REVIEW ESSAYS

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN MEXICO:
Politics after One-Party Rule*

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POLITICS AFTER NEOLIBERALISM: REREGULATION IN MEXICO. By Richard Snyder. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. 245. $60.00 cloth.)

MEXICO'S POLITICAL AWAKENING. By Vikram K. Chand. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University Press of Notre Dame, 2001. Pp. 378. $40.00 cloth, $20.00 paper.)

MEXICO UNDER ZEDILLO. Edited by Susan Kaufman Purcell and Luis Rubio. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998. Pp. 151. $12.95 paper.)

TOWARD MEXICO'S DEMOCRATIZATION: PARTIES, CAMPAIGNS, ELECTIONS, AND PUBLIC OPINION. Edited by Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré. (New York: Routledge, 1999. Pp. 251. $75.00 cloth, $22.99 paper.)

GOVERNING MEXICO: POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS. Edited by Mónica Serrano. (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998. Pp. 215. $19.95 paper.)

MARKET ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL CHANGE: COMPARING CHINA AND MEXICO. Edited by Juan D. Lindau and Timothy Cheek. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998. Pp. 346. $24.95 paper.)

ELITES, MASSES, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO: A CULTURALIST APPROACH. By Sara Schatz. (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000. Pp. 132. $55.00 cloth.)

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The electoral victory of Vicente Fox of the opposition Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) and his subsequent peaceful assumption of power represented the final act of Mexico's prolonged transition to democracy. The transition began in the early 1980s with a handful of opposition victories in municipal elections. The organizational capacity and electoral strength of the opposition moved up to the state level in many regions of the country during the 1990s as opposition candidates won congressional and gubernatorial elections in many states. Then in July 2000, the opposition conquered the presidency, delivering a decisive blow to the hegemony of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) over electoral politics in Mexico and ushering in a new era of multiparty democracy.

With the transition to democracy complete, the main challenge facing students of Mexican politics is to integrate Mexico into the broader theoretical debates of comparative politics. Because of the unique characteristics of its one-party regime, Mexico has long been excluded from comparative studies of Latin America and other developing regions. When the PRI dominated politics in Mexico, research focused narrowly on the ruling party and the presidency. Other governmental institutions were deemed unworthy of scholarly attention because they served largely as democratic window dressings for an otherwise authoritarian regime dominated by the president. But with the advent of competitive electoral politics in Mexico, institutions such as the legislature, opposition parties, elections, electoral institutes, federalism, and the judiciary have assumed new influence and relevance. Many scholars quickly recognized these changes and shifted their attention accordingly.

The new focus on democratic institutions and elections parallels similar trends in the broader comparative study of newly democratized countries in Latin America and elsewhere. Such concurrence has afforded important new opportunities to incorporate Mexico into broader comparative debates about institutions and democracy. Many of the works to be reviewed in this essay capitalize on these new opportunities by examining Mexico's political economy from a comparative perspective. Lindau and Cheek's *Market Economics and Political Change* and Schatz's *Elites, Masses, and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* both fall into this category. Many of the remaining works are more implicitly comparative. Various essays in Domínguez and Poiré's *Toward Mexico's Democratization*, for example, draw on U.S. models of voting behavior or the policy-making process and apply them to the Mexican case, while Serrano's *Governing Mexico* relies on the broader comparative literature on political parties to understand Mexico's experience with deinstitutionalizing one-party rule. While the application of these models to the Mexican case provides readers with new insights into the Mexican political reality, the most significant theoretical contribution of these works is the ability to use Mexican data to challenge and enrich models developed elsewhere and to specify the limits of their universality.

