

Democratization and the PRI in Mexico:
A Case Study from 1929 to 2000

Senior Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

Can Mexico be considered a democracy under seventy years of one-party rule?

How does one determine whether a regime is ‘democratic’? Many scholars have attempted to answer this question and as a result, have created a collection of confusing definitions of *democracy*. Scholars have created new terminologies that often alter the core meaning of ‘democracy’. These terms, plus adjectives, create new sub-categories to fit specific country cases that diverge from the ‘norm’. Thus, terms such as democracy and authoritarianism become overgeneralizations whose central definitions are intermingled by additives. Throughout this thesis, I seek to clarify what elements determine whether a regime has successfully transitioned from authoritarian to democratic. In Chapter I, I review the literature on democracy and democratization to discuss what distinguishes a one-party democracy from a classic authoritarian regime. Throughout the first chapter, I develop a set of criteria for determining the minimum definition of democracy and propose an enhanced definition of democracy based on my findings.

The case of Mexico is particularly interesting because one party governed the country for seventy uninterrupted years; the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) monopolized the government from 1929 until 2000. This immediately raises the question of whether Mexico can be considered a democracy. By claiming to be the heir to the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the PRI mobilized a strong base of supporters and business allies in order to create a large sphere of influence that encompassed every sector of the economy. Through manipulation and threats, the PRI controlled everything in Mexico, including electoral results. Despite the fact that no one person was allowed to serve more than one term as president, a single political party did rule the

country for one of the longest periods in the history of any country. Because one of the first criteria that define a democratic system is the peaceful alternation of power, one-party rule is generally, but not in all cases, seen as incompatible with democracy; thus, scholars cannot seem to agree on how Mexico should be categorized.

In Chapter II, I review the political history of Mexico with a focus on the time period in which the PRI was in power, from 1929 to 2000. I present an analytical narrative of the developments and changes that occurred in Mexico, relevant to the criteria for discerning a democratic regime from an authoritarian one, as identified in Chapter I. Throughout this second chapter, I explore the PRI's practices to determine if, and under what circumstances, liberalizing policies were adopted by the PRI. I examine whether these policies placed Mexico on the path towards democratization or, at least, away from authoritarianism, and finish by discussing how this led to the PRI's defeat in 2000.

In Chapter III, I will determine the state of democracy in Mexico by evaluating its governing structure in terms of the criteria and the enhanced definition of democracy that I propose in Chapter I. To conclude, I will discuss whether Mexico can be classified as a democracy prior to the 2000 presidential elections. I also seek to determine the current state of democracy in Mexico; primarily, whether Mexico was able to consolidate as a democracy in and after the 2000 elections.

CHAPTER I: Literature Review on Democracy and Democratization

The question I began with is: how does one determine whether a regime is *democratic*? In order to look at democracy over time, one needs a stable definition to evaluate change. In this chapter, I review the literature on democracy and democratization from the classical 18th century definition of democracy, to Schumpeter, Dahl, Huntington, Schmitter and Karl, and Collier and Levitsky. After discussing each scholar's criteria for, and interpretation of, democracy, I compile their ideas in Table 1 (Appendix A). From that, I propose an enhanced definition of democracy, which I will use to analyze the democratization that occurred in Mexico during the seven decades of the PRI's rule.

I. Scholars' Interpretations of Democracy

A) Classical Democracy vs. Joseph Schumpeter

The classical doctrine of democracy, stemming from the 18th century, describes the democratic method as the "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will."¹ This doctrine was created at a time when monarchs were being overthrown and revolutions were a predominant phenomenon in the world. The classical doctrine of democracy is a philosophical definition of the ideal government where the people would work together toward the 'common good'. As in all revolutions, the masses rise up against the elite to regain power and take control of their lives. More often than not however, the leaders of this uprising become the new elite, and are in charge of the new social order. This new elite consists of great speakers who are able to appeal to the desires of the masses by using vague language such as the 'common good.' By never defining

such terms, this new elite succeeds in hiding the true benefactors of the regime change: themselves. This vague terminology is one of the problems Joseph Schumpeter had with the classical definition of democracy. He believed that too much faith was put in the people and in the hope that they could agree on what constitutes a ‘common good’ for all, not just for the elite minority.²

John Medearis did an extensive analysis of Schumpeter’s two theories of democracy and writes that Schumpeter’s work has influenced the field of political science by decoupling democracy from “any set of ends or values,” especially in the way done by the classical doctrine of democracy.³ Medearis defines Schumpeter’s way of identifying democracy as a method “with ‘competitive leadership’ and ‘the rule of the politician’ rather than mass participation and popular rule.”⁴ Schumpeter was the first to come up with an innovative new definition of democracy by focusing on leadership selection, and shifting the role of the people to become that of electing a government. His definition reframed the democratic method as, “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”⁵ This procedural perspective has become the basis for most scholarly work on democracy. In this definition, Schumpeter advocates for what we have deemed to be open, fair, and free elections that include competition for votes among parties and politicians. Schumpeter uses the word *individuals*, which in itself includes all human beings, regardless of gender, race, or social status. The second part of Schumpeter’s definition concerns those who want to be elected and want to have a role in the formation of government. These ‘competitors’ are political candidates who are running for office, typically as part of a specific political party. By referring to them as ‘competitors’,

Schumpeter is inherently inputting his philosophy of campaigning for support, leaving the power of choice in the hands of the *individuals*.

It is my opinion however, that a procedural democracy, like the one described by Schumpeter, is not enough. Unlike Medearis's and Schumpeter's views on methods and processes, I believe that societal values are important to the functioning of a democratic entity. One also needs to establish a functioning social democracy within one's country. To have real competition for the 'people's vote' with Schumpeter's method, equal opportunities must be present for candidates to seek political support and for voters to choose their representatives freely. Because the government is composed and elected by the people, there must be rules in place to protect not only the electorate, but also the candidates. Consequently, those electing and those looking to be elected must be considered equals and responsible to one and other for the institutional arrangement of democracy to function. Nevertheless, the liberties and rights discussed above must be met with strong social values to create a functional liberal democracy.

B) Robert Dahl

Robert Dahl believes, as do I, that in order for a government to be responsible to its citizens, sufficient liberties and civil rights must be provided. Many stipulations implied by Schumpeter about protecting the elected and the electorate are part of Dahl's conditions for democracy.⁶ Each citizen must have the unimpaired opportunity to convey his preferences and know that his opinions will be taken into consideration in an equal manner when governments make decisions.⁷ Sufficient liberties are required for people to express their opinions openly and respectfully without fear of retaliation. This also means that the government, and those who form it, must always be held accountable to the citizens of the country they govern. The eight

guarantees for democracy that Robert Dahl believes to be the minimum that institutions must yield to are:

1. Freedom to form and join organizations
2. Freedom of expression
3. Right to vote
4. Right of political leaders to compete for support
5. Alternative sources of information
6. Eligibility for public office
7. Free and fair elections
8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.⁸

For Dahl's stipulations to be guaranteed, they must be protected by the law, which, in turn, must be respected and properly enforced. Dahl refers to the government under which all of these conditions exist as a 'polyarchy'. The term 'polyarchy' is Dahl's way of redefining democracy without using the actual word. For a polyarchy to exist, one needs contestation and participation, which is the standard definition of democracy used by Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl in *What Democracy Is... and Is Not* (1991). Dahl's use of another word to convey his interpretation of what it means to be a democracy is an example of the overuse of the word *democracy*; thus, demonstrating the essential need to redefine it.

C) Samuel Huntington

Huntington's minimal condition for democracy is for elections to be open, fair, and free; but he neglects the principle of competition – the core of Schumpeter's definition of democracy.⁹ Samuel Huntington best describes democratization in the 20th century from 1974 until the 1990s as the 'third wave of democratization'.¹⁰ He sees the third wave of democratization as one that has inspired third-world countries to change their regime type and democratize. However, many nations have only begun the process by liberalizing certain parts of their society rather than entirely altering their regime. Huntington defines liberalizations as, "the partial opening of an

authoritarian system short of choosing governmental leaders through freely competitive elections (...) [which] may or may not lead to full-scale democratization.”¹¹ He defines Schumpeter’s democracy as the minimal interpretation, but differentiates between democratization and liberalization because many countries have only started the transition process but have not yet successfully become democracies.

Stability is a central dimension for a democratic political system to survive. Huntington believes that, in order to classify governments as democratic, the concept of institutionalization should be incorporated into the definition, to assure that such a political system will continue to exist.¹² He defines institutionalization as “the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability,” and once these values become the constraining norms, they have become institutionalized.¹³ Though many problems may arise within democratic governments, they do not disqualify them from being categorized as undemocratic: “governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, (...) [and] irresponsible, (...) [making] such governments undesirable but (...) [not] undemocratic.”¹⁴ Huntington’s illustration of some of the problems with democracy highlights the reason why the process of democratizing is often slow and stagnant. In Chapter II, we will see if this might serve as a partial explanation in the Mexican case.

D) Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl

By encompassing all the elements needed for the formation of a complete democracy, Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl propose one of the best definitions of democracy in their paper *What Democracy Is... and Is Not* (1991). Their definition describes modern political democracy as “a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their

elected representatives;” and modern democracy as “[offering] a variety of competitive processes and channels for the expression of interests and values – associational as well as partisan, functional as well as territorial, collective as well as individual. All are integral to its practice.”¹⁵ Schmitter and Karl incorporate every criterion set forth by the aforementioned scholars that are seen as most necessary for the existence of a full democracy, including participation, elections as part of a multiparty society, and government accountability as part of a politically egalitarian society that is adopting liberalizing policies.

II) Analysis of Scholars’ Interpretations

A) Compilation of the Scholars’ Criteria for Democracy

Table 1 (Appendix A) illustrates the six main categories and their sub-categories that result from the different theories and definitions of democracy discussed above. These categories are, for the most part, all intertwined: one cannot exist without the presence of the other. Table 1 (Appendix A) is organized in a way that illustrates the link between each criterion. The first category is elections, which must be held at set intervals. This category is requires open, free, and fair elections, that are guaranteed not to be fraudulent. The second category is electoral participation, formed by political rights such as the existence of full adult suffrage, which implies the right to vote, as well as the right to run for office, and the freedoms of expression and contestation. All of these elements must also yield meaningful competition to form a multiparty society with effective electoral participation. The third category is the possibility of change through collective action without fear of repression. This is made possible by the existence of elections and a competitive multiparty society (the first two categories).

