PROPAGANDA AND CRONY CAPITALISM:
Partisan Bias in Mexican Television News[1]

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Abstract: The relationship between media ownership and partisan bias has been an important source of controversy in emerging democracies. Systematic tests of the effects of ownership, however, remain relatively rare. Using data from content analysis of ninety-three television news programs, as well as more detailed examination of six provincial television stations, we assess the extent of bias exhibited by different types of broadcasters during Mexico's 2000 presidential campaign. We find that privately owned television stations were generally more balanced than public broadcasters, who typically followed propagandistic models of coverage. At the same time, private ownership often entailed collusive arrangements between broadcasters and politicians, based on the prospect of future business concessions (i.e., "crony capitalism"). We conclude that changes in ownership patterns are unlikely to eradicate partisan bias, and we discuss other institutional remedies aimed at insulating both private and state-run media from political manipulation.

INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, dozens of countries have made the transition from autocracy to something resembling democratic government. In analyzing this wave of democratization, scholars have devoted substantial attention to the institutional choices that may influence the quality of democratic governance: executive-legislative relations, electoral rules, mechanisms for solidifying civilian control over the military, and so on. Their analysis offers political actors some guidance about the tradeoffs involved in reforming authoritarian systems and reinforcing democratic practices.

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In keeping with this effort, some experts on the mass media have attempted to address the institutional choices that influence media performance in emerging democracies. Although they call attention to a number of factors that might shape coverage, much of the research has focused on whether the media should be publicly or privately owned. Nevertheless, systematic analyses of the effects of ownership on media performance remain rare.

In this article, we assess the sources of partisan bias in television coverage in Mexico, with an eye toward larger comparative debates over media pluralism and independence. Based on a quantitative analysis of ninety-three television news programs during Mexico's pivotal 2000 presidential campaign and in-depth interviews at six television stations, we reach three conclusions. First, privately owned national networks based in Mexico City offered much more balanced coverage of the 2000 campaign than did provincial broadcasters, especially state-run stations. Second, despite overall differences between local private and public stations, both types of media were vulnerable to bias. For privately owned stations, financial incentives—including both advertising revenues and potential favors from government officials—were most important in shaping coverage. For state-owned television broadcasters, coverage depended straightforwardly on whether or not governors intended to exploit the station for political ends, which they typically did. Third, we find that the inclinations and values of media owners and journalists did influence electoral coverage. However, the overall effect of professional norms remained relatively weak, and journalists exercised little control relative to owners.

These findings have important implications for research on media reform in emerging democracies. As with some research by other scholars, our findings suggest that neither privatization nor state ownership will necessarily produce an open broadcasting system. Rather, intensive institutional reforms are required for media pluralism and independence. Such reforms might include: the establishment of politically insulated boards to oversee public stations; greater transparency in the process by which broadcasting concessions, government advertising, and other resources are awarded; equal time rules; and explicit monitoring of media coverage by public agencies and civic organizations.

The first section of this article discusses the larger literature on media performance in new democracies. The second section describes the system of media-state relations that characterized the period of one-party rule in Mexico, summarizing how political transition, economic reform, and personnel changes during the 1990s altered television coverage. The third section summarizes six case studies of Mexican broadcasters, designed to identify the mechanisms that generated biases in coverage. The fourth section uses data from content analysis of ninety-three tele-

vision news programs to generalize across television broadcasters in Mexico, documenting which types of programs exhibited which partisan biases. The final section discusses the implications of our findings for media pluralism and media reform in new democracies.

MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND PLURALISM IN NEW DEMOCRACIES

In emerging democracies, the relaxation of direct political controls is obviously a fundamental factor in shaping the degree to which mass media offer balanced coverage of political alternatives. As in established democratic countries, however, the simple absence of censorship and repression does not appear to lead automatically to media pluralism or independence (Lawson 2002; see also Gunther and Mughan 2000; Lichtenberg 1990). Despite political democratization in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, "democratization of the mass media . . . continued to be an elusive goal" (Fox 1988, 26). As Silvio Waisbord recently argued:

> The recent affirmation of liberal democracy has not resulted in the democratization of media access. Quite the opposite. It has coincided with the further consolidation of market principles and media concentration. (2000b, 59)

These findings are similar in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, where the overthrow of autocratic governments has typically not resulted in the creation of a viable "Fourth Estate" (Lánczi and O'Neil 1997; Jakubowicz 1995; Mickiewicz 1999; Bajomi-Lázár and Hegedus 2001; Milton 2001; Jakubowicz 1998; O'Neil 1998). As Jeffrey Mondak argues, "the crux of the problem in many post-communist states is that media lack independence and professionalism . . . such media must be counted as part of the problem, not part of the solution" (2003, 2).