A second promising avenue for future research on Mexican politics

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is a new focus on subnational politics, particularly state-level politics. The subnational comparative case-study approach used by Richard Snyder in *Politics after Neoliberalism* is perhaps the best example of this kind of work currently available. Another important trend is the use of more sophisticated social science methods and statistical analysis. Now that public-opinion data and electoral data are more widely available, analysts have more opportunities to incorporate diverse methods into the study of Mexico. The works under review in this essay provide compelling examples of each of these new trends. More specifically, this essay will review recent contributions to the literature on Mexico on opposition parties, the rule of law, voting behavior, and federalism.

Opposition Parties

In the not-so-distant past, the internal workings of Mexico's opposition parties, while perhaps an intellectual curiosity, seemed largely inconsequential for understanding the functioning of the broader political system. But as opposition parties began to assume control of more municipalities and various state governments in the 1990s, the national Congress and the Federal District in 1997, and then the presidency in 2000, the impact of opposition parties became indisputable.

Vikram Chand's *Mexico's Political Awakening* provides a comprehensive analysis of the PAN in both the state of Chihuahua and the country. Chand argues that economic crisis and electoral reforms during increasing economic modernization brought about the political awakening of Mexican society, which in turn generated institutional transformation. Although Chand examines the changing role of the Catholic Church and civic associations, these actors seem to be secondary in his analysis to the transformation and rise of the PAN. Chand documents how the main goal of the PAN evolved from simply promoting civic consciousness to trying to win political power. The crucial elements of this transformation were building mass support, campaigning to win, devising strategies to counter fraud, improving party organization, and maintaining ideological flexibility. Even with success, tensions between Catholic doctrine and the new business orientation continued to cause problems for the PAN internally. Nevertheless, Chand contends, once the PAN gained power, party leaders improved governance by circumventing clientelist networks, improving efficiency, and reducing corruption. Chand provides a solid analysis of the PAN's development in Chihuahua, but he may be a bit too congratulatory of the PAN. His work could benefit from greater attention to the roles of other parties (such as the Partido de la Revolución Democrática or PRD) and the Left more generally in generating Mexico's "political awakening."

Yemile Mizrahi's contribution to *Governing Mexico: Political Parties and Elections*, edited by Mónica Serrano, provides a more critical view of the PAN

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as she analyzes how winning elections has weakened the PAN and created new tensions within the party. Mizrahi asserts that a weak and fragmented organization brought the PAN electoral success because it allowed for flexibility. But now this lack of organization is becoming an obstacle as the party tries to consolidate its rule across the country. Like Chand, Mizrahi emphasizes the friction within the PAN between seeking votes and maintaining ideological purity. The main dilemmas for growth, according to Mizrahi, are conflicts over the process of candidate selection and the development of nonclientelistic strategies for mobilizing electoral support. These tensions stressed by both Chand and Mizrahi clearly remain problematic for the PAN, as Vicente Fox's "self-nomination" to the presidency created strains vis-à-vis the old guard. Similarly, Fox's difficulty in getting even the members of his own party in the Congress to support his legislative initiatives suggests that internal divisions may limit the effectiveness of the PAN's rule.

Kathleen Bruhn's contributions to both the Serrano edited volume and Jorge Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré's *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* examine the Partido de la Revolución Democrática. Bruhn's piece in the Serrano volume stresses the difficulty of party building in a hegemonic one-party regime. In explaining why the PRD lost influence after the presidential elections of 1988, she points to both internal divisions and institutional weaknesses but also stresses the way the PRI's hostility to the opposition forced the PRD into mobilization and negotiation. Bruhn further contends that the emergence of the PRD had important consequences for the PAN. After the PRD's success in the 1988 elections, the PRI began to perceive the PRD as the greatest threat to its power. As a result, the PRI negotiated with the PAN in an attempt to channel votes away from the PRD.

In her contribution to the Domínguez and Poiré volume, Bruhn turns to the question of what explains the success of the PRD in the elections of 1997. Although she attributes the PRD's decline after 1988 to the difficulties of building a new party and uniting the Left, combined with hostility and violence from the PRI, Bruhn credits the PRD's success in 1997 to a better campaign strategy that aggressively targeted those outside of the traditional base of the party. She also attributes the PRD's success to economic crisis and the electoral reforms, which greatly expanded the PRD's access to public financing.