The fourth category is that of government accountability and transparency of its policies and actions to the people. The fifth category is that of a politically egalitarian society, which

must recognize its citizens as equal, without discriminating based on race, gender, or social status. The sixth category is the institutionalization of a system of governance and a civil society. This requires that the processes, which have gained value and become norms, be embodied in a written body of law (often a Constitution and its amendments), implying the stability of a government. If regular elections and an embedded system of rights exist, a civil society is created and is characterized by the possibility of cooperation and deliberation by autonomous groups.

Joseph Schumpeter's definition implies many of the criteria established in Table 1 (Appendix A), and, though it only states a few explicitly, it is a complete definition of democracy. Robert Dahl does the best job of incorporating all of the categories in his depiction of what is necessary for a government to be democratic, though he calls it a 'polyarchy'.¹⁶ Dahl includes the necessary institutions as well as the practical realities of rights needed for a functional democracy. Samuel Huntington's, as well as Schmitter and Karl's description of what a democracy consists of is complete but, in both cases, their interpretations are based on Schumpeter's and Dahl's definitions.

B) Enhanced Definition of Democracy

Because all of the concepts listed in Table 1 (Appendix A) are interrelated, the enhanced definition of democracy I propose and will use throughout this thesis is a mixture of those previously established by Schumpeter (1950), Dahl (1971), and Schmitter and Karl (1991):

A democracy is an institutionalized system of governance that is accountable to and chosen by its citizens – who are equal to one another – through free, fair, and competitive elections in a non-oppressive, multiparty society that provides civil rights and liberties that benefit and improve said individuals' opportunities and qualities of life.

This definition describes a nation with a strong political culture in which laws are institutionalized, respected, and enforced. Under these laws, all citizens, including government

officials must be equal in front of the law and none must be above it. It also requires full adult suffrage and freedoms of expression and contestation. Finally, it requires government accountability and transparency so that no single individual or party may abuse power without repercussions. The definition I propose encompasses all three essential conditions for a democratic system of government set forth by Diamond, Linz, and Lipset in the preface to *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America* (1988): “meaningful and extensive competition [...], a highly inclusive level of *political participation* in the selection of leaders and policies [...], and a level of *civil and political liberties*.”¹⁷ These three elements: competition, participation, and liberties, are the basis on which Mexico will be judged in Chapter III to determine if it passes or fails the test of a complete democracy.

C) Democracy with Adjectives

By combining Schumpeter and Dahl’s conditions for democracy, one comes across a more complete definition of democracy. Yet, this discovery makes one want to redefine the word democracy, and add to the pile of increasingly complex definitions of the term. As noted in Collier and Levitsky’s *Democracy with Adjectives* (1997), many academics add adjectives to the word in an attempt to mold the definitions of democracy to fit specific case studies without stretching its concept too far. ‘Democracy with adjectives’ is an approach used to distinguish each democratic system by subtype, but one may wonder if some of these adjectives violate the core definition of democracy. The most general example is “incomplete democracy,” meaning that the government being analyzed is democratic in all but one or more ways. These missing attributes could include full adult suffrage, full contestation, or civil liberties.¹⁸ These partial democracies diminish the meaning of democracy by lowering the standards for its classifications.¹⁹ The term “illiberal democracy” is the one that most violates the basis of

democracy. If a country is to be qualified as an illiberal democracy, would it not be best to identify it as something other than a subtype of democracy?²⁰

It is very hard to move past the “dichotomous conceptualization of authoritarianism and democracy and recognize the ‘hybrid’ or ‘mixed’ character of many postauthoritarian regimes.”²¹ According to Collier and Levitsky’s Figure 3, Mexico should be categorized as a controlled, restrictive, and illiberal democracy; it could also be categorized as an inclusionary authoritarian regime.²² In Mexico’s case, the governing structure is missing both full contestation and full civil liberties – this will be further discussed in the following chapters.

III) One-Party Democracies

One-party dominant regimes are not commonly democracies, especially when the electoral change of government is the central element that has come to define a democracy. In T.J. Pempel’s *Uncommon Democracies* (1990), he addresses the question of how parties in Sweden, Japan, Italy, and Israel were able to govern alone while fulfilling all the criteria for a democracy including, “free electoral competition, relatively open information systems, respect for civil liberties, and the right of free political association²³.” Pempel argues that there are three important commonalities among one-party dominant democracies:

- 1) An electoral system that promotes a multiparty system
- 2) A similar historical evolution that creates a cycle of dominance, and
- 3) The ability of the ruling party to use its position in the government for its own benefit (consequence of long-term dominance).²⁴

As we will see in the next chapter, Mexico immediately separates itself from other one-party dominant democratic regimes because it does not have an electoral system that promotes a multiparty environment. The analytical historical narrative presented in the next chapter makes it

clear that the PRI manipulated the electoral system to discourage opposition parties from forming, and disadvantaged those that existed in Mexico by withholding public funds and censoring the media among other things. From its conception, the PRI incorporated authoritarian practices and established its influence over the country during its post-war reconstruction. Once in power, the PRI was able to utilize its vast influence as the 'heir of the Revolution' to shape the government and its policies in a way that benefited the party's long-term dominance over the country, including its ability to commit electoral fraud. These practices persisted from 1929 until the historic election of 2000. Mexico does not fit the category of an 'uncommon democracy' as described by Pempel, despite the fact that one party has managed to govern alone for an unusually long period of time, because it has not been able to maintain all of the democratic mechanisms described by Pempel above.

CHAPTER II: A Review of Mexico's Political History

Mexico has gone through colonialism, dictatorships, multiple revolts, a revolution, and a semblance of democracy, making its search for stability an ongoing one. I present a review of the political history of Mexico from the 19th century through the 2000 presidential election. This chapter focuses on the changes that prompted such drastic shifts in power, from the “longest record of controlling the national executive of any ruling party in the world” by the PRI, to the subsequent alternation of power with an opposition party.²⁵

I. Historical Background of Mexico

A. Mexico in the 19th Century

Mexico has had a complicated history when it comes to governance. It went from being a Spanish colony, to declaring its independence in 1821, and then to losing half of its territory during the Mexican-American War in 1848. Benito Juárez, the leader of the War of Independence, helped create Mexico's first constitution in 1857 and was president from 1861 to 1867. This constitution was the product of “The Reform,” whose aims were to abolish what was left of the Spanish colonial era by separating church & state.²⁶ This “Reform” also promoted economic development, established a stable rule of law, and got rid of special privileges reserved for the military and clergy.

After gaining its independence in 1821, Mexico was indebted to the French, Spanish, and British from the war. In the midst of post-war rebuilding, Juárez sought to delay repaying Mexico's debt,²⁷ but the European powers demanded immediate reimbursement. The French invaded Mexico in 1861 to “preside over the country's regeneration,” and started a new war. Acclaimed General Porfirio Díaz, led an extraordinary military career that culminated during the

fight against the French in the 1860s. In the course of the invasion, Díaz was sought out by the French to join their cause but he remained loyal to his country and his president, Benito Juárez. He went on to win the final battle of Puebla in 1867, expelling the French for good.²⁸ Benito Juárez pronounced his famous phrase on July 15, 1867: “*Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace,*”²⁹ illustrating Juárez’s basic democratic inclinations. These would soon be obscured by a long period of instability.

Between 1821 and 1867, Mexico went through 58 administrations, only two of which reached the end of their term. All of this turmoil only emphasized the country’s political instability and set a precedent, which suggests that Mexicans may have grown accustomed to such disorder in the years to come. Free from European pressures, Juárez tried to rebuild Mexico’s shattered economy, develop its infrastructure, and educational system to cleanse the country of its colonial past. As soon as the Juárez administration took over once again, Díaz grew discontented about how the country was being run.

When Juárez died suddenly in 1872, Mexico’s future was left undetermined. Finally seeing an opportunity to grasp power, Porfirio Díaz organized various revolts, culminating in 1876 when Díaz and his rebels defeated the Mexican military. After two electoral losses against Juárez in 1867 and 1871, Díaz became president in 1876.³⁰ Mexico’s political scene changed drastically as Porfirio Díaz, under the pretense of serving as president, established dictatorial control by serving for seven consecutive terms. Díaz’s thirty-five year dictatorship would be known as the *Porfiriato*. His rise to power altered the country’s fate, leading it away from democracy. Here again, as mirrored in Juárez’s famous phrase, there is an unspoken argument that Mexico could have been democratized under Benito Juárez if his reforms had been adopted. But, the instability of invasions, war, and Juárez’s sudden death, coupled with the usurping of

power by Porfirio Díaz, who held opposing political inclinations, changed Mexico's course towards democracy.

B. The Porfiriato (1876 – 1910) and the Revolution of 1910

i) The Porfiriato (1876-1910)

Given the immense amount of instability caused by civil war and rebellions prior to the *Porfiriato*, Díaz focused on suppressing unrest as soon as he became president. He established authoritarian control, setting out to subdue chaos and industrialize the country. The first way in which Díaz established his control over Mexico was by amending the Constitution of 1857 and removing the policy of no re-election, allowing him to run for reelection as a means of establishing a claim to legitimacy.³¹ Attempting to avoid being branded an authoritarian ruler, Díaz held regular elections; but Díaz's legitimacy progressively declined as he continued to reelect himself as president. This was aggravated by the fact that he squashed any political rival that dared challenge him.³²

Díaz ruled with an iron fist, instilling order and stability to facilitate economic development. His famous slogan "*bread or the stick*", suggests that Mexicans had to acquire to Díaz's demands in order to get bread, or be suppressed.³³ This expression illustrates the core doctrine of his administration: failure to abide by the new official policies would result in retaliation with brute force.³⁴ The masses thus grew obedient under Díaz's rule, fully aware that the only way to stay out of trouble was to comply with his policies.