Given persistent partisan bias in the wake of democratization, much of the debate over media performance has focused on ownership. Those who favor commercial media regimes argue that private outlets will respond to the demands of the marketplace rather than the preferences of government officials; by contrast, state-run media are vulnerable to direct political control (Splichal 1992; Splichal and Wasko 1993; Seres 2001; Manaev 1996; Lawson 2002). Because government-run outlets are so thoroughly biased, the argument goes, privatization can only encourage media opening (Gross 1996; Caristi 1996; Bajomi-Lázár and Hegedus 2001; Alves 2003). In this sense, recent authors reinforce the conclusions from research on state-run media in developing countries during earlier decades:

> The most striking fact to emerge from our study is the virtual abandonment, throughout the developing world, of Western patterns of broadcasting in which, however defined, the broadcasting system has some element of autonomy from the government of the day. (Katz and Wedell 1977, 212)

On the other hand, those who favor public ownership insist that commercial media rarely guarantees the proper representation of dissenting political voices, instead favoring status quo appeals to market segments that attract the most advertisers (Herman and Chompsky 1988; Bagdikian 2000; McChesney 2000). In Latin America and elsewhere, they point out, private ownership has rarely inclined broadcasters to play a civic role, and media owners often trade favorable coverage for business concessions (Rockwell and Janus 2002; Fox 1997; Lawson 2002; Waisbord 2000a, 2000b; Mickiewicz 1999). Indeed, this "penchant of media owners to court government officials in order to advance multiple business interests" remains a prominent feature of many Latin American media systems (Fox and Waisbord 2002, xxii). In post-transition Uruguay, for instance:

> the political and television powers maintain relations as associates. Private television seems to say, "As long as you don't harm my business, you will receive coverage." The political power seems to say, "As long as you support power, you will be treated well." Both seem to say to the military: "You will not be touched." (Faraone 2002)

Beyond such spaces of silence, private ownership is thought to encourage trivialization and tabloidization of the news (Bennett 2003; Entman 1989; Hallin 2000a). Private media in emerging democracies thus tend to be politically conservative, establishment-oriented, and vacuous (Curran 1991; Skidmore 1993; Fox 1998; Lawson 2002; Molina 1987; Zazur 1996; Fernández 1996; Rockwell and Janus 2003; Ramírez 1988; Bernal and Torreblanca 1988; Amaral and Guimarães 1994; McNair 2000; Mickiewicz 1999).

Most empirical studies have found some truth on both sides of the ownership debate. For instance, Curran's review of European media systems finds that truly competitive private systems do "result in greater responsiveness to audience preferences" than state-owned systems, but he also finds that these systems retain the sort of defects noted by critics of commercial media. This mixed assessment has led Curran and others to favor hybrid systems, with state regulation of private media and politically insulated state-owned media (1991, 52). In the same vein, other scholars have emphasized the need to move beyond:

> the dichotomy between the liberal perspective, for which democratization of the media is purely a matter of the elimination of state interference, and the critical political economy perspective, which has focused on the control of media by private capital but has until now not been very sophisticated in its analysis of variations in the relation of capital to the state, political parties, and other institutions. (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002, 184)

Bennett, in particular, has noted that "conventional distinctions among regime types and media ownership patterns provide little insight into the dynamics of democratic communication" (Bennett 1998, 196–97; see also Waisbord 2000b).

One final set of arguments about media performance hinges on the impact of professional norms. Analysts of the print media have argued that journalistic norms and newsroom culture play an important role in shaping press coverage, regardless of ownership (Hughes 2003; Waisbord 2000a; Jones 2002; Altschull 1984; Epstein 1973). How the same arguments apply to broadcasting, however, is less clear.

The state of the debate over media reform suggests that more systematic evidence is needed about the forces responsible for greater pluralism and balance in the mass media. How exactly do democratization and commercialism influence media representations of political options? Do alternative ownership models lend themselves to less biased coverage? How strongly do journalistic norms influence reporting?

The Political Economy of Mexican Television

The history of Mexican television suggests that democratization, commercial competition, and journalistic norms have all played important roles in transforming news coverage over the last two decades. At the same time, this history lends support to many of the criticisms advanced by analysts of Latin American broadcasting today. Democratization has not brought as radical or uniform a shift in coverage as critics had hoped; both commercial and state-owned television networks have proven deeply biased; and civic-oriented journalistic culture has only infrequently exercised a decisive influence on the behavior of broadcasters.

As in other Latin American countries, Mexican television has long been dominated by private entrepreneurs who received subsidies and concessions in exchange for favorable coverage (Zazur Osorio 1996; Fernández and Paxman 2000; Trejo Delarbre 1985, 1988; Fernández 1996; Mejía 1989; Guerrero 2002; Lawson 2002; on Latin America, see Fox 1997; Skidmore 1993; and Fox and Waisbord 2002). By 1973, the country's leading broadcasters had combined their holdings to create a virtual private monopoly, known as Televisa (Molina 1987). Televisa operated as a private, profit-oriented enterprise, but it also provided the regime with the sort of relentlessly positive coverage that one might expect from a government-controlled outlet. Opposition parties were dismissed or denigrated, although candidates of the ruling party were treated with deference and enthusiasm (Arredondo et al. 1991; Adler 1993; Acosta and Parra 1994; Bernal and Torreblanca 1988; Hallin 2000b; Lawson 2002). In return, Televisa received special privileges from the government: preferential tax treatment, subsidized access to communications infrastructure, and protection from commercial competition (Olmos 1999; Fernández and Paxman 2000; Guerrero 2002). Smaller broadcasters were likewise intertwined with the old regime, as the few provincial concessionaires not affiliated with the main network had typically received

their licenses from friends in the government. Finally, broadcasting regulations gave the federal executive broad discretion to monitor and sanction errant concessionaires (Guerrero 2002). Consequently, television news content remained tightly controlled.

Mexico's economic and political transitions, however, gradually altered the incentives facing broadcasters. On the economic side, the privatization of a network of state-owned television channels in the early 1990s led to the creation of a second major national network, Televisión Azteca (Delgado 1996; Galarza 1996; de la Selva 1998). Although the content of Televisión Azteca's political reporting was not radically different from Televisa's, competition for market share did encourage both networks to experiment with different styles of coverage in an effort to attract viewers (Guerrero 2002; Lawson 2002).