The work of Chand, Mizrahi, and Bruhn provides readers with valuable insights into the inner workings of two of Mexico's most important political parties. The next logical step for this ongoing research is to incorporate these cases into the larger debates about political parties because important questions about the Mexican party system remain unanswered. For example, are stronger or weaker parties better for democratic accountability? Will Mexico follow the path of Venezuela's partyarchy (Coppedge 1994) or Brazil's inchoate party system (Mainwaring 1999)? Will Mexico be able

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to find that happy middle ground where parties represent the interests of their constituents and provide accountability from election to election? Will ongoing insolvable economic crises result in the collapse of the party system as in Peru and Venezuela? What kind of electoral institutions generate an accountable party system? Mexico's experience should be added to the equation as analysts try to understand which types of party systems promote moderation and compromise and thus facilitate democratic stability and accountability.

The Separation of Powers and the Rule of Law

Guillermo O'Donnell's theoretical work on delegative democracy (1994) and horizontal accountability (1998) established a clear link between the separation of powers and the rule of law. He argues that the rule of law can be implemented only when institutions such as the legislature and the judiciary have sufficient power and autonomy to check the actions of the executive. Lorenzo Meyer follows this same logic in his contribution to Juan Lindau and Timothy Cheek's edited volume, *Market Economics and Political Change: Comparing China and Mexico*. Meyer argues that the absence of an effective separation of powers in Mexico has inhibited the rule of law. An all-powerful presidency, noncompetitive elections, and a powerless congress have resulted in a judiciary with no independence from the executive branch, thereby generating unaccountability, corruption, and a police force that preys on the weakest in society. Meyer doubts that the introduction of market reforms will help establish the rule of law. He contends that economic modernization has created an underclass of permanently marginalized citizens in Mexico. Growing economic inequality makes the rule of law difficult to attain because it requires constructing legal equality for all citizens. Meyer is nevertheless hopeful that growing opposition to the new economic model will help usher in a new level of democracy where the rule of law can be implemented. The opposition victory in the Congress in 1997 constituted a first step toward establishing a separation of powers that will break down the extra-institutional powers of the president that have allowed informal practices to dominate formal institutions. The election of an opposition president clearly marks another step forward.

Sara Schatz's *Elites, Masses, and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico: A Culturalist Approach* provides key insights into one of Mexico's least-understood institutions, the judiciary. Her work describes how the Supreme Court is slowly growing stronger, thereby reinforcing the separation of powers. According to Schatz, the 1994 judicial reform opened the possibility of greater separation of powers because it extended the court's power of judicial review. Yet in analyzing the decisions made by the Supreme Court from 1994 to 1996, Schatz finds mixed results. Although she locates some evidence of the court applying the law fairly, the court was hesitant to extend

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its control into the realm of electoral law, a sensitive area for the ruling party. Moreover, in the two cases in which the court ruled against the regime (the case of Tabasco Governor Madrazo and the Aguas Blancas peasant massacre), other PRI-controlled authorities either ignored or overturned the court's rulings. Thus punitive actions were never taken against the government officials responsible.

Luis Rubio's contribution to *Mexico under Zedillo*, which he coedited with Susan Kaufman Purcell, also emphasizes the need for strong institutions for the rule of law. Without it, he contends, continuing uncertainty will undermine the possibilities for economic growth. Rubio criticizes in particular the Mexican government's tolerance of corruption and its willingness to negotiate the rules of the game ex post facto. As long as extra-institutional remedies remain possible, Rubio argues, the government creates incentives for the opposition to demonstrate and protest, thereby empowering special interests at the cost of the rule of law.

