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**BUILDING THE FOURTH ESTATE
DEMOCRATIZATION AND MEDIA OPENING IN MEXICO**

**A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

J. Chappell H. Lawson

July 1999

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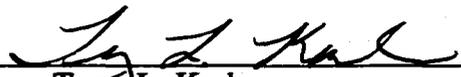
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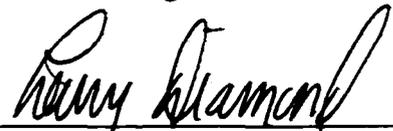
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the emergence of independent media and their role in political transition, focusing especially on Mexico. It argues that the role that mass media play in political transition depends primarily on the degree of market competition and journalistic professionalism within the media themselves. Where competition takes hold and journalists develop their own sense of professional identity, the transformation of the media tends to outpace the broader process of political reform. This leaves the media in the forefront of change, propelling regime transition. By contrast, those media outlets that have not undergone their own internal process of transformation are more apt to support authoritarian institutions and norms. In practice, this means that broadcast television networks typically retard political transition (at least in the early stages), while elements of the print media tend to encourage it. These conclusions are supported by case studies and statistical evidence from a range of countries, as well as detailed examination of media opening and democratization in Mexico.

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J.C.H.L.

La Jolla, California

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Introduction

In June 1995, President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico held a remarkable press conference in the town of Cuauhtitlán. The president was hoping to reassure his fellow Mexicans that their country, then in the midst of deep economic crisis and continuing political turmoil, was on the right track. In the course of his remarks, Zedillo made reference to small group of “bad guys” (*malosos*) within the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). It was these naughty officials, Zedillo implied, who lay behind some of the country’s troubles -- including the 1994 assassinations of PRI head José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu and PRI presidential candidate Luís Donaldo Colosio.¹

Mexican journalists responded vigorously to Zedillo’s comments. Did the President mean that ruling party officials were responsible for Colosio’s murder? Who, exactly, were the officials in question? Could the country’s problems really be blamed on a small cabal of *malosos*, however nefarious? And was *malosos* -- a puerile word -- the right way to describe such people, given that their extracurricular activities apparently included corruption, drug trafficking, and political assassination?²

The vehemence of journalists’ reactions surprised most observers. Traditionally, interactions between the president and the press in Mexico were carefully scripted affairs. Questions were often planted by government officials; independent newspapers were underrepresented if they were represented at all; and the entire performance was carefully edited before being re-broadcast by the country’s reliably pro-government media conglomerate, Televisa. Aggressive or hostile inquiries were simply not part of the regularly scheduled program.

Reporters’ reactions to the *malosos* incident exemplified the changes that have taken place in Mexico’s media. Over the past two decades, independent publications have emerged and flourished, supplanting their more staid and traditional counterparts. Feisty talk-radio shows have come to dominate the airwaves in Mexico’s largest cities. Even broadcast television, once notoriously pro-government, has begun to devote more coverage to opposition and civic groups. These changes have brought increased attention to the viewpoints of civil society,

¹Miguel Pérez, “Denuncia EZP a los ‘Malosos,’” *Reforma*, June 24, 1995.

²Author’s interviews with Mexican journalists, especially Ricardo Alemán, Mexico City, August 12, 1995.

more even-handed coverage of electoral campaigns, more incisive criticism of the political system, and more aggressive investigation of potential scandals.

The changing role and growing importance of the mass media is not a uniquely Mexican phenomenon. In a range of new democracies and countries undergoing transition from authoritarian rule,³ the media play an increasing role in giving voice to competing political perspectives and exposing the misdeeds of government officials. In Brazil -- where the country's giant conglomerate *Globo* was once regarded as a right-wing ally of the country's military regime⁴ -- observers have credited the media with bringing about the downfall of conservative President Fernando Collor de Mello. In the corruption scandal that led up Collor's resignation the media played a decisive role.⁵ As analysts of the Brazilian press put it:

By and large, other social institutions have been a major disappointment.... Largely by default, the media have assumed...the role of inquisitor, auditor, and goad.⁶

Such impressions of media influence resonated throughout the region.⁷ As Argentine President Carlos Menem declared, "the news media have become the

³Political scientists today tend to use "authoritarian" as an antonym for "democratic". Although "autocratic" would probably be a more precise term, I have generally adhered to the current usage.

⁴See Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?" and Joseph D. Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Cavaliari Nuñez, "The Brazilian Case: Influencing the Voter," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

⁵For reports on the scandal, see William R. Long, "Brazilian Press Fans the Flames Threatening to Engulf the President," *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1992, p. 2; Isabel Hilton, "Dallas, Brazilian-Style," *The Independent*, November 8, 1992, p. 11; James Brooke, "The Media Business: A New Vigor in the Brazilian Press," *New York Times*, November 8, 1993, p. D6.

⁶Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The search for rights and responsibilities of the press and mass media in four Latin American nations*, IIE Research Report No. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 20.

⁷See Thomas Skidmore, "Politics and the Media in a Democratizing Latin America," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Silvio Waisbord, "Television and Election Campaigns in Contemporary Argentina," *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1994, 44 (2):125-135; Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *American nations*, IIE Research Report No. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995); and Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995).

principal force of opposition to the government."⁸ In short, in a region where dissatisfied political actors once knocked on the back door of the barracks, they now knock on the back door of the news room.⁹

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

Over the last two decades, scholars have devoted a tremendous amount of attention to the spread and deepening of democracy around the world. Despite this burgeoning literature on democratization, however, there has been little serious research on the role of the mass media in political change. How does a free press emerge? What role does it play in regime transition? While theorists of democratization have lavished attention on constitutional arrangements,¹¹ electoral systems and political parties,¹² social movements,¹³ interest groups,¹⁴ civil-military

⁸Ximena Ortúzar, "Guerra sucia del gobierno de Menem contra la prensa," *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 42.

⁹Silvio Waisbord, "Knocking on Newsroom Doors: The Press and Political Scandals in Argentina," *Political Communication*, January 1994, 11 (1):19-33.

¹⁰See Vicky Randall, "The media and democratisation in the Third World," *Third World Quarterly*, 1993, 14 (3):625-46.

¹¹See, among others, Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, eds., *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Arend Lijphart and Carlos H. Waisman, eds., *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996); Mark P. Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Matthew S. Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

¹²See, among others, Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds., *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Michael Coppedge, *Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); and Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

relations,¹⁵ and related topics, they have left such questions about the media not only unanswered but virtually unaddressed.¹⁶

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

¹³See, among others, Gerardo L. Munck, "Actor Formation, Social Coordination, and Political Strategy: Some Conceptual Problems in the Study of Social Movements," *Sociology*, November 1995, 29 (4):667-85; Tracy Fitzsimmons, *Paradoxes of Participation: Organizations and Democratization in Latin America* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, 1995); Joe Foweraker, *Theorizing Social Movements* (Boulder: Pluto Press, 1995); Gerardo L., Munck, "Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics*, April 1994, 26 (3):355-75; and Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds., *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).

¹⁴See, among others, Francisco Durand and Eduardo Silva, *Organized Business, Economic Change, and Democracy in Latin America* (Coral Gables: FL: North-South Center, 1998); Ernest Bartell and Leigh A. Payne, eds., *Business and Democracy in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); Philippe C. Schmitter, "Consolidation of Democracy and the Representation of Social Groups," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 35 (March-June 1992): 422-49; and Kevin J. Middlebrook, "Union Democratization in the Mexican Automobile Industry: An Appraisal," *Latin American Research Review*, 1989, 24 (2):69-94.

¹⁵See, among others, Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Deborah L. Norden, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Felipe Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Louis Goodman, Johanna Mendelson, and Juan Rial, eds., *The Military and Democracy: The Future of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990); and Albert Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹⁶Neither "media" nor "press" even appear in the indexes of several prominent works in the field of democratization: Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*; Robert A. Dahl's *Polyarchy*; Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*; Nancy Bermeo, ed., *Liberalization and Democratization: Changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* and Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. The media receives some scattered attention in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* and Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Politics in Developing Countries*, and greater prominence in some of Diamond's more recent work.

For these reasons, scholars generally acknowledge that the mass media represent a crucial element of democratic governance.¹⁷ Media freedom is a core ingredient both in theoretical conceptions of democracy (e.g., Dahl's) and in empirical measurements of it (such as the Freedom House index).¹⁸ But analysts do not know how an independent press arises. Nor do they understand the complex relationship between changes within the media and parallel processes of transformation in other institutions.

One reason why the media have not received much attention from scholars of democratization is that the topic is simply difficult to research. To begin with, the relationship between the mass media and political institutions is contingent and complex. The mass media are not a single entity, and different media play different roles in democratization. Moreover, if the media both shape and are shaped by political transition, assigning causality becomes problematic. At best, simultaneity makes elegant theorizing a tricky endeavor.¹⁹

These obstacles are compounded by the unsatisfying nature of existing literature on the press. In general, political science research on the media falls into one of two categories: (1) case studies of the mass media in one country, and (2) quantitative analyses of media effects on public opinion. The first type of studies can be useful for understanding the dynamics of political change in one country and (as in the following chapter) for distilling hypotheses about the causes of media opening. But such studies tend to be narrow, theoretically anchorless, and, at times, tinged with normative assumptions about media ownership. The second type of studies are more rigorous and sophisticated from a methodological point of view. But they are typically confined to the impact of media messages on public opinion about specific issues or candidates in established democracies (such as the United

¹⁷Even Joseph A. Schumpeter, often credited with the original "electoralist" definition of democracy, recognized this danger. See *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 263-4.

¹⁸Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 3. Media openness -- in terms of both freedom of expression and access to alternative sources of political information -- figures prominently in all three of Dahl's major categories: (I) the opportunity to formulate preferences, (II) the opportunity to signify preferences, and (III) the opportunity to have their preferences weighted equally in the conduct of government. See also Terry Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "What Democracy is...and is not," *Journal of Democracy*, Summer 1991, 2 (3):75-86; James W. Carey, "Mass Media and Democracy," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):1-21.

¹⁹When I began research on this topic, a well-meaning professor at Stanford's political science department made it a point to warn me that reciprocal causality was the "death knell of theorizing" -- and, by extension, of my career prospects.

States).²⁰ It is not immediately obvious how applicable the conclusions of such studies are to a context of political transition. Moreover, despite several decades of research on the subject, scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the magnitude of individual-level media effects. It is thus difficult for theorists of democratization to extract clear lessons from a body of literature that was, for decades, “one of the most notable embarrassments of modern social science.”²¹

In other words, for scholars seeking to analyze the role of the media in political transition, existing literature offers only limited conceptual guidance. Academic research on democratization tends to ignore the media altogether; studies on changes within the press typically lack theoretical underpinnings; and quantitative analyses of media effects on public opinion formation are not readily applicable to the study of political transition.

Ideally, a satisfying study on the media and democratization would weave together these disparate strands of research. Specifically, it would identify the factors that cause changes in the media and then document the political consequences of these changes in a rigorous way. It would also provide a broad, theoretical framework for generalizing from findings in one case to a range of countries and media. In the end, it would answer two broad questions: (1) what factors shape the emergence of independent media, and (2) what role the media play in political transition.

Locomotive or Caboose?

Although little explicit research has been done on these questions, there appears to be a default hypothesis that answers them both: a free press simply follows general opening in the rest of the political system. Political liberalization reduces censorship, and full-fledged democratization ultimately guarantees media freedom. According to this hypothesis, then, the media play little independent role in political change; media opening is merely a by-product of democratization.

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

²⁰See, among others, the work of Christopher Achen, Stephen Ansolobehere, Larry Bartels, Henry Brady, Richard Brody, Steven Chaffee, Stanley Feldman, Daniel Hallin, Shanto Iyengar, Donald Kinder, Diana Mutz, Thomas Patterson, Samuel Popkin, and John Zaller.

²¹Larry Bartels, “Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure,” *American Political Science Review*, June 1993, 87 (2):267-85, p. 267.

the matter more bluntly, independent media do not appear magically like Aphrodite on the waves in the wake of regime change. Many new democracies have emerged from political transition with media that are hobbled by corruption (Korea),²² legal restrictions (Chile), politicized state ownership (Hungary),²³ private monopolization (Brazil),²⁴ and other legacies of authoritarian rule. Democratization is at best a necessary condition for media freedom, not a sufficient one.

In fact, the experience of some countries suggests that political liberalization is not always a necessary condition for media opening. Under certain circumstances, technological diffusion and international spillovers can create a relatively open media environment long before political transition has occurred. In Taiwan, for instance, about one-third of residents had access to illegal cable systems that received satellite transmissions from around the world, thus exposing some citizens to alternative viewpoints long before the end of martial law.²⁵ A similar pattern once held in East Germany, where most of the population could receive nightly broadcasts in their native language from West German stations. East

²²Kyu Ho Youm, "Press Freedom in 'Democratic' South Korea: Moving from Authoritarian to Libertarian," *Gazette*, January 1989, 43 (1):53-71; Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's Experiment with a Free Press," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53 (1-2):111-16; Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991; Peter Leyden and David Bank, "The Web of Bribery That Envelopes South Korean News Media," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16, 1990; Michael Breen, "'Scoop' Has Different Meanings for South Korean Reporters," *Washington Times*, April 8, 1991, p. A10.

²³Ray Hiebert, "The Difficult Birth of a Free Press in Hungary," *American Journalism Review*, January 1994, 16 (1):34; Peter Elam, "Hungary: The Media -- War by Other Means," *Index on Censorship*, February 1993, 22 (2):20-1; Ken Kasriel, "Hungary: Whose Voice? Who's Master? The Battle for the Media," *Index on Censorship* (February 1993); Elemer Hankiss, "The Hungarian Media's War of Independence," *Media, Culture, and Society*, April 1994, 16 (2):293-312; Richard W. Bruner, "Suppressing the Free Press in Hungary," *The New Leader*, November 15, 1993, 76 (13):7-9; Florian Mezes, "The Media War," *New Hungarian Quarterly*, Fall 1992, 33 (127):60; and Johnston M. Mitchell, "The Evolution of a Free Press in Hungary: 1986-90," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1991).

²⁴Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimaraes, "Media Monopoly in Brazil," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1994, 44 (4):26-38; Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?" in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Luiz Fernando Santoro, "The Promise of Democracy in the New Media Age: A Brazilian Point of View," *Intermedia*, October-November 1995, 23 (5):32-6; and Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995).

Germany's airwaves were first liberated by international spillovers, not political transition.²⁶ In other words, the "Aphrodite-on-the waves" argument overlooks a series of other factors that encourage media freedom.

Perhaps most seriously, though, this argument misstates the relationship between changes in the media and political transition. It portrays the media as a sort of free rider on democratization -- as one Mexican journalist put it, not a locomotive of change but a caboose of the state.²⁷ Rather than promoting political change, the media are simply dragged along. This interpretation of the media's role does not accord with the more vigorous role that the media have played during political transition in range of countries, from the Philippines to Russia to Mexico.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that both pieces of the traditional argument are wrong. First, political liberalization is not the sole or even the most important driver of change in the media. Market competition, journalistic professionalism, technological innovation, international spillovers, and other factors also play powerful roles. In Mexico, for instance, a combination of market competition, journalistic professionalism, and particular catalytic events helped pry open segments of the country's print and broadcast media. During most of this process, political pressures typically worked to stifle changes in the media that were occurring for other reasons. By the early 1990's, Mexico's emerging fourth estate had gone well beyond what the government deemed acceptable. At that point, however, many independent media were sufficiently well established to fend off official assaults.

Second, I argue that the media can exert a powerful independent influence on democratization. One typical pattern is for independent media to scrutinize government actions and decisions, triggering political scandals. In Mexico, for instance, more aggressive coverage of previously "closed" topics by elements of the print media produced a series of revelations that reverberated through the Mexican political establishment. As I argue in Chapter Five, the ensuing scandals

²⁵See Daniel K. Berman, *Words like Colored Glass: The Role of the Press in Taiwan's Democratization Process* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

²⁶See George Quester, *The International Politics of Television* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington Books, 1990). It is possible that foreign radio broadcasts are having a similar effect on today in countries like Cuba (Radio Martí) and China (BBC and Voice of America).

²⁷Author's interview with the ever-quotable Raymundo Riva Palacio, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.

helped to delegitimize Mexico's authoritarian regime in the eyes of the mass public and to alter elite calculations about the desirability of political reform.

Another typical pattern is for independent media to give greater coverage to opposition parties during election campaigns. In Mexico, for instance, coverage of the main opposition parties on the country's traditionally pro-government television network improved substantially in the 1997 legislative elections. Enhanced access to the mass media in turn facilitated opposition victory at the polls.

Media opening and democratization are thus parallel, mutually reinforcing processes. But they do not always proceed at the same pace. Where media opening occurs more rapidly than changes in the primary institutions of governance, the press helps pull political transition along. By contrast, where media opening is stifled but political reforms continue apace, the press acts as a drag on the rest of the political system. In other words, the press may be either a locomotive or a caboose; it may either propel democratization or slow it down.

What factors determine which role the media will play? I argue that where market competition takes hold, internal changes in the media tend to outpace political reform. This leaves the media in the forefront of change, propelling regime transition. By the same token, media that have not undergone their own internal transformation will not propel political transition. Mexican television, for instance, was dominated for years by a single firm (Televisa) and thus remained obstinately pro-government long after radio and newspapers had begun to experiment with critical coverage. In its capacity as regime cheerleader, Televisa helped sell the president, the PRI, and other authoritarian institutions to an increasingly dubious mass public. Television coverage in Mexico did not really begin to change until 1992-93, when commercial competition sparked by the privatization of government-owned stations forced Televisa to evolve.

These findings have broad implications for a range of newly democracies and countries undergoing a transition from authoritarian rule. First, they suggest that the press can play a powerful role in regime change. From a theoretical perspective, then, scholars of regime change cannot simply ignore the mass media. Second, they suggest some general hypotheses about when the media will promote and when it will hinder democratization. Specifically, when market competition exists, the media tend to promote political change; where competition is stifled, the media act as a drag on democratization. In practice, because of economies of scale and other factors, competition is usually most vigorous in print media and least so in

television. As a result, broadcast television typically retards political transition (at least in the early stages) while elements of the print media tend to encourage it.

Finally, these findings underscore the dangers that lack of competition and high levels of media concentration pose for many new democracies. Just as many countries emerge from political transition with unreconstructed militaries, local authoritarian enclaves, and other vestiges of autocracy, so they may be saddled with an economically concentrated press that previously constrained political change and has yet to “catch up” with other elements of the political system. The persistence of media monopolies and cartels has predictable consequences for the quality of democracy in societies that have recently undergone a transition from authoritarian rule.

Design of the study

The study begins by offering a framework for thinking about the structure and operation of the media. This framework emphasizes two dimensions: independence of the media from government censorship (i.e., the extent of political control) and pluralism or diversity (i.e., the number of competing perspectives). I argue that an open media regime — one in which the press is broadly independent and pluralistic — is best able to promote democratic accountability.

But how does the press become more independent and pluralistic? Chapter One develops and evaluates a series of hypotheses about the causes of media opening. Specifically, it examines the relationship between media openness (on the one hand) and political freedom, economic development, market-oriented reform, technological innovation, international spillovers, journalistic professionalism, and market competition. Findings from case studies of media opening in different countries offers evidence that all these factors can promote press freedom.

Using data from Freedom House’s World Survey of Press Freedom, Chapter One then evaluates the relationship between media openness and the several factors discussed above. Virtually all these factors seem to be associated with media openness. Even when controlling for several confounding variables, most of the core relationships hold across a range of countries. Political liberalization, economic development, economic liberalization, technological innovation, international spillovers, journalistic professionalism, and market competition do seem to promote media openness.

Unfortunately, cross-national statistical comparisons leave many questions unresolved. First, data limitations make it impossible to control for all confounding

variables and determine definitively which factors have the most influence on media opening. Even more importantly, the data are not granular enough to allow us to assess the precise nature of the relationship between democratization and media opening. Does democratization lead to changes in the media? Or does independence in the media promote democratization? Do the two processes mutually reinforce each other? Or does some other factor (such as economic development or social mobilization) cause both of them? Is the relationship even more complicated than that, with multiple lines of causality and feedback loops? Neither existing scholarship nor the quantitative relationships reported in Chapter One provides a conclusive answer to these questions.

To address these issues, Chapters Two through Six examine a single instance of media opening and political transition in greater detail. This extensive case study first attempts to illustrate how the factors identified in Chapter One (such as market competition) actually work in practice. How exactly do they lead to media openness? What are the exact causal sequences? How do these various factors interact with one another? It then seeks to illustrate how media opening shapes political transition. What role do different media play in democratization? Are they a locomotive or a caboose? How much of an influence do they have?

Methodologically, it would be preferable to use a case study to generate hypotheses and then test these hypotheses on a broader data set. Unfortunately, broader data on media opening are so spotty and gross that they seem fit only for hypothesis-generation. These data really reveal only correlations; they do not demonstrate that certain variables actually cause media opening. Although existing case studies point to lines of causality, these studies are so incomplete and scattered that they may well have overlooked important factors responsible for media opening, or misstated the way those factors work in crucial ways. Only by examining specific countries in detail can we hope to fully understand the causes of media opening and the ways in which media opening influences political transition.

The ideal case study for our purposes would have two principal attributes. First, it would contain substantial internal variation across time, region, and type of media. This variation would add robustness to any findings culled from a single country. If the same factors work in the same ways across different regions, time periods, and types of media -- albeit in the same country -- we may be more confident that we have discovered a generalizable dynamic.

Second, at least some of the changes to be analyzed should be observable in real time. Ex-post explanations may be simpler, but they are rarely more

informative, and they are likely to miss critical features of the context. For subjects as difficult to untangle as the role of the mass media in democratization, being on the ground at the time seems to offer important advantages.

This approach, of course, entails certain risks and drawbacks. Most obvious is the risk that the ultimate outcome may be much different than it seems now. For instance, it may appear that the mass media in a particular country are heading toward independence, but if they later move in the exact opposite direction, many of the broader conclusions based on that case will immediately become suspect. A related risk is that factors which initially seem less crucial may take on tremendous significance after all the facts become known. For instance, it may turn out that the final transfer of power from regime to opposition makes more of a difference in how the media operate than all prior changes put together. If so, conclusions based on a case still in transition will have not given sufficient weight to the impact of political reform on media opening.

Against these potential dangers there are the immense research advantages that real-time observation brings. On a theoretical level, such research captures the contingencies and complexities of the moment. Interviews at the time capture people's thinking then, rather than their recollections after the fact; surveys record opinions that would otherwise never be known. And on a purely mechanical level, content analysis salvages material that might be discarded or destroyed. For these reasons, it seems worth the risk to select a case that is still in the process of transition.

Mexico satisfies both requirements as well as or better than any other country. First, it is large enough to allow for substantial intra-country comparison between different types of media, firms, and regions. These comparisons effectively convert a single data point into many, strengthening findings that would otherwise be limited to cross-temporal analysis of one country. Second, the remarkable transformation of Mexico's press over the past fifteen years has paralleled a broader, slow-motion process of democratization. The protracted, overlapping nature of these processes provides an excellent opportunity to observe the relationship between them as they run their courses.

Chapters Two through Four analyze this process of media opening in Mexico. Chapter Two describes Mexico's unique system of press control, based on dozens of interviews with journalists, publishers, broadcasters, government officials, and opposition leaders. It details how the Mexican regime relied on subsidies, corruption, and manipulation of broadcasting concessions to create a

docile and dependent media. By comparison to many authoritarian regimes, Mexico's system of media control was relatively mild. But, as Chapter Two reveals, it was quite effective; news coverage was marked by partisan bias in favor of the ruling party, official control of the public agenda, and selective silence on issues of particular sensitivity to the government.

Chapters Three and Four analyze the breakdown of this system. Chapter Three relies on interviews and detailed content analysis to trace the process of opening in Mexico's print media. It shows how independent publications emerged outside of the traditional system that were able to resist official pressures. Animated by a new journalistic ethic and sustained by a broad readership base, these periodicals formed the core of Mexico's nascent fourth estate.

Chapter Four identifies the principal drivers of opening in Mexico's broadcast media, based on interviews, ratings data, and content analysis of leading television programs. This chapter shows how economic liberalization, market competition, and social mobilization helped pry open Mexican radio and, to a lesser extent, television. It also discusses how the final transformation of television -- Mexico's principal laggard in the process of media transformation -- depended partly on political reform. Together, Chapters Three and Four document how a handful of factors led Mexico's media to become more assertive in covering touchy subjects, more critical of government policies, more open to opposition and civic groups, and more impartial in electoral reporting.

Chapters Five and Six discuss how changes in the media helped shape Mexico's political transition. Although these chapters do not represent a comprehensive catalogue of media effects on democratization, they do highlight the two most important patterns of media influence in Mexico. Based on a review of twelve shocking political events, Chapter Five shows how increased assertiveness in the media triggered a series of political scandals. Recurrent scandals in turn helped to delegitimize Mexico's crumbling authoritarian regime in the eyes of the mass public and to increase support for political change. At the same time, scandals signaled to elites that the rules of the political game were changing. Increased media coverage of previously closed topics thus propelled Mexico's democratic transition.

Chapter Six analyzes a more familiar type of media impact: the role of the media in shaping electoral choices. It focuses on the watershed elections of 1997, which cost the PRI control of the lower house of Congress and thus ended seventy years of one-party rule in Mexico. This chapter draws on a three-round panel

survey of 402 Mexico City residents during the 1997 mayoral campaign.²⁸ The results of this survey demonstrate powerful and pervasive media influences on public opinion and voting behavior. By eroding support for the PRI and rehabilitating the image of certain opposition groups, media opening propelled democratization.

The concluding chapter returns to a more general discussion of the role of the media in new democracies. In theory, independence and diversity in the media ensure the expression of competing perspectives and opinions. Independent media also contribute to political accountability by investigating and publicizing the actions of government officials. In some new democracies, the press is playing precisely this role -- most commonly by exposing egregious examples of official misconduct. But in others, the media continue to be hampered by government restrictions, dominated by the views of conservative owners, or silenced by the legacy of corruption and repression. These debilities prevent the media from acting as a true "fourth estate" and diminish the quality of democratic government in many countries that have recently emerged from authoritarian rule.

Orienting perspectives

Our world is not an optimal place, fine-tuned by omnipotent forces of selection. It is a quirky mass of imperfections, working well enough (often admirably); a jerry-rigged set of adaptations built of curious parts made available by past histories in different contexts....A world optimally adapted to current environments is a world without history, and a world without history might have been created as we find it....History matters; it confounds perfections.
-- Stephen Jay Gould²⁹

In contrast with much recent research in political science, this study presupposes little about actors and their motivations. It does not assume that individuals are motivated exclusively or even primarily by the prospect of material gain, nor that motivations are the same for all people in all situations. In other words, readers need not begin by abandoning their common sense.

The overall design and approach of the study, however, will make certain orienting perspectives immediately apparent. First, as should be obvious from

²⁸Data from this survey is available from the author. It is also directly accessible in Mexico City through *Reforma* newspaper, the Department of Communication at the Universidad de Anahuac, and the Department of Social Sciences at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM).

Chapters Two through Six, this study makes no attempt to model individuals as rational, strategic actors. The journalists, media owners, voters, and government officials described here were -- like most people -- creatures of habit rather than calculation. Many were capable of determining their interests in certain well-defined, clearly specified situations, and then acting on those interests. In other words, they were rational -- if sloppily so -- when responding to a narrow range of sharply posed questions where the outcome was relatively important to them. But in terms of which questions they asked themselves in the first place, they were typically prisoners of culture. The few who were not represented rare exceptions, and they ultimately drew the accolades properly accorded geniuses and pioneers.

One case in point is the experience of Mexico's independent print journalists -- the protagonists of Chapter Three. When determining how to turn a profit, most Mexican publishers and journalists clearly understood that they could make money from official subsidies. They also understood that excessively critical or investigative articles could cost them government advertising revenues (though *threatening* government officials with unfavorable coverage might earn them money). But few asked themselves whether and how they could make money without subsidies from the regime. And those who did rarely began by asking how they might make more money but rather how they might satisfy an altogether different goal: to be a real journalist (*Proceso* magazine), to give voice to those without voice (*unomásuno* newspaper), to challenge the system (*Jornada* newspaper), to serve as a vehicle for civil society (*Siglo 21* newspaper), to offer their customers accurate and timely information (*Financiero* newspaper), to inform the public (*Reforma* newspaper), etc. In the process of asking and answering these questions, they often discovered that their answers to other questions changed. They learned; they adjusted; they questioned assumptions that they had previously taken for granted; and they changed their minds. In other words, the discovery that independent journalism could be profitable, like many great discoveries, was the product of multiple and sometimes competing motivations. Explaining the emergence of Mexico's fourth estate depended to some degree on understanding these motivations and how they shaped behavior. Pretending that journalists and publishers always knew what they were trying to achieve and pursued their goals in a calculatedly rational manner would not have advanced the inquiry.

²⁹*The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections on Natural History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), p. 54.

A similar point can be made about Mexican voters, the subjects of Chapter Six. Most Mexican voters, like most voters everywhere, participated in electoral politics out of habit, political conviction, or a sense of social obligation. Rarely did they sit down and calculate whether the costs of voting outweighed the benefits and, consequently, whether they should vote at all. When they did vote, their choices were guided by a number of conflicting factors -- impressions of the state of the economy, opinions of the main candidates and parties, media images, etc. Assuming that voters were rational and strategic actors would have added complexity to quantitative analyses of voting behavior without contributing any additional explanatory power.

A second orienting perspective concerns political and social institutions. Few of the institutions described here were created *de novo*; they were not constantly shifting and infinitely flexible in response to changing circumstances. Some emerged out of a gradual process of adaptation and adjustment (as classic evolutionary models would suggest); most appeared rapidly in response to a certain confluence of events or expectations and then solidified (as punctuated equilibrium paradigms would predict). In either case, the inertial component of their make-up at any point in time was extremely high.

For this reason, the study does not include elaborate formal constructs purporting to demonstrate why these institutions were ahistoric equilibria. Rather, it endeavors to explain how they came into being in the first place (recognizing that different institutional arrangements were initially possible), how they were perpetuated, how they were linked to other institutions, what tensions those linkages created, and what threshold of internal and external tensions the institutions in question could resist. In this sense, the study relies on a historical-evolutionary perspective that is somewhat at variance with the currently fashionable paradigms in political science and economics.³⁰

The creation of Mexico's one-party political system, one of the most durable such systems in world history, is an excellent case in point. As discussed in Chapter Two, the PRI grew out of the exigencies of the post-revolutionary period, when *caudillos* (strongmen) dominated different regions of the country. Through the creation of a single coordinating institution -- the ruling party -- local bosses were lured into a national system in exchange for a share of the spoils. Spoils were

³⁰For an in-depth discussion (and application) of the historical-evolutionary approach, see Stephen Krasner, "Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective," *Comparative Political Studies*, April 1988, 21 (1):1-17.

in turn secured by an enormous expansion of the state's economic role, including nationalization of the oil industry. President Lázaro Cárdenas probably did not intend petroleum nationalization and land reform to create a bloated state apparatus that would perpetuate one-party rule. Some of his actions were undoubtedly designed to enhance his personal power; others can probably be traced to the naive Marxism that seems to have been his orienting ideological framework. But his revolutionary agenda did, inadvertently, help to consolidate a stable, one-party political system based around corruption, patronage, and pork-barreling. This system lasted because its various elements reinforced one another, and because external forces did not radically disrupt it. But it began to break down when economic stagnation caused by statism, corruption, and a changing world economy undermined economic growth, thus limiting the regime's capacity to co-opt potential opponents. The combination of this structural failure with the social consequences of modernization plunged the system into crisis and, ultimately, political transition. A number of factors, including increasing independence in the media, then shaped the outcome of this transition.

To say that institutions are sticky and inertial, and that human behavior is the product of habit rather than calculation, is to admit that culture matters. Culture -- the constellation of norms, beliefs, and instincts that persist and continue to influence behavior despite changes in the institutional context -- shapes people's behavior in myriad ways, including ways that are not immediately obvious even to them. Undoubtedly, social scientists have often used culture as an intellectual crutch to support otherwise shaky arguments; perhaps there are good reasons why it is no longer fashionable to invoke culture as an explanatory variable. But ignoring culture altogether banishes from the analysis a variable with evident explanatory power simply because it has been overused in the past or (even worse) because it is difficult to quantify. That makes for bad social science.

One intriguing example of culture that emerged from this study concerns the level of newspaper readership in Mexico, which remains comparatively low despite high levels of literacy and a sizable middle class. Virtually all Mexican journalists and publishers with whom I spoke recognized this fact, and many drew invidious comparisons between Mexico and other countries at similar stages of economic development. When asked why readership levels were modest, most simply mentioned "low cultural standards."

My research suggests a specific origin for these "low" standards. Although overall newspaper readership in Mexico is low, it varies substantially

across different media markets. Cities like Mérida and Monterrey have very high levels of per capita readership -- only about half those of the United States; Mexico City, Tijuana, and Guadalajara have moderate levels; and other provincial towns like Puebla, Oaxaca, and Querétaro have still fewer readers per capita. A portion of this variation can be explained by income and media quality -- where independent newspapers exist and people have money to buy them, sales tend to be higher. But Mérida was hardly a rich town in the 1970's, when its readership per capita was higher than Mexico City's today, and Querétaro is hardly a poor one now. A substantial proportion of the variation in readership levels appears to be related to earlier levels of media professionalism. Where high-quality publications appeared before the penetration of broadcast media, readership levels tend to be relatively elevated today. In other words, consumers who were exposed to high-quality papers before the widespread availability of electronic media developed what Rogelio Cárdenas Jr., publisher of *Financiero* newspaper, called a "reading culture."³¹ Those who were not so exposed passed directly from a society based on interpersonal (oral) communication to one based on audio-visual communication without ever pausing in a print media phase. If this argument is correct, levels of newspaper readership are not simply a matter of price and quality. They are, at least partly, a product of history and culture.

Another powerful example of culture is corruption in the Mexican media -- a subject discussed in detail in Chapters Two and Three. Many analysts have argued that corruption is primarily a product of low salaries, and some of it certainly is. But even more important is the socialization of reporters, both in universities and at the firms in which they work. Younger reporters -- most of whom were exposed to ethical training early in their careers -- tend to be much less corrupt than their older colleagues. Moreover, the professionalization of corrupted journalists is rare and difficult; cohort replacement rather than conversion explains most of the recent decrease in corruption levels among Mexican journalists. In other words, reporters inculcated with different habits at the beginning of their careers subsequently respond to the same incentive structures in radically different ways. Like newspaper readership, corruption has cultural roots. Precisely for this reason, it is so difficult to eliminate.

One final orienting perspective concerns human agency. Like culture, human agency is a problematic variable for political scientists. As a result, many

³¹ Author's interview, Mexico City, March 27, 1996.

analysts relegate human agency to the residual term of their models instead of treating it as a factor worthy of consideration in its own right. Even studies of political transition that explicitly acknowledge the importance of decisions made by political elites tend to ignore the choices of less prominent citizens.³² Against both naked historical determinism and the restriction of human agency to elites, this study attempts to take into account the actions of specific individuals in civil society that struggled to escape existing institutional and cultural constraints.

The chapters that follow thus portray a world in which habits persist and institutions are sticky, but also one in which particular decisions made at moments of institutional crisis can have lasting consequences. To borrow from a paradigm originally intended to inform paleontology, political history consists of long periods of stasis punctuated by systemic crises and ensuing short periods of rapid change, during which apparently unimportant events or choices can tilt political arrangements in one direction or another. Once tilted in a given direction, the resulting arrangements tend to congeal, limiting the extent to which individuals within the new system can change it.

Because each new system is constructed at least partly from discarded pieces of its predecessor, however, not all of its elements are really new. In other words, old ways of doing business do not immediately disappear under the new regime. As a result, certain features of Mexican politics and journalism remain recognizable despite the sea changes of recent years — that is, despite the remarkable processes of media opening and democratization that are the subjects of this study.

³²For a critique of the literature along these lines, see Larry Diamond, ed., *The Democratic Revolution: Struggles for Freedom and Pluralism in the Developing World* (New York: Freedom House, 1992) and Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), Chapter 6.

1. Opening the Media Regime

For students of democratization, the impeachment of Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello on September 29, 1992 was a watershed event. Experts on political transition debated the apparent fragility and resilience of Brazil's new democratic institutions. Analysts of Brazilian politics marveled at the soap opera quality of the corruption scandal that consumed Collor's administration, which included charges leveled against the president by his own brother.³³ And ordinary Brazilians, whose mass protests had propelled congressional investigation of Collor, celebrated his demise in classic Brazilian style -- with a night-long party in the streets.

But perhaps the most striking lesson that observers drew from Collor's downfall concerned the role of the media, liberated only a few years before from military censorship. Throughout the period leading up to Collor's impeachment and ultimate resignation, Brazil's press led the charge. Allegations of influence-peddling that initially triggered the scandal were first reported in the mass circulation magazine *Veja* in May 1992, following an interview with the president's brother. Other publications -- especially *Isto E* and *Folha de Sao Paolo*, which had already been investigating corruption in the Collor administration -- soon followed suit. Brazil's *Bandeirantes* television network also covered the unfolding story, and after further revelations appeared in *Veja* on September 6, the country's largest media conglomerate (*Globo*) gave widespread coverage to pro-impeachment rallies around the country.³⁴ This last shift was particularly significant, because many political analysts credited *Globo* with Collor's political ascendance and electoral victory over leftist leader Luis da Silva ("Lula") less than three years before.³⁵ To some, it seemed that the media had made the president and then unmade him.

³³See Silvio Waisbord, "The Narrative Exposed in South American Journalism: Telling the Story of Collorgate in Brazil," *Gazette*, 1997, 58 (3):189-203.

³⁴See William R. Long, "Brazilian Press Fans the Flames Threatening to Engulf the President," *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1992, p. 2; Isabel Hilton, "Dallas, Brazilian-Style," *The Independent*, November 8, 1992, p. 11; James Brooke, "The Media Business: A New Vigor in the Brazilian Press," *New York Times*, November 8, 1993, p. D6; *Latin American Weekly Reporter* (no author), October 20, 1995.

³⁵*Globo's* televised cuts of the final presidential debate between the two candidates had been carefully edited to highlight Collor's best points, eliminate his gaffs, and paint Lula as an extremist and an incompetent. See Joseph D. Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Cavaliari Nuñez, "The Brazilian Case: Influencing the Voter?," and Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics*,

Where had Brazil's powerful, independent press come from? How had it evolved from an instrument of social control under the country's military dictatorship into a political watchdog? And how had a chorus of new media voices begun to make themselves heard in a market once virtually monopolized by *Globo*?

This chapter analyzes the emergence of a free press in new democracies. It begins by discussing the role of the mass media in modern democratic systems. It then offers a framework for thinking about media freedom, which emphasizes two dimensions: independence from government censorship (i.e., the extent of political control) and pluralism or diversity (i.e., the degree of concentration). I argue that an "open media regime" -- in which the media are broadly independent and pluralistic -- is best able to promote democratic accountability.

I then develop and evaluate a series of hypotheses about the causes of media opening, based on existing case studies of the media in particular countries. Specifically, I examine the relationship between media openness (on the one hand) and democratization, economic development, market-oriented reform, technological innovation, foreign media penetration, journalistic professionalism, and market competition (on the other). Using data from Freedom House's World Survey of Press Freedom, I then test the relationship between media openness and these seven factors. I conclude that virtually all these explanations for media opening find support across a range of cases. Although the exact causal sequences are not always clear and many nuanced version of the hypotheses cannot be tested, these findings are suggestive. Collectively, they point toward a general argument about the emergence of a free press. I present a preliminary version of this argument in the concluding section of this chapter, returning to it in Chapter Seven.

The media in representative democracy

Any meaningful understanding of the media's role in democratic governance requires a discussion of democracy.³⁶ In much of the popular and scholarly literature, democracy is often described in terms of elections. As one renowned expert on democratization, Samuel Huntington, put it:

and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

³⁶The discussion that follows focuses on definitions of democracy, but it is also important to define "the media." The most expansive definition probably includes the sum of all devices used for communicating messages between one or more senders and one or more recipients. For practical purposes, this study focuses on a few mass media (radio, television, newspapers, and

Elections, open, free and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable *sine qua non*. Governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, short-sighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good. These qualities may make such governments undesirable, but they do not make them undemocratic.³⁷

Such "electoralist" versions of democracy have enjoyed a degree of currency in recent years.³⁸ Nevertheless, a number of eminent scholars have argued that the essence of democracy is not any particular set of (electoral) institutions. Rather, democracy consists of the practical approximation of a set of principles -- variously defined as the balance of majority rule with minority rights,³⁹ the combination of political contestation and popular participation,⁴⁰ the timely translation of citizens' preferences into public policies,⁴¹ and the accountability of rulers to the ruled.⁴² All of these principle-based definitions reflect the notion that public policy in a democratic system is supposed to reflect the wishes and demands of its citizens. Political power derives from the people, who retain ultimate authority. From this perspective, then, democracy is a political system that successfully puts into practice the principle of popular self-governance.

magazines). Its conclusions, however, could be extended to other media (film, wall posters, the Internet, etc.).

³⁷Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 9-10.

³⁸See, for instance, Juan J. Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 6-7. For the original minimalist view, see Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975; originally 1942), XXI-XXIII. Scholars subscribing to minimalist definitions should view the following as a discussion about "improving" or "deepening" democracy.

³⁹Publius [James Madison], *The Federalist*, (London: Penguin Books, 1987; originally 1788), No. 10 and 47-51.

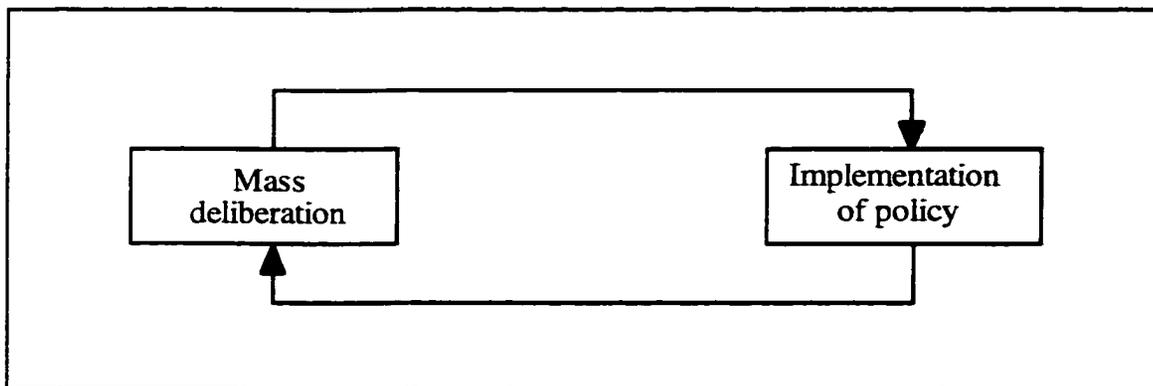
⁴⁰Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). See also Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries*; Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 6-8.

⁴¹Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

⁴²Terry Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "What Democracy is...and is not," *Journal of Democracy*, Summer 1991, 2 (3):75-86.

Perhaps the most straightforward way to operationalize this principle would be to put all public issues to a direct vote of the people. Few if any office-holders would be chosen (whether by elections or by some other device), and limited political authority would be delegated to those that were.⁴³ Instead, popular preferences would express themselves directly in public policy. Figure 1, below, depicts this cycle.

Figure 1: Policy-making in direct democracy



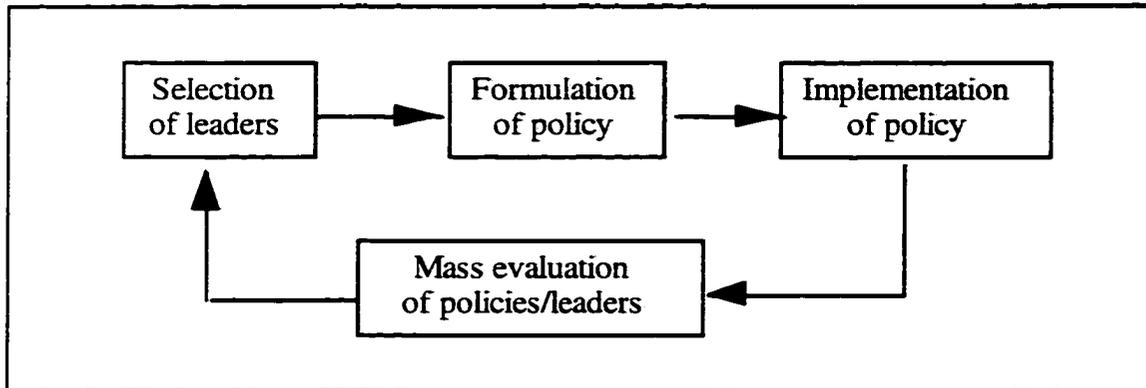
Modern vestiges of direct democracy -- in the form of public referenda -- persist in some regions with long-standing traditions of popular rule, such as Switzerland and the parts of the United States. In practice, however, the sheer volume of attention and expertise required of ordinary citizens in a direct democracy makes it a rather cumbersome and unwieldy system for the most official decision-making today.⁴⁴ Consequently, direct democratic procedures -- where they are employed at all -- are usually reserved for particularly weighty or salient issues (such as large-scale government initiatives or constitutional amendments). The bulk of policy-making is done by representatives of the citizenry who theoretically act on their behalf.

⁴³Even in direct democracy, there might still be the need for a few leaders who would determine the wording of public questions and the order in which they were presented to the people. Because such agenda-setting powers can determine the ultimate outcome of public deliberations under certain circumstances, direct democracy thus raises important subsidiary questions about the selection of the person whom Rousseau called a "Legislator." In addition, some officials would be needed to execute the laws, thus raising some of the problems of delegation discussed below.

⁴⁴In past centuries, direct democracy would also have faced presumably fatal technical hurdles (such as the high cost of polling a geographically dispersed population). Innovations in communications technology during the second half of the twentieth century, however, removed these barriers entirely.

Modern democracies are thus representative democracies; they involve the delegation of political authority by the citizenry as a whole to a much smaller group of office-holders. Representative democracy can thus be conceptualized as chain of delegations that extends from the selection of leaders to the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and alteration of policies.⁴⁵ Figure 2, below, summarizes this democratic chain.

Figure 2: The democratic chain



In the first step, representatives are chosen through some relatively equitable process (typically by election). In consultation with the people and each other, these representatives then design and formulate public policies. Next, their policies are translated into action by other government officials (ministers, civil servants, judges, etc.). Finally, citizens evaluate the results of these policies and, based on the results and the potential alternatives available to them, select a new batch of leaders.

This representative system offers several advantages over direct democracy - most notably, the increased expertise and attention that office-holders can bring to matters of policy. However, it raises several important questions regarding the selection of leaders and their subsequent responsiveness to citizens. Without political rules designed to hold them accountable, leaders may systematically neglect citizens' wishes, overstep their authority, or even pervert the system itself to ensure their continuation in office. For this reason, representative democracies involve a

⁴⁵The following discussion owes a great deal to recent scholarship on "partial regimes," especially the work of Philippe Schmitter. In fact, it is possible to think of each of these links as "partial regimes," which may be in very different stages of transition or consolidation. Many countries (including the one that figures most prominently in this study) have consolidated duly representative systems for selecting leaders but have yet to build other links in the democratic chain.

range of rules and practices designed to ensure that public policies actually reflect citizen preferences.⁴⁶

The first and foremost challenge in a representative system is how to choose the people's representatives. In small communities (villages, immigrant colonies, etc.), official posts could conceivably be filled by consensus or rotation. Where citizens vastly outnumber office-holders, however, some other selection mechanism is clearly required. One obvious approach would be to randomly select a group of citizens to act on behalf of the population as a whole. Provided that the sample was large enough and that each citizen had an equal chance of being chosen, this lottery system would produce citizen councils that mirrored the population as a whole. In theory, these citizen councils would reach the same sorts of policy conclusions that the citizenry as a whole would reach if it had similar opportunities to consider each issue in detail. For this reason, some political theorists (such as Montesquieu) considered lottery the natural leadership selection mechanism in a representative democracy.

Lottery was the primary device for choosing leaders in some classical Greek city-states, and vestiges of that approach can be found in some countries today. One modern analogue is the U.S. jury system, in which legal determinations are made by a panel of citizens selected more-or-less at random, rather than by elected or appointed judges. For the most part, however, lottery has not been a popular form of leadership selection in the modern era.⁴⁷

A much more common selection mechanism in modern democracy is popular election. According to this system, citizens vote for the candidates (or groups of candidates) who they feel best represent them. Their votes are then aggregated according to a prearranged formula that determines which contenders for

⁴⁶Which "preferences" they should reflect is a major subject of debate in democratic theory. From one perspective, citizens' preferences are simply whatever citizens say they are at any one time, whether animated by passion, prejudice, self-interest, or altruism. From another perspective, however, the preferences that should be reflected in policy are enlightened preferences -- that is, citizens' reasoned views after they have heard various arguments, reflected upon them, and deliberated amongst themselves. Finally, from an even more strict point of view, the preferences that should matter are those that are totally divorced from any calculation of personal advantage and consider only the greater good of the community.

⁴⁷Why is not exactly clear, as neither the technical nor the theoretical obstacles to lottery systems of representation are greater than those of electoral systems. Presumably, electoral systems developed in response to certain historical conjunctures and were subsequently copied by other groups of people, in quite different times and places, without exhaustive consideration of alternative selection mechanisms. The prevalence of electoral systems may also reflect the fact that political systems are generally created by elites who are likely to more likely to gain office under electoral systems than lottery systems.

office get which positions.⁴⁸ Provided that (a) rival contenders for office have comparable opportunities to persuade potential voters about their qualifications and intentions, (b) voters are able to cast their ballots freely, and (c) the formulae for translating votes into posts are equitable, electoral systems can ensure that the choice of representatives reflects the wishes of the citizenry.

In practice, of course, these conditions may not hold. Repression and radical inequalities in campaign resources (media coverage, campaign financing, etc.) may constrain competition. Fear and coercion, rather than popular volition, may determine voters' choices. Suffrage restrictions, gerrymandering, fraud, and other failings may unfairly bias the electoral playing field in favor of certain contenders. For all these reasons, most electoral systems have historically served as vehicles for legitimating already entrenched leaders, rather than mechanisms for holding them accountable to their citizens. Still, a number of countries -- including all modern representative democracies -- have successfully consolidated electoral systems that guarantee reasonably free and fair political competition for office.

This brings us to the second major challenge for representative democracy: ensuring the responsiveness of elected leaders once they actually assume office. Where representatives can be (and seek to be) reelected, electoral competition provides certain incentives for representatives to remain accountable to their citizens throughout the democratic chain. That is, the simple knowledge that frustrated voters might choose to replace them sometime in the future may encourage leaders to take public sentiment into account in formulating and implementing policies. Nevertheless, to assume that fear of electoral reprisal alone can ensure leaders' compliance with popular wishes is to assume the political equivalent a frictionless world. Even given a properly functioning electoral system, there are ample opportunities for slippage and abuse throughout the democratic chain. Elected representatives -- even those jealous of their political careers -- might trade public benefit and electoral payoffs for more direct forms of personal gain. Intra-governmental decision rules might offer particular groups privileged access to the policy-making process, while unelected and unaccountable actors (military officers,

⁴⁸Formulae for aggregating votes vary widely across democracies. For instance, proportional representation systems help ensure the fair representation of minorities, while winner-take-all systems help confer decisive mandates on majorities (or pluralities). Most scholars today seem to concur that both systems, and their myriad variants and combinations, constitute equally valid approximations of democratic principles. To use a phrase coined by Philippe C. Schmitter, they are "differently democratic". The same contention appears to hold for most questions of

property-owners, mafiosi, etc.) might exercise informal vetoes over certain policy arenas. Corruption and bureaucratic inertia might retard or warp policy implementation, thus preventing duly enacted laws from actually taking effect.⁴⁹ Finally, the information on which citizens based their political behavior might be so restricted or distorted that meaningful mass evaluation of public decision-making becomes impossible. In each of these cases, one weak link -- or a combination of several weak links -- has compromised the integrity of the entire democratic chain.⁵⁰

These problems are compounded whenever some public officials are chosen through indirect election, appointment, or negotiation among elected officials, rather than by vote by the people -- in other words, where an additional act of delegation insulates some leaders from direct popular accountability. Sometimes, the insulation of public officials provides a valuable check against abuse of power by other officials and thus helps safeguard the representative system as a whole. In these cases (as with judges, regulators, civil servants, etc.), the sacrifice of short-term responsiveness may well be justified by the longer-term accountability it guarantees.⁵¹ In other cases, however, the rules for filling important posts simply advance the interests of political leaders themselves without providing any demonstrable long-term benefits for the citizenry.⁵² Such practices obviously reduce the overall responsiveness of the system to popular demands.

The limits of "electoralism" should now be apparent. Free, fair, and inclusive elections are an important device for holding rulers accountable to the ruled and for guaranteeing that public policies accord with citizens' wishes. At the least, the right of citizens to replace their leaders imposes a sort of procedural "floor" on the responsiveness of ruling elites and thus guarantees citizens the most primitive form of accountability. Free and fair elections, however, do not ensure that the level

constitutional design -- e.g., the choice of presidential or parliamentary systems, of bicameral or unicameral legislatures, etc.

⁴⁹From this perspective, some of the failings that Samuel Huntington mentions -- such as corruption and domination of the policy-making process by special interest groups -- would render a political system less democratic.

⁵⁰Those familiar with modern political science and economics models will immediately recognize most of these threats to responsiveness and accountability as principal-agent problems.

⁵¹The insulation of Central Bank officials constitutes an intermediate case. One could make the case that Central Bank independence is actually a mechanism to prevent opportunistic manipulation of the economy by politicians seeking reelection and is democratically justified on those grounds. More commonly, however, Central Bank independence is defended on grounds of efficacy and necessity -- that is, it guarantees sound macroeconomic policy even at the expense of public participation.

of accountability will rise much above that floor. As Robert Dahl put it more than four decades ago:

I am not suggesting that elections and interelection activity are of trivial importance in determining policy. On the contrary, they are crucial processes for insuring that political leaders will be somewhat responsive to the preferences of some ordinary citizens. But neither elections nor interelection activity provide much insurance that decisions will accord with the preferences of a majority of adults or voters.⁵³

In other words, additional social and political institutions are necessary to ensure that leaders actually remain accountable to citizens once in office. Otherwise, competitive elections would produce only a highly delegative system of representation that offers ample opportunities for slippage and abuse.⁵⁴

One type of corollary institution is designed to ensure the long-term preservation of the representative system itself, such as constitutional checks and balances that prevent particular leaders from abusing their power, overstepping their authority, or systematically altering the rules of the political game to maintain themselves in power.⁵⁵ One common such check is limitation on tenure in office for certain officials. Although term limits may weaken leaders' electoral incentives to respond to citizens' wishes -- thus diluting one key guarantee of responsiveness in an electoral system -- they also prevent leaders from amassing too much power or locking in collusive bargains. Another common restriction is the requirement that elected officials share power with other elected or appointed officials. Because officials may face different personal or electoral incentives, sharing power theoretically encourages leaders to monitor each other and thus minimizes the opportunities of abuse.⁵⁶ Finally, elected officials are typically required to follow well-specified procedures designed to guarantee transparency and even-handedness

⁵²Storied examples include the allocation of committee posts in the U.S. Congress and the "money politics" that once characterized prime ministerial selection in Japan.

⁵³Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 131. I take Dahl's emphasis on "responsiveness" to mean the same thing that Karl and Schmitter mean by accountability: Compare *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, p. 57-60 with Terry Karl and Philippe Schmitter, "What Democracy is...and is not," *Journal of Democracy*, Summer 1991, 2 (3):75-86.

⁵⁴See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy" *Journal of Democracy*, January 1994, 5 (1):56-69.

⁵⁵In principal-agent parlance, they are primarily designed to prevent "subverting".

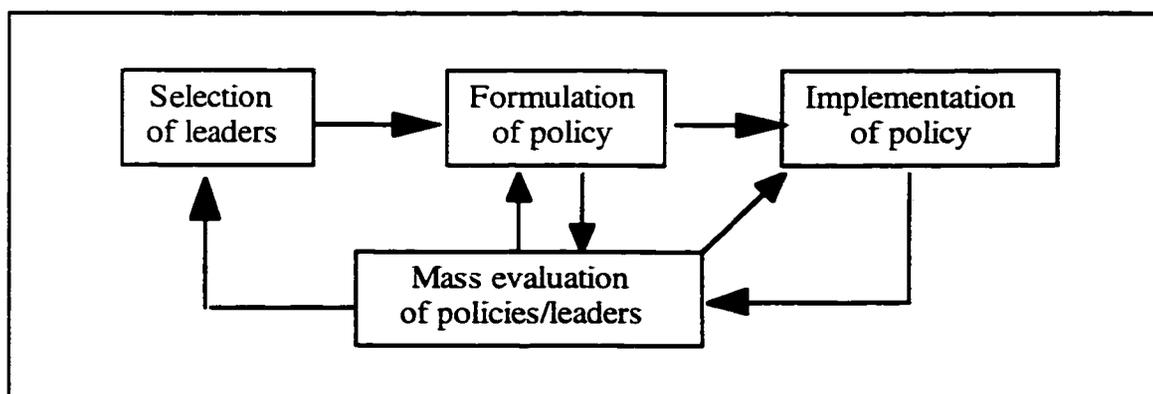
⁵⁶See James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 51.

in policy-making and policy implementation. Bureaucratic regulations, and the rule of law more generally, thus constitute important constraints on the authority of public officials.

A somewhat different type of supporting institution is designed to ensure that leaders actually take popular preferences into account when making and implementing policies.⁵⁷ These political intermediaries – parties, interest groups, social movements, etc. – encourage the continued responsiveness of leaders throughout the democratic chain. During the selection of leaders, for instance, disciplined parties offer citizens clear packages of policies from which they can choose when selecting their representatives, along with a credible commitment that those policies will actually be implemented if the party wins office. Strong, stable parties thus help to ensure that the selection of particular leaders actually leads to the passage of certain policies favored by the voters.

Political intermediaries also allow citizens to influence the formulation and implementation of policy directly, instead of simply awaiting official decisions and then affirming or rejecting them at the polls at some later date. For instance, organized groups claiming representing different segments of the citizenry may mobilize to support or oppose certain initiatives. Their activities both provide leaders with valuable information about the preferences of their constituencies and ensure that leaders' decisions (and their consequences) are made public. The result is an ongoing dialogue between citizens and their representatives rather than a periodic delegation of power. These interactions are shown in Figure 3, below.

Figure 3: Intermediation in representative democracy



⁵⁷In principal-agent parlance, they are primarily designed to prevent “shirking.”

Among the most important political intermediaries are the mass media, which play a crucial role at several places in the democratic chain. First, during the selection of leaders, the media help transmit information about the abilities and intentions of competing candidates and factions. These much-needed political cues help citizens select leaders that purport to represent their preferences and aspirations. Without relatively balanced and equitable coverage of rival contenders in the media, the odds that electoral decisions will reflect citizens' real preferences may be substantially diminished.

Second, the media help provide citizens and organized groups in civil society with the information they need to hold leaders accountable during the process of policy-making and policy-implementation. They also give leaders the same information, allowing them to anticipate or respond to popular demands. By helping citizens and organized groups develop and articulate their positions on specific issues, then, the media play an important role in guaranteeing leaders' responsiveness to popular demands throughout the process of policy formulation and implementation.

Finally, the media play an important role in helping citizens to evaluate policies and policy-making after the fact. By transmitting information about the consequences of official decisions -- including spectacular instances of official misconduct in policy-making -- the media provide citizens and organized groups with valuable political cues. Ultimately, citizens can make use of these cues in evaluating their political options and alternatives. Media scrutiny of policy outcomes thus enhances the ability of voters to hold their representatives accountable.

Providing information about policy outcomes, policy-making, and political alternatives, of course, is not the exclusive purview of the media. Citizens may also rely on parties, interest groups, social movements and others for political cues. But in a modern mass democracy, the press is a potent source of political information. Without independent and pluralistic media, it is much more difficult for citizens to accurately appraise government actions or evaluate their political alternatives. As a result, how the press operates is a crucial determinant of the degree to which electoral systems actually produce popular self-governance.⁵⁸

In many emerging democracies, the absence or weakness of traditional political intermediaries makes the media's role even more vital. Most new

⁵⁸In other words, to use a now-familiar phrase, the media influence the "quality of democracy."

democracies lack the well-defined party structures of their more established predecessors in the developed West. With a handful of exceptions, only those countries with historically strong, mass-based parties (e.g., Chile and Spain) have reemerged from periods of dictatorship with coherent, well-formed party systems. A more common pattern in much of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe has been partisan fragmentation, dissolution, and even delegitimation. Consequently, few scholars expect parties to play the same pivotal role that they did in the founding and maintenance of many established democracies (such as Austria, England, Italy, and the United States).⁵⁹

What is true of political parties is also true of interest groups. In most new democracies (including much of Latin America and Africa), systems of interest group representation remain incoherent or feeble. As Marcelo Cavarozzi put it:

The collective actors of the past -- i.e., business associations, labor unions, and cadres of state managers and technocrats -- have gone through a process of disintegration which has led to their gradual marginalization. For the most part, sectoral organizations and large, informal groups have seen their ability to 'engage' individual members dramatically curtailed...⁶⁰

Even those new democracies that inherited corporatist peak associations from their outgoing autocratic counterparts (such as Mexico and the former Communist countries) have tended to view such institutional legacies as tainted by association with the old regime and hence unworthy of salvation. As a result, the societal corporatism that characterized Western Europe's political economy in the second half of the twentieth century is unlikely to be replicated in most new democracies.

⁵⁹See Philippe Schmitter, "Intermediaries in the Consolidation of Neo-Democracies: The Role of Parties, Associations, and Movements," unpublished manuscript, September 1996; Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), Chapter 8; Geoffrey Pridham, ed., *Securing Democracy: Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, eds., *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); and Robert H. Dix, "Democratization and the Institutionalization of Latin American Parties," *Comparative Political Studies*, January 1992, 24 (4):488-511.