At the same time, sweeping market-oriented reform during the late 1980s and 1990s diminished the regime's control over private broadcasters. In the early 1980s the state controlled more than 1,500 companies, including such important advertisers as banks, airlines, utilities, and the telephone company. Additionally, economic controls allowed it to block or subsidize the importation of broadcasting technology and inputs. By the late 1990s, however, the bulk of state-owned enterprises had been sold to private investors, economic regulation had been drastically reduced, and barriers to international trade and investment had fallen dramatically. In 1999 government advertising overall was well below private sector advertising—approximately $600 million compared to over $1,400 million.

Even more importantly, the remaining public funds that were spent on television came from more than one partisan source. As a result of sweeping electoral reforms in 1996, opposition parties were granted substantial access to public funds, and each of the major parties spent millions of dollars on media purchases. In 1997, for instance, opposition political parties spent some $167 million, the bulk of it on television ads, compared to only $111 million by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) (Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos 1997). In 2000, expenditures were approximately as high and as balanced (Grayson 2000, 25, 62); all told, the three main candidates bought approximately twenty-five hours of advertising on the two main networks during the first half of 2000.[2]

Increasing electoral competition also affected provincial stations, both network affiliates and independents. Starting in 1989, Mexican leaders selectively recognized opposition party victories in gubernatorial elections (Levy and Bruhn 2001). By late 2000, state-level governments formed a

2. Counts of ad time are taken from *Reforma*'s monitoring effort (see Moreno forthcoming).

political patchwork across Mexico with the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) holding ten governorships; the leftist Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), two (plus the Federal District); and the PRI retaining the rest. Each major political party thus came to control state-level government patronage, as well as national-level campaign funds.

Political transition also diminished federal pressure on the main broadcasters. During the second half of the 1990s, President Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000) pledged to maintain a "healthy distance" from the ruling party, the PRI lost control of the lower house of Congress, and the newly autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) took an active role in monitoring electoral coverage. Although the executive branch retained substantial discretion over awarding and withdrawing concessions, the political environment for broadcasters changed substantially.

One final change occurred in 1997 with the death of Televisa owner Emilio Azcárraga Milmo and his replacement by his son, Emilio Azcárraga Jean. Whereas Azcárraga Milmo had been an open partisan of the PRI (Fernández and Paxman 2000), Azcárraga Jean described himself as "a businessman" without firm partisan leanings. In a series of interviews and public statements, Azcárraga Jean stressed the importance of offering politically balanced coverage, enhancing the network's credibility and ability to attract or retain viewers (Puig 1997). Over the next three years, anchors and reporters most closely associated with the old pro-government line were replaced.

As a result of these changes, partisan bias moderated substantially on Mexico's two main commercial networks. Coverage of the PRI on the private national networks, for instance, dropped from approximately 80 percent in presidential campaigns in 1988 to just over half in 1994 to a little over one third in 1997 and 2000 (Lawson 2002, 52–55, 159–61). However, considerable partisan bias remained in local news, both private and public. According to an IFE sample of programs monitored throughout the 2000 campaign, 42 percent of all news coverage was dedicated to the PRI, 24 percent was dedicated to the PAN-dominated Alliance for Change (AC), and 20 percent was dedicated to the PRD-dominated Alliance for Mexico (AM). Compared to its share of the vote in that year's presidential election, the PRI received 3 percent more airtime than electoral support, while its principal rival (the AC) received 18 percent less. Bias on certain provincial stations reached dizzying proportions: in the PRI-dominated state of Tabasco, for instance, the ruling party received approximately 72 percent of all electoral coverage. By contrast, the ruling party received about 15 percent of all time devoted to the parties in the state of Tlaxcala (governed by the PRD), and only 22 percent of all time in Guanajuato (governed by the PAN).

To conclude, the 1990s saw a remarkable shift in the extent of bias on Mexican television. Mexico's largest network, Televisa, became substantially more

sympathetic to the opposition, and electoral coverage was also relatively evenhanded on newly private Televisión Azteca. Nevertheless, substantial variation remained in campaign coverage across different stations, especially outside the capital. Neither the withdrawal of the state from the economy nor vigorous electoral competition was sufficient to produce systematically balanced coverage.

Ownership Patterns, Norms, and Television Coverage in 2000

To investigate the extent and sources of bias in television coverage, we selected six Mexican television broadcasters for in-depth study. These included three state-owned stations, two stations owned by regional media companies, and one affiliate of Mexico's largest commercial network. The stations were located in four states where men from different political parties occupied the governor's mansion: Baja California (PAN), Guanajuato (PAN), Tabasco (PRI) and Tlaxcala (PRD). Thus, although our sample is necessarily limited in scope, it comprises a range of ownership types and political contexts.

Table 1 summarizes key features of each station: ownership type in 2000, the party that received the most coverage, and the extent to which the station favored that party. Table 1 offers three separate measures of such favoritism: (1) the difference between the percentage of time devoted to the station's favored party minus the percentage of time devoted to the party that received the next most coverage; (2) the difference between coverage of the station's favored party, as a percentage of the coverage devoted to the three main parties, and that party's share of the state-wide vote in 2000; and (3) the difference between coverage of the station's favored party, as a percentage of the coverage devoted to the three main parties, and that party's share of the national vote in 2000.[3]

All three indicators suggest that bias was relatively limited on Channel 66 in Baja California and extremely heavy in Tabasco, especially on the state-run channel. State-run television in Tlaxcala proved biased in favor of the Left by any measure, although the extent of that bias is less clear. The Guanajuato stations, especially the private Televisa del Bajío, were strongly sympathetic toward Fox, but at least some of this favoritism might be attributed to Fox's strong performance in his home state.