Rubio's criticism of the use of extra-institutional means to secure changes contrasts sharply with Richard Snyder's "interactive view" of reform articulated in *Politics after Neoliberalism: Reregulation in Mexico*. Whereas Snyder's empirical work suggests that the most effective reforms result from sustained interaction between masses and elites, Rubio implies that a top-down comprehensive reform process is preferable to the slow, piecemeal transition that emerged in Mexico as a result of the ongoing conflict between state and society. Rubio is especially concerned about the Mexican government's use of electoral fraud and the subsequent extra-institutional solutions. While Rubio is correct that such openness to negotiate motivates further post-electoral conflicts, it is through this kind of struggle that most democratic reforms have been achieved in Mexico. It is hard to imagine the circumstances in which empowered elites would give up their privileges and enact comprehensive reforms for the benefit of society without extra-institutional pressure from society.

Several essays in Serrano's *Governing Mexico* demonstrate how the reform of electoral institutions took place as a result of ongoing negotiations among opposition parties and the PRI. The first step toward building the rule of law is getting all major actors to accept the legitimacy of the law and agree on a set of institutions for processing disagreements. As conflict between state and society has increasingly taken the form of bargaining over laws and the design of institutions, the rule of law has been strengthened. Once credible and impartial institutions have been established, the opposition forces can concentrate on pushing the regime to enforce the law rather than undermining the laws through extra-institutional protests. As a result, society may begin to view the law as something legitimate and meaningful.

By examining the evolution of electoral institutions, Jean François Prud'home's contribution to the Serrano volume delves further into the topic

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of the rule of law. The quest to build an impartial electoral authority is fundamental to generating consensus among the major actors in Mexican politics. Prud'home demonstrates how the process of interparty bargaining around the creation of the Instituto Federal Electoral built trust between the opposition and the government and generated the confidence of broad sectors of society in the electoral institutions, thereby strengthening the rule of law in that arena.

Mony de Swaan, Paola Martorelli, and Juan Molinar's contribution to Serrano's *Governing Mexico* highlights the incremental process of regulating the financing of elections. After many rounds of negotiation, the Mexican electoral reform process established legal procedures to oversee campaign expenditures. In the case of election finances, the task was not just reforming existing laws to generate agreement on the rules of the game but writing these laws from scratch. Spending limits were established for the first time in 1989, and public and private financing was regulated for the first time in 1994. Alonso Lujambio's piece in the same volume further explores the long series of electoral reforms, focusing on the changing formula for allocating seats in the national Congress. Ultimately, these reforms, along with the increasing electoral competition facing the governing party, led to the end of unified government in 1997 and also undermined party discipline within the PRI. Because unified rule and strong party discipline are necessary to enable "the meta-constitutional powers" traditionally held by Mexican presidents, the ongoing bargaining over the distribution of seats in the Congress has empowered the legislature and strengthened the separation of powers.

As a cautionary note, however, Lujambio also points out how a divided government creates new opportunities for gridlock, and Purcell's piece in *Mexico under Zedillo* suggests that a stronger congress may compromise Mexico's bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States by tying the hands of the Mexican president at the negotiating table. On the bright side, Linda Stevenson's article in the Domínguez and Poiré volume shows how a more diverse congress creates new avenues to power for historically underrepresented groups, thereby strengthening the separation of powers while extending and enriching the rights of citizenship.

The organization of the opposition parties and the rule of law are clearly related, as Chand makes clear in his account of how the PAN made electoral fraud a major social issue in the 1990s. Without the strengthening of the opposition parties and the concomitant societal focus on fraud, the bargaining process of the electoral reform era could not have succeeded. Thus it seems that as the struggle between state and society increasingly involves bargaining over the rules of the game, society's confidence in the formal legal system will increase, and the rule of law will be reinforced.