⁶⁰Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Beyond Transitions to Democracy in Latin America," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, October 1992, 24 (3), p. 670. In addition, links between political parties and interests groups are weak in many "third wave" democracies.

Citizens in those regimes will have to look elsewhere for stable, institutionalized representation of their sectoral and economic interests.⁶¹

The gap left by political parties and interest groups has been partially filled by social movements and civic organizations that tend to spring up during the period of democratic transition. But in many cases, these new associations have proven more evanescent than permanent. Democracy, at least in the late twentieth century, appears more likely to demobilize than to institutionalize the popular upsurge of the transition period. Although the recrudescence of civil society clearly acts as a powerful counterweight against authoritarian retrogression, it is unlikely to produce full-fledged substitutes for parties and interest groups.⁶²

The absence or weakness of conventional intermediaries thus accords the media a particularly crucial role in ensuring official accountability, providing citizens with appropriate political cues, and enhancing the overall quality of democratic governance. In many cases, mass media must fill a yawning gap left by the dissolution, withdrawal, or absence of familiar intermediaries. How well they succeed in doing so influences the degree to which representative political systems actually reflect popular wishes and demands in practice.

Unfortunately, in many new democracies the media often fail to meet this challenge. Old instruments of government manipulation -- such as corruption -- may persist well into the new order (as in Korea).⁶³ Lack of training and low professional standards may hamper the media's ability to act as a government

⁶¹Philippe Schmitter, "The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups", *American Behavioral Scientist*, March-June 1992, 35(4-5):422-49; Philippe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" in Philippe Schmitter and Gerhard Lembruch, eds., *Trends toward Corporatist Intermediation* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979); Robert Bianchi, "Interest Group Politics in the Third World," *Third World Quarterly*, April 1986, 8 (2):507-539.

⁶²See Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), especially p. 55-56; Tracy Fitzsimmons, *Paradoxes of Participation: Organizations and Democratization in Latin America* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, 1995); Gerardo L. Munck, "Actor Formation, Social Coordination, and Political Strategy: Some Conceptual Problems in the Study of Social Movements," *Sociology*, November 1995, 29 (4):667-85; Eduardo Canel, "Democratization and the Decline of Urban Social Movements in Uruguay" (n.d.).

⁶³See discussion below; see also C. S. Manegold, "Envelopes of 'Good Will'", *Asian Newsweek*, April 23, 1990, p. 49 and Jon Vanden Heuvel, ed., *The Unfolding Lotus: East Asia's Changing Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, 1993).

watchdog and credible informational vehicle (as in the Philippines and Thailand).⁶⁴ An oppressive legal architecture -- laden with strict regulations on libel, national security, and other themes -- may constrain independent reporting (as in Chile and Argentina).⁶⁵ State-run media inherited by the new regime may become the subject of partisan manipulation by early electoral victors, who then use these outlets against legitimate political opponents (as in Hungary).⁶⁶ Finally, concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few broadcasters and publishers may curtail the diversity necessary for an even-handed presentation of information about policy options and consequences (as in Russia, Brazil, and Mexico).⁶⁷ For these reason, the organization and operation of the press influence how democratic emerging democracies really are.

⁶⁴See Jon Vanden Heuvel, ed., *The Unfolding Lotus: East Asia's Changing Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, 1993).

⁶⁵See Leon Patricios, "Ekmekdjian v. Sofovich: The Argentine Supreme Court Limits Freedom of the Press," *Inter-American Law Review*, Spring 1993, 24 (3):541-65; C. W. Ogbondah, "The sword versus the pen: a study of military-press relations in Chile, Greece, and Nigeria," *Gazette*, July 1989, 44 (1):1-26; Guillermo Torres-Gaona, "Press Monopolies on the Increase in Chile," *The Democratic Journalist*, March 1991, 38 (3/4):18; Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995).

⁶⁶See Ray Hiebert, "The Difficult Birth of a Free Press in Hungary," *American Journalism Review*, January 1994, 16 (1):34; Peter Elam, "Hungary: The Media -- War by Other Means," *Index on Censorship*, February 1993, 22 (2):20-1; Ken Kasriel, "Hungary: Whose Voice? Who's Master? The Battle for the Media," *Index on Censorship* (February 1993); Elemer Hankiss, "The Hungarian Media's War of Independence," *Media, Culture, and Society*, April 1994, 16 (2):293-312; Richard W. Bruner, "Suppressing the Free Press in Hungary," *The New Leader*, November 15, 1993, 76 (13):7-9; Florian Mezes, "The Media War," *New Hungarian Quarterly*, Fall 1992, 33 (127):60; P. Sainath, "Does the Hungarian Media Scene Reflect the Future for Eastern Europe?" *The Democratic Journalist*, December 1990, 37 (12):9. For the relatively happy conclusion of the Hungarian case, see John English, "Hungarian TV and Film," in Al Hester, L. Earle Reybold, and Kimberly Conger, eds., *The Post-Communist Press in Eastern and Central Europe: New Studies* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1992); Gabor Demzsky, "Breaking Censorship, Making Peace," *Media Studies Journal*, Summer 1995, 9 (3):79-85; and Zsofia Szilagyi, "Hungary has a Broadcast Media Law, at Last," *Transition*, April 2, 1996, 2 (8):22.

⁶⁷For Brazil, see Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimaraes, "Media Monopoly in Brazil," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1994, 44 (4):26-38; Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?" in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Luiz Fernando Santoro, "The Promise of Democracy in the New Media Age: A Brazilian Point of View," *Intermedia*, October-November 1995, 23 (5):32-6; and Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995). The Brazilian case, as well as the Russia, is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

The media regime

Under the right circumstances, then, the media can play a crucial role in enhancing democratic accountability. Under other circumstances, they may fail to do so. One crucial question for students of the media and democracy, then, is what characteristics of media organization and operation determine how well the media contribute to democratic accountability. In general, scholars have emphasized two features.

First, the media are better able to exercise their role as Fourth Estate if they are independent of government control. "Independence" does not mean that the media must be completely free from all forms of state regulation. Educational requirements, advertising restrictions, cultural standards, prohibitions against pornography and violence, scarcity of broadcasting spectra, and a host of other considerations all represent legitimate grounds for official oversight. But it does mean that the media should be relatively insulated from politically motivated repression and manipulation.⁶⁸

Politically motivated censorship of the mass media comes in various guises, and a number of previous studies have attempted to catalogue different forms of official control.⁶⁹ On the softer side lie tactics like manipulation of access to sources and information, legal restrictions that impede investigative journalism, corruption of the news media, and official manipulation of broadcasting concessions. Sterner measures include overt forms of censorship, direct government ownership, and repression (including the closing of media outlets and the harassment, arrest, or murder of journalists). The use of these controls should convey the extent of the government-imposed limits to media independence. It should also indicate *how* the media is controlled -- through subtle manipulation,

⁶⁸See Judith Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media*; Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*; and assorted articles in the *Journal of International Affairs*, summer 1993.

⁶⁹See Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1981); Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan R. Dassin, eds., *Press Control around the World* (New York: Praeger, 1982); Leonard R. Sussman, *Survey of Press Freedom* (New York: Freedom House, 1995); Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press in 1996: A Worldwide Survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists* (New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, March 1997); David H. Weaver, Judith M. Buddenbaum and Jo Ellen Fair, "Media, and Development, 1950-1979: A Study of Press Freedom in 134 Nations," *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1985, 35 (2):104-117; World Report, *Information, Freedom, and Censorship* (London: Times Books, 1988).

corruption, repression, or direct government ownership. All of these approaches can result in a substantial loss of independence.⁷⁰ If management and manipulation of the media are sufficiently expert, for instance, it is possible for governments to severely restrict the flow of information without regularly resorting to such crude measures as direct censorship and the murder of overly zealous journalists.

A second oft-cited feature concerns what Raymond Nixon called the number of “media voices” in society.⁷¹ In other words, the media are better able to inform the public about policies, issues, and electoral alternatives to the extent that they present diverse points of view. From the standpoint of democratic accountability, the media play this role best if they present competing perspectives in some rough proportion to their prevalence in society. Under such circumstances, the press does not privilege the opinions of owners, advertisers, high-income media consumers, or other groups, but rather “the public” as a whole.

As critics of the so-called “corporate media” have argued, pluralism is partly a function of the nature and concentration of media ownership.⁷² In small media markets, the media is often controlled by a handful of entrepreneurs or families.⁷³ Where these owners share similar interests, reporting tends to be relatively homogeneous. In such circumstances, major publications and broadcasting networks typically reflect the (right-wing) ideological predilections of their owners. It is precisely this pattern of concentrated ownership and management that accounts for the conservative bias of most Latin American and Southern European media.⁷⁴ By contrast, where ownership of the media is fragmented and diverse reporting tends to be more pluralistic. Under these circumstances,

⁷⁰See Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1981).

⁷¹Raymond B. Nixon and Tae-youl Hahn, “Concentration of Press Ownership: A Comparison of 32 Countries,” *Journalism Quarterly*, Spring 1971, 48 (1):5-16.

⁷²See, for instance, leftist critiques like Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988). One does not need to accept all elements of these critiques to accept the basic, commonsensical point about the effects of media concentration.

⁷³These conditions also appear to have accounted for the conservative bias of American newspapers during the days of Hearst and early media barons.

⁷⁴See James Schwoch, “Broadcast Media and Latin American Politics: The Historical Context,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993) and Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott, “The Role of the Media in the Portuguese Revolution,” in Anthony Smith, ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980).

competition among different media and norms of journalistic professionalism tend to encourage the presentation of alternative viewpoints.

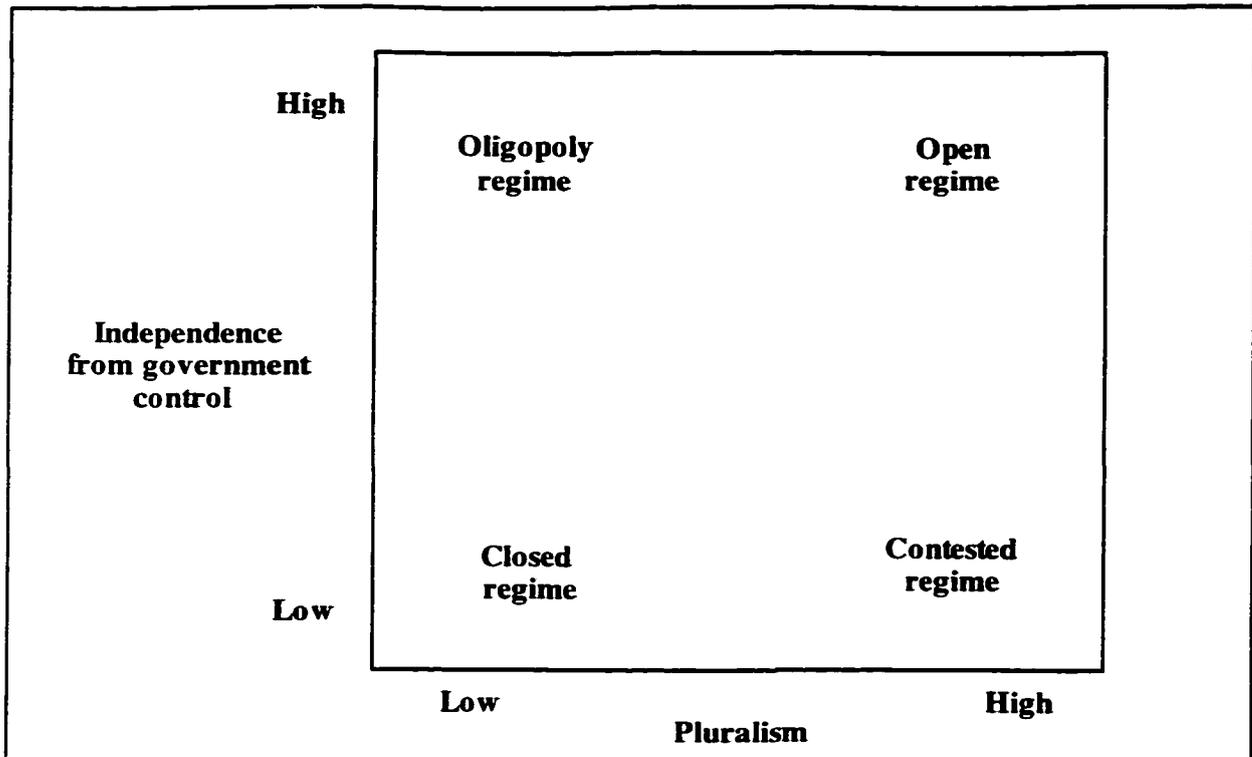
In practice, media pluralism can be achieved through a range of institutional designs: “neutral” public ownership in which editors and journalists are insulated from direct political pressure by professionalized boards and well-established norms of non-interference; competition among a range of private media; broad-based media subsidies that theoretically increase the representation of poorer audiences; editorial independence and professionalism; or some combination of the above. All these mechanisms, of course, have their defects. Subsidies (such as Scandinavian newsprint subsidies) support all media, regardless of whether they need or deserve public financing.⁷⁵ Regulated market competition (as in the United States) tends to favor consumers with greater purchasing power. Public ownership (as in Germany, Britain, Italy, and elsewhere) creates a perennial temptation for political authorities to manipulate state-owned media. And professionalism may prove a weak barrier against the wishes of private media owners. Despite their obvious drawbacks, however, all these mechanisms can promote media pluralism.

Figure 4, below, combines these two dimensions -- pluralism and independence from government control -- to create a typology of media regimes.⁷⁶

⁷⁵For additional discussion on European subsidy policies and their effects, see Anthony Smith ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), p. xi.

⁷⁶For an older typology, see Fred Siebert, Wilbur Schram, and Theodore Peterson, *Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1956). See also John C. Nerome, ed., *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995). One problem with that typology is Siebert et al. present is that the categories it presents are not mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive, as they should be in a classical categorization scheme.

Figure 4: The media regime



The upper right-hand quadrant represents the type of media regime traditionally associated with democratic accountability. Free from official censorship, the media are able to perform the functions of a Fourth Estate, scrutinizing and publicizing government decisions and informing citizens of political alternatives. Free also from manipulation by a few media owners or sponsors, they are able to carry out this function in a relatively even-handed way. In the United States and other established democracies, the press broadly fits this description, notwithstanding minor forms of government interference and high levels of concentration within certain sectors of the media.

By contrast, if the media remain free from government control but dominated by a small number of firms, coverage is likely to be influenced by the interests of these firms. Media regimes in the upper left-hand quadrant are termed “oligopolistic” because they display the homogenization that typically results from concentration of ownership. Such regimes are likely to be characterized by “spaces of silence” on issues that media owners or their sponsors find unpalatable. Because owners (or advertisers) are normally establishment-oriented, oligopoly media regimes tend to have a conservative tint. A whole spectrum of topics – strikes, protests, environmentalism, consumer advocacy, “corporate welfare”,

corruption and influence peddling, opposition movements, etc. -- may never receive treatment.

Oligopoly media regimes are particularly common in new democracies, where direct political controls have been removed but unregulated market competition has produced extreme concentration of media ownership. In such cases, substantial media independence from government control has been achieved without a concomitant increase in pluralism. As one frustrated critic of Latin America's private media put it:

The democratization of the mass media proved to be far more formidable a task than it had appeared during the long dictatorships. Then, government corruption, censorship, and blacklisting looked like the most serious obstacles. These obstacles were removed relatively easily. Few of the new political leaders were willing or able to take on the commercial media....The challenge involved limiting the almost monopolistic tendencies of the private media.⁷⁷

The lower right extreme represents the opposite scenario: some measure of media pluralism continues to exist despite relatively heavy-handed attempts at government control. In these cases, the public is exposed to competing, but embattled, media voices. For instance, during most of the 1980's, anti-Sandinista media in Nicaragua (such as *Radio Católica* and *La Prensa*) were subjected to increasing levels of harassment and censorship, but they generally remained capable of presenting viewpoints at variance with official paradigms.⁷⁸ Press-government relations in military-ruled Nigeria during the late 1980s and 1990s were similarly contested.

Contested media regimes tend to emerge during the breakdown or consolidation of an autocratic political system. Spain, Portugal, and a number of other new democracies fell into this category during their transitions from authoritarian rule. In the long run, however, this sort of contested arrangement is likely to give way either to full-fledged liberalization of government controls or to greater concentration of the media in the hands of the government or its allies. When Ferdinand Marcos wished to crack down on the Philippines' independent press in 1972, for instance, he and his cronies bought Manila's independent

⁷⁷Elizabeth Fox, ed., *Media and Politics in Latin America* (London: Sage, 1988), p. 182-3.

⁷⁸See A. Mattelart, ed., *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua* (New York: International General, 1986) and T. D. Allman, "Television, Sandinista Style," *Channels*, September-October 1983, 3 (5).

television channels and most of its major newspapers.⁷⁹ Other autocratic leaders have responded by closing down critical publications and broadcasting stations.

The most hostile media system from the standpoint of democratic accountability is clearly a closed regime of thorough-going official control and extreme homogeneity. In such cases, the media generally supports existing institutions by reinforcing dominant political paradigms, framing public issues in ways favorable to the government, and attacking internal or external opposition groups. It may also play a role in legitimating the political system by giving sustained coverage to the government's traditional themes (social progress, nationalism, etc.) and conveying messages between different groups within the ruling elite.⁸⁰ At the extreme, the media exists only to disseminate official instructions and propaganda. Such authoritarian media regimes are typical of most one-party hegemonies, military dictatorships, and religious theocracies.

In practice, of course, most media regimes do not fit the extreme cases described here. Few countries are perfectly authoritarian or perfectly open in any aspect of political life, and the media is no exception. France's media regime, for instance, remains essentially open, but expansive anti-defamation and privacy rules (against which truth is not always a legally recognized defense) and an array of "exempted subjects" restrict the media's ability to engage in vigorous investigation of government practices.⁸¹ In Japan, the institution of government-supported press clubs has had a similar consequence.⁸² And in Britain, the Official Secrets Act,

⁷⁹Sanford J. Ungar, "The role of a free press in strengthening democracy," in Judith Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 386.

⁸⁰See Ilya Adler, "Press-Government Relations in Mexico: A Study of Freedom of the Mexican Press and Press Criticism of Government Institutions," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 1993, 12:1-30 and Lilita Dzirkals, Thane Gustafson, and A. Ross Johnson, *The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in the USSR* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1982).

⁸¹Stories that could never have been covered by the French media include such staples of American political journalism as the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, and the Iran-Contra affair. See C. R. Eisendrath, "Press Freedom in France: Private Ownership and State Controls," in Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan R. Dassin, eds., *Press Control around the World* (New York: Praeger, 1982). See also Francis Balle and Jean Marie Cotteret, "Government and the Media in France," in Dan Nimmo and Michael W. Mansfield, eds., *Government and the News Media: Comparative Dimensions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1982).

⁸²As William Horsely puts it, "lack of concern for libel laws...enables the press, especially the popular weekly magazines, to publish scurrilous articles or make serious allegations without any real fear of prosecution, while selectively observing unwritten taboos on certain figures and issues." See "The Press as Loyal Opposition in Japan," in Anthony Smith, ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), p. 202. See also Roya Akhavan-Majid, "The Press as an Elite Power Group in Japan," *Journalism*

muzzle rules, prosecution of government whistle-blowers, partial bans on coverage of Northern Ireland, and extensive public ownership of broadcasting allow the government to exercise a degree of media control unimaginable in the American context.⁸³

Just as some essentially open media regimes have less-than-open elements, so certain closed media regimes have their chinks. In many Latin American and African countries, for instance, low-circulation newspapers and magazines often offer more balanced and critical coverage than radio and television programs. There appear to be two principal reasons for the print media's relatively greater liberty. First, where publications do not reach mass audiences, they are not necessarily viewed as threatening to the political system. For this reason, specialized or foreign-language publications -- such as the English-language periodicals of South-East Asia -- are often given greater leeway on sensitive subjects than their more popular counterparts.⁸⁴ Second, and more important, official intervention in the print media is more difficult than censorship of broadcasting. Lower entry barriers in the print media, for instance, make it easier for illegal publications (such as *samizdat* and underground papers) to emerge as alternative sources of information whenever the mainstream press is tightly controlled. By contrast, broadcasting media offer governments a number of subtle instruments of official manipulation. It is a relatively simple matter for the government to revoke (or threaten to revoke) broadcasting concessions -- often under the guise of perfectly legitimate public rationales. Less facile political control and lower entry barriers thus tend to leave the print media more open than radio or television in most countries.⁸⁵

Quarterly, Winter 1990, 67 (4):1006-14; Kyu Ho Youm, "Libel Law and the Press in Japan," *Journalism Quarterly*, Winter 1990, 67 (4):1103-12; Young C. Kim, "Government and the News Media in Japan: A Focus Upon Political Reporters and Public Officials," in Dan Nimmo and Michael W. Mansfield, eds., *Government and the News Media: Comparative Dimensions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1982); and Susan Pharr and E. Krauss, eds., *Media and Politics in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996).

⁸³See Sanford J. Ungar, "The role of a free press in strengthening democracy," in Judith Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 380-2; David C. Boyce, "Government and the News Media: The British Experience," in Dan Nimmo and Michael W. Mansfield, eds., *Government and the News Media: Comparative Dimensions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1982).

⁸⁴Jon Vanden Heuvel, ed., *The Unfolding Lotus: East Asia's Changing Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, 1993).

⁸⁵Analysis of quantitative data on media freedom (in this case, Freedom House's 1995 Survey of Press Freedom) supports the contention that this second factor, rather than official tolerance, is primarily responsible for greater openness in the print media. On average, harassment of the print media -- whether measured by legal restrictions, political pressures, economic influences, overt

Even authoritarian management of the broadcast media, however, can be frustrated by unauthorized or cross-border transmissions. Foreign broadcasts proved crucial in assuring a more diverse media regime in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe, especially East Germany.⁸⁶ Though national broadcasting remains tightly controlled in many countries, international spillovers have led to a more democratic media regime wherever jamming has proven politically or technically impractical. In addition, underground broadcasters (such as the guerrilla-run *Radio Venceremos* in El Salvador and pirate radio stations elsewhere) can sometimes counter tight government control of licensed transmitters. As a consequence, many apparently authoritarian media regimes are actually penetrated by unofficial media.⁸⁷

Figure 5, below, attempts to flesh out these points by locating a number of Latin American media regimes within this framework. For the purposes of this exercise, levels of independence were based on the inventory of familiar government controls mentioned above (control over access, legal restrictions, manipulation of broadcast concessions, corruption, repression, and politicized government ownership). Of the sixteen countries shown here, six have media that are relatively independent of state control. One (Cuba) has an extremely controlled media, although foreign radio broadcasts and underground newspapers give it a modicum of freedom. Independence is also limited in a number of others (including Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, and Mexico). The rest fall somewhere in between.

Measuring the “number of media voices” is more difficult, because there are many dimensions of pluralism: ideological, religious, racial, ethnic, regional, etc. But concentration of ownership in the country’s dominant medium offers a useful proxy. Countries where ownership of the dominant medium was fragmented among different players (as with radio in Bolivia) score reasonably well on this scale. So too do relatively affluent and literate societies, where no one medium – radio,

repression, or a combination of the above -- is substantially greater than harassment of the broadcast media. Thus, it appears that governments at least attempt to control the printed word as aggressively as they attempt to control radio and television.

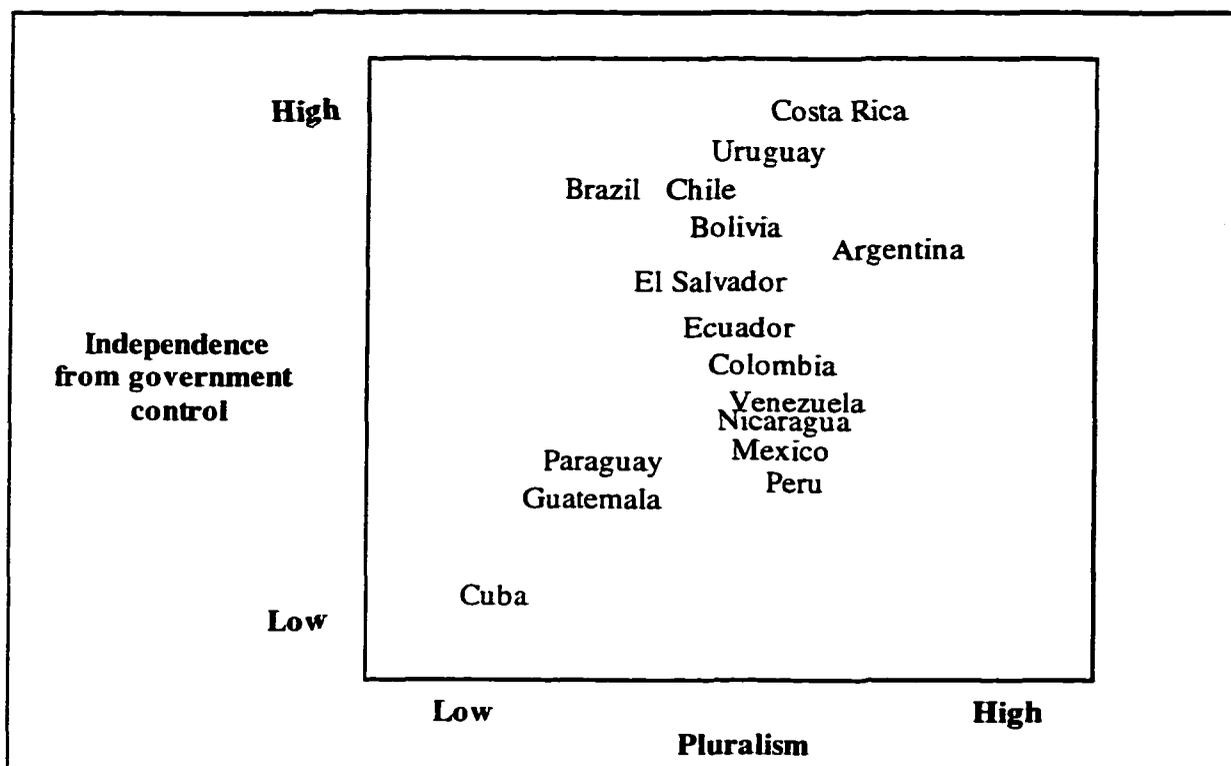
⁸⁶Kurt Hesse, “Cross-Border Mass Communication from West to East Germany,” *European Journal of Communication*, 5 (1990):355-71.

⁸⁷Emperatrix E. Arreaza-Camero. “Comunicación, derechos humanos, y democracia: el rol de *Radio Venceremos* en el proceso de democratización en El Salvador (1981-94),” paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C., September 28-30, 1995; Charles Riddle, “South African attempts to dominate political communication in Namibia through control of radio 1966-1989,” *Gazette*, July 1993, 52 (1):25-41.

television, or print -- is truly dominant (such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela).

This first cut at measurement is not quantitatively rigorous. The location of individual countries on both dimensions can always be debated, and aggregation at the national level obscures important differences between different regions of each country and different media. But the results, shown below, may prove helpful for illustrative purposes.

Figure 5: Latin American media regimes in the late 1990s

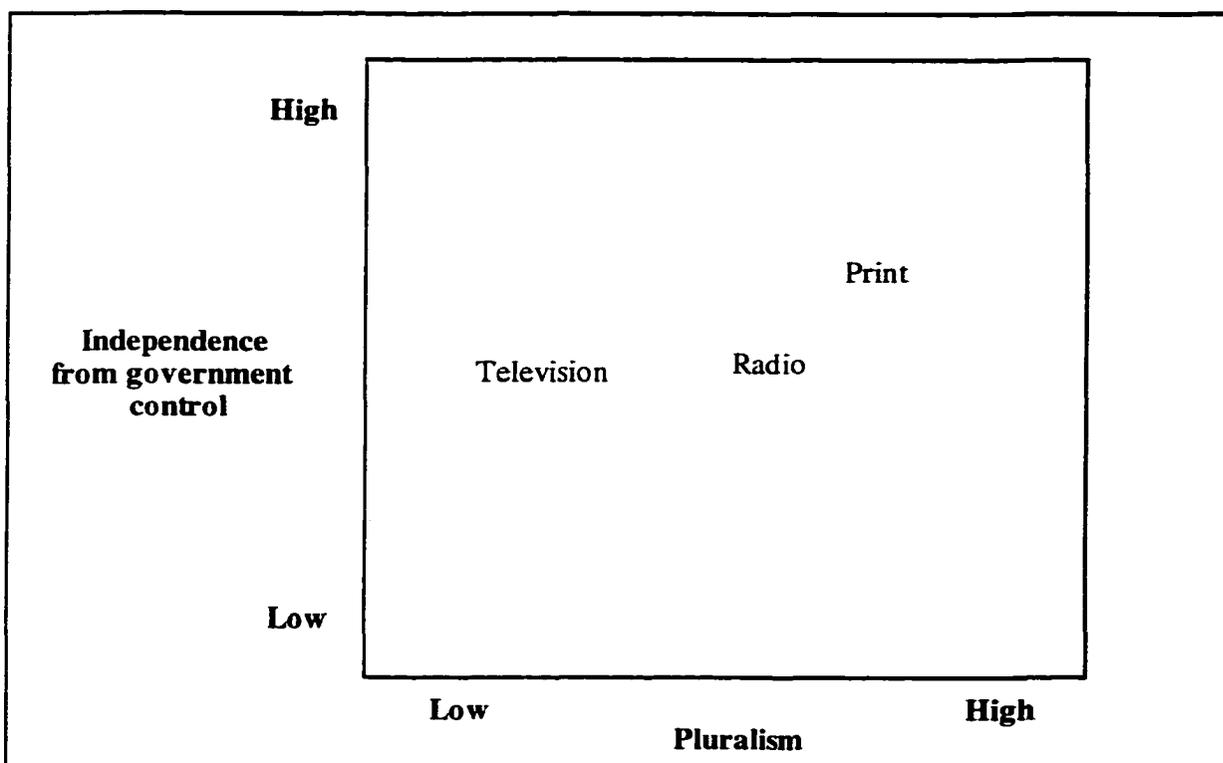


As Figure 5 suggests, there is a strong overall correspondence between levels of media independence and levels of media pluralism. Cuba maintains the most closed media system in the hemisphere in terms of both independence and diversity. At the other end of the spectrum, Costa Rica boasts Latin America's most open media regime; the press enjoys substantial freedom from government pressure and a variety of commercial television networks, radio stations, and high-circulation newspapers compete for public attention. Most countries fall close to a line between these two poles. Nevertheless, a few cases correspond to the liberal and contested categories described above. For instance, continuing domination of much of Brazilian television -- the country's major important medium -- by the *Globo*

network places Brazil squarely within the “oligopoly” category. By contrast, countries like Mexico, Peru, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Colombia approximate contested media systems.

The picture becomes slightly more complicated when the media regimes of each country are “disaggregated.” In Mexico, for instance, increasing pluralism in radio and print has pushed both these media into the contested box. By contrast, television remains substantially more concentrated and homogenous, with two pro-government networks dominating broadcasting. Figure 6, below, shows these differences across media in Mexico.

Figure 6: Print, radio, and television in Mexico in 1997

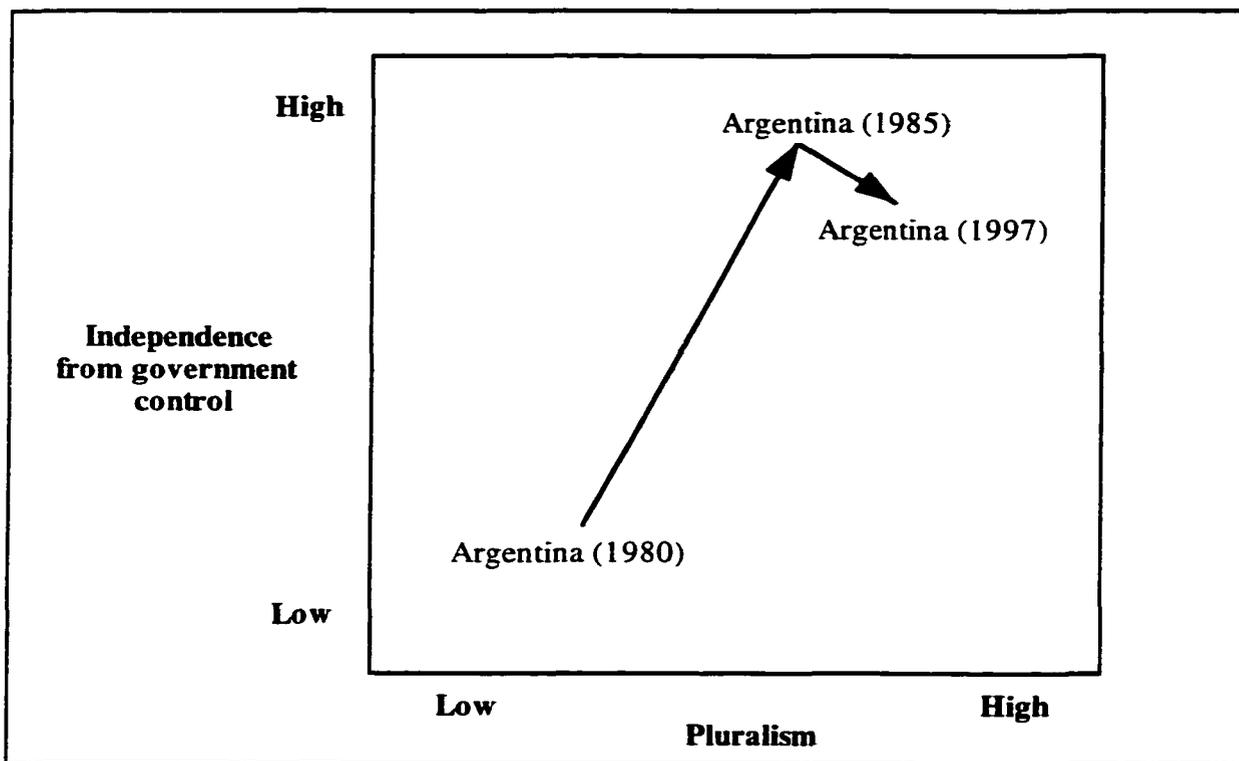


In other words, there is substantial variation in media regimes across both countries and types of media.

There is also substantial variation within the same country over time. For instance, Argentina’s media regime evolved from sharp control under the military to much greater pluralism and independence from 1982 to 1984. Since then, new media have emerged and expanded, including cable television and an alternative newspaper known for its investigative reporting (*Página 12*). Increasing hostility directed at the media by President Carlos Menem and his associates, however, has

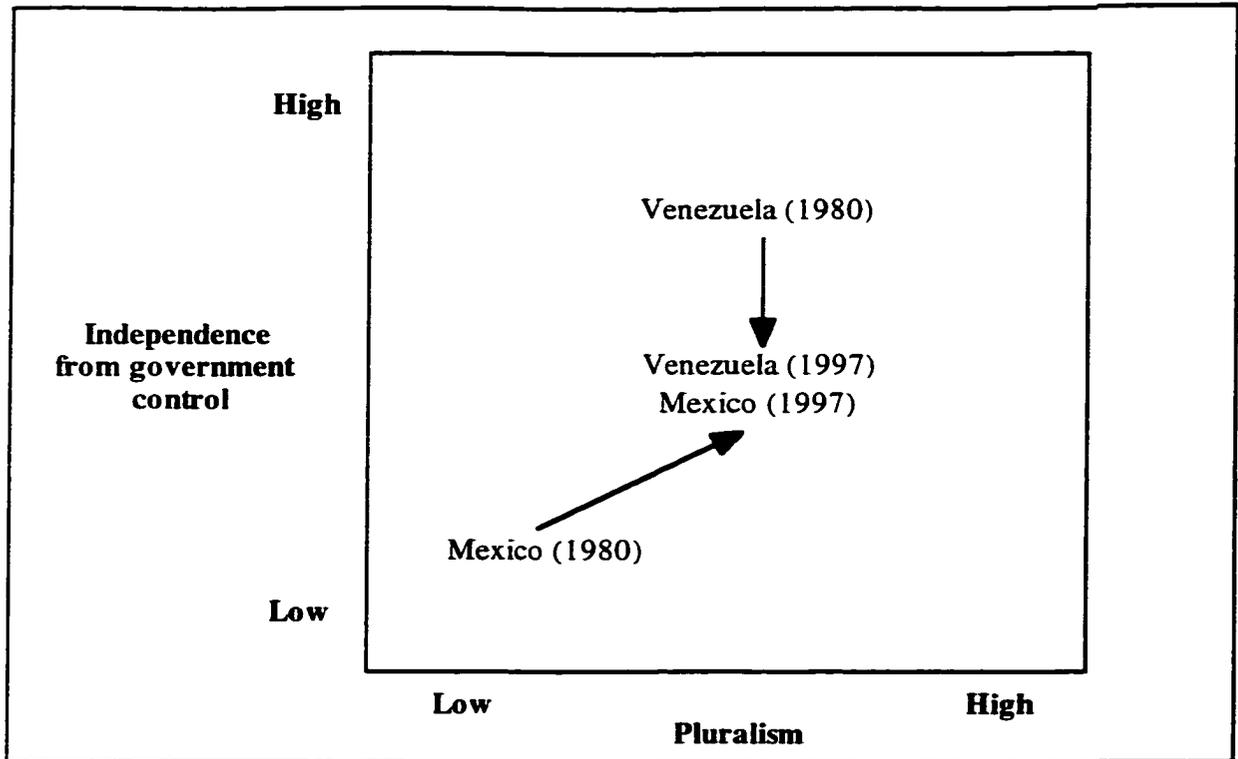
recently begun to nudge Argentina's media regime downwards toward the contested zone. Figure 7 below summarizes these trends.

Figure 7: Opening and partial retrogression in the Argentine media



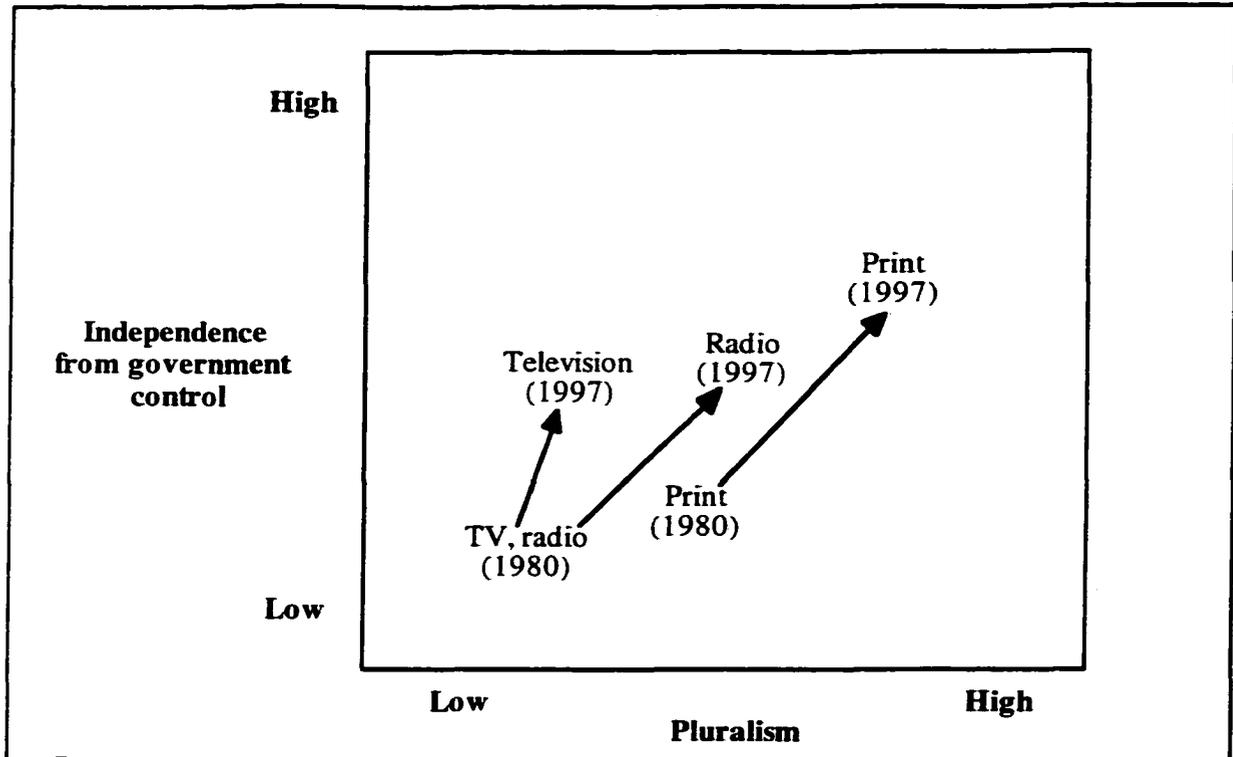
Official pressure on the news media also mounted in Venezuela under President Rafael Caldera in the mid-1990s. In particular, tightened controls over foreign exchange and an increasingly authoritarian political context gave the government greater leverage over potentially critical media. By contrast, Mexico's media regime has moved in the opposite direction, becoming more pluralistic and, to a lesser extent, more independent during the last decade. Privatization of government-run television channels during the administration of Carlos Salinas (1988-1994) has added an element of competition in the country's most important medium. Meanwhile, independent newspapers and radio programs have emerged and begun to overtake their more traditional rivals. These two countries' media trajectories are shown in Figure 8, below.

Figure 8: Shifts in Venezuela's and Mexico's media regimes



As with the position of individual countries, changes in the media regime as a whole can also be disaggregated. Figure 9, below, depicts the evolution of Mexican print, radio, and television over the last twelve years.

Figure 9: Evolution of television, radio, and print media in Mexico



As Figure 9 indicates, Mexico's media -- especially its print media -- have moved from a decidedly authoritarian context toward a much more open regime.

Opening the media regime

What explains this variation across time, country, and type of media? How does a media regime become more independent and pluralistic? To date, there have been few rigorous, cross-national studies on the causes of media opening. There are, however, a number of country- and region-specific analyses of the media from which certain basic hypotheses can be distilled.⁸⁸ These analyses have identified seven factors -- democratization, economic development, economic liberalization,

⁸⁸The most relevant examples include: Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Jeremy D. Popkin, ed., *Media and Revolution: Comparative Perspectives* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Vicky Randall, "The media and democratisation in the Third World," *Third World Quarterly*, 1993, 14 (3):625-46; Oleg Manaev and Yuri Prylivk, eds., *Media in Transition: From Totalitarianism to Democracy* (Kiev: Arbis, 1993); Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1991); Anthony Smith, ed.,

technological change, international spillovers, journalistic professionalism, and market competition -- as causes of media independence. In this section, I reformulate these arguments as hypotheses and review the evidence that has been offered in support of each of them. Where possible, I then assess the generalizability of these arguments using data from Leonard Sussman's global survey of press freedom, which measures overall levels of openness in the media.⁸⁹

For a number of reasons, these quantitative probes are not perfect tests of the hypotheses. First, operationalizing several of the hypotheses is extremely difficult. Reasonable indicators of technological change, foreign media penetration, and journalistic professionalism, for instance, are not easy to come by. As a result, much of the analysis relies on proxy measures that vary substantially in reliability and validity. Second, measurement of the dependent variable, media freedom, is limited to a single year. Reliable time-series data for a broad range of countries are not available, making it impossible to conduct cross-temporal analyses of media opening.⁹⁰ Third, reciprocal causality impedes statistical analysis of the relationship between democratization and media opening. In theory, the problem of reciprocal causality could be addressed through simultaneous equations analysis. But even with more advanced statistical techniques, serious problems persist. Most standard indicators of democracy, for instance, contain within them measures of media freedom that cannot readily be "backed out", and the reverse appears to hold for media freedom scores. As a result, it is not possible to tease apart the influence of democratization on media opening and the reciprocal influence of media opening on democratization using current data. Finally, as a result of these data and methodological problems, it is not always possible to control for potential confounding variables (such as level of democracy). For instance, the strong

Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium; and the *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1).

⁸⁹Leonard R. Sussman, *Survey of Press Freedom* (New York: Freedom House, 1995). Scores on the Sussman index measure total levels of "freedom" in the media regime as of the end of 1994, with lower scores indicating greater freedom. Overall scores are based on four sub-measurements -- the legal architecture governing the media, political pressures on the media, economic influences on the media, and overt repression (weighted twice). Because economic influences combine both state and non-state influences, it is not really possible to disaggregate media "independence" and media "pluralism." Thus, the scores are treated as measuring total openness in the media regime.

⁹⁰In the past, some scholars (such as Raymond Nixon) have attempted to measure media freedom in different countries over time. However, these measurements are not nearly as comprehensive and reliable as the new Freedom House data. Moreover, most earlier measurements were taken many years apart, making it even more difficult to untangle the real causes of changes in media freedom.

relationship in the data between economic development and media freedom may simply be a statistical artifact. Economic development may actually cause democracy, which in turn leads to greater media openness. For all these reasons, the statistical analysis presented below should be viewed as a sort of cross-national plausibility probe of hypotheses that were originally developed to explain the transformation of media regimes in particular countries. In other words, it is a way of evaluating whether these hypotheses appear to be generalizable to a range of cases rather than a way of definitively settling the matter.

Hypothesis 1: Democratization causes media opening

Perhaps the most straightforward hypothesis is that media openness simply reflects overall levels of political freedom. Just as increasing official harassment of the media tends to produce a more homogeneous and tractable media, so official tolerance should permit greater diversity and independence. In other words, changes in the media regime are a direct function of changes in the political regime.

This concise and elegant explanation fits well with existing scholarship on political transition. Relaxation of official controls over the media are often a key component of more generalized political opening. So called “soft-liners” and reformers within the dictatorship may permit or promote a freer press to defuse opposition demands for greater openness, pursue anti-corruption drives, mobilize political support for their reforms, and boost their own standing against rival factions. Thus, media opening is part and parcel of political liberalization.

Continued political evolution -- that is, regime transition -- is also likely to stimulate increased media independence and pluralism. Electoral victories by opposition groups, for instance, usually remove the last vestiges of government control and trigger reforms in press-government relations. And even within relatively democratic systems, political victories by reformers and checks on executive power can reduce government controls and foster media pluralism. The courts, for instance, have often played a critical role in protecting and expanding press freedom in already democratic political systems. In Israel, judges have aggressively upheld liberty of the press and systematically ruled against government attempts at censorship and control.⁹¹ The same has been true in Japan, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Sweden, and the Czech Republic, where courts have generally upheld

⁹¹See Dina Goren and Rozann Rothman, “Government-News Media Relations in Israel,” in Dan Nimmo and Michael W. Mansfield, eds., *Government and the News Media: Comparative Dimensions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1982).

journalists' rights to conceal their sources (thus safeguarding investigative reporting).⁹² In all these cases, greater openness in the media appears to flow from democratization.

This basic argument is also supported by some of the existing empirical work on the media and political transition. Throughout the process of "decompression" under Brazil's military regime, for instance, "the censorship system developed in response to decisive events in the larger political order."⁹³ Relaxation of press censorship tended to preempt opposition demands, and television coverage responded to popular demands rather than stimulating them. Likewise, in East Germany "newspapers *reacted* to political demands from the party and were never at the 'forefront' of political change."⁹⁴ In Taiwan, broadcasting remained timid, tentative, and state-controlled throughout the crucial period of the transition. Although newspapers were more activist, changes in their coverage of political events normally followed the process of civic mobilization.⁹⁵ In all these cases, the media did eventually act as promoters of political transition, but they were primarily its beneficiaries. In other words, several case studies of the media in political transition suggest that media pluralism and independence follow from political changes.

Quantitative analysis of the relationship between press freedom (as measured by the Sussman index) and political freedom (as measured by Freedom House's 1994 scores for political rights) strongly supports the notion that media freedom and political freedom move together.⁹⁶ As Table 1 (below) indicates, the

⁹²See Frank L. Kaplan, "Czechoslovakia's Press Law: Shaping the Media's Future," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1991), p. 49.

⁹³Joan Dassin, "Press Censorship and the Military State in Brazil," in Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan R. Dassin, eds., *Press Control around the World* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 161-2.

⁹⁴Lars Willnat, "The East German press during the political transformation of East Germany," *Gazette*, 1991, 48 (3):193-206, p. 206. Emphasis in the original.

⁹⁵Kudlip Rampal, "Post-martial law media boom in Taiwan," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53 (1-2):73-91.

⁹⁶Scores for political rights, unlike the scores on civil rights and overall freedom scores, do not include measurements of press freedom. In other words, they measure only political competition rather than freedom of speech, freedom of the press, etc.

correlation between media freedom and political rights is extremely high for the world as a whole and for Latin America in particular.⁹⁷

Table 1: Correlation of political rights and media openness

World*	.88
Latin America (A) **	.90
Latin America (B) ^o	.91
<p>*Includes 185 countries for which data was available. **Includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela. ^oIncludes the countries listed above, except for Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana.</p>	

Nevertheless, this strong correlation does not prove that causality invariably flows from the political system to the media. The media may actually cause political opening; some third factor (such as social mobilization or economic development) may cause both; or changes in the media and changes in the political system may be mutually and reciprocally reinforcing. In other words, initial political liberalization may encourage media independence and pluralism, which in turn stimulates pressure for continuing political reform.

These alternative interpretations find some support in country-specific analysis of the media and democratization. As Leonard Sussman writes with respect to Czechoslovakia:

At a crucial moment, in Czechoslovakia as elsewhere in Eastern Europe in 1989, journalists on the government's payroll, i.e., civil servants, simply changed sides and became instruments of the popular clamor for democracy. Without their truthful reporting of the magnitude of the disillusionment and demand for reform, it would have been much more difficult to mobilize the entire population and replace the oppressive regime.⁹⁸

⁹⁷In fact, this correlation is about as strong as the correlation between different measurements of democracy -- such as Freedom House's civil rights and political rights scores, the combined Freedom House score and the Bollen index.

⁹⁸"Exit the censor, enter the regulator," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991, p. 16.

A similar pattern prevailed late in Brazil's political transition, where *Globo's* decision to cover opposition protests constituted a crucial turning point in the process of democratization.⁹⁹ In these cases, a modicum of political opening encouraged media independence, which then accelerated regime change.

Precisely how might the media influence political change? Work on the role of the media in political transition is sketchy, unsystematic, and contradictory, even by comparison to research on media opening itself. In addition, the extremely sophisticated and well-developed literature on media effects in advanced industrialized countries -- especially on priming, agenda-setting, and framing -- does not always offer that much in the way of guidance.¹⁰⁰ Media impacts may be very different in a context of institutional flux than in a stable political system; not only may the magnitude of media effects on public opinion be much greater, the media may also exercise entirely new types of influence not studied in established democracies. Given the myriad of possible effects -- from suggesting political alternatives to signaling the relative strength of different political factions -- it is difficult to assemble a comprehensive catalogue of media influences on political transition. But existing studies do suggest at least six ways that media opening can propel democratization.

One highly visible way involves increasingly aggressive coverage of incendiary or shocking events. By exposing the defects of authoritarian rule, media opening may undermine support for authoritarian institutions and practices. Most commonly, media independence may trigger political scandals, which reveal the scope and costs of regime practices (corruption, repression, etc.) that were previously well concealed and highlight glaring failures of regime performance. In

⁹⁹Joseph D. Straubhaar, "TV and Video in the Transition from Military to Civilian Rule in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review*, 1989, 24 (1):140-54, p. 146. See also Joseph Straubhaar, Organ Olsen and Maria Cavaliari Nuñez, "The Brazilian Case: Influencing the Voter," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimarães, "Media Monopoly in Brazil," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1994, 44 (4):26-38.

¹⁰⁰See Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Richard Johnston, André Blais, Henry E. Brady, and Jean Crête, *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Richard A. Brody, *Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), among others.

recent years, studies of Argentina and other countries have documented the role of independent media in triggering political scandals.¹⁰¹

A second hypothesis comes less from studies of the media than from research on democratization. According to "transitologists," rifts within the ruling authoritarian coalition typically represent a crucial step in the process of regime change.¹⁰² In theory, increasingly assertive media coverage may provoke or exacerbate cleavages within the regime, raising the odds of exposure (and thus the costs of further political liberalization) for authoritarian elites most deeply involved in repression and corruption. Opening in the media may thus act as a catalyst for political transition by reinforcing cleavages within the ruling autocratic coalition.

Third, the press may shape public opinion about specific issues and candidates.¹⁰³ This effect is familiar from scholarly literature on the media in advanced industrialized countries, but it may be unusually important in new democracies. In "founding elections" and constitutional referenda, initial outcomes typically influence not only the distribution of power within an existing system, but also the nature of the system itself. Because the potential stakes in these contests are so high, any media influences merit special attention.

In addition, because founding elections often take place in a context of constrained public information about political alternatives, media effects may be substantially more pronounced than in established democracies. Presumably, the combination of low levels of political knowledge, weak partisan attachments, and high voter reliance on the media create an environment where media coverage can

¹⁰¹See Silvio Waisbord, "Knocking on Newsroom Doors: The Press and Political Scandals in Argentina," *Political Communication*, January 1994, 11 (1):19-33; Johnston M. Mitchell, "The Evolution of a Free Press in Hungary: 1986-90," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center, 1990); Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991; and Peter Leyden and David Bank, "The Web of Bribery That Envelopes South Korean News Media," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16, 1990.

¹⁰²For the importance of divisions in the ruling coalition, see Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990); and Russell Bova, "Political Dynamics of the Post-Communist Transition: A Comparative Perspective," in Nancy Bermeo, ed., *Liberalization and Democratization: Change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹⁰³See Thomas E. Skidmore, "Politics and the Media in a Democratizing Latin America," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), especially p. 16.

exercise a powerful influence over the course of a campaign.¹⁰⁴ Recent campaigns in Brazil, Russia, and other new democracies appear to support this contention.¹⁰⁵

Fourth, the media may also act as important mobilizational vehicle for civil society. Media coverage of political events may also have an important focusing effect for the political opposition, signaling regime opponents when and where to marshal their forces.¹⁰⁶ For instance, the media may play a pivotal role in political transition by transmitting information about the fact and extent of political opposition, thus lowering the perceived costs of anti-regime protest. Such demonstration effects appear to have played an important role in sparking or sustaining popular mobilization in Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Philippines.¹⁰⁷ Because popular mobilization is arguably the single most important factor in the

¹⁰⁴David M. Farrell, "Campaign Strategies and Tactics," in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris, eds., *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996) and Steven E. Finkel, "Reexamining the 'Minimal Effects' Model in Recent Presidential Campaigns," *Journal of Politics*, February 1993, 55 (1):1-20.

¹⁰⁵For Russia, see, Randy L. Zabel, "Campaign Message Effects and the 1996 Russian Presidential Elections," paper presented at the conference of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28-31, 1997; Michael McFaul, "Russia's 1996 Presidential Elections," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, October-December 1996, 12 (4):318-350; and Richard Rose and Evgeny Tikhomirov, "Russia's Forced-Choice Presidential Election," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 1996, 12 (4): 351-379. For Brazil, see Venicio A. de Lima, "Brazilian Television in the 1989 Presidential Campaign: Constructing a President,"; Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, "The Brazilian Case: Manipulation by the Media?"; and Joseph D. Straubhaar, Organ Olsen, and Maria Cavaliari Nuñez, "The Brazilian Case: Influencing the Voter," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993). For Chile, see María Eugenia Hirmas, "The Chilean Case: Television in the 1988 Plebiscite," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁶See Jeremy D. Popkin, ed., *Media and Revolution: Comparative Perspectives* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

¹⁰⁷See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 101-103. See also, Linda Jensen, "The Press and Power in the Russian Federation," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):97-125, p. 110; Joan R. Dassin, "Press Censorship and the Military State in Brazil," in Jane Leftwich Curry and Joan R. Dassin, eds., *Press Control around the World* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 177-8; Sanford J. Ungar, "The role of a free press in strengthening democracy," in Judith Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 388; Chin-Chuan Lee, "Sparking a fire: The Press and the Ferment of Democratic Change in Taiwan," *Journalism Monographs*, 138, April 1993; and Leonard Sussman, "Exit the censor, enter the regulator," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991, p. 16.

calculations of authoritarian rulers, the media's role in stimulating or sustaining mass public protest is crucial to regime change.

Fifth, the media may contribute to the rebirth of civil society and the creation of a public sphere.¹⁰⁸ In other words, media opening may help stimulate peaceful, open discussion of public issues. One result is that citizens begin to reflect on their current circumstances and join together to articulate new demands. Empirically, there is an undeniable correlation between the emergence of new media and the rebirth of civil society during political transition. Almost every instance of democratization over the last twenty years has been accompanied by a spectacular profusion of new media. In Spain from 1974-7, the number of papers rapidly rebounded to 1934 levels (i.e., before the stultifying effect of Franco's dictatorship).¹⁰⁹ In Romania, the number of publications soared from 495 at the time of Ceaucescu's downfall in December 1989 to 1,545 by the election of September 27, 1992.¹¹⁰ In Hungary, almost 450 papers were added between 1986 and 1989.¹¹¹ In Taiwan, the total number of newspapers increased eightfold, from 31 at the end of martial law in 1987 to 249 by mid-1992.¹¹² In Korea, the number of dailies almost quadrupled from 28 (at the time of Roh Tae Woo's democratization pledge in June 1987) to 100 six years later.¹¹³ In Brazil from 1981-86, 100 papers were started, most since 1984. Even in China, where full-fledged democratization has so far been stymied, economic liberalization and development spawned some 500 papers between 1991 and 1994, an increase of about one-

¹⁰⁸For a useful definition and discussion of civil society, see Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 221-7.

¹⁰⁹José Francisco Martínez-Soler, "The Paradoxes of Press Freedom: The Spanish Case," in Anthony Smith, ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980).

¹¹⁰Mihai Coman and Peter Gross, "The 1992 presidential/parliamentary elections in Romania's largest circulation dailies and weeklies," May 1994, *Gazette*, 52 (3):223-240, p. 223.

¹¹¹Johnston Mitchell, "The Evolution of a Free Press in Hungary: 1986-90," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1991).

¹¹²Kudlip Rampal, "Post-martial law media boom in Taiwan," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53 (1-2):73-91, p. 79.

¹¹³Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's experiment with a free press," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53 (1-2):111-16; Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991.

third.¹¹⁴ Although lines of causality are not clear — popular mobilization may drive media opening rather than the other way around — the strength of the relationship between these two processes is suggestive.

Finally, the media may influence political culture by promoting democratic norms of tolerance, trust, and civic engagement.¹¹⁵ Although the media is only one contributor to political socialization — and probably not the most important one — it does have the potential to shape underlying values.¹¹⁶ If, as some theorists of democratization contend, political culture is more plastic than scholars once believed, the media's potential influence in molding core beliefs cannot be dismissed.¹¹⁷

Examination of the relationship between media openness and political freedom thus suggests two conclusions. First, political change may be expected to exercise a powerful effect on the level of media independence and pluralism. This finding is supported by some existing studies of the media in political transition and accords with the strong observed relationship between democracy and media freedom. Second, the media themselves may influence political change in several ways. In particular, media opening may encourage democratization by delegitimizing authoritarian institutions; exacerbating cleavages in the ruling autocratic coalition; shaping public opinion regarding particular candidates and issues; communicating information about the existence and strength of political opposition; creating a public sphere; and instilling democratic values in the mass public.

As mentioned above, testing these propositions with existing measurements of democracy and media freedom is essentially impossible. There is an extremely

¹¹⁴Xu Yu, "Professionalism without guarantees: Changes of the Chinese press in the post-1989 years," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53, (1-2):23-41, p. 24.

¹¹⁵See Frederick Schiff, "Rewriting the Dirty War: State Terrorism Reinterpreted by the Press in Argentina during the Transition to Democracy," *Terrorism*, July-October 1990, 13 (4/5):311-28.

¹¹⁶See Steven H. Chaffee and S. M. Yang, "Communication and Political Socialization," in Orit Ichilov, ed., *Political Socialization, Citizenship, and Democracy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990).

¹¹⁷For the traditional view of political culture, see Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989); Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1960); Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); and Robert D. Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For arguments that minimize the role of political culture, see the work of Philippe C. Schmitter and Guillermo O'Donnell. Some scholars, such as Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Alfred Stepan have staked out more middle-of-the road positions.

close correspondence between levels of media freedom and democracy, both across countries and within different countries over time. But the data are too gross (one measure per country per year for a few years at best) to tease out causal patterns. Untangling this relationship thus requires finer-grained measurements and in-depth analyses of particular cases – a task undertaken in Chapters Two through Six.

Hypothesis 2: Socio-economic development causes media opening

One enduring argument about media freedom concerns its relationship to socioeconomic development. As Vicky Randall has argued, larger, richer, more literate, more educated, and more urbanized populations mean larger markets for information and communication.¹¹⁸ According to this argument, modernization provides the social basis for media openness. One excellent empirical example comes from Potter's study of white liberal papers in South Africa. In what has since become known as "the Potter effect," white periodicals were pushed to the left by the emergence of a literate black middle class that could afford to purchase newspapers.¹¹⁹

In addition to changing media audiences, economic development also changes the conditions of media ownership. Large, modern, financially vibrant enterprises are better able to resist government pressures and more likely to experiment with critical coverage than their traditional or cash-strapped counterparts. In Portugal, for instance, the transition from old-style family businesses to broader-based corporate control during the 1970's played a crucial role in promoting independence and diversity. In the "stagnant conditions of [António] Salazar's New State," newspapers were owned by "small, traditional, conservative, single enterprises, unconnected with outside interests. This structure of ownership did not encourage risk taking in either a commercial or a political sense."¹²⁰ A major change in the press' posture toward the government came with the purchase of Portuguese newspapers by commercial conglomerates. As observers of this evolution pointed out, "a cushion of industrial ownership and wealth provided the

¹¹⁸"The media and democratisation in the Third World," *Third World Quarterly*, 1993, 14 (3):625-46.

¹¹⁹Elaine Potter, *The Press as Opposition: The Political Role of South African Newspapers* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1975).