State-Run Television

The three public stations each fell under the jurisdiction of the executive branch in their state: specifically, the Guanajuato Radio and Televi-

3. Coverage was averaged for Tabasco's private television station, which had two news programs.

Table 1 Case Studies

Station	*State*	*Private or state?*	*Party with most coverage*	*Party 1 - Party 2*	*Party 1 - state vote*	*Party 1 - nat'l vote*
Grupo Intramedia	Baja California	Private	PRI	7%	5%	7%
Televisión de Guanajuato	Guanajuato	State	AC/PAN	16%	-14%	2%
Televisa del Bajío	Guanajuato	Private	AC/PAN	31%	4%	20%
Grupo Medios del Sureste	Tabasco	Private	PRI	44%	25%	30%
Televisión Tabasqueña	Tabasco	State	PRI	88%	53%	59%
Televisión Tlaxcalteca	Tlaxcala	State	AM/PRD	6%	14%	25%

sion Commission; the State Radio and Television Commission of Tabasco; and the Coordinator of Tlaxcala Radio, Cinema, and Television. In each case, executive directors were appointed by the governor in office. Governors also proposed the budgets for state television stations. Although budgets required approval from the state legislature, different legislatures varied significantly in their partisan composition and independence: in Tabasco, the PRI controlled both branches; in Tlaxcala and Guanajuato, governing parties lacked a majority in the legislature.

In all three state-run networks, politicization of the news was standard. At interview, journalists and station directors attributed this practice to state governors' intervention in news operations. State-owned television stations "are part of Narcissus's mirror," according to the executive director of Guanajuato's state-run station, Jorge Pantoja. "If the governor in this moment is *panista* [from the PAN], everyone goes for the PAN. If he is *priísta* [from the PRI], everyone goes for the PRI."

Closer inspection of Guanajuato's Channel 4 supports Pantoja's contention. Former director Julio Di Bella Roldán left the station soon after the beginning of the 2000 election campaign to seek the PAN's candidacy for a mayoral post; Di Bella Roldán had been appointed by Governor Vicente Fox before Fox left office in 1999 to launch his presidential bid.[4] The new station director, Juan Aguilera Cid, was appointed on January 7, 2000, by an interim governor who owed his own appointment to

4. After Fox became president, Di Bella became station director for the public Channel 11, operated by the National Polytechnic University.

Fox (Zacarías 2000). News programming at Channel 4 changed with each new executive director, either focusing narrowly on the governor and his cabinet or on politics more generally. In practice, these changes reflected the wishes of the governor himself. "It is according to the director who is here and really according to the governor because the governor names the director," said news director Alicia Arias Muñoz. "If we have a governor who perhaps asks us not to touch certain interests, or more than interests, not to adversely affect his image, then he dictates a policy and the director follows it."

Coverage on the station drew criticism from opposition legislators who, in 2001, successfully blocked additional funds for state television in the state legislature. Under Pantoja, who was appointed by then newly elected Governor Juan Carlos Romero Hicks in 2001, there have been greater signs of balance at the station. A director at the university-run Channel 11 in Mexico City, Pantoja accepted the Guanajuato appointment only when Romero Hicks assured him that he wanted Channel 4 to operate in a non-partisan manner. "I am not *panista*, nor *priísta*, nor anything. I look for balance and equity," Pantoja said. He acknowledged, however, that the liberty he currently enjoys depends on the governor.

Control of television news content was even more evident in PRI-run Tabasco. The director of Tabasco's state television channel in 2000, Paulo Miguel Orico Julien, answered to the state government's Director of Social Communication and Public Relations, Ady García López. García in turn was an appointee of PRI Governor Roberto Madrazo, who had won a contested victory in 1994 amid charges of fraud and campaign finance violations. When Madrazo became the PRI's president in 2002, he brought García with him to the National Executive Committee, where she was placed in charge of party relations with provincial media.[5]

Unlike in Guanajuato, where opposition parties in the legislature could block the executive branch, the PRI dominates state government in Tabasco. Consequently, the legislature has never constituted a check on gubernatorial control of state-run media, and budgets for the station are approved automatically. National-level pressure to correct bias has had only a modest influence. In 2000, Mexico's Federal Electoral Tribunal (TRIFE) annulled the gubernatorial election of Madrazo's hand-picked successor, Manuel Andrade, citing among other things persistent media bias in favor of the PRI (Federal Superior Electoral Tribunal 2000, 543). After Andrade was elected in a special second vote, he appointed Carlos Alberto Pérez as director of the state channel in January 2001; Pérez had previously served as a media coordinator for both the Madrazo and Andrade election campaigns. In response to opposition criticism, the

5. Curriculum vitae are listed on the PRI's web site, http://www.pri.org.mx.

station reached out with entertainment and cultural programming to different constituencies, such as university professors and young people. News coverage, however, has continued to focus on the governor.

In February 2000 the station changed its federal license from operating as a non-profit, educational organization to a commercial concession and became a quasi-commercial company known as Televisión Tabasqueña (TVT). The move from non-profit to commercial status, however, had little effect on the link between the state government and the station. TVT inherited its building, production equipment, and all other infrastructure from the state government, and the government effectively continues to cover the payroll. About 60 percent of advertising revenues came from the state in 2002, and Pérez remains the station's CEO.