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Elections and Voting Behavior

As elections in Mexico have been transformed from symbolic gestures to generate legitimacy for the ruling party into meaningful exercises in citizenship, the study of voting behavior in Mexico has taken on greater significance. And as scholars have taken more interest in voting behavior and more reliable public-opinion data have become available, Mexico has become an important new case in which to test and expand existing theories of voting behavior that were created to explain U.S. politics. Whereas institutional analyses view the struggle between state and society to democratize political institutions as the essence of democratization, studies of voting behavior emphasize the voter as the main protagonist in the struggle for democracy in Mexico, as in Domínguez's essay in *Toward Mexico's Democratization*.

Beatriz Magaloni's contribution to the Domínguez and Poiré volume asks why the Mexican voters reelected the PRI in the aftermath of the economic crisis of the 1980s. Magaloni argues that retrospective voting in a one-party system differs greatly from retrospective voting in a competitive party system. If a dominant party succeeds in producing stable economic growth over many years and opposition parties have no experience governing, then retrospective voting may not immediately punish a dominant party responsible for economic crisis. Uncertainty about the opposition's ability to provide better economic policy may allow the dominant party to ride out an economic crisis. If the dominant party continues to provide unsatisfactory economic policy over a number of years, however, voters will increasingly weigh their dissatisfaction with the governing party against the uncertainty of opposition rule. Once dissatisfaction with the governing party grows enough to compensate for uncertainty about the opposition, the latter will win an election .

Magaloni's theory of retrospective voting provides a convincing argument as to why a dominant party can weather one major economic crisis but not two, and it helps explain why dealignment has been so gradual in Mexico. But although this theory is nicely argued within a rigorous rational-choice model, it offers little predictive power and no means of identifying when the threshold between dissatisfaction and uncertainty will be reached. Observers know the threshold has been reached only when the dominant party is voted out. Thus testing the model effectively is difficult without succumbing to tautology.

Poiré's essay in the same volume supports Magaloni's argument in finding that by 1994, risk aversion was less important than in previous elections, while retrospective voting and party loyalty had the strongest impact on voting decisions. Alberto Cinta (also in the Domínguez and Poiré volume) echoes these findings, demonstrating that Mexican voters became more willing to take risks between 1994 and 1997. But while Magaloni, Poiré, and Cinta all shed new light on the changing nature of voting behavior in

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Mexico, none of them consider the most obvious counter-hypothesis: that dealignment was slow in Mexico after the initial economic crisis of 1982 because of institutional conditions. These included the fact that corporatist institutions tied voters to the dominant party; that weak electoral institutions allowed for fraud and limitations on the secrecy of the ballot; and that the weak opposition parties needed time to develop the institutional infrastructure and organization to attract voters, oversee elections, and compete successfully in elections.

Alejandro Moreno's essay (in the Domínguez and Poiré volume) contributes another piece to this puzzle with his findings on political awareness. Establishing an important link between institutional research and voting-behavior research, Moreno shows how intense campaigning increases the level of competition. Thus the electoral reforms of campaign financing that were passed just before the 1997 elections had major consequences for the vote by allowing the opposition the resources necessary for intense campaigning. Chappell Lawson's contribution to the Domínguez and Poiré book comes to a similar conclusion about the 1997 elections in Mexico City. He finds that the campaign helped the PRD win the mayoral elections. Lawson also finds that the two-step model of voting (identified by Domínguez and McCann in 1996) is breaking down as the process of transition moves forward.

Students of voting behavior have traced the changing nature of voters' decisions through Mexico's transition, implicitly suggesting that as voting behavior more closely resembles that in the United States, democracy is being consolidated. But according to this view, as long as risk aversion with respect to opposition parties remains high, then Mexico is less than democratic. Mexican voting behavior studies may place too much emphasis on the role of voters, however, and too little on questions of institutional context. The research on voting behavior could be fruitfully advanced by theoretically embedding voters more effectively into the institutions that influence voting decisions, especially the development of opposition parties and fair electoral institutions.