¹²⁰Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott, "The Role of the Media in the Portuguese Revolution," in Anthony Smith, ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), p. 177.

necessary security for a degree of political and commercial innovation.”¹²¹ New ownership subsequently encouraged greater criticism of the ossified and decrepit Salazar regime in the period leading up to its collapse.¹²²

One corollary to this hypothesis is that, just as economic development encourages media openness, so economic downturn and “middle class impoverishment” can stifle media pluralism and facilitate government control. This argument is also supported by the experience of many new democracies. In Eastern Europe, for instance, rising prices for crucial inputs and general economic austerity have priced newspapers out of the reach of most of the population. In Bolivia, economic crisis strangled the miners’ radio stations more effectively than the country’s previous interregnums of military rule: while almost every mining district in the country had its own station in the mid-1970’s, by 1988 only nine were still broadcasting.¹²³ And in all countries, economic stagnation means a limited or shrinking pool of advertising revenues. Financial vulnerability makes government control easier. It seems reasonable, therefore, to expect that changes in the level of economic development -- in both directions -- play a pervasive and fundamental role in shaping the media regime.

The relationship between economic development and media freedom is amply supported by quantitative data. Analysis of media freedom suggests that certain elements of modernization -- e.g., income and literacy -- are strongly associated with media openness. The impact of per capita income is particularly powerful and robust, remaining significant across a series of samples (world, developing world, Latin America, etc.) after other modernization-related variables are taken into account. Literacy appears to have a weaker impact -- though it retains the correct sign across samples, it never quite reaches traditional levels of significance once market size and income are taken into account. The effects of urbanization and life expectancy are weaker still; their apparent correlation with media freedom disappears once market size and per capita income are taken into account.

Table 2 below summarizes the results of multiple regression where independent variables included the log of market size, the log of per capita income

¹²¹Jean Seaton and Ben Pimlott, “The Role of the Media in the Portuguese Revolution,” in Anthony Smith, ed., *Newspapers and Democracy: International Essays on a Changing Medium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), p. 177.

¹²²See Samuel P. Huntington, *Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 3-5.

(as measured by purchasing power parity), and literacy.¹²⁴ Bearing in mind that higher scores on the media freedom index indicate less media freedom, the results indicate a strong relationship between media openness and per capita GDP. Literacy is also associated with media openness, but the result is not statistically significant.

Interestingly, press freedom appears to respond to a slightly different mix of modernization variables than political freedom. Whereas literacy, education, and other indicators of human development correlate most closely with democracy, per capita income remains the best correlate of media freedom.¹²⁵

Table 2: Effects of market size, per capita income, and literacy on media openness

World		
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Ln(GDP)*	2.46	.00
Ln(per capita income) **	-12.08	.00
Adult literacy	-.13	.11
Adjusted R ² : 0.34		
N: 169		
Latin America^o		
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Ln(GDP)	6.16	.03
Ln(per capita income)	-25.11	.05
Adult literacy	-.26	.39
Adjusted R ² : 0.30		
N: 22		
*Represents the natural log of GDP, as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP).		
**Represents the natural log of GDP per capita, as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP).		
^o Includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela.		

¹²³Alan O'Connor, "The Miners' Radio Stations in Bolivia: A Culture of Resistance," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1990, 40 (1), p. 105.

¹²⁴The distributions of per capita income and market size in the sample were skewed; logging these variables made their distribution more normal. As with other regressions, a constant term was included in the model but is not reported here.

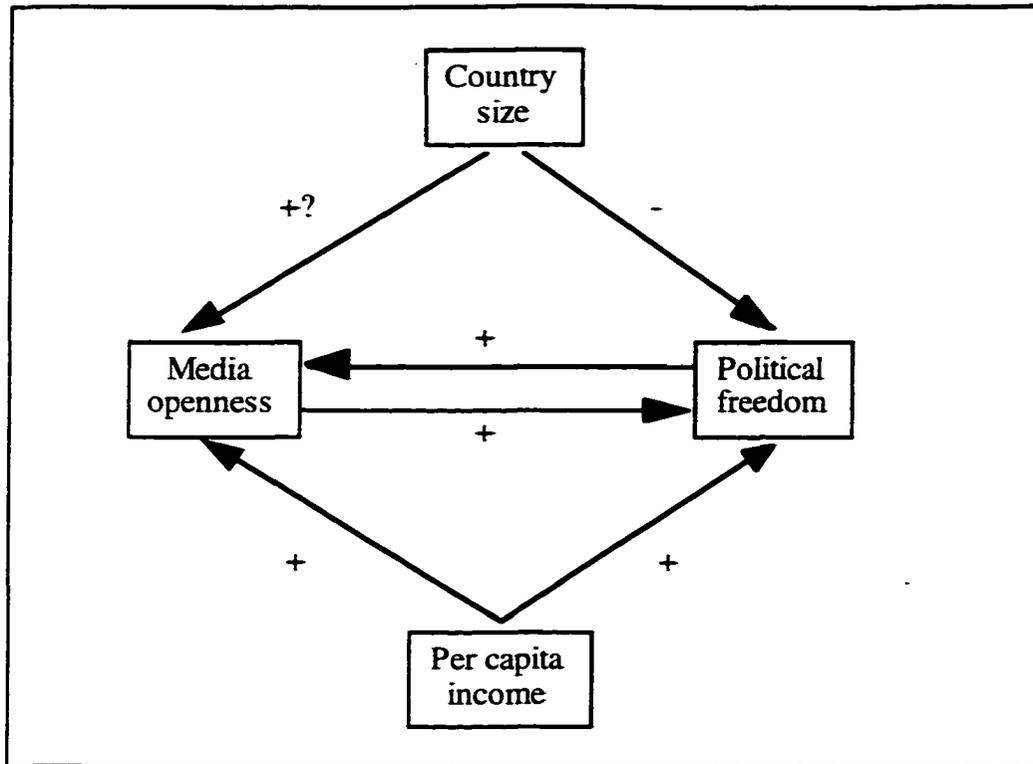
¹²⁵See Alex Inkeles and Larry J. Diamond, "Personal Development and National Development: A Cross-National Perspective," in Alexander Szalai and Frank M. Andrews, eds., *The Quality of Life: Comparative Studies* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980).

One important surprise from these findings, however, is that market size (as measured by total GDP in purchasing power parity terms) appears to exercise the opposite influence anticipated. In other words, once per capita income and literacy are taken into account, increasing market size is associated with less media freedom. Why should market size be associated with less media freedom, when analysts have postulated precisely the reverse?

The most likely explanation is that country size impacts media freedom indirectly, by influencing levels of political freedom. As previous studies have suggested -- and as these data also indicate -- larger and more populous countries are less likely to be democratic.¹²⁶ Because they are less likely to be democratic, they are also less likely to maintain open media regimes. Though greater size should theoretically encourage media pluralism, this direct effect is not sufficient to overcome the negative indirect influence of country size on political freedom, and ultimately on media openness. Figure 10 below attempts to capture these hypothesized relationships.

¹²⁶See Robert A. Dahl and Edward R. Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973). See also Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), chapter 4. In the sample I have used, this relationship holds even when small countries (those with less than 1 million inhabitants) are removed.

Figure 10: Hypothesized relationships between country size, democracy, per capita income, and media opening



The most refined version of the modernization hypothesis, therefore, is that increased per capita income promotes media freedom. Increased literacy appears to have the same effect, but its influence is not as clear-cut. Finally, market size does not appear to encourage media freedom, but it may do so once levels of political freedom are taken into account.

Hypothesis 3: Market-oriented reform promotes media opening

A third hypothesis suggested by existing research concerns the role of market-oriented (or “neoliberal”) reform. According to this argument, economic liberalization triggers a host of changes in the relationship between the state and the private sector that ultimately ripple through the media. For instance, neoliberal reforms like privatization and exchange rate liberalization tend to limit the state’s control over resources previously used to manipulate the media. As one analyst of the Chinese media concluded,

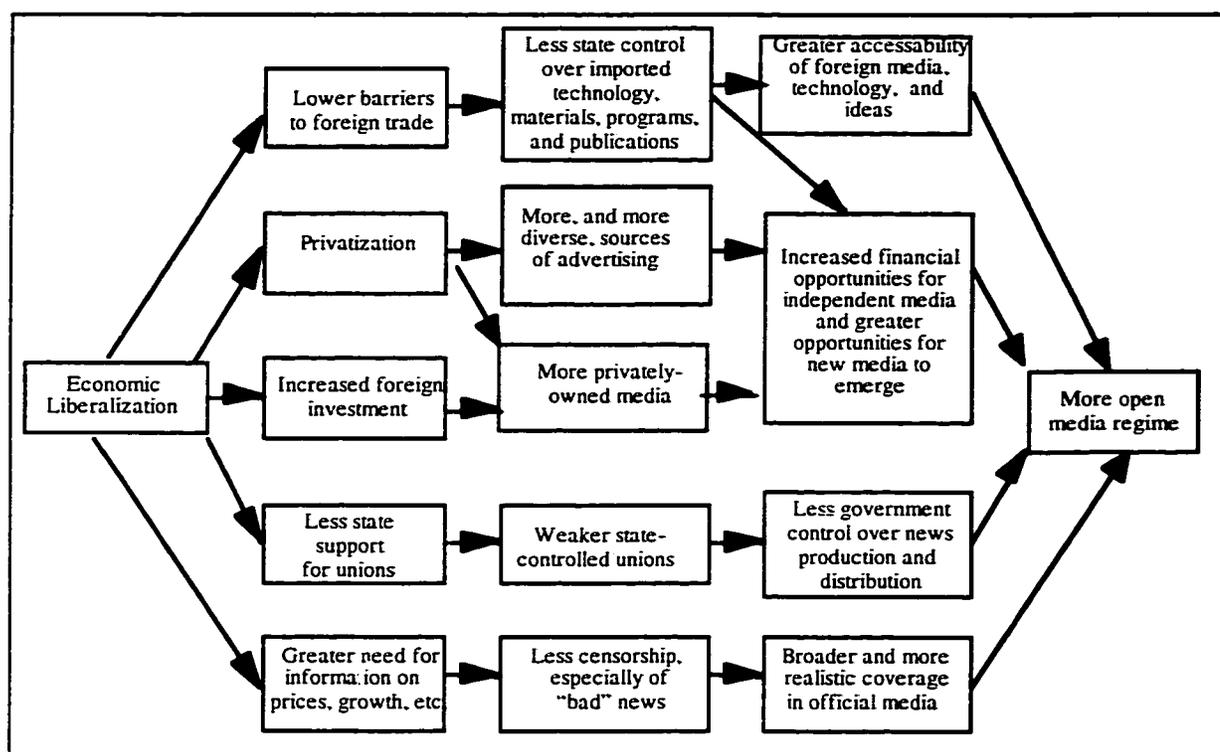
as government subsidies are gradually reduced to unimportance [because of increased private advertising revenues and lower state expenditures], repressive mechanisms tend to become more clumsy

and harder to implement. That the government has to resort to arrests, job suspensions, etc. to gain compliance carries with it the threat of popular backlash. For instance, as circulation-driven newspapers promote popular columnists, like the Hong Kong and American newspapers, it will become difficult for the central authorities to punish those columnists by firing, suspending, or arresting them, since this could trigger a reader boycott.¹²⁷

In economically and politically closed countries, therefore, neoliberal reform should weaken government controls and reinforce other centers of power.

How exactly might economic liberalization lead to a more open media regime? Figure 11, below, lays out five broad ways.

Figure 11: How market-oriented reform promotes media opening



First, economic liberalization limits state control over imported technology and materials, either directly (through lowering trade barriers and reducing import restrictions) or indirectly (through liberalization of exchange rate controls). In Mexico, for instance, accession to GATT forced the Salinas administration to end the government's monopoly on importation of newsprint. In the Southern Cone of

¹²⁷Xu Yu, "Professionalism without Guarantees: Changes of the Chinese Press in the Post-1989 Years," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53, (1-2):23-41, p. 37.

Latin America, military governments bent on economic growth permitted the importation of such potentially subversive technologies as microcomputers, faxes, VCR's and satellite receivers – all of which were subsequently put to good use by non-governmental organizations.¹²⁸

Second, privatization of state companies diminishes government control over advertising, allowing the media to achieve some measure of financial autonomy. For instance, commercialization of the Chinese press, and the firms on which the press relies for advertising revenue, have rendered newspapers less subject to ideological and bureaucratic control. Though not technically private, approximately one-third of China's newspapers had achieved financial autonomy by 1992.¹²⁹ While these media remain politically censored, they are likely to become increasingly restive and feisty should central government control appear momentarily weak. Privatization may also affect the media directly as governments auction off previously state-controlled spectra, frequencies, and periodicals, wire services, publishing houses, and production companies. In theory, such privatization encourages greater independence and diversity in the media.

Third, economic reform lowers barriers to foreign trade and investment, thus encouraging foreign penetration of national media markets. In Hungary and other Eastern European countries, reform has permitted European and U.S. media conglomerates to buy into the local media, ensuring that politicized, state-run television stations will never enjoy a monopoly on domestically produced programming.¹³⁰ While increasing consolidation in the international media does not bode well for media pluralism globally, the appearance of one or two foreign-owned media, independent of official control, can exert a positive influence on the media market in certain countries. The increasing penetration of Western media may also contribute to a new culture within the press itself, encouraging values and practices associated with media openness in other countries.

¹²⁸See Fernando Reyes-Matta, "New communication technology and press freedom: a Chilean case study," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991.

¹²⁹Zhang Xiaogang, "The Market versus the State: The Chinese Press since Tiananmen," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):195-221, p. 206.

¹³⁰Johnston M. Mitchell, "The Evolution of a Free Press in Hungary: 1986-90," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1991).

Fourth, economic liberalization that impacts the labor market tends to erode union power. Whatever its social consequences, this erosion may decrease the influence of pro-government distribution syndicates, journalists' associations, and publishers' and broadcasters' organizations over potentially independent media. Because the capture and manipulation of such groups has been an important element of control in some autocratic governments -- such as Perón's Argentina, Mexico under the PRI, and various Communist countries -- breaking down these structures can contribute to opening the media regime.

Finally, successful economic reform typically requires more accurate information on prices, shortages, work stoppages, natural disasters, and other potentially "political" events. In extremely authoritarian media regimes where all forms of news are carefully screened, economic liberalization thus induces broader and more realistic coverage of ordinary events, even in the official media. Accurate information about these events can provide citizens with limited but useful cues about regime performance.

The following analysis attempts to evaluate the overall relationship between economic liberalization and media opening using two different data sets. The first is adapted from Freedom House's 1995-6 World Survey of Economic Freedom, which measures "economic freedom" in 82 countries. Because not all the indicators in the survey directly address the role of the state in the economy -- two focus on the right to collective bargaining and union organization -- I constructed a modified scale based on the remaining three indicators. These include the freedom to operate a business (rated from 0-3); the freedom to invest one's earnings (also rated from 0-3); and the freedom to trade internationally (scored from 0-2). The new index thus varied from a low of 0 (North Korea and Burma) to a high of 8 (the Netherlands, USA, Poland, Argentina, etc.).

These data reveal a strong relationship between economic liberalism and media openness. The relationship was robust, surviving controls for market size and per capita income, and persisting in a subset of Latin American countries. Table 3 below summarizes the results of multiple regression analysis.¹³¹

¹³¹As with other regression results, these equations include a constant term that is not reported here.

Table 3: Influence of economic liberalism on media openness

World			
<u>Variable</u>		<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Economic liberalism		-5.19	.00
Ln(per capita income) *		-10.52	.00
Ln(GDP)**		1.96	.13
Adjusted R ²	0.64		
Latin America*			
<u>Variable</u>		<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Economic liberalism		-3.63	.09
Ln(per capita income)		-16.69	.10
Ln(GDP)		5.71	.19
Adjusted R ²	0.37		
*Represents the natural log of GDP per capita, as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP).			
**Represents the natural log of GDP, as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP).			
†Includes the following thirteen countries (the only ones for which data was available): Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.			

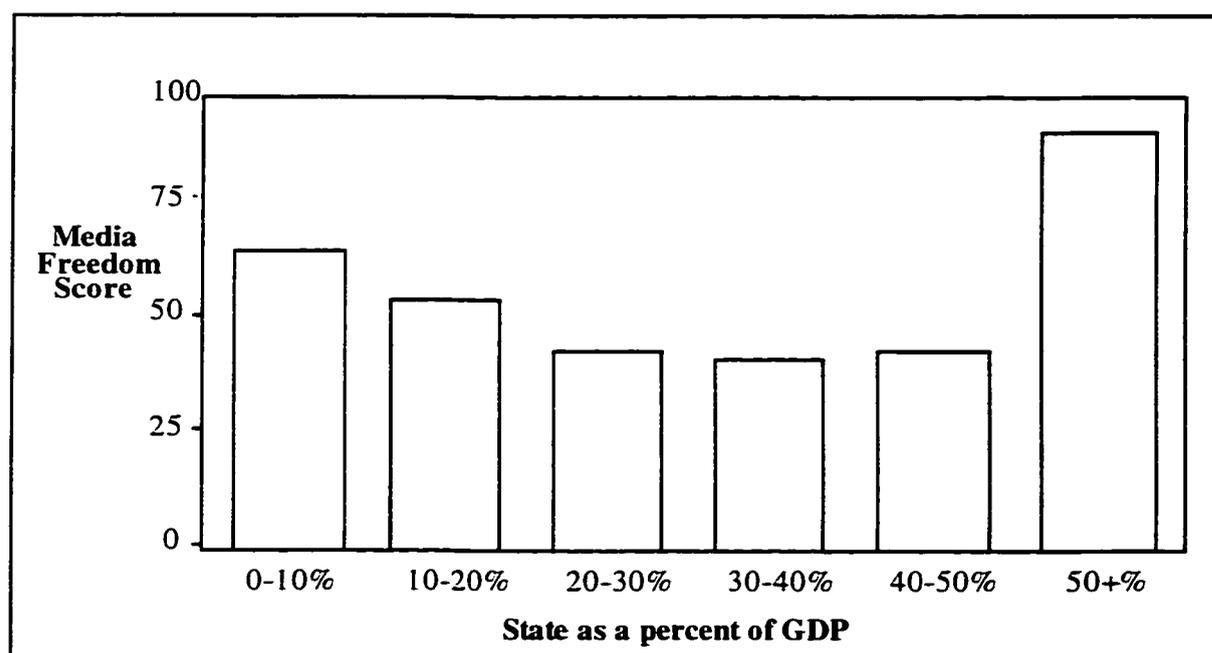
Keeping in mind again that higher scores on the media freedom index indicate less openness, these data provide strong support for the hypothesis that economic liberalism encourages media freedom. The coefficient is statistically significant in both the global and Latin American samples, and the overall explanatory power of the model (especially for the world sample) is high.

The Freedom House index of economic freedom covers a broad cross-section of countries, including several post-Communist countries for which most other measures of state involvement in the economy are not available. As a data set, however, it has its warts. Certain countries have rather surprising scores -- for instance, Peru scores 7 (indicating very limited state involvement) while Brazil scores only a 3. More importantly, scores for economic freedom are suspiciously well correlated with Freedom House's measurements of political freedom. Both the measurements themselves and the selection of countries appear intended to reinforce the notion that economic liberalism is inextricably linked to political freedom, despite evidence to the contrary from certain developing nations.

To address these concerns, I assembled an alternative data set that measures the state sector as a percent of gross domestic product in 92 countries in 1994.¹³² These data reveal a curvilinear pattern that is not evident in the Freedom House figures. In other words, countries with very high and very low levels of state participation in the economy tend to have lower levels of media openness.

Figure 12, below, summarizes that relationship for all 71 developing countries in the sample, grouped by state participation in the economy. As the graph indicates, average media freedom scores tend to be high (i.e., media openness tends to be low) in countries where the state represents more than 50% or less than 10% of GDP. Media openness improves as countries approach the middle range of the spectrum, where state participation represents 20-50% GDP.

Figure 12: Size of state sector and media openness



In the developing world (including Latin America), the turning point for media freedom appears to come where state participation in the economy reaches about 35% of GDP. For the world as a whole, this point is reached a little later (40-45% of GDP), owing to the presence of several European social democracies whose state sectors hover around 50% of national product. In both samples, however, extremely low (under 10%) and extremely high (over 55%) state participation in the

¹³²Principal sources for this data set were the World Bank's 1996 survey of leading indicators and Central Intelligence Agency's 1995 *World Factbook*. For two countries (Iran and the United Arab Emirates) reliable 1994 indicators were not available, and data from previous year was used instead.

economy seem noxious to media freedom. This curvilinear pattern persists when levels of economic development account (that is, when the residuals of a regression of media freedom on the log of per capita income are plotted against state participation in the economy), indicating that the pattern is not simply a result of the fact that poorer countries have both lower levels of media openness and more extreme variations in state participation in the economy.

Presumably, extremely high levels of state involvement in the economy simply offer the government too many potential levers of control over the media. In such cases, the state can easily colonize the press (and presumably other spheres of civil society as well). Subsidies, official advertising, and direct public ownership of the media all facilitate politically-motivated manipulation of the media.

A different dynamic seems to dominate at the other extreme of the scale, where a number of smaller, low-capacity states are clustered. In these cases, the state's withdrawal from economic life may have undercut the regulatory framework needed to maintain media pluralism. The press thus becomes vulnerable to monopolization or cartelization, with a subsequent loss of diversity.

Both quantitative tests, therefore, strongly support the notion that economic liberalization is likely to encourage media freedom in countries where the state's role in the economy is already substantial. The Freedom House data suggest that this same relationship is also true for economically liberal countries as well. Analysis of the relationship between media freedom and state share of gross domestic product, by contrast, suggests that further economic liberalization in countries that are already market-oriented is likely to diminish overall levels of media openness, presumably by encouraging concentrated private ownership.

Hypothesis 4: Technological innovation and diffusion cause media opening

A fourth oft-mentioned hypothesis about media openness concerns the role of technological innovation and diffusion. Since the introduction of the printing press helped curtail the power of the pulpit in medieval Europe, social scientists have remarked on the liberating potential of new communications technologies. The modern array of fax machines, direct-dial telephony, increased availability of broadcasting spectra, wireless/cellular voice and data transmission, video-cassette recorders, hand-held video cameras, desktop publishing, direct broadcasting from satellite, and various combinations of them all seems to herald an era of far lower

entry barriers in the production and transmission of information.¹³³ According to Fernando Reyes-Matta, some forty people were required to produce a quality newspaper in the 1970's. Two decades later, the number of permanent staff required was four or five (plus freelancers).¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the combination of cable and VCR technology had made possible short-range *transmission* of television signals. Such decentralizing technologies act as a crucial counterweight to the concentrating effect of economies of scale in printing, advertising, distribution, and other facets of media operation.

They also impede government attempts at control. As Mexican journalist Raymundo Riva-Palacio put it:

With 500 channels of satellite television, real-time computerized communication, fiber optics that transmit information at speeds of less than one one-thousandth of a second, direct or indirect access to innumerable publications and databases around the world, the government cannot, as before, block the sun with a finger.¹³⁵

Examples of the political use of new information technologies are already legendary among students of political transition. In 1979, Iranian dissidents smuggled in audio-cassettes of Khomeini's speeches, which were then played from mosques across the country.¹³⁶ A decade later, Czech dissidents were able to record western television images of police clubbing student demonstrators in Prague and then distribute copies to Civic Forum activists for viewing on VCR's across the

¹³³See Leonard R. Sussman, *Power, the Press, and the Technology of Freedom: The Coming of ISDN* (New York: Freedom House, 1989); Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: A Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991; Tunji Lardner, "Democratization and Forces in the African Media," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):89-93, p. 90-92.

¹³⁴Fernando Reyes-Matta, "New communication technology and press freedom: a Chilean case study," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991.

¹³⁵Raymundo Riva Palacio, prologue to Gabriela Aguilar and Ana Cecilia Terrazas, *La prensa, en la calle: Los voceadores y la distribución de periódicos y revistas en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996), p. 15.

¹³⁶Hamid Mowlana, "Technology versus Tradition: Communication in the Iranian Revolution," *Journal of Communication*, Summer 1979, 29 (3):107-112, p. 108; Leonard Sussman, "Exit the Sensor, enter the regulator," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991, p. 15.

country.¹³⁷ In 1988 in Panama and 1989 in China, opposition leaders communicated with each other and the outside world by fax;¹³⁸ in the Soviet Union, faxes, electronic mail, and broadcasting on pirate television and radio were crucial in preventing the recentralization of the media and conveying information about centers of resistance to the August 1991 coup.¹³⁹ Today, the prospect of true direct broadcast from satellite (DBS) threatens to make all these innovations pale by comparison. In China, 5-foot dishes costing less than \$500 continue to sprout up across the country while corruption, local resistance, and divisions within the Communist Party leadership hamper any concerted attempt at a crackdown.¹⁴⁰ Given a contest between the strength of the state and the ever-shrinking size of the satellite dish, few would bet on the state.¹⁴¹

In the face of such staggering and rapid innovation, it is tempting to wax philosophic about the coming age of ISDN (integrated services digital network), in which all political attempts at media control are doomed to failure. As one observer put it,

The radiant arc of a communications satellite 22,300 miles above the earth synchronized time and transformed the globe into one homogeneous space. With perfection of this technology, the conquest of time and space -- the dream of nineteenth-century romantics -- has now in a way been realized.¹⁴²

¹³⁷See Roland Page, "Back to the Future: How Public Relations is Helping to Build a New Czechoslovakia," in Al Hester and L. Earle Reybold, eds., *Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in Eastern and Central Europe* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1991), p. 173; see also Douglas A. Boyd and Joseph D. Straubhaar, "Developmental Impact of the Home Video Cassette Recorder on Third World Countries," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, Winter 1985, 29 (1):5-21.

¹³⁸See Sanford Ungar, "The role of a free press in strengthening democracy," in Judith Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 372.

¹³⁹See Linda Jensen, "The Press and Power in the Russian Federation," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):97-125, p. 110.

¹⁴⁰See Nicolas Kristof, "Via Satellite, Information Revolution Stirs China," *New York Times*, April 11, 1993.

¹⁴¹See George Quester, *The International Politics of Television* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington Books, 1990), p. 80-94.

¹⁴²James Carey, "Mass Media and Democracy," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):1-21, p. 18. See also Leonard Sussman, *Power, the Press, and the Technology of Freedom: The Coming Age of ISDN* (New York: Freedom House, 1989).

Unfortunately, the blessings of technological innovation may prove less profound, less clear-cut, and less permanent than such optimism would suggest. First, governments willing to accept the economic stagnation that extraordinary limitations on the introduction of new technologies bring may remain insulated from the political consequences of innovation. The classic example, of course, was Ceaucescu's Romania, where control was so thorough that all typewriters had to be registered with the police.¹⁴³

Second, with regard to media pluralism, the radical fragmentation and diversification promised by DBS and cable in some settings may not be reproduced in others, where government favoritism of particular firms persists and broadcasting is already concentrated. In certain Latin American cases, for instance, authorities have tended to award new services (cable, spectra, etc.) to already dominant players or to weaker firms without media experience whose forays into television are unlikely to really open up the market. As Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimarães write with respect to Brazil:

There is no reason to believe that the introduction of new technologies, sophisticated or not, will necessarily contribute to the democratization of television. On the contrary, all indicators show a growing tendency toward increased concentration and corporate ownership of the media.¹⁴⁴

Third, not all innovations in mass communication carry the liberating potential that one might hope. For instance, cable television is typically presented as a complement to broadcasting and a source of extraordinary viewer choice. A system based exclusively on cable, however, would give potential censors facile control over signal transmission from both domestic and international sources.

¹⁴³Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 344.

¹⁴⁴Roberto Amaral and Cesar Guimaraes, "Media Monopoly in Brazil," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1994, 44 (4):26-38, p. 38. Some go even farther and argue that the introduction of new technologies in an already unequal media environment accentuates the information gap between moneyed citizens with wide access and poorer, more isolated inhabitants priced out of the new media market. While these conclusions are overstated, they do represent a salutary antidote to the universally benign prognostications of technophiles. (See Nicolas Garnham, "Impact of new information and communication technology on information diversity in North America and Western Europe," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, p. 32.) For an opposing point of view, see George Quester (*The International Politics of Television*, p. 165) on the development of less expensive broadcasting

Once the obsolete aerial antennae were taken down, users would be trapped in a tightly controlled information system. The Israeli government's proposal to introduce cable in the occupied section of Jerusalem, whose residents could receive transmissions from Arab countries, and the East German government's enthusiasm for cable installation in Dresden, possibly a prelude for wiring the entire nation, should give pause to those who believe cable will bring uniformly positive results.¹⁴⁵ With the entire country on a cable system, East Germany's Communist leaders would no longer have had to endure those devastatingly subversive broadcasts from their next-door neighbor. As if to reinforce just this point, Mexico's cable operators censored out coverage of the 1994 Mexican election by the big three U.S. networks and replaced CNN live reports with other programming — a feat that would have been much more difficult to accomplish with regular aerial transmissions.¹⁴⁶

The dangers from new technologies are not confined to cable. Closed circuit television, beepers, electronic data interchanges, and remote sensing by satellite are all communication technologies that could enhance state control over society rather than undermine it.¹⁴⁷ Though technological innovation often limits government control of the media, especially at first, long-run consequences may prove less benign.

This brings us to a fourth reason for suspicion about the liberating role of innovation: the relationship between new communications technologies and the state tends to follow a cycle. In the first stage, new technologies emerge outside of government control (often from abroad). Unless the government has managed to control importation or introduction of the new technology, its appearance contributes to media openness. New media may erode the dominance of old monopolies or cartels and may initially escape government regulation, thus injecting an element of independence and diversity into the media regime. Eventually, however, some form of state regulation becomes necessary, if only to impose order on the expansion and diffusion of the technology in question. For instance, both television and radio required public management and allocation of spectra to prevent a cacophony of

technologies and the consequent emergence of independent television stations in the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Greece.

¹⁴⁵See George Quester, *The International Politics of Television* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington Books, 1990), p. 80-2.

¹⁴⁶Lisa Bransten, "Blackout," *Forbes*, September 26, 1994.

¹⁴⁷In an earlier era, for instance, state control of motion picture technology provided autocratic governments (like Mussolini's Italy) with crucial instruments of mass mobilization and indoctrination.

conflicting transmissions;¹⁴⁸ more recent technologies (such as the Internet) may require some government protection against transmission of copyrighted and pornographic material. The government's new regulatory powers, however, soon give it leverage to control the new technology in other ways -- by selectively distributing operating permits, regulating content, creating access points for state intervention, etc. Ultimately, the balance shifts in favor of state authority, and the new technology becomes "domesticated." For autocratic political systems, it may become a propaganda vehicle for the regime; for democratic polities, it may be harnessed to serve public goals. In either case, however, its subversive quality has disappeared.

The cycle sketched out here is hardly universal -- it may proceed at different paces across different technologies, it may be short-circuited completely in authoritarian regimes, and it may not apply to some innovations. But it does capture the dynamics of communications regulation in many settings. And it gives one reason to suspect that the new technologies of today may not necessarily serve the same liberalizing function later in their life cycle. In other words, technological change can cut both ways -- enhancing media pluralism and independence in the initial stages, and promoting closure later on.

Can quantitative data shed any light on the relationship between technological innovation and media openness? Operationalizing and testing these hypotheses about the penetration of new technologies is problematic, even if analysis is confined to testing relatively primitive versions of each argument. The most promising approach involves identifying proxy indicators that measure relative levels of innovation and permeability to new technologies. The following statistical analysis relies on patent data collected by the World Intellectual Property Organization in Geneva in 1990-91 for approximately 100 countries.¹⁴⁹ To maximize the validity of these indicators, I examined both applications for patents and grants of patents.¹⁵⁰ The results, which control for market size and per capita income, are summarized in Table 4 below.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸This sort of chaos actually did occur with radio in the U.S. and Brazil, and with television in Bolivia.

¹⁴⁹More recent data were not available. Fortunately, however, patent data does not vary dramatically from year to year.

¹⁵⁰As with economic development and market size, distribution of patents is skewed. Using the natural log of the variable produced a variable with more normal distribution.

¹⁵¹As with other quantitative results presented here, these equations included a constant that is not reported.

Table 4: Effect of technological innovation on media openness

World		Grants of patents		Patent applications	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>	
Ln(GDP)*	4.98	.01	6.15	.00	
Ln(per capita income)**	-11.37	.00	-10.95	.00	
Ln(patents) ^o	-2.43	.12	-3.36	.00	
Adjusted R ²	.52		.48		
N	88		94		
Latin America**		Grants of patents		Patent applications	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>	
Ln(GDP)	9.64	.06	18.16	.05	
Ln(per capita income)	-19.86	.00	-16.96	.02	
Ln(patents)	-2.58	.53	-10.36	.20	
Adjusted R ²	.36		.39		
N	18		17		

*Represents the natural log of GDP, as measured in dollars.
**Represents the natural log of GDP per capita, as measured dollars.
^oRepresents the natural log of patent grants or applications, depending on the model.
^{oo}Includes Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The regression for applications does not include Argentina, for which recent data was not available.

Even given the crudeness of the indicators and data constraints, there does seem to be a relationship between technological innovation and media freedom. Controlling for market size and level of development, the coefficient for patent applications is significant in the world sample and its counterpart for patent grants is close to significant. Though neither variable is significant in the smaller subset of Latin American countries, both have the anticipated sign. These results thus suggest -- at least at this stage in evolution of mass communication -- that technological innovation and diffusion do promote media openness.

Hypothesis 5: Foreign media penetration causes media opening

Closely related to technological change is the role of transborder news flows in promoting a more open media regime. As international spillovers increase, partly as a result of the technological changes discussed above, official control becomes more difficult and media diversity tends to increase. Consequently, countries that can receive information from abroad should have more open media regimes.

The impact of satellite broadcasting and cable television in Taiwan suggests how technological change and international spillovers can combine to produce a more open media regime. From 1976 to 1993 in Taiwan, for instance, cable

television served as an informal “fourth channel,” partially counterbalancing tight government control over the official three. By the time martial law was finally lifted in 1989, the island boasted some 400 illegal cable systems, and approximately 37% of all households had access to cable or satellite television.¹⁵² A media regime that appeared firmly authoritarian was thus at least partly open.

Taiwan’s experience is not unique. Almost all countries are vulnerable to cross-border transmission of radio and television broadcasts, contraband newspapers and cassettes, and even direct broadcasting from satellites to individual residences; many countries regularly receive multiple foreign signals.¹⁵³ For some of them, these transborder information flows may compensate for the effects of extremely tight control over domestic media, rendering the overall level of diversity and liberty quite high. In the former East Germany, for instance, near saturation penetration of West German television – not to mention Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, the BBC, and contraband literature and video cassettes – gave inquiring East Germans a reasonably accurate picture of life on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It may well turn out that foreign radio broadcasts have played a similar role in Cuba (Radio Martí) and China (BBC and Voice of America). International spillovers, then, may sometimes overwhelm government attempts at control through jamming and punishment of audiences that seek access to independent media.¹⁵⁴

How influential are international spillovers in opening the media regime? As with technological change, documenting the effects of foreign media penetration with quantitative data is extremely difficult. The following analysis focuses on 1994 imports of newspapers and magazines in 59 countries (about half of which could be categorized as “developing”). This indicator is a poor proxy for international spillovers, as it fails to measure cross-border electronic transmissions – a more crucial driver of media openness than foreign publications. Nevertheless, it may at least function as a proxy for international spillovers in the print media. Table 5

¹⁵²Kudlip Rampal, “Post-martial law media boom in Taiwan,” *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53 (1-2):73-91, p. 67-8.

¹⁵³In fact, certain countries (such as the Benelux countries) seem almost doomed to an open media regime as a result of international spillovers.

¹⁵⁴See Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 100-106; see also Tunji Lardner’s description of the combined impact of decentralized communication technology and international spillovers in Africa in “Forces in the African Media,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, 47 (1):89-93, p. 90-2.

below summarizes the findings from multiple regression analysis, controlling for market size and per capita GDP.¹⁵⁵

Table 5: International spillovers and media openness

World	All media		Print media	
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Ln(GDP)	3.74	.05	2.85	.01
Ln(per capita income) ^o	-10.05	.00	-4.75	.00
Ln(print imports) ^{oo}	-2.48	.24	-2.05	.10
Adjusted R	.48		.44	
N	59		59	

*Represents the natural log of GDP, as measured in dollars. As with technological diffusion (above), it was thought that dollarized measures of GDP were more appropriate for controlling for the magnitude of than purchasing power parity measures.

^oRepresents the natural log of GDP per capita, as measured dollars. As with technological (above), it was thought that dollarized measures of GDP were more appropriate for controlling for the volume of imports than purchasing power parity measures.

^{oo}Represents the natural log of imports of newspapers, magazines, and similar printed matter, in millions of U.S. dollars.

As with the analysis of technological change, these findings are suggestive but inconclusive.¹⁵⁶ Imports of printed material are not a statistically significant predictor of media freedom at the traditional 5% cutoff for hypothesis testing. But the coefficient has the anticipated sign, and it approaches significance in the case of the print media.

Hypothesis 6: Journalistic professionalism causes media opening

A less familiar argument about transformation of the media regime concerns changes inside the press itself. According to this line of reasoning, journalists may acquire a sense of mission in the course of their work and training that makes their manipulation or repression more difficult.¹⁵⁷ This counter-pressure from journalists

¹⁵⁵As in other regressions, a constant term was included which is not reported here.

¹⁵⁶Only 10 Latin American countries were included in the sample, making it implausible that multiple regression would yield statistically significant results. The test variable had the appropriate sign but failed to attain traditional levels of statistical significance.

¹⁵⁷Journalists in industrialized democracies tend to view their mission as "finding the truth" or "reporting the facts" in a balanced and accurate way. While journalists in developing countries seem to share this professional aspiration, more difficult circumstances there tend to generate additional professional goals as well. See Wolfgang Donsbach and Bettina Klett, "Subjective objectivity: How journalists in four countries define a key term of the profession," *Gazette*, 1993, 51 (1), p. 53; Gustavo Gorriti "Issues in Peruvian Press Freedom," *Journal of International*

to print or broadcast the truth does not necessarily result from mastery of a set body of knowledge, attainment of proper educational qualifications, recognition of special status by the state, pursuit of a particular career path, adherence to a series of ethical standards, or any other elements of “professionalism” in the traditional sense. Rather, it can simply be the result of cognitive dissonance stemming from a gap between the “official” reality that journalists are told to report and the alternative reality that they confront every day.¹⁵⁸ This gap is likely to turn reporters into closet regime critics, who may become outright opponents once their stories are spiked or censored enough times.

The alienation of journalists in Eastern Europe, and their rapid conversion to democratization once Communist controls were removed, bears witness to the power of change from within the profession.¹⁵⁹ And after the demise of Communism, this newfound professionalism encouraged subsequent efforts to protect media autonomy. In Poland, for instance, print journalists set up a Free Press Fund to support the founding of new newspapers and thus ensure media pluralism.¹⁶⁰

Such examples are not limited to Eastern Europe. In Brazil, television journalists at *Globo* apparently threatened to strike if the network’s management continued to oppose direct elections during the 1983-4 opposition campaign.¹⁶¹ In Colombia, the entire staff of the state-run television authority resigned in protest over Liberal attempts to politicize news coverage in 1976.¹⁶² And in South Korea, journalists formed strong unions in an attempt to give them more clout vis-à-vis managers and editors -- an effort epitomized by the July 1988 strike at Pusan Ilbo, in which labor demands included broad-based reforms in editorial policy and

Affairs, Summer 1993, 47 (1), p. 224; Claudia Fernández, "An Ethical Guideline for Mexican Reporters: A Proposal", unpublished manuscript presented to Center for Investigative Journalism, University of Southern California, December 1995; Michael B. Salwen and Bruce Garrison, "Press Freedom and Development: U.S. and Latin American Views," *Journalism Quarterly*, Spring 1989, 66 (1):87-92.

¹⁵⁸I thank Jane Curry-Palmer (née Jane Leftwich Curry) for sharpening my thinking on this issue.

¹⁵⁹Leonard R. Sussman, "Exit the censor, enter the regulator," in Colin Sparks, ed., *New Communication Technologies: a Challenge for Press Freedom*, UNESCO Reports and Papers on Mass Communications, #106, November 15, 1991, p. 16.

¹⁶⁰Slavko Splichal, "Media privatization and democratization in Central-Eastern Europe," *Gazette*, 1992, 46 (1-2):3-22, p.15.

¹⁶¹Joseph D. Straubhaar, "TV and Video in the Transition from Military to Civilian Rule in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review*, 1989, 24 (1):140-54, p. 146.

¹⁶²Elizabeth Fox and Patricia Anzola, "Politics and Regional Television in Colombia," in Elizabeth Fox, ed., *Media and Politics in Latin America* (London: Sage, 1988), p. 85-7.

management.¹⁶³ In each case, journalistic professionalism helped promote or safeguard media pluralism and independence.

Because professionalism contributes to media openness, practices that undermine professionalism can indirectly facilitate official control. In other words, the form and style of censorship -- as well as the degree -- can have significant long-term consequences for media openness. Stationing government censors in the news room, for instance, often leaves reporters actively investigating government actions and uncovering unsavory details -- only to have their stories rejected at the last minute. Because prior censorship fails to co-opt reporters themselves, aggressive journalism is likely to rebound rapidly after the removal of censorship. By contrast, corruption of the news media through a variety of bribes and privileges is likely to have an enduring effect on professional standards, incorporating newsmen into the government's media control strategy. Self-censorship engendered through official harassment and repression of the media is likely to have an intermediate effect -- less pervasive and persistent than corruption, but more corrosive than direct prior censorship. By constraining journalistic professionalization, then, the form of government control itself may influence the pace of opening once other forms of control disappear.

The process of media opening in a country that relied extensively on media corruption should serve to illustrate the point. In South Korea, an overwhelming percentage of reporters have traditionally accepted payments -- known as *chonji* -- from the individuals, government agencies, and companies they cover.¹⁶⁴ These gratuities helped buy media silence on nettlesome issues and engender broadly positive coverage of official activities. For instance, the Education Ministry paid reporters not to report on low university examination results, and the Health Ministry paid them not to report outbreaks of disease in the summer months.¹⁶⁵ Coupled with outright repression and other mechanisms of official control, corruption of journalists co-opted much of the media. Consequently, once more severe government controls over the media -- imprisonment, torture, etc. -- were

¹⁶³Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's experiment with a free press," *Gazette* (1994), p. 116.

¹⁶⁴In Korea, the percent of reporters accepting such payments was 93% according to a 1989 survey and 75% according to a different survey two years later. See Michael Breen, "'Scoop' Has Different Meanings for South Korean Reporters," *Washington Times*, April 8, 1991; Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991.

¹⁶⁵See Michael Breen, "'Scoop' Has Different Meanings for South Korean Reporters," *Washington Times*, April 8, 1991; Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991.

relaxed, journalists did not respond rapidly with criticism of the dictatorship. Bias and co-optation were lingering consequences of the old mechanisms of control.¹⁶⁶

In such a media environment, it is hardly surprising that real pluralism tends to emerge only when fresh publications appear on the scene. Such new media arise largely inoculated against the corruption and self-censorship that infected traditional media. In Korea, for instance, independent papers like the left-leaning *Hankyoreh Shinmun* have since their inception rejected *chonji* journalism. In contrast to its traditional rivals, *Hankyoreh* is staffed by a younger cohort of journalists who view their profession and their paper with a sense of mission – approximately 90 of *Hankyoreh*'s original 144 reporters had quit or been purged from other leading dailies.¹⁶⁷

Testing these hypotheses about professionalism in a systematic way is extremely difficult. But it should be possible to ascertain whether a broad relationship exists between media openness and levels of journalistic professionalism. Although demonstrating the existence of this relationship cannot prove which way causality runs, and certainly cannot address the more nuanced questions of media professionalism raised above, it does represent a starting point.

To evaluate the general relationship between professionalism and media openness, I constructed a scale of professionalism for seventeen countries whose media have been reasonably well-analyzed in previous studies.¹⁶⁸ I rated each country's media from 1 to 5 on seven different elements of professionalism: journalistic ethics (i.e., the extent of corruption and bribery); standards of balance, fairness, and accuracy; levels of professional training; levels of educational attainment; salaries (relative to the local wage); the existence of a well-defined journalistic career path; and the strength and autonomy of professional

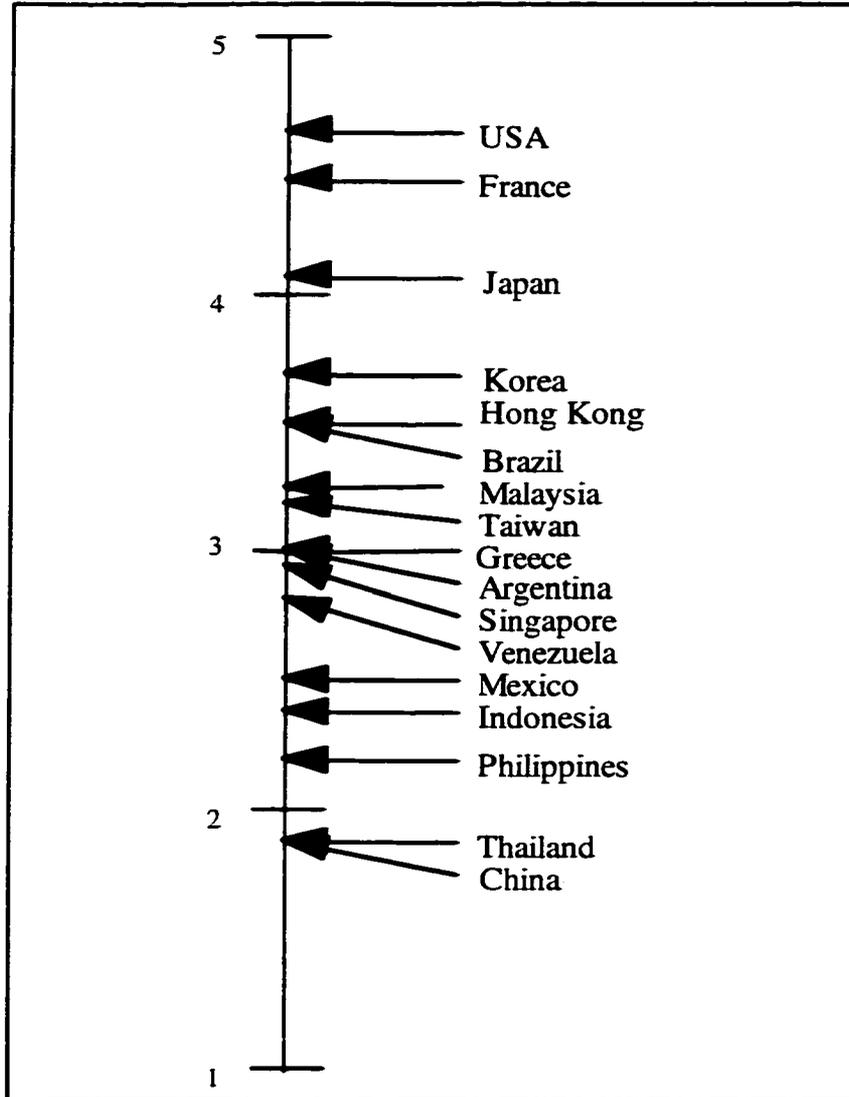
¹⁶⁶See Kyu Ho Youm, "South Korea's Experiment with a Free Press," *Gazette*, January-March 1994, 53 (1-2):111-16 and Kyu Ho Youm, "Press Freedom in 'Democratic' South Korea: Moving from Authoritarian to Libertarian," *Gazette*, January 1989, 43 (1):53-71.

¹⁶⁷See Sam Jameson, "Media: Payoffs, Politics, and Korea's Press," *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1991; Peter Leyden and David Bank, "The Web of Bribery That Envelopes South Korean News Media," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 16, 1990.

¹⁶⁸See, in particular, Jon Vanden Heuvel, ed., *The Unfolding Lotus: East Asia's Changing Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, 1993) and Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995). The sample includes six developed countries (Singapore, Hong Kong, France, Greece, Japan, and the U.S.), seven developing Asian countries (Thailand, China, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Taiwan), and four Latin American countries (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Venezuela). These ratings are necessarily subjective and could benefit from further refinement, but they average to a plausible scores for each country.

associations. For greater robustness, I then averaged these scores for each country to produce an overall rating of professionalism. The results are presented in Figure 13, below.

Figure 13: Journalistic professionalism in fourteen countries



The bivariate correlation between these average professionalism ratings and scores on the Sussman index was -0.77 , suggesting a strong relationship between media openness and professionalism. This relationship remains strong even when per capita income is taken into account. Table 6, below, summarizes regression results

for the same set of countries.¹⁶⁹ As the results indicate, professionalism appears to exercise a powerful and statistically significant influence on media freedom.

Table 6: Impact of professionalism on media openness

<u>Variable</u>		<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Ln(per capita income) ^o		-3.62	.61
Media professionalism		-16.16	.02
Adjusted R ²	.53		
N	17		

^oRepresents the natural log of GDP per capita, as measured by purchasing power parity (PPP).

One interesting result is that in this smaller subset of relatively wealthy countries, per capita income does not appear to influence media openness once professionalism is taken into account -- although this variable has the anticipated sign, it fails to achieve statistical significance. One explanation is that these findings are the result of small sample size (N=17) and collinearity between professionalism and economic development. Another interpretation is that non-demographic factors like professionalism may play a more important role in opening the media in middle- and upper-income countries than socio-economic factors.

As with other analyses, of course, these findings do not prove that causality flows in the hypothesized direction. Media professionalism -- especially journalistic norms and organizational autonomy -- may be as much a result of media freedom as its cause. But the data do at least accord with the claims based on case studies of particular countries, which identify journalistic professionalism as an important element in media opening.

Hypothesis 7: Market competition causes media opening

One of the most salient features of media opening is that changes within the media tend to become self-reinforcing. This may be the result of market pressures, which encourage the conversion of traditional media. Once it becomes clear that a market for independent reporting exists, established media may try to capture it by changing the tone and balance of their coverage. In addition, entrepreneurs and journalists may attempt to capitalize on commercial opportunities by founding additional independent media.

¹⁶⁹As with other regressions, a constant term was included that is not reported here.

In many countries, change typically begins with independent, limited-circulation newspapers or newsmagazines. The success of these independent newspapers places pressure on co-opted competitors to follow suit and report the news more accurately. Previously sleepy and pro-government newspapers may then begin to practice more critical and investigative journalism. Eventually, even broadcasting networks come under pressure to follow up on stories that appear in other media.

The shift in *Globo's* stance toward democratization in Brazil illustrates this sort of cascade effect. During the period of military rule in Brazil, *Globo* played an important role in supporting the military's ideological objectives by advancing an image of Brazil as an emerging economic powerhouse and thereby reinforcing efficacy-based claims of governmental legitimacy. In return, the network benefited from repeated allocations of broadcasting spectra and from the general growth of a heavily subsidized television market. It emerged in the 1980's as one of the world's largest media conglomerates.

Predictably, *Globo* studiously ignored anti-government rallies and protests at the beginning of the opposition's campaign for direct elections in 1983-4. By April 1984, however, public pressure and media competition from smaller rivals forced *Globo* to switch sides and broadcast images of mass opposition demonstrations across the country. As Joseph Straubhaar puts it:

It must be remembered that although TV Globo contributes greatly to creating consensus by exercising ideological leadership in a variety of widely watched programming, the network is above all a commercial enterprise that could not, or would not, risk alienating much of its audience for a political cause that appeared to be failing.¹⁷⁰

Both the efflorescence of new media and the market pressures that act on older ones suggest that, once the media begins to open up, it is likely to do so dramatically. Pent-up demand and market competition tend to encourage rather rapid shifts in the media regime. In theory, therefore, where a market for independent journalism already exists, incipient political liberalization might trigger a sort of cascade of media independence and diversity.

If no market exists, however, or if the market is dominated by a few firms, these same pressures are likely to be profoundly muted. New media may not be

¹⁷⁰Joseph D. Straubhaar, "TV and Video in the Transition from Military to Civilian Rule in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review*, 1989, 24 (1):140-54, p. 146.

able to emerge or establish themselves as credible threats to existing firms. In the Brazilian case, for instance, *Globo* undoubtedly responded much more slowly to public rallies for democratization than it would have had it faced stronger commercial rivals. Weak or concentrated markets, the theory goes, make media opening a more uncertain and protracted process than an environment of dynamic competition.

Conclusions

The previous section outlined seven hypotheses (or rather, clusters of hypotheses) regarding change in the media. They suggest that seven forces are responsible for opening the media regime: democratization, socioeconomic development, economic liberalization, technological change, international spillovers, journalistic professionalization, and market competition.

Table 7, below, summarizes these arguments and the evidence supporting or disconfirming them. As the table indicates, most of the basic hypotheses I have presented find support in existing case studies of the media and democratization. A number of these hypotheses are also supported by cross-national statistical analysis.

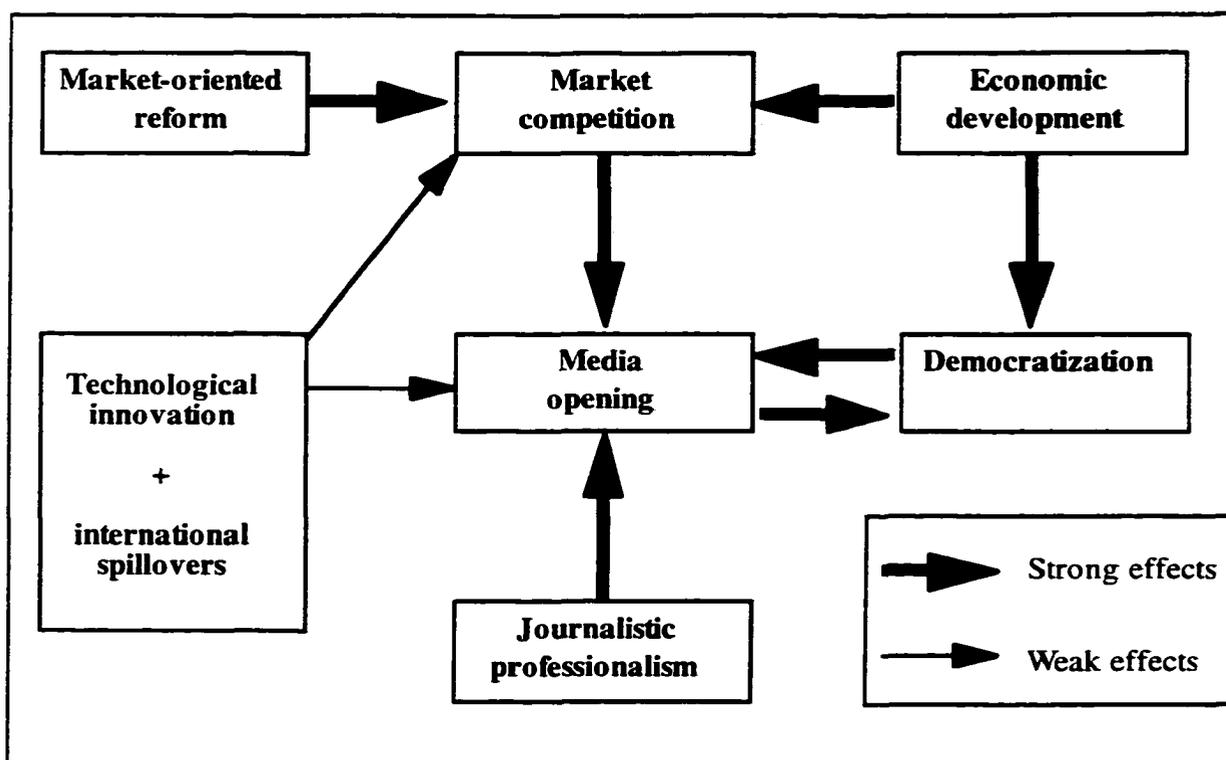
Table 7: Review of the principal hypotheses

Principal hypotheses	Suggested by case studies of media?	Supported by data analysis?
1a. Democratization causes media opening 1b. Democratization and media opening mutually reinforce each other (reciprocal causality)	Yes Yes	Yes Not tested
2a. Socio-economic development causes media opening 2b. Increases in per capita income cause media opening 2c. Increases in literacy cause media opening 2d. Increases in market size cause media opening	Yes Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes No No
3a. Market-oriented reform causes media opening in economically closed systems 3b. Market-oriented reform causes media opening in all systems	Yes No	Yes Yes?
4. Innovation and diffusion of communications technologies cause media opening	Yes	Yes
5. Increased penetration by international media causes media opening	Yes	No?
6. Journalistic professionalism causes media opening	Yes	Yes
7. Market competition causes media opening	Yes	Not tested

While presented as rival hypotheses, these explanations for media opening can be treated as complementary. In other words, both technological change and international spillovers, or both economic development and political liberalization, may encourage media openness. Even if most of the hypotheses have something to add, however, it seems appropriate to assess their relative weight. This task is admittedly difficult, because relative influences almost certainly vary across countries and time periods. For instance, the combination of international spillovers and technological change -- a bundle that other scholars might call "globalization" -- may prove crucial to explaining opening the media in certain cases (Taiwan and much of Africa) but be essentially irrelevant in others (Portugal). Political controls may constitute the principal barrier to media opening in some countries (Communist Eastern Europe); elsewhere, increasing media freedom may depend on economic development and liberalization (India and Venezuela). But in broad terms, the influence of democratization, economic development, market-oriented reform, and journalistic professionalism appear particularly powerful. The impact of foreign media penetration and technological innovation, while undeniably important in certain cases, appears to be less pervasively powerful. Finally, it is difficult to assess the impact of market competition, but it seems likely that economic reform, economic development, and technological innovation encourage media opening principally by stimulating market competition. It is possible, then, that market competition is the crucial intervening variable.

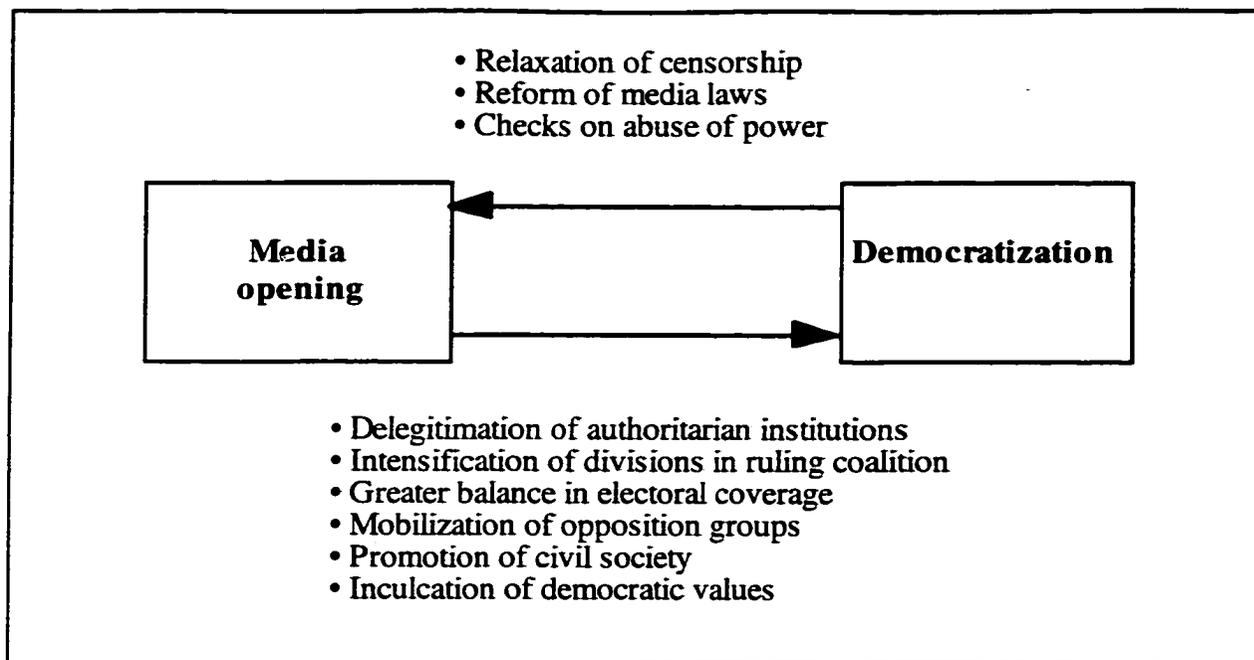
Figure 14, below, summarizes these relationships. As the diagram indicates, market competition, democratization and journalistic professionalism exert a potent influence on media opening. Technological change and international spillovers (i.e., penetration by foreign media) also encourage media opening, but their effect is not as strong. Finally, economic development and market-oriented reforms shape media freedom by creating new demand for information and stimulating market competition among media outlets.

Figure 14: Hypothesized causes of media opening



One important feature of Figure 14 is the reciprocal relationship between media opening and democratization. In other words, democratization causes media opening, but media opening also promotes democratization. As discussed above, media opening may promote democratization in six broad ways: by delegitimizing old institutions and practices; reinforcing cleavages within the ruling authoritarian coalition; giving more balanced coverage to opposition groups during political campaigns; mobilizing opposition against the regime; promoting civil society; and creating a democratic political culture. This reciprocal relationship is depicted in Figure 15, below.

Figure 15: Relationship between democratization and media opening



A review of media opening around the world thus suggests a number of hypotheses about the emergence of an independent media and its impact on political transition. In particular, it identifies a handful of factors that promote media opening around the world – most importantly political liberalization, market competition, and journalistic professionalism. This same review also suggests six hypotheses about the influence of media opening on democratization.

The Mexican case

These hypotheses, however, are just that -- plausible arguments culled from scattered studies of the media and imperfectly tested with cross-national data. The depth and detail that would give these arguments real force are still missing. In other words, our review lacks a richer empirical understanding of how the somewhat abstract-sounding factors discussed above (e.g., journalistic professionalism) actually work, whether they are actually as important as they appear to be, and whether other “co-factors” are necessary for them to operate. To address these elements, we need a case study.