Political control of Tlaxcala's Televisión Tlaxcalteca paralleled that of Tabasco and Guanajuato. During the 2000 elections, state-run media were directed by Hector Parker, an engineer who had helped found several educational stations in Mexico. PRD Governor Alfonso Sánchez Anaya had appointed Parker upon taking office in 1999, just months after Sánchez joined the PRD. Throughout this period, political control of state-run broadcasting remained tight. Observers and employees of the television station report that Sánchez has replaced journalists who refused to follow his news policies, and Mexico's Fraternidad de Reporteros, an independent journalists' professional association based in Mexico City, accused him of eliminating five radio programs that were deemed too critical in 1999 (Salas and Olivos 1999).[6]

Having been criticized by the IFE for biased coverage in 2000, journalists at Televisión Tlaxcalteca "followed the law" in state elections two years later—i.e., they allotted proportional time to each of the main parties. This approach, however, "was looked upon badly": in 2002 Sánchez fired Parker and almost all the journalists in the television station's news division. According to station manager Romeo Peña Silva, the firings stemmed from journalists' insufficiently vigorous support for the PRD during mid-term legislative elections in 2002. As he put it, "The new news director has told us, 'your boss is the governor and you owe your job to the governor'."

In summary, each of the state-owned television stations were controlled in 2000 by governors who viewed state news media as propaganda tools and enforced their vision through control of personnel. In one case where journalists later resisted, Tlaxcala, they were dismissed. The only case where the emergence of public service television appeared plausible was Guanajuato, but its transition depended upon partisan

6. Sánchez himself had previously been a member of the PRI, but he left in 1998 when the party denied him nomination for governor.

balance in the state legislature. To guarantee balance over the long term would require policy reforms that institutionalized media autonomy, which the now-dominant PAN has little incentive to implement.

Private Television

Unlike the government-run stations, the three private television stations operated quite differently from each other. Televisa del Bajío in Guanajuato is owned entirely by Mexico's largest network, Televisa; it produces its own local news and entertainment programming and makes local content decisions, but it depends on Mexico City for its general editorial direction. Both Tabasco's Channel 9 and Baja California's Channel 66 are owned by private entrepreneurs with broader media interests. Channel 9's internal programming is quite limited, and Channel 66's is extensive.

The three stations had very different financial bases. The Guanajuato and Baja California stations reported that only about 5 percent of their overall income came from government or political advertising and that they received neither pressure regarding concessions nor politically motivated advertiser boycotts. In Tabasco, by contrast, government advertising constituted a substantial portion of the station's budget. The prospects of future payoffs from political adhesion also differed across the three stations, as owners in both Guanajuato and Tabasco had reason to believe that partisan bias might ultimately gain them influence at the federal level (where television concessions are awarded).

Tabasco's Channel 9 was reportedly founded by the family of a state governor in 1979. When the family could not turn a profit on their new concession, they sold it to Angel González, an entrepreneur from the northern industrial city of Monterrey (Medios Publicitarios Mexicanos 2001). A former programming salesman, González quietly built up an empire of ninety radio stations and thirty-eight television stations in six Latin American countries, including a local station in the Mexican state of Chiapas, which borders Tabasco. González dominates television in neighboring Guatemala, where he owns the only four stations with a national reach in the country. He speaks openly of his willingness to use his media empire to support politicians he favors. These include Guatemalan President Alfonso Portillo, who upon his election made González's brother-in-law the head of the agency that awards broadcast concessions (Medios Publicitarios Mexicanos 2001; Organization of American States 2002; Weissert 2002; Fox and Waisbord 2002).

In Tabasco, González has consistently supported the governing PRI. During Madrazo's tenure as governor, journalists at González's station were prohibited from mentioning the PRD or those closely associated with it on the air. It is unclear whether such political favoritism is any-

thing more than pragmatic. For instance, news employees report being told that the government's advertising purchases were enough to cover the payroll and thus justified favorable coverage. In addition, some at the station believe that González is betting that Madrazo will be Mexico's next president and hopes to benefit from his connection to the former governor (anonymous informant 2002a). Should González change his mind, however, station personnel will be expected to comply. As the news director told an employee:

> Look, this is the way we are here. If the boss asks you to paint yourself yellow [the PRD's color], you paint yourself yellow. And if the boss asks you to paint yourself tricolor [i.e., the PRI's colors], you paint yourself tricolor. And if the boss asks you to paint yourself blue [the PAN's color], you paint yourself blue.

In contrast to Channel 9, Televisa del Bajío is one of twenty-two wholly owned affiliates of Mexico's largest commercial broadcast network, Televisa. Initially the Mexico City-based managers of Televisa viewed local news stations such as Televisa del Bajío primarily as a place to repeat nationally sold advertising. By 2000, however, the network viewed its provincial stations as self-sufficient moneymaking enterprises in their own right. Leonel Nogueda Solís, CEO of Televisa del Bajío since November 1998, projects a news philosophy that reflects the larger company's general model. Above all, the station should privilege financial considerations, which means protecting advertisers and not taking sides politically.

The first of these considerations reflects Mexico's increasingly competitive political context. In Guanajuato, for example, the former station CEO lent the station's support to a politician seeking the PAN's nomination for the mayor's post in León in 1997. When that candidate lost, the winner punished the station by withholding information and advertising. "The lesson was that you have to be impartial," Nogueda Solís said. "You are a communication medium. You can't simply marry a candidate and stay right with everyone else."