Federal Institutions and Subnational Politics

A final important trend in the recent scholarly literature on Mexico is increasing attention to subnational politics. The study of subnational politics matters because democratization in Mexico began at the municipal and state levels, and these democratic movements had important consequences for national politics. Moreover, as international financial institutions have increasingly prescribed decentralization to remedy entrenched problems in developing countries and as President Ernesto Zedillo implemented the "Nuevo Federalismo" in the 1990s, subnational institutions have taken on greater responsibility for education, health care, poverty alleviation, and development projects. Finally, in the context of the voting behavior arguments

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that stress the role of uncertainty and the ways it can be reduced by local experience with opposition rule, one can perceive the significance of local opposition victories and how they can lead to further victories at higher levels of government. Thus for purely empirical reasons, the study of subnational political phenomena is clearly needed.

Subnational studies in federal systems also have significant methodological and theoretical benefits, as is shown in Richard Snyder's (2001) article. Comparative studies of subnational regimes permit researchers to hold constant important structural variables while allowing for variation in many other theoretically relevant variables. Often, more consistent data are available for comparison across subnational units than for cross-national units. Moreover, cross-national comparisons may mask significant regional variation within countries. The diversity among Mexico's regions makes the country particularly well-suited for subnational comparison. Scholars of Mexican politics have increasingly taken advantage of the benefits of subnational comparison to investigate key theoretical questions.

The weakening of the Mexican state at the national level has invigorated many subnational governments. The national government's withdrawal from economic regulation in the wake of neoliberal reforms combined with the collapse of the president's extra-institutional powers during the Zedillo administration have forced new responsibilities on subnational governments. As a result, the tremendous variation among subnational political institutions is reshaping the nature of state-society relations in Mexico. Some states, especially those with competitive political systems and activated civil societies, are rising to the occasion by implementing effective economic policies and providing more efficient services for their citizens. Other states that are dominated by authoritarian oligarchies are being left behind because crony capitalist projects continue to be implemented to benefit the few at the cost of the many and social-welfare projects are hijacked by corrupt elites.

Snyder's *Politics after Neoliberalism* finds that by dismantling national institutions for economic regulation, neoliberal reforms created vacuums that resulted in the creation of new regulatory institutions at the state level. In *Mexico under Zedillo,* Rubio suggests that when Zedillo abandoned the traditional powers of the presidency, he left a power vacuum that forced others to move in. The contribution by Guillermo Trejo and Claudio Jones in the same volume argues similarly that in PRI-dominated states, governors moved aggressively to occupy the space left by the breakdown of presidential authority. As power has been decentralized (either through intentional decentralization programs or through de facto decentralization resulting from the central government's withdrawal from various policy arenas), state governors have taken on increasing significance in the Mexican political system.

Trejo and Jones conclude that regional inequalities are widening be-

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cause northern Mexican states are following a path of deepening democratization and economic growth while southern states are falling deeper into poverty and authoritarianism. The national government has not been able to respond to this growing regional disparity with a comprehensive social-policy strategy because the benefits of comprehensive reform are outweighed by the costs of dismantling clientelistic networks. As a result, the national government has been caught between the growing demands of technocrats and corporatist interests. Trejo and Jones fear that without an active federal government to provide policy direction and resources, Mexico will suffer from increasing regional polarization and ungovernability. They place some hope, however, in the national Congress as it becomes a new focal point for national policy making. They suggest that resources for alleviating poverty are more likely to actually reach the poor in electorally competitive states because an effective welfare system demands continuous interaction between state and society.

Snyder provides a more optimistic assessment of reform possibilities at the state level in *Politics after Neoliberalism*. In examining the reregulation of the coffee sector in four of Mexico's southern states, he finds tremendous variation in the capacity of these governments to implement effective policies that serve the needs of the people. While Trejo and Jones are pessimistic about the possibilities for effective reform in all the southern states, Snyder finds that in Oaxaca and Chiapas, a combination of reform-minded elites at the state and national levels along with well-organized societal organizations could successfully accomplish reregulation projects that would benefit the majority of the coffee-producing sector. Thus both Snyder's work and Trejo and Jones's stress the centrality of interaction between state and society in forging effective reforms. Snyder's work provides the best example of how to carry out systematic subnational comparative research. By examining the reregulation projects of the coffee sector in the four main coffee producing states, Snyder is able to isolate the necessary conditions for effective reform.