This case study should serve two main functions. First, it should provide the sort of contextualized knowledge on which all solid academic analysis depends. This detail will ensure that we are not led astray by overly simplistic explanations, however elegant and parsimonious they may appear. Of course, deciding how much detail is needed requires some degree of judgment. Offering too little suggests a

suspiciously selective presentation of the facts; giving too much obfuscates the overall argument. The goal here is to provide enough raw material to understand the nuances and contradictions of empirical reality without losing sight of the study's central themes. In most cases, this is accomplished by presenting a narrative of the facts in one section and an analysis of those facts in a separate, subsequent section. Though potentially tiresome, this approach theoretically permits other researchers to reach novel (or even contrasting) conclusions from the same set of facts.

Second, our case should offer evidence for or against the principal hypotheses presented here. For instance, it should show us whether economic liberalization actually promotes media opening, and whether it does so in the ways we expect. The case may even produce evidence for other salient causes of media opening that we have yet to identify. In other words, we expect the case to provide us with a more comprehensive and persuasive set of hypotheses than we had when we began.

We begin our case study in much better position to evaluate hypotheses regarding media opening than those regarding the impact of media opening on democratization. Our first set of hypotheses is based on a number of case studies and supported by cross-national analysis; our case can thus be geared to hypothesis testing. By contrast, our "hypotheses" regarding the role of the media in political transition are less well defined and substantiated. Our case will thus serve as a vehicle for documenting the existence of certain types of media influence on democratization in a compelling way, rather than a mechanism for assessing every single hypothesis and ranking its impact.

With these goals in mind, the next six chapters analyze media opening in one country -- Mexico. Chapter Two provides the starting point for analysis by describing Mexico's old media regime. It provides necessary background on Mexico's political system, that system's peculiar style of press control, and the consequences of such control for media coverage. Chapters Three and Four then trace the breakdown of the old system. Together these chapters lend further weight to the hypotheses outlined in this chapter about the emergence of a free press. In particular, they call attention to the role of market competition and identity-formation among journalists ("professionalization") in prying open Mexico's closed media regime.

Past case studies suggested that different causal factors may operate in print and broadcast media. Because entry barriers are generally higher in broadcasting, market competition is likely to be more limited. In addition, broadcasting affords

more facile government censorship through the allocation of licenses and concessions. As a result, opening in the electronic media may depend on different factors (e.g., political and economic liberalization) than opening in the print media. With this possibility in mind, analysis of these two types of media is split, with Chapter Three concentrating on print and Chapter Four on broadcasting.

Chapters Five and Six highlight some of the consequences of change in the media for democratization. In particular, these chapters analyze the impact of media opening on scandals and electoral competition. Although they do not rule out the possibility that other types of media effects may also be crucial for political transition in Mexico or other countries, they do demonstrate the impact of certain media influences. Based on these findings, the final chapter then returns a broader discussion of media opening and democratization.

2. The Old Regime: Media Corruption in Mexico

For much of the last fifty years — from the early postwar period to the 1990's — the bulk of Mexico's media was co-opted and constrained by the authoritarian system. Despite the erosion of official censorship over the last decade, many elements of this old system of media control still persist. Even as Mexico's political institutions have moved in the direction of democratization, and even as independent media have begun to emerge, the country's traditional system of press management continues to dominate chunks of the media. Therefore, although I describe the old system of media control in the past tense, it remains a contemporary phenomenon. Understanding this system is thus crucial to analyzing both the emergence of Mexico's independent press and the role of the media in contemporary Mexico.

This chapter describes the old system of corruption and censorship that governed Mexico's media: its origins, salient features, limits, and general consequences. It begins with a brief overview of Mexico's one-party-dominant system, which places the country's media regime in proper context. It then describes the principal mechanisms of media control in Mexico and discusses how these controls, while extremely effective, left the media with some measure of independence and diversity. The chapter concludes by highlighting four ways in which media control reinforced the country's authoritarian political institutions.

The perfect dictatorship

With each thing you see, ask yourself: What is it in itself, stripped of adornment? How does it fit together as a coherent whole? What elements went into its creation, and into what elements will it decompose?

— Marcus Aurelius¹⁷¹

Mexico's peculiar system of media control was anchored in a political regime characterized by Peruvian writer Mario Vargas-Llosa as “the perfect dictatorship.”¹⁷² From the 1930's until the late 1990's, Mexican political life was dominated by one “official” party, currently named the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, by its Spanish initials). During this period, the PRI controlled

¹⁷¹Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Emperor of Rome, *Meditations*, Book III, No. 11 (author's translation).

¹⁷²See Mario Vargas Llosa. “Mexico: The Perfect Dictatorship,” *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Winter 1991, 8 (1):23-4.

Mexico's most important political offices, and, through a series of state-corporatist institutions, the country's leading sectoral, professional, and civic organizations. True to the regime's liberal facade, opposition parties were allowed some role at the margin of the political system, especially in municipal government and in the lower house of the legislature. But serious challenges to PRI rule were invariably thwarted through an elaborate system of corporatist co-optation, electoral "alchemy" (fraud), and selective repression. The net result of these institutions and practices was a reasonably inclusive autocratic system.

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

Key to the durability of this regime was the peculiar nature of the Mexican presidency. Although the rules of the political game expressly forbid presidents from extending their tenure beyond a constitutionally-mandated term, Mexican presidents enjoyed untrammelled power during this tenure. They could reward their friends, indulge their avarice, bask in public adulation, and craft public policies. They could even hand-pick their own successor (the famous *dedazo*) -- a right that helped ensure them protection from punishment after they left office. Presidents could thus stamp their imprint on Mexican history, steal enough money to assure themselves comfortable retirement, and step down without fear of reprisal against themselves or their (ill-gotten) property.

Three aspects of the Mexican regime, then, made it "perfect". First, its facade of liberal-democratic institutions and its elaborate network of state-corporatist associations helped fragment and isolate opposition groups. Second, its concentration of authority in one institution, the presidency, provided a mechanism for the definitive resolution of conflict between members of the ruling elite. Third,

its institutionalized mechanisms for power transfer -- no-reelection plus the *dedazo* -- solved the succession problem that has historically plagued authoritarian regimes. Mexico could thus experience a change of *government* (with all that it implied) without a change of *regime*. Periodic changes in government in turn made it all the more difficult for opposition groups to mount sustained protests against the regime.

The rise of a rent-seeking regime

Over the years, scholars have analyzed several aspects of this remarkable political system -- its revolutionary origins, hyper-presidentialism, institutionalized mechanisms for leadership succession, patterns of elite turnover, state corporatist pillars, one-party dominance, and liberal trappings.¹⁷³ One under-emphasized element in most academic analyses, however, is the rent-seeking nature of Mexico's old regime.¹⁷⁴ The regime was, from its inception, a vehicle for dividing up economic rents among its leaders and supporters.

Founded in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), Mexico's ruling party was born out of post-revolutionary attempts to redistribute the spoils of victory among surviving chieftains. In 1928-29, President Plutarco Elías Calles hit upon the inspired idea of creating a single political party that would serve as a sort of coordinating committee for the country's leading revolutionary generals. In

¹⁷³See, among others, Pablo González-Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Martin C. Needler, *Mexican Politics: The Containment of Conflict* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995); Wayne Cornelius, *Politics in Mexico* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of Southern California, San Diego, 1984); Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Roderic Ai Camp, "The Political-Technocrat in Mexico and the Survival of the Political System," *Latin American Research Review*, 1985, 20 (1):97-118; Kevin J. Middlebrook, "Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Mexico," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Daniel C. Levy, "Mexico: Sustained Civilian Rule Without Democracy," in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989); George Grayson, *The Prospects for Democracy in Mexico* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990); John J. Bailey, *Governing Mexico: The Statecraft of Crisis Management* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1988); Miguel Basañez, *El pulso de los sexenios* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1990); Hector Aguilar-Camín and Lorenzo Meyer, *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas, 1993); and Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁷⁴For a recent analysis from this perspective, see Roberto Blum, "Mexico's New Politics: The Weight of the Past," *Journal of Democracy*, October 1997. Hints at the rent-seeking nature of the regime also appear in several classic works on Mexican politics. See, for example, Pablo González-Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico* (1970), p. 149-50.

effect, rival strongmen would cede direct control over territory in exchange for personal security and a share of the national spoils. This arrangement was designed to moderate elite conflict over national office and restore political stability.

This system was consolidated after President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) broadened the state's role in the economy and nationalized the petroleum industry. Increased federal revenues and patronage opportunities permitted the party-state to co-opt local elites and buy off potential rivals. The regime was further strengthened and legitimated by social reforms introduced by Cárdenas, which purported to make good on the promises of the Revolution. These measures, especially sweeping land reform, assured the regime a mass base of support.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the expansion of the state's economic role provided a career path for party loyalists and circumscribed the social space in which autonomous centers of power could emerge.

By the end of Cárdenas' tenure, then, the basic features of Mexico's rent-seeking regime were in place. Groups with access to the state apparatus (political operators, state-corporatist bosses, the labor aristocracy, large-scale quasi-monopolistic enterprises, the establishment media, government employees, peasant communities aligned with the PRI, etc.) benefited from a broad array of state subsidies. Groups without this access (owners of small and medium-size businesses, professionals, non-union laborers, urban marginals, peasants in villages not favored by the PRI, consumers, etc.) paid the direct and indirect costs of these subsidies. In this sense, Mexico's party-state acted as a gigantic, pork-barreling political machine, soaking the bulk of population and selectively rewarding its leaders and adherents. The fundamental division in authoritarian Mexico was thus not between rich and poor -- or even between different classes and economic sectors -- but rather between groups and communities that were allied with the ruling party and those that were not. The regime's political coalition cut across classes, sectors, regions, and the traditional ideological spectrum.

For this reason, criticisms of the government from a leftist or even Marxist perspective were not systematically persecuted. Mexico's left-leaning intelligentsia were allowed to play the role of domesticated critic, mouthing tired paradigms and predictable laments. In fact, their role in issuing these laments constituted an important part of the system itself. It distracted attention from the real nature of the Mexican regime and helped the political establishment frame every issue in terms of

¹⁷⁵See Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 32-44.

“left” and “right” (with the regime near the center). As long as critics limited their analyses to this familiar ideological dimension, their erudite tracts were permissible; often, they were even rewarded or brought into the system in formal ways. In other words, ideological criticisms of the regime were tolerated precisely because they missed the fundamental dynamics of the system. By contrast, criticism of the president or documentation of the extent of official corruption struck at the heart of the regime and was sternly punished.¹⁷⁶

The decomposition of a rent-seeking regime

The old regime proved remarkably stable and resilient. It lasted so long because various pieces reinforced each other and because no foreign powers intervened to dismantle it. Two factors, however, placed increasing and ultimately fatal strains on the rent-seeking system.

The first of these was economic crisis brought on by the exhaustion of the regime’s nationalist-populist economic growth model. Initially, revolutionary institutions – social reform, the absorption of local elites, and the co-optation of various corporatist organizations – ensured political stability. As a result, investment (public, private, and foreign) increased, and the Mexican economy grew steadily. For a thirty-year period known as the Mexican Miracle (1940-1970), living standards for much of Mexico’s population improved.

But corruption, statism, and protectionism had inevitable costs. Businesses (both state monopolies and protected private firms) became uncompetitive internationally; subsidies defied economic rationality; investment decisions followed a political rather than a financial logic. These problems were exacerbated by the further expansion of the state apparatus during the administration of Luís Echeverría (1970-76), only temporarily deferred by the oil boom of the late 1970’s, and exacerbated again by fantastic over-borrowing during the López-Portillo administration (1976-82). By the early 1980s, fifty years of graft, cronyism, patronage, and pork-barreling had sabotaged Mexico’s economy.

Although it was triggered in part by falling oil prices and rising international interest rates, the national bankruptcy of 1982 symbolized the final collapse of the old economic model. For much of Mexico’s business community, insolvency

¹⁷⁶None of this is to deny that the distribution of economic resources in Mexico was extraordinarily unequal or that some factions within the ruling coalition were more sympathetic to state intervention in the economy than others. Ideological cleavages did exist, both inside and

demonstrated the necessity of fundamental reforms in the country's debt-ridden and state-dominated economy. For Mexicans in general, it underscored the extent of economic mismanagement under PRI rule. And for Mexico's ruling elite, it highlighted the magnitude of the economic problems they confronted.

In the context of economic crisis, the PRI's heterogeneous coalition became hopelessly expensive. No longer could the party-state afford to extend subsidies to broad sectors of society. Consequently, it began to deal out certain elements of the old growth coalition: organized labor, peasants, and eventually employees of state-owned companies and the federal bureaucracy. Ensuing clashes provoked a schism in the regime and led to the defection of a portion of the PRI's leftist-nationalist wing in 1987-88. Led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of former president Lázaro Cárdenas, this group launched an independent presidential bid in 1988 and eventually formed the nucleus of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution.¹⁷⁷

The second factor working against the system was also rooted in economic changes. Like authoritarian governments in a number of other countries (Spain, South Korea, etc.), Mexico's regime was partly undone by its own initial successes.¹⁷⁸ Although economic growth helped maintain the regime's legitimacy for several decades, it also wrought a series of demographic transformations that made one-party rule less tenable: urbanization, increasing literacy and education, the expansion of mass communications, and other changes that political scientists have long associated with democracy. These demographic shifts directly undermined the PRI's state-corporatist instruments of social control. Urbanization and the growth of the service sector, for instance, created new social classes that were not linked to the PRI's state-corporatist apparatus. By the 1980s, when economic growth finally collapsed, Mexico was no longer a nation of hapless peasants easily manipulated by a paternalistic state, as the country's political leadership continued to behave.

The same demographic changes that eroded state-corporatism also encouraged dealignment from the PRI on the electoral front. The ruling party's share of the vote began a long secular decline in the 1960s, especially among urban,

outside the regime. But in authoritarian Mexico, these cleavages were secondary to the fundamental division between regime (with all its penetrating tentacles) and the rest of society.

¹⁷⁷Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), p. 67-164.

¹⁷⁸At first glance, the argument that economic development contributed to the collapse of the old regime may seem to contradict the argument that its collapse was brought on by poor economic

middle-class, well-educated, and politically informed voters frustrated with PRI corruption and authoritarianism. The main beneficiary of these defections was the conservative National Action Party (PAN), which had strong roots in the more affluent North of the country. But detachment from the ruling party ultimately benefited virtually any opposition parties that seemed to have a chance of defeating the PRI, regardless of their ideological orientation. By the 1980s, ruling party officials frequently had to resort to electoral fraud to defend themselves from increasingly vigorous opposition challenges.

Mexico's political transition

The contested elections of 1988 -- in which PRI candidate Carlos Salinas was declared the winner over Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas amidst widespread allegations of fraud -- represented a crucial turning point for Mexico's political system. Although the regime's legitimacy had been eroding steadily, it now collapsed. Like the national bankruptcy of 1982 and the devastating Mexico City earthquake of 1985, the alleged fraud of 1988 triggered mass protests and increasing social mobilization.

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

performance. Actually, level of economic development and rate of economic growth are two different variables.

The construction of new institutions

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

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

Salinas's attempts at authoritarian rejuvenation, however, ended in failure. Economic growth remained sluggish, and market-oriented reforms exacerbated already sharp socio-economic inequalities. Opposition and civic mobilization accelerated throughout the country; the mass media became increasingly independent; and the regime -- dependent on foreign capital flows to maintain macroeconomic balance -- was unable to resort to traditional repressive tactics to suppress these changes. Meanwhile, an armed guerrilla movement emerged in Chiapas, and political infighting within the PRI culminated in the assassination of two senior ruling party officials in 1994 (among them the PRI's original presidential candidate, Luís Donaldo Colosio). Finally, precipitous devaluation of the Mexican peso at the end of 1994 plunged the country into renewed economic and political crisis. By early 1995, newly inaugurated President Ernesto Zedillo faced political cannibalism within the ruling party, mass unrest, and mounting violence. In the words of journalist Andrés Oppenheimer, Mexico was "bordering on chaos".¹⁷⁹

In this context, the Zedillo administration agreed to negotiate a series of sweeping constitutional reforms with the country's main opposition parties. Most significantly, these measures (known collectively as the "reform of the state") guaranteed the autonomy of the Federal Electoral Institute, a virtual fourth branch of government in charge of supervising elections. They thus committed the regime to

¹⁷⁹Andres Oppenheimer, *Bordering on Chaos* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1996).

reasonably fair political competition and paved the way for opposition electoral victory at the national level.

The Zedillo administration accepted opposition demands for political reform reluctantly and grudgingly. Nevertheless, it did accept them. Mexico's rulers could have resisted meaningful political reform at the risk of igniting a massive social conflagration, and a different Mexican president -- one more intimately linked with nefarious practices of the old regime -- might well have made a different decision. In fact, less responsible behavior by the principal actors in either the regime or the opposition might well have plunged the country into violence -- as it did in 1910-17.

Instead, elite compromise led to democratization. In the legislative elections of 1997, the first held under the new rules of the game, opposition parties wrested control of the lower house of Congress from the PRI. Their victory ended nearly seventy years of one-party rule and ushered in a new era of multiparty government. As the presidential elections of 2000 approached, fragile but fundamentally democratic institutions had replaced the old regime.

This thumbnail sketch sacrifices much of the context and nuance of Mexico's political transition. Future studies will fill in its gaps and, undoubtedly, dispute some of its particulars. But several elements of Mexico's political transition deserve special emphasis.

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

The pace of political change also varied across different spheres of governance. Although Mexico's electoral regime was quite fair and competitive by 1997 -- even by comparison to established democracies -- other institutions of governance remained much less democratic. The judiciary and the federal bureaucracy, for instance, remained firmly under the control of PRI supporters throughout the 1990s. In other words, the consolidation of a relatively free and fair electoral system did not eliminate other weak links in Mexico's democratic chain.

As a result of this patchwork pattern of democratization, the elections of 1997 did not represent the end of Mexico's political transition. A range of political

actors -- opposition party leaders, civic activists, PRI hard-liners, technocratic reformers, and leftist insurgents -- continued to contest exactly what type of democracy will ultimately take root in Mexico. At stake in these struggles was how thorough the process of institutional restructuring would be and how fast it would proceed.

A second aspect of Mexico's transition that deserves attention is the role played by particular catalytic events. Modernization may have provided the social basis for regime change, and economic crisis may have triggered popular disenchantment. But there was an important step between these two structural influences and organized mass mobilization. The timing and intensity of popular protests was deeply shaped by dramatic events -- such as the 1982 bankruptcy, the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the 1988 elections, the tumultuous events of 1994, and various local episodes of repression and electoral fraud -- that highlighted the regime's failings. These events provided a crucial linkage between underlying economic variables and political implications.

This brings us to a final noteworthy aspect of Mexico's political transition -- the role of civil society. Political elites forged key aspects of Mexico's new political system through negotiation, deliberation, and compromise, often in private and sometimes in secret. But opposition leaders were only able to insist on democratic reforms because the specter of mass unrest compelled elements of the old regime to seek an accommodation with their political adversaries.¹⁸⁰ For this reason, it would be wrong to think of political transition in Mexico as a gift to the people from an enlightened ruling establishment. Rather, it was the product of mobilization by millions of ordinary Mexicans who pushed forward a process that had stalled several times before.

¹⁸⁰For this reason, the notion that transitions are either "elite-led" or "mass-led" may represent a false dichotomy. Mass support is what gives opposition leaders bargaining power vis-à-vis authoritarian rulers.

Media control in a rent-seeking regime

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

— President Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz, at speech to the National Congress of Provincial Publishers on Freedom of the Press Day, June 7, 1968¹⁸¹

All the essential traits of Mexico's political system were reflected in the country's press. Early on during the period of authoritarian rule, the media was colonized and used as a vehicle for private gain and political legitimization. Lucrative broadcasting concessions were doled out to regime supporters with the dual purpose of benefiting political insiders and ensuring favorable coverage. Meanwhile, different factions of the political elite founded or purchased their own newspapers to advance personal and policy agendas, supporting them through an array of government subsidies. In this environment, a wide range of ideological rhetoric and a certain amount of criticism "within the system" were tolerated, even encouraged.¹⁸² By contrast, core features of the political regime — presidential authority, official corruption, electoral fraud, etc. — remained decidedly off-limits to the press. Mexico's media thus mirrored the PRI's amorphous political coalition, covering a broad ideological spectrum without questioning the fundamentals of the regime.

Mexico's old system of media control has antecedents that stretch back to the pre-Revolutionary era, when the daily *El Imparcial* succumbed to the blandishments of then-President Porfirio Díaz and accepted government "subsidies." But the current system really dates from the early post-war era, when Presidents Manuel Avila-Camacho (1940-46) and Miguel Alemán (1946-52) encouraged the corruption of news media and the consolidation of media ownership in the hands of sympathetic private owners. As a result, Mexico's media regime gravitated toward more subtle types of control, rather than traditional forms of censorship (as in many Latin American countries) or overt state ownership (as

¹⁸¹Cited in Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 119.

¹⁸²Ilya Adler, "Press-Government Relations in Mexico: A Study of Freedom of the Mexican Press and Press Criticism of Government Institutions," *Studies in Latin American Popular*

President Lázaro Cárdenas would have wished). Like the larger political system, the new media regime's flexibility and effectiveness made it sustainable: it permitted ideological pluralism and constrained criticism without compromising official control of the press. Behind the facade of liberal-democratic institutions, a bloated party-state manipulated the country's media.

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

Like most institutions in the country, the Mexican news media is nominally regulated by legal tenets, but it functions within a system of ill-defined practices. Such a system creates an inconsistent environment of informal rules whose net result is the promotion of self-censorship. This atmosphere is fed by a mixture of negative practices such as stringent regulations, threats against journalists and occasional physical intervention in news organizations. More often, however, persuasion hinges on positive incentives, including subsidies and economic rewards to journalists and media owners in exchange for favorable coverage of government policies and actions.¹⁸³

In other words, Mexico's system of media control was skewed toward less vicious forms of official manipulation. Physical repression, direct government ownership, and punishments for receiving banned information were all rare. By contrast, corruption and manipulation of broadcasting concessions were extremely common.¹⁸⁴

While relatively mild, these forms of media control in Mexico proved remarkably effective. As a senior editor at Mexico's principal newsmagazine, *Proceso*, put it in 1987, "The government is like a defender in a soccer game. He stays on the man with the ball all the time, making sure he never scores a goal. It's not necessarily a dramatic thing, but it's constant."¹⁸⁵

Culture, 12 (1993):1-30.

¹⁸³Juan Carlos Gamboa, "Media, Public Opinion Polls, and the 1994 Mexican Presidential Election," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C., September 28-30, 1995, p. 14.

¹⁸⁴Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists, publishers, broadcasters, and government officials.

¹⁸⁵Froylan López, editor of *Proceso* magazine, cited in *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1987.

This peculiar system of media control persisted for nearly five decades, with different elements of emphasis and intensity. Particular presidents, interior ministers, and presidential press secretaries added their own idiosyncratic twists to the system, and certain elements evolved over time.¹⁸⁶ The tenures of Mexican presidents in the early post-war era, for instance, were marked by the systematic corruption of news media and the concentration of television in the hands of pro-government entrepreneurs. The leftist-populist administration of Luis Echeverría (1970-76) was characterized by generalized intolerance of dissent and official attempts to assert control over privately-owned media.¹⁸⁷ President José López-Portillo's (1976-82) attitude toward the media reflected the rise and fall of his political reformist initiatives, oscillating between openness and censorship. President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) focused on constraining media coverage of potentially damaging topics: popular discontent with economic austerity, the spread of drug-related corruption, the growing mobilization of civil society, and the regime's increasing recourse to electoral fraud. President Carlos Salinas' term (1988-1994) witnessed incipient liberalizing measures that followed from his political and economic reforms. But liberalization was accompanied by a pervasive preoccupation with the President's image that dictated thorough and meticulous "management" of the news media.¹⁸⁸ As a result, salient features of the rent-seeking system remained intact, and it continued to govern chunks of the media into the Zedillo administration (1994-2000).

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

¹⁸⁶See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993). The personalities of these presidents and their stormy relationship with Mexico's most esteemed independent journalist, Julio Scherer-García, are the subject of Scherer's *Los presidentes* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1986).

¹⁸⁷For a detailed examination of the Echeverría administration, see Samuel Schmidt, *The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency* (Tulane: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

¹⁸⁸Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists, publishers, broadcasters, and government officials.

1980s, for instance, the conflict did not end in nationalization, stricter state regulation, or a greater public orientation in Mexican television. Rather, it led to an arrangement in which Mexico's dominant private network (Televisa) agreed to provide the regime with 12.5% of all airtime in exchange for tax exemption.

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

A culture of collusion¹⁸⁹

About 30 to 40 families own the Mexican media and they are predisposed to agree with the PRI. They are conservative, status quo businessmen who basically concede, "This system works for me."¹⁹⁰

One of the most powerful elements of government control was the confluence of interests between media owners and PRI leaders. Media owners wanted, above all, a hospitable business environment in which they could prosper economically and protect their status as members of the country's elite. In order to prosper economically, they needed the state to provide them with broadcasting concessions, subsidized inputs, government advertising, protection from competition, and lucrative business opportunities -- including those outside the media itself. To safeguard a system that met these requirements, and to protect their own position within it, they were willing to serve as the regime's chief informational vehicle. As Mexican editor Raymundo Riva-Palacio reflected on this generation of media owners:

¹⁸⁹This term is borrowed from the ever-quotable Raymundo Riva-Palacio ("A Culture of Collusion: The Ties that Bind the Press and the PRI", unpublished manuscript presented to Committee to Protect Journalists, n/d). It is also the title of an edited volume by William A. Orme, Jr. -- *A Culture of Collusion: An Inside Look at the Mexican Press* (Miami: North-South Center, University of Miami and The Committee to Protect Journalists, 1997).

¹⁹⁰Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 21.

I believe that the media, in general... wished to maintain the status quo, which for the owners and a good number of directors, has produced a substantial amount of income, a very comfortable lifestyle, and a privileged place among the elites.¹⁹¹

Some of Mexico's leading establishment papers, such as *Excelsior* and *Universal*, were founded during the tail end of the revolutionary period and traditionally maintained close ties to the PRI. Others – the *El Sol* chain, *Novedades*, *El Diario de México*, *El Día*, *El Heraldo de México*, etc. – were intertwined with the regime since their inception or re-purchase by members of the political elite over the last few decades. Gabriel Alarcón's conservative *El Heraldo de México*, for instance, was born *oficialista*: its first issue featured official praise for the new paper and displayed an oversized picture of then-President Gustavo Díaz-Ordaz (1964-1970) on the front page.¹⁹²

Collusion between media owners and the PRI was especially pronounced in broadcasting, where concessions could be divvied up among political allies and sympathizers. When television emerged in the early 1950's, for instance, President Miguel Alemán (1946-52) and several of his associates obtained the original licenses.¹⁹³ In 1955, President Adolfo Ruíz-Cortínes (1952-58) asked Emilio Azcárraga Sr., a radio pioneer and recipient of one of Mexico's original television licenses, to form a partnership with two of the president's friends who were losing money on their concessions. The friends in question turned out to be former President Alemán and Rómulo O'Farrill, another initial concessionaire and Alemán crony. Azcárraga Sr. wisely complied with the president's request by merging the three men's holdings into Telesistema Mexicano.¹⁹⁴ With the absorption of another television channel owned by a group of Monterrey-based industrialists in 1972, the consortium officially became Televisa.¹⁹⁵

Televisa flourished under authoritarianism. The company remained a virtual monopoly until the 1990s, claiming over 80 percent of the television audience and

¹⁹¹Cited in interview with Claudia Fernández, *Pulso*, "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón...y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July/September 1995, 23, p. 22.

¹⁹²Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 101.

¹⁹³For further details, see Fernando Mejía-Barquera and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, *Televisa: el quinto poder* (Mexico City: Claves Latinoamericanas, 1985).

¹⁹⁴Carlos Ramírez, "Indicador Político," *El Universal*, July 1, 1996, p. 8.

¹⁹⁵That same year, the Echeverría administration took over Channel 13, thus leaving Televisa (allied with the conservative wing of the PRI) and the government network (under control of the leftist wing of the PRI) in control of virtually all of Mexican television.

almost that much of television advertising revenue. Over the years, successive concessions helped Televisa reinforce its hegemony in television and establish a secure position in related industries.¹⁹⁶ In 1974, the company was awarded Mexico's first cable television licenses, a technology it continues to dominate through its subsidiary Cablevisión. In 1980-82, Televisa secured control of 158 government-built satellite signal-capturing stations, as well as access to the government's Morelos satellite (which was launched in 1985). In December 1992, Televisa was awarded 62 vacant television frequencies without a competitive tender, allowing the network to complete a second national network.¹⁹⁷ And in 1994, Televisa received two channels for high-definition television (HDTV) in Mexico.¹⁹⁸ Critics referred to the corporation as a private "Ministry of Education," "Ministry of Information," or even "Ministry of Truth."¹⁹⁹

To be sure, Televisa's relationship with the Mexican government was sometimes stormy. Closely aligned with Alemán clique within the ruling party, Televisa came into conflict with the government whenever the PRI's left wing controlled the presidency. During the administrations of President Luís Echeverría (1970-76) and, to a lesser extent, that of President José López-Portillo (1976-82), Televisa had to fend off various government threats to tax, regulate, and even nationalize the television industry. But rather than conflict between regime opponents and supporters, or between the private sector and the state, these disputes are best viewed as the product of ongoing rivalry between competing factions of Mexico's ruling elite. For the last twenty-five years, Televisa and the PRI have been deeply intertwined, with the network dependent on the government for concessions

¹⁹⁶See Florence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y los medios: un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: *La Jornada* and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), p. 22-3.

¹⁹⁷International Press Institute Report (no author), December 1993, p. 40; Florence Toussaint, "La simbiosis entre el estado y Televisa," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 70; Fátima Fernández-Christlieb, "Los oficios políticos de la dinastía Azcárraga," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 7.

¹⁹⁸Florence Toussaint, "La simbiosis entre el estado y Televisa," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 70. The corporation did not always get its way. For instance, Televisa failed to obtain concessions for cellular phone communication and ultra-high frequency (UHF) television. It also failed in its bid to purchase the government-owned television network in 1993. (See Miguel de la Vega, "Azcárraga fue un socio a veces áspero, pero incondicional al gobierno: Trejo Delarbre," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 8-9.)

¹⁹⁹Author's interview with Amalia García, Party of the Democratic Revolution, August 15, 1995; see also, *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 1986.

and infrastructure development, and the regime relying on Televisa for political marketing.²⁰⁰

These links became particularly flagrant during the administration of President Carlos Salinas (1988-94). Televisa launched an all-out defense of Salinas during his contested 1988 presidential bid and relentlessly supported his administration's modernizing, pro-business policies. At a fundraising dinner in February 1993, when several leading Mexican businessmen were asked to donate \$25 million each to the PRI's 1994 presidential campaign, Emilio Azcárraga Jr. responded that he had made so much money during Salinas's term that he was prepared to contribute even more.²⁰¹ With public statements like "I am the number two *priista* (PRI supporter) in the country," "I am a soldier of the PRI," and "Televisa considers itself part of the government system," Azcárraga personified the collusion between media owners and the regime.²⁰²

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

²⁰⁰Infrastructure development includes both microwave and satellite links. In addition to Morelos, Mexico launched two other satellites (Solidaridad I and Solidaridad II) in November 1993 and October 1994.

²⁰¹Andrés Oppenheimer claimed that this sum was \$70 million. See *México: En la frontera del caos; la crisis de los noventa y la esperanza del nuevo milenio* (Mexico City: Javier Vergara, 1996), p. 119. Others have argued that Azcárraga contributed only \$30 million. See Agustín Ambríz, "Ante la Suprema Corte, la petición de Azcárraga y Cañedo White para no pagar impuestos por sus Mercedes Benz blindados," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 11.

²⁰²See Florence Toussaint "Inequidad y democracia: realidad en los medios electrónicos," in Florence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y medios de comunicación: un binomio inexplorado*, (Mexico City: *La Jornada* and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), p. 22.

A series of recent examples come from the Salinas administration. In 1989, Salinas successfully coerced Manuel Becerra-Acosta, director of the semi-independent daily *unomásuno*, into selling his newspaper to a more sympathetic owner.²⁰³ Three years later, one apparent condition of the privatization of Mexico's state-owned television network -- now Televisión Azteca -- was the acceptance by the network's new owners of Raúl Salinas (President Carlos Salinas' elder brother) as a silent partner. And during the last year of Salinas' administration (1993-94), approximately three-quarters of radio concessions were awarded -- either directly or through front-men -- to Raúl himself.²⁰⁴ While the primary purpose of such machinations was often personal gain, they had the additional benefit of keeping the media in friendly, private hands.

The Philanthropic Ogre²⁰⁵

Pay for them to beat up on me? Gentlemen, I think not!
-- President José López-Portillo, announcing
the withdrawal of government advertising
from independent periodicals on Freedom
of the Press Day, June 7, 1982²⁰⁶

In addition to structuring the media market so as to benefit pro-government owners, the regime also channeled funds directly to the press itself in exchange for favorable coverage. One of the most important ways it did so was through the selective allocation of government advertising. Official publicity was the mainstay of most pro-government periodicals throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and despite

²⁰³This story has been famous among journalists since Becerra-Acosta recounted it to *Proceso* magazine several years later. In addition to being affiliated with rival factions of the political elite, Becerra-Acosta and Salinas apparently disliked each other personally. After taking power, Salinas arranged an audit of *Unomásuno* that revealed a series of financial improprieties. Salinas then sought a buyer from among his staff and forced Becerra-Acosta, under pain of prosecution, into selling his paper and leaving the country. As Becerra-Acosta was packing, an official from the Interior Ministry arrived at his house with a suitcase containing one million dollars in cash, drawn from the state-run development bank BanObras. (Author's interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.) See also Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 316-19.

²⁰⁴Author's interview with middle-level official in the Ministry of Communications and Transportation, March 18, 1996.

²⁰⁵This phrase, a reference to the state, comes from Mexican author Octavio Paz -- *El ogro filantrópico: historia y política, 1971-78* (Mexico City: J. Montiz, 1979).

²⁰⁶Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 217-8.

the Mexican state's perennial fiscal crisis, official publicity remained substantial in the 1980s and 1990s. In the print media, Mexico's "philanthropic ogre" provided about half of all advertising revenue -- whether through parastatal companies, state-corporatist bodies, the official party, or federal, state, and local government agencies.²⁰⁷ In the broadcast media, the PRI and a series of separate state agencies traditionally ranked among the top advertisers in the country.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, because Mexico's largest private companies were semi-monopolistic enterprises whose competitive position depended in large measure on government policies, a portion of purely private-sector advertising remained susceptible to political manipulation. Leading Mexican banks and firms -- including Televisa itself -- were major advertisers in pro-government newspapers and magazines, including publications whose limited circulations would hardly recommend them as marketing vehicles. The party-state thus retained broad direct and indirect control over advertising revenues.

Perhaps the most striking form of official advertising was the *gacetilla* -- a paid insert typically prepared by the government and disguised as a bona fide newspaper article. *Gacetillas* varied in cost, depending on (1) the importance of the medium in which it was published, (2) the extent to which it was disguised, and (3) the importance of the political moment in which it appeared. In the 1990s, for instance, a *gacetilla* might cost some \$2,000 for a quarter of a page in the political section of a moderately-sized capital daily; an equivalent spot on the front page would run approximately four times as much.²⁰⁹ Front-page *gacetillas* with bylines and photographs, however, could be worth as much as \$30,000 in large-circulation

²⁰⁷Estimates of official advertising have ranged from around 20-30 percent in 1964 to 35-80 percent in the mid-1990's. See Richard Ray Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, March 1972), p. 79; John Virtue, "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón...y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July-September 1995, 23, p. 9; *Political Handbook of the World, 1994*, p. 576; *Business Week*, December 20, 1993.)

²⁰⁸See Florence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y medios de comunicación: un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: *La Jornada* and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), p. 23.

²⁰⁹In previous eras (for instance, in 1970), prices for *gacetillas* were published. See Richard Ray Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control* (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, March 1972), p. 85-90. The use of *gacetillas* is not unique to Mexico -- disguised advertisements called "reading notices" were published in the United States before the Progressive era. See Linda Lawson, *Truth in Publishing: Federal Regulation of the Press's Business Practices, 1880-1920* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).

publications, and some papers even sold their lead headlines for far more. Coupled with other forms of official subsidy, these sums provided substantial rewards for publications that maintained a pro-establishment line.

Government largesse meant that a plethora of pro-government newspapers could operate without serious regard to circulation, commercial advertising, or other normal requisites of financial viability.²¹⁰ These “ghost papers” -- including at least seven Mexico City dailies still in circulation -- were published and displayed in newsstands every day but had very few real readers.²¹¹ Even today, only about a dozen of Mexico’s 250-odd newspapers could survive without direct or indirect government assistance.²¹²

²¹⁰As Alejandro Ramos, editor of *Financiero* put it, the only thing one used to need to open a newspaper was five well-placed friends in the government who could secure advertising revenues from Pemex, Telmex, and other state-run enterprises. (See John Virtue, *La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón...y la conciencia*,” *Pulso*, July-September 1995, p. 15.)

²¹¹Circulation estimates in Mexico are wildly exaggerated. My own estimates for the average circulation of the morning edition of Mexico City’s principal news-oriented dailies in 1996 -- based on several dozen interviews with journalists, publishers, distributors, and government officials -- are shown below. These figures include subscription sales but do not include devolutions; that is, they represent the number of copies actually sold.

<i>Universal</i>	105,000
<i>La Prensa</i>	95,000
<i>Reforma</i>	80,000
<i>Financiero</i>	75,000
<i>Jornada</i>	65,000
<i>Excelsior</i>	30,000
<i>El Heraldo de México</i>	8,000
<i>Unomásuno</i>	7,000
<i>El Sol</i>	6,000
<i>Novedades</i>	5,000
<i>Economista</i>	4,000
<i>Nacional</i>	4,000
<i>Diario de México</i>	2,000
<i>Día</i>	<1,000

²¹²Raymundo Riva-Palacio offered an even lower estimate of eight in 1994 (*San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 1994). United States Information Service officials at the American Embassy estimate that only four or five of the capital’s 16 or so dailies (*La Prensa*, *Universal*, *Financiero*, *Reforma*, *La Jornada* and perhaps *El Economista*) and very few provincial papers could pay their own way. (Author’s interviews, Mexico City; April 1, 1996.) My rough calculations suggest that the following daily papers could probably survive a complete cutoff of government subsidies: *Reforma*, *El Norte* (Monterrey), *Financiero*, *Jornada*, *Universal*, *Economista*, *La Prensa*, *Ovaciones*, *El Porvenir* (Monterrey), *El Diario de Yucatán* (Mérida), *El Occidental* (Guadalajara), *Siglo 21* (Guadalajara), *El Imparcial* (Hermosillo), *La Crónica* (Mexicali) and one or two of the *El Sol* papers. Some other papers, including *Novedades*, *Mexico City News*, and several of the *El Sol* chain are part of larger business groups and might survive from intra-enterprise transfers.

The dependence of most newspapers on official advertising rendered them extremely vulnerable to government pressures. Not surprisingly, the government frequently used its ample advertising budget to castigate independent publications and reward sympathetic ones. One of the most celebrated episodes occurred on June 7, 1982, when President López-Portillo announced that the government would no longer advertise in periodicals deemed hostile to the regime.²¹³ The regime also employed partial or selective boycotts against the leftist newspaper *La Jornada* (1991 and 1994), the conservative magazine *Impacto* (1986), and other publications.²¹⁴ During the Salinas administration, for instance, Banamex withdrew advertising from the *Economista* after the paper criticized government economic policies on its front page.²¹⁵

Where advertising revenue alone was not a sufficient incentive, the government often supplemented it with other enticements. Tax forgiveness, subsidized utilities, free service from the government-owned news agency Notimex, bulk purchases by government agencies, credit at below market rates, and cheap newsprint were all rewards for suitably pliant periodicals.²¹⁶ The provision of subsidized credit to Mexico's most well-known establishment paper, *Excelsior*, is a case in point. On April 8, 1986, the Banco Nacional de Obras y Servicios Públicos (BanObras) loaned *Excelsior* some 1.4 billion pesos (more than one million dollars) at subsidized rates to buy a new printing press. During the first fifteen months of its sixteen-month repayment schedule, *Excelsior* managed to make only two monthly payments. Nevertheless, the government loaned *Excelsior* another three billion pesos in July 1987, and by February 28, 1992, the paper owed some sixteen billion pesos. Three years later, the ailing cooperative signed a promissory note for the sum of 16,149,545,360 pesos. With *Excelsior* now quite bankrupt, that sum is unlikely to be repaid. Consequently, these successive loans represented a total transfer of more than three million dollars to that decaying, outdated enterprise.

²¹³The subsequent loss of revenue succeeded in suffocating some smaller upstart periodicals but failed to destroy the regime's most irksome adversary, *Proceso*.

²¹⁴Author's interview with Alfonso Sotelo-Valdes, Chief Financial Officer of *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 8, 1995.

²¹⁵Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media*, (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 30-31.

²¹⁶Author's interviews with various Mexican journalists and publishers.

Smaller loans to other pro-government papers were also arranged through BanObras and other government lending agencies such as Somex and Nafinsa.²¹⁷

In the print media, even more powerful than control over credit was the government's ability to provide subsidized newsprint. Until the initiation of full-scale economic reform under President Carlos Salinas in the 1990's, production and importation of newsprint remained under the monopoly control of a parastatal company, PIPSA.²¹⁸ Outside Mexico, the cliché was that PIPSA provided the government with a crucial lever of control over the print media by restricting the supply of newsprint to anti-government publications. PIPSA was used in this way occasionally, typically as part of a broader government campaign against specific publications: the weekly *Presente* under President Miguel Alemán in 1951; the Cuban-subsidized *Política* in June 1962; a synarchist publication called *Orden* in 1969; the independent daily *El Norte* during 1979; and the conservative weekly *Impacto* as well as allied magazines *Valle de Lágrimas* and *Alarma* from April 26 through June of 1986.²¹⁹ But like most traditional mechanisms of control, PIPSA was used more often as a carrot than as a stick. Since its creation in 1935, PIPSA provided subsidized newsprint through a variety of formal and informal means: offering generous terms of credit, absorbing the costs of shipping and storage, or simply selling paper at reduced prices.²²⁰ All told, the scope of subsidy to pro-government papers sometimes reached fantastic proportions -- *Excelsior*, for instance, was often deeply in debt to PIPSA.

Unsurprisingly, whenever PIPSA's legal mandate expired, most newspaper owners pleaded for its continuation.²²¹ Without PIPSA to act as intermediary, Mexican newspapers would have had to face the vertiginous fluctuations and

²¹⁷For more detail, see Julio Scherer-García, *Estos Años* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995), p. 43-7.

²¹⁸PIPSA is the Spanish acronym for Newsprint Producer and Importer, Inc.

²¹⁹Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda discusses the cases of *Presente* and *Impacto* in *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 22 and p. 275-7; for other cases, see Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), p. 38-42. Information on *El Norte* was confirmed in author's interviews with Alejandro Junco, publisher of *El Norte* and *Reforma* (Mexico City, September 21, 1995) and Ramón Alberto Garza, editor-in-chief of *El Norte* and *Reforma* (Mexico City, April 17, 1996).

²²⁰An ingenious array of financial devices have been employed to disguise these subsidies, from indexed prices during inflationary periods to tax exemptions to creative depreciation schedules to manipulation of the foreign exchange rate.

²²¹PIPSA's charter originally granted in 1934; it was renewed twice in the 1960's and once during Salinas' tenure.

generally higher newsprint prices of the international market.²²² As a result, the threat to withdraw this subsidy in itself proved an important tool of government influence, similar to the selective use of official advertising. On several occasions, overly feisty papers suddenly lost drawing rights on PIPSA's account and were presented a bill for their accumulated debts -- a legitimate commercial response masking the underlying political rationale. Some publications, such as the semi-sensationalist *Rumor* and leftist *Motivos*, permanently lost drawing privileges on PIPSA accounts.²²³ Others were threatened with official reprisals on particular issues of pressing concern to the government. During President Carlos Salinas' tenure, for instance, one independent provincial daily published a front-page story implicating the government-owned oil company, Pemex, in a massive industrial accident. In the midst of sensitive trade negotiations touching on Pemex's future status, the federal government feared that such incendiary reporting would provoke a popular response and ultimately jeopardize its bargaining position. The newspaper's owner was summoned to Mexico's Interior Ministry for a thorough dressing down, and PIPSA suspended credit and newsprint delivery. Facing a one-month wait for imported newsprint, the publication found itself without enough paper to publish its next edition. Fortunately for the newspaper, the sort of popular protest against Pemex which the government had anticipated never materialized, and PIPSA ultimately relented.²²⁴

As with government advertising, accepting special favors from PIPSA in the form of credit or pricing potentially compromised newspapers' autonomy.²²⁵

²²²In the first six months of 1995, for instance, the price of newsprint increased 43 percent in real terms. Because newsprint represents 15-25 percent of a newspaper's costs -- generally the largest financial line item besides salaries -- many papers became dependent on PIPSA as a supplier of credit and paper.

²²³Author's interview with Juan Luís Conchelo, editor of *Motivos*, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

²²⁴I asked the newspaper's principal editors what they would have done had PIPSA not restored the flow of paper. One told me that they might have been able to obtain enough newsprint from other papers to hold over until imports arrived. (These other publications could earn a profit by reselling at market prices the newsprint they had purchased from PIPSA.) At that time, however, the paper was on shaky financial ground, and the additional cost of imported paper might have triggered bankruptcy.

²²⁵Under the leadership of a new management team that took over during the Salinas administration, PIPSA has undergone a gradual transformation into a more normal business enterprise. To that end, PIPSA's management has attempted to limit subsidies and place relations with the print media on a strictly commercial footing. According to Mexican newspaper editors, preparing PIPSA for successful privatization is the "cherished dream" and "obsession" of PIPSA's director, René Villarreal. Consequently, the company cannot afford the kind of international

Slippage in payment at independent newspapers like *Jornada* and *Financiero*, for instance, sometimes cost these publications editorial maneuvering room. As a result, independent periodicals (such as the *El Norte-Reforma* group) preferred to pay their bills religiously or use imported paper. For the traditional press, subsidized newsprint was just another element of collusion.²²⁶

Corruption of the rank and file

For the bulk of Mexican journalists, the concept of “conflict of interest” does not exist in theory or practice....The absence of this concept is a fundamental ingredient in the collusion between the media and the authorities. It blurs the line that should separate journalists from government spokesmen. Its absence from journalists’ code of conduct generates a chain of corruption and obligations that limits and circumscribes a reporter’s everyday work.²²⁷

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

First, and normally least important, journalists received a base salary from the medium at which they worked. These salaries were poor for most reporters and abysmally low for correspondents outside their firm’s home base. One reporter formerly employed by a leading Mexico City daily described his salary there as a

opprobrium that would inevitably follow any blatant attempt to strangle Mexico’s emerging independent press. Furthermore, cutting off newsprint to independent and financially viable publications would cost a commercially-oriented PIPSA valuable clients. Nevertheless, PIPSA’s parastatal status encourages its continued use as an instrument of government influence. Senior executives at PIPSA, including Villarreal, remain government employees, and Mexico’s Interior Minister is Chairman of PIPSA’s Board of Directors. The composition of the Board itself also reflects the company’s official orientation – pro-regime publications like *Excelsior*, *Universal*, and the *El Sol* chain have voting seats; more independent papers like *Jornada*, *Financiero*, and *Reforma* are not represented at all.

²²⁶Operating subsidies have not been as crucial in securing official control of the broadcast media, but they are used occasionally. In addition, the price of broadcasting concessions themselves may include government subsidies. See Florence Toussaint, ed., *Democracia y los medios: un binomio inexplorado* (Mexico City: *La Jornada* and Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1995), p. 22-3.

²²⁷Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para un nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 113.

sort of stipend that served more to indicate institutional affiliation and gain him access to other sources of remuneration than it did to provide a living.²²⁸

The second source of income consisted of commissions (typically between eight and fifteen percent) from advertising revenues procured by the reporter.²²⁹

Journalists in the print media were thus encouraged to regard their beat as a vehicle for soliciting advertising

-- including the lucrative *gacetillas* -- and to treat their sources as potential customers. As Raymundo Riva-Palacio noted, this practice had predictable effects on coverage:

In this way, reporters are transformed into 'page-salesmen', watchful of the treatment of the sources to which they have been assigned -- out of fear of losing their advertising revenue -- and vulnerable to any pressures or complaints from them.²³⁰

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

²²⁸Author's interview with former reporter for *La Jornada*, March 28, 1996. Salaries have increased substantially in the last few years, thanks to a minimum journalistic wage law passed by the Salinas administration and wage pressure from independent publications (e.g., *Reforma*) that paid their employees higher salaries. These changes are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

²²⁹The January 25, 1988 issue of *Proceso* carried a list of salaries and commissions at major Mexico City periodicals. At that time, commissions were as follows:

- *Excelsior*: 5 percent to reporter, 5 percent to common fund
- *Unomásuno*: 10 percent to reporter
- *Jornada*: 4 percent to reporter, 4 percent to common fund, 4 percent to other staff
- *Novedades*: 15 percent for reporter
- *Universal*: 10 percent direct commission, 5 percent to fund
- *Financiero*: 15 percent to fund
- *El Día*: 10 percent to reporter

Since then, many papers have changed their payment regimes and eliminated or reduced commissions in an effort to stimulate professionalism (as in the most independent papers), increase revenue for the paper itself (as at *Excelsior*), or some combination (as at *Universal*).

²³⁰Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para el nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 119.

As with *gacetillas*, the exact amount of the bribe depended on three factors: (1) the prominence of the outlet, (2) the credibility and reputation of the individual journalist, and (3) the importance of the “political moment” or the event covered. Favorable, well-placed articles extolling the virtues of a potential presidential contender prior to the selection of the PRI’s candidate could produce large bonuses. Sympathetic photographs or television images also netted relatively large sums. Presidential campaigns and trips were famously extravagant, with reporters receiving approximately \$100-300 at each stop and sumptuous accommodations throughout.²³¹

Some outsiders argue that institutionalized corruption began to unravel when President Carlos Salinas ended cash payments to journalists from the President’s office in December 1992.²³² *Chayos* did decline, principally as a result of general cutbacks in government spending. But corrupt practices hardly disappeared. Payments continued at other levels of government, and bribery took on more sophisticated forms. In many cases, government functionaries simply found less transparent ways to funnel cash. For instance, officials at the Interior Ministry and Presidency often hired prominent media figures as “political consultants,” lending the ensuing payments an aura of propriety.²³³ At other times, government officials purchased advertising in low-circulation magazines owned by prominent columnists and created by them at least partly as a receptacle for official funds.²³⁴

Reporters who considered themselves above simple bribery, therefore, could still be won over through favors, blandishments, access to information or similar offers. As one official at the Interior Ministry put it, “the trick to controlling the media is knowing whom rather than knowing how.”²³⁵ In other words, direct cash payments were only the most blatant form of official compensation. Gifts and

²³¹For practical purposes, reporters on such trips were normally divided into three tiers and paid accordingly. For further detail see Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 291-92, 229-30, 338-340, 346-48; *Proceso*, May 23, 1983; Julio Scherer-García, *Estos Años* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995), p. 46-7; Scott Morrison, “Read all about it! Local news media show a pro-government bias,” *Maclean’s*, August 15, 1994, p. 22; and Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control*, Ph.D. dissertation (Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, March 1972), p. 87.

²³²See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 367-8. President Ernesto Zedillo later revived the practice of paying journalists on presidential trips.

²³³Author’s interviews with Interior Ministry officials, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

²³⁴Author’s interviews with Interior Ministry officials, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

²³⁵Author’s interview with Interior Ministry official, Mexico City, March 20, 1996.

favors -- lavish Christmas baskets, plane tickets, electronic appliances allegedly related to journalistic work, etc. -- often complemented *chayos*. So did the provision of scarce government services: medical procedures for family members, scholarships, public housing, etc. In March 1996, for instance, the independent daily *Reforma* published a list of reporters and columnists who enjoyed personal police protection, a prized commodity given Mexico City's crime rate. Few of those on the list had received the sort of threats that might merit such special police attention.²³⁶

In addition to gifts and favors, the government also used its control over awards and appointments to bless favored editors and ostracize critics. Reliable journalists won fame and prizes at the annual banquet held to celebrate "Freedom of the Press Day" (June 7) -- an event that developed into a sort of Academy Awards for the pro-government media.²³⁷ Sometimes, government favors, awards, gifts, and monies became so extensive that they were difficult to distinguish from the type of collusion that characterized the relationships between the regime and media owners. In its more profligate moments, the regime sprinkled cars, homes, publishing contracts, import licenses, and business concessions (such as the duty-free stores in Mexico's airports) among prominent members of the media establishment.

Certain cases of venality are legendary among reporters. One telling inventory comes from Riva-Palacio:²³⁸

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

²³⁶Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, "Personajes Protegidos," *Reforma*, March 7, 1996, p. 7.

²³⁷The evolution of this event is described in great detail by Rafael Rodriguez-Castañeda in *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993).

²³⁸Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para un nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 114-5.

5. An important political columnist regularly begins his article by transcribing notecards that arrive from the Presidency, the Interior Ministry, or the PRI.

Though bribery of journalists was never a particularly powerful or efficient form of censorship, it nevertheless constituted a key component of the generalized corruption that characterized Mexico's old media regime. It thus helped to ensure continued official control over the news media.²³⁹

Unionization, PRI-style

Mexico is a country where, although nothing works, everything can be fixed.

-- P. J. O'Rourke²⁴⁰

The corrupting links between Mexico's ruling party and the mass media extended not only to media owners and journalists, but also to the other news-related organizations. One classic example was Mexico's principal newspaper and magazine distribution network, the *Unión de Voceadores* (Street Vendors' Union). With its integration into the PRI's state-corporatist structure in 1924, the Union became a prime beneficiary of the statist largesse that larded Mexico's political economy for decades. Its longtime head, Enrique Gómez-Corchado, maintained close contacts with a string of Mexican presidents, who furnished tax exemptions, protection from competition, and personal rewards in exchange for political adhesion. A microcosm of the PRI itself, the Union operated as a near-monopoly distribution system for Mexico City and a handful of provincial towns.²⁴¹

Many of the organization's deficiencies were obvious from its structure. The Union claimed 40 percent of the end-price of every periodical it sold, divvying up these spoils between three layers of distribution and, of course, the syndicate's

²³⁹Corruption in Mexico's media has been so pervasive that the dividing line between bribes designed to perpetuate official control and everyday corruption is blurry. For instance, a prominent pro-government capital city newspaper once allegedly sold its eight-column, front page header to a group of 62 police chiefs fired for corruption. In exchange for ten thousand dollars apiece, the paper defended them as hard-working and effective officers. (Author's interview with former reporter at the paper in question, March 28, 1996.) Is this official control of the media designed to prevent further coverage of a scandal, or is it simply payment by one private citizen to another?

²⁴⁰P. J. O'Rourke, "Of Lunch and War," *Rolling Stone*, November 3, 1994, p. 88.

²⁴¹Two younger Mexican journalists, Gabriela Aguilar and Ana Cecilia Terrazas, have recently published a very thorough study of the Union entitled *La prensa, en la calle: Los voceadores y la distribución de periódicos y revistas en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996). My own interviews with approximately 30 wholesalers, distributors, vendors, and Union officials confirm most of their findings.

top management.²⁴² Publishers passed their newspapers and magazines to one of seven large wholesalers (known as *despachos*), who then divided the periodicals among 200-300 intermediaries (known as *expedios*), who in turn distributed them throughout Mexico City's 20,000-odd kiosks (each of which was allegedly separately owned).²⁴³ The Union did not absorb the cost of papers it failed to sell, but rather passed them back up its distribution chain to the original publishers. Predictably, both the costs of distribution and the rate of returned publications (20-25%) were substantially higher than in competitive markets.²⁴⁴ One editor at the daily *Economista* described the Union as a "corrupt, disorganized, and inefficient" mafia -- a sentiment echoed by some of the organization's own members.²⁴⁵

At the behest of the government, the Union restricted the distribution of certain publications that stretched the limits of official tolerance, such as *Política* in the 1960's, *Impacto* in 1985-6, and various publications during the Echeverría administration (1970-76). These practices continued until recently in less frequent and dramatic ways, such as delaying or reducing the circulation of particularly critical issues of independent papers.²⁴⁶ In the fall of 1991, for instance, the leftist periodical *Motivos* ran a satirical cartoon depicting then-President Carlos Salinas as a street vendor auctioning off the national patrimony. That particular issue failed to "sell well," Union managers claimed, even though most of the bundles it returned to *Motivos* had never been unwrapped for distribution.²⁴⁷

²⁴²In an effort to ensure that their periodical is properly "pushed" by the Union or similar organizations in other Mexican cities, some papers (such as *Financiero* and *Siglo 21* in Guadalajara) pay the Union 42 percent of the final price.

²⁴³The number of full-time *expedios* is actually closer to 50, as a larger number exist only for the less lucrative distribution of afternoon editions. Aguilar and Terrazas argue that the number of actual Union members is around 7,000, some of whom own more than one newsstand. See Gabriela Aguilar and Ana Cecilia Terrazas, *La prensa, en la calle: Los voceadores y la distribución de periódicos y revistas en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996).

²⁴⁴Distribution might cost 20-30 percent of the end price in comparable markets. *Reforma's* private network of hawkers absorbs 30 percent of the price paid by consumers.

²⁴⁵See Aguilar and Terrazas, *La prensa, en la calle: Los voceadores y la distribución de periódicos y revistas en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996), p. 118-19; author's interviews with distributors and Union managers, Mexico City, July 1995.

²⁴⁶Author's interview with senior manager at the *Unión de Voceadores*, July 25, 1995. See also Gabriela Aguilar and Ana Cecilia Terrazas, *La prensa, en la calle: Los voceadores y la distribución de periódicos y revistas en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo and Universidad Iberoamericana, 1996), p. 115 and p. 143-8.

²⁴⁷Author's interview with Juan Luís Conchelo, editor of *Motivos*, August 15, 1995.

Compared to other weapons in the government's arsenal, control over the distribution of periodicals was relatively cumbersome and expensive. Halting the distribution of a given issue meant that the government had failed to adequately control things on the "front end." In addition, manipulation of distribution was also fairly transparent and easy to document -- much more so than the subtle rentier mechanisms it supplemented. As a result, it became increasingly problematic as Mexico's political transition proceeded.

In the 1990s, the emergence of alternative distribution networks and divisions within the syndicate further reduced the Union's coherence and efficacy as an instrument of official control.²⁴⁸ To compensate, some politicians turned to the only slightly more subtle approach of buying up or stealing all the copies of a particularly damaging publication.²⁴⁹ For instance, issues of *Proceso* criticizing the governors of Aguascalientes, Zacatecas, Tabasco, and Veracruz in the mid-1990s tended to sell out suspiciously rapidly in those states.²⁵⁰ Although manipulation of distribution was relatively rare, therefore, it did occur.

²⁴⁸In addition to the *Reforma* network of street vendors and a similar system in Monterrey, there are a few national alternatives to the *Unión*. Smaller independent companies like CITEM and DIFESA handle distribution to department stores, restaurants, hotels, and other sales outlets, and several papers do a healthy business through subscriptions.

²⁴⁹See Article 19, *In the Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Article 19, 1989), p. 19; Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 325-6.

²⁵⁰Author's interview with senior editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996; author's interview with Amalia García of the PRD, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

Manipulation of access

The total subordination [of journalists] to official information has given rise to some incredible and aberrant cases. For instance, there was a radio reporter assigned to the office of the President, who trotted behind officials every time they traveled to ask them for their comments. On one occasion, the reporter approached a Cabinet officer and requested a statement. "What do you want me to say?" the Secretary replied. "Whatever you want," begged the reporter, "but say something."²⁵¹

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

In the 1990s, Mexican journalists often drew a distinction between (1) the government's willingness to tolerate criticism, and (2) its willingness to furnish the media with information that should reasonably be considered public. In a system where judges sometimes claimed copyright over their legal decisions and presidential approval ratings were considered a state secret, this second component of press freedom remained even less developed than the first.²⁵² Although Mexico had no legal classification system for government documents -- thus implying that they were all public -- in practice most touchy information was treated as if it were highly classified.²⁵³ Basic financial data (foreign exchange reserves, government interest rates, equities trading volumes, etc.) were closely guarded, and even the figures that journalists eventually received were sometimes "massaged" to support

²⁵¹Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para un nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 106.

²⁵²For more detail, see Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The search for rights and responsibilities of the press and mass media in four Latin American nations*, IIE Research Report No. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 63.

²⁵³As Marco Antonio Rascón, a congressman from the PRD and an occasional contributor to *La Jornada*, put it, "here, everything is open and everything is secret." (Interview on *Nuestro Tiempo*, Channel 11, March 18, 1996.)

official pronouncements.²⁵⁴ Meanwhile, reporters independent enough to seek information on revenues and expenditures for government agencies (such as the National Lottery), bureaucratic operations (such as land title registration), or any subject relating to the Mexican military rapidly ran into an impenetrable wall of official silence.²⁵⁵ As one editor at an semi-independent newspaper lamented in 1996:

In the United States or Europe, you can usually find someone who will answer your questions. Maybe they won't really tell you much, but after some digging and pushing, you will get some kind of response. Here, not only do they not answer your questions, they don't even answer your phone calls.²⁵⁶

Predictably, access to the President and control of the President's image were especially strict. Candid photographs were rare and public appearances well-scripted.²⁵⁷ As one observer described the situation:

for years, television media were not allowed to film the president. All images of the president would come from the presidential office, edited to put the best face on him. If an unflattering image slipped through, such as a blemish or a drop of saliva on the president's lip, television networks were sometimes called and asked to return the tape of the president for further editing. When the president's office is happy with a tape of the president, they can be relentless in calling the station and demanding that they air at least five minutes of a fifteen minute speech.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴Author's interviews with Alejandro Junco, publisher of *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995; Jesús Sánchez, political news editor, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, September 20, 1995 and March 27, 1996; Rogelio Cárdenas, publisher, and Alejandro Ramos, news editor, *El Financiero*, Mexico City, March 27, 1996; Congresswoman Pati Mendoza, member of committee on media reform, Mexico City, August 11, 1995; Congresswoman María Teresa Gómez-Mont, leader of National Action Party (PAN) delegation of congressional committee on media reform, Mexico City, March 25, 1996. Many journalists and opposition politicians blame the lack of timely, accurate information about currency reserves for the 1994 peso crisis.