Nogueda Solís denied purposeful support for the PAN in 2000, saying that his station covered the PAN more because of campaign dynamics particular to Guanajuato that year: Vicente Fox's candidacy, a contentious PAN primary for governor, and the disorganization of the local PRI when dealing with the media. As the campaign progressed, however, Televisa's central management ordered him to tone down its pro-PAN coverage. The station did, by as much as thirty percentage points. Importantly, however, Televisa's approach to coverage remains entirely commercial and pragmatic, unencumbered by civic norms of autonomy, assertiveness, and fairness. In addition to standing orders to take extra care when reporting on advertisers, one example concerns the sale of news-like interviews called "capsules," which can run for two minutes inside a newscast. These capsules transmit events that the

regular news does not cover, such as campaign rallies. As a result, Televisa programming may still contain significant biases despite apparent partisan balance in regular (unpaid) news coverage. Although some journalists at Televisa del Bajío expressed the desire to produce public service-oriented news, the commercial logic of the network largely overwhelmed these intentions.

Baja California's Channel 66 differed from other stations in the sense that the owner's predispositions lean toward pluralism and public service in news coverage. Despite the fact that the PAN had controlled state-level administration for eleven consecutive years by 2000, coverage on Channel 66 tilted slightly toward the PRI. This pattern of coverage reflected a combination of commercial incentives, journalistic norms of fairness and balance, and perhaps early partisan affinities.

Channel 66 is part of a family-owned chain known as Grupo Intermedia, based in Ciudad Juárez. Arnoldo Cabada de la O, the family patriarch, received his first broadcast concession in 1979 by directly petitioning President José López Portillo after winning a national prize for public service journalism (Hazen-Hammond 1994). Fourteen years after the first concession, Cabada and his sons tried to participate in the privatization of the state-owned network Imevisión, which gave rise to Televisión Azteca. After resistance from the Finance Ministry and the Ministry of Communications and Transportation, which favored an inside bidder, the family was able to win two of the 140 concessions, one of which became Channel 66 in Mexicali.

The Cabadas were outsiders in the world of elite Mexican media owners, and they generally adopted a different approach than the crony capitalism of other broadcasters. For instance, their first station in Ciudad Juárez was successful because of a community service call-in show, rather than its connections to the local political and business elite. In contrast to other public and private stations, editorial practices at Channel 66 demonstrated attention to journalistic norms of balance and fairness in electoral coverage. For instance, in 2000 the news director created an elections coverage plan that offered equal opportunity coverage for all parties. Management approved the plan, which apparently was followed. As a result, biases in favor of the PRI during the 2000 campaign were relatively limited.

In summary, all three private broadcasters that we examined responded to commercial incentives. These incentives, however, did not mean devotion to audience preferences. In fact, rating studies in each of the three broadcast markets were rare or absent. Rather, commercial logics typically involved the provision of political advertising (direct in Tabasco, indirect in Guanajuato) and the promise of informal rewards associated with crony capitalism (present in Tabasco, potential in Guanajuato). Such collusive arrangements were most obvious in

Tabasco's Channel 9, the most biased private station. In Guanajuato and Baja California, civic-oriented inclinations also influenced coverage, but they did so in ways that were not always obvious *a priori*.

COVERAGE ACROSS ALL STATIONS

To understand how these patterns of coverage played out over a larger sample, we drew on data compiled by Mexico's IFE. These data include comprehensive measures of the time devoted to all parties on each of ninety-three television news programs monitored by the IFE during the official campaign period (January 19 to June 28, 2000). They obviously do not capture all elements of coverage, such as visual tone of reporting about the candidates or more subtle questions of priming and framing. Nevertheless, they represent a reliable measure of the quantity of television coverage dedicated to each of the major parties in Mexico's 2000 race, which is itself a reasonable proxy for favoritism.

As with the case comparisons, it is important to take into account the partisan composition of the vote in different regions of the country. Television stations might play to the tastes of their audience, or they might simply wish to focus on the most viable (and therefore newsworthy) candidates in their areas. With this in mind, the first row of table 2 reports the correlation between each party's share of 2000 media coverage on a given news broadcast and its share of the 1997 legislative vote in the state from which that broadcast emanated.[7] As the data show, there was clearly a relationship between the volume of coverage that the main parties received in 2000 and these parties' past electoral strength across different regions of the country. It is equally clear, however, that this relationship was hardly perfect; the correlations in table 2 are only 0.39 for the ruling party, 0.38 for the PAN, and 0.32 or the Left. Differences in popular support for the main parties thus do not appear to explain much of the variation in television coverage.

The remaining rows in the table report the average share of the electoral coverage given by each major party on different stations, as a percentage of coverage devoted to all three major parties. In each case, different broadcasts are grouped according to their ownership patterns. As the table indicates, coverage of the three main parties was quite even on programs broadcast by the main networks from Mexico City, where coverage virtually paralleled relative vote shares in 2000. Reporting on

7. In order to make the 1997 electoral data maximally comparable, the vote shares of minor parties that ran separately in 1997 but aligned with the PAN or the PRD in 2000 are included in the tally. Thus, the 1997 vote share for the AC includes the votes of the Green Party (PVEM), and that of the AM includes the votes of the Labor Party (PT). Using electoral returns from 2000 instead of 1997 produced similar results.

Table 2 Party Share Coverage for Different Broadcasters

	PRI	*AC/PAN*	*AM/PRD*
Correlation: 1997 vote, 2000 coverage	0.39	0.38	0.32
Network in D.F.	34.6%	39.0%	26.4%
Network in D.F. or affiliate	42.5%	33.5%	24.0%
State-run	52.2%	23.4%	24.4%
State-run with PRI governor	56.1%	21.3%	22.6%
State-run with PAN governor	30.8%	38.8%	30.3%
State-run with PRD governor	29.2%	33.2%	37.5%

the main networks appears more distinctly pro-PRI when provincial affiliates are added to the mix. Fox's PAN-led alliance did reasonably well on most commercial stations, though still not as well as one would expect given his electoral performance in 2000.