In focusing on politics in the state of Chihuahua, Chand's *Mexico's Political Awakening* demonstrates how important changes at the state level can travel both upward to influence national politics and laterally to influence other states. For example, Chand argues that the election of Luis Alvarez and Manuel Clouthier (both from Chihuahua) to the top spots of the national PAN resulted in reorganizing the national party along the lines of the one in Chihuahua. Chand further claims that the Bishop of Chihuahua's decision to rally against electoral fraud in 1986 provided the impetus for the national Catholic Church to join the struggle for electoral democracy in Mexico. At the same time, Chand's analysis reveals some of the problems of relying on a single case. Because he focuses so closely on the politics of Chihuahua, Chand overlooks the role of opposition movements in other states and downplays the importance of the Left. Moreover, he probably over-

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states the importance of Chihuahua in the political transition in Mexico. Chihuahua clearly played a key role in the political awakening of Mexico, but the process did not begin and end in Chihuahua, as Chand's single-case analysis implies.

In sum, subnational analysis is important empirically, methodologically, and theoretically. The growing divergence among regions remains one of the most significant threats facing Mexico's political system. Given the increasing importance of state governments, subnational comparisons provide one of the most fertile grounds for future research in Mexico for understanding contemporary Mexican politics and enabling Mexicanists to test significant theoretical questions across the states of Mexico. As evidenced by the research reviewed here, subnational analysis can be employed successfully to shed light on the process of institutional reform, the development of opposition parties, and the evolution of social-welfare policies.

Conclusion

Democratic institutions have become the focal point of Mexican politics. The research reviewed here documents how the interactions between state and society have generated the transformation of many political institutions in Mexico. Opposition parties have made use of both formal and extra-institutional means to increase their leverage and negotiate institutional reforms. Civic associations and autonomous interest groups have sometimes joined opposition parties and at other times acted independently to demand reform and encourage voters to do their part in ending authoritarianism. Mexican voters have embraced their new role as key protagonists in the reform process, and the ruling elite have succumbed to growing pressure to enact changes that level the playing field. This process culminated in the election of an opposition-controlled congress in 1997 and an opposition victory in the presidential elections of 2000. The new deconcentration of political power will help to encourage a greater separation of powers, which may in turn strengthen the rule of law in Mexico.

Now that Mexico has consolidated competitive multiparty elections, the main hurdles facing the country include creating new institutions that function in a multiparty system; improving government accountability; addressing pervasive poverty and inequality; building and strengthening an independent judiciary; and creating a more competent police force to bring crime under control and ensure protection of human rights for all citizens. Will electoral democracy help Mexico deal with these problems? If competitive elections are not enough to enforce accountability, good governance, and the rule of law, then what else is necessary? What role does the party system play in generating democratic accountability? Under what conditions can legislatures more effectively represent the will of the people inside the halls of government? These questions are being asked (and are

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starting to be answered) by several scholars working on a variety of newly democratized countries (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; Stokes 2001). The case of Mexico can provide illuminating new evidence for examining these crucial issues, and Mexicanists should seize the opportunity to contribute to these debates.

Two major challenges currently confront the study of Mexican politics: how to generate greater cross-fertilization among scholarly work in order to provide institutional and structural contexts for individual behavior and micro-level foundations for institutional and structural phenomena; and how to employ comparative methodologies to address broader questions of comparative politics. The seven works reviewed here provide important insights into how new democratic institutions have been transformed by the interaction between the Mexican state and society during the transition to democracy. Now it is time to move beyond the specifics of Mexico to ask how Mexico's experience can help us understand the top questions confronting new democracies in the contemporary developing world.

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