²⁵⁵Claudia Fernández, "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón...y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July/September, 1995, p. 14-15. One senior journalist I spoke with described the Mexican military as "a tortoise with a very thick carapace." (Author's interview with Jesús Sánchez, politics editor, *Financiero*, Mexico City September 20, 1995.)

²⁵⁶Author's interview with senior Mexican journalist, April 3, 1996.

²⁵⁷Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) was the first Mexican president to grant a live radio interview, to hold regular live press conferences, and to participate in a live television debate against his opponents.

²⁵⁸Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 23.

Although former President Carlos Salinas was Mexico's undisputed master of image management, earlier chief executives were also assiduous about protecting their image. For instance, when a leading Spanish journalist sought to interview former President Miguel de la Madrid, the President's press secretary struck from the pre-set agenda any reference to corruption charges against high-ranking officials, well-documented allegations of embezzlement by the president himself, and the unresolved murder of Mexico City columnist Manuel Buendía.²⁵⁹

As with access to official advertising and other funds, access to official information was granted selectively as a way to reward sympathetic media and punish independent ones. Overly frisky newspapers were expelled from the press pool and Mexico's most revered independent journalist, Julio Scherer-García, was banned from the Presidential palace. At a crucial 1990 press conference given by former President Carlos Salinas, for instance, reporters from publications like *Financiero*, *Economista*, and *Proceso* were not allowed in, and *La Jornada* was limited to one of twelve spots. The bulk of the slots were awarded to reliably pro-government newspapers or broadcast media. In 1996, in a similarly glaring example of heavy-handed spin control, Mexico's Interior Ministry reportedly drew up a short "blacklist" of journalists whom government officials were expected to shun.²⁶⁰ Such machinations encouraged press release journalism in the pro-government media and gave the state yet another club with which to bludgeon recalcitrant, independent-minded reporters.²⁶¹ In other words, manipulation of access complemented the array of favors and bribes that tied Mexico's media to the regime.

²⁵⁹Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 249.

²⁶⁰I discussed this alleged list with several prominent journalists and editors, including René Delgado (*Reforma*), Carlos Marín (*Proceso*), Froylan López (*Proceso*), Roberto Zamarripa (*Reforma*), and Raymundo Riva-Palacio (*Reforma*). The irony of the list is that several of the journalists named are considered thoroughly corrupt. Interior Ministry officials (who were quite frank on other matters) acknowledged that such lists had existed in the past, but insisted that any list today would be informal and unofficial.

²⁶¹These days, Mexico's best independent journalists insist that government control of information and manipulation of access are not insurmountable obstacles for competent reporters. Many of these journalists have well-cultivated sources inside the government who are prepared to leak them "official" information. But the degree of control exercised by the state is nonetheless striking. Because reporters are dependent on information to do their jobs properly, manipulation of access remains a potent tool of official influence.

Monitoring and harassment

I have lived through practically everything. There were telephone threats and written threats...attacks against my family's physical safety, and advertising boycotts, including those by private firms....

On May 18, we published the letter of a reader that, parodying the text of Mario Benedetti -- why are you laughing, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Secretary, why are you laughing -- questioned the current president [Carlos Salinas]....On Monday, May 22, I met with Otto Granados, the President's Director of Social Communications, to discuss the issue. The atmosphere was tense and the conversation sharp. The crucial moment came when he explained to me: 'I will tell you the rules under which we operate. They are respect for the President, respect for the President's image, and professionalism in your work. These are the sensible, rational rules, on the basis of which we can do business -- but if you prefer others, we can work with those as well.'

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

-- Jesús Cantú, editor of Monterrey's *El Porvenir*, describing the circumstances that led up to his resignation in 1991²⁶²

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

From the 1970's until 1996, official monitoring and disciplining of the media at the federal level was carried out by two directorates of "Social Communications" located within the Ministry of the Interior and the Executive Office of the President.²⁶³ Because these two entities had parallel structures and shared similar objectives, the organizational boundaries between them were not

²⁶²Cited in Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 345-6.

²⁶³In 1996, the Office of the President ceded much of the direct management of the media to the Interior Ministry, leaving the President's staff focused on image-management and other tasks associated with press relations in more democratic political systems.

always clear.²⁶⁴ In general, though, the Interior Ministry was in charge of identifying potential problems and trouble-shooting, while the presidential staff handled relationships with media owners. Particularly intractable or nettlesome issues were thus passed from the Interior Ministry to the president's office.²⁶⁵

Typically, government monitors paid as much attention to the "spin" on a story as they did to the story's actual appearance. In 1987, for instance, National Action Party (PAN) leader Luís H. Alvarez declared a hunger strike to protest electoral fraud. At a subsequent meeting of opposition political parties, a group of right-wing extremists broke into the room demanding air time. The government promptly phoned a number of reliable media to suggest that the "real story" was the behavior of a few fanatics, rather than the widely-acknowledged electoral fraud that had triggered Alvarez's announcement and the opposition meeting.²⁶⁶

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

Generally, a call from a high-ranking government official to a media owner suggesting that a station or paper cover a story in a particular way, emphasize a certain aspect or drop a particular angle suffices. The military, for instance, was recently concerned that its image was suffering at the hands of the media. One Mexico City television news bureau said that it received a videotape this past December [1992] showing soldiers handing out Christmas presents to children, accompanied with a polite letter explaining that the military wanted to polish its image and requesting that it run the tape as a news story.²⁶⁷

The same tactics were occasionally used to kill potentially damaging stories outright. One particularly notorious incident occurred as *Proceso* magazine was preparing to publish a report that lambasted then-Interior Minister Manuel Bartlett for alleged abuse of authority.²⁶⁸ *Proceso* editors Julio Scherer-García and Vicente Leñero were treated to a visit by José Antonio Zorrilla-Pérez, then head of Mexico's Federal Police. Holding a bottle at the edge of the table, Zorrilla told them:

²⁶⁴Both groups were organized by region (Mexico City media, provincial media, and foreign media). Each regional subdirectorate was divided into print and broadcast media.

²⁶⁵Author's interview with Interior Ministry officials, April 3, 1996.

²⁶⁶Author's interview with Juan Luís Conchelo, editor of *Motivos*, August 15, 1995.

²⁶⁷Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 22.

²⁶⁸The article in question recounted how Bartlett had used his position to arrange for the rescue (or kidnapping, depending on whose account one believes) two younger relatives from a religious cult in Venezuela.

“*Proceso* is here. Do you want it to fall off?”²⁶⁹ Given that Zorrilla was later arrested (in June 1989) for the murder of Mexico City columnist Manuel Buendía, the warning carried some weight. *Proceso* opted not to run the story.

Phone calls and summons after the fact were more worrisome and normally indicated intense official displeasure. Editors at one provincial paper recounted how they received two separate telephone calls from the state governor over a cartoon lampooning Mexican political culture. In the course of his harangue, the governor ominously denounced the paper as an “obstacle to the governability of the state” -- a charge he repeated publicly thereafter.²⁷⁰

One common outcome of ex-post reprimands was for the medium in question to offer (or the government to demand) the dismissal of a particular reporter or editor. Most senior journalists -- even those regarded as sympathetic to the regime -- were fired at some point in their careers, and many were fired more than once. Raúl Trejo, Benjamín Wong, Manú Dombrierer, Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, Enrique Quintana, René Delgado, and numerous others were all sacrificed by the owners of the news organization for which they worked. Wong’s case is illustrative: after Mexico City’s devastating 1985 earthquake, reporters examining the basement of the collapsed City Attorney General’s building found the bodies of at least two men with their hands tied behind their backs. The two men, allegedly criminals linked to the Colombian drug cartels, had clearly not died in the earthquake; in fact, subsequent investigations suggested that they had been tortured to death. Wong, then editor of *Universal*, ran the story on the front page and was promptly sacked.²⁷¹

Such dismissals were equally common in broadcasting. The 1993 campaign against independent media orchestrated by the Salinas administration in preparation for the announcement of the PRI’s 1994 presidential candidate is an excellent case in point. Harassment began in earnest when Enrique Quintana was fired from Stereo Cién after interviewing Eduardo Valle, a former government official who had accused the PRI of links to narco trafficking.²⁷² In April, veteran journalist René

²⁶⁹ Author’s interview with Carlos Marín of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996.

²⁷⁰ Author’s interview with editor of provincial daily, April 2, 1996. Threats to the paper subsided when the governor was subsequently forced to resign for unrelated reasons.

²⁷¹ Author’s interview with Benjamín Wong, April 3, 1996. The same story is also recounted in Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993).

²⁷² Heuvel and Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America’s Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 46.

Delgado was removed from the morning news show *Para Empezar*.²⁷³ Only four months later, independent political activist Adolfo Aguilar-Zinzer was fired from Radio Fórmula.²⁷⁴ And in September, Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, host of Radio Mil's news program, *The City*, was forced to resign after he interviewed leftist opposition leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas.²⁷⁵

Delgado's case offers a unique insight into the difficulties that confronted independent-minded journalists in Mexico. Delgado began his broadcasting career in 1978 at the government-run Channel 11, but after covering a strike at General Motors two years later, he was promptly shown the door. From 1980-84, he drifted between the semi-independent newspaper *unomásuno*, the University-run television station (Channel 13), and a weekly magazine called *Seminario*. Frustrated with frequent dismissals and reportedly blacklisted on government orders, Delgado withdrew from journalism entirely for nearly four years. He reemerged to join the leftist independent daily *La Jornada* in 1987, leaving in 1990 to help launch *El Independiente* newspaper (a project which ultimately never came to fruition). After a brief return to *La Jornada* in 1991, he moved on to the semi-independent specialty magazine *Este País* and then to the daily radio show *Para Empezar*. At the behest of Interior Minister Patrocinio González, Delgado was sacked in 1993 -- not for any one incident, he believes, but simply because he was too outspoken at a time when the regime was striving to tighten control over the electronic media. Delgado again found refuge in the print media, this time as a columnist at the independent center-right daily *El Financiero*. In October 1994, he joined the newly launched independent daily *Reforma*, which had poached many of the top staff from *El Independiente* and *Financiero*. Finally, in 1995, he was invited to restart *Para Empezar* (while still an editor at *Reforma*).²⁷⁶

Precisely which of Delgado's frequent job changes and dismissals were the result of government pressure is difficult to determine. As one radio journalist put it, "you never know why they fired you. They say it's because of your ratings, or

²⁷³Roberto Zamarripa, "Manuel Villa sugiere, exige, ordena: fuera del aire Castañeda, Aguilar Zínzer, Sodi, Delgado, Granados..." *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 14.

²⁷⁴Carlos Marín, "El gobierno de México no admite voces contrarias: Jorge Castañeda," *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 10.

²⁷⁵Roberto Zamarripa, "Vigilado, hostigado, insultado, prohibido. Cárdenas apela a la ética de los medios," *Proceso*, October 4, 1993, p. 7-9. According to the *Latin American Weekly Reporter* (October 14, 1993), Granados-Chapa's ouster was the result of pressure from Interior Ministry official Manuel Villa.

²⁷⁶Author's interview with René Delgado, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.

sometimes because your views don't correspond with the station's editorial line. But they don't tell you that such-and-such minister called and ordered the owner to run you out."²⁷⁷ The capricious environment in which journalists operated thus encouraged circumspection and self-censorship — which was, of course, the ultimate goal.

Relatively gentle forms of harassment were enough to keep most errant media in line. But such tactics could take a harsher edge if they failed to have the desired effect. In broadcasting, the regime's ability to withdraw operating licenses hung like a sword of Damocles over the heads of radio and television owners. Given the Byzantine legal structure that governed Mexico's electronic media, the regime could readily find a pretext for withdrawing the license of an unruly radio or television station. A host of apparently trivial regulations, seldom enforced, could always be dredged up to serve political ends. Rules governing national content, educational programming, and commercial advertising, for instance, could all be invoked to justify government intervention. For the broadcast media, this sort of intervention (or potential intervention) was probably the most powerful instrument of government control. Although this tool was rarely used, the mere threat was extremely successful in inducing broad self-censorship.²⁷⁸

In the print media, the government lacked such ready points of access once other controls had broken down. Consequently, government reprisals were more noisy and threatening. From 1950 to 1990, a handful of publications were persecuted to the point of closure: *Presente* after running afoul of President Miguel Alemán; *Política* after a string of government harassments and economic problems in 1966;²⁷⁹ *Diario de México* in 1967, after reversing the captions on two photographs and thus portraying President Díaz-Ordaz as an ape in the zoo;²⁸⁰ the

²⁷⁷ Author's interview with Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 22, 1997.

²⁷⁸ See Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), especially p. 53-56. According to Alisky, the Mexican government did not permanently revoke a single broadcasting license between 1934 and 1981, though it did suspend some temporarily and several owners were unofficially pressured into selling their concessions. My impression is that this general trend has persisted, though one Interior Ministry official told me of a provincial radio station that lost its license during the Salinas administration after a series of nasty personal attacks on the local mayor.

²⁷⁹ Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 71.

²⁸⁰ This famous story is recounted in Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control*, Ph.D. dissertation (Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, March 1972, p. 78 and Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 106-8. The paper was subsequently revived in 1971 and has remained faithfully pro-government ever since.

Communist Party's *Voz de México* in July 1968 in response to student protests; the radical leftist magazine *Por Qué?* in 1974;²⁸¹ *ABC* of Tijuana in the second half of 1979;²⁸² and *Impacto* in 1986. One of the most celebrated cases of direct government intervention occurred in July 1976, when President Luís Echeverría orchestrated a coup at *Excelsior* (then Mexico City's leading newspaper), ejecting Julio Scherer-García and his team of independent-minded editors.²⁸³ Another significant incident came in the wake of President José López-Portillo's bank nationalization in 1982, when *El Norte* publisher Alejandro Junco was temporarily forced to flee the country with his family.²⁸⁴ Although no one was physically harmed in these incidents, they represented clear cases of censorship.

Hard-line tactics were more common in the provinces, where local bosses (known as *caciques*) often exercised strict authoritarian control over their fiefdoms. As one editor at an independent provincial daily explained, governors who were both repressive and intelligent could exact a terrible toll on insufficiently docile media. Repeated financial audits, capricious enforcement of industrial relations laws and building codes, indirect pressure through private advertisers, and a host of other harassment techniques -- all technically legal -- usually proved fatal to targeted publications.²⁸⁵ And when they did not, *caciques* could resort to more brutal forms of control, including assaults by mobs and other physical attacks.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹See Kenneth Johnson, *Mexican Democracy: A Critical View* (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 156-162.

²⁸²Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 197-8. In response to these pressures, the paper expelled its director, Jesús Blancornelos, who left with 26 other staffers. Blancornelos subsequently founded Tijuana's independent weekly *Zeta*.

²⁸³This team of journalists figures prominently in Chapter Three.

²⁸⁴This event -- discussed further in Chapter Three -- had a profound impact on Junco and his colleagues at *El Norte*. Senior editors and managers at *Reforma*, including Junco himself, invariably mentioned the de facto expulsion as a pivotal moment in their view of their role as journalists and their relationship to the political establishment.

²⁸⁵Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief of *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996. *Siglo 21* was based in Guadalajara, Jalisco, a state controlled after 1995 by the opposition National Action Party. As one journalist at the paper put it, "if we were in Puebla, Tabasco, or Guerrero [states then controlled by hard-line PRI governors], we'd be history." (Author's interview, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.)

²⁸⁶In such cases, the federal government has often intervened to prevent the escalation of confrontations between provincial media and provincial political leaders. (Author's interview with Interior Ministry officials, April 3, 1996 and with Hernán Casares, news editor of *Diario de Yucatán*, April 6, 1996). See also Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 264, 279-82.

The vitriolic conflict between the independent *El Diario de Yucatán* and Governor Dulce María Sauri provides a telling example of organized harassment of the media by local bosses. For years, *El Diario de Yucatán* was the focal point for conservative opposition to the PRI in Yucatán state. Nevertheless, the extent of its conflicts depended in large measure on who occupied the governor's mansion. The replacement of Governor Victor Manzanilla -- with whom the paper had a difficult but civil relationship -- by Sauri in February 1990 spelled trouble for the paper. The new governor's husband had once been active in Mexico's leftist underground, and *El Diario* -- quite possibly wrongly -- linked him to the notorious abduction and murder of Monterrey industrialist Eugenio Garza-Sada twenty years before. The allegation provoked a full-fledged attack on *El Diario*. Over the next two years, the government financed a series of competing newspapers and magazines, most importantly the leftist daily *Por Esto*. It also cut off all official access to reporters from *El Diario*, suspended official advertising, and initiated a generalized propaganda campaign against the paper in the electronic media. For its part, *El Diario* launched its own vituperative campaign against the governor herself, exaggerating corruption and repression during her administration. Conflict culminated in an anonymous bomb threat at the paper's offices and an attack on the owner's home. Despite electoral victory by the PAN in the state's 1991 legislative elections, the situation continued to deteriorate. A visit by President Carlos Salinas and his top aide, José Córdoba, in 1993 -- during which Córdoba made a point of conveying the President's concern over the situation to both sides -- led to a temporary *modus vivendi*. But the conflict was not fully resolved until Sauri was subsequently replaced by a new interim governor.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Author's interview with Hernán Casares, news editor of *El Diario de Yucatán*, April 6, 1996.

7. La mano dura

In Mexico a writer is free to say whatever he wants until censorship commands the opposite, and censorship appears in various forms....Juan Miguel de Mora is a renowned Sanskrit scholar....He is also a journalist, a theater critic, and a novelist, and in his free time he writes books on Mexican presidential administrations....The limits to de Mora's freedom became apparent in the 1970's when, after a few attempts to corrupt him by buying him off, it was indirectly suggested that he leave the country to stay alive. While he was driving south in Mexico, after two overnight stops, strange things began to happen: all the nuts in one wheel came loose at the same time, and his trailer inexplicably became unhooked from his car while on a difficult mountain road. I always thought that de Mora's international and national reputation would protect him from repression, but that does not seem to be the case....²⁸⁸

Relatively mild punishments were usually sufficient to drive independent media into compliance or out of business. As a consequence, organized official repression against the media was seldom necessary. Nevertheless, what Mexicans call *la mano dura* -- the iron fist of the state -- remained available should other tactics fail. In the 1980s and 1990s, independent newspapers emerged that were able to resist traditional enticements and to survive government attempts to pummel them into submission. Precisely as a result of the declining efficacy of familiar instruments of official control, physical attacks on the media increased. Corrupt officials fearing exposure by the country's increasingly assertive media turned to overt repression to keep the press in line.

Perhaps sixty Mexican journalists were murdered between 1980 and 1996 -- a striking figure even if many of the murders were not related to the journalists' work.²⁸⁹ Repression intensified in the 1980's, a period which coincided not only

²⁸⁸Samuel Schmidt, *The Deterioration of the Mexican Presidency* (Tulance: University of Arizona Press, 1991), p. 10.

²⁸⁹Mexico had the highest rate of journalists murdered of any country in the world in 1986, and until 1988 was surpassed only by such paragons of press freedom as El Salvador, the Philippines, and Nigeria. See Rodriguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 279; Report of the International Press Institute, December 1994, p. 52-3; Article 19, *In the Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Article 19, 1989), Appendix I; Jonathan Alter, "Reporters under the Gun," *Newsweek*, December 17, 1986, p. 62. According to a report published in *La Jornada* (August 3, 1992), some 52 journalists were murdered between 1982 and 1992. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, twenty reporters were murdered as a result of their work between 1985 and 1995. See Committee to Project Journalists, *Attacks on the Press in 1996: A Worldwide Survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists* (New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, March 1997).

with the emergence of independent papers but also with the thorough penetration of drug-related corruption in Mexico's political establishment. Indeed, many of the killings appear related to drug-trafficking or graft stemming from the drug trade. Mexico's most infamous case -- the assassination of Mexico City columnist Manuel Buendía on May 30, 1984 -- resulted from Buendía's investigations of drug-related corruption in the federal police.²⁹⁰

The politically-motivated murder of journalists was normally the work of vindictive middle-level government officials, rather than any premeditated strategy by the federal government. Journalists in Mexico City in the mid-1990s rarely mentioned physical threats as a serious concern, and even provincial reporters placed much greater emphasis on other forms of state control. One editor of a prominent provincial daily explained that his fears centered on the misguided "loyal friend" of a high-ranking official, or the overzealous "subordinate with initiative," whose actions would rarely be endorsed by higher authorities.²⁹¹ In this sense, the most worrisome issue for Mexican journalists was a climate of impunity that permitted violent retaliation against the media. Although physical assaults on journalists were not a standard element of official policy, their infrequent occurrence had a chilling effect. The fact that not all attacks were solved and assailants were rarely brought to justice served as a reminder that forceful methods of media control exist.

To summarize, Mexico's old system of press control relied mainly on pervasive corruption of the media (in all its forms). As a result, there was often little overt pressure from the traditional media to investigate controversial topics and publish sensitive information. Rather, most Mexican publishers, broadcasters, editors, reporters, and distributors were part of the old system of rent-seeking that benefited them as well as the country's political leadership. Given the scope of positive incentives, the overt and brutal methods of media control found in most autocratic political systems were largely redundant. These were normally reserved for independent media that chose to reject the beneficence of the state and consequently might be tempted to disseminate damaging information. As Mexico's press became more assertive and less corrupt, overt repression increased.

²⁹⁰Article 19, *In the Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Article 19, 1989).

²⁹¹Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief of *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

Bandwagon journalism²⁹²

In general, Mexico's system of media control proved effective in producing a relatively docile and domesticated press. Mexico's media were much more varied and independent than media in many autocratic regimes, but they were nevertheless manipulated and controlled through an array of subtle -- and sometimes not so subtle -- mechanisms. These mechanisms helped guarantee (1) selective silence on issues of particular vulnerability for the government, (2) official control of the public agenda, and (3) partisan media bias in favor of the PRI. The net consequence was legitimization of Mexico's autocratic regime.

1. Selective silence

Since their silence about the 1968 massacre of student demonstrators in Tlatelolco Plaza, Mexico's traditional media have earned a well-deserved reputation for avoiding topics that the government considered especially damaging.²⁹³ Touchy issues -- drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protest, political repression, and the Mexican military -- were ignored or downplayed in favor of collusion and strategic silence.²⁹⁴ After the 1994 presidential election, for instance, the National Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry (CIRT) circulated a letter to its members instructing them to refrain from any mention of electoral irregularities.²⁹⁵ In certain cases, media silence reached absurd proportions: during the worst periods of economic crisis in the 1980's, for instance,

²⁹²I owe this term to Marvin Alisky's *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), p. 28.

²⁹³The massacre at Mexico City's Tlatelolco Plaza is considered a major turning point in Mexican political history. As with similar acts of official repression (Tiananmen in China, Kwangju in South Korea, the Boston Massacre in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, etc.), Tlatelolco represented a focusing moment that signaled the regime's fundamental loss legitimacy. The media's reaction (or lack thereof) figures prominently in various accounts of the tragedy and in the memorial that now stands in Tlatelolco Plaza.

²⁹⁴According to one maxim, there were traditionally three "untouchables" in Mexico: the President, the national army, and the Virgin of Guadalupe. Today, nothing in Mexico is totally off-limits, though certain topics are likely to elicit more vigorous reprisals from the government.

²⁹⁵As a consequence of this self-censorship campaign, the broadcast media did not interview Sergio Aguayo, leader of the non-partisan electoral watchdog group Alianza Cívica and notable critic of the electoral process. See Jon Vanden Heuvel, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995), p. 46; *La Jornada*, August 27, 1994.

the National University's radio station in Mexico City (Radio UNAM) was forbidden from even using the word "inflation."²⁹⁶

As opposition leaders are quick to point out, Mexican television coverage was particularly "Orwellian."²⁹⁷ According to one observer:

Regular viewers of Televisa are more likely to know about unrest in Madrid, Bogotá, or Chicago than about domestic problems. The picture of Mexico normally presented on its main news program is that of a calm, democratic nation where bullfights are about all that ever turns bloody.²⁹⁸

Until recently, sensitive topics were simply not part of regular news coverage. Street demonstrations, for instance, were typically reported only in the context of the traffic congestion they provoked.²⁹⁹ Coverage of the economy was normally very positive, even during bad times.³⁰⁰ Equally telling was the company's studious avoidance of particular individuals -- typically, leading members of the political opposition. Televisa traditionally maintained a list of two to three dozen "vetoed" personages, mainly leftist opposition figures, whom reporters were not allowed to interview. During the Salinas administration, for instance, this list included PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, deposed Pemex union boss Joaquín Hernández-Galicia (a.k.a., "La Quina"), former Mexico City mayor Manuel Camacho-Solís (after his defection from the PRI in 1994), and human rights activist Rosario Ibarra y Piedra.³⁰¹

The emergence of credible alternative sources of information (independent newspapers, pay television networks, foreign media, etc.) during the 1980's and

²⁹⁶ Author's interview with Juan Luis Conchelo, editor of *Motivos*, Mexico City, August 15, 1995. Radio UNAM was also forbidden from mentioning the leftist University Student Council (CEU).

²⁹⁷ Author's interview with Amalia García, Party of the Democratic Revolution, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

²⁹⁸ Anthony DePalma, "Mexican Press Docile on Revolt," *New York Times*, May 6, 1994, p. 4.

²⁹⁹ Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* (Televisa's main nightly news program) during the first two weeks of March for 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996; the main findings of this analysis are discussed further in Chapter Four. I am grateful to Televisa for the opportunity to use their extensive video archives for this purpose -- to my knowledge, the first time academic inquiries of this sort have been permitted.

³⁰⁰ Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

³⁰¹ Author's interview with Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996; author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

1990's rendered complete silence about issues or individuals a less viable strategy. Consequently, traditional media often addressed controversial topics by printing stories that reflected government perspectives and paradigms. Political reform, for instance, was portrayed as "improving Mexican democracy," rather than bringing some measure of accountability to an entrenched autocratic system. Articles on drug trafficking devoted ample ink to Mexican "successes" in interdiction and ritual denunciations of U.S. international counternarcotics policy. Stories about the Mexican military focused on relief and rescue operations, ceremonial events, and patriotic paeans to the national army. Reporting on electoral fraud typically consisted of official retorts, asseverations, and pledges of clean elections in the future. Pandemic graft was gently alluded to through announcements of new anti-corruption initiatives. Specific allegations that did surface were limited to individuals who no longer held public office or who had fallen out of favor with the president.

Another familiar pattern for dealing with damaging material was to report government responses without providing any orienting context. Consequently, passionate denials of official wrongdoing would appear out of nowhere in the political sections of major capital-city papers, as if the charges that originally provoked them had previously been reported. Establishment media adopted this approach with a number of salient but delicate subjects: allegations that President Miguel de la Madrid had deposited approximately \$162 million dollars in foreign bank accounts in 1984; the 1991 ambush (by members of the Mexican army) of federal police agents pursuing drug traffickers in Veracruz; and electoral fraud in Chihuahua in 1986.

Televisa's handling of the PRI's secret fundraising banquet (at which Televisa owner Emilio Azcárraga Jr. pledged more than \$25 million to the party's 1994 campaign) was a classic example of such selective coverage. Not only did Televisa's principal news program *24 Hours* never mention the dinner itself, it devoted three days of sustained coverage to "spinning" the ensuing scandal. The network broadcast a lengthy story comparing the fundraising activities of different political parties around the world, followed by a brief "investigative" report revealing that Mexico's Communist Party had received money from the Soviet Union. Additional reporting was devoted to campaign finance reforms proposed by an embarrassed Salinas administration in the wake of the scandal.³⁰²

³⁰²See *24 Hours*, March 1-4, 1993.

One final approach was to report the event in question without according it much in the way of attention, analysis, or follow-up. Consequently, potentially shocking incidents tended to surface fleetingly and then disappear, rather than snowballing into scandal. After a day or two in the back pages, the story would simply fade away amidst a cacophony of conflicting claims and explanations, never having reached the front pages of traditional newspapers or the electronic media.

2. Official agenda control

Mexican officials have long evinced a profound preoccupation with what they call “governability” -- that is, convincing an allegedly benighted and unruly population to endorse a seemingly interminable array of government initiatives. To do so, Mexico’s political leadership needed to control which issues and policies were viewed as important. Consequently, government officials sought to assure regular media coverage of high-ranking members of the party-state, and of their proposals. For the Presidency and the Interior Ministry, maintaining official agenda control was at least as important a goal as restricting criticism of the government itself.³⁰³

Corruption and manipulation of access were highly effective in producing a captive media that faithfully reported what government officials said and did. Newspaper sources reflected an overwhelmingly pro-government bias, and many headlines consisted of nothing more than assertions by prominent members of the political elite. In television, anchors often read official press releases word for word as the text appeared on the screen. And in both print and broadcast media, each presidential activity and every new government initiative was reported with appropriate deference and fanfare. Even supposedly non-political broadcasts, like soap operas, were occasionally enlisted in support of assorted government initiatives -- birth control, literacy, women’s education, etc. -- thus contributing to the PRI-inspired myth of affirmative state action.³⁰⁴

Televisa’s news coverage was particularly *oficialista* in the agenda-setting sense. Instead of civic gatherings, rallies, strikes, or demonstrations, Televisa tended to focus on reports by commissions of “leading citizens” and comments from pro-government experts or politicians. Press releases and official declarations were given prominent attention, but representatives of Mexican civil society rarely figured

³⁰³ Author’s interviews with officials at the Interior Ministry, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

³⁰⁴ See Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames: Iowa State

in news reports. For instance, a lengthy story on satellite television education in 1994 did not include a single interview with teachers, students, or parents, nor a single image of a classroom. It did, however, feature several self-congratulatory statements by government officials (as well as commentary on Televisa's own role in the expansion of educational television).³⁰⁵ The net effect of such coverage was that Mexico's public agenda was set in government offices and disseminated downward by a captive press.

3. Electoral bias

Selective media silence and disproportionate attention to official voices went hand-in-hand with blatant partiality toward the ruling party during electoral campaigns. During Mexico's 1994 presidential election, for instance, the PRI received approximately 51 percent of television coverage, 89 percent of advertisements, 50 percent of front page newspaper space, and 66 percent of newspaper photographs.³⁰⁶ These figures represented only a limited improvement over Mexico's 1988 elections, in which coverage of the PRI reached over 80 percent in most media.³⁰⁷ Bias was even more outrageous in earlier contests, in which opposition parties' share of campaign airtime was essentially rounding error on that of the PRI.

The tone of coverage, as well as the quantity, also varied dramatically across parties and candidates. In the 1988 campaign, broadcasters reading news about the ruling party tended to be enthusiastic and respectful; footage featured large crowds and patriotic symbols. By contrast, news about the opposition was usually read in a flat or sarcastic tone with few favorable supporting images.³⁰⁸ One particularly

University Press, 1981), p. 57-63.

³⁰⁵24 Hours, March 7, 1994.

³⁰⁶See Alianza Cívica/Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, "The Media and the 1994 Federal Elections in Mexico: A Content Analysis of Television News Coverage of the Political Parties and Presidential Candidates," May 19, 1994. See also, Daniel C. Hallin, *Dos instituciones, un camino: Television and the State in the 1994 Mexican Election*, paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, September 28-30, 1995.

³⁰⁷See Ilya Adler, "The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993); Scott Morrison, "Read all about it! Local news media show a pro-government bias," *MacLean's*, August 15, 1994, p. 22. Most estimates of the 1988 elections come from the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution but seem reasonable.

³⁰⁸Ilya Adler, "The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election," in Thomas

striking example came during the closing period of the campaign. Jacobo Zabludovsky, anchor of Televisa's principal nightly news broadcast, described a Salinas rally in Veracruz as "more than a traditional political act tonight....[it was] an artistic spectacle, full of colors, human warmth, and spontaneity."³⁰⁹ The rally in question was certainly colorful, featuring local folk dances and related pageantry. And Salinas's reception there was noticeably warmer than at his previous tepid campaign appearances. But it is difficult to imagine an event more carefully scripted and *less* spontaneous than a PRI political rally at the close of a presidential campaign.

Not only did the corporation accord strikingly sympathetic coverage to the PRI, it played a crucial role in facilitating more sophisticated PRI electoral strategies. Until 1997, Televisa gave disproportionate coverage to minor political parties at the expense of the conservative PAN and the Cárdenist left.³¹⁰ Coverage thus reinforced the notion that the PRI confronted a fragmented opposition of fringe political groupings. Moreover, because many smaller parties were actually PRI satellites whose representatives voted consistently with government once in office, coverage of them aided the ruling party in its strategy of political brand proliferation.

One intriguing example of more subtle media bias occurred during the 1994 presidential election, which took place amid an atmosphere of increasing political instability. Throughout the campaign, Televisa gave copious coverage to instances of political violence in other countries (e.g., Guatemala, which happens to border the turbulent state of Chiapas).³¹¹ Subsequent studies have lent credence to the notion that fear of violence was a crucial factor in generating support for the PRI, long viewed as a guarantor of political stability.³¹² In other words, by selectively accentuating the threat of upheaval and subtly framing the election in terms of

Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), p. 155.

³⁰⁹24 Hours, March 8, 1988.

³¹⁰The PRI traditionally encouraged the formation of small parties to increase the illusion of political pluralism, co-opt anti-government activists, and fragment the electoral opposition.

³¹¹Author's interview with Miguel Acosta, director of media monitoring at Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos, Mexico City, April 8, 1996; author's interview with senior official at the Office of the President, March 20, 1996; see also Daniel C. Hallin, *Dos instituciones, un camino: Television and the State in the 1994 Mexican Election*, paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, September 28-30, 1995.

³¹²See contributions by Alberto Cinta and Jorge Buendía in Jorge I. Domínguez and Jorge Buendía, eds., *The Changing Mexican Voter: Electoral Participation in the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

“stability” versus “instability”, Televisa helped generate electoral support for the ruling party.

Partisan media bias was crucial to maintaining PRI control in an era when blatant electoral fraud was becoming increasingly untenable. During the Salinas administration, professional image management and careful media framing of key events successfully conveyed the impression of rapid social and economic progress. In addition, government-orchestrated campaigns against the opposition -- especially the leftist PRD -- succeeded in discrediting some of the ruling party's main rivals. These media campaigns contributed to a sweeping PRI victory in the 1991 legislative by-elections, presidential approval ratings that defied gravity, and a solid PRI win in 1994 presidential contest.³¹³

The media's role in the electoral process, however, went beyond acting as a cheerleader and strategist for the incumbent party. Rather, the press was a crucial participant in the rituals of power transfer that legitimized the PRI's hegemonic rule. Unlike many autocracies, the Mexican political system did not derive its legitimacy from a single dominant set of norms or institutions. Its claim to political authority rested on a peculiar combination of revolutionary heritage, state-corporatist intermediation, electoral victory, economic stewardship, and simple tradition. At least until recent years, therefore, elections in Mexico served a different function from the competition and choice associated with established democracies. They formed part of a complex political pageantry that simultaneously invoked several of the PRI's claims to legitimacy.

As Ilya Adler argued in his penetrating analysis of the 1988 presidential elections, the media helped generate an aura of suspense, drama and vicarious participation around the unveiling of the PRI's chosen presidential candidate (who was assured of electoral victory).³¹⁴ During this pre-election period, the media provided a forum for contending factions within the ruling party -- technocrats and politicians, rightists and leftists, farmers and laborers, etc. -- to advance their positions and mobilize support for their favored contenders (known as “pre-

³¹³Media influences on voting behavior are discussed further in Chapter Six and Seven. Regarding media influences on presidential approval ratings, see Andrés Villareal, "Public Opinion of the Economy and the President during the Salinas Sexenio: The Role of the Mass Media," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C., September 28-30, 1995.

³¹⁴Ilya Adler, "The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press,

candidates”). Once the official PRI candidate was chosen by the outgoing president, the media scrupulously recorded his activities and prepared the rest of the country for his ultimate ascension to power. The establishment print media acted as a sort of royal scribe, accompanying the official candidate on his campaign tour and chronicling the activities of his court.³¹⁵ At the same time, saturation coverage in the broadcast media built the candidate up from a savvy political operator to an individual of national and historic stature, worthy to be invested with the pharaonic power of a modern Mexican president.

Even in the midst of Mexico’s political transition, traditional elements of the media continued to play this sort of role. Daniel Hallin’s analysis of campaign coverage during the 1994 presidential elections revealed that -- in addition to favoritism for the PRI -- Televisa’s reporting nurtured existing authoritarian paradigms. Televised images of future president Ernesto Zedillo typically portrayed him distributing land titles and similar patronage to duly submissive groups of peasants or poor urban dwellers. These images, and others like them, tended to reinforce a traditional notion of political participation, in which “citizenship” consisted of waiting passively for clientelistic benefits handed down by a paternalistic state.³¹⁶ In other words, television coverage attempted to legitimate key elements of a system viewed as anachronistic even by many of its own supporters.

The limits of media control

A despot doesn’t fear eloquent writers preaching freedom -- he fears
a drunken poet who may crack a joke that will take hold.
-- E. B. White

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

1993).

³¹⁵Ilya Adler, “The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election,” in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington DC: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), p. 164.

³¹⁶Daniel C. Hallin, *Dos instituciones, un camino: Television and the State in the 1994 Mexican Election*,” paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, September 28-30, 1995, p. 14.

First, the politically amorphous nature of the PRI encouraged an impressive degree of ideological pluralism within the media. Dogmatically leftist newspapers like *El Día* coexisted with right-wing dailies like *El Heraldo de México*. Inter-governmental, regional, and personalistic divisions within the PRI also encouraged official indulgence. The government-owned *El Nacional*, for instance, enjoyed periods of greater autonomy when its bureaucratic principals (the Interior Ministry, the Presidency, the PRI, etc.) disagreed.³¹⁷ Some periodicals were also able to preserve a measure of independence by playing on Mexico's federal-state cleavage. The Mérida-based daily *El Diario de Yucatán*, for instance, survived conflicts with local bosses because it rarely came into conflict with federal-level authorities. Conversely, *Proceso* magazine enjoyed good relations with certain PRI leaders at the state level, even though it remained locked in perpetual conflict with the national political establishment. The range of opinion in the media thus reflected the range of the PRI's sprawling political coalition.

Second, the regime showed great sensitivity to the style and timing of critical reporting. Ritual laments (such as leftist condemnations of economic austerity and rightist complaints about official treatment of the church) were more acceptable than focused assaults on subjects of greater vulnerability (e.g., official corruption or electoral fraud). Reasoned, erudite critiques couched in respectful tones met with greater tolerance than bawdy or humorous denunciations with potential mass appeal. Personalized barbs lobbed at particular officials were treated with greater indulgence than condemnations of the system as a whole, especially when these *ad hominem* attacks represented part of the cyclical jockeying for power between rival cliques within the elite. As Ilya Adler pointed out in his analysis of media criticism in Mexico in the 1980s:

apparent criticism by the press is the vehicle that allows competing factions within the system to carry out their political struggles...Therefore, criticism in the press serves a central function for the PRI, a party that has to maintain a system of representation of many factions and diverse ideologies under a single body of politics by maintaining a system of negotiation in a public arena...³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Author's interview with Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, former director of *El Nacional*, September 19, 1995.

³¹⁸ Ilya Adler, "Press-Government Relations in Mexico: A Study of Freedom of the Mexican Press and Press Criticism of Government Institutions," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 1993, 12, p. 16.

Third, for government officials the medium mattered as much as the message. Compared to radio and television, for instance, the regime accorded print media greater maneuvering room – both because state intervention was easier in broadcasting and because print media, with their rather limited circulation, were deemed less threatening. Within the print media themselves, back page articles were accorded much greater leeway than front page headlines, photographs, political cartoons, or editorial columns.³¹⁹ Within broadcasting, radio was granted more leeway than television, and minor reports more than lead stories. Publishers and broadcasters thus confronted a hierarchy of official shibboleths.

Understanding the old regime: an example

One case that captures the nuances and ironies of media control in Mexico is *La Jornada*, the main voice of Mexico's anti-system left. Since its creation in 1984, the paper has had a complex relationship with Mexico's political establishment. Some of the paper's contributors have served in the regime; others have been imprisoned by the same regime. Its funding sources have been equally schizophrenic: although it has consistently been one of Mexico's most independent dailies, *La Jornada* often depended on government advertising for close to half of its revenues. As one prominent journalist put it, "*La Jornada* is a quintessentially Mexican phenomenon: it is dogmatically anti-government, and it lives off the government."³²⁰

To survive, the paper's editors cultivated protectors in the ruling party and picked their battles with the regime with some care. For example, the paper participated in government-orchestrated campaigns against the PAN but, in keeping with its progressive editorial line, also gave favorable coverage to leftist opposition groups.³²¹ Moreover, its coverage tended to be much more critical than investigative – that is, it routinely denounced government policies and registered social opposition to the regime, but it did not focus too much attention on touchy subjects like drug trafficking and official corruption.

La Jornada's savvy longtime editor-in-chief, Carlos Payán, proved especially clever at covering the paper's operating costs without sacrificing too

³¹⁹According to Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief of *Siglo 21*, the government cares most about front-page articles, followed by photographs, political cartoons, opinion pieces, and back-page news – in that order. (Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.) Government sources confirmed this basic hierarchy.

³²⁰Author's interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, September 18, 1995.

much of its editorial independence. In one remarkable instance, the newspaper was allegedly offered a large sum of money -- as much as two million dollars -- in return for favorable coverage of the PRI's 1994 gubernatorial candidate in Tabasco, Carlos Madrazo. Madrazo, a notorious PRI hard-liner, was at that point in the midst of a highly contested race against the leftist PRD (which *La Jornada* normally supported). With the paper in tight financial straits at the time, Payán reportedly accepted the money. He ran Madrazo's *gacetilla* as promised -- right next to a real article from the paper's correspondent in Tabasco that excoriated Madrazo and highlighted the PRD's struggles.³²² Madrazo won the election (or so he claimed), but it is hard to imagine that his investment in *La Jornada* had much to do with it.

Conclusions

This chapter represents an overview of Mexico's old system of media control -- its political context, salient features, consequences, and limits. In general, the PRI was able to manipulate Mexico's media through corruption, selective allocation of broadcasting concessions, and occasional doses of overt repression. While this system of media control was never total, it was quite effective. Mexico's media generally supported existing political institutions by maintaining a studied silence on potentially damaging topics, encouraging official control of the public agenda, and favoring the official party over its electoral rivals.

³²¹ Author's interview with reporter at *La Jornada*, Mexico City, July 18, 1995.

³²² Author's interview with senior official at the Interior Ministry, Mexico City, April 3, 1996. This incident was confirmed in two separate interviews with reporters from *La Jornada*. Participants at the meeting reportedly included Madrazo, Payán, and a well-known academic who specializes in the media.

3. Mexico's Emerging Fourth Estate: The Print Media

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

-- Carlos Payán, *La Jornada* newspaper³²³

Over the last two decades, the old regime that governed Mexico's media has gradually begun to break down. Halting political reform has rendered the use of certain coercive mechanisms -- direct censorship, physical repression, etc. -- more problematic. Cohort change and professionalization within Mexico's journalistic ranks have discouraged the acceptance of bribes and given rise to independent publications. Publishers and broadcasters have capitalized on media audiences increasingly receptive to more assertive coverage, and the financial success of independent media has earned them a great deal of autonomy. The net result of these changes is a contested media regime, in which an emerging "fourth estate" -- incipient in television, partially developed in radio, and full-blown in the print media -- coexists with the old system of corruption and control.

This chapter analyzes the gradual opening of Mexico's print media. Although their reach is not as pervasive as television -- only 15-20% of Mexicans get their news principally from newspapers or magazines -- the print media are important for three reasons.³²⁴ First, Mexico's print media have moved much further toward openness than the country's broadcast media. Their transformation is thus particularly relevant for analysis of changes in the Mexican media. Second, newspapers and magazines are widely read by the nation's elite, including "opinion leaders" and political decision-makers. Therefore, the political influence of the print media is disproportionate to their readership. Finally, increasing openness in the print media has had potent political consequences. As Chapter Five discusses in detail, independent publications have played a crucial role in the new "politics of scandal" in Mexico.

³²³ Author's interview with Carlos Payán, editor-in-chief of *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 14, 1995.

³²⁴ For media use patterns in Mexico, see Jon Vanden Heuval, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media*, p. 40; poll by MORI of Mexico for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/PEAC, April 1993; the 1994 World Survey of Values in Mexico; and "La reforma electoral y su contexto sociocultural," IFE/Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la UNAM, 1996 (Cuadra 1.4). Private polls from the Office of the Presidency, as well as recent surveys conducted by *Reforma*, give similar figures.

This chapter begins with an overview of Mexico's print media, especially on the so-called "national" publications based in Mexico City. The second section traces the process of media opening chronologically, focusing on several key turning points in the Mexican press. The third section dissects this process from a theoretical perspective, using the evolution of Mexico's print media to evaluate the hypotheses presented in Chapter One.

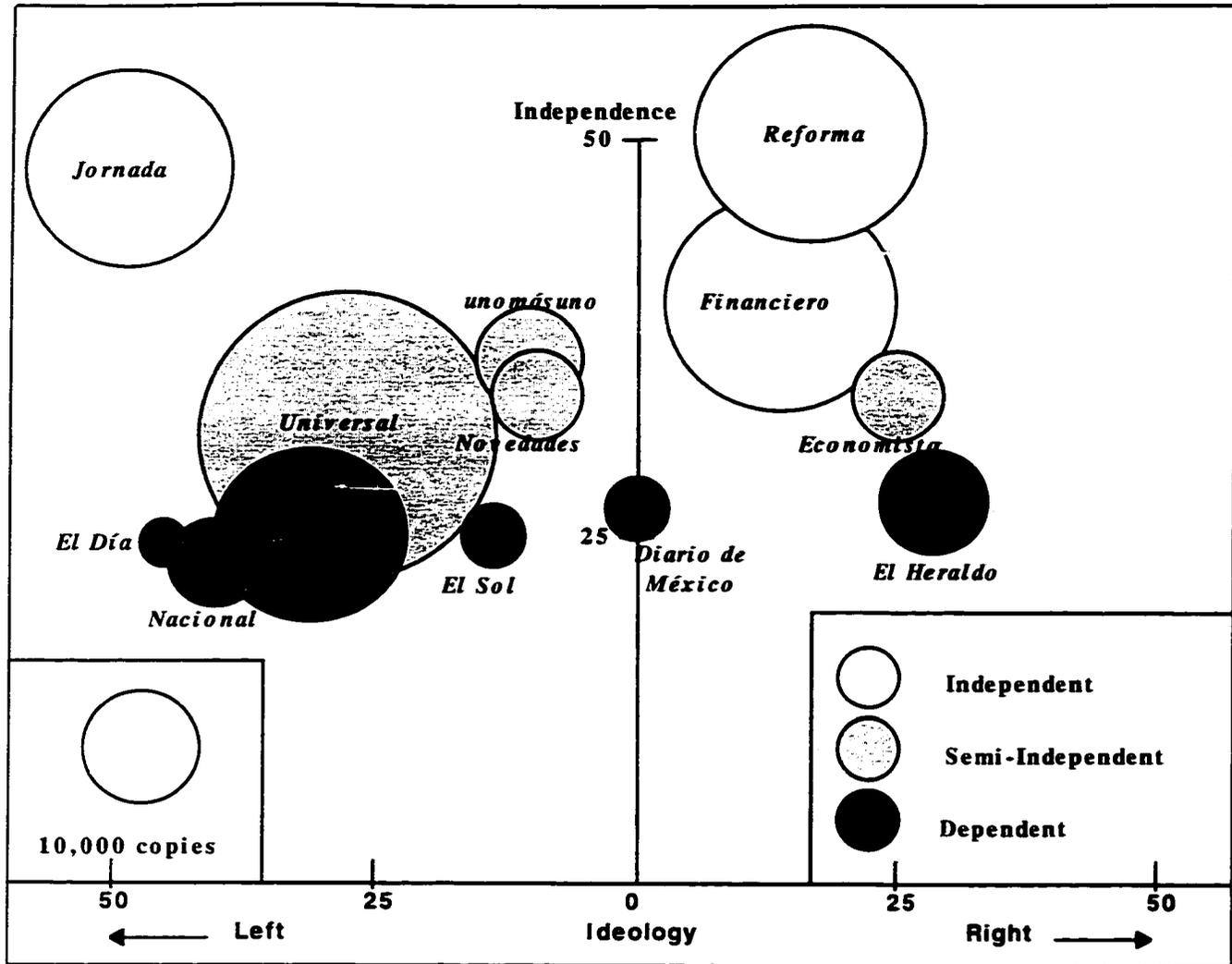
Mexico's print media

On paper, Mexico's print media appears vital and pluralistic. The country boasts over two hundred newspapers and several newsmagazines, with divergent ideological perspectives and, according to self-reported circulation figures, relatively high levels of readership. In reality, however, only about twenty papers and one newsmagazine (*Proceso*) sell more than 30,000 copies per issue; the rest are essentially ghost publications that survive on government subsidies or grants from wealthy benefactors. The larger publications -- themselves still rather small by international standards -- are concentrated in Mexico City and a handful of larger provincial towns (Monterrey, Guadalajara, Mérida, etc.). These include most of the country's independent publications: *Reforma* (Mexico City), *El Norte* (Monterrey), *La Jornada* (Mexico City), *El Financiero* (Mexico City), *El Diario de Yucatán* (Mérida), *Siglo 21* (Guadalajara), *El Imparcial* (Hermosillo), *La Crónica* (Mexicali), and *Zeta* (a weekly newspaper based in Tijuana). They also include several traditionally pro-government papers -- *Excelsior* (Mexico City), *El Informador* (Guadalajara), *El Occidental* (Guadalajara), and *Por Esto* (Mérida) -- and a few publications that fall somewhere in between these two categories, such as *El Universal* (Mexico City) and *El Porvenir* (Monterrey).

As Chapter Two indicated, pro-government newspapers span the ideological spectrum. But they do not vary much in their attitude toward Mexico's political leadership. To illustrate these features of the Mexican press, I developed several indicators of independence and ideological orientation for the main news-oriented dailies in Mexico City -- the country's largest media market and home to all the publications that claim a "national" readership.³²⁵ The results are shown in Figure 16, below.

³²⁵All measurements are based on two one-week samples from the second full week in September 1995 and the second full week in March 1996.

Figure 16: Mexico City's contested print media



The size of each bubble in Figure 16 represents the average daily circulation of each paper, including both subscriptions and single-copy sales but excluding copies returned to the publishers through the distribution network.³²⁶ These figures are necessarily estimates, as declared circulation figures for most publications are wildly exaggerated.³²⁷ But they capture the basic fact that Mexican newspapers tend to have very limited readerships -- in most cases, below 10,000 copies per day.

³²⁶My estimates are based on interviews with several dozen distributors, as well as private market research reports, previous estimates by Mexican journalists, claims by publishers who were considered credible, and occasional conversations with the operators in charge of the actual printing presses.

³²⁷Even independently certified figures overstate circulations because they include a large number of unsold copies.

The horizontal axis (indexed from -100 to +100) measures ideology in the traditional left-right sense. To measure ideology, I developed two indicators: (1) front-page mentions of traditional leftist and rightist buzzwords, such as “imperialism” and “private enterprise,” and (2) evaluations of a few key issues on the front page and editorial pages.³²⁸ Scores for these two indicators were weighted equally and combined to produce the horizontal axis. As the graph indicates, Mexico’s print media was ideologically diverse.

The vertical axis (also indexed to 100) combines various measures of independence in reporting. Specifically, this index includes a total of nine measures of three indicators of independence: (1) agenda-setting, (2) assertiveness, and (3) critical posture. Aggregate independence scores for each newspaper represented a straight average of agenda-setting, assertiveness, and critical posture.

Agenda-setting was measured by an average of the percentage of front-page sources that are PRI or government officials, the percentage of news section photographs that portray PRI or government officials, the percentage of front-page headlines that consist of the pronouncements of PRI or government officials, the percentage of back-page headlines that consist of the pronouncements of PRI or government officials, and the percentage of lead stories that are the same as the lead story of the government-owned newspaper *El Nacional*.³²⁹ Collectively, these measures attempt to capture the extent to which publications simply regurgitated on cue the opinions and perspectives of government officials.³³⁰

³²⁸Leftist buzzwords included: imperialism, socialism, working class (*clase obrera, obrero, or clase trabajadora*), social justice, unemployment, (*desempleo or nivel de empleo*), the Zapatista National Liberation Army, the people (*el pueblo*), and social inequality. Rightist buzzwords include: private property, private sector (*sector privado, sector empresarial, iniciativa privada*), the Catholic Church, communism, inflation (*inflación, subio de precios, crecimiento de precios*), and public order (*el orden or orden público*). The issues analyzed included the North American Free Trade Agreement, the United States, Cuba, neoliberal economic reforms, the Catholic Church, the National Action Party, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution. Favorable references to Cuba and the PRD — as well as unfavorable references to NAFTA, the U.S., the PAN, and the Catholic Church — were coded as leftist. The opposite were coded as right, and neutral evaluations were also recorded; the final score was a net of leftist or rightist references divided by the total number of references.

³²⁹This last measure was obviously omitted for *El Nacional* itself (which had the most *oficialista* score).

³³⁰It appears the government also employs some of these measurements in monitoring the media. One editor in a provincial newspaper mentioned to me that he received a phone call from the federal government criticizing him for not citing the president enough on the front page. My own interviews with officials at the Interior Ministry and the Presidency indicate that these are the types of indicators that the federal government normally considers, even if it does not employ them systematically.

Assertiveness was measured by the percentage of news stories devoted to the following themes: drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protests or demonstrations, state repression or police brutality, and the Mexican armed forces. All of these are issues whose coverage the regime has consistently tried to discourage. Increasing coverage of them has often led to damaging revelations about the regime.

Finally, critical posture was measured by the percentage of lead articles critical of the government, the percentage of editorials critical of the government, and the percent of political cartoons that lampooned the political system or the PRI. This indicator represented the degree to which a publication was willing to criticize the government and the ruling party, rather than act as its cheerleader. As discussed in Chapter Two, the regime traditionally tolerated only limited criticism and was especially sensitive to cartoons and front-page stories.

As Figure 16 shows, Mexican newspapers varied considerably in overall levels of independence. Ghost papers tended to be pro-government; larger papers were generally more independent. Although there was a weak correlation between conservatism and independence, both independent and pro-government papers could be of any ideological tendency. Mexico's pro-government press thus reflected the ideological range of the PRI's amorphous political coalition.

Finally, based on the papers' reputations, I have also color-coded the bubbles: the darker the shading, the less independent the newspaper. As the graph indicates, there is a close correspondence between the reputations of particular papers and their independence scores. Once again, there is little correspondence between independence and ideology.

A contested media regime

Figure 16 depicts a media regime in transition. At the bottom of the graph, a row of dark bubbles represents the old system of corruption and control described in Chapter Two. Most of these papers are aligned with particular factions of the PRI and finance their operations through government subsidies. Predictably, journalistic standards at these ghost papers are relatively low: scanty training, nonexistent stylistic or ethical guidelines, press-release journalism, sloppy editing, and unconstrained sensationalism are all common. Although these defects may sometimes be mistaken for the excesses of a free press, they are intimately connected with old system of corruption and state intervention. In fact, what Mexican editor Juan Luis Conchelo has called the "periodismo de golpeteo"

(“beat-‘em-up journalism”) often represents the flip side of the “periodismo de chayote” (“bribery journalism”), since dependent newspapers sometimes hound prominent individuals simply in order to extort payoffs from them.³³¹ For papers with a generally pro-regime posture, revenues from payoffs or official advertising are typically the most promising way to make money. Similarly, recourse to sensationalism, stridency, and slander may be the optimal sales strategy in an environment where a newspaper’s political allegiances preclude credible or investigative reporting. Mexico’s system of media control thus offers incentives for pro-government publishers to enrich themselves as the quality of their newspaper deteriorates, making Mexico a land of rich owners and poor papers (*dueño rico, periódico pobre*).

Just above these papers is the middle swath of bubbles -- the semi-independents. This group includes publications that have attempted to make the transition from dependent to independent, but whose pro-government ownership impedes their adopting a more aggressive stance. Although they have tried to modernize and professionalize in order to compete, they have been reluctant to abandon the old rules of Mexican journalism. This group also includes (in the case of *unomásuno*) a formerly independent-minded publication that succumbed to government pressure.

Finally, the top band of larger, light-colored spheres represents Mexico’s emerging fourth estate -- an ideologically diverse collection of independent dailies. For publications like these, the challenge has been to carve out an autonomous space for financially viable, professional journalism. By expanding their financial base and adhering to new journalistic norms, these papers have attempted to push back officially-imposed boundaries to critical and assertive reporting. Their independent posture has in turn permitted them to grow and displace more traditional media.

The emergence and persistence of these independent publications -- and their provincial counterparts -- lies at the heart of the changes in Mexico’s print media. Why were they founded? How did they survive and flourish? As the following section discusses, Mexico’s independent press is the product of an evolution that stretches back more than two decades.

Turning points: The rise of independent publications

³³¹ Author’s interview with Juan Luís Conchelo, editor of *Motivos*, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

On June 10, 1971, government-sponsored thugs known as *halcones* (Falcons) attacked a group of leftist demonstrators in Mexico City. When questioned about the episode, government officials issued the sort of blanket denial familiar to reporters in autocratic political systems around the world. They did not, however, receive the familiar response. Reporters who had witnessed the violence first-hand insisted that police vehicles had carried Falcons to the scene and that ambulances had later carried away a number of bloodied and dying protesters. Some newspaper reports the next day reflected their eyewitness accounts, marking the end of the old policy of complete cover-up.³³²

What had changed in Mexico's media? Among journalists, editors, and publishers -- as among all politically-oriented Mexicans -- the notorious massacre of student demonstrators at Tlatelolco Plaza three years before had provoked a certain amount of soul-searching. In the weeks before and after October 2, 1968, "magazines and newspapers restricted, manipulated, and qualified information" about the student movement and generally adopted a pro-government perspective on the ensuing repression.³³³ But the events at Tlatelolco proved to be an important turning point for Mexico's media. Stung by student shouts of "*prensa vendida*" ("sell-out press") that greeted their news reports, the press began to show embryonic signs of restiveness.³³⁴

Restiveness was particularly pronounced at Mexico's flagship newspaper, *Excelsior*, which had come under the direction of independent-minded editor Julio Scherer-García in the late 1960's. A complex and reticent man, Scherer became one of the most seminal figures in Mexico's independent press.³³⁵ His tenure at

³³²The events of June 10 were described by Pablo Gómez, an organizer of the 1971 protests and currently a leader of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution. (Author's interview, Mexico City, September 11, 1995.)

³³³Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 119.

³³⁴Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida* (Mexico City: Editorial Grijalbo, 1993), p. 119-123.

³³⁵President José López-Portillo (1976-82) described Scherer in the following way after their meeting in 1978:

Anxious, nervous, with cold, sweaty hands...Intelligent, and even brilliant. Totally warped by his sense of self-importance. The country will only be saved if Julio and his group can do their jobs, with the fundamental help of the state, that is, a paper with complete freedom to strike at the state itself, on the altar of liberty and journalism, whose exercise is an end in itself, the supreme goal of society...as long as Julio is involved.

See Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida*, p. 188.

Excelsior began a long period of learning and gestation, during which Mexican journalism became more vibrant, more investigative, and more professional.

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

The period from 1966 to 1968 was the first two years that Julio Scherer García took over the management of *Excelsior*, and Scherer introduced a social dimension in coverage of political and economic affairs. He made Mexicans discover the existence of a poor Mexico. *Excelsior*, under Scherer, began to depict a bitter Mexico of landless peasants, deprived workers, and the dispossessed -- that unruly Mexico [*México bronco*] in constant struggle and conflict -- that had been missing from the pages of the country's newspapers. This new coverage significantly changed the parameters of reporting in Mexican newspapers. It began to assign responsibility, and assigning responsibility led to the identification those among the authorities who were guilty of fraud, negligence, and abuse. This gave rise to an incipient struggle against the powers that be of this country -- against the local bosses, against the governors, against the president himself.³³⁶

The new style of journalism met with a predictable response from Mexican authorities. Official harassment began in earnest in 1971, culminating in the government-orchestrated expulsion of Scherer and his cohort of collaborators five years later. At a stormy cooperative meeting on July 8, 1976, *Excelsior's* top editors were relieved of their posts, and a more pliable, pro-government team was installed in their place. Over two hundred employees, including one hundred and fifty members of the news staff, left in protest.³³⁷

The fallout from 1976

The coup at *Excelsior* would later be recognized as a watershed in Mexican journalism. Those who were expelled from the paper subsequently helped found a series of publications that became the core of Mexico's independent print media. Rather than stamping out Mexico's new style of journalism, therefore, the

³³⁶Raymundo Riva-Palacio, in interview with Claudia Fernández, *Pulso*, July/September, 1995, p. 20.

³³⁷The coup at *Excelsior* and subsequent events are the subject of fictionalized accounts written by two of the men involved: Vicente Leñero's *Los periodistas* and Hector Aguilar-Camín's *La guerra de galio*.

reorganization of *Excelsior* spread sparks of independence and professionalism across Mexico's journalistic landscape.³³⁸

Of the original group that left *Excelsior*, about forty remained with Scherer. This crew subsequently became the nucleus of one of Mexico's most successful periodicals. On July 19, 1976, just six weeks after their expulsion, the group held a meeting of 2,000 potential investors at Mexico City's Hotel María Isabel to raise capital for a new journalistic enterprise. By August 2, they had created a news agency (known as APRO) and begun plans for a new publication. The first issue of *Proceso* -- soon to become the country's premier newsmagazine -- appeared on November 6, 1976. For the next seventeen years, until the appearance of *Reforma* newspaper in 1993, *Proceso* would be the only medium to consistently investigate and report what the regime regarded as "closed" topics.³³⁹

In addition to *Proceso*, refugees from *Excelsior* helped launch a number of other media. Octavio Paz and about 20 intellectuals whom Scherer had attracted to *Excelsior* formed the literary magazine *Vuelta* in December 1976, which remains influential in creative circles. About ten reporters accompanied Angel Trinidad-Ferrera to the government-run cultural Channel 13.³⁴⁰ An equal number, including columnist Francisco Cárdenas-Cruz, left for *Universal*, *Diario de México*, and other papers. Another group under Hector Aguilar-Camín founded the more scholarly political magazine *Nexos*.