Porfirio Díaz was mostly focused on growing the Mexican economy with an export-oriented strategy supported by foreign investments.³⁵ The goal was to industrialize Mexico using foreign capital and technological advancements. The most successful venture was the expansion of the Mexican railroad network, which allowed for the development of commerce for domestic

and foreign manufacturing of goods.³⁶ By facilitating access to new, previously isolated locations within Mexico, the expansion of the railroad system also revived the agricultural and mining sectors of the economy. This increased the production of food and the sales of natural resources. Díaz's efforts to modernize Mexico led to an average annual economic growth rate of 2.6%.³⁷

Though Díaz was wildly successful in stabilizing the country after a long period of rebellion by growing Mexico's economy and ridding it of its debt, modernization came at great cost for the majority of Mexicans. As industrialization occurred, the workforce grew faster than the job market and unemployment increased around the major cities. Díaz allowed foreign powers to exploit Mexico's cheaper labor and natural resources by altering tariff policies to benefit such foreign businesses. The state's land seizures of both private and communal agricultural lands increased as well, leading to concentrated land ownership in the hands of members of the elite.³⁸ The social inequalities and the quality of life for those who were not part of the rich elite were worse than ever before.³⁹ Díaz's stabilization and industrialization of Mexico did not outweigh his personalistic form of authoritarian and repressive rule when it comes to judging whether the *Porfiriato* was democratic or not. It was not.

ii) The Eve of the Revolution of 1910

By 1908, Porfirio Díaz was almost 80 years old and had been in power for thirty-four years. That same year he announced in an interview that he had no intention of putting himself up for reelection in 1910, claiming that Mexico was mature enough for a more open political approach.⁴⁰ Because Díaz had been in power for so long, there was no political framework for rule and no procedural rules for the conduct of politics or elections. Therefore, once Díaz made his announcement, many highborn Mexicans, including Francisco I. Madero, began campaigning for support and creating Mexico's first political parties. Francisco I. Madero, a wealthy

landowner educated abroad, was a well-placed, politically conscious individual who took advantage of this political opening to run for president.⁴¹

In 1908 Madero wrote a book, *The Presidential Succession of 1910: The National Democratic Party*, in which he describes the political history of Mexico since its independence. Madero illustrates his own democratic intent by discussing Mexico's readiness for real democratization.⁴² He describes the possibility of creating a political system that would follow two rules: "valid suffrage [and] no reelection."⁴³ But, Porfirio Díaz had a change of heart and announced his candidacy for the 1910 elections. Madero's hope becoming the new leader and bringing democracy within the Mexican's reach was destroyed. In the run up to the 1910 elections, Madero founded the Anti-Reelection Party (PNA) in 1909. He traveled, campaigned, and spread his anti-reelection (and by extension, anti-dictator) ideas around Mexico. Madero posed a real threat to Porfirio Díaz's reelection. As Madero's victory over Díaz seemed apparent, Madero was arrested on the eve of the elections, to be released after the results were announced.⁴⁴ This is another clear piece of evidence of the authoritarian nature of the Díaz regime.

iii) The Revolution of 1910

The stability that the *Porfiriato* created in the late 1800s was replaced by instability and chaos in the 1910s. The period between 1908 and 1910-1911 was the period of destabilization of the authoritarian system. After such a fraudulent execution of the will of the people in the 1910 presidential elections, Madero was motivated to create an armed revolt that would be known as the Mexican Revolution of 1910 with the purpose of ousting Díaz.⁴⁵ Unable to create a mass uprising himself, Madero aided small guerrilla groups led by Pascual Orozco and Pancho Villa who were rebelling in the north of Mexico.⁴⁶ Surprisingly, they were able to vanquish Díaz's

army in May 1911. Once the Díaz regime was brought down militarily, Madero became Mexico's president from 1911 until 1913, when he was assassinated.⁴⁷ An internal war was going on between 1910/11 until 1915, and was characterized by chaos among the revolutionary groups, as many guerilla leaders became increasingly power hungry. In the midst of war-torn Mexico, there were at least 8 presidents between 1913 and 1920. Despite constant changes in leadership and sporadic warfare through 1920, there was some consolidation of a new order between 1915 and 1920. During this time, elements of partial stabilization arose, the most important being the creation of the Constitution of 1917.⁴⁸ This new constitution continued the practice of restricting incumbency to one term and included a democratic rhetoric. Nevertheless, the creation of this new Constitution was followed by a long period of instability, not democracy.

After the instability brought upon by the Revolution settled, Mexico reverted back to a political system that was very similar to that of Porfirio Díaz. A false sense of democratization was projected under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) –founded in the late 1920s by one of the successors of the chaos of the Mexican Revolution. For the rest of the 20th century, Mexican politics will be shaped by a paradox between authoritarianism and democracy because “the *practice* of politics is authoritarian; the *promise* or potential is democratic.”⁴⁹ This is a well-known paradox as it has been seen in communist regimes: the contradiction between rhetoric or ideology and reality.

II. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)

During the *Porfiriato*, there were already procedural mechanisms of authoritarian one-party rule. Mexico's official party from 1929 to 2000 – the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – combined these methods of control with Madero's democratic, populist rhetoric and ideology. The PRI was created from the ruins of the Revolution; and, facing no opposition, the

PRI was able to seize control of all sectors of the country. The PRI adopted and implemented the principle of no reelection for sequential or non-sequential terms. The power of this principle was so strong that when other parties emerged in later years, they adhered to it as well. This policy is one that the PRI has adopted from its conception, especially after Álvaro Obregón's attempt to get reelected for a non-sequential presidential term in 1928.⁵⁰ Despite that, the 'no reelection' banner was interpreted as applicable to a single individual, not an entire party. That interpretation is how the PRI's victories are justifiable: the "no reelection" rule was never broken even though the party stayed in power for seventy years. The party's mechanism is so well established that it overwhelmed every individual leader, reinforcing that the PRI party, not any one individual, ruled over Mexico. This is very close to a liberal communist authoritarian regime because the party runs everything; however, in Mexico, leaders do not lead for life, they are only allowed one term in office. This moderated rule is the most critical element that explains the PRI's authoritarian success in Mexico.

A. The Creation of the Dominant Party System

In the midst of a period of instability during the years immediately following the Revolution of 1910, the first presidents of Mexico worked on rebuilding a calm society under the new constitution established in 1917. Based on the Constitution of 1857, the Constitution of 1917 emphasized new civil liberties and the policy of no-reelection. Though this policy was cemented in the hearts of Mexicans, the politicians of the 1920s would try and override it. Álvaro Obregón would serve as president from 1920 to 1924, followed by one of the most famous Mexican political figures, Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928).

After Calles's presidency, Obregón sought reelection. The constitution was amended to state that an individual could seek reelection if the terms were not consecutive, defying the new

Mexican society's core principle of no-reelection.⁵¹ This suggests a lack of institutionalization, and maybe a strong extra-systemic power in the hands of Calles, Obregón, or their supporters. Despite his win, Obregón was assassinated, Calles' amendment was overturned, and at the same time, the presidential term was extended from four to six years and each term is referred to as a *sexenio*. Perhaps this extension was a compromise between those who wanted to be reelected and those who lobbied for one-term presidencies.

In 1929, General Plutarco Elías Calles was able to blend all the different schools of thought that arose from the heat of the Revolution of 1910 into one cohesive political party known as the National Revolutionary Party (PNR). Calles designed this political organization as a way to bypass the anti-reelection laws because he had the intention of running the PNR, and by extension the country from behind-the-scenes. The origins of the PRI regime's authoritarianism were established under Calles in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Because Calles ruled as the supreme leader, or *jefe máximo*, the next few years would be known as the *Maximato*. Calles single-handedly selected the presidential successors and policies the country was to adopt, mirroring the authoritarian practices of the old Díaz regime. He selected the next four presidents of Mexico: Emilio Portes Gil (1928-1930), Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932), Abelardo Rodríguez (1932-1934), and Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940).

Through corrupt means and electoral fraud, Calles's pick always won, setting a dangerous precedent for the 'official' party, who would soon utilize similar tactics on its own. The process of the current president handpicking his successor is known as the *dedazo* – appointment by pointing one's finger – in Mexico and would be a customary practice of the PRI. The president would become the most powerful politician in Mexico thanks to the PRI's wide sphere of influence and friendships with important businessmen. Throughout the PRI regime,

Mexican presidents had enjoyed metaconstitutional powers known as presidentialism: unwritten rules authorizing the centralization of power so the president would be the most powerful man in Mexico.⁵² The net effect of changes between 1910 and 1920 seem to have been a mere substitution of leftist and somewhat populist ideologies for capitalist, or elitist, ones. The *Porfiriato* regime was replaced after a long period of internal unrest by a combination of ‘revolutionary’ actors under Calles and the PNR – which would later become the PRI – only to maintain the political culture of repression and personalistic authoritarianism in which a fraudulent façade of democracy was upheld.

B. The Institutionalization of the ‘Official’ Party

i) *El Cardenismo*, 1934-1940

Lázaro Cárdenas was the fourth man selected by Calles to continue the *Maximato*. But, from the beginning, Cárdenas sought to show his independence by doing things his own way. He reduced the presidential salary, focused on widespread land reform, expanded education, supported cultural development, and fired many of Calles’s followers in the government. With Calles’s discontent growing stronger, Cárdenas forced the authoritarian leader into exile in 1936, before Calles could oust Cárdenas from the presidency as he had done with his three predecessors who only served two years each.

In 1938, Cárdenas restructured the ‘official’ party, broadening its political base to include people of all sectors of the society, and renamed the party: Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM). Cárdenas focused on strengthening presidential power by “subordinating the entire apparatus of the official party under the chief executive.”⁵³ The ‘official’ party owes its successful seventy-one year rule to its intelligent use of populism and nationalism, which are the true “opiate of the masses” in Mexico, contrary to Marx’s belief that it is religion.⁵⁴ Populism

appeals to ordinary people by presenting the regime in power as the agent of the masses, that it represents all of their interests, and is there for them. Nationalism creates a sense of pride, uniting the masses as the regime in power describes its success as the people's success, as something they are doing together and for each other. However, this is false, because in reality, the elite in power are the ones who control everything and represent their own interests; they rarely act to benefit the people.

As a response to the PRM's strong imposition on Mexican society, the National Action Party (PAN) was created in 1939 with the aim of "rescuing the liberal-democratic legacy of the Mexican Revolution that postrevolutionary generals-as-presidents had placed on hold."⁵⁵ Over the years, the PAN would become the PRM's (and later the PRI's) main opposition but never the 'official' party's puppet. Although, the PAN was forced to work with the official party if it hoped to survive at all.

Cárdenas is best known for his support of the working class and for the creation of the 'popular' sector of the PRM. This 'popular' sector incorporates all of the unions for blue and white-collar laborers, agricultural workers, and teachers, which were created and controlled by the 'official' party. President Cárdenas's biggest achievement was land redistribution and his most daring act was the nationalization and expropriation of the oil industry in 1938 and the creation of PEMEX - the second largest oil enterprise in Latin America today. The nationalization of oil was a source of great national pride among the Mexican masses and this pride was an additional source of support for the PRI.

[ii\) The Industrialization of Mexico](#)

Under Cárdenas, the oil industry became a stable form of income for the government, funding a third of its spending budget. Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) led the country

during World War II and Miguel Alemán Valdés (1946-1952) did so afterwards. President Camacho would rename the ‘official’ party the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) in 1946. Both presidents shifted away from Cárdenas’s small agricultural approach, making it clear that the PRI no longer served the interests of peasantry. Under both President Camacho and President Alemán, the PRI was becoming less populist-oriented by employing more traditional authoritarian practices and focusing on economic development. During World War II, this one-party authoritarian regime looked to modernize and improve the material wellbeing of the country in order to buy support from influential members of the Mexican capitalist economy and votes from the masses.