State-run stations as a whole were more supportive of the ruling party than private stations were, roughly similar in coverage to private provincial broadcasters. All told, the PRI did best on state-run broadcasts in states where it controlled the governorship. The same held for the two main opposition coalitions, though to a less pronounced degree.

At first glance, then, ownership, political control, and audience dispositions all appeared to play a role in shaping coverage. To understand how much each of these factors mattered on its own, we regressed the share of coverage that each party received in 2000 on a series of the variables in table 2. Specifically, we included each coalition's share of the valid vote in 1997 in the state from which the program was broadcast, as well as three dummy variables: government-run television broadcasts where the same party was in power at the state-level, government-run television stations where a different party held power at the state-level, and broadcasts of the main private networks in the national capital. (The base case for each regression would thus be all private television broadcasts outside the capital.) This analysis allows us to identify the effects of ownership and politics, controlling for the level of coverage that a party could expect to receive based on its 1997 vote. The results are presented in table 3.

Data in table 3 support the notion that ownership patterns and political pressure shaped television coverage in Mexico's 2000 race, even when past electoral performance is taken into account. For instance, coverage of the PRI was greatest on government-run television programs broadcast from those states where the ruling party retained the governorship. Controlling for the party's share of the vote in 1997, the PRI's share of coverage in 2000 was approximately 9 percent higher on these programs than on private provincial broadcasts. By contrast, it was about 6 percent lower on the main news shows in the capital and 16 percent lower

Table 3 Multivariate Predictors of Partisan Coverage

	PRI	*AC/PAN*	*AM/PRD*
Constant	.339**	.221**	.172**
	(.088)	(.029)	(.023)
Share of 1997 vote	.298	.250**	.261**
	(.200)	(.078)	(.090)
State-owned station	.089**	.056	.117**
with own party in power	(.028)	(.062)	(.052)
State-owned station	-.157**	-.050*	-.021
with another party in power	(.055)	(.022)	(.022)
Network television	-.064	.102**	-.029
in the capital	(.054)	(.028)	(.036)
Adjusted R^2	.30	.32	.14
N	93	93	93

N.B.: Entries are OLS coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses).
*Significant at 5% level
**Significant at 1% level

on state-run stations in opposition-controlled states. Thus, in a state where the PRI received 40 percent of the vote, it could expect to receive about 45 percent of the programming on a private provincial station (the constant value of .339 plus 40 times the coefficient for its 1997 share of the vote, 0.298). If that broadcast originated from a state-run station in a place where another party controlled the governorship, the PRI would receive only about 30 percent of the coverage devoted to the three main parties. On the other hand, if the PRI controlled the state (and thus the station), it could expect to receive about 54 percent of the coverage.

Interestingly, the coefficient for the PRI's 1997 share of the valid vote was not statistically significant once ownership and government control were taken into account. In other words, how well the party had performed in the past was not a particularly good predictor of how much television coverage it would receive in 2000. Rather, reporting on the ruling party was sharply influenced by ownership and political control.

The results for the Left roughly parallel those for the PRI. The AM benefited substantially on state-run broadcasts where it controlled the governorship. On these stations, the PRD received approximately 12 percent more airtime. Coverage was approximately the same on all other types of broadcasts, with differences between them not being statistically significant. Thus, in a state where the AM had received 40 percent of the vote in 1997, it could expect to receive about the same percentage of the coverage on public stations if it controlled the governorship and only 25–28 percent of the coverage on other types of stations. The PRD

seems to have suffered at the hands of the main networks based in the capital, but this result is largely an artifact of the PRD's extremely strong showing in the D.F. in 1997 (which made its coverage there appear low). If we regard broadcasts from the capital as focused on national-level contests, rather than on the local race, coverage of the AM appears more balanced.

In contrast to both the PRI and the PRD, the PAN did not seem to exploit its control of state-run stations. The coefficient for this variable is relatively small and not significantly different from the base case (private provincial stations). In other words, the apparently favorable coverage that the PAN received on state-run stations in states it governed was largely explained by its electoral strength. Controlling for its past performance, however, the PAN was penalized somewhat on state-run television programs controlled by other parties. It did about 10 percent better on the big commercial networks in the national capital than on the smaller provincial stations in the provinces, suggesting that the owners of local stations may have felt more vulnerable to PRI pressures than the corporate headquarters of Televisa or Televisión Azteca.[8]

Quantitative analysis of television coverage thus suggests two main conclusions. First, both state-run and private-run stations *can* offer reasonably balanced coverage. For instance, the main commercial networks were relatively even-handed in their treatment of Mexico's 2000 race. Likewise, government-run broadcasts in at least some PAN states tended to reflect popular preferences in those states. Second, both government ownership and private ownership can yield extremely biased coverage. State-run broadcasters in areas dominated by the PRI, for instance, gave the ruling party excessively generous coverage. Likewise, private broadcasters in the provinces tended to favor the ruling party, and even the main networks may have been somewhat less sympathetic to the Left.