The most substantial and impressive faction, however, joined Manuel Becerra-Acosta to form a new paper that would pick up where *Excelsior* had left off. This band, approximately two dozen people, included several of *Excelsior*'s best

³³⁸The following discussion of *Proceso*, *unomásuno*, and *La Jornada* is based on the author's interviews with a number of journalists in Mexico City, including: Froylan López, editor, *Proceso*, March 26, 1996; Carlos Marín, editor, *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996 and March 26, 1996; Raymundo Riva-Palacio, news editor, *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 18, 1995 and March 21, 1996; and Carlos Payán, editor-in-chief, *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 14, 1995.

³³⁹Of the original *Proceso* group, a dozen or so have remained in its top management (and, according to them, the pinnacle of Mexico's media). These include Julio Scherer, Vicente Leñero, Froylan López, Carlos Marín, Enrique Sánchez-España, Enrique Maza, and Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda. A handful, including Gastón García-Cantú, were lured back to *Excelsior* (and regarded as sell-outs by the *Proceso* elite). Approximately a dozen subsequently died, retired or left journalism. Around ten -- including such luminaries of Mexican journalism as Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, Elías Chávez, and José Reveles -- left *Proceso* to cross-fertilize other independent media. Granados-Chapa, for instance, later worked for a number of print and broadcast media, including *unomásuno*, *La Jornada*, and *Reforma*.

reporters and a handful of talented editors: Carlos Payán, Carmen Lira, and Becerra-Acosta himself.³⁴¹ Founded in a house owned by Manuel Moreno-Sánchez in Mexico City's Prado Norte de las Lomas neighborhood, their paper -- the French tabloid-style *unomásuno* -- first appeared on November 14, 1977.

The founding of *unomásuno* added a new element of diversity and professionalism to Mexico's press. Though initially ignorant of investigative journalism, the paper's reporters began to specialize and acquire beat-specific skills. Photographs took on an aesthetic and informative character; opinion pieces were replaced by fact-based reporting; editorial pages disappeared; and private advertisements expanded.³⁴²

Rifts within *unomásuno* soon spawned yet another newspaper. During 1983-4, growing dissension over Becerra-Acosta's management of *unomásuno* led to the resignation of approximately ninety people.³⁴³ The principal defectors, led by Payán and Lira, soon formed a rival daily which appeared on September 19, 1984. The new paper, *La Jornada*, has since become the voice of Mexico's anti-regime left. Though *unomásuno* faded into irrelevance, the project it had begun continued under a new standard.³⁴⁴ Figure 17, below, summarizes the evolution of Mexico City's press. As it indicates, the original *Excelsior* cohort ended up producing four news-oriented publications (as well as *Vuelta*). Two of these -- *La Jornada* and *Proceso* -- remain crucial pieces of Mexico's fourth estate.

³⁴⁰Many of them (including Trinidad-Ferriera, now a columnist at *Universal*) would later reappear as the most pro-government of the original *Excelsior* exiles.

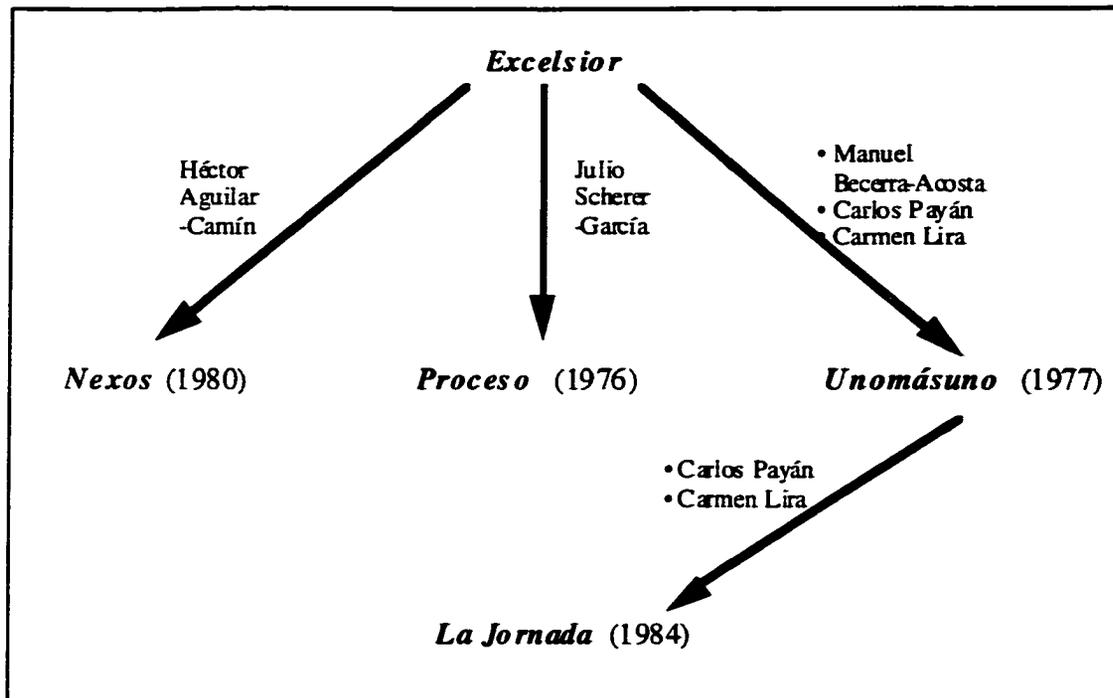
³⁴¹It also included a promising young reporter who had not worked at *Excelsior*, Raymundo Riva-Palacio.

³⁴²In contrast to *Proceso's* uncompromisingly oppositional stance, *unomásuno* was identified with the liberalizing wing of the PRI, which saw the new paper as a vehicle for recently-inaugurated President López-Portillo's political reform program. Its start-up capital came partly from entrepreneur José Solís (who retained 40% of the stock), partly from its own staff, and partly from government loans. The newspaper's first issue included a lengthy, front-page interview with Interior Minister Rodolfo González announcing the government's proposals for political reform. (Author' interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.)

³⁴³A few departures were triggered in 1980, when Becerra-Acosta, Payán, and Lira converted *unomásuno* from a cooperative into a privately-held company. However, the real schism began in earnest on December 2, 1983, when leading editors Payán, Lira, Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, and Hector Aguilar-Camín gave notice. They were followed a week later by some forty-six others. A trickle of defections continued into 1984, effectively gutting *unomásuno*.

³⁴⁴In 1989, President Carlos Salinas coerced Becerra-Acosta into selling *unomásuno* to a political ally, Angel Borja. (See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida*, p. 309-10, 316-19.) Since then, the paper's ownership has changed to former government official Luís Gutiérrez and businessman Jacobo Zaidenwebber. *Unomásuno* is generally aligned with the De la Madrid faction of the PRI.

Figure 17: The post-1976 diaspora



Not all the journalists who left *Excelsior* in 1976 remained in journalism.³⁴⁵ Some dropped out of circulation, took positions in the government, or retreated into more stable, private sector careers.³⁴⁶ But those who did remain fortified independent journalism across a range of existing media. Through the periodicals they subsequently established, this cohort of reporters and editors has kept alive Mexico's enduring strand of social democratic, professional journalism. Although periodic ruptures and schisms have cost these individuals substantially in personal terms, the same crises have also pushed forward a long process of professionalization. Both *Proceso* and *La Jornada*, for instance, represent a substantial improvement over the original *Excelsior* project. As one editor put it: "We ended up, inadvertently, creating a much better type of journalism than we could ever have at *Excelsior*...and the government, inadvertently, helped us do it."³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵My calculations suggest that about 60 of the original 150 members of the news staff that left with Scherer remain active in journalism.

³⁴⁶One, José Dudet, even started a popular chain of bakeries in Mexico City known as *La Baguette*.

³⁴⁷Author's interview with Carlos Marín, news editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996.

The 1982 boycott

Serendipity did not end with the coup at *Excelsior*. A second crucial turning point came in 1982, when a frustrated President José López-Portillo declared that his administration would no longer advertise in publications deemed hostile to the government -- in his now-legendary phrase, *No pago para que me peguen* ("I won't pay them to beat up on me."). The main target of López-Portillo's wrath was *Proceso*, which was driven to near bankruptcy and forced to lay off 32 employees. By boosting sales and subscriptions, however, *Proceso* was able to compensate for the loss of government revenue, and it emerged as an even more independent publication. The magazine now depends on sales for approximately 80% of its revenues. Although the withdrawal of government advertising managed to suffocate a number of smaller periodicals, *Proceso*'s editors drew an enormously empowering lesson: independent media could survive without financial support from the regime.³⁴⁸

The awakening of civil society

The ability of independent periodicals to achieve financial success was enhanced by a series of changes in the Mexican reading public. Starting in 1982, economic crisis, government corruption, increasing recourse to electoral fraud, and mounting social mobilization encouraged popular receptivity to independent reporting. The devastating Mexico City earthquake of 1985 and the presidential elections of 1988 were crucial catalysts for the emergence of Mexico's new civil society.³⁴⁹ By the end of the decade, a more literate and demanding readership had created the social base for Mexico's emerging fourth estate. Although the largest capital papers (*Excelsior*, *Universal*, etc.) remained pro-government, a handful of publications began to register the changes in Mexican society and exploit the growing market for independent journalism.

One of these was *La Jornada*, heir to part of the original *Excelsior* cohort.

Figure 18, below, traces *La Jornada*'s gradual evolution since its founding in

³⁴⁸Authors interviews with Froylan López, editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 26, 1996 and Carlos Marín, news editor of *Proceso*, Mexico City, March 19, 1996 and March 26, 1996.

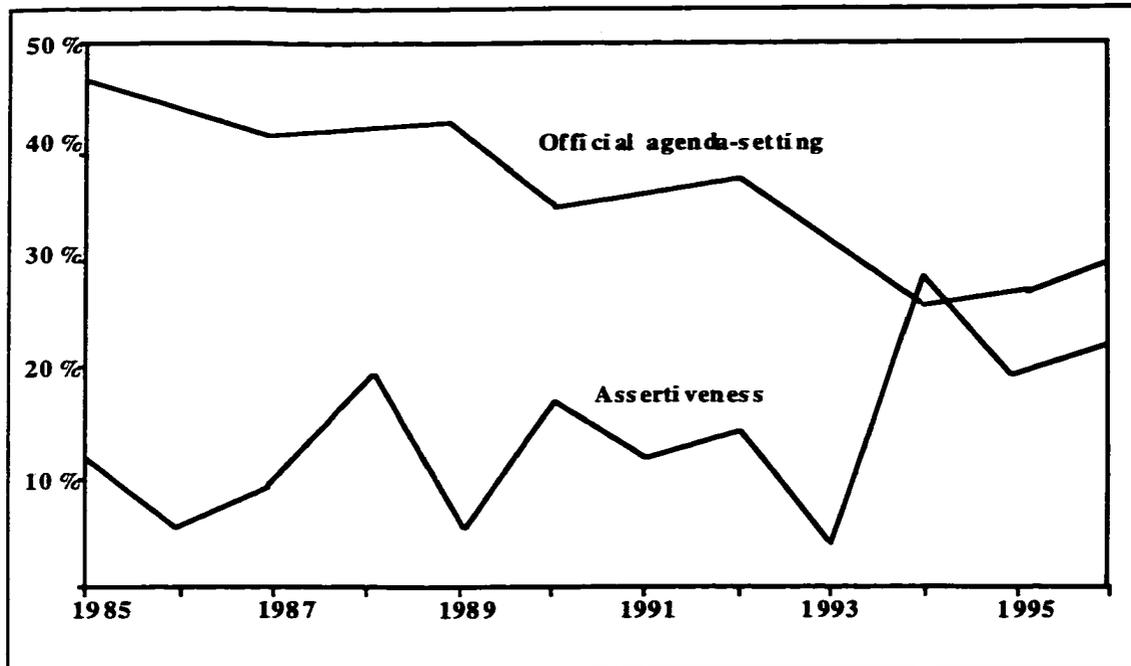
³⁴⁹On the effects of the 1985 earthquake, see Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre: crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987).

1984.³⁵⁰ The top line shows the extent to which “official agenda-setting” -- measured here by the percentage of photographs and front-page sources that are of government or PRI officials -- has declined over time. As the graph indicates, *La Jornada* has increasingly given prominence to Mexican civil society rather than to representatives of the party-state. The lower line (assertiveness) measures the percentage of news articles devoted to drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protest, state repression, and the Mexican military. As the graph suggests, increased assertiveness has accompanied the decline in official agenda-setting. Although levels of assertiveness have fluctuated with political events and with the paper’s financial condition, the general trend has been upward. Thus the “valley” in 1995 was higher than the “peak” in 1988, a year marked by intense opposition protests against alleged electoral fraud.³⁵¹ In other words, on two crucial dimensions *La Jornada* has become a much more independent newspaper.

³⁵⁰Data is based on two one-week samples from the second full week in September and the second full week in March. Assertiveness was measured every year; agenda-setting was measured every other year.

³⁵¹My interviews suggest that this “valley” in 1995 -- and the contemporaneous increase in coverage of officials -- was a result of the paper’s worsening financial condition in the wake of the Mexican peso crisis. Its economic straits rendered the paper more vulnerable official blandishments, especially *gacetillas*. Higher revenues in 1996 put the paper back on course toward increasingly assertive coverage.

Figure 18: Increasing openness at *La Jornada* newspaper, 1984-96



The second paper to capitalize on Mexico's changing circumstances was *El Financiero*, founded in 1981 in response to the country's incipient economic crisis. Originally targeted at the business community, *Financiero* started operations with a mere 27 employees and only \$250,000 in operating capital. At the time, *Financiero* could not even afford its own printing press and was forced to use that of the leftist-officialista daily *El Día*. But former government employee Rogelio Cárdenas Sr. had discovered a new market, and his paper grew steadily. By 1984, the paper had introduced sections for political and social news. To cover this new subject matter, *Financiero* recruited a number of noted Mexican journalists, including several *Excelsior* refugees: Carlos Ramírez, Francisco Gómez-Maza, José Reveles, Jorge Rodríguez, and Rodolfo Guzmán. Through what editors describe as "a gradual process of organic growth," the paper eventually became one of Mexico's most reliable and independent media outlets.³⁵² From 1985 to 1993 (when *Reforma* newspaper appeared), *Financiero* published a series of stories on economic policy, drug trafficking, official corruption, and electoral fraud that no other national daily would carry.

³⁵² Author's interviews with Rogelio Cárdenas Jr., publisher of *El Financiero*, and Alejandro Ramos, editor-in-chief of *El Financiero*, Mexico City, March 27, 1996; author's interviews with Jesús Sánchez, politics editor of *Financiero*, Mexico City, September 20, 1995 and March 26, 1996.

Rebellion in the provinces

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

Originally linked to Mérida's business elite, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and PAN, the paper began to evolve in the 1980's into a more representative vehicle for public opinion. The paper's owner-managers (the Menéndez family) dropped their reflexive conservatism and their habit of labeling all progressive political forces "Marxist".³⁵³ Today, *El Diario de Yucatán* remains one of the largest, most independent papers in Mexico, and it exercises an enormous political influence within Yucatán state.³⁵⁴

Even more important for the evolution of Mexico's media was the success of another provincial newspaper, *El Norte*. Begun in the late 1930's, *El Norte*'s origins and ownership were in many ways similar to those of *El Diario de Yucatán*. Its rise to prominence began in 1972-73, when a twenty-four year-old Alejandro Junco de la Vega inherited the paper from his father and grandfather. The first member of his family trained as a journalist, Junco set about modernizing and professionalizing the publication. From 1972 to 1978, *El Norte* recruited a cohort of younger people to replace the collection of frustrated lawyers and accountants that had previously constituted its staff. These new reporters were treated as career professionals, and trained, paid, promoted, and managed accordingly. Journalists received no commissions from advertising, and government sources were kept at arm's length. Reporters were forbidden from accepting bribes under pain of dismissal -- even gifts from government officials had to be returned.³⁵⁵ The

³⁵³Author's interview with Hernán Casares, news editor of *El Diario de Yucatán*, Mérida, April 6, 1996.

³⁵⁴On the influence of *El Diario de Yucatán*, see Adolfo Aguilar-Zinzer, *Vamos a ganar: La pugna de Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas por el poder* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995), p. 77.

³⁵⁵According to one study, three people have been fired for corruption in the history of the paper. See Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The search for rights and responsibilities of the press and mass media in four Latin American nations*, IIE Research Report No. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 61. My interviews suggest that this is more a symptom of widespread rule acceptance than lax enforcement.

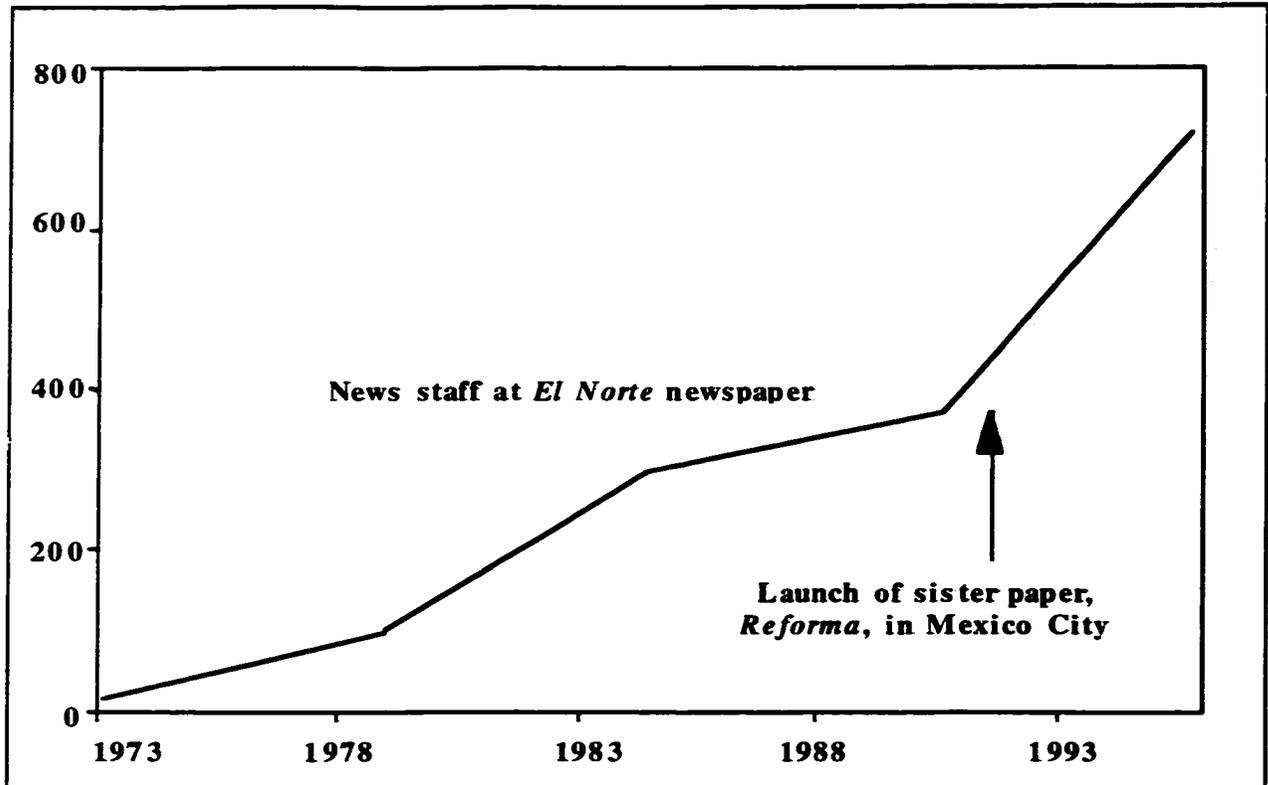
newspaper even paid for its reporters' accommodations on some official trips, rather than relying on government largess. Over time, this new vision of journalistic professionalism became part of the newspaper's culture, and veteran staffers developed what one foreign observer characterized as "a virtually Pavlovian response to corruption."³⁵⁶

In addition to professionalizing *El Norte's* staff, Junco modernized the paper's physical plant and upgraded its technology. In 1984-5, *El Norte* developed an electronic library and shifted its staff to personal computers, allowing reporters to work more swiftly and autonomously. Finally, beginning in 1981, the paper reoriented its format and content to meet the demands of Monterrey's burgeoning middle-class readership. In contrast to the complex layouts, drab formatting, and politics-cum-sports focus of establishment Mexican papers, *El Norte* introduced sections on fashion, food, automobiles, real estate, and suburban life, as well as a Sunday supplement. Sales responded dramatically to this series of innovations, boosting newspaper penetration rates in Monterrey to levels approaching those in the developed world. Figure 19 depicts the increase in *El Norte* staff since 1973, including the addition of personnel that accompanied the 1993 launch of a sister paper, *Reforma*, in Mexico City (discussed below).³⁵⁷ As the graph indicates, Junco's innovations in format and coverage paid off.

³⁵⁶Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The search for rights and responsibilities of the press and mass media in four Latin American nations*, p. 62.

³⁵⁷Data for this graph was provided by Ramón Alberto Garza, editor-in-chief of both *El Norte* and *Reforma*. (Author's interview, Mexico City, April 17, 1996.)

Figure 19: The growth of *El Norte* newspaper, 1973-95



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

A third independent daily to emerge in the provinces was Guadalajara's *Siglo 21*, based in Mexico's second-largest media market. In 1990 former PRI politician Alfonso Dau, then 61 and retired, decided to realize his long-standing dream of publishing a newspaper. The initial team he selected included two Argentines with experience in journalism, one Spanish editor, and two local professors -- one of whom, Jorge Zepeda, became the editor-in-chief. Zepeda ultimately supplied the vision for a paper that "was neither at the service of the state nor rabidly against it, but rather in favor of and at the service of the community."³⁵⁸

In seeking to avoid the traditional vices of Mexican journalism, *Siglo 21*'s management initially went too far in the other direction. With the exception of news

³⁵⁸ Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

editor Diego Peterson (who had previously managed his own weekly) and a handful of talented reporters poached from other papers, few of the original staff were journalists. Most were academics or students recruited directly out of college. As Peterson put it, “it was complicated to make a newspaper without reporters.”³⁵⁹ Launch, initially scheduled for October 1991, was delayed until November; its dense, European-style format (modeled after Spain’s *El País*) did not appeal to Guadalaajaran readers; and the paper soon exhausted most of its \$3 million in start-up capital.

Siglo 21 faced other obstacles as well. The PRI establishment of Jalisco state (of which Guadalajara is the capital) had no interest in a new paper that would be “in favor of and at the service of the community.” Meanwhile, the city’s two established dailies, *El Informador* and *El Occidental*, joined forces to squeeze *Siglo 21* out of the market. Firms who agreed to advertise in one of the established papers -- which at that time had a combined circulation more than fifty times that of their new competitor -- were not permitted to advertise in *Siglo 21* as well.³⁶⁰

As a result of these obstacles, the new paper rapidly approached bankruptcy. In December 1991, there was no money for customary Christmas bonuses; by January, there was none for salaries. Facing the prospect of closure, the paper endeavored to reorient itself, abandoning its “academic vices” and seeking out more “hot” daily news. The changes appealed to younger readers and women, who felt under-served by the city’s traditional dailies. Readership began to grow slowly, increasing further when the paper gave special coverage to a March vigil by middle-class women to protest the rise in street crime. But despite its reorientation, the paper remained in the red in April, after two years of planning and six months of operation.³⁶¹ Daily circulation hovered at around 1,500 copies.

Then, on April 22, 1992 twelve kilometers of city sewer in Guadalajara suddenly exploded, killing 198 people. In the aftermath of the explosion, the thoroughly *oficialista* orientation of its competitors gave *Siglo 21* a golden opportunity. While *Occidental* ran a front-page interview with the president of Georgia and *Informador* ran a note about then-President Carlos Salinas’ visit to the region, *Siglo 21* covered the blast. For the rest of the week, the paper focused on the

³⁵⁹ Author’s interview with Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

³⁶⁰ Author’s interview with Salvador Camarena, former reporter at *Siglo 21*, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.

tragedy, as well as the government corruption and negligence that had helped cause it. By April 30, the paper's investigations had forced the resignation of a number of senior government officials, including the governor. In a matter of weeks, *Siglo 21* had gone from irrelevance and insolvency to become Guadalajara's most influential paper. International journalists who had poured into Guadalajara to cover the explosion stationed themselves in *Siglo 21*'s news room, and the young paper won an award for its photography of the tragedy. Its circulation increased with its stature: by mid May, sales had soared from 1,500 copies per day to a peak of 25,000, before receding a stable circulation of 12,000.³⁶²

Siglo 21's next big boost came approximately one year later, with the assassination of Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas-O'Campo, archbishop of Guadalajara. Once again, other dailies reacted slowly to the news and timidly accepted the highly implausible official version of events. Though the government claimed Cardinal Posadas had accidentally been caught in a crossfire, *Siglo 21*'s coverage revealed that the dead Cardinal had been riddled with bullets while clad in full clerical garb. Circulation leapt to 20,000.³⁶³

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

Siglo 21's last major jump came with the gubernatorial victory of the National Action Party in Jalisco's February 1995 state elections. The final vote tally agreed with a costly and much-criticized poll that *Siglo 21* had published before the elections, predicting a PAN victory. After reaching a high-water mark of 45,000, the paper eventually settled down to a stable circulation of 30,000-35,000 copies per day.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996; Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996. The phrase "academic vices" comes from Camarena.

³⁶² Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996; Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

³⁶³ Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996, and Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

³⁶⁴ Author's interview with Salvador Camarena, Mexico City, March 28, 1996; Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

By this time, local businessmen had followed readers and, with certain exceptions, had begun to advertise regularly in the new paper.³⁶⁵ The combination of sales and advertising revenues gave *Siglo 21* – then three-and-a-half years old – financial viability. Equally important, the threat of politically-motivated harassment receded after the PAN's victory. With opposition leaders in the governor's mansion, the paper no longer had to fear official reprisals for its independent stances. By the middle of the 1990s, then, *Siglo 21* was well-established in Guadalajara.³⁶⁶

By the mid-1990s, independent newspapers were appearing in other provincial cities. Several – such as *El Imparcial de Hermosillo* and its sister paper, *La Crónica* of Mexicali – followed the model of *El Diario de Yucatán* and *El Norte*. That is, they were owned by conservative publishers who tried to maintain an independent line from the PRI and the government. Others – such as *Zeta* in Tijuana, founded in 1979 – were started by journalists who deliberately sought to create professional, independent publications. Invariably, the new style of journalism practiced at all these papers brought them into conflict with political authorities. But it also opened up opportunities for financial independence from the regime.

Salinastroika

Economic reforms under President Carlos Salinas in the late 1980s and early 1990s tended to enhance these opportunities. Although the reforms that Salinas' administration enacted were designed to fortify Mexico's ruling party, they had a number of unintended positive consequences for press freedom. One important cluster of Salinas-era reforms involved placing state-media relationships on a more "modern" footing. Between 1991-93, President Salinas (1) ended the time-honored practice of paying for reporters' accommodations on presidential trips; (2) stopped distributing bribes from the Presidential palace; (3) mandated a minimum wage for journalists; (4) reduced official advertising and redirected it

³⁶⁵One exception came after the paper published an allegedly obscene and sacrilegious cartoon. At the behest of the Church, local businessmen affiliated with the PAN briefly boycotted the paper. (Author's interview with Diego Peterson, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.)

³⁶⁶The paper did, however, fall victim to serious internal divisions between its independent-minded staff and its PRI-aligned owner. Ultimately, these conflicts led to the defection of the bulk of the editorial staff and the formation of a new paper, *Público*, in the late 1990s. Soon after the appearance of *Público*, *El Norte* publisher Alejandro Junco launched a new paper of his own in Guadalajara (*Mural*), giving the city two independent papers.

toward larger circulation publications; (5) cut several long-standing subsidies such as tax deferrals, utilities, and credit; (6) extended the value-added tax to newsprint; and (7) forced newspapers to pay their Social Security taxes in cash instead of in advertisements.³⁶⁷ Such fiscally-minded, rationalizing measures forced newspapers to rely more on commercial sources of revenue.

Second, Salinas' administration pursued a vigorous program of privatization. Because many of the newly privatized firms -- banks, airlines, telephone companies, and television stations -- were major advertisers, the state effectively abdicated substantial control over newspaper revenues. Salinas also attempted to privatize both PIPSA and the government-owned daily *El Nacional*. PIPSA's privatization was so vigorously resisted by the traditional media (which depended on PIPSA for subsidies) that Salinas postponed its sale, and bids for *El Nacional* failed to reach the government's minimum asking price. Nevertheless, the expectation that PIPSA would eventually be sold encouraged its evolution toward a more purely commercial enterprise.

A third set of reforms involved increasing openness to foreign trade and investment: securing Mexico's membership in GATT, soliciting American investment, and joining the US-Canadian free-trade zone. These policies encouraged coverage of Mexico in the North American media, which inevitably eased pressure on domestic media that sought to cover controversial topics. Mexican newspapers could (and did) run controversial stories published by the international wire services or follow up on investigative reports in the foreign press.³⁶⁸ Equally important, deepening integration with the international market facilitated the importation of crucial inputs (like newsprint). Publishers and broadcasters became less dependent on government distribution and importation monopolies (e.g., PIPSA), and consequently less vulnerable to official manipulation of exchange rates or import licenses.³⁶⁹ Coupled with Salinas' rhetoric of reform,

³⁶⁷See Rafael Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida*, p. 363-70. Salinas did not, however, force newspapers to pay the general 2% capital tax, nor did he end the practice of accepting television airtime in place of corporate taxes. See Claudia Fernández, *Pulso*, July/September, 1995, p. 22.

³⁶⁸See, for instance, Suzanne Billelo, "La prensa extranjera y las elecciones en Chihuahua, julio de 1986," in Gerardo M. Bueno, ed., *México-Estados Unidos 1986*. In 1985, *Proceso* republished a series of criticisms of Mexico from *Newsweek*, *El País*, and *L'Express*. (See Rodríguez-Castañeda, *Prensa Vendida*, p. 273.) As subsequent events made clear, however, Salinas ultimately proved extremely effective in managing the press in the United States, which proved more sympathetic to his administration than most independent papers in Mexico.

³⁶⁹The end of PIPSA's monopoly over newsprint importation was a precondition for Mexico's acceptance in GATT.

the change in PIPSA was crucial in convincing *El Norte*'s owners to launch a sister publication in Mexico City.³⁷⁰

The barbarians of the north

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

On the business side, *Reforma*'s management team evinced a devotion to their paper's financial performance that allowed the publication to survive several potential catastrophes. As Junco put it: "in this business we have only one god, the reader, and he demands regular worship."³⁷¹ Despite initial planning errors *Reforma* was able to adjust its scope and orientation to the tastes of a *chilango* audience.³⁷² The paper also successfully weathered a conflict with the Street Vendor's Union in October 1994 by creating its own distribution network. Finally, *Reforma* managed to compensate for the wrenching economic crisis that came only a year after its founding. By March 1995, the paper had rescheduled its debt, locked in long-term advertising, trimmed its staff by 12%, reduced the paper's length by 30%, and doubled its street price.³⁷³ The combination of astute business

³⁷⁰Author's interview with Alejandro Junco, publisher of *Reforma* and *El Norte*, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.

³⁷¹Author's interview with Alejandro Junco, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.

³⁷²According to Junco, *Reforma*'s original prospectus called for a 32-page, financially-oriented paper consisting of four sections with an initial circulation of 35 thousand copies and commercial break-even in five years. The paper he ultimately launched was 96 pages, with seven sections covering all types of news. (Author's interview with Alejandro Junco, Mexico City, September 21, 1995.)

³⁷³Claire Poole, *Mexico Business*, September 1995, p. 56-8; author's interview with Ignacio Mijares, director of planning and budgeting for *El Norte* and *Reforma*, Mexico City, September 26, 1995.

management and journalistic talent allowed the paper to flourish where earlier, similar projects failed.³⁷⁴

Reforma's success has provoked a great deal of unsympathetic scrutiny. Reporters at rival publications poke fun of the paper's extensive internal security and allegedly excessive employee background investigations. Critics lament the paper's *USA Today*-style format, its apparent sympathy for the PAN, and its generally favorable coverage of the business community. Some portray *Reforma* as an informational appendage of northern industrial interests and claim its *regiomontana* (northern) tendencies even extend to partiality for Monterrey's soccer team.³⁷⁵ Although the paper has no editorial page and its opinion pieces cover the political spectrum, the paper's editorial direction is not actually separate from its ownership. The alleged result is biased and excessively commercialized reporting.³⁷⁶

These criticisms notwithstanding, *Reforma*'s arrival changed the rules of Mexican journalism. Previously touchy stories on government corruption or electoral fraud were spread across its front page.³⁷⁷ Several more traditional papers -- including *Novedades* and *Universal* -- responded to its arrival by upgrading their physical plants, layouts, and journalistic standards.³⁷⁸ *Reforma*'s hiring practice also helped drive up journalists' salaries across the board, presumably reducing the temptation to corruption. These contributions to Mexican media independence alone seem to outweigh any corollary defects.

Boom and crisis

Despite Carlos Salinas's prognostications, 1994 did not deposit Mexico at the threshold of the First World. Instead, it brought armed uprising in the southern

³⁷⁴Javier Moreno-Valle's 1990 plan to create a Mexico City newspaper, *El Independiente*, collapsed without ever publishing an issue, even though it included many of the same individuals. Another prior attempt by a different group, *El Centenario*, had also failed. Moreno-Valle later began Channel 40, now regarded as Mexico's most independent television station.

³⁷⁵Interview with former *Reforma* editor, Mexico City, March 28, 1996.

³⁷⁶*Reforma* does occasionally wander into misleading and sensationalist coverage, especially in its headlines. Examples include its reporting of 1995 economic growth figures and its coverage of the merger between Cablevisión (owned by Televisa) and a subsidiary of Telmex -- both eight-column, front page headers.

³⁷⁷Though they were not as important, *Reforma*'s appearance also had a number of negative consequences for independent journalism in Mexico. *Financiero* has not quite recovered from the departure of so many influential journalists, and *Proceso* has lost its claim as the leader in investigative reporting.

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

The economic crisis that followed Mexico's political implosion had more mixed consequences for independent newspapers. Street sales slumped and advertising revenues shriveled, while the cost of inputs rose precipitously. Wire service reports and other international suppliers continued to charge in dollars (which meant that peso prices effectively doubled almost overnight). Newsprint prices on the international market skyrocketed, increasing 43% in dollar terms (and more than twice that much in pesos) during 1995 alone.³⁷⁹ These unexpected shocks cut into the revenues of virtually all Mexican publications. But the crisis hit traditional newspapers much harder than their independent counterparts. Because of the relative popularity of independent publications, most of the sales declines came out of traditional media. *La Jornada* lost only 10-20% of its readers during the first year of the crisis, in contrast to 40%-50% for more dependent papers; *Reforma* actually showed positive sales growth for 1995. Even more important for the press overall, the government's near-bankruptcy led it to curtail subsidies and official advertising.³⁸⁰ Faced with the loss of staple government revenue, at least 30 Mexican newspapers (15% of the total) folded between March 1995 and January 1996. The crisis thus had a mildly purging effect on Mexico's increasingly competitive newspaper market.

³⁷⁸ Author's interview with senior Mexican journalist, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

³⁷⁹ Author's interview with Ignacio Mijares, Mexico City, September 26, 1995; author's interview with Carlos Payán, Mexico City, August 14, 1995.

³⁸⁰ The crisis did have uniformly negative consequences for the one independent newspaper that depended heavily on government revenues (*La Jornada*).

The causes of media opening

From 1976 to 1996, a series of independent publications emerged and ultimately flourished in Mexico. Supported by a loyal readership base and animated by a professional journalistic ethic, these newspapers and magazines successfully pushed out the boundaries of Mexican reporting. The pages of these periodicals now broach previously closed subjects (like official corruption and electoral fraud) and give prominence to the opinions of diverse sectors of society, including opposition political movements.

What factors are responsible for the growth of independent journalism in Mexico? One tempting explanation is the general mellowing in Mexico's political climate over the last two decades. Although the scope of political liberalization in Mexico is not apparent from most standard indicators of democracy, such as the Freedom House index, Mexico's political system became substantially more open during the period of opening in the print media.³⁸¹ In theory, without this political thaw, the government could have squashed any independent publications -- as it did earlier with *Excelsior* in 1976. In this sense, a modicum of political liberalization was probably necessary for Mexico's independent media to survive and establish themselves.

This argument also receives support from the experience of certain provincial newspapers. For *Siglo 21*, for instance, the PAN's victory in the 1995 elections was a godsend. On shaky financial ground throughout its first two years of operation, the paper could probably not have survived protracted conflict with state-level authorities.³⁸² Some measure of political tolerance was thus a necessary background condition for media opening.

At the same time, it would be inaccurate to portray political reform as the principal driver of media opening. The great majority of independent journalists regard government policies -- especially those of the Salinas administration -- as partial and contradictory at best. Most are adamant that any autonomous space the Mexican media now enjoy is due to changes in civil society and the media itself,

³⁸¹During the Echeverría administration (1970-76), for instance, street demonstrations were essentially prohibited; in 1996, there were as many as a dozen protests per day in the capital alone.

³⁸²Author's interview with Jorge Zepeda, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996. As Zepeda narrated it, *Siglo 21* first confronted a governor who was intensely hostile toward the new paper but was forced to resign after the sewer explosion. He was replaced by an equally truculent interim governor who was (fortunately) too weak and ineffectual to do serious damage. Finally, the PAN won the gubernatorial elections.

which gradually pried control out of the government's hands. At best, the government failed to repress an independent press that had emerged for different reasons. By itself, then, political decompression cannot explain media opening. A series of other factors allowed Mexico's independent media to transform their country's halting and tentative political transition into an opportunity for autonomous journalism.

Socio-economic development

A second tempting explanation is that socio-economic development was primarily responsible for the changes in Mexico's press. During the 1960's and 1970's, Mexico saw steady economic expansion, the spread of mass education, improvements in living standards, rapid urbanization, industrial deepening, and the growth of a substantial middle class. In theory, this process of modernization created the social raw material for independent journalism. In 1950, Mexico probably did not have the kind of demographic profile that would have supported a diverse and independent print media. By 1990, the argument goes, it did.

To the extent that modernization did play a role in media opening, however, its effects were lagged and mediated by other factors. Mexicans did not become richer, more educated, or more literate during the 1980's and 1990's, and it was during this period that independent publications emerged. As with anti-government sentiment in general, then, Mexican preferences for independent journalism were not the automatic consequences of modernization.

To further evaluate the role of socio-economic modernization in promoting media independence, I used cross-sectional data from the twenty-six Mexican cities with populations of over 400,000 people (according to the 1990 census). Because the Mexican census bureau does not publish certain data at the city level, I relied on measurements of state-level data for levels of literacy and per capita income.³⁸³ Although these measurements are not precise in an absolute sense -- urban areas in Mexico are generally richer and have higher literacy rates than the rural areas that surround them -- they do produce a good relative ranking of different cities. Furthermore, because the cities included in this sample comprise a very large portion of the population of their states, the data are not as gross as they might seem on first glance.

³⁸³In other words, to calculate total market size I multiplied the city's population times the per capita income of the state in which the city was located. To reduce the skewness of the distribution, I used the natural log of both per capita income and market size.

The analysis employs two measures of openness in the print media. The first is the absolute number of independent publications in 1996, based on the reputations of different papers. Dependent newspapers were coded as zero, independent newspapers were coded as one, and semi-independents were coded as 0.5. Thus, the Monterrey newspaper market had 1.5 independent publications -- *El Norte*, a full-fledged independent, and *El Porvenir*, a semi-independent. Mexico City had five: three independents (*El Financiero*, *La Jornada*, and *Reforma*) and four semi-independents (*Universal*, *Novedades*, *Economista*, and *unomásuno*). Other markets had only one independent or semi-independent paper, or none at all.

The second measure of independence is my estimate of the percentage of the total daily newspaper circulation in each city that independent publications accounted for in 1996. In other words, I attempted to measure not just whether an independent newspaper existed, but rather how independent the newspaper market as a whole was. The Monterrey market, for instance, is dominated by the independent *El Norte* and, to a lesser extent, the semi-independent *El Porvenir*. By contrast, independent newspapers in Mexico City and Guadalajara make up less than half of daily sales. To calculate total media independence, I simply took the average independence of all the papers in each market weighted by their relative circulations. Thus, a market in which one independent newspaper had approximately 50% of the readership, one semi-independent newspaper had 25% of the circulation, and a series of pro-government newspapers had 25% of the circulation would be rated as 62.5% independent.

The analysis presented in Chapter One suggested that market size and media openness were inversely related. But, as discussed there, this apparent relationship across different countries may be the result of the fact that smaller countries tend to be more democratic. Within this sample of twenty-six Mexican cities in 1996, this potentially confounding relationship is not an issue: size and political openness are not strongly related. Variation in the level of democracy across Mexican states, therefore, does not bias estimates of the relationship between market size and media openness.

Table 8 presents the results of regression analysis of independence on market size, per capita income, and literacy.³⁸⁴ The results indicate that, within Mexico, market size is an important arbiter of whether independent media will survive. Mexico's independent publications are overwhelmingly concentrated in

³⁸⁴These equations contained a constant term which is not reported here.

larger, richer urban centers. In fact, there are no established independent publications in any Mexican city with a population smaller than 450,000 inhabitants. Given current incomes, education levels, and purchasing habits (i.e., culture) a fairly large population is apparently required to support independent newspapers. By contrast, literacy and per capita income do not exercise a clear-cut positive influence on the emergence of independent media -- although these variables usually have the anticipated sign, they fail to reach traditional levels of statistical significance.

Table 8: Market size, per capita income, literacy, and independence in Mexico

Number of independent publications		
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Ln(GDP) ^a :	.61	.00
Ln(per capita income) ^b :	-.09	.82
Literacy	1.94	.25
Adjusted R ² : 0.75		
N: 26		
Circulation of independent publications as percent of total		
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-hat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Ln(GDP) ^a :	.10	.19
Ln(per capita income) ^b :	.01	.98
Literacy	1.25	.21
Adjusted R ² : 0.23		
N: 26		
^a Represents the natural log of the product of total population of the city and the per capita income of the state in which the city lies. ^b Represents the natural log of the per capita income of the state within which the city lies.		
N.B: Equations include a constant term which is not reported.		

The analysis also suggests socio-economic development overall is not a particularly powerful predictor of the level of media independence within each media market. Although the data suggest some "threshold effects" -- specifically, requisite levels of market size below which independent newspapers are unlikely to survive -- they do not explain when publications emerge and flourish once a certain threshold has been crossed. As the table indicates, modernization-related variables fail to explain the bulk of the variation in media independence across major markets in Mexico. In all, the combination of (1) the substantial time lag between socio-economic changes and media opening at a national level, and (2) the relatively unimpressive explanatory power of socio-economic variables in cross-regional analysis within Mexico,

suggests that modernization was not the main driver of transformation in the country's print media. It was, rather, a background against which the real drama of media opening played out.

Catalytic events

More important than increases in wealth and literacy for media opening in Mexico were changes in readers' tastes. During the 1980's and 1990's, Mexico's potential readership base evolved in ways that were not immediately obvious from demographic data. To cite a phrase that came up repeatedly in interviews with Mexican journalists, readers became "more demanding" (*más exigente*). A more skeptical, assertive public embraced the new style of pluralistic and investigative reporting advanced by Mexico's independent press.

The shocking events of the 1980's and 1990's reinforced Mexican preferences for more independent media. Each new crisis and calamity -- national bankruptcy in 1982, the 1985 earthquake, the questionable presidential elections of 1988, the 1994 rebellion in Chiapas, the assassinations of that same year, and the 1994-5 peso devaluation -- galvanized Mexico's independent media. *El Financiero*, *El Economista*, and other publications like them became fixtures on the Mexican scene precisely because of the country's economic instability. Guadalajara's *Siglo 21* owes its survival to the explosion of ten kilometers of city sewer -- an event that other local papers downplayed. The uprising in Chiapas gave *La Jornada* a new lease on life. And the tumultuous events of 1994 whetted public appetites for independent reporting just after *Reforma* was launched. These events activated the latent readership that socio-economic development had created.

Not surprisingly, the most skeptical and assertive readers were those whose political perspectives were most shaped by Mexico's perennial crisis -- the younger generation. It is primarily this post-1960 cohort that has formed the audience base for Mexico's independent publications. Over 70% of the readers of *El Financiero*, for instance, are between 22 and 38 years old.³⁸⁵ A number of other independent papers -- *La Jornada*, *Reforma*, *El Norte*, and *Siglo 21* -- show similar readership profiles. By contrast, *oficialista* papers (like *Excelsior*) tend to have a disproportionately older audience.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵Author's interviews with Rogelio Cárdenas Jr. and Alejandro Ramos, Mexico City, March 27, 1996.

³⁸⁶The one exception is *El Diario de Yucatán*, long associated with Mérida's local elite, whose readership base resembles that of traditional papers.

The experience of Mexico's print media thus suggests that modernization reinforced media opening only in combination other factors that changed readers' tastes. Most important among these were shocking political events, which served to heighten interest in independent reporting, discredit the political system, and shape a new generation of more demanding readers. These events, as much as modernization itself, produced the audience for Mexico's new Fourth Estate.

These events served another function as well: they helped signal to journalists and publishers that the media audience had changed. In other words, these events served as a crucial link between the changes in Mexico's population and the calculations of Mexican editors and publishers. The efflorescence of Mexican civil society in the wake of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the widely-questioned presidential elections of 1988, and the political crimes of 1994 all helped convince Mexican journalists that a new readership -- more suspicious and demanding -- was available to be tapped. Again, the salient point is that demographic changes in Mexican audiences were real, but their consequences were not automatic and immediate. Rather, modernization-induced changes were mediated by public perceptions of the country's political and economic condition, and by publishers' discovery that they could indeed make money through independent journalism.

Market competition

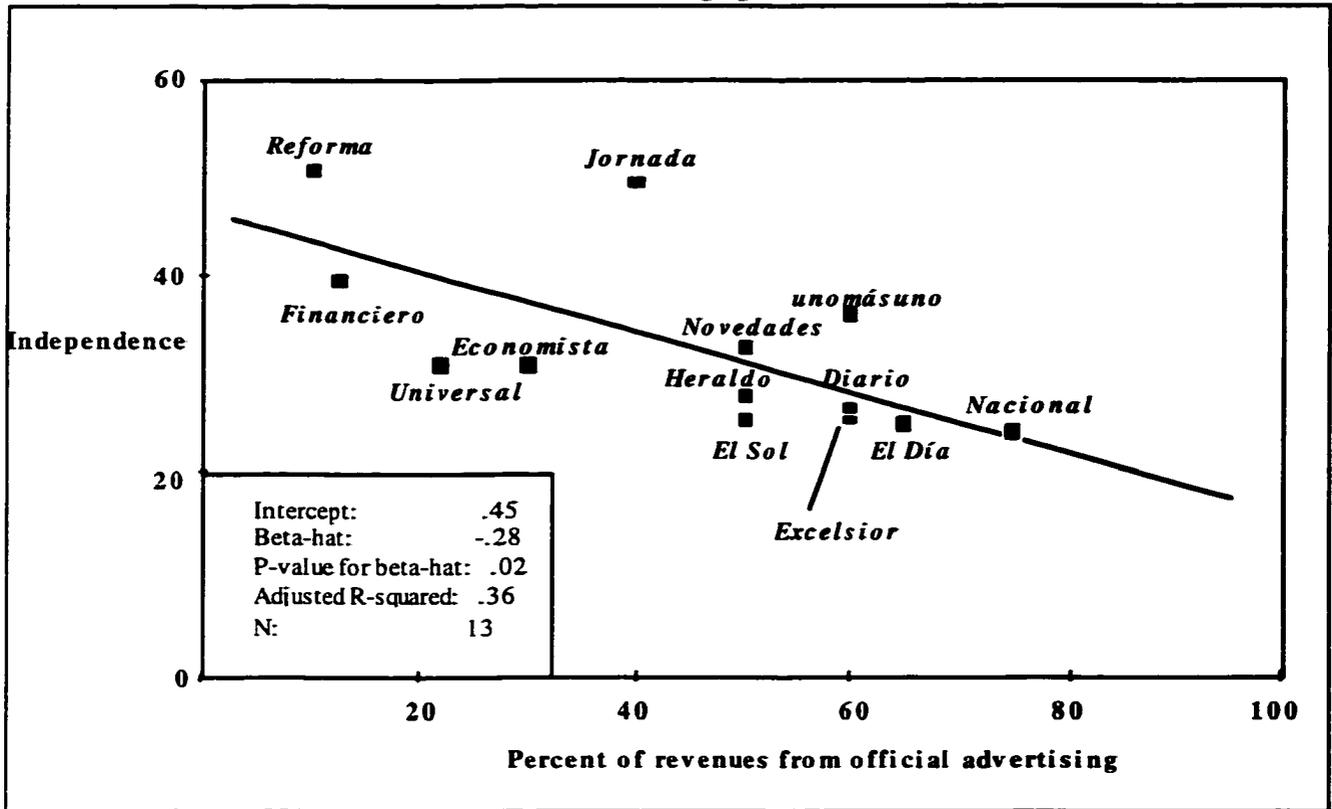
Given an audience receptive to more assertive coverage, the ability of independent newspapers to compete against their traditional counterparts was crucial to the survival of Mexico's fourth estate. Independent papers needed a replacement for government subsidies, on which they would have otherwise been forced to depend. This alternative stream of revenues came from readers and advertisers (who became increasingly responsive to readership). Consequently, a series of changes in both the Mexican population and the business environment were crucial for establishing the market for independent reporting.

Figure 20, below, shows the relationship between journalistic independence (as measured in Figure 16) and financial autonomy (as measured by the percentage of each newspaper's revenues that come from official advertising) for Mexico City's thirteen leading news dailies.³⁸⁷ As this analysis implies, the more

³⁸⁷Estimates of revenues from official advertising are based on author's interviews with newspaper publishers, editors, chief financial officers, and accounting staff. Ratings of independence are the same as in Figure 1 (above).

newspapers relied on government advertising, the less independent they were likely to be. This relationship is captured by the downward sloping regression line; the principal output from this regression is also shown below.³⁸⁸

Figure 20: Financial autonomy and independence in Mexican newspapers



Eventually, market forces encouraged the notion that “telling the truth is a good business.” In a sort of cascade effect, competition encouraged previously sleepy or *oficialista* media to adopt more independent postures. The success of *Reforma*, for instance, has stimulated more aggressive reporting at other papers. Thus, demographic changes, focusing events, and competitive pressures all worked together to open up Mexico’s print media.

We have thus explained why Mexico’s emerging fourth estate was able to survive and grow. Political liberalization ruled out systematic and persistent repression of the press, giving independent-minded journalists and publishers the opportunity to experiment. At the same time, changes in Mexico’s reading public (brought on by socio-economic development and shocking events in the 1980s and

³⁸⁸The one obvious outlier is *La Jornada*, which has managed to maintain a very independent

1990s) created a market for independent reporting. Market competition then reinforced independent journalism.

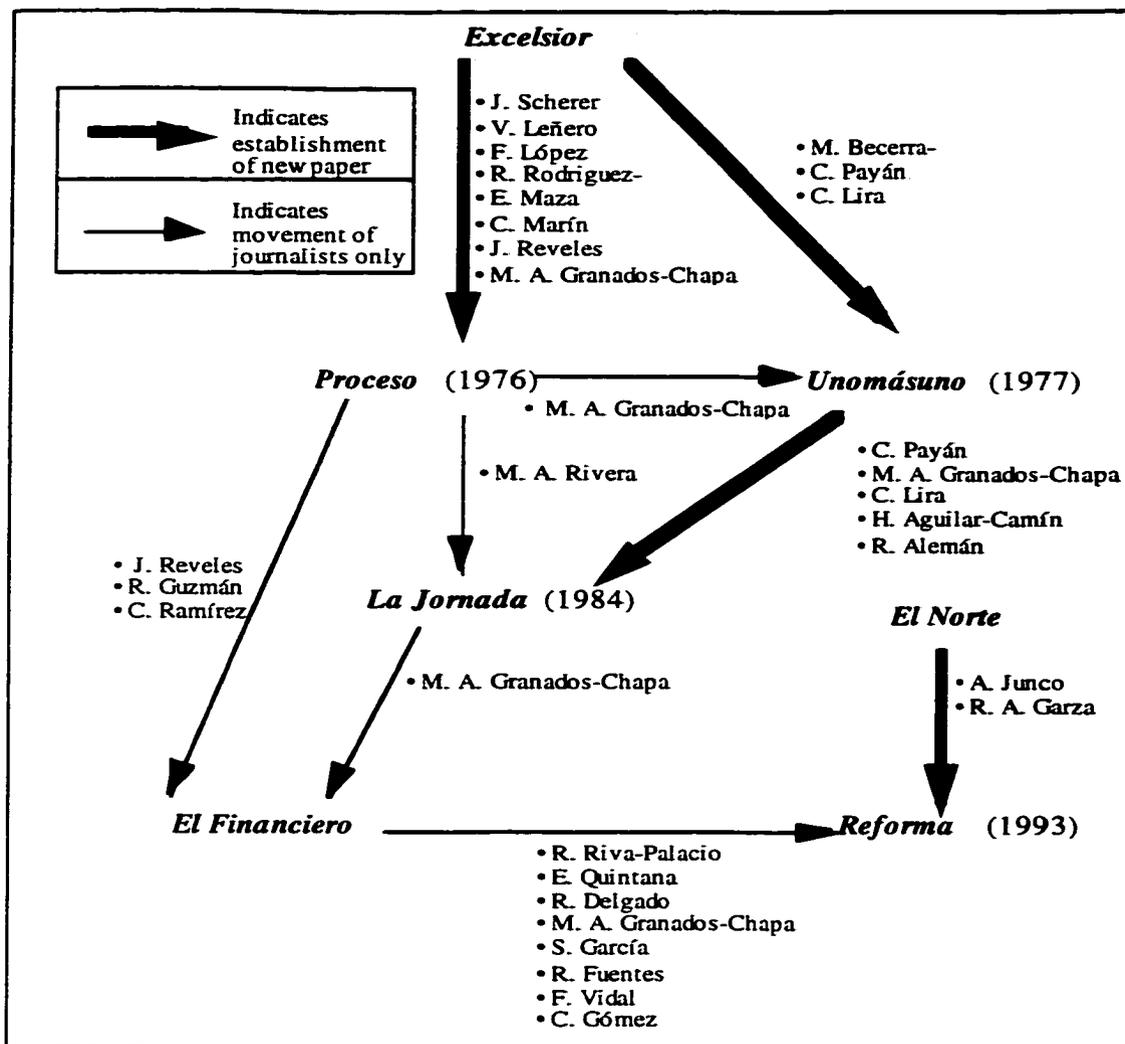
Journalistic professionalism

These factors, however, tell only one part of the story. Although they explain how independent newspapers were able to survive and even flourish, they do not explain why such publications emerged in the first place. In other words, they do not explain what led journalists to experiment with independent coverage when the existence of a receptive audience was far from clear and government efforts to restrict coverage remained vigorous. The explanation for these innovations lies within the Mexican press itself, in a long process of learning and professionalization.

In large measure, professionalization reflected the experience of the original *Excelsior* group and a handful of journalists like them. Even the newspapers not created by this group (such as *Reforma* and *El Financiero*) were influenced by it. As Figure 21 below indicates, Mexico's elaborate process of cross-fertilization ultimately touched all of Mexico City's independent papers.

posture despite its financial dependence on the government.

Figure 21: Journalistic professionalism and Mexico's fourth estate



In Mexico, one symbol of professionalism and independence was the refusal of reporters to accept bribes. Better ethics signified a commitment to non-traditional journalism, and this commitment was perhaps the best predictor of independence in reporting. The correlation between independence in coverage and the estimated percentage of reporters who regularly receive bribes at thirteen Mexico City newspapers is 0.76 -- even tighter than the correlation between independence and financial autonomy.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁹I calculated the percentage of reporters who received bribes by averaging the estimates of fifteen leading Mexican journalists; to enhance reliability, I discarded journalists' ratings of the papers for which they worked. Unfortunately, the limited number of data points and the high correlation between dependence on government advertising and the percentage of journalists who regularly receive bribes impedes multivariate testing. The adjusted R-squared on a regression containing both variables was approximately .60.

In other words, one key ingredient in the opening of Mexico's print media was the development of a broader journalistic vision about the role of the press in society. For most independent journalists, this new vision was the product of a series of events and experiences -- including a number of failures, missteps, and unpleasant interactions with the regime. Ultimately, these experiences helped drive some individuals to create a new culture of journalism outside the traditional rent-seeking system. Mexico's fourth estate was built by particular individuals, and it reflects the indelible stamp of their experiences.

In this sense, media opening depended in part on particular choices at crucial moments that ultimately had a powerful impact on Mexico's press. Julio Scherer-García, for instance, could easily have lapsed into bitterness and obscurity following the government-orchestrated coup at *Excelsior*. Alejandro Junco did not have to launch a new publication in Mexico City's notoriously saturated newspaper market. Nothing made *Siglo 21*'s original crew of reporters stay on during the paper's early months, when salaries had not been paid and readership remained hopelessly limited. And every day in Mexico, scores of journalists have to decide for themselves whether to accept or decline an array of official favors; the sum of their individual decisions matters in whether Mexico's independent media remain so. It would be wrong to regard these individual decisions as entirely divorced from the structural variables discussed above, or to claim that a few individuals determined the entire trajectory of Mexico's media regime. But it would be equally foolish -- indeed, the height of academic hubris -- to argue that social transformations as profound and complex as the opening of Mexico's print media can be explained without reference to human agency.

Other factors

In addition to political liberalization, market competition, and journalistic professionalism, a series of other factors encouraged the emergence of independent media in Mexico. Economic globalization and market-oriented reform expanded the base of private advertising and reinforced market competition; technological change and increased penetration by foreign media increased Mexican publications' maneuvering room. In this sense, the Mexican print media provide some evidence for a number of hypotheses mentioned in Chapter One. In fact, a descent into the details of the Mexican case reveals a number of factors that were not considered in the cross-national statistical analysis of Chapter One. Unexpected focusing events, serendipity (including the unintended consequences of government actions) and the

unforeseen actions particular individuals were all important contributors to the transformation of Mexico's print regime.

Review of the principal hypotheses

With certain exceptions, the evolution of Mexico's print media supports the hypotheses presented in Chapter One. Political liberalization, socio-economic development, economic liberalization, technological change, journalistic professionalism, and market competition all contributed to independence in the Mexican press. In addition, the weight of these factors is more or less as expected: journalistic professionalism and market competition played critical roles; socio-economic development and political liberalization also mattered, though their impact was slightly weaker or less direct. Table 9, below, summarizes these findings.

Table 9: Review of the principal hypotheses

Principal hypotheses	Suggested by existing literature?	Supported by data analysis?	Supported by analysis of Mexico's print media?
1a. Political freedom leads to media openness	Yes	Yes	Yes
1b. Political freedom and media openness mutually reinforce each other (reciprocal)	Yes	Not tested	Not tested
2a. Socio-economic development promotes media openness	Yes	Yes	Yes
2b. Increases in per capita income promote media openness	Yes	Yes	No?
2c. Increases in literacy promote media openness	Yes	Yes?	Yes?
2d. Increases in market size promote media openness	Yes	No	Yes
3a. Market-oriented reform promotes media openness in economically closed systems	Yes	Yes	Yes
3b. Market-oriented reform promotes media openness in all systems	No	Yes?	Not tested
4. Innovation and diffusion of communications technologies promote media openness	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Increased penetration by international media promotes media openness	Yes	Yes?	Yes
6. Journalistic professionalism promotes media openness	Yes	Yes	Yes
7. Market pressures tend to reinforce and accelerate process of media opening	Yes	Not tested	Yes

The Mexican case also sheds light on a number of subsidiary issues raised by these hypotheses. In Chapter One, it was suggested that political reform was likely to be a particularly powerful factor in opening the media. In Mexico, political liberalization was clearly a facilitating condition for media opening. But it was

hardly the whole story; a series of other variables shaped the extent to which political opening actually led to media openness.

The experience of Mexico's print media also helps clarify the relationship between socio-economic development and press freedom. As the comparison of print media in different Mexican cities suggested, market size appears to promote media openness. This analysis also suggests that increasing purchasing power -- rather than literacy or non-financial indices of material well-being -- is the element of modernization most closely associated with media opening. Even more importantly, though, the Mexican experience highlights the extent to which demographic changes do not automatically translate into institutional transformations. Rather, demographic changes require certain triggers to render them political salient, such as the catalytic events described in this chapter. In Mexico, a series of political shocks, accidents, and natural disasters simultaneously stimulated audience demand for more independent journalism and signaled to the media that a new reading public was available to be tapped.³⁹⁰ Without these events, the social changes generated by economic development would not have led to media opening.

A third issue raised in Chapter One concerns the causal relationship between press freedom and factors like journalistic professionalism. The Mexican case strongly suggests that the original hypothesized directions of causality were correct: journalistic professionalism precedes and shapes media independence and diversity, rather than the other way around. Consequently, government controls which influence media professionalism -- e.g., corruption -- can have lingering consequences for press freedom.

The following chapter re-tests these conclusions by examining Mexico's electronic media. As Chapter Four shows, a slightly different cluster of factors encouraged opening in Mexican radio and television. In particular, economic liberalization and market competition have played a particularly powerful role in transforming Mexico's electronic media.