President Alemán focused on industrializing the country and expanding all methods of transportation (railroads, highways, and airline networks). Because Mexican capitalists did not have the means or know-how to maintain production for the export of oil and other resources, the state took a highly interventionist approach when it came to resources and transportation. President Alemán cultivated relations with businessmen and private capitalists who enjoyed government assurances and privileged allocation of foreign investments, paving the way for the economic success known as the ‘Mexican miracle’ that lasted from the 1940s to the 1970s.⁵⁶ Table 2.1 (Appendix B) reports the GDP per capita in pesos at their value in 2009 for the period from 1930 to 1970. Table 2.2 (Appendix B) reports GDP growth rate for the same period.⁵⁷ The immense success of the economic tactics adopted by the PRI is clearly shown in Table 2.2. From 1940 to 1950, the Mexico GDP grew 289%; from 1950 to 1960 it grew 180%; and from 1960 to 1970 it grew 101% (Table 2.2, Appendix B). This enormous boom in economic prosperity greatly improved the standard of living throughout Mexico.

President Alemán greatly expanded the ‘official’ party’s popular support. In the years to come, the PRI extended its influence to every asset and sector of the economy, creating a new method of political representation and participation known as corporatism. Corporatism, also known as corporativism, is defined by Schmitter as,

A system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized and licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.⁵⁸

Corporatism is a system in which the state sponsors the organization of economic actors into ‘corporations’ and for labor: unions, which the state can control. These corporations provide counsel to the government in the policy process instead of independent organizations or associations seeking to represent economic and other interests. The corporatist principle of organizing the economy and economy policymaking is a state-dominant, non-democratic form of governance associated with authoritarian regimes.

The PRI’s control of all the country’s financial resources started with Cárdenas’s nationalization of oil. The party would use some of these resources to industrialize the nation, and others to bankroll the ‘official’ party and its campaigns. This included funding bribery of media sources, from newspapers, to radio, to television. Every part of the country would be at the party’s mercy, including opposition parties seeking to institute change because no one party or business could make a decision that the PRI disagreed with if they wanted to obtain government funding, licenses, or special treatments. The PRI had created a top-down system of representation – which included the labor, peasant, and popular sectors; and, as Martin Needler states, “the price of inclusion was subordination to the ruling elite.”⁵⁹

iii) Mexico in the PRI's Heyday

The PRI's legitimacy was based on both democratic and revolutionary sources. The democratic sources of legitimacy include the platform of no reelection that produces the periodic change of individual leaders, and distribution of benefits to the masses, even though the majority of benefits go to the elite. The distribution of material benefits to the masses is a crucial element to the PRI's success, as it can produce instrumental support, and therefore legitimacy, even in the absence of political democracy and/or rights. The revolutionary source of legitimacy is the PRI's status as the heir of the Revolution and its commitment to the democratic values of the Revolution – both rhetorically and, to a certain extent, in its real welfare policies. These sources of legitimacy are “personalized in the role of president.”⁶⁰ The improvement of material wellbeing among the masses is a revolutionary tradition, a democratic rhetoric, and an instrumentalist strategy that fits both the democratic and the revolutionary natures of the PRI.

It is imperative that the PRI continuously perform well in the eyes of the masses. If what the government is providing fails to fulfill what the masses expect them to, this may create sentiments of relative deprivation among the people. Therefore, decline in performance can undermine a regime's legitimacy. Examples of this can be seen during the economic downturn of the 1980s in Mexico, when the PRI was no longer able to provide improvements in material wellbeing. As will be discussed below, the masses loss of faith in the PRI's abilities were partially reflected in their support for opposing political parties, especially the strong electoral support for the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) in 1988.

The PRI has had to deal with an increasing population over the years. A growing population means an increase in demands on the regime over time. In 1910, the total population of Mexico was 15 million people, in 1950 it was 26 million people, in 1980 it was 67 million

people, and in 2012 it was 120 million people.⁶¹ Table 2.3 (Appendix B) shows that the growth rate per year between 1910 and 1950 was 0.28%; between 1950 and 1980 it was 1.37%; and between 1980 and 2012 it was 1.66%. Table 2.4 (Appendix B) shows the population growth rate by decade, from 1910 to 2010. This ever-growing population progressively migrated to urban areas. As a result, shantytowns started to form, lacking basic public services such as utilities, water, and proper sewage systems.⁶² The PRI worked to improve the quality of life of those living in such dismal conditions by building and maintaining roads, schools, and hospitals.⁶³ Life expectancy at birth almost doubled in Mexico, from an average of 40 years in 1940 to 75 years in 2000.⁶⁴ Satisfying such basic human needs is a fundamental requirement for all political regimes. To offset the fact that Mexico lacked political rights, the PRI focused its resources on aiding these communities as a means of securing the support of the masses.

However, as is typical in a hegemonic party system, the PRI was accountable only to itself and the leader of the party, not to the Mexican citizens. Silvia Gómez Tagle, a renowned professor at the Colegio de México argues, “this system fostered corruption and impunity, and it placed the rule of law at risk.”⁶⁵ The PRI controlled the political and judicial institutions and the means by which to reform them. Thus, because the party did not hesitate to engage in corruption to secure influence, the PRI was able to control elections, the economy, and the press. These are all characteristics of an authoritarian regime and such mechanisms of control were progressively constructed first by Porfirio Díaz prior to the Revolution, then built on by President Calles, and refined further by President Cárdenas in the early stages of the PRI’s development.

C. Challenges to the PRI’s Legitimacy

José Antonio Crespo describes the nature of the PRI as that of a true hegemonic party rather than a one-party regime, “in the sense that, having itself achieved a de facto monopoly

over the country's political life, opposition parties were always legally recognized" because the supporters of the Revolution fought under the banner of political democracy.⁶⁶ Crespo believes that having taken any route other than that of a hegemonic party would have ended the PRI's legitimacy, forcing the party into oblivion. However, the formal legal recognition of opposition parties was just a façade of democracy in Mexico, in the same manner that communist regimes allow other parties to exist but do not give them access to any tools that would allow such parties to become important. Though regular, but fraudulent, elections (Table 2.5, Appendix B) and 'legally recognized' opposition parties exist in Mexico, no one other than the PRI seems to be able to win the presidency. This is partly due to the fact that, by law, the PRI received a disproportionate amount of government funding and media access thanks to the large percentage of votes it obtained.⁶⁷

i) Conflicts and Grievances Between the People and the PRI, 1950s to 1970s

Despite economic growth, many agrarian conflicts emerged in the 1950s, forcing President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) to focus the government's resources on land redistribution to appease the people.⁶⁸ In 1958, 16 million hectares of land were reallocated to end the disputes over land ownership. This type of mass redistribution had not been seen since the Cárdenas presidency in the 1940s. The demand for land reform has been a major source of grievances, leading to various peasant uprisings in the 1990s, and it is an issue that has yet to be resolved. The PRI government seems to revisit the issue of land distribution only when it needs a quick way to appease the masses and get back in their good graces. And it carries out only as much as is necessary to achieve this goal. The PRI thus plays a 'reformist game' in which, "the government manages reform from above to prevent rather than trigger fundamental change from below."⁶⁹

Civil rights, anti-war, women, and student protest movements marked the 1960s across the globe and Mexico was no different.⁷⁰ Student movements were formed to protest the quality of education, treatment and pay of teachers, and the violation of schools' autonomy by the PRI. As the PRI strove to put Mexico on the map by hosting the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, Mexico's students joined the fight against the government's violent repression of peaceful protests by other social movements.⁷¹ Ten days before the Olympic Opening Ceremony, ten thousand students gathered in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City for another rally against government repression and violence. Fearful of losing control and unwilling to accept a challenge to their authority only days away from the Olympic Games, President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) sent the army into the city to disperse the crowds. After two hours of shooting, nearly 3,000 civilians were killed and countless more were wounded.⁷²

However, this story was never accurately reported in the media because it portrayed the president, and the PRI, in a very negative light at the same time that the country was gaining international recognition. The media was forbidden from reporting on the incident and "the official account of the events would be that the students – infiltrated by communist forces – had fired on the army, and the soldiers had to fire back to defend themselves."⁷³ The truth of the Tlatelolco Massacre was one of the PRI's best-kept secrets from the world for over forty years, until President Vicente Fox (2000-2006), the first PAN president, opened up an official investigation on the subject.⁷⁴ Despite the PRI's attempt to hide its violent repression of the student protest, the regime's legitimacy was gravely undermined at that time among the growing middle class.

ii) The PRI's Command over the Mexican Media

Over time, newspaper, followed by radio, and then television have become the primary sources for the dissemination of information to the general population and to the world. Communications were revolutionized by radio in the late 19th century and by television in the 1940s. Radio became the primary source of information in the 1930s, as even illiterate citizens now had access to information. Under President Cárdenas (1934-1940), the PRI obtained complete control and by extension, censorship, of what was broadcast on the radio. In the 1950s, the first television channels in Mexico were opened through a partnership between the government (and by extension the PRI) and Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, head of Telesistema Mexicano – the predecessor of Grupo Televisa, the largest multimedia mass media company in Latin America today. Azcárraga learned to thrive under the authoritarian rule of the PRI. This partnership allowed him to successfully grow his media monopoly known today as Televisa. This type of collusion between the media owners and the ‘official’ party was established from the earliest stages of the PNR’s creation. This form of complicity between the government and the media is a standard operating procedure for authoritarian regimes.

The government learned that controlling the media would be a simple affair as long as they were able to threaten them with taxes, regulations, or even nationalization of the industry. In exchange for privileged access to cable television licenses, and other concessions, Televisa provided the PRI regime with 12.5% of all airtime and influence over the broadcast’s agendas, portraying the PRI in a positive light all the while downplaying sensitive topics.⁷⁵ “The picture of Mexico normally presented on its main news program is that of a calm, democratic nation where bullfights are about all that ever turns bloody.”⁷⁶ The Tlatelolco Massacre and precipitating demonstrations were part of ongoing protests against the PRI’s performance, its corrupt methods,

elitist practices of corporatism, and electoral fraud. The PRI's overt censorship of stories that could tarnish the party's reputation reached epic proportions during the recession of the 1980s, when the capital's radio stations were prohibited from using the word 'inflation'.⁷⁷ The massacre and the subsequent suppression of information about it reflect the very powerful mechanisms of control in the hands of the PRI.