CONCLUSION

Much of the debate over the reform of broadcasting in new democracies has focused on the "thorny division of basic media policy" (Iosifides 1999, 154): namely, whether the media should be publicly or privately owned. Mexico's 2000 presidential election offers a useful laboratory in which to evaluate competing policy proscriptions. Like much of Latin America, Mexico has left behind an authoritarian period in which private media were substantially controlled by the regime. Furthermore,

8. We also tested for the relationship between bias and electoral competition (as measured by the degree of fragmentation of the vote in each state); our results suggest that electoral competition explained little of the variation in bias across stations once other factors were taken into account.

Mexico's national media system includes a number of recently privatized television stations. The Mexican broadcasting system can thus speak to the experiences of transitional media systems in a range of emerging democracies.

Our findings support the notion that privatization of broadcast media will lower the level of partisan bias in newly democratic countries. In this sense, our analysis reinforces findings from other emerging democracies (such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile) that financially strong commercial media may be "better able to resist censorship and manipulation . . . than the public-service or development-oriented programs" (Fox 1988, 28). At the same time, however, we find that balance on private stations was largely unencumbered by a cohesive commitment to pluralism, or for that matter, any of the reporting norms (autonomy, assertiveness, accuracy, fairness, etc.) associated with civic-oriented media. Commercial incentives continue to encourage the special treatment of private advertisers, sale of airtime, strategic acquiescence to political pressures, attempts to curry favor with likely electoral winners, and other departures from norms of balance and fairness.

Private stations outside the capital—including those owned by or affiliated with the main networks—seem especially susceptible to the failings of commercially oriented broadcasting. In Tabasco, for instance, neither audience tastes nor pressure from the courts, the IFE, and the political opposition affected the extent of bias on private television. Coverage appears to have been based on government subsidies of dubious legality and on the prospects of future commercial benefits should former governor Roberto Madrazo become president. Such collusive arrangements echo those in other parts of Latin America and beyond (Rockwell and Janus 2002; Calero 2002, 99; Waisbord 2000a, 227).

At the same time, profound biases also characterize state-run television. Public outlets generally followed a propaganda model of news production, in which state-run stations were treated as a tool of incumbent politicians to further partisan and personal agendas. The extent to which such stations remain subject to political manipulation is striking. Even when opposition groups have protested media bias and threatened legislative or legal action, governors retained the option of running the station without legislative support (as occurred in Tlaxcala) or privatizing it to political allies (as in Tabasco).

As with crony capitalism in privately-owned stations, such propagandistic use of state-run stations is hardly unique to Mexico. Indeed, public broadcasting in new democracies has almost universally given way to politicization and manipulation (Katz and Wedell 1977; Curran 1991; Splichal 1992; Splichal and Wasko 1993; Manaev 1996; Gross 1996; Caristi 1996; Lánczi and O'Neil 1997, 94–98; Seres 2001; Bajomi-Lázár and Hegedus 2001). Our findings thus support the notion that

privatization of propagandistic state-run media could encourage partisan balance.

Our analysis suggests that biases may sometimes be constrained because private owners or political leaders prefer to be less partisan—for instance, Televisa after the death of Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, Baja California's Channel 66, or state-run television in Guanajuato under Governor Romero Hicks. In the larger scheme of Mexican broadcasting, however, balance induced by such professional dispositions is neither widespread nor institutionalized. Most station owners (whether private entrepreneurs or government officials) held political preferences, and their preferences determined coverage even when news staff at the stations favored greater balance. In this sense, the Mexican experience suggests the limited influence of journalistic norms for broadcasting. Although we have certainly uncovered cases where norms mattered, economic motivations and political pressures typically loomed larger in broadcasters' calculations. Moreover, even the atypical cases concerned the attitudes of media owners, rather than journalists. This finding suggests that increased investment in journalistic training may have little effect on the content of television news coverage in the absence of structural reforms. In other words, the sorts of influences that other scholars have found in the print media may not apply to broadcast television.

One factor discouraging bias in Mexican private television was the large-scale provision of public financing to political parties. Thus, one positive lesson that can be culled from Mexico's experience is that ample public campaign financing can alter the incentives confronting private broadcasters and thus influence coverage. As a general model, however, this approach faces significant limitations: many democracies may be unwilling or unable to subsidize campaigns to such a degree.[9]

Another lesson from Mexico concerns the role of media monitoring. All of the station owners and managers in our smaller sample were aware that they had been monitored by the IFE, which set a normative standard of balance that the broadcasters had to either reject or embrace. In two cases, the management of Televisa del Bajío and the journalists of state-run television in Tlaxcala reacted to publication of evidence of bias by moderating bias in subsequent broadcasts. Likewise, evidence of bias collected by electoral authorities gave opposition politicians in Guanajuato and Tabasco ammunition to use in the state legislature and federal courts. However, monitoring alone was not sufficient to guarantee balance, as persistent bias in Tabasco and the sacking of the Tlaxcalan journalists indicates. Rather, monitoring had to be supported by actions

9. Even in Mexico, Congress may soon restrict public financing of campaigns substantially.

from other political institutions, such as courts and legislatures. For this reason, we remain somewhat skeptical that monitoring alone can produce systematically balanced coverage.

The sort of deeper, systemic reforms that would encourage a more open broadcast regime across the newly democratic world are not difficult to imagine. In state-run stations, professionally qualified news directors could be appointed by non-partisan boards, whose own terms were staggered and whose own appointment required supermajorities in the legislature. The same system could be devised to govern the process for awarding or withdrawing private broadcasting concessions and government advertising contracts (see Bennett 1998, 197). And for both public and private broadcasters, equal time rules coupled with monitoring of media content could promote greater balance. Without these sorts of reforms, news coverage in emerging democracies is likely to follow models of propaganda in state-run media and crony capitalism in private media.

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