³⁹⁰Focusing events also encouraged political reforms, as discussed above.

4. Mexico's Emerging Fourth Estate: Broadcast Media

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

— Enrique Quintana, Channel 40³⁹¹

On April 16, 1997, media magnate Emilio Azcárraga Jr. -- known as "the Tiger" -- died of cancer on his yacht off the coast of Miami.³⁹² His demise provoked a predictable range of reactions across the Mexican political spectrum. Executives and financiers paid tribute to one of the country's richest men, who had presided over the spectacular development of Mexico's television industry.³⁹³ Politicians from the ruling party mourned the passing of a longtime ally, whose partisan sympathies had been openly proclaimed in life. And civic groups expressed hope that Azcárraga's demise would stimulate further opening in Televisa, the multi-billion dollar media conglomerate he controlled.³⁹⁴ In all, it was a fittingly mixed tribute for a man who was simultaneously, "visionary and authoritarian, magnanimous and dictatorial, ubiquitous and reserved...a symbol of the practical mix of modern high technology and the archaic concentration of power and ownership in a single man."³⁹⁵

With the Tiger's death, control of Televisa passed to his twenty-nine year-old son, Emilio Azcárraga III (known as Azcárraga-Jean), and a crew of predominantly younger executives.³⁹⁶ Open and informal, Azcárraga III presented a stark contrast to his father (who never granted interviews). Optimists viewed the changing of the guard as a crucial step in Televisa's painfully slow evolution toward greater independence.

³⁹¹Cited in Elias Parra with María Hope, "¿La censura está en el aire?" *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, p. 44.

³⁹²See Carlos Puig, "La historia de Televisa: el aplauso sumiso al gobierno en turno," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 12.

³⁹³In 1994, *Forbes* magazine listed Azcárraga as one of Mexico's wealthiest individuals, with a family net worth of \$5.4 billion. In 1995, following the sudden devaluation of the Mexican peso and ensuing economic crisis, *Forbes* estimated his family's assets at \$1.6 billion. (See *Forbes*, July 18, 1994, p. 194 and July 17, 1995, p. 194.)

³⁹⁴See *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, pp. 6-16.

³⁹⁵Carlos Monsiváis, "Azcárraga Milmo y la 'filosofía de Televisa'," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 58.

³⁹⁶Carlos Marín, "Disputa familiar por el legado de 'El Tigre': un emporio de 1,600 millones de dolares," *Proceso*, July 20, 1997, p. 6-13; Carlos Puig, "La pugna llega a los noticieros: cómo humilló Ricardo Rocha a Zabludovsky el 6 de julio," *Proceso*, July 20, 1997, p. 8-9.

This chapter analyzes the evolution of Mexico's electronic media since 1985. The first section sketches out the major players in Mexico's broadcasting industry, concentrating on the country's two major commercial television networks. The second section summarizes the principal events that led to growing independence and diversity in the electronic media. The third section dissects these events from a theoretical perspective. The fourth section turns to the political consequences of changes in Mexico's media.

The evolution of Mexican broadcasting highlights the importance of market forces in prying open a once highly controlled media regime. In radio, focusing events (such as the 1985 Mexico City earthquake) and format changes in certain talk-radio programs encouraged the emergence of quality, independent news coverage. The financial success of these programs guaranteed their persistence, and competition for advertising revenues forced other stations to follow their lead. Consequently, from 1985 to 1997 Mexican radio evolved steadily toward independence.

In television, commercial competition following the privatization of government-owned channels in 1993 put pressure on the country's dominant network, Televisa, to introduce a measure of independence in news coverage. The effects of commercial competition were reinforced by economic crisis, which forced Televisa to search out novel strategies to protect its ratings. Attempts to change the network were also propelled by dramatic focusing events and public criticism of Televisa by opposition activists. Each new shock -- the Mexico City earthquake, the contested presidential elections of 1988, the tumultuous political events of 1994, and the presidential elections of the same year -- highlighted the extent to which Televisa's *oficialista* news coverage was out of step with both the changing reality of Mexican politics and the tastes of its audience. From 1993 to 1996, therefore, Televisa's news coverage became more representative and impartial.

But the recent history of Mexico's broadcast media also highlights the limits of change. For most of the last decade, Mexican television has not kept pace with Mexican society. Televisa's enduring hegemony has constrained market competition in television broadcasting and thus retarded media opening. As a result, broadcast television has acted as a counterweight to democratizing forces in other parts of civil society. It was not until the elections of 1997, when leadership changes at Televisa and electoral reforms led to more extensive coverage of the main opposition parties, that the power of television was harnessed for democratization.

Mexican broadcasting

In contrast to magazines and newspapers, Mexico's electronic media have a pervasive scope. Since 1960, the "transistor revolution" and the multiplication of radio transmitters have made radio signals available to virtually all Mexicans. And over the last two decades, the expansion of television broadcasting has also carried visual signals to over 95% of the population. Although limited purchasing power means that only about 50% of households actually own a television set, a clear majority of Mexicans report receiving most of their information about politics and current events through television.

Table 10, below, shows the breakdown of Mexican media audiences between publications, radio, and television. As the first column indicates, most Mexicans rely either on television exclusively or on television and a smattering of other media. Audience breakdown by education level (the second column) shows that all strata of Mexican society rely primarily on television, even educated Mexicans who have access to a variety of sources.

Table 10: Media use in Mexico

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>College Educated</u>
Print	10.1%	28.1%
Radio	16.7%	10.5%
Television	58.6%	45.3%
All	6.2%	15.4%
Other/None	<u>8.4%</u>	<u>0.7%</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

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

Data from other sources suggest that, if anything, even more Mexicans depend on television for news. According to most surveys, between two-thirds and three-quarters of Mexicans rely primarily on television for information about politics.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷Jon Vanden Heuvel and Everette E. Dennis, *Changing Patterns: Latin America's Vital Media* (New York: Freedom Forum Studies Center, Columbia University, 1995) cite a figure of 72% (p. 40). A poll by MORI of Mexico for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/PEAC, April 1993 claimed 74%. Polls by the Office of the Presidency suggest slightly more modest percentages.

The “octopus of the airwaves”³⁹⁸

For most of the last twenty-five years, Mexico’s important medium has been dominated by a single company, Televisa. Comparable in scope to Brazil’s *O Globo* and the major American networks, Televisa produces world-class news, sports, and entertainment programs. The corporation’s most lucrative programs are its *telenovelas*, or nightly soap operas, which are exported around the world. Its interests also extend to a range of media-related industries (newspapers, magazines, radio, and film, sports teams, etc.), as well as new technologies like satellite and cable. Top managers now present their firm as a software/production enterprise with a range of distribution outlets – open television, pay television, radio, export, etc.³⁹⁹

The multiple-media nature of Televisa’s holdings gives the corporation a tremendous advantage in securing advertising revenues. Possibly no other company in the world can match the saturation coverage that Televisa offers potential clients in Mexico. Televisa’s presence in television, radio, and print media guarantee prospective clients access to every nook and cranny of the Mexican market; its ownership of a majority of the country’s billboards, the national stadium in Mexico City, and most of Mexico’s musical and dramatic talent ensure that traditional advertising campaigns are supplemented by a range of local promotional efforts. Promotional activities orchestrated by Televisa thus penetrate the entire country, from nationally broadcast television programs to local radio shows, from championship soccer matches to the smallest town fairs.⁴⁰⁰

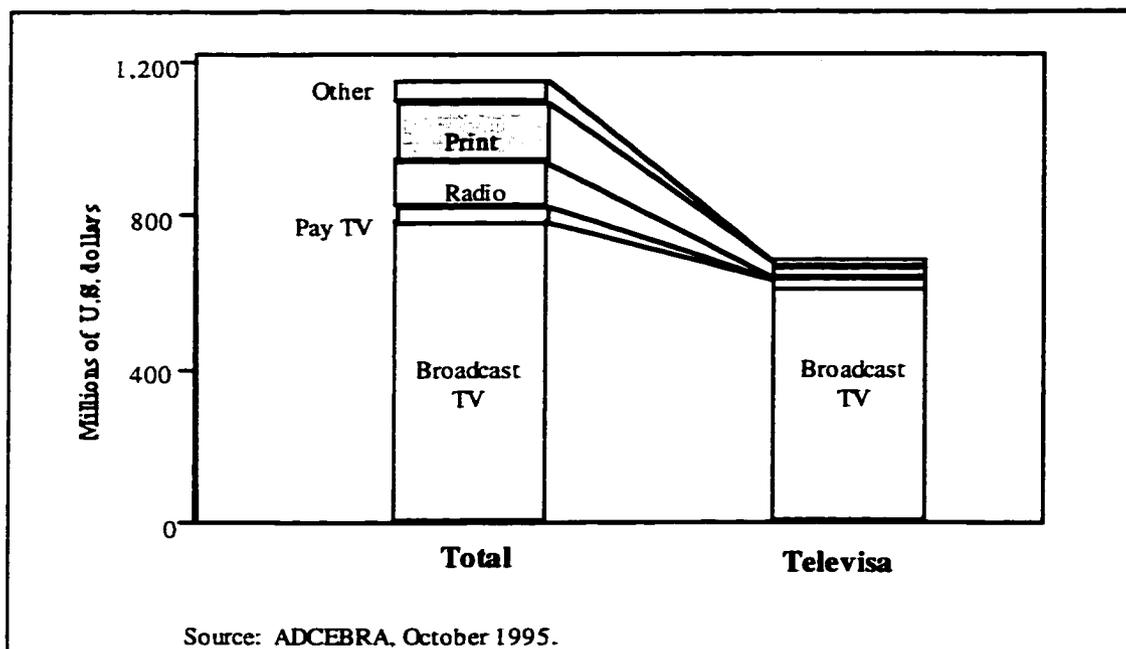
Figure 22, below, summarizes Televisa’s preeminence in the realm of publicity in 1994. As the graph indicates, Televisa received about 70% of television advertising revenues and over 50% of all advertising revenues in Mexico. This dominance of advertising persists today.

³⁹⁸ This phrase is taken from Joseph Skinner, “Octopus of the Airwaves,” *Monthly Review*, September 1987, 39 (4):44-59.

³⁹⁹ Carlos Puig, “Mermada en sus márgenes de ganancia y de audiencia, enduedada y vendiendo parte de sus activos, Televisa prepara el conflictivo reemplazo de sus mandos,” *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁰ Televisa’s reach gives it tremendous leverage over potential advertisers. The company’s payment scheme, known as the French Plan, requires clients to pay up front for an entire year of advertising.

Figure 22: Televisa dominance of Mexican advertising



Despite its immense size and commercial success, Televisa remains a largely family-owned company.⁴⁰¹ Most of the voting stock remains in the Azcárraga nuclear family, with collateral relatives and descendants of the corporation's other original partners retaining the rest. Principal minority shareholders include the Alemán family (14.8%), Alejandro Burillo-Azcárraga (14%), and the Cañedo-White brothers (10.2%). Management of the enterprise reflects its ownership: Emilio Azcárraga III, José Antonio and Guillermo Cañedo-White, Miguel Alemán Jr. -- and until recently Emilio Azcárraga Jr. and Alejandro Burillo-Azcárraga -- have held the company's top posts.⁴⁰²

As discussed in Chapter Two, Televisa's coverage faithfully reflected government concerns and priorities. In many ways, however, Televisa's internal corporate rules were even more restrictive than the government's. Reporting was especially constrained on any topics that might be construed as leftist. Throughout

⁴⁰¹ Emilio Azcárraga Jr. bought out his former partner Rómulo O'Farrill in the early 1990's, allegedly for \$500 million. Since 1991, non-voting Televisa stock has been tradable on the Mexican exchange.

⁴⁰² See Carlos Puig, Alemán, de regreso a Televisa, al frente de un compacto grupo de jóvenes

the 1980's, for example, Televisa gave no coverage to leftist guerrilla movements in the hemisphere, regularly lambasted the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and adhered to a strongly pro-Israel line in coverage of the Middle East.⁴⁰³ Such internal censorship even extended to the personal conversations and opinions of Televisa staff. In one incident, employees of the company were fired for repeating stories of government corruption in private.⁴⁰⁴

Self-censorship also extended to coverage of Televisa's corporate partners and advertisers. In general, the interests and practices of leading Mexican businessmen allied with the conservative faction of the regime -- Miguel Alemán, Carlos Hank-González, Carlos Slim, etc. -- were simply not legitimate subjects for reporting. The corporation was equally zealous about promoting its own businesses, such as the sports newspaper *Ovaciones* and books produced by its publishing house. Prominent performing artists not employed by Televisa were often included on internal lists of "vetoed" persons, alongside opposition politicians and activists.⁴⁰⁵

Beginning in 1988, Televisa's news reporting has shown signs of change. Although many predatory business tactics persist, news reporting has lost its surreal quality. Bad news, especially bad economic news, now regularly appears. Opposition political parties receive far greater coverage; even scandalous events are occasionally reported. As one journalist put it, "the Televisa of today is simply not the Televisa of 1988."⁴⁰⁶ In large measure, these changes are due to the appearance of other alternatives in Mexican broadcasting.

priistas," *Proceso*, March 16, 1997, p. 33.

⁴⁰³ Author's interview with Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996; author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

⁴⁰⁴ The incident concerned employee jests regarding the "renting" of high-ranking Mexico City police officers to provide security for a private party, an occasional practice among Mexico's elite. Author's interview with Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.

⁴⁰⁵ Author's interview, Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.

⁴⁰⁶ Author's interview with Ricardo Alemán, columnist at *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 12, 1995. Alemán was one of the few people who undertook a systematic study of Televisa's coverage in 1988, before the formation of the Civic Alliance. See also Pablo Arredondo-Ramírez, Gilberto Fregoso-Peralta, and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, eds., *Así se calló el sistema: comunicación y elecciones en 1988* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991).

The emerging duopoly...

Despite its dominant position, Televisa now faces competition from private pay-television companies and local broadcasters. Most importantly, it must compete with a rival national network known as Televisión Azteca, which was created from the government-owned Imevisión chain (which was itself created when President Luís Echeverría took over several private channels in 1972). In 1993, these channels were sold to a consortium led by Monterrey-based businessman Ricardo Salinas-Pliego (no relation to President Carlos Salinas) for \$641 million. With 178 transmitters and 87 broadcasting licenses, Televisión Azteca has the technical scope and broadcasting capacity to compete against Televisa. Today it is more appropriate to speak of Mexican television as a quasi-duopoly rather than a quasi-monopoly, as it was in the past.

In many respects, Mexico's two networks are fairly similar. Both offer commercially oriented products, and both focus principally on entertainment. Azteca's main news programs -- *Hechos, Está Enterado, A Quien Corresponda* -- are generally designed to match Televisa's. Since 1994, the two networks have become more similar still, with paired "soft news" programs like *Ciudad Desnuda* (TV Azteca) and *A sangre fría* (Televisa), as well as "hidden camera" programs like *Te caché* (TV Azteca) and *Cámara Inflagrante* (Televisa). The two networks even own rival soccer leagues, reinforcing the Coke-versus-Pepsi flavor of their competition.

Though Televisión Azteca has sometimes been credited with greater independence, news coverage on the two networks is actually not that different. Despite the fact that Azteca devotes slightly more attention to potentially scandalous or incendiary events (especially police corruption), until 1997 Mexico's political opposition received similarly negative coverage on both networks. One classic example occurred during Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's September 1993 trip to Veracruz, when local PRI bosses paid a group of transvestites to hug and kiss the PRD leader. Photographs and footage of the event subsequently appeared in the captive local press, as well as in some dependent publications in the capital (e.g., *unomásuno* and *Excelsior*), with captions like "Cárdenas's girls." Both Televisa and Televisión Azteca covered the manufactured incident on their national evening news programs.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁷ Ricardo Ravelo and Rodrigo Vera, "El gobierno veracruzano pagó a los travestis, porros, y teporochos que hostilizaron a Cuauhtémoc," *Proceso* October 4, 1993, p. 6-7. Similar instances of manipulation occurred during the elections themselves -- as when Televisión Azteca's *Hechos*

Probably the biggest difference between the two networks is not their news content but the source of their non-news programming. With over 20,000 employees and a world-class production infrastructure, Televisa creates most of its own programs. Televisión Azteca, by contrast, maintains a staff of only 800 employees and depends on imported programming, mainly from its U.S. partner NBC. It owns few other enterprises, even in media-related industries, and concentrates almost exclusively on broadcast television.

Since its birth in 1993, Televisión Azteca has gradually gained market share at the expense of Televisa. From a base of less than 2% four years ago, the new firm has captured approximately 30% of the total viewing audience. Most of this growth has come in news reporting, where Azteca's softer, yellower style proved popular and early perceptions of independence worked to the network's advantage. Its entertainment shows, however, have not been able to compete as effectively with Televisa's. Barring major changes in programming, the two rival networks seem destined to share the market in a rough two-to-one ratio.⁴⁰⁸

...and the rest

In addition to Mexico's two principal networks, a number of other broadcasters play a role at the margin of Mexican television. The most important of these is Multivisión, a microwave-based pay-television system. With approximately 300,000 subscribers, Multivisión is Mexico's largest pay-television system, about 50% larger than the other major industry player, Televisa's Cablevisión.⁴⁰⁹

Over the last five years, Multivisión has sought to expand and diversify its media holdings. Multivisión already owns some radio stations and bid (unsuccessfully) for the government-owned television network in 1992-93. It is also a partner to regional satellite television ventures. As the Mexican media market grows more technologically sophisticated, therefore, the Multivisión will become an increasingly relevant alternative source of information. The company currently offers independent political commentary and news coverage through its roundtable

reported the results of an opinion poll by the innocuous-sounding *Fundación para la Democracia* (Foundation for Democracy) without mentioning that it was a PRI group. (See Juan Carlos Gamboa, "Media, Public Opinion Polls, and the 1994 Mexican Presidential Election," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C., September 28-30, 1995, p. 12.)

⁴⁰⁸ Ratings data from both IBOPE and Nielsen, the two principal ratings companies in Mexico, show the same trend.

⁴⁰⁹ Data from the CIRT (Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry) and Nielsen give similar

talk-show *Nexos (Connections)* and its principal newscast, *En blanco y negro (In Black and White)*. Unfortunately, the potential impact of these programs is limited by Multivisión's limited penetration and upscale client base; most subscribers are wealthy households that already have access to diverse sources of information, including independent publications and foreign media.

Another emerging player is Channel 40, broadcast from Mexico City. Though technically an open broadcaster without subscription fees, Channel 40 transmits on a UHF (ultra-high frequency) band that most television sets cannot receive. This makes it effectively a restricted-signal medium, with the same educated, affluent audience profile as pay-television.

Channel 40 is the brainchild of Javier Moreno-Valle, son of the former governor of Puebla state and a businessman with broadcasting interests in Argentina and Spain.⁴¹⁰ Together with his associate Hernán Cabalceta, Moreno-Valle helped found *Financiero* before selling his interest to the Cárdenas family in the early 1980's. Moreno-Valle also led the ill-fated effort behind *El Independiente* newspaper (most of whose staff subsequently ended up working for *Reforma*).

In many respects, Channel 40 is an extension and continuation of previous projects. Several leading journalists involved with the independent media, most notably news editor Ciro Gómez-Leyva, now work at Channel 40, and the station is strongly oriented toward news coverage. News reporting comprises 51 hours per week, in addition to 21 hours of special reports and documentaries and 12 hours of the feisty debate program *Sin límites (No Limits)*.⁴¹¹

The newness of Channel 40 makes its posture and impact difficult to assess -- although the company officially began to broadcast full coverage in June 1995, signal problems impeded transmission until early 1996.⁴¹² So far, however, the network has proved strikingly independent. In its first year of operation, the station broadcast investigative reports on Pemex and the assassination of PRI presidential candidate Luís Donaldo Colosio, as well as shorter news reports on topics like election-related violence in Morelos and interviews with "vetoed" political figures

information on the number of Multivisión subscribers

⁴¹⁰ In addition to Moreno-Valle and Cabalceta, the company also received start-up financing from Nacional Financiera (which controls 15% of stock) and Francisco Ibarra of Grupo Acir. (See ADCEBRA, October 1995, p. 58-59.)

³¹ See ADCEBRA, October 1995, p. 58-59.

⁴¹² It is not clear whether the problems in question were purely technological or whether they were also the result of government interference. The station had earlier faced problems in securing government permission to broadcast. (Author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.)

like PRI defector Manuel Camacho-Solís and former union boss Joaquín Hernández-Galicia (“La Quina”).⁴¹³ Though Channel 40 allegedly appeared on an “enemies” list drawn up by the Zedillo administration, government pressure so far has been light.⁴¹⁴ Possibly because of Channel 40’s relatively limited audience, the network has not yet been threatened with the withdrawal of its concession.⁴¹⁵

A third new and more independent broadcaster is Channel 22, a cultural station that began transmitting on June 23, 1993. Also viewed as a potential threat by the government, Channel 22 resembles several other smaller television stations (e.g., Chihuahua’s Channel 11) that have become increasingly independent in the last five years.⁴¹⁶ Though limited viewership makes them rounding errors on the two national networks, local television offers some measure of diversity in Mexican broadcasting.

One final emerging source of independent television transmissions is international -- both from satellite systems and from international spillovers. In the last five years, Mexican airwaves have been increasingly filled with signals beamed from Univisión (a U.S.-based Spanish language network formerly owned by Televisa), Telenoticias (a Florida-based consortium of Reuters, Telemundo of Miami, and Spain’s Antena 3), Corporación Medcom, and other foreign broadcasting ventures. In addition to these high-end broadcasts, cross-border spillovers represent an important new element along the U.S.-Mexico frontier. Since 1990, burgeoning demand within the United States for “Latino television” has produced a number of Spanish-language broadcasts that reach into Mexico. Throughout the northern maquiladora belt -- which includes some fairly large cities like Tijuana, Mexicali, and Juárez -- Mexican citizens can receive local American broadcasts in their native tongue. The result is a fairly pluralistic and independent broadcast media along the frontier, despite Mexican government attempts at control.

⁴¹³ Following her report on Pemex, Gina Batista’s car was shot at and she required police protection for the next year. (Author’s interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.)

⁴¹⁴ According to a number of journalists and government officials, other perceived “enemies” included Channel 11 of Chihuahua, Channel 22, and Mexico’s principal independent publications (*Reforma*, *Proceso*, etc.).

⁴¹⁵ Author’s interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Channel 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

⁴¹⁶ Still another local broadcaster is Mexico City’s Channel 11, owned by the government and managed by the National Polytechnic Institute since 1958. Modernized in 1989-92, Channel 11 provides news coverage similar to that of Televisa and Televisión Azteca, though perhaps with a slightly more leftist twist. Its reach continues to be limited to the Mexico City metropolitan area, and even within that zone reception is sometimes poor.

Radio

If Mexican television is the country's most widely viewed medium, radio is the one with greatest penetration. With the spread of inexpensive, portable receivers and the modernization of Mexico's broadcasting infrastructure, radio has now reached virtually every household in Mexico. Some Mexican cities (e.g., Guadalajara and the Federal District) have among of the highest numbers of stations per capita in the world -- theoretically offering tremendous consumer choice.⁴¹⁷

In Mexico, radio is overwhelmingly an entertainment medium. Despite the resurgence of talk radio over the last decade, most stations devote themselves exclusively to music, sports, and, to a lesser extent, radio soap operas. Only about 15-20% of Mexicans rely on radio for news and political information -- slightly above the print media. These listeners are an eclectic assortment of urban commuters, geographically isolated rural communities, and poorer Mexicans cannot afford televisions.

Mexican radio began much as television did, with private barons dominating the industry. The government later began to found its own stations for propaganda purposes in the 1930's and, of course, to dole out concessions to cronies, political supporters, and established private broadcasters.⁴¹⁸ The Azcárraga family, for instance, began as radio entrepreneurs.⁴¹⁹ Today, Mexico's radio industry is dominated by a few large chains: Radio Centro, Radiorama, ACIR, RASA, OIR, Crystal-Cima, and Radiopolis (owned by Televisa). Many cities also have several unaffiliated local broadcasters, typically friends of government officials who acquired their concessions through political and personal connections.

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

⁴¹⁷ See "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón...y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July-September 1995, p. 11.

⁴¹⁸ See Dinorah Zapata-Vázquez, *Genesis y desarrollo de la radio y la televisión en Nuevo León* (Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León/Centro de Información de Historia Regional/Editorial Gona, 1990); Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1981); and Richard R. Cole, *The Mass Media of Mexico: Ownership and Control*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, March 1972).

⁴¹⁹ See *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, p. 21-44; Marvin Alisky, "Radio's Role in Mexico," *Journalism Quarterly*, Winter 1954, 31(4): 67-80.

Multivisión) and José Gutiérrez-Vivó of Radio Red (now owned by Radio Centro).⁴²⁰

The national leader in radio news is undoubtedly Radio Centro, which produces world class music and information programming.⁴²¹ The company's August 24, 1994 acquisition of Radio Red (for \$135 million) left it with 40% of the capital's overall market and perhaps 70% of its news market.⁴²² Reporting on Radio Centro is not as detailed, rigorous, and independent as it is in Mexico's independent newspapers, but it is nevertheless remarkably assertive.

Summary

Mexican television has evolved from virtual monopolization by Televisa to a more heterogeneous environment segmented primarily by income. While broadcast television remains a quasi-duopoly of Televisa and Televisión Azteca, the high-end market offers a range of viewing options based on pay systems and new technologies. There is also increasing differentiation by region, a product of cross-border spillovers from the United States and the emergence of smaller local broadcasters. Collectively, these secondary players control about 10% of the Mexican television market.

By comparison to television, Mexican radio is more fragmented -- a range of local stations and national chains compete for audiences and advertising revenues. Not surprisingly, radio news is more diverse and independent than broadcast television. Diversity and independence are especially noticeable in the handful of high-quality talk programs produced in Mexico City, which save radio from being a pure entertainment medium.

Turning points: The transformation of the Mexican broadcasting

On September 10, 1985, an earthquake registering 8.1 on the Richter scale rocked Mexico City. Government officials reported that eight thousand people died in the disaster, but unofficial estimates of the death count ranged in the tens of thousands, and Mexico City's incessant rumor mill churned out even more apocalyptic figures. One of the reasons that damage from the earthquake was so

⁴²⁰ Antonio Puertas, "¿Para Empezar, Monitor?," *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, p. 43.

⁴²¹ María Antoineta Barragán, *Expansión*, March 15, 1995, p. 21-44.

⁴²² Private market research report prepared for Radio Red by Consultores Internacionales, 1995, p. 78; author's interviews with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, January 23, 1997 and March 18, 1997.

extensive, of course, was widespread lack of compliance with building codes and safety regulations -- itself a product of pervasive graft within the Mexican bureaucracy. Though few politicians were bold enough to state such a conclusion publicly, it soon became clear that official corruption was indirectly responsible for countless deaths and widespread devastation. The 1985 earthquake was one of a series of events -- like the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, the national bankruptcy of 1982, the contested presidential elections of 1988, the 1994 Chiapas uprising, and the bungled peso devaluation of 1994 -- that helped crystallize popular dissatisfaction with the regime.⁴²³

Public resentment was further aroused by the government's failure to provide a coordinated and rapid response. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, President Miguel de la Madrid failed to appear in public immediately to reassure the nation or announce the government's relief efforts. Rescue operations were slow and spotty; repairs were slower still. In the absence of an effective government response, citizens rapidly took matters into their own hands. Neighborhood organizations sprang up around the city to distribute water, care for the injured, and dig out the survivors. Although these associations were rapidly dismantled by the government once official relief efforts got underway, their unexpected efflorescence signaled the rebirth of Mexican civil society.⁴²⁴ As one journalist put it -- echoing similar comments by several colleagues -- the earthquake "woke a sleeping country."⁴²⁵

Seismic change

The earthquake had a series of direct and indirect impacts on Mexico's broadcast media. Most directly, public reactions signaled to media owners that the Mexican population was no longer a politically inert mass; the market for accurate information was there to be tapped if broadcasters were willing to experiment in news coverage. As José Gutiérrez-Vivó, anchor for Radio Red's *Monitor*, put it, "from 1973 [when *Monitor* began] to 1985, the electronic media were asleep." Like rest of the country, they were jolted awake by the earthquake.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ See Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre: crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1987), p. 17-122.

⁴²⁴ See Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre: crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1987), especially p. 40-51.

⁴²⁵ Author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Canal 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

⁴²⁶ Author's interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, Mexico City, April 18, 1996.

Audience responses to reporting of the disaster reinforced this impression. In the aftermath of the earthquake, several radio stations rushed to provide timely assessments of the damage and placed themselves at the disposal of popular relief efforts. The result was a radio boom, which gave Mexican radio new influence as an informational medium.⁴²⁷ In particular, this boom rewarded a handful of more assertive and professional radio stations — such as Radio Red — on which people came to rely for accurate updates about the disaster.⁴²⁸ From that day forward, independent radio stations were consistently among the first media to break important news.⁴²⁹

For Mexican television, which clung to *oficialista* patterns of reporting, the results were reversed. Televisa continued to transmit mild reports of the damage — up until its own tower collapsed and it was forced off the air for three days. The credibility of Televisa's newscasts suffered both with the public at large and inside the corporation itself (where a large number of employees were killed).⁴³⁰ In this sense, the earthquake was one of the first events that led Televisa to reconsider its Orwellian coverage of “bad news”.⁴³¹ In recent years, perhaps in an attempt to atone for past sins, coverage of earthquakes and other natural disasters has been extensive and graphic.⁴³²

The 1988 election

The electronic media's next step toward independence came in 1988, with the independent candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and the contested election of

⁴²⁷ Almost ten years to the day after the 1985 earthquake, a series of tremors struck Mexico City. Although damage was minimal, the magnitude of the tremors was unsettling, and many residents refused to return to their homes for most of the day. I happened to be living in Mexico City at the time and was struck by the degree to which people turned to radio for updates rather than other media. Many ignored television sets placed in storefront windows in favor of radio announcements; others watched only muted television images while listening to radio reports.

⁴²⁸ Exactly the same sort of process occurred in Guadalajara, after the explosion of twelve kilometers of city sewer in 1992. Once again, government incompetence and corruption were blamed; once again, timely and accurate reports on the radio lent earned a few stations a great deal of credibility.

⁴²⁹ Author's interview with Raymundo Riva-Palacio, Mexico City, September 18, 1995.

⁴³⁰ Author's interview with Benjamín Wong, Mexico City, April 3, 1996.

⁴³¹ Exactly the same sort of process occurred in Guadalajara, after the explosion of twelve kilometers of city sewer in 1992. Once again, government incompetence and corruption were blamed; once again, timely and accurate reports on the radio lent earned a few stations a great deal of credibility. For further details, see Chapter Three.

⁴³² Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

President Carlos Salinas. As with the 1985 earthquake, radio proved much more aggressive and even-handed in covering Cárdenas.⁴³³ Television coverage of the campaign, by contrast, was deeply biased, portraying Cárdenas as a dangerous radical and painting the PAN as an extension of the private sector and the Catholic Church. Television bias was so notorious that it became a campaign issue. Manuel Clouthier, the PAN's charismatic candidate, repeatedly denounced reporting on Televisa's principal newscast, *24 Hours*. Opposition activists called for a boycott of Televisa products, passed out bumper stickers lambasting *24 Hours* anchor Jacobo Zabludovsky, and organized demonstrations outside Televisa's headquarters.⁴³⁴ The corporation became identified with the old regime precisely as that regime was coming under its greatest stress.

In response to these events, Televisa initiated a limited opening in 1989, allowing some coverage of controversial topics and opposition figures. But change was both circumscribed and ephemeral. Rising Televisa star Guillermo Ochoa, host of *Hoy Mismo (Today)* and the symbol of recent changes, was fired after interviewing jailed labor leader Joaquín Hernández-Galicia (whom President Salinas had arrested early in his term).⁴³⁵ The corporation also launched a systematic campaign to help the government discredit PRD leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and sell President Carlos Salinas' program of economic reform.⁴³⁶

The talk-radio renaissance

As Televisa was withdrawing its first tentative gestures at opening, Mexican radio was continuing its evolution toward greater independence. Talent from print media and television -- including those purged from Televisa -- trickled into the

⁴³³ Author's interview with René Delgado, Mexico City, March 26, 1996.

⁴³⁴ Author's interview with Ricardo Alemán, columnist at *La Jornada*, Mexico City, August 12, 1995; see also Pablo Arrendondo-Ramírez, Gilberto Fregoso-Peralta, and Raúl Trejo-Delarbre, eds., *Así se calló el sistema: comunicación y elecciones en 1988* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1991).

⁴³⁵ Author's interview with Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996; see also Carlos Puig, "Mermada en sus márgenes de ganancia y de audiencia, enduedada y vendiendo parte de sus activos, Televisa prepara el conflictivo reemplazo de sus mandos," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 6; Carlos Puig, "En 1989, un primer intento de apertura informativa en Televisa terminó con el despido de Guillermo Ochoa," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 10; Alvaro Delgado, "No soportó el gobierno la apertura noticiosa: la 'primavera de Televisa', efímera: Azcárraga se plegó y Burillo dijo adiós," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 9.

⁴³⁶ Author's content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks of March in 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

radio industry.⁴³⁷ Radio broadcasters, increasingly aware of the profit potential in news radio, welcomed the new professionals. Meanwhile, radio hosts themselves continued to experiment with changes in format and presentation.

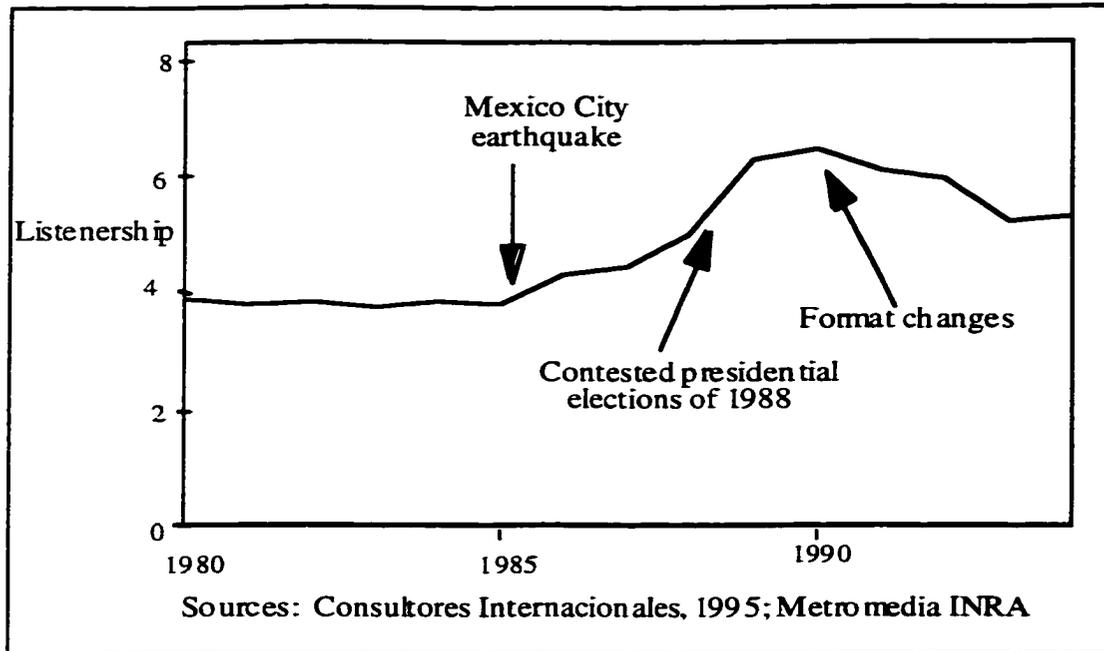
The most successful of these experiments was Radio Red, one of the original stations to broadcast accurate updates on the 1985 earthquake. José Gutiérrez-Vivó, the host of Radio Red's leading news program (*Monitor*), radically restructured the style of radio news, expanding the time allotted to interviews and introducing listener call-ins that gave radio an interactive flavor. Public reaction to the changes was dramatic, and *Monitor* quickly came to dominate the capital's airwaves. By the mid-1990s, *Monitor* had captured approximately 56% of the Mexico City news market.⁴³⁸

Figure 23, below, traces Radio Red's listenership (as a percent of all households with radios) since 1980. As the graph indicates, the company's ratings were more or less static until the Mexico City earthquake. Over the next five years, however, they surged from 4% to 6%. Though ratings slipped in the early 1990's, when other stations began to mimic Radio Red's innovations, the station's popularity remained high.

⁴³⁷ These included men like José Cárdenas and Javier Solórzano, the latter of whom later joined Multivisión's *En blanco y negro*.

⁴³⁸ Confidential market research report conducted for Radio Red by Consultores Internacionales in 1995.

Figure 23: Ratings at Radio Red, 1980-94



Talk radio programs soon surged across Mexico City's airwaves, reviving a stagnant AM dial and breathing new life into the news/information side of radio. With ratings came advertising revenues. Because radio stations lived off a scarce supply of advertising revenues, and because news shows presented the most lucrative advertising opportunities, commercial pressure was particularly keen. In this sense, the changes at *Monitor* were comparable to those introduced by Julio Scherer at *Excelsior* or Alejandro Junco at *El Norte*, elevating the most independent radio programs and triggering a cascade effect throughout the industry.

By the middle of President Carlos Salinas' term, then, Mexican radio was becoming increasingly pluralistic and independent.⁴³⁹ Despite its propaganda campaign against Cárdenas, Televisa was also showing incipient signs of openness. Starting in 1990-91, it became acceptable to mention leading opposition parties, refer to "vetoed" persons, and occasionally report on government corruption.⁴⁴⁰ Television lagged behind radio -- every two step forwards accompanied by another step back -- but both media were inching toward limited independence.

⁴³⁹ On a scale of one to ten (with ten representing complete independence), journalists rated radio between a three and a seven during 1990-1994.

⁴⁴⁰ Author's interview, Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.

Increasing openness, of course, owed little to government tolerance. Even the mild reforms President Salinas introduced in the print media were absent in radio and television. Mexican radio was still the victim of regular censorship, which increased sharply in second half of Salinas' term with the government-mandated firing of several prominent independent journalists.⁴⁴¹ Concessions continued to be doled out to regime supporters rather than smaller, politically non-partisan entrepreneurs.⁴⁴² And Mexican television remained dominated by an openly pro-government monopoly.

Privatization (at last)

President Salinas' program of economic liberalization, however, finally reached broadcasting on August 2, 1993, with the privatization of government-owned television channels. Televisión Azteca, as the new network was baptized, introduced an element of competition into Mexican broadcast television. To be sure Televisión Azteca was initially hobbled by the usual legacies of public sector ownership and management: low ratings, high costs, technological obsolescence, administrative incompetence, and a corporate culture that celebrated organizational slack.⁴⁴³ Nevertheless, it had important financial backers: two Texas-based banks (Allen and First Southwest), two Mexican banks (Atlántico and Bancomer), and the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) which sold Azteca U.S. programming and reserved the right to purchase up to 20% of the new network.⁴⁴⁴ For the first time in over two decades, Televisa would face real competition from a private, well-financed, national broadcaster.

As discussed below, it later transpired that the privatization process was deeply compromised by business connections between the Salinas family and Television Azteca's new owners.⁴⁴⁵ The development of Televisión Azteca undoubtedly suffered from these connections: reporting was not dramatically different from Televisa's, and Azteca broke no records for journalistic assertiveness. Focusing primarily on entertainment, the new network initially placed little pressure

⁴⁴¹ Those dismissed included Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, Enrique Quintana, Francisco Huerta, José Cárdenas, and René Delgado. For further details, see Chapter 2.

⁴⁴² Author's interviews with María Teresa Gómez Mont, PAN Federal Deputy, Mexico City, August 11, 1995 and March 20, 1996.

⁴⁴³ ADCEBRA, October 1995, *Suplemento Público*.

⁴⁴⁴ Ultimately, NBC declined to exercise this option.

⁴⁴⁵ The relationship between the Salinas family and Televisión Azteca was originally reported, predictably, by Televisa. It is discussed further below.

on Televisa for more authentic news coverage. Critics soon dismissed the network as “Televisa Lite” -- a more sensationalist but equally pro-government version of Mexico’s long-standing broadcasting hegemon.⁴⁴⁶

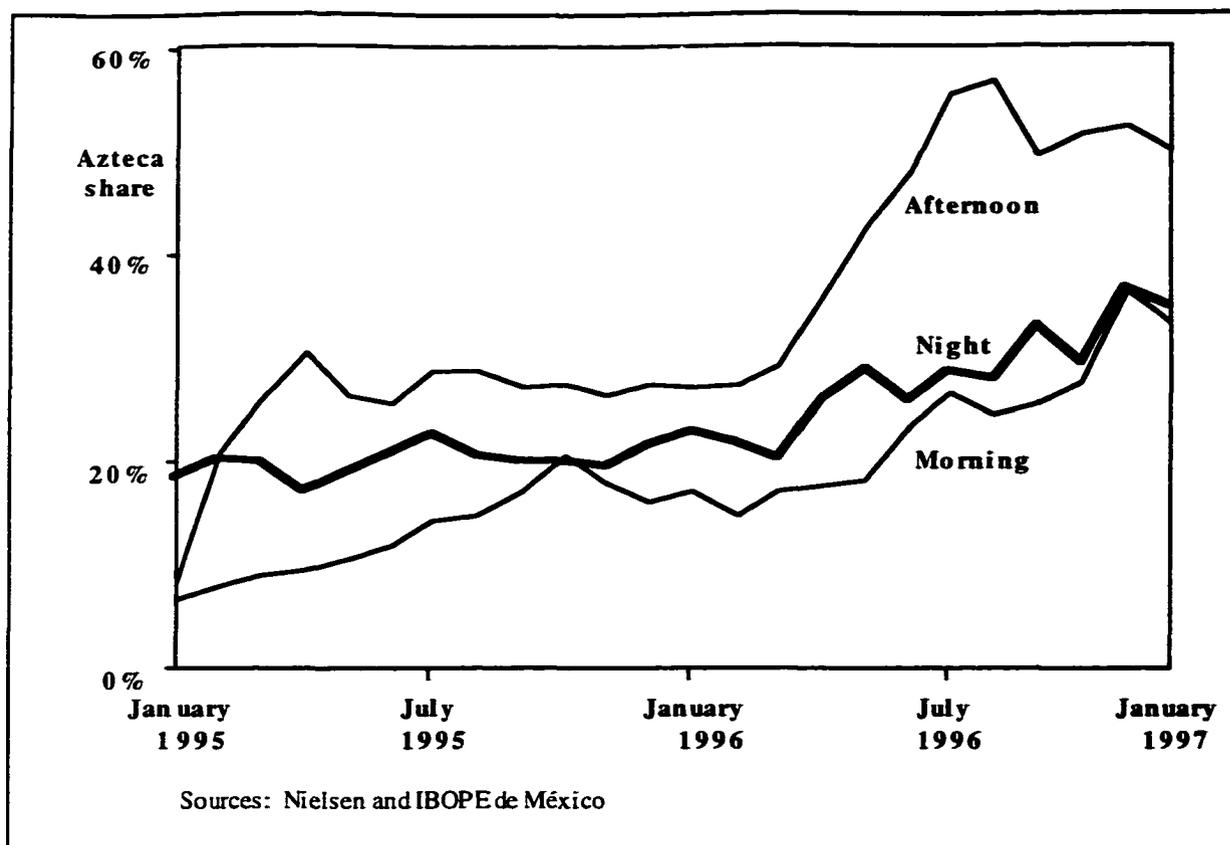
Nevertheless, Azteca’s ratings did grow steadily. From a base of 1-2% in October 1993 (when the new team took over), viewership climbed to 8-10% of the population two years later. By late 1996, executives were claiming 40% of the viewing audience.⁴⁴⁷ Even though Azteca’s real share was probably closer to 30%, its rapid expansion was still impressive.

Equally important, Televisión Azteca’s orientation began to evolve. Stimulated by the shocking political events of 1994-95, including the arrest of Raúl Salinas for the murder of his former brother-in-law, the new network began to concentrate more on news coverage. It retained Sergio Sarmiento, respected former editor of Encyclopedia Britannica, as its news chief. Sensing the market for different news coverage, it also experimented with both “yellowier” and more objective reporting. As a result, its news ratings climbed rapidly toward those of Televisa. By 1995, the network’s flagship nightly news program, *Hechos (The Facts)*, rivaled Televisa’s *24 Hours*. Figure 24, below, summarizes the rise in the popularity of Televisión Azteca’s newscasts from January 1995 to January 1997. It shows Televisión Azteca’s share as a percentage of the two main networks.

⁴⁴⁶ Author’s interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Canal 40, Mexico City, March 14, 1997.

⁴⁴⁷ See Alvaro Delgado, “Nuevos episodios de la guerra por el ‘rating’: el ‘descontón’ de Rocha y la paz unilateral de Azcárraga,” *Proceso*, November 3, 1996, p. 18.

Figure 24: Growth of Televisión Azteca, 1995-97



The television wars

Televisa responded to market competition in a number of ways. First, the company adopted a host of sniping commercial tactics intended to lock in advertising and damage TV Azteca.⁴⁴⁸ Softer and more “yellow” news programs were launched; sports and entertainment assumed greater prominence. Coverage also changed on Televisa’s established news programs, including the traditionally staid *24 Hours*.⁴⁴⁹ Not only did Televisa devote more time to accidents, crime stories, and natural disasters (earthquakes, storms, floods, fires, etc.), but it presented more graphic and grisly images than before. Blood made its debut on *24 Hours* in 1995, just as Azteca’s ratings were catching up.

⁴⁴⁸ For instance, Televisa initially threatened to blacklist artists who perform for the competition, and to deny airtime to firms that advertise on other stations. (See *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 5, 1993).

⁴⁴⁹ The following discussion is based on content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks in March for 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996. I am grateful to Televisa for the opportunity to use their extensive video archives for this purpose -- to my knowledge, the first time academic inquiries of this sort have been permitted.

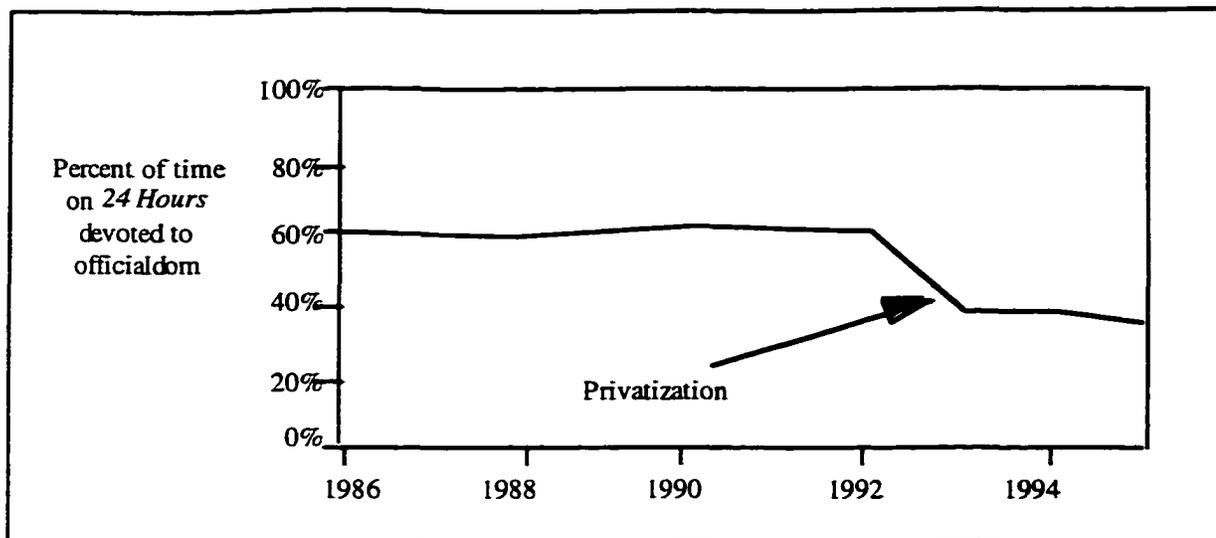
Second, the network also reoriented its “cultural” news reporting. In the 1980’s and early 1990’s, *24 Hours* appeared to aim at an erudite and sophisticated segment of the Mexican population that would appreciate abstruse artistic, literary, and intellectual topics. Beginning in 1994, programming became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

Third, and most importantly for media opening, Televisa also experimented with greater independence in news coverage. To be sure, this process was tentative and halting. Little progress was made in reporting of touchy or sensitive themes, such as government corruption, drug trafficking, electoral fraud, anti-government protests, and the Mexican military. As late as 1996, only a tiny fraction of news coverage was devoted to such “closed” topics. But the network became less relentlessly pro-government in its reporting of the economy and the political opposition. Negative economic news began to appear, and opposition parties (especially the PAN) were occasionally presented as responsible political actors with legitimate social agendas.

Figure 25, below, tracks the division of time between official and non-official sources on *24 Hours* over the last decade. As the graph shows, Televisa’s reporting changed relatively little until 1993.⁴⁵⁰ At that point, the time devoted to officials of the government and the PRI (as a percent of total nightly news coverage) dropped precipitously. In other words, Televisa evolved from a completely closed and *oficialista* medium to a partially independent one following Televisión Azteca’s appearance.

⁴⁵⁰ Data for Figure 25 is from my content analysis of *24 Hours* during the first two weeks in March for 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996.

Figure 25: Declining official agenda control on Televisa



Crisis and compensation

The effects of commercial competition on Televisa were reinforced by two factors. First, economic crisis triggered by the precipitous devaluation of Mexico's peso on December 19, 1994 placed the company in real financial difficulties.⁴⁵¹ To address its immediate cash flow problems, Televisa was forced to downsize drastically. The company sold off several foreign businesses, including its majority stake in Peruvian broadcasting and its minority share of PanAm Sat, and reduced its holdings in Chile's Red Televisa Megavisión from 49% to 10%. Within Mexico, it jettisoned its video distribution subsidiary, ceded 49% of its cable company to Sercotel (a subsidiary of Telmex) for \$211M, and closed 40 money-losing publications.⁴⁵² Televisa also laid off approximately 6% of its 21,000 member workforce; coupled with attrition, reductions totaled 3,000 employees. Finally, the corporation reduced investment by 78% (to \$80 million), restructured its debt, and

⁴⁵¹ Claire Poole, Christina Adams, and Joshua Chaffin, "Mexico's Media Titans," *Mexico Business*, September 1995, p. 44. The company was insulated from the worst effects of the crisis because it had managed to convert its dollar-denominated debt into pesos on the eve of the devaluation, presumably exploiting inside information on the planned currency adjustments. (See Carlos Puig, "La historia de Televisa: el aplauso sumiso al gobierno en turno," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997; Jack Virtue, "La prensa mexicana se aprieta el cinturón...y la conciencia," *Pulso*, July-September 1995, p. 16.)

⁴⁵² See Andrew Paxman, "A Media Blitzed," *Variety*, January 9, 1995, p. 47.

raised advertising rates in an effort to lock-in needed cash.⁴⁵³ All these financial adjustments drove home the fact that Televisa was now vulnerable in a commercial sense and heightened the corporation's sensitivity to the threat of competition.

Second, increasing public pressure by civic groups and the political opposition sharpened incentives for the network to open up. Two independent watchdog groups -- the Civic Alliance and the Mexican Academy of Human Rights -- comprehensively documented Televisa's bias in electoral coverage in the 1994 presidential campaign, confirming opposition allegations from the presidential elections of 1988. Independent media like *Proceso* magazine featured regular cover stories on Mexican television; opposition legislators and politicians routinely denounced the network. In the middle of the 1994 presidential campaign, for instance, PAN candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos wrote to the Interior Ministry to warn that his party would not be able to recognize the election results if more balanced coverage was not forthcoming. As Fernández put it:

[I]t should be clear: if things continue the way they are going, I will not be able to accept the triumph of anyone in the presidential elections, because there is not equity or objectivity in the information on television.⁴⁵⁴

By the end of the campaign, Televisa had become an object of ritual pillory by a range of opposition and civic groups.

For Televisa, Mexico's protracted political transition only exacerbated the impact of civic pressure. Negotiated political reform and a string of opposition electoral victories at the state and local levels clearly indicated that the country's long-standing authoritarian system was clearly crumbling. Mexico was changing, the argument went, but Televisa was not -- or at least, not rapidly enough to keep pace with its audience. Instead of a professional news network or an apolitical source of entertainment, the company came to be perceived as a key obstacle to democratization in Mexico.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³In addition to his company's financial woes, the crisis had direct personal consequences for Azcárraga. Televisa's owner had recently bought out his former partner Rómulo O'Farrill -- allegedly for \$500 million dollars -- using company stock as collateral to obtain the necessary loans. Unfortunately, Televisa's stock plummeted after the devaluation, leaving lenders jittery.

⁴⁵⁴Cited in Fernando Mayolo-López, "Las elecciones del 94 no me la ganó Zedillo, sino Salinas, Pronasol, y Televisa: Diego Fernández de Cevallos," *Proceso*, April 20, 1997, p. 16.

⁴⁵⁵Author's interview with Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, March 21, 1996; author's interview with Gina Batista, reporter at Canal 40, March 14, 1997; author's interviews with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, January 23, 1997 and March 18, 1997; author's interviews

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

Within Televisa, Burillo recruited a new crop of professional journalists, several of whom had a record of conflict with the government. These included Federico Reyes-Heróles, Tomás Mojarro, Rodolfo Guzmán, José Reveles, and most importantly, newscaster Ricardo Rocha.⁴⁵⁶ In February 1996, Rocha was given his own show, *Detrás de la noticia* (*Behind the News*), which quickly became one of Mexico's most well-regarded news programs. Collectively, these changes represented an attempt to re-position Televisa's news coverage.

Unfortunately for Televisa's critics, the opening proved limited. Internal censorship persisted, and the bulk of the journalists recruited under Burillo soon quit the network, citing professional "obstacles" and "barriers." Other firings followed, including that of independent journalist Carlos Ramírez, who was dismissed from his position as head of Televisa's radio news division in 1996. Even Burillo himself was forced to resign in March 1996, after news anchor Ricardo Rocha aired (with Burillo's approval) grisly footage of a massacre carried out by Guerrero state police.⁴⁵⁷ The network's gradual evolution toward independence continued, but with Burillo's departure Televisa appeared to back away once again from radical changes in coverage.

The changing of the guard

On March 3, 1997 -- two weeks after medical tests revealed he was dying -- Emilio Azcárraga Jr. formally turned over operational control of Televisa to Emilio Azcárraga III. On the commercial side, generational transition was accompanied by corporate restructuring, the continuing sale of peripheral businesses, and a renewed

with staff of United States Information Service at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, April 1, 1996 and July 17, 1996.

⁴⁵⁶ Alvaro Delgado, "No soportó el gobierno la apertura noticiosa: la 'primavera de Televisa', efímera: Azcárraga se plegó y Burillo dijo adiós," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 9.

emphasis on entertainment programming. It was also accompanied by a decisive shift toward balance in news coverage.

In contrast to his father, Azcárraga III presented himself as a simple businessman without meaningful political attachments. Where Azcárraga Jr. had pronounced himself “number two PRI supporter” in the country (the number one being the president), his son adhered to a different philosophy:

I am not a politician -- what's more, I don't understand politics....I am a businessman. I like entertainment, I like to make television; that's what I do....More than that, I don't believe that having a good relationship with political figures is going to benefit us in terms of what matters. I believe in the ratings. I don't think that having a good or bad relationship with the Interior Minister is going to change my rating, which in the end is what I care about -- getting the best rating possible....I can vote for the PRD; nevertheless, the PRI and the PAN are still news and still have things to say. I don't mix my ideology with the screen.⁴⁵⁸

With the changing of the guard at Televisa, reverence for the political establishment was replaced by genuflection to an even more jealous god -- that of the marketplace.

The elections of 1997

The extent of change at Televisa became apparent shortly after, in the watershed elections of 1997. In contrast to previous election campaigns, where the PRI dominated television coverage, opposition parties were finally given a real chance to present their views. From March 16 (just after the official start of the campaign) to June 21 (two weeks before the election), the PRI garnered only 23% of all television coverage devoted to electoral issues.⁴⁵⁹ The shift in reporting was particularly pronounced in Televisa, which ended up providing slightly more favorable coverage of the opposition than its rival, Televisión Azteca.

Commercial competition, civic pressure, political reform, and generation change within Televisa combined to produce this long-awaited shift. On the political side, reforms negotiated between Mexico's main parties guaranteed greater opposition access to the airwaves (if not the tone or quality of the regular news

⁴⁵⁷The Aguas Blancas massacre and the scandal surrounding it are discussed extensively in Chapter Five.

⁴⁵⁸Carlos Puig, "Azcárraga Jean: 'Yo soy empresario; no creo que tener buenas o malas relaciones con el secretario de Gobernación vaya a alterar mi rating,'" *Proceso*, March 16, 1997, p. 31.

⁴⁵⁹The 23% figure is based on the total time dedicated to political parties or candidates on 16 different television programs in Mexico, as calculated by the IFE. Figures from the Mexican

coverage they received). At the same time, civic watchdog groups and opposition parties mobilized to ensure that these reforms were implemented. Focusing on television, the Mexican Academy of Human Rights recorded in meticulous detail not only how much time was devoted to each candidate or party but also the tone of the coverage. In 1997, therefore, Televisa confronted a highly mobilized electorate carefully scrutinizing its every move in a political atmosphere of hitherto unknown permissiveness.

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

3. The drivers of broadcasting independence

What forces shaped opening in Mexico's electronic media during the last decade? As with more extensive opening in the print media, changes in Mexican broadcasting were the product of a number of factors operating together. Journalistic professionalism, economic development, technological innovation, political reform, economic liberalization, and market competition all helped stimulate greater independence in news coverage. But two factors, in particular, encouraged openness: commercial competition and specific catalytic events that served as focal points for civic pressure and signaled to broadcasters the changes in their commercial environment.

Competition, competition, and more competition

It is difficult to overestimate the effect of market pressures on changes in the electronic media.⁴⁶⁰ Even more than the press, electronic media compete fiercely for

Academy for Human Rights reveal similar results.

⁴⁶⁰The first person to emphasize to me the importance of market competition in explaining the evolution of Mexico's electronic media and the different levels of openness in radio and television

ratings and the advertising revenues they bring. Although a few broadcasters have alternate streams of revenue -- such as Televisa's sales of programming abroad -- most are completely dependent on publicity. In broadcasting, there are no equivalents of *Proceso* magazine, which derives the bulk of its revenues from subscriptions and street sales.⁴⁶¹

In Mexican radio, the way advertising dollars were spent also encouraged independence. Because talk-radio audiences are less fickle than music audiences, promotional time on talk-radio shows is substantially more valuable. In Mexico City, for instance, advertising during news programs pays, on average, more than three times as much than advertising during all other types of programming.⁴⁶² Consequently, the struggle to capture news audiences is particularly intense.

From a commercial perspective, then, feisty, irreverent, incendiary, and critical radio personalities are gems. Their commercial value also makes them hard to fire when they displease officialdom, as owners cannot easily dismiss independent-minded radio professionals who maintain high ratings. In other words, the financial contribution of news shows to a radio station's bottom line gives popular radio commentators substantial bargaining power vis-à-vis broadcasters who might otherwise fold to government demands. Just as the financial autonomy of independent newspapers gave them the ability to withstand official harassment, so the profitability of independent news programs gave radio broadcasters an incentive to resist government pressures. As one foreign observer put it:

Because private-sector advertising depends heavily on ratings, and because stations find that ratings rise with candid discussions of the news and controversial public issues, they have been increasingly willing to sacrifice public revenues in return for market-based rewards.⁴⁶³

Once one station garners high ratings for its news program, however, other stations must copy the innovator or risk losing their own advertising revenues. In radio, the presence of multiple stations in every major market means that commercial

was Amalia García of the PRD. (Author's interview, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.)

⁴⁶¹The only electronic exceptions are pay-television firms, which derive a substantial portion of their revenues from subscriptions and thus may behave more like magazines.

⁴⁶²This figure represents my analysis of advertising rates at five of Mexico City's largest radio concerns. The rates themselves are taken from a confidential market research study by Consultores Internacionales, undertaken for Radio Red in 1993, p. 87.

⁴⁶³See Craufurd D. Goodwin and Michael Nacht, *Talking to Themselves: The search for rights and responsibilities of the press and mass media in four Latin American nations*, IIE Research Report

forces work relatively rapidly. For instance, even if only one-third or one-fourth of radio stations in Mexico City offer regular news programming, there are still a number of serious competitors at any one time. In addition, the threat of easy entry from dozens of other stations that do not yet offer news coverage means that constant competitive pressures exist. For these reasons, the format changes introduced by José Gutiérrez-Vivó at Radio Red not only endured there but swept across Mexico's airwaves.⁴⁶⁴ By the mid-1990's Mexican radio had become a reasonably open medium.

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

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

On the other hand, other factors tended to sharpen the effects of commercial competition and compelled Televisa to introduce certain changes. Azteca's re-orientation toward news coverage following the calamitous events of 1994 meant

No. 26 (New York: Institute of International Education, 1995), p. 59.

⁴⁶⁴ See market research study by Consultores Internacionales, undertaken for Radio Red in 1995, p. 73-77; author's interviews with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, January 23, 1997 and March 18, 1997.

that some changes in news coverage would have to be made for Televisa to keep pace. Harsh criticism of Televisa from civic and opposition groups encouraged viewers to switch to different media, even if they were only marginally more independent. Most important of all, though, Mexico's economic crisis of 1995-96 highlighted the commercial threat. Televisa suddenly confronted market competition in a context of falling revenues. By 1995, Televisa was compelled to experiment with a range of tactics that would safeguard its ratings.

Privatization: These consequences inevitably raise the question of why the government decided to privatize its television network in the first place. From the perspective of media control, privatization was potentially dangerous. Not only might the new network act more independent itself, but increased commercial competition could trigger a cascade effect that would lead to more critical coverage in other media. Officials in the Salinas administration, who had devoted a tremendous amount of energy to media management, could hardly have been unaware of this risk.