It has become a common saying in Mexico that "corruption is not part of the system; rather, it is the system."⁷⁸ This system of corruption is evident in the bribes that journalists and media owners received from PRI members in exchange for favorable party coverage. This played an enormous role in the party's long hold on power in Mexico. One of the ways in which the media contributed to the PRI's success was by saturating all the outlets with news about the official PRI candidate for the Mexican president, once he was chosen by the outgoing president via *el dedazo*. "The PRI exceeded 80% of total campaign coverage in most elections."⁷⁹ Pro-government newspapers followed the candidate's campaign trail and reported on all of his activities, while the broadcast media created a narrative around the candidate's importance to the nation that he was about to govern.⁸⁰ Through the media's selective silence on delicate issues such, "official dominance of public discourse and electoral bias in favor of the PRI,"⁸¹ blatantly illustrated the PRI's control over the press.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there began to be a growth in independent media publications thanks to private domestic investors, leading to an opening of the Mexican press and media. Thanks to new professional ethics and a growing base of readers within the emerging middle class, seeking diverse opinions and non-government controlled forms of media, these publications were able to survive without government advertising or the acceptance of bribes, despite harassment and threats by PRI officials.⁸² Media liberalization persisted in the 1990s

when the head of Televisa died and a new rival emerged, Televisión Azteca. The founding of opposition newspapers and an increase in support for regime criticism created more open conditions, forcing the PRI to adapt to its loss of influence. Televisa had to start broadcasting more balanced coverage of the news in order to stay relevant in an increasingly competitive market. Chappell Lawson's content analysis of the Televisa news show *24 Horas* from 1986 to 1995, demonstrates that the time devoted to the activities and pronouncements of PRI officials dropped from about 60% to less than 40%.⁸³ Because the party is the government, the state, and the system, one must wonder what news coverage would not include the PRI other than entertainment and sports despite the apparent opening of media coverage. Lawson's analysis shows that in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, opposition parties were able to gain more airtime on televised news programs.⁸⁴ This was certainly a factor in the PAN's presidential victory over the PRI in 2000.

This trend of increasing clarity and candor in media coverage contributed to the possibility of change in the political sphere, including electoral results. Balanced coverage of political campaigns, particularly for the Mexican presidency, allowed for popular support to develop based on the preferences of individuals rather than familiarity with only a single candidate: the PRI's. In addition to issues of electoral fraud, the media began addressing issues that were previously censored such as drug trafficking, corruption, judicial subordination and political repression.⁸⁵ The PRI was losing its grip on media censorship. These newfound morals and desire for unbiased reporting created a ripple effect and the PRI watched this wave of liberalization that they could no longer control, engulf the press.

iii) Political Liberalization in Mexico

Elections have been an issue of contention throughout the whole PRI period (1929-2000) because of questions about whether the hegemony of the PRI was real versus just the product of electoral fraud. The two most progressive electoral reforms of Mexico were passed in 1964 and 1977. In both cases, the PRI wanted to “create the impression that the electoral system was more democratic and competitive than was actually the case,” to offset criticism of its “semi-authoritarian political model.”⁸⁶ Trying to mask the PRI’s monopoly on power, the 1964 reform altered the distribution of seats in the Mexican Congress, adding 36 new positions for minority parties. This new composition would be based on proportional representation: “the percentage of votes cast for congressional candidates in each election.”⁸⁷ This effort to give other parties a little more representation in Congress increased over time as more and more congressional seats were added.

The 1977 electoral reform was created in response to the 1976 elections in which the PRI essentially ran unopposed. In the 1976 presidential race, the PAN was unable to present a candidate due to internal conflicts; therefore, the PRI’s candidate – José López Portillo (1976-1982) – ran unopposed.⁸⁸ President López Portillo’s victory was an embarrassment to the PRI because the conditions under which he was elected undermined the party’s claim to democracy. The failure of the symbolic process of nominating opposition candidates during the 1976 Mexican general elections necessitated genuine reform for the country to function. The 1977 electoral reforms allowed opposition parties to register as such, giving legal standing to long-established political parties, thus fostering more party competition by encouraging opposition parties to organize and fully participate in elections of every level.

Daniel Levy states that reforms such as the 1964 and 1977 reforms, “were not intended to let opposition parties challenge the PRI, but to keep them in the game by offering incentives for participation and sanctions for non-participation.”⁸⁹ The PRI’s main goal was always to stay in power while strengthening its government’s legitimacy. The 1964 and 1977 reforms illustrate the PRI’s distinct advantage in general elections. Electoral laws guaranteed that the largest party would obtain a disproportional share of seats in Congress. Because the PRI controlled the institutions that legally recognized smaller opposition parties, it allowed the PRI to effectively limit the number of opposition parties in the Mexican Congress.⁹⁰ Additionally, “the PRI was given – by law – more financial support and media access” because government subsidies were divided by the percentage of votes the party received in the previous elections.⁹¹ Because the PRI won by large majorities such as 70% or 80%, it received an equally large proportion of funding. In the years to come however, trouble would arise not from the opposition of other parties, but from within the PRI itself. Internal conflict would split the PRI in to two parties: PRI and PRD, showing a clear divide between the *prístas* who wished to liberalize, and those who preferred to hold on to dominant power.

D. The Decline of PRI Dominance

i) Economic Crisis and the Weakening of PRI Dominance

Between 1970 and 1982, Mexico’s external debt rose as a result of domestic economic expansion in the context of a global recession. After twenty years of economic growth, the 1970s petroleum price shocks yielded great instability in the world economy, creating a phenomenon of simultaneous inflation and recession across the board. In an attempt to remedy the situation and restore a sense of normalcy, President Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976) decided to open up the Mexican economy to more foreign trade. This increased the country’s national debt, which

was primarily held by the public sector. By the end of President Echeverría's term, inflation rose to 27%,⁹² the total foreign debt was 31% of the country's GDP, and the peso was devalued by 50%.⁹³ A second oil shock occurred at the end of the 1970s under President José López Portillo (1976-1982), both helping and hurting Mexico. The increase in oil prices helped Mexico's oil export business but the worldwide recession reduced the number of net exports.⁹⁴ Despite fears of devaluation, Mexico continued to borrow heavily and the peso depreciated by an additional 16%.⁹⁵ In 1980, large deficits were the results of increasing expenditures and decreasing revenues. After the devaluations of the peso and rising global interest rates raised Mexico's external debt to 49% of GDP in 1982.⁹⁶ The combination of liberalizing trade policies, declining non-oil exports, and devaluation of the peso led the country to declare bankruptcy.

Under President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982-1988), U.S. commercial banks intervened to bail out the Mexican government. This became very controversial in the United States because Mexico was only asked to repay some of the interest on its loans and many Americans were unwilling to give Mexico any sort of 'free ride'. The gross mismanagement of the economy by the PRI, especially the oil industry, and the need for the United States to intervene and save the Mexican economy represented a significant failure in performance with important implications for regime support and legitimacy, identified earlier in this chapter. This failure of the PRI to protect the material wellbeing of the masses undermined support for the party, and generated stronger opposition to the PRI regime.

As a condition to the U.S. government's and the IMF's financial aid package, Mexico was required to implement very strict fiscal reforms including the privatization of state-owned companies, reductions in trade barriers, and the liberalization of foreign investments and industry regulations.⁹⁷ All of these structural changes helped stabilize the Mexican economy by the end of

the 1980s. These neoliberal reforms were a prelude to the establishment of NAFTA. However, the nationalization of the banks meant that the PRI now controlled the entirety of the country's monetary resources. This made people uneasy because it was the PRI's mismanagement of funds that had led Mexico into such a dismal economic situation. To alleviate such fears, economic decisions made by the government would become increasingly transparent in the years to come. Such transparency represented a small step in the direction of democratization.

The sharp decline in performance of the regime encouraged popular support for opposition parties, who promised more intelligent management of the economy, and more transparency of government actions. In the run up to the 1988 general elections, several prominent PRI leaders lobbied for the party to provide economic aid to the poor and adopt more neoliberal and democratic policies within the economy and the internal selection of the PRI's presidential candidate.⁹⁸ When the PRI refused, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solorzano and his followers split off from the party. As the son of the famous revolutionary and president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), many followed him based on his legacy and respect for his father. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas ran for president in 1988 under a new party, the PRD. As the preliminary results came in and showed that Cárdenas had unexpectedly gained a lot of support in the capital, the PRI was forced to take matter in to its own hands to guarantee the party's continuation as the political powerhouse.

Daniel Levy describes the manner in which the PRI conducted itself during the 1988 elections – one of the most controversial and fraudulent elections – when it faced an opponent that could truly disrupt the party's historical hold on power:

Believing that the solid PRI rural vote would make up for Mexico City, top PRI officials ordered election workers to effect a crash of the computerized counting system to delay announcement of the results. But taking nothing for granted, they also worked feverishly to ensure that their candidate would win – inflating voting counts and burning thousands

of ballots. Such evidence gave credence to Cárdenas's claim that he had won the elections. Certainly, Salinas won less of the vote than he claimed.⁹⁹

The official results of the 1988 presidential elections showed that the PRI won just over 50% of the votes, while the PRD won only 30% (Table 2.5, Appendix B). Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's claim that he was robbed of the presidency¹⁰⁰ was given credibility by reports of "ballot box stuffing ... and manufactured computer glitches to throw the election to the PRI candidate."¹⁰¹ The 1988 elections sent a clear message that the PRI's lengthy hegemony was due in large part to outright fraud and repression, and perhaps to a greater extent than actual support in the electorate. This split in the ruling elite into PRI and PRD, recalls Samuel Huntington's notion that democratization starts with factionalism within a regime.¹⁰² However, the traction of the PRD's candidacy does not draw more support away from the PRI after the 1988 elections. In reality, the real opposition shifted to support the PAN as illustrated by the increase in votes received by the PAN between 1982 and 2000 (Table 2.5, Appendix B). This suggests that factionalism may not have played as big a role as Huntington speculates.

