23, 1997).

4. Rogelio Ramírez de la O, remarks at a meeting of the Pacific Council on International Policy, University of California at San Diego, May 11, 1997.

5. Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, January 23, 1997.

6. Recent (as yet unpublished) research by Sallie Hughes of Tulane University strongly supports these conclusions.

7. It should be noted that this generalization applies only to *broadcasting*, not to narrowcast electronic media (cable, satellite, etc.) that compete with broadcast television. These media are almost uniformly private, and their presence tends to encourage privatization of other electronic media.

8. For the effects of media opening on China, see Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

9. See, for example, Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

10. See Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), pp. 31–39, 59–65.

11. Decree 98, March 1983. See Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 351.

12. Joseph D. Straubhaar, "TV and Video in the Transition from Military to Civilian Rule in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review*, 1989, 24 (1):140–54, p. 146.

13. See Fernando Reyes-Matta, "New Communication Technology and Press Freedom: A Chilean Case Study," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: A Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, no. 106, November 15, 1991; Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimarães, "Media Monopoly in Brazil," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1994, 44 (4):26–38, p. 38.

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16. See Samuel P. Huntington, *Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 3–5.

17. Zhang Xiaogang, "The Market versus the State: The Chinese Press since Tiananmen," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):195–221, p. 206.

18. Xu Yu, "Professionalism without Guarantees: Changes of the Chinese Press in the Post-1989 Years," *Gazette*, January / March 1994, 53 (1–2):23–41, p. 37.

19. Daniel C. Lynch, *After the Propaganda State: Media, Politics, and "Thought Work" in Reformed China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 6.

20. Johnston M. Mitchell, "The Evolution of a Free Press in Hungary: 1986–90," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens: University of Georgia, Cox

Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1990). See also Slavko Splichal, "Media Privatization and Democratization in Central-Eastern Europe," *Gazette*, 1992, 46 (1-2):3-22.

21. Author's interview with senior official at the Unión de Voceadores, Mexico City, July 25, 1995.

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23. Leonard R. Sussman, "Exit the Censor, Enter the Regulator," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: A Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, no. 106, November 15, 1991, p. 16.

24. Slavko Splichal, "Media Privatization and Democratization in Central-Eastern Europe," *Gazette*, 1992, 46 (1-2):3-22, p. 15.

25. Joseph D. Straubhaar, "TV and Video in the Transition from Military to Civilian Rule in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review*, 1989, 24 (1):140-54, p. 146.

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27. Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's Experiment with a Free Press," *Gazette*, January / March 1994, 53 (1-2):111-16, p. 116.

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30. See Michael Breen, "'Scoop' Has Different Meanings for South Korean Reporters," *Washington Times*, April 8, 1991; Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991.

31. See Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's Experiment with a Free Press," *Gazette*, January / March 1994, 53 (1-2):111-16; and Kyu Ho Youm, "Press Freedom in 'Democratic' South Korea: Moving from Authoritarian to Libertarian," *Gazette*, January 1989, 43 (1):53-71.

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INTERVIEWS

Note: The individuals listed alphabetically below include those with whom the author conducted formal interviews in which interviewees agreed to be identified. They do not include several dozen informal conversations with journalists, government officials, and others, nor interviews with those individuals who were unwilling to be cited in any form.

- Miguel Acosta, Mexican Academy for Human Rights, Mexico City, April 8, 1996.
- Ricardo Alemán, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 12, 1995.
- Gina Batista, Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.
- Alberto Beltán, *El Día*, Mexico City, July 27, 1995.
- Salvador Camarena, *Reforma* (formerly *Siglo 21*), Mexico City, March 11, 1996.
- Rogelio Cárdenas, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, March 27, 1996.
- Hernán Casares, *Diario de Yucatán*, Mérida, April 6, 1996.
- Juan Luis Concheiro, *Motivos*, August 15, 1995.
- René Delgado, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.
- Gabriel Echegoyan, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 7, 1995.
- Editor, provincial daily, April 2, 1996.
- Former editor, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.
- Former reporter, *La Jornada*, March 26, 1996.
- Former reporter, leading Mexico City daily, March 28, 1996.
- Former reporter, Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.
- Rosanna Fuentes, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.
- Amalia García, PRD, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.
- Ramón Alberto Garza, *Reforma*, Mexico City, April 17, 1996.
- Rafael Giménez, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.
- Pablo Gómez, PRD, Mexico City, September 11, 1995.
- María Teresa Gómez-Mont, Federal Deputy of the PAN, Mexico City, March 25, 1996.
- José Gutiérrez-Vivó, Radio Red, Mexico City, April 18, 1996.
- Don Hamilton, Director, U.S. Information Service, Mexico City, April 1, 1996.
- Gustavo Hurtado, Legal Affairs Manager, PIPSA, Mexico City, September 22, 1995 (telephone).
- César Jacobo, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.
- Alejandro Junco, *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.
- Froylan López, *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 26, 1996.
- Carlos Marín, *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996, and March 26, 1996.

- Marta Patricia Mendoza-Peña, alternate deputy of the PAN, Mexico City, August 11, 1995.
- Middle managers 1-2 and staffers 1-4, Televisa, Mexico City, March-April 1996.
- Middle-level official, Ministry of Communication and Transport, Mexico City, March 18, 1996.
- Ignacio Mijares, *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.
- Rocío Ortega, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 20, 1996.
- Carlos Payán, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 14, 1995.
- Diego Peterson, *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.
- Alejandro Ramos, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, March 27, 1996.
- Reporter, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, July 11, 1995, and July 18, 1995.
- Reporter, *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996.
- Reporter, *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.
- Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 18, 1995, and March 21, 1996.
- Jesús Sánchez, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, September 20, 1995, and March 27, 1996.
- Adalberto Santoya, Unión de Voceadores, Mexico City, July 26, 1995.
- Ramy Schwartz, formerly of Radio Red, Mexico City, January 23, 1997, and March 18, 1997.
- Yuri Sebolov, *Carpeta Púrpura*, Mexico City, March 18, 1996.
- Senior Mexican journalist, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.
- Senior official, Interior Ministry, Mexico City, March 20, 1996, and April 3, 1996.
- Senior official, Office of the President, Mexico City, March 20, 1996.
- Senior official, Office of the Secretary, Interior Ministry, April 3, 1996.
- Senior official, Office of Technical Advisory to the President, Mexico City, March 20, 1996.
- Senior official, Unión de Voceadores, Mexico City, July 25, 1995.
- Senior staffer, PAN 1997 mayoral campaign in Mexico City, Mexico City, February 6, 1997.
- Alfonso Sotelo-Valdés, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 8, 1995.
- Staffer 1, Office of Technical Advisory to the President, Mexico City, February 5, 1997.
- Staffers 1-3, *La Prensa*, Mexico City, July 26, 1995.
- Staffers 1-3, Office of Technical Advisory to the President, Mexico City, March 20, 1996.
- Staffers 1-3, U.S. Information Service, Mexico City, April 1, 1996.
- Street vendors 1-23, Mexico City, July 24-25, 1995.
- Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and *Etcétera*, Mexico City, September 19, 1995, and March 18, 1996.
- Francisco Vidal, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.
- Benjamín Wong, *Novedades*, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.
- Roberto Zamarripa, *Reforma*, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.
- Fausto Zapata, PRI, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.
- Jorge Zepeda, *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

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