The way in which the PRI conducted itself during these elections is reminiscent of the 1910 elections between Porfirio Díaz, the authoritarian ruler for thirty-four years, and Francisco I. Madero, a real contender in the elections. As described at the beginning of this chapter, Madero was arrested on the eve of the election and Díaz won by default. By 1988, there were multiple instances where the PRI had won the presidency by default and because of foul play. Table 2.5 (Appendix B) illustrates the percentage of votes per *sexenio* by the three major political parties: PRI, PAN, and PRD. One can clearly see that the PRI won every election with more than 70% of the votes from 1934 to 1988. The PRI won by 90% or more in 1934 and 1940 because it was the only viable political party. However, it won by that margin again in 1958 and in 1976, the two elections that were suspected of being the most fraudulent. In 1976, the PRI

even ran unopposed because the PAN was unable to put up a candidate. After this election, the PRI tried very hard to protect its image but was once again suspected of committing fraud when the PRD entered the presidential race in 1988. The PAN's percentage of voters however, increased steadily from 7.8% in 1952 to 42.52% in 2000, when its candidate, Vicente Fox, was elected president. But, the PRD's support dropped drastically after 1988.

After such a controversial electoral 'victory', the PRI regime was in crisis of legitimacy. At risk of losing control and power, the party began liberalizing, and thus democratizing, as a way to regain some of its lost legitimacy. The newly elected PRI president, Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), wanted to amend the constitution to adopt electoral reforms in an effort to erase the cloud of fraud surrounding his victory. In prior decades, the PRI held more than 70% of the seats in the lower chamber (Cámara de Diputados) of Congress (Table 2.7, Appendix B). But, because President Salinas de Gortari won by a dramatically smaller percentage in 1988 than previous PRI presidents, the PRI now lacked the two-thirds majority in Congress necessary to amend the constitution. The PRI was able to obtain only 52.0% of the seats (Table 2.7, Appendix B). The 1988 election constituted the first real significant, and lasting, blow to the PRI's legitimacy as its appeal began to falter from 1988 onwards. The composition of the Mexican Parliament can be seen in Tables 2.7 and 2.8 (Appendix B). However, data for the composition of the Senate was not available prior to 1982, as explained by Dieter Nohlen, who comments that all Senate seats were seemingly held by the PRI prior to that date.

In order to obtain the PAN's support in Congress for electoral reform, "[President] Salinas promised to refrain from electoral fraud and put forward a new electoral law in 1990, the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures [COFIPE]"¹⁰³ that emphasized non-PRI representation in the newly created institution in charge of organizing the elections: the Federal

Electoral Institute (IFE). The IFE was finally established in 1996 and would be a key player in the democratization of Mexico. To keep fraud to a minimum, this third party, unbiased institution was in charge of monitoring local and presidential elections through vote counting and the publication of electoral results.¹⁰⁴ The establishment of the IFE constituted a limited step in the direction of free and fair elections. These reforms would allow Mexico to begin moving away from excessive centralism towards increasing opposition control of state and municipal governments.¹⁰⁵

ii) The End of PRI Hegemony

Via *el dedazo*, President Salinas de Gortari had chosen Luis Donaldo Colosio as his successor, the former president of the PRI from 1988 to 1992 (for almost all of President Salinas de Gortari's *sexenio*).¹⁰⁶ But, Colosio was murdered in March 1994. Colosio's assassination reminds us of Álvaro Obregón's assassination in 1928 when this former President of Mexico sought reelection for a non-consecutive term. As a result, the PRI scrambled to find another eligible candidate who could win the elections in a credible fashion to begin erasing the distrust created in the 1988 election. The Mexican Constitution states in Article 82 that, in order to be a candidate for the presidency, one cannot hold any political office within six months of the election.¹⁰⁷ Because of this constitutional restriction, the party's new candidate in the 1994 elections would likely not be as well vetted by the PRI, enjoy as much support inside the PRI, or be as controllable as previously candidates by the party. The party ended up selecting a new technocrat as its presidential candidate: Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (1994-2000). Trying to maintain the PRI's public image after Colosio's assassination, Zedillo ran on the platforms of decentralizing the government and strengthening the judicial process. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas ran again on the PRD's ballot but this time, he was able to obtain only 16% of the votes (Table 2.5,

Appendix B). The PAN however, increased its share of the vote from 16% in 1988 to 25% in 1994 (Table 2.5, Appendix B). The PRI's inability to perform during the country's most severe economic crisis explains its progressive loss in votes and the increased support for the PAN. But, it is unclear why such a situation did not favor opposition candidates.

Still in the midst of this economic crisis, President Zedillo continued opening Mexico's economy by prioritizing NAFTA, which was enacted in 1994. However, President Zedillo focused his efforts on his 1996 electoral reforms, which "took up the issue of representation and made further progress toward more representative governmental institutions."¹⁰⁸ These reforms further changed the composition of Congress. The Senate would be chosen by "proportional representation in a single national constituency", and no party would be permitted more than 60% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁰⁹ The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), started under President Salinas de Gortari, was restructured and given the authority to run as an independent organization away from the ruling government and any external political pressures.¹¹⁰ This represented a major step in the direction of free, fair, and competitive elections. These changes were the final push that led to the PRI's first loss of power.

After the 1997-midterm elections, the PRI was no longer able to hold onto the majority in Congress. This suggests that a major opening in the direction of democracy had taken place, since free, fair, and competitive elections were now taking place. The PRI went from having 60% of the seats in the lower chamber in 1994 to having 47.8% of the seats in 1997. The party went from 74.2% of the seats in the upper chamber in 1994 to having 60.2% of the seats in 1997 (Tables 2.7 and 2.8, Appendix B). President Zedillo's refusal to alter the 1997 midterm electoral results went even further when he refused to intervene in the 2000 presidential elections. This shift in support away from the PRI continued when its candidate lost the presidential elections of

2000, and the PRI had to relinquish power for the first time in Mexican history, after seventy-one years in power. “[President] Zedillo figuratively cut off his finger – and, in so doing, ended the tradition of the *dedazo*.”¹¹¹ Though he did express his support for Francisco Labastida Ochoa, the PRI candidate in the 2000 general elections.

President Vicente Fox Quesada (2000-2006), of the PAN party, would be the very first non-PRI president since 1929. He ran on a platform focused on “ending government corruption and improving the economy.”¹¹² This peaceful transfer of power signaled the beginning of democratic consolidation in Mexico. In 2000, the PRI became the opposition party and would be forced to participate in real party competition from then on. Although alternation of power is part of the consolidation process, there is an argument about how many alternations are enough to consider democracy as firmly established. A second alternation occurred in 2012 when the PRI regained the presidency with 38.2% of the vote, suggesting that Mexico has finally consolidated as a democracy (Table 2.5, Appendix B).

Table 2.6 (Appendix B) shows which percentage of the Mexican population voted in each presidential election from 1946 to 2000. Overall, this table shows a steady increase in the number of voters. However, the population of Mexico grew while the percentage of voters barely increased by 5% each election after the mid-1950s. A little over half of the population voted in each presidential election, with the exception of 1988 with the PRI vs PRD electoral fraud controversy. In 1988 when the PRD ran for the first time, either people did not vote or many ballots were destroyed. Voter turnout never exceeds 66% of the population. This could be linked to a lack of information or a lack of resources distributed to potential voters, especially in rural areas. Or, it could simply be explained by a lack of interest in participating in elections. An obvious speculation is that Mexicans stopped believing that their votes would make a difference

because in the past, even when voter turnout increased, the PRI continued to win. The interesting thing to notice is that voter turnout did not improve when the PAN was in power from 2000 to 2012. Perhaps today, Mexicans no longer trust in the country's system and therefore these numbers can be explained by disinterest. This disparity brings up the following question: if more eligible voters had participated in each general election, would democracy in Mexico have consolidated sooner? Additionally, one may wonder if one of the PRI's strategies, and secrets to its success, involved demobilization, especially of large portions of the population, that were least likely to support the PRI or to participate in the most basic of societal activities.

CHAPTER III: An Analysis of the State of Democracy in Mexico

Chapter Two reviewed the political history of Mexico since the Revolution of 1910 up to the year 2000. Throughout that historical narrative, one can pinpoint instances in which Mexico's governing structure falls short of being a democracy. But there are also moments where one can see the government's efforts to make its policies resemble those of a democracy.

The definition of democracy I propose in Chapter I encompasses all three essential conditions for a democratic system of government set forth by Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1988): competition, participation, and civil liberties.¹¹³ These are basis for the criteria used to assess whether Mexico can be considered a democracy.

I. Analysis of Table 1, Appendix A

I seek to determine whether Mexico can in fact be classified as a democracy based on the more detailed definitions of the criteria in Table 1 (Appendix A), and the enhanced definition of democracy that I proposed in Chapter I:

A democracy is an institutionalized system of governance that is accountable to and chosen by its citizens – who are equal to one another – through free, fair, and competitive elections in a non-oppressive, multiparty society that provides civil rights and liberties that benefit and improve said individuals' opportunities and qualities of life.

The criteria for democracy in Table 1 (Appendix A) are drawn from my review of the literature on democracy and democratization. Below, I explain each criterion for democracy and clarify how it applies to the Mexican case from 1929 to 2000, based on the three essential conditions set forth in the above definition of democracy: competition, participation, and civil liberties.¹¹⁴

#1 – Elections

The most complex criterion for democracy revolves around elections. Elections must first and foremost be held at regular intervals; something Mexico has always abided by. Elections for the presidency and the Senate are held every six years, and those for the Chamber of Deputies are held every three years. Elections must be open, fair, and free, as well as part of a multiparty political environment. For elections to be open, fair, and free, there must be full adult suffrage and sufficient civil liberties to allow for meaningful participation and competition¹¹⁵ – conditions that are a part of criterion #2. While Mexican citizens enjoy civil liberties, elections are not fair. Though proof is hard to come by, elections in Mexico are often fraudulent. There are many instances in which ballot stuffing is suspected or clearly visible, especially when the PRI wins by very large margins (Table 2.5, Appendix B), or when, as in 1988, it felt threatened with defeat. Table 2.5 (Appendix B) shows that the PRI has won by 70% to 90% of the votes from 1929 to 1982. These results emphasize the disproportionate share of votes received by the PRI prior to Mexico's adoption of more liberalizing policies in the mid-1980s. After 1988, the PRI had to reduce its fraudulent tactics to try and salvage the party's status as a legitimate and seemingly democratic government. The PRI encouraged competition through electoral reforms in the 1970s and restructured the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) in the 1990s to make it a politically neutral institution that would monitor the electoral process. This led to an increase in transparency of elections from the 1994 presidential election onward and will lead to the PRI's defeat in 2000 (criterion #4).

#2 – Electoral Participation

The second criterion of democracy is electoral participation, which necessitates full adult suffrage, the rights and freedoms to vote and contest, and the possibility to participate in

meaningful competitive elections. Mexicans have unobstructed rights to vote and run for political office. However, they do not always have the right to freely choose who they vote for. Nor do they have an equal chance of winning political office if they run on a ballot other than the PRI's. To qualify as a democracy, Mexico needs to have a multiparty society; in other words, there must be meaningful electoral competition. This requirement is similar to that for a civil society (criterion 6) but stays within the realm of politics. However, opposition parties in Mexico do not have equal access to media, funds, or voters, and are often barely able to obtain 1% of votes.¹¹⁶ There have been elections in which the PRI has run entirely unopposed as it did in 1976. One can speculate that the greater the threat posed by an opposition candidate to the PRI's hold on power, the greater the electoral fraud committed by the PRI. Thus, with the exception of 1988, there was no meaningful electoral competition before 2000.

#3 Possibility of Change Through Collective Action

Schmitter and Karl state that for a political system to be considered democratic, the possibility of change through independent collective action must exist, "even in those polities where one party persists in winning elections or one policy is consistently implemented;"¹¹⁷ and because it does not exist in Mexico, the country is not democratic. Although the PRI has almost always run against one or more parties, it was not until the 2000 elections that change through collective action by opposition parties became possible. Therefore, Mexico did not have a fully competitive electoral environment between 1929 and 2000, and thus, it did not have a real multiparty society. Because of this, Mexico's electoral practices fail to meet the majority of the requirements set forth in the first three criteria for assessing whether Mexico was a democracy prior to 2000.

#4 – Government Accountability and Transparency

A very important but often overlooked part of a democracy is a government's accountability to its citizens, and the transparency of its actions and policies. Unfortunately, the Mexican government fails to live up to these requirements. The PRI is not truly accountable to its electors because it has set measures in place to block other parties from taking over the powerful political posts of Mexico. There are a few catalogued instances that illustrate the severity of the PRI's electoral fraud (Table 2.5, Appendix B). In addition to instances of electoral fraud, the absence of a free, watchdog press and media in Mexico, further weaken the government's accountability to its citizens. The media's efforts to hold the government accountable are improving but they are not yet at the level necessary for the country to be considered democratic. The 1970s electoral reforms and other efforts in the 1990s, including the new IFE and a more open press, increased party competition and made the Mexican government more accountable and transparent regarding its duties in the late 20th century and in to the new millennium.

#5 – Social Democracy & Political Equality Among Citizens

Mexicans live in a politically equal society in the sense that citizens are equal before the law, without regard to race, gender, or social status. Benito Juárez, one of Mexico's most beloved leaders, famously said that, "respect for the rights of others is peace."¹¹⁸ The concept of equality is one that has been in every constitution the country has adopted. Though other values have changed, this is one that has remained constant. However, Mexico only fulfills part of the criterion for being a politically equal society because Mexicans do not have unimpeded freedom of expression or contestation. More importantly, the government has been unable to guarantee the personal security of its citizens.

From 1929 to the 1970s, freedom of expression was permitted only if the intended speech benefitted the PRI government. Therefore, Mexican society can only be considered partially equal during that time period. It was not until the mid 1970s and 1980s, when independent media publications, free from the PRI's grip began to arise that critical opinions were heard. In the 1990s, the PRI's loss of influence over central elements in the country, including presidential influence, gave way to more public contestation and unimpeded freedom of expression. Between the 1970s and 1990s, Mexico was moving towards becoming a more politically equal society.

#6 – Institutionalized System of Governance and Presence of a Civil Society

The sixth criterion is the institutionalization of government and the presence of a civil society. Organizing a government around a strict set of rules should bring a certain level of stability, but it does not in Mexico. The governing structure in Mexico is based on a constitution, but governance has not developed fully in comprehension with the Mexican Constitution. Governance in Mexico continues to be conducted through extra-institutional methods (within the PRI or behind the scenes with powerful economic actors), rather than in a transparent fashion within the formal institutions of the government. The PRI's influence has greatly affected the way in which the country was run and the way in which conflicting issues were resolved. The PRI completely dominated the legislative branch, and created an overpowering executive that inherently diminished the power of the judiciary. Mexican presidents enjoyed metaconstitutional powers known as presidentialism, which are a series of unwritten norms of the Mexican system that authorized the centralization of the president's power through a progressive "distortion of constitutional mechanism."¹¹⁹ Thus, Mexico has an institutionalized system of governance, but it is not congruent with formal constitutional prescriptions. Institutional changes in the direction of constitutionalism are required to advance the country towards democracy.

A civil society is present if a system of rights and elections are institutionalized, which is only partially the case in Mexico. Larry Diamond defines a civil society as, “the entire range of organized groups and institutions that are independent of the state, voluntary, and at least to some extent self-generating and self-reliant.”¹²⁰ This includes NGOs, independent mass media, social groups, and other autonomous groups who have the possibility of cooperating for the betterment of the society.¹²¹ The notion of a civil society implies tolerance of diversity, and the freedoms of expression, assembly, and contestation. The autonomous groups of a civil society function outside of the realm of political parties though they often advocate for certain political causes. Mexican civil society is not developed to its full potential because most groups are affiliated with political parties, typically with the PRI. Civil society also implies accepted norms that constrain behaviors, such as violence; but crime and violence have increased in Mexico since the economic crisis of 1980.¹²² Therefore, Mexico fails to meet the criterion of a functional civil society.

Concluding Analysis

As seen in Chapter II, Mexico has a long history of the PRI interfering when people, companies, and policies conflict with the party’s interests. There have only been a few instances where the Mexican government, run by the PRI, has put forth liberalizing policies to help advance the democratic cause in the country. These instances include electoral reforms in which political parties were allowed to register as legal parties. This gave political parties increased opportunities to compete on a more leveled playing field. Nevertheless, instances of liberalization are scarce in Mexico, which contribute to the absence of a consolidated democracy.

It would be useful to compare Mexico to other partially or newly democratized countries on these other criteria of democracy, but some of the more trusted measures of democracy such as those used by Polity IV,¹²³ the World Bank,¹²⁴ and Freedom House,¹²⁵ either have limited or no data on Mexico prior to the 1980s or even the 2000s. Because of this, I turned to the Fitzgibbon Index in which UCLA Professor Russell Fitzgibbon “asked a panel of ten distinguished U.S. scholars to rank the twenty Latin American republics according to a set of criteria that he felt would measure the extent of democracy in each of the countries.”¹²⁶ These criteria included social liberalization such as levels of education and standards of living; and political liberalization such as freedoms of expression and government transparency.¹²⁷ Mexico averaged a ranking of 5 out of 20 over 50 years. Although its cumulative ranking put it in third place among the Latin American nations, it was consistently rated “either among the four highest on the scale or among the four lowest,”¹²⁸ illustrating a deep division among scholarly perceptions on Mexico.

On other criteria such as “civilian supremacy over the military, regular elections, lack of ecclesiastical dominance, internal unity, and political maturity,” Mexico scores relatively high.¹²⁹ But, as Guy Poitras puts it, this says more about Mexico’s “brand of political stability” than about the state of democracy within the country.¹³⁰ Poitras believes that Mexico’s stability is impressively unmatched among other Latin American countries, “but this stability has also delayed for many years the onset of liberal democracy.”¹³¹ When compared to the rest of the world, Mexico’s rank drops dramatically from 3rd among Latin American nations, to 53rd out of 167 countries covered in *The Economist* Intelligence Unit’s measures of democracy. The same study also classifies Mexico under flawed democracies, highlighting once again all the deficiencies of the Mexican system identified in this thesis.¹³²

II. Characterizing Mexico's State of Democracy

Table 3 (Appendix C) compiles the criteria for democracy established in Chapter I (Table 1, Appendix A), and depicts my own assessment of how Mexico fits in to each category during the 1900s. The formal rules of government had some value but the informal rules of the PRI machine dominated the system. There was some electoral participation and a weak institutionalization of the government from 1929 to 2000. Government accountability and transparency was not very existent from 1929 to the 1980s, but became more present in the 1990s. Elections were never truly free, fair, or competitive, and there was no real possibility of change through collective action before 2000; therefore, electoral conditions were very poor in Mexico. The only positive aspect is that elections have always been held at set intervals. Mexican society is not fully politically equal because although there is equality among citizens, their freedoms of expression were often obstructed by the PRI. Lastly, there was no real civil society in Mexico. Based on these results, it is possible to conclude that Mexico fails the test of democracy set forth by both Table 1 (Appendix A) and my enhanced definition of democracy.

Although the country has taken multiple decades to transition from an authoritarian regime to a full-fledged democracy, the results in Table 3 (Appendix C) show that Mexico fails or only barely fulfills every criterion set forth in Table 1 (Appendix A). Thus, I conclude that Mexico must be categorized as an inclusionary authoritarian regime rather than a controlled, restrictive, and illiberal democracy because it hardly qualifies as a democracy, even with adjectives.¹³³

CONCLUSION

During the seventy-one years of the PRI's one-party rule, Mexico cannot be considered anything more than an inclusionary authoritarian regime. The country's transition towards democracy has lasted almost a century and is still in the process of consolidating. For the first few years, the PRI was the sole viable political option, marketing itself as the heir of the Revolution and its ideals. This illusion lasted well into the 1960s and 1970s, when the PRI had already established its firm influence over the country. It was not until the rest of the world began to globalize that Mexico was recognized as being behind in its promise of democratizing the nation. The PRI government tried to make Mexico an important player on the world stage while maintaining its restrictive practices and façade of a democracy. Wanting to quickly grow the economy, the PRI adopted policies that destabilized the Mexican economy and undermined itself by the negatively affected material performance of the regime. Negative economic performance established the basis for the questioning the PRI's legitimacy, and the ruling party faced the only serious electoral threat to its power (until 2000) in the 1988 elections. Establishing electoral reforms, adopting a minimal amount of liberalizing practices in an effort to regain legitimacy, and attempting to appease the peasantry through land distribution, failed, as Mexicans asked for a more democratic governing structure. Unable to accommodate the nation and hold on to its overwhelming influence, the PRI lost the presidential election in the year 2000.

The question asked at the beginning of this thesis was: can Mexico be considered a democracy under seventy years of one-party rule? Many may consider this a loaded question because Mexico's legitimacy as a democracy has never truly been questioned in the public eye. If one reads or hears about Mexico in the news, one may know that the PRI is the ruling party, but the complexity of the country's classification is rarely discussed. This shows one of two

things: either Mexico's one-party rule was never considered undemocratic, or no one cared to find out. This issue poses a grave conundrum for me as I began my investigation and I realized the first step was defining what it means to be a democracy.

Based on the scholarly works reviewed in Chapter I and my findings presented in Table 1 (Appendix A), I proposed an enhanced definition of democracy as,

An institutionalized system of governance that is accountable to and chosen by its citizens – who are equal to one another – through free, fair, and competitive elections in a non-oppressive, multiparty society that provides civil rights and liberties that benefit and improve said individuals' opportunities and qualities of life.

My enhanced definition incorporates the elements in Table 1 (Appendix A), requiring that a democratic nation be firmly based on a body of laws that provide and encourage a politically equal society, encompassing participation, competitive elections in a multiparty environment, and a government that is accountable for its actions, as well as a government that strives for liberalization and modernization. Given these elements, I show throughout the thesis how Mexico fails the test of democracy.

The PRI holds elections at regular intervals. However, these have never been truly open, free, fair, or competitive elections, which are some of the more important criteria for categorizing a nation as being democratic. There even appear to be some very clear instances in which the PRI likely participated in election rigging. In 1988, when the PRI faced the most serious electoral challenge to its power up to that point, the percentage of voter turnout dropped dramatically from 65% to 42% and then increased to 65% again in the following general election (Table 2.6, Appendix B). This unusual decline in a highly competitive election seems to corroborate accusations of massive electoral fraud, including the destruction of a large number of ballots, as claimed by the opposition. The PRI could no longer manipulate electoral results in the

same manner after 1988, and thus the proportion of votes received by the PRI declined (Table 2.5, Appendix B).

The transition to democracy is often about elections. Given that Mexico has already carried out reforms, each of which has moved the system to being more democratic, it is possible that Mexico will do so again in the future. However, to fully transform into a democracy, the country would have to create a more balanced system of power between the president and other institutions, put an end to corrupt practices, and adopt policies that increased electoral participation for free, fair, and truly competitive elections. It would also have to create a more egalitarian society, in which freedoms of expression could not be violated, and where government accountability and transparency was enforced.

Finally, the country would have to move from being a transitional democracy to a consolidated democracy by agreeing on and enforcing “rules and codes of political conduct and the worth of political institutions.”¹³⁴ Schumpeter’s minimal definition of democracy implies the possibility of alternation of power, which Mexico has never had until 2000. Today, Mexico has already had two peaceful alternations of power (2000 and 2012), which can be seen as the beginning of a stable consolidated democracy. However, the power has now shifted from the hands of the PAN back to those of the PRI. One has to wonder whether the country’s progress in the direction of democracy will be impeded by the PRI’s return to power in 2012 and whether Mexico’s transition from authoritarian to democratic rule will come to a full stop. The real question will be to see if the PRI is able to adapt to modern times and function under more transparent democratic means in the years to come. The criteria and principles discussed in this thesis can be used to evaluate any nation when trying to ascertain if a nation is, or is not, democratic.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A – Chapter I Tables

Table 1: Criterion for Democracy Based on a Review of the Literature on Democracy and Democratization

CRITERION SCHOLARS	<u>Elections</u> Free & Fair [Held at set intervals, no fraud]	<u>Electoral Participation</u>		Possibility of change through collection action, w/o repression of opposition	Government accountability & transparency	<u>Political Equality</u> Citizens are equals, all have same rights, w/o discrimination	<u>Institutionalization of Government & Civil Society</u>	
		<u>Political Rights:</u> Full adult suffrage, freedoms of expression and full contestation	Meaningful Competition				<u>Institutionalization</u> System of governance acquires value and stability, based on a written body of laws	<u>Civil Society</u> Cooperation and deliberation via autonomous groups
Classical Doctrine 18 th century	? ✓	?	✗	? ✓	? ✓	?	✓	?
Schumpeter 1950	? ✓	? ✓	✓	? ✓	? ✓	? ✓	✓	?
Dahl 1971	✓	✓	✓	? ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Huntington 1991	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schmitter & Karl 1991	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key:
 ✓ = Yes ✗ = No ? = Unclear ? ✓ = Unspecified but seemingly implied

APPENDIX B – Chapter II Tables**Table 2.1: GDP Per Capita in Pesos (at value in 2009) from 1930 to 1970, Every 5 Years**

Year	GDP per capita in pesos (at value in 2009)
1930	282
1935	252
1940	420
1945	913
1950	1,635
1955	3,001
1960	4,573
1965	6,459
1970	9,212

Source: “Estadísticas históricas de México”, Chapter 7. 2009

http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/integracion/pais/historicas10/Te ma7_SCNM.pdf

Table 2.2: GDP growth rates from 1930 to 1970, Every 10 Years

Year	GDP Growth Rate	Formula: GDP Growth Rate $= (\text{GDP}_{\text{Year 2}} / \text{GDP}_{\text{Year 1}}) - 1 * 100$
1930 – 1940	48%	$(420/282) - 1 = 0.4893$
1940 – 1950	289%	$(1635/420) - 1 = 2.8928$
1950 – 1960	180%	$(4573/1635) - 1 = 1.7969$
1960 – 1970	101%	$(9212/4573) - 1 = 1.01443$

Source: INEGI. “Estadísticas históricas de México”, Chapter 7. 2009

http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/integracion/pais/historicas10/Te ma7_SCNM.pdf

Note: GDP per capita numbers are taken from Table 2.1

Table 2.3: Population Growth Rates Per Year Bracket

Year Bracket	Population Growth Rate Per Year	Calculations: Growth Rate per Year $= (\text{Pop}_{\text{Year 2}} - \text{Pop}_{\text{Year 1}}) / (\text{Year 2} - \text{Year 1})$
1910-1950	0.28%	$(26-15)/(1950-1910) = 0.275$
1950-1980	1.37%	$(67-26)/(1980-1950) = 1.366$
1980 - 2012	1.66%	$(120-67)/(2012-1980) = 1.656$

Source: INEGI. “Annual population growth rate, 1895 to 2010”. 2011

http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/graficas_temas/epobla02.htm?s=est&c=17510

Table 2.4: Population Growth Rates from 1910 to 2010, Every 10 Years

Years	Population Growth Rate
1910-1920	- 0.5%
1920-1930	1.7%
1930-1940	1.8%
1940-1950	2.7%
1950-1960	3.1%
1960-1970	3.4%
1970-1980	3.2%
1980-1990	2.0%
1990-2000	1.9%
2000-2010	1.4%

Source: INEGI. “Annual population growth rate, 1895 to 2010”. 2011

http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/graficas_temas/epobla02.htm?s=est&c=17510

Table 2.5:
Percentage of Votes Received by Major Parties in Mexican General Elections, 1934 to 2012

Party Year	PRI (Founded 1929)	PAN (Founded 1939)	PRD (Founded 1988)
1934	98.2%	-	-
1940	93.9%	-	-
1946	77.9%	-	-
1952	74.3%	7.8%	-
1958	90.4%	9.4%	-
1964	88.8%	11.0%	-
1970	86.0%	14.0%	-
1976	91.90%	*	-
1982	74.3%	16.4%	-
1988	50.7%	16.8%	31.1%
1994	48.69%	25.92%	16.59%
2000	36.11%	42.52%	16.64%
2006	22.26%	35.89%	35.31%
2012	38.21%	25.4%	31.6%

Sources: Nohlen, Dieter. *Elections in the Americas a Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

INE.mx: http://www.ine.mx/documentos/Estadisticas2006/presidente/gra_nac.html

ElectionResource.org: <http://electionresources.org/mx/president.php?election=2012>

Key: – party did not exist, * party did not present a candidate

Table 2.6:
Voter-Turn Out in Mexican General Elections, 1964 to 2000

Year	President & Party Affiliation	Voter-Turn Out	Total # of Votes Cast	# of People Registered to Vote
1964	PRI – Gustavo Díaz Ordaz	69.33%	9,422,185	13,589,594
1970	PRI – Luis Echeverría	64.26%	13,915,963	21,645,217
1976	PRI – José López Portillo	64.55%	16,727,993	25,913,215
1982	PRI – Miguel de la Madrid	74.84%	23,592,888	31,526,386
1988	PRI – Carlos Salinas de Gortari	50.14%	19,091,843	38,074,926
1994	PRI – Ernesto Zedillo	78.50%	35,535,831	45,279,053
2000	PAN – Vicente Fox	63.95%	37,603,923	58,789,209

Sources:

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. “Voter Turnout Data for Mexico”.

<http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=MX>

Table 2.7: Composition of Mexican Lower Chamber (House of Representatives) by Percentage of Seats Held by Each Party, 1952-2000

Year Party	1952	1955	1958	1961	1964	1967	1970	1973	1976	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000
PRI	93.8	94.5	94.5	96.6	83.3	83.5	83.6	81.8	82.3	74.0	80.4	73.0	52.0	64.0	60.0	47.8	42.2
PAN	3.1	3.7	3.7	2.8	9.5	9.4	9.4	10.8	8.4	10.8	13.7	9.5	20.4	17.8	23.8	24.2	41.2
PRD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	8.2	14.2	25.0	10.0
Other	3.1	1.8	1.8	0.6	7.2	7.1	7.0	7.4	9.3	15.2	5.9	17.5	27.6	10.0	2.0	3.0	6.6

Source: Nohlen, Dieter. *Elections in the Americas a Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Note from Nohlen: Seats for PRI given here were determined by subtracting the number of other parties' seats from the total. The party did not always occupy all of those seats, however, there is no precise information available.

Table 2.8: Composition of Mexican Upper Chamber (Senate) by Percentage of Seats Held by Each Party, 1982-2000

Year Party	1982	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000
PRI	98.4	93.8	95.3	74.2	60.2	46.9
PAN	-	0	1.6	19.6	25.8	35.9
PRD	-	0	3.1	6.3	12.5	11.7
Other	1.6	6.2	0	0	1.5	5.5

Source: Nohlen, Dieter. *Elections in the Americas a Data Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Note from Nohlen: Before 1982, PRI held all senate seats.

APPENDIX C – Chapter III Tables

Table 3: The State of Democracy in Mexico within the Criteria for Democracy by Different Time Frames

CRITERION TIME FRAMES	Elections Free & Fair [Held at set intervals, no fraud]	Electoral Participation		Possibility of change through collection action, w/o repression of opposition	Government accountability & transparency	Political Equality Citizens are equals, all have same rights, w/o discrimination	Institutionalization of Government & Civil Society	
		Political Rights: Full adult suffrage, freedoms of expression and full contestation	Meaningful Competition				Institutionalization System of governance acquires value and stability, based on a written body of laws	Civil Society Cooperation and deliberation via autonomous groups
1929 – 1980s	Weak	Weak	Weak	X	Weak	Strong	Weak	X
1990s	Mild	Mild					Mild	X
State of Democracy in Mexico	Weak	Weak		X	Mild	Strong	Weak	

Key:
 ✓ = Strong ✓/Weak = Mild Weak = Weak X = Unavailable

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