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

In retrospect, one important motivator was probably the specific interests of the Salinas family. From the president's personal perspective, privatization represented a marvelous opportunity as well as a political risk. Not only did it provide tantalizing pecuniary rewards, it offered the outgoing president a foothold in Mexico's country's principal medium. Such a foothold would help enhance his influence after he left office, in an era when the old rules of the political game were breaking down.

At the time, the television privatization process appeared clean and straightforward: Salinas-Pliego's group won out over three other consortia, including Televisa.⁴⁶⁵ Salinas-Pliego's bid was reported to have been substantially

⁴⁶⁵The most important rival group was led by Multivisión's Joaquín Vargas, Clemente Serna, and Adrián Sada, in partnership with America's Fox and Turner networks and Mexico's Banco Serfín. The second, dark horse contender was Raymundo Gómez-Flores, a Guadalajara entrepreneur with

higher than the others, making his consortium the legitimate winner. Moreover, the fact that Televisa was not awarded the concession was viewed at the time as an indication that the Salinas administration intended to introduce some measure of market competition into a previously protected sector.

Unfortunately, the real history of television privatization was radically different. Though the connection was not revealed until 1996, it eventually transpired that Raúl Salinas, elder brother of the president, had manipulated the process in favor of Salinas-Pliego. It also leaked out that Salinas-Pliego had agreed to invest some twenty-nine million dollars for Raúl on the eve of the privatization.⁴⁶⁶ The nature of the "Azteca connection" became clearer when Joaquín Vargas, leader of the Multivisión consortium, announced that Raúl Salinas had made it clear to him that he wished to be "partners" with whomever won the concession -- a relationship Vargas apparently preferred to avoid.⁴⁶⁷

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

It is clear that the gentleman [Raúl] invested in the form of a loan of 29 million dollars and is not a partner, because does not own a single share of stock. I would like to point out two things: in the first place, the total sum of the transaction was 650 million dollars and the loan was 29 million; in other words, not a representative figure in the global context. Second, it can't be that because you obtain a loan from the bank for a house that you are the bank's partner? No. Listen: you have a relationship with the bank, yes, because it lent me money. Well, that's literally the way this supposed relationship is....⁴⁶⁸

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

I always had a friendly relationship with Raúl. He was always cordial with me. He seemed like an intelligent person who loved

help from Capital Cities/ABC and Paramount in the United States. The last bidder, predictably, was Televisa itself, whose victory would have created a complete broadcast television monopoly.

⁴⁶⁶ The charges were originally aired by Televisa on July 7, and followed up by newscaster Ricardo Rocha on his weekly television program *Detrás de la noticia* (also on Televisa) on October 27, 1996. Several other media, especially *Proceso* magazine, subsequently pursued the story. (See Alvaro Delgado, "Nuevos episodios de la guerra por el 'rating': el 'descontón' de Rocha y la paz unilateral de Azcárraga," *Proceso*, November 3, 1996, p. 15.)

⁴⁶⁷ Carlos Ramírez, "Indicador Político," *El Universal*, July 1, 1996, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁸ Gerardo Galarza, "Salinas Pliego: presentaré una demanda contra Ricardo Rocha por sus calumnias e infamias," *Proceso* November 3, 1996, p. 18.

Mexico, liked Mexican things, liked rodeos, liked horses,⁴⁶⁹ liked to read, liked the company of his friends. On some occasions he invited me to social events, where there were lots of people from politics and the business community; it never went beyond that. And I am not going to say that he was my close friend, because it's not true, but for me it was important to be the friend of the brother of the president. The man knew things, was privy to information, talked to me about things to which I had no access....It was interesting for me to know details of how politicians thought and what they were doing and what they were not doing. So he was cordial with me and it's a pity that he and his family find themselves in this situation. [Raúl was incarcerated, facing murder and corruption charges.]....And as far as President Salinas goes, I never knew him until after this was privatized. I believe it was a surprise for him that another man named Salinas from Monterrey won the bid. I never had a personal relationship with him, since we only saw each other on various public occasions. On two or three occasions he invited me to his office to chat about the political situation in the country, or its effects on television coverage, but no more....⁴⁷⁰

It is entirely plausible that Salinas-Pliego and Raúl Salinas were not close friends and that Salinas-Pliego never knew the president himself very well.⁴⁷¹ It is even conceivable that neither Raúl nor Carlos ever actually owned stock in Televisión Azteca. But it is clear from Salinas-Pliego's own statements that he and Raúl were in business together and that the President subsequently gave him suggestions about how to cover key political events. These admissions reinforced the general impression that the privatization was a "filthy" affair, in which "everyone knows the Salinas family has a big stake."⁴⁷²

In the end, the links between the Salinas brothers and Salinas-Pliego were similar to those between other members of the political elite and leading businessmen; privileged information, influence-peddling, and corruption were the currency of those relationships. In this case, Raúl secretly "lent" Salinas-Pliego a large sum of money – itself of rather dubious origin – on the eve of the privatization. In return, he presumably expected to receive a cut of the proceeds of the business, or at the very least, to have a larger (and cleaner) sum of money

⁴⁶⁹ During his brother's tenure in office, Raúl Salinas managed to scare off potential rival bidders for Mexico's equestrian league, which he sought to control. See Carlos Ramírez, "Indicador Político," *El Universal*, July 1, 1996, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁰ Gerardo Galarza, "Salinas Pliego: presentaré una demanda contra Ricardo Rocha por sus calumnias e infamias," *Proceso* November 3, 1996, p. 18.

⁴⁷¹ Most of the Salinas family's dirtiest transactions were handled by Raúl rather than the president himself. See Chapter Five for further information.

⁴⁷² Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, March 18, 1997.

returned to him later. As one Mexican government official involved in communications regulation put it: “When I heard Salinas-Pliego describing what he did with the money that Raúl lent him, I just thought, my God, he’s telling us how to launder money. That’s all they were doing.”⁴⁷³

Given the subterranean connections between the Salinas family and Televisión Azteca, the decision to privatize is more understandable. In essence, the Salinas administration waited until the end of its term, manipulated the process in favor of one favored bidder, and then left office with enhanced agenda-setting power. The unintended consequence of privatization, however, was a partial opening in Mexican television. What is perhaps most remarkable is the fact that commercial competition encouraged media openness despite a series of obvious limitations: the existence of a duopoly rather than a truly competitive market, the corruption that characterized the privatization process, and Televisión Azteca’s links to nefarious political operators from the old regime.

Economic liberalization: In addition to privatization, a smattering of other market-oriented reforms contributed to opening in the broadcast media. First, international trade and investment reinforced the dynamics of market competition, sometimes in unanticipated ways. For instance, multinational penetration of the Mexican economy exposed local advertisers to professionalized foreign advertising agencies. Whereas before 1990 many advertisers had relied on the claims of broadcasters themselves, or on poorly developed market research data, NAFTA brought demands for greater accuracy and reliability. Local businesses promptly became more sensitive to the audience levels and profiles of the media in which they advertised. Increased savviness on the part of advertisers sharpened competition and rewarded the more independent media, whose shares were growing relative to their traditional counterparts.⁴⁷⁴

Second, radio concessionaires themselves became more aggressive and professional. The discovery that money could indeed be made from radio broadcasting stimulated many owners to re-orient their stations along commercial lines or sell their concessions to those who would. In other words, during the late

⁴⁷³ Author’s interview, Mexico City, March 18, 1996.

⁴⁷⁴ Author’s interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 18, 1997.

1980's and early 1990's, radio broadcasters began to behave more like real businessmen.⁴⁷⁵

Third, the combination of technological innovation and economic liberalization encouraged competition in broadcasting by opening new markets. The rescission of the government's ban on private satellite dishes opened Mexico's high-end television market to international broadcasters. Though the ban itself had never been enforced, official deregulation enlarged the market by encouraging foreign broadcasters to invest in direct-to-home transmission in Mexico. In addition, government concessions in UHF (e.g., Channel 40) and pay-television created new competitors in certain segments of broadcasting. In short, an array of market-oriented reforms and market-induced changes reinforced media opening.

Catalytic events and popular pressure

In both radio and television, the process of media opening received several unexpected and essentially exogenous jolts. The Mexico City earthquake of 1985, the contested 1988 elections, the Chiapas uprising, and the 1994 presidential campaign all reinforced the general impression that the country was changing. For Mexican radio, the first of these events signaled that a market for independent news coverage was available to be tapped. For Televisión Azteca, the calamitous events of 1994 (especially the high-profile assassinations of PRI president José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu and PRI presidential candidate Luís Donald Colosio) encouraged the network to focus on news as well as entertainment. And for Televisa, the collective weight of these incidents underscored the danger of remaining too closely tied to the political establishment. Constant opposition criticism of the network after 1988 threatened Televisa's credibility with a range of potential viewers.⁴⁷⁶ Tired of being portrayed as an appendage of the regime, Televisa began to experiment with changes in coverage. Though the company's commanding market position and ownership

⁴⁷⁵ Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 18, 1997.

⁴⁷⁶ According to one poll, 31% found television news very credible, 41% somewhat credible, and 19% little credible -- very low for a visual medium that is widely regarded in other countries. (See "Los números de los medios," *Revista Especial* sin autor, May-June, 1994, p. 55-58 and *Reforma*, March 18, 1994). A poll by MORI of Mexico for Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/PEAC, April 1993, revealed that 64% saw total or partial government control of television; a survey by Centro de Estudios Económicos del Sector Privado, in 1987, found that only 37% believed in the press. See Raymundo Riva-Palacio, "De cara al futuro," in *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación*, August 1990, p. 51; and Raymundo Riva-Palacio, *Más allá de los límites: Ensayos para un nuevo periodismo* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía and State Government of Colima, 1995), p. 25.

structure forestalled radical re-orientation, perceived public sentiments compelled the network to initiate a moderate, gradual opening.

In the end, the effects of commercial competition, social pressure, changes in the broadcasting audience, and conscious innovation by broadcasters are difficult to separate. These influences were mutually reinforcing, as perceived changes in the market encouraged broadcasters to experiment, and experimentation sometimes created new markets. In radio, for instance, physical and political earthquakes sparked shifts in coverage, which in turn changed audience perceptions of the medium. In television, economic crisis and Televisa's eroding credibility accentuated the threat of commercial competition. Any one of these factors by itself might have been insufficient to provoke sustainable shifts in television coverage. Indeed, Televisa experienced several tentative openings and retrogressions after 1988. But the combination of these ingredients pushed the network toward more balanced coverage.

Political reform

Not surprisingly, Mexico's protracted process of political transition encouraged greater diversity in the electronic media. Political reforms played a fairly limited role in radio; although a modicum of political liberalization may have been an important background condition for media opening, it was hardly the driving force. As Radio Red's José Gutiérrez-Vivó argued, "The media did not get opened from above. We opened it. We broke the limits."⁴⁷⁷ Journalists were especially adamant about the negative influence of the Salinas's administration, which was never sympathetic to Mexico's emerging independent press and became increasingly abusive toward the end of its tenure. To cite Gutiérrez-Vivó again: "Salinas was the president who was hardest on the media. He was the one who sought the most control over the media."⁴⁷⁸

Political reform did prove crucial, however, in reinforcing the changes in Mexican broadcast television. Most important of all was the role of inter-party negotiations in 1995-96, which essentially forced the government (and by extension, Televisa) to grant opposition parties greater access to the media during electoral

⁴⁷⁷ Author's interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of *Monitor*, Mexico City, April 18, 1996.

⁴⁷⁸ Author's interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of *Monitor*, Mexico City, April 18, 1996. These same sentiments were echoed by other journalists with experience in the electronic media, including René Delgado (author's interview, Mexico City, March 28, 1996) and Ramy Schwartz (author's interview, Mexico City, March 18, 1997).

campaigns. Without these reforms, it is quite possible that coverage of the all-important 1997 elections might have remained highly partisan, with predictable consequences for electoral outcomes.⁴⁷⁹ Although political reform had little effect on coverage of scandals, it did change reporting on specifically electoral matters.

Other factors

In addition to political reform and market competition, three other factors also shaped opening in Mexico's broadcast media. First, globalization (in the form of satellite broadcasts and international spillovers from the United States) gradually pried open pieces of the Mexican market. These changes were especially relevant for affluent consumers, who could afford pay-television systems, but they also had a marginal effect on Mexico's electronic media as a whole. As one journalist put it, technological innovation and cross-border transmission "irrigated" Mexican broadcasting, even if they failed to "inundate" it.⁴⁸⁰

Second, journalistic professionalization helped roll back barriers imposed by media owners or government officials. While professionalism was not the force in broadcasting that it was in the print media, it did generate pressure for more authentic news coverage. Over the last two decades, both home-grown broadcast journalists and those imported from the print media have encouraged independent reporting.

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

But, in the electronic media, human agency also worked decisively against opening. The most notorious case, of course, is Emilio Azcárraga Jr. As the majority owner of an immense and profitable corporation, the Tiger enjoyed a substantial amount of maneuvering room. His network could easily have been more assertive than it was -- even without risking its privileged relationship to the government. Unfortunately, Azcárraga's personal allegiances sometimes left Televisa more pro-PRI than the PRI itself. Had the Tiger's political vision matched his business acumen, Televisa could have become a much more open medium much

⁴⁷⁹ See Chapter Six.

sooner. As it was, substantial changes in the network's orientation had to wait until his death in 1997.

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

For this reason, it would be incorrect to portray media owners' caution as the exclusive product of official sensitivity. Both journalists and government officials agree that many Mexican broadcasters enjoyed an unexploited margin of flexibility -- especially in the post-1994 environment when international scrutiny and popular mobilization would have made overt censorship extremely costly for the government.⁴⁸⁰ Part of the reticence media owners showed is undoubtedly attributable to personal and political allegiances; after all, many broadcasters received their concessions from friends and associates in the government. But a portion is less explicable -- probably best chalked up to a lack of entrepreneurial talent and imagination among a group of people who were not really professional businessmen. In all, the combination of broadcasters' personal biases with their commercial myopia undoubtedly made opening in Mexico's electronic media a more halting and protracted process than it would have been under different management.

Review of the principal hypotheses

As with opening in Mexico's print media, the changes in broadcasting provide support for many of the hypotheses presented in Chapter One. To a greater or less degree, political liberalization, modernization, market-oriented reform, technological innovation, foreign media penetration, journalistic professionalism, and

⁴⁸⁰ Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, March 18, 1997.

⁴⁸¹ Some journalists even argue that government-imposed limits have changed very little. Rather, certain media owners have finally attempted to seize territory long available to them. (Author's interview with Rebecca Romero, former reporter for Televisa, Mexico City, March 21, 1996.)

market competition all played a role in media opening. Table 11, below, summarizes the findings.

Table 11: Review of the principal hypotheses

Principal hypotheses	Suggested by case studies?	Supported by data analysis?	Supported by analysis of Mexico's print media?	Supported by analysis of Mexican broadcasting?
1a. Political freedom leads to media openness 1b. Political freedom and media openness mutually reinforce each other (reciprocal causality)	Yes Yes	Yes Not tested	Yes Not tested	Yes Not tested
2a. Socio-economic development promotes media openness 2b. Increases in per capita income promote media openness 2c. Increases in literacy promote media openness 2d. Increases in market size promote media openness	Yes Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes No No	Yes No? Yes? Yes	Yes Yes Not tested Not tested
3a. Market-oriented reform promotes media openness in economically closed systems 3b. Market-oriented reform promotes media openness in all systems	Yes No	Yes Yes?	Yes Not tested	Yes Not tested
4. Innovation and diffusion of communications technologies promote media openness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Increased penetration by international media promotes media openness	Yes	Yes?	Yes	Yes
6. Journalistic professionalism promotes media openness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7. Market pressures tend to reinforce and accelerate the process of media opening	Yes	Not tested	Yes	Yes

However, some of these hypotheses received much stronger support than others. Both market competition and political liberalization, for instance, played particularly critical roles in opening up Mexican broadcasting. By contrast, technological diffusion and foreign media penetration -- while undeniably important -- proved less crucial. In fact, the Mexican experience suggests that private monopolization can radically reduce the liberating impact of new technologies. The introduction of cable television, which was controlled by Televisa, failed to promote media opening in Mexico; rather, it helped assure the extension of pro-government biases into new media markets. Innovation and diffusion stimulated media opening only when new players were able to exploit emerging technologies.

Demographic changes induced by modernization seem to have encouraged opening in Mexican broadcasting, given that affluent audiences were able to gain access to diverse and independent media. In the print media, however, the impact of socioeconomic development was strongly mediated by particular focusing events. The social cleavages wrought by modernization were neither immediately apparent

nor automatically reflected in broadcasting. It took a series of sudden, unexpected, exogenous events -- like the Mexico City earthquake -- to stimulate audiences and rouse broadcasters from their pre-1985 torpor.

In contrast to its influence on newspapers and magazines, journalistic professionalism played a rather limited role in transforming Mexico's electronic media. Journalists' sense of their role and obligations did help create and sustain Channel 40, and to a lesser extent independent radio programs, but professionalism exerted little influence on broadcast television. The professionalism that did exist at Televisa served as a feeble barrier against the decisions of its owner.

The nature of professionalism in television supports the argument that the style of media control influences media professionalism and thus indirectly impacts media opening. Under the Televisa quasi-monopoly, Mexican television was professional in many senses despite its political biases. Journalists were relatively well-paid and not as outrageously corrupt as their counterparts in the pro-government print media. Regular news coverage may have been biased, selective, and culturally retrograde, but it was rarely shoddy, stale, or (until the late 1990s) sensationalistic.

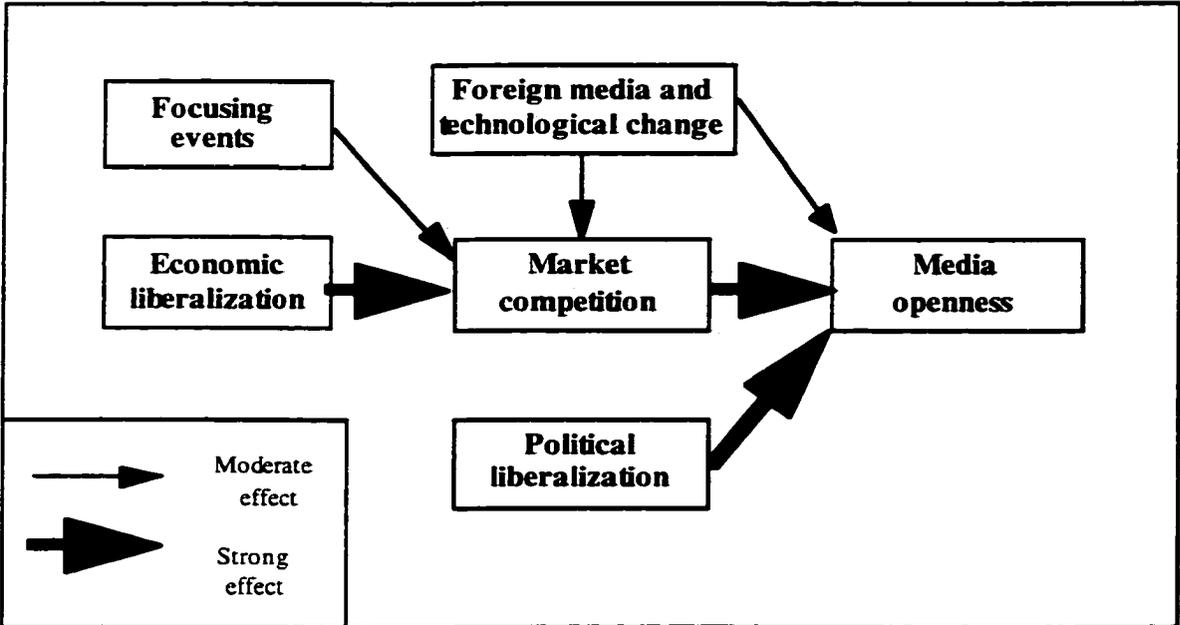
Differences in levels of professionalism between Televisa and pro-government newspapers are partly attributable to the style of media control. In print media, corruption was a long-standing mechanism for assuring pro-government coverage. Official control of the electronic media, by contrast, depended primarily on the allocation of broadcasting concessions. Corruption of the rank-and-file in broadcasting was not a necessary component of the old media regime. As a consequence, pro-government broadcasters could develop some components of professionalism to a greater extent than their counterparts in the print media.

The causal chain

As Table 12 suggests, the opening of Mexico's electronic media was a complex process: a number of factors and combinations of factors were involved. But the central dynamic was relatively straightforward: market competition stimulated media opening. In television, economic liberalization created market competition, which then led to greater independence and diversity in news reporting. At the same time, political liberalization forced Mexican broadcasters to be more even-handed in their coverage of elections. Other factors, such as foreign media penetration and technological innovation, also played a role, but their part was much

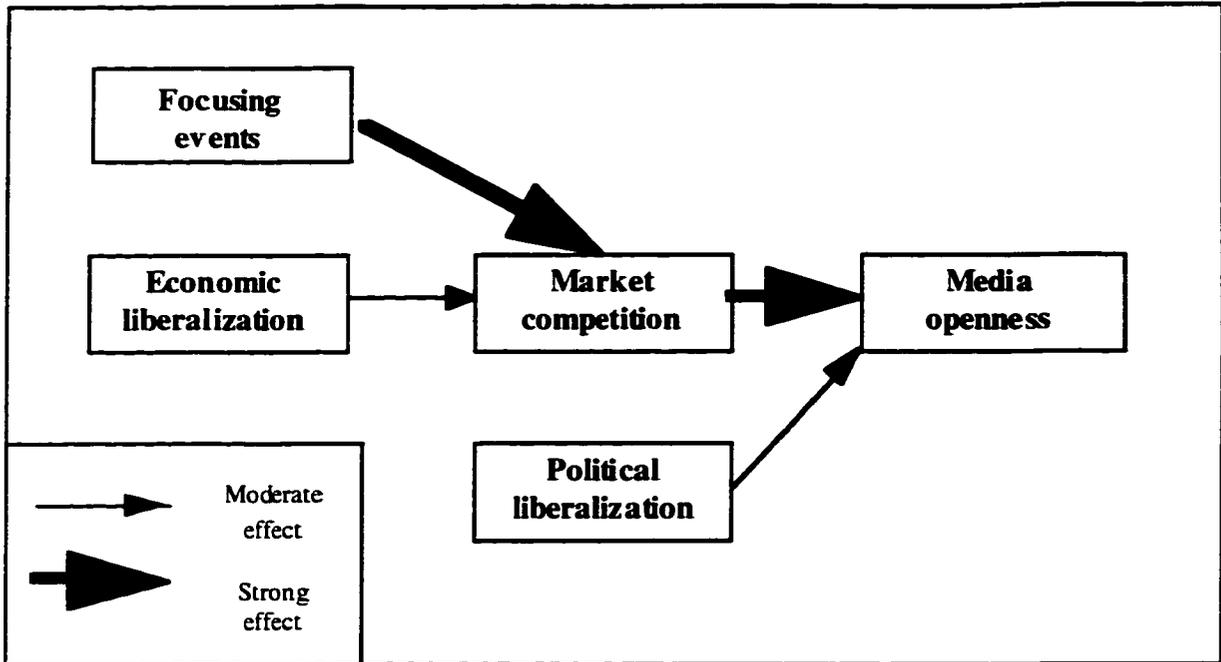
more limited. Figure 26, below, summarizes the principal ingredients in media opening within Mexican television.

Figure 26: Drivers of opening in Mexican television



The causal sequence in Mexican radio was similar, though focusing events played a much greater role and political liberalization was less important. But the central influence of market competition remained the same. These relationships are summarized in Figure 27, below.

Figure 27: Drivers of opening in Mexican radio



The future of Mexican broadcasting

These same forces are likely to propel Mexico's media further in the direction of democratization. Political reform, assuming it continues, will ultimately lead to the renovation of the regulatory framework that governs Mexico's press. It will guarantee independent entrepreneurs access to broadcasting concessions and squeeze out remaining subsidies for ghost publications. In the end, then, democratic deepening will push Mexico toward a much more open media regime.

By far the greatest threat to media openness in Mexico comes not from the restoration of official censorship but rather from the cartelization of television by two large firms with links to the old regime. The danger is that these firms will be permitted not only to maintain their hold on television but also to colonize related industries, thus preserving their market power. In that case, Mexico runs the real risk of consolidating an oligopoly media regime. Lamentably, this is a circumstance it shares with many other new democracies.

The fourth estate and Mexican politics

The last two chapters have traced the process of opening in Mexico's media regime. But what of the media's effect on politics? Has media opening propelled democratization? If so, how? To evaluate every possible effect of media opening on

Mexican politics is too daunting a task. Nevertheless, it should be possible to document some types of media influence in a rigorous and compelling way. By highlighting the most obvious and important consequences of media independence in Mexico, the following chapters attempt to demonstrate that media opening can exercise a significant influence over political transition.

Chapter Two noted three principal results of media control in Mexico: (1) constrained coverage of sensitive subjects, (2) official agenda control, and (3) electoral bias in favor of the ruling party. Chapters Three and Four then documented how these old styles of reporting gave way to more pluralistic and independent coverage. In theory, if the old media regime reinforced Mexico's authoritarian institutions, its erosion should have undermined those same institutions. For instance, Mexico's old system of press control strongly discouraged reporting on subjects like electoral fraud, official corruption, and political repression -- all of which called into question the fundamentals of the regime. Independent publications, however, began to report on such subjects in the 1980s and 1990s, and they were joined by radio and television toward the end of that period. These changes in coverage might have helped undermine the regime's legitimacy. Likewise, changes in agenda-setting might also have had significant political consequences. By giving greater voice to actors in civil society (and less to Mexican officialdom), independent media might stimulate popular organization. Finally, shifting coverage of political parties and campaigns might help level the electoral playing field, thus facilitating opposition victory at the polls.

In Mexico, scholars, government officials, opposition politicians, civic activists, and foreign observers held vague and conflicting views on the impact of changes in media coverage on politics. A few mentioned media effects on public opinion about particular government policies (such as economic reform, indigenous rights, the death penalty, or the deployment of soldiers to combat crime in parts of the Mexico City metropolitan area). Others mentioned particular incidents in which a barrage of media coverage appeared to influence official decision-making. Still others mentioned the role of the press in stimulating social mobilization, shaping core political values (through entertainment television as well as news coverage), and targeting particular authoritarian institutions that demand reform. Virtually all of them, however, noted two particularly salient aspects of media coverage. The first of these concerned increasingly bold coverage of topics that were previously off-limits, the explosion of scandals this new coverage triggered, and the political fallout of these scandals. The second concerned pro-PRI coverage during electoral campaigns

(which diminished in 1997). Most felt that bias, especially in television, had a significant effect on voting behavior but were unable to gauge its true impact.

Given this study's modest goal of documenting a few types of media effects in a compelling way, it seems appropriate to concentrate on these two types of media effects. Although this leaves aside several potentially fruitful areas of inquiry -- especially the role of media opening in promoting civic mobilization -- it does suggest some first steps in the direction of analyzing media influences on political transition. With this goal in mind, the next chapter concentrates on increased coverage of sensitive topics. As Chapter Five shows, growing assertiveness by the press triggered a series of political scandals in Mexico. These scandals in turn delegitimized Mexico's authoritarian system at the mass level and signaled to elites the changes in public sentiments and political rules. Media opening thus promoted political transition.

Chapter Six turns to the impact of the media on electoral politics. Based on a panel survey of Mexico City residents during the 1997 mayoral campaign, it shows that media messages helped reshape public perceptions of the major parties. In particular, changes in Televisa's coverage of the campaign had a dramatic impact on its viewers' perceptions of the ruling party and the leftist PRD. This impact was sufficient to change the outcome of the election in 1997 -- and thus the pace and direction of political transition in Mexico.

5. The New Politics of Scandal

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

The Aguas Blancas scandal, like a dozen other political scandals Mexico has experienced in recent years, was a direct product of growing assertiveness in the mass media. As Chapters Two through Four discussed, one key element of media opening in Mexico has been increased coverage of previously "closed" subjects. Stories about drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, government repression, and similar subjects now appear with relative frequency in certain publications, radio shows, and even television programs. In other words, selective silence on issues of particular sensitivity to the government is no longer automatic or guaranteed. These changes in press coverage have led to the efflorescence of scandal. In this chapter, I discuss the new politics of scandal and its consequences for democratization in Mexico.

I argue that recent scandals are not the result of more stringent public standards of behavior or the increased prevalence of potentially scandalous events. Rather, changes in Mexican institutions have led to public exposure of actions that were previously concealed. Some of these changes are the product of political reforms over the last decade. But the new politics of scandal is principally a media-generated phenomenon. The emergence of independent media, more than any change in Mexico's political institutions, has created a new climate where scandals are common.

These scandals have an impact that goes well beyond the fortunes of particular individuals. At the mass level, public exposure of corruption and other abuses contributes to delegitimation of the one-party regime. By highlighting the darker side of authoritarianism, scandals encourage mass support for democratic change. Increasing media assertiveness thus promotes regime transition.

Meanwhile, at the elite level, scandals signal to Mexican leaders that the rules of the political game have changed. Actions that could once be kept reliably secret

are now exposed to the harsh light of public scrutiny. On the one hand, increasing odds of exposure raise the costs of engaging in a variety of once-standard practices, inducing some members of the elite to refrain from potentially scandalous acts. On the other hand, fear of exposure can also lead elites to target the mass media in an attempt to prevent scandals. In other words, increasing media assertiveness over the last decade has stimulated both greater official accountability and more intense repression at the same time.

The first section of this chapter reviews twelve prominent political scandals over the last decade, showing how changes in media coverage led to the exposure of unsavory practices that were previously concealed. This section provides an overview of scandal in Mexico today. The second section examines one of these incidents -- the Aguas Blancas affair -- in greater detail. This section attempts to capture the dynamics of scandal based on investigation of a particularly well-known case. The third section discusses how scandals helped to delegitimize the old regime and to alter elite calculations about political reform in Mexico. The final section reviews how the new politics of scandal in Mexico provide support for hypotheses presented in Chapter One about the role of the mass media in democratization. It also discusses how the Mexican case can help revise and sharpen these hypotheses for further testing in other contexts.

Media opening and the efflorescence of political scandal

Massacres in Guerrero are not new. What is new is that they are broadcast on television.

-- Roberto Zamarripa⁴⁸²

Before the emergence of an independent press in Mexico, outrageous behavior occurred regularly but went unreported. Potentially shocking events would surface fleetingly, accompanied by vigorous official denials, and then disappear -- or they would not surface at all. Mexico's captive media continue to play by these old rules, reporting potential scandals in a limited and pro-government fashion. What is new in today's environment is that a few independent media exist that attempt to uncover and follow up on scandalous incidents.

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, during the 1980's and 1990's pioneering publications, radio programs, and television shows began to push the

⁴⁸²Roberto Zamarripa, "Guerrero: Una mirada especial," *Reforma*, March 17, 1996.

boundaries of acceptable reporting. Damaging revelations regarding drug trafficking, official corruption, electoral fraud, opposition protests, and government repression began to appear in certain media. The discovery that Mexican audiences devoured scandalous information only encouraged greater reporting of incendiary and shocking events. For media owners, scandals sold newspapers and boosted ratings; for reporters, they helped make careers and satisfied personal desires to participate in a new kind of journalistic enterprise that would expose the failings of authoritarian rule. Market competition and journalistic professionalism thus encouraged Mexico's emerging independent media to expose spectacular instances of government abuse. As a result, Mexico's increasingly assertive press has continued to investigate incidents and practices that were previously kept hidden. After 1994 this trend accelerated, and reporting on scandals became commonplace.

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

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

Today, Mexican political leaders often accuse the country's increasingly assertive press of yellow journalism and scandal-mongering. Although this charge has some merit, the fact remains that everyday news in Mexico, fairly and accurately

reported, is often scandalous. During a single ten-day period in February 1997, for instance, Mexico's independent media had to contend with credible allegations that (1) several senior officials of the previous administration, including the Salinas family, were involved in the drug trade; (2) the country's drug czar was in the pay of a notorious trafficker; and (3) the Attorney General's office had manufactured evidence in the murder investigation of Raúl Salinas -- among other things.

Although not all instances of official abuse and corruption are reported or given the prominence they deserve, recent changes in Mexico's media have dramatically increased the likelihood that serious violations of existing norms of behavior will be exposed. As a result, scandals have become a recurring feature of Mexican political life. In fact, it is not hyperbole to say that over the last several years Mexicans have witnessed a scandal the size of Watergate, the Iran-Contra Scandal, Whitewater, or the Lewinsky Affair every few of months.

Turning points

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

Several factors distinguished the events at Llano de la Víbora from previous incidents. First, the media -- especially *El Financiero* -- successfully pursued a story that dealt with not one but three "closed" topics: (a) drug trafficking, (b) corruption by officials currently serving in the government, and (c) the Mexican military. Second, inquiry into the affair was followed-up not only by the independent media but also by the newly-created, semi-independent National Human Rights Commission. Third, partly as a result of the first two changes, initial official accounts of the event proved unsustainable. The government was forced to revise its story and admit that the scandalous charges were true. Finally, official investigations ultimately led to the conviction of serving government officials (in this case, military officers). The Viborilla incident thus had all the hallmarks of political

scandal, along with its attendant consequences. Behavior that contravened widely-held norms of acceptable conduct in the political realm were exposed, provoking public outrage.⁴⁸³ Further investigations then led to the punishment of at least some of those responsible. Although it was not recognized at the time, the new politics of scandal had made its debut in Mexico.

Less than two years after the Viborilla incident, Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas-O'Campo was shot to death in his car at the Guadalajara airport.⁴⁸⁴ The official version of events -- that Cardinal Posadas was caught in cross-fire between rival drug gangs -- was quickly discredited by press reports that the Cardinal had been dressed in full clerical garb and shot several times at point blank range. Over the next three years, investigations by the media revealed that the assassins, well-known members of the Tijuana drug cartel, had left the scene under police protection. News reports also claimed that the gunmen themselves had subsequently met with the Papal Nuncio (the Vatican's representative in Mexico).⁴⁸⁵

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

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

⁴⁸³Here, scandal is defined as public outrage to acts that are perceived as violating norms of conduct in the political realm. The more clear and egregious the violation, the greater the scandal. This perceptual definition is the dominant one in the literature. See Susan Garment, *Scandal: The Crisis of Mistrust in American Politics* (New York: Random House, 1991); Andrei S. Markovits and Mark Silverstein, eds., *The Politics of Scandal: Power and Processes in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988); and Silvio Waisbord, "Knocking on Newsroom Doors: The Press and Political Scandals in Argentina," *Political Communication*, January 1994, 11 (1):19-33.

⁴⁸⁴The exact date was May 22, 1993.

⁴⁸⁵Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, "Plaza Público: Secretos de Confesión," *El Norte*, July 28, 1994.

prominent politicians (including then-President Carlos Salinas and members of his senior staff), or both were responsible for the crime.

Colosio's assassination was followed on September 28, 1994, by the murder of José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu, president of the ruling party. Despite President Salinas' characterization of the murder as an aberrant crime, it soon became evident that ruling party officials were behind the murder. Assistant Attorney General Mario Ruíz-Massieu, brother of the victim, consistently claimed that high-level officials of the PRI were obstructing the investigation and eventually resigned.⁴⁸⁶ Finally, in January 1995, recently-inaugurated President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the arrest of Raúl Salinas, elder brother of the former president, for the murder.⁴⁸⁷

Subsequent government investigations of Raúl soon led to a flurry of related scandals. In the months following his arrest, rumors began to circulate that Raúl -- long considered one of the most corrupt power-brokers in the Mexican political elite -- had accumulated a vast fortune during his brother's tenure in office. The scandal finally burst when Raúl's wife, Paulina Casteñón, was arrested by Swiss authorities while trying to access an eighty million dollar account created by Raúl under a false name.⁴⁸⁸ It eventually transpired that a number of leading PRI figures, including at least one member of the Zedillo cabinet, were linked to Raúl through a convoluted series of shady financial transactions. Independent publications, like *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, and *Proceso* aggressively followed up on those leads and gave widespread coverage to the burgeoning scandal.

Ripple effects from the investigations eventually touched another high-ranking member of the Salinas administration. Shortly after resigning from his post as Assistant Attorney General, Mario Ruíz-Massieu was arrested in the United States for failing to declare a large quantity of cash he was bringing into the country. U.S. authorities subsequently determined that Ruíz-Massieu held deposits worth several million dollars in the Texas Commerce Bank, and that these funds derived from the drug trade. Civil proceedings in the U.S. to seize Ruiz-Massieu's assets eventually illuminated the extent of corruption during the Salinas administration -- including hush money to prevent the investigation of his brother's assassination, pervasive graft related to the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and protection

⁴⁸⁶See *Reforma*, September 29, 1994.

⁴⁸⁷The shocking nature of the allegations was accentuated by the fact that José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu had previously been married to Raúl's sister. Raúl was ultimately convicted of first-degree murder in January 1999.

payments to the Salinas family from leading drug traffickers. Again, independent media proved aggressive in pursuing the story, and even some pro-government publications began to join in the frenzy.

In the meantime, other events had also highlighted the extent to which drug money had penetrated Mexico's political establishment. On June 24, 1995, a private plane carrying Hector Luís "El Güero" Palma, *capo* of Sinaloa drug cartel, crashed in Nayarit state. Palma was subsequently detained in Guadalajara, along with the thirty-one agents of Mexico's Federal Judicial Police then serving as his bodyguards. Independent media, including *Reforma* newspaper, soon revealed that Palma had paid millions of dollars annually for political protection and that the federal Attorney General's office and National Institute for the Combat of Drugs had known the location of his residence for over a year.⁴⁸⁹

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

Unfortunately for the ruling party, revelations of drug-related corruption were only part of a series of shocking political events that became public during the mid-1990's. On February 23, 1993, Mexican financier Antonio Ortiz-Mena hosted a private dinner party for President Carlos Salinas and some thirty Mexican executives. Businessmen invited to the dinner, many of whom were prominent beneficiaries of the Salinas administration's privatization program, were each asked to donate \$25 million dollars to the Institutional Revolutionary Party's 1994 electoral campaign. News of the fund-raiser appeared a week later, when

⁴⁸⁸Swiss authorities have so far located over \$120 million of Raúl's fortune and determined that much of it is drug-related.

⁴⁸⁹Roberto Zamarripa, "El Güero Palma Protegido en Sonora desde 1993," *Reforma*, June 30, 1995; Irma Salas, Cayetano Frías, and Gerardo Román, "Detienen por Complices a Funcionarios de la PGR," *Reforma*, June 25, 1995.

Economista newspaper -- whose publisher had originally learned of the dinner through personal connections -- broke the story.

As journalist Andrés Oppenheimer put it, the banquet was the sort of event that existed only in the minds of conspiracy theorists -- except that it was all true.⁴⁹⁰ The incident confirmed the opposition's most outrageous charges about PRI campaign spending and fundraising tactics that bordered on bribery. Furthermore, by calling into question the integrity of an electoral process that had not yet even begun, the scandal belied President Carlos Salinas' promises of political reform. Government spokesmen devoted several days to "spinning" the issue -- calling attention to how other parties raised money, pointing out that at least the PRI was no longer relying on public funds, and claiming (falsely) that guests were only asked to raise \$25 million each rather than donate it themselves.⁴⁹¹

Subsequent scandals, however, confirmed the PRI's proclivity for vast and illegal campaign expenditures. In June 1995, leaders of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution claimed that the PRI Governor of Tabasco state, Roberto Madrazo-Pintado, had spent between forty and seventy million dollars on his contested gubernatorial campaign in 1994 -- at least two dozen times the allowed amount. Copious documentation of the allegations, including official receipts and payments to journalists for favorable coverage, were presented over the next several months. The revelations led PRD leaders to threaten to withdraw from national-level negotiations over political reform (a threat which was rescinded after the federal government promised legal investigation into the affair).⁴⁹²

Scandals over drug money, assassinations, and electoral irregularities were deeply damaging to the government and the ruling party. But they were not the only incidents that provoked public outrage. These revelations were accompanied by three other scandals that focused on specific individuals whose actions seemed to capture what was most typical and venal about the old system. Each was provoked and propelled by Mexico's increasingly assertive press.

The first of these came on December 9, 1994, when *Reforma* newspaper reported that newly-appointed Secretary of Education Fausto Alzati had never

⁴⁹⁰See Andres Oppenheimer, *Bordering on Chaos* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1996).

⁴⁹¹*24 Horas*, March 1-4, 1993.

⁴⁹²The original source of the leaked documents ultimately proved to be the federal government itself. Apparently, federal officials had wished to discredit Madrazo, a leading PRI hard-liner with whom President Ernesto Zedillo had clashed previously. The case was ultimately dropped in 1996, after an apparent reconciliation between Zedillo and Madrazo. See Ernesto Nuñez, "...Y dicen que es caso cerrado," *Reforma*, June 1, 1999, p. 8A.

received the Harvard doctorate he claimed on his resume. In fact, as further reports by *Reforma* and *La Jornada* revealed, Alzati had never even completed his undergraduate degree.⁴⁹³ The charges were particularly ironic because in his previous post at Mexico's National Science Commission (CONACyT), Alzati had been known for the strictness with which he scrutinized the academic credentials of fellowship applicants. Journalists and commentators soon dubbed the unfortunate minister "Falzati" in wry tribute to his false credentials. Following opposition from the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution, the Parents' Association, and the Teachers' Union, Alzati finally resigned on January 22, 1995 -- only 53 days after taking office.

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

Figueroa's demise was followed only one month later by that of Socrates Rizzo-García, governor of the northern industrial state of Nuevo León. Rizzo's downfall was tied to a protracted controversy over the diversion of water to neighboring Tamaulipas state and a series of minor corruption and influence-peddling scandals. But perhaps the most important factor in Rizzo's removal was his administration's failure to solve the assassination of controversial attorney Leopoldo del Real Ibáñez four months before, in which several high-level state government officials were implicated. In the months following the murder, opposition legislators in the state assembly and journalists from the Monterrey-based daily *El Norte* had mounted a sustained and apparently coordinated campaign to dethrone Rizzo.⁴⁹⁴

Collectively, the twelve scandals described above struck at the heart of Mexico's decaying one-party system. Two dealt with electoral integrity (or lack thereof), detailing the truly fantastic scope of the PRI's campaign expenditures. Six

⁴⁹³Alzati had, however, managed to receive a masters degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, presumably based on the belief that he already had his college diploma.

⁴⁹⁴See *El Norte*, August 17, 1996, p. 1 and *El Norte*, "Cae Socrates Rizzo," April 18, 1996, p.1.

called attention to the spread of drug trafficking and the pervasive penetration of drug-related corruption at all levels of government. Two (Mario Ruíz-Massieu's declarations in the United States and the Ortiz-Mena fundraising banquet) shed light on the graft and influence-peddling that characterized the Salinas administration's privatization program. Almost all called attention to the shocking mendacity of Mexico's political leaders and the utter impunity with which they discharged their duties. Events leading up to the resignations of governors Rizzo and Figueroa -- not to mention the revelations that followed the assassinations of Luís Donaldo Colosio and José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu -- demonstrated that this impunity extended to repression and murder.

None of these features of the PRI-dominated regime are particularly new: repression, corruption, lying, impunity, and electoral fraud have long been staple ingredients in Mexican political life. What is new in today's environment is that these issues receive regular public treatment. Or, as investigative journalist Roberto Zamarripa put it bluntly with regard to the Aguas Blancas affair, "Massacres in Guerrero are not new. What is new is that they are broadcast on television."⁴⁹⁵

Competing explanations

I have argued that the recent proliferation of political scandals in Mexico is primarily a function of changes in the country's media. But there are three rival explanations that deserve attention. Scandals may be more prevalent now because (1) the number of scandalous events has increased, (2) public standards of behavior have become more stringent, and (3) changes in other institutions besides the media have facilitated the diffusion of damaging revelations.

More raw material: First, scandals may have become more frequent in recent years because there are simply more scandalous events to report. If corruption, repression, and electoral fraud have increased in recent years, then scandals will occur more often even if public standards and media coverage have remained unchanged. In other words, Mexico's new politics of scandal may simply be a result of the fact that Mexican political figures are taking increasing license with the public trust.

All the evidence, however, indicates that Mexico's recent spate of scandals is not a function of the sheer quantity of sleaze. The various actions that have

⁴⁹⁵Roberto Zamarripa, "Guerrero: Una mirada especial," *Reforma*, March 17, 1996.

provoked scandal in recent years -- drug trafficking, corruption, electoral fraud, government repression, etc. -- occurred in previous years but typically went unreported. Graft stemming from Mexico's oil boom during the López-Portillo administration, for instance, was comparable in magnitude to the corruption surrounding the Salinas administration's privatization program. Links between leading drug traffickers like Rafael Caro-Quintero and senior officials of the de la Madrid administration were as well-developed as those between Juan García-Abrego of the Gulf Cartel and the Salinas family. Electoral fraud in San Luís Potosí in 1961, Yucatán in 1969, or Chihuahua in 1986 was just as outrageous as irregularities in Tabasco in 1995, if not much more so. The government's dirty war against leftist guerrillas in the 1970's and 1980's was as brutal as anything that happened in Guerrero and Chiapas during the 1990's.⁴⁹⁶ The difference is that these earlier events simply did not receive the same degree of press scrutiny as similar events today.

In fact, precisely the opposite is true today: comparatively minor events regularly receive saturation coverage in Mexico's independent media. Police repression of demonstrators protesting the construction of a golf course in the town of Tepoztlán, south of Mexico City, in 1996 received as much press coverage as the notorious massacre of student activists in Tlatelolco Plaza in October 1968. Tepoztlán was a relatively minor affair, but its bloody finale was front page material in virtually every capital city daily -- even *oficialista* papers like *El Día* and *Excelsior*. The same holds true for reporting of other incidents, such as electoral irregularities in the municipality of Huejotzingo (Puebla state) and accusations against President Ernesto Zedillo for relatively minor conflicts of interest. In short, events that would have gone unreported before the emergence of an independent press now receive regular attention.

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

⁴⁹⁶In September 1988, Mexican army defector Zacarias Osorio-Cruz revealed that he had been a member of an army unit that murdered between 60 and 140 civilians between August 1978 and May 1983. He estimated the total number of civilians eliminated at between 180 and 520. See Article 19, *In the Shadow of Buendía: The Mass Media and Censorship in Mexico* (London: Article 19, 1989), p. 15-16. Assuming these figures are accurate, Mexico's dirty war was small-scale compared to counter-insurgency campaigns in many Latin American countries (Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, and Chile), but roughly comparable to the death toll from military rule in Brazil. Until the mid-1990s, counterinsurgency activities were not reported in Mexico, and Osorio-Cruz's testimony in 1989 was reported only by *Proceso* magazine.

audiences simply interpret the same sorts of incidents differently than they did before. In other words, the Mexican people have become less tolerant of practices they once viewed as relatively benign.

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

In fact, it is not always clear that public reactions have kept pace with those of journalists. One recent example is the well-documented 1997 charge that the leading opposition candidate for mayor of Mexico City, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, had sold public land to his mother at below-market prices during his tenure as governor of Michoacán twenty years earlier. In other words, the leader of Mexico’s left once engaged in the sort of nepotism and graft that long characterized much of Mexican public administration.⁴⁹⁷ Though the media gave substantial play to the revelations, they failed to hurt Cárdenas (who went on to win the mayoral race in a landslide). The standards that have changed are the media’s, not necessarily the public’s.

Political liberalization: One final argument is that Mexico’s new politics of scandal is the product of a panoply of changes in the Mexican political system as a whole, rather than simply increased assertiveness in the press. According to this explanation, political transition and institutional reform have led to greater exposure of scandalous acts. In other words, Mexico’s general process of democratization, rather than the emergence of independent media, was responsible for the efflorescence of political scandal.

It is undeniable that changes in a number of Mexican institutions have contributed to scandals and their political consequences. The increasing representation of opposition parties at all levels of government has helped expose certain unsavory practices. The rebirth of Mexican civil society in the second half of

⁴⁹⁷See Carlos Castillo-Peraza, “Playa Eréndira, Michoacán,” *Reforma*, May 1, 1997 and “Playa Eréndira, Michoacán (II),” *Reforma*, May 8, 1997.

the 1980's has led to greater pressure on the government to investigate shocking events. Greater scrutiny of Mexican political life by foreign media and governments have propelled investigations into certain incidents. Nascent assertiveness by the judiciary has meant that officials could no longer count on political manipulation of the law. The creation of the National Human Rights Commission by President Carlos Salinas has fortified the government's self-investigative apparatus,⁴⁹⁸ and the appointment by President Zedillo of political outsiders to the post of Attorney General has increased the independence of legal investigations in 1995-96.⁴⁹⁹ In short, Mexico's media are not the only actors that have contributed to the new politics of scandal. Opposition political parties, state and federal law-enforcement agencies, social movements, Congress, the courts, foreign actors, and defectors from the political establishment have all played a role. In cases like the Ortiz-Mena fundraising dinner and the Falzati affair, for instance, revelations in the media were subsequently pursued by opposition parties and civic groups. The media has even taken a back seat to other actors in certain scandals -- such as the assassination of José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu and the Tabasco electoral controversy -- where most revelations came from the government agencies or opposition parties rather than journalistic investigations.

But it is important to separate the causes of scandal from its political and legal consequences. Often, scandals defy legal resolution and the individuals involved evade punishment. This does not mean, however, that scandals have not occurred. It simply means that the official investigative and juridical apparatus is too weak, incompetent, corrupt, or politically compromised to act on public revelations. Changes in legal and institutions are undoubtedly crucial in determining what consequences flow from scandal. Without prosecutors and judges, scandals produce no arrests or convictions. Without political parties and social movements to capitalize on popular dissent, scandals may not translate swiftly into changes in government policy and personnel. Thus, the constellation of institutional changes that has taken place in Mexico during the last several years shapes the way scandals play out in the legal and political realms.

⁴⁹⁸The Commission was created by presidential fiat in response to an America's Watch report detailing the extent of human rights abuses in Mexico. President Salinas feared bad publicity surrounding the report might jeopardize the approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement by the U.S. Congress.

⁴⁹⁹Antonio Lozano-Gracia, a PAN legislator, was Zedillo's first Attorney General. He was replaced shortly before the 1997 elections by Jorge Madrazo-Cuellar, a political independent.

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

In three of the twelve examples discussed above, the media was not only the most important player but the dominant one. Socrates Rizzo's demise may have been abetted by opposition legislators from the PAN, but it was first and foremost a product of *El Norte's* relentless investigations. Likewise, the fall of Fausto Alzati was facilitated by the Parents' Association, Teachers' Union, and PRD, but the origins of the scandal itself lay in the press rooms at *Reforma* and *La Jornada*. Finally, and perhaps most obviously of all, the scandal surrounding the PRI's fundraising banquet was a direct product of reports in the *Economista*. Government investigators, opposition legislators, and civic activists played little role in exposing these incidents.

In summary, a number of institutional changes have contributed to the rise of scandals in Mexico. The growing power of opposition parties and civic groups, increasing autonomy of government agencies and the courts, and heightened official sensitivity to foreign pressure and have facilitated the investigation and punishment of public officials. But the most important ingredient in the new politics of scandal is increasing assertiveness in the mass media. The press has played an active, prominent role in uncovering and publicizing virtually every major shocking event over the last five years. Changing media coverage thus constitutes the common denominator of political scandal in Mexico.

The Aguas Blancas affair and the dynamics of political scandal

It is, fundamentally, an affair of the press, the media.
— Governor Rubén Figueroa, Jr.⁵⁰⁰

I have argued that changing media coverage has given rise to the new politics of scandal in Mexico. But the broad sweep of this review sacrifices the flavor and detail of recent scandals and makes it difficult to discern exactly what impact scandals have had on Mexican politics. To capture these missing elements, I now turn to examination of one particularly well-known incident -- the Aguas Blancas affair. I focus on the Aguas Blancas affair not only because it was considered as a watershed event in Mexico, but also because it neatly illustrates how scandals play out and what political consequences they may have in contemporary Mexico.

I begin by providing some background on circumstances leading up to the massacre, which occurred in a context of mounting violence in Guerrero. Next, I summarize the scandal itself, from the massacre to its resolution one year later. I then analyze the behavior of different political actors during the scandal, including the media, the political opposition, and the various government agencies charged with investigating the affair. I conclude by discussing the consequences of the Aguas Blancas scandal for Mexican politics -- namely, regime delegitimation and shifting elite calculation. These consequences serve as the basis for a broader analysis of the effects of political scandal in Mexico.

The context: the sierra of Guerrero

In one sense, the massacre at Aguas Blancas was a crucial political event that demonstrated the increasing salience of Mexico's media, provoked outrage across the political spectrum, and signaled to political elites that the rules of the game were changing. But in another sense, it was largely a continuation of a decades-long conflict. Viewed from the impoverished countryside of Guerrero, the murders at Aguas Blancas were part of a chicken-and-egg cycle of popular mobilization, government repression, and guerrilla insurgency that stretched back over thirty years.

One of the first bloody episodes in this conflict came on October 18, 1967, with a notorious massacre of peasant activists by local authorities. The massacre gave rise to Guerrero's best-known guerrilla movement, led by charismatic guerrilla

⁵⁰⁰Raymundo Riva-Palacio and Ciro Gómez-Leyva, "Entrevista con Rubén Figueroa: 'Esas

commanders Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas. Conflict between the guerrillas and state authorities entered a second phase in 1974, after leftist rebels kidnapped PRI gubernatorial candidate Rubén Figueroa Sr. (father of the governor implicated in the Aguas Blancas scandal). Predictably, the abduction itself unleashed even more vigorous official repression, beginning with a massacre of some twenty-seven peasants on August 20, 1974 and continuing through a six-year dirty war under Figueroa Sr.⁵⁰¹

The latest round of confrontation in Guerrero began in 1989, when leftist activists from the newly-formed Party of the Democratic Revolution launched a renewed challenge to the state's political machine. Official responses to this challenge were as rapid as they were predictable: a March 6, 1989 massacre left eighteen dead, ten missing, and dozens wounded. State-sponsored repression worsened after April 1993, when Governor Rubén Figueroa Jr. took office. According to the non-governmental Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, Figueroa Jr.'s tenure saw the death of some seventy-six members of the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and twenty-one members of the Southern Sierra Farmer's Organization (OCSS), the organization whose activists were killed at Aguas Blancas.⁵⁰²

The current conflict in Guerrero is drenched with historical ironies. Not only is Figueroa Jr. the son of the architect of Guerrero's previous dirty war, his opponents are also "descendants" of earlier struggles. The OCSS, for instance, was founded by activists of the Poor People's Party, itself led by former guerrilla leader Lucio Cabañas.

Events surrounding the Aguas Blancas massacre suggest that neither side learned much from earlier generations -- or perhaps that they learned too much. Increased mobilization by the OCSS and PRD was met with the massacre at Aguas Blancas, which in turn precipitated the formation of a new guerrilla movement, the Revolutionary People's Army (allegedly led by members of the OCSS). In a sequence eerily reminiscent of events thirty years before, the Aguas Blancas massacre plunged Guerrero into a new cycle of political violence.

preguntas me perjudican'," *Reforma*, July 14, 1995.

⁵⁰¹For a good summary of these events, see *La Jornada*, June 30, 1995, p. 7 and Kenneth Johnson, *Mexican Democracy: A Critical View* (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 156-166.

⁵⁰²Roberto Zamarripa, "Guerrero: Una mirada especial," *Reforma*, March 17, 1996.

Anatomy of a scandal

Events immediately leading up to the massacre at Aguas Blancas were set in motion three days before, when the OCSS decided to hold two anti-government rallies near its headquarters in Guerrero. The ostensible motivation for these rallies was twofold: to protest the forcible disappearance of one of their activists over a month before,⁵⁰³ and to compel the government to honor earlier pledges for community improvements (electrification, sewage, policing, etc.). Both these objectives reflected the relatively moderate nature of the OCSS' demands, which tended to focus on small-scale projects that would meet the basic needs of Guerrero's isolated peasant communities -- the provision of agricultural credit, the paving of stretches of road, and the restriction of logging on ecologically vulnerable land. They also reflected local peasant grievances over the generalized absence of the rule of law in a region where private paramilitary groups flourished and justice was administered by corrupt local authorities.

Nevertheless, the OCSS' decision aroused alarm in the state capital. Although it was not an armed movement, the OCSS' tactics and pedigree distinguished it as a particularly dangerous organization. The group favored militant direct action -- including illegal forms of protest such setting up roadblocks and commandeering vehicles -- and its members certainly included a number of individuals sympathetic to the use of violence.⁵⁰⁴ Government officials anticipated confrontation.⁵⁰⁵

According to subsequent press accounts, Governor Figueroa met with top aides the next day to plan the government's response.⁵⁰⁶ Though Figueroa's exact intentions and instructions are still disputed, the "operation" he and his staff designed became a massacre.⁵⁰⁷ At a river crossing near the village of Aguas

⁵⁰³Coincidentally, the rally at which he had disappeared had been held to commemorate the same 1967 massacre that gave rise to Lucio Cabañas' guerrilla movement. (See Miguel Angel Juárez, "Aguas Blancas: Se tiñe de rojo," *Reforma*, March 18, 1996.)

⁵⁰⁴See *Reforma*, July 3, 1995, p. 2; Sergio Flores, "Sustentan ex-funcionarios a grupos armados -- OCSS," *Reforma*, June 23, 1996. The contrast between the moderate nature of the OCSS' demands and the group's aggressive tactics only serves to underscore how Guerrero's narrow and intransigent socio-political elite had systematically radicalized opposition groups.

⁵⁰⁵For this reason, they brought a video camera with them and recorded the operation.

⁵⁰⁶In an interview with *Reforma* newspaper, Figueroa later claimed that he and his staff had held eleven separate meetings with the OCSS in an attempt to address their demands. (Raymundo Riva-Palacio and Ciro Gómez-Leyva, "Yo no dije que no pasaba nada," *Reforma*, July 15, 1995.)

⁵⁰⁷Whether Figueroa actually ordered the massacre remains in doubt. At least one of the state special prosecutors, Miguel Angel García-Domínguez, seems to have thought so, and the mayor of

Blancas (municipality of Coyuca de Benítez), the OCSS' truck was stopped by a group of some forty state policemen, who had earlier taken up positions on both sides of the road. Without provocation, police shot several of the activists at point-blank range and then opened fire on their vehicle. Seventeen peasants were killed and a similar number were wounded.

At a press conference the next day, Figueroa outlined the official version of events: OCSS militants had resisted police attempts to detain them, wounding at least one officer with a machete. In the confrontation that followed, officials asserted, police had opened fire on the peasants -- many of whom had firearms -- killing several of them. The government even released a videotape showing the motley collection of weapons police claimed to have confiscated and videotaped images of the dead peasants clutching pistols in their hands. Figueroa ordered the immediate arrest of the remaining OCSS leaders. But faced with a flurry of hostile stories and opposition protests, he also promised to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate the incident in detail.

The official version of events satisfied few people. In particular, the fact that the state special prosecutor assigned to the incident, Adrián Vega, was a known Figueroa ally did little to defuse criticism. In the first week following the massacre, independent publications such as *La Jornada* and *Reforma* gave the incident sustained front-page coverage and refused to print doctored pictures provided by the government which purported to prove that the peasants were armed.⁵⁰⁸ Meanwhile, a congressional committee left Mexico City for Guerrero to launch their own investigation of the incident. The leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution called for an investigation by the Organization of American States, urged federal intervention to replace Figueroa, and declared it would withdraw from ongoing federal negotiations over political reform pending satisfactory resolution of the incident. The National Commission of Human Rights announced that it, too, would

Coyuca de Benítez, María de la Luz Núñez, repeatedly claimed that Figueroa had told her the day before the massacre that he would never let the peasants reach their destination. Other sources in the federal government, however, remain convinced that Figueroa merely gave vague instructions to his subordinates and then attempted to protect them after the fact. In this view, the massacre was the result of Figueroa's hard-line style of governing and "the stupidity of the moment," rather than of any deliberate, pre-conceived plan. (See Julio Fentanes, "Indagaban primer fiscal a Figueroa," *Reforma*, March 26, 1996; *Reforma*, "Perder el poder en 9 días," March 13, 1996; interviews with senior officials in the Interior Ministry and Presidency, Mexico City, Mexico City, February 26, 1997 and March 18, 1997.)

⁵⁰⁸I happened to be interviewing Carlos Payán, then editor-in-chief of *La Jornada*, when government representatives appeared and requested that he publish an "official" picture of the scene showing dead peasants clutching firearms. Payán demurred.

investigate the case. And President Ernesto Zedillo -- questioned about the incident at a press conference on July 4 -- urged a full inquiry.

These pressures soon forced the arrest of ten policemen involved in the incident (for abuse of authority). Nevertheless, the government in Guerrero continued to maintain that armed peasants had provoked the attack. Consequently, most responses to the massacre over the next six weeks broke down along partisan lines. Local PRD representatives launched a series of protests and acts of civil disobedience against Figueroa, but the PRI's political machine in Guerrero produced thousands of people at counter-demonstrations in support of the governor, and the party's national leadership declared their support for Figueroa. Traditional media let the incident fade; radio reported only occasional highlights; and television largely ignored the ongoing investigations. Only the country's independent print media continued to pursue the case, running almost daily articles on the massacre.

These publications received a boost on August 14, when the National Human Rights Commission issued its report. In a scathing, 360-page indictment of the Figueroa administration, the Commission found that police had fired indiscriminately at unarmed peasants, that state government officials had systematically covered up evidence and obstructed investigations into the affair, and that the videotape which authorities originally aired had been doctored to bolster the government's version of events. At the press conference announcing their report, the Commission played new videotaped clips of the massacre, revealing that the peasants killed at Aguas Blancas did not actually die with pistols in their hands. Among other things, the Commission recommended the indictment of twenty-two state government officials and the naming of a new special prosecutor to carry on the investigation. Governor Figueroa responded by firing eight top aides and promising to comply with the Commission's recommendations.

Over the next several months, press and government investigations produced a series of minor revelations about the case. Two special prosecutors resigned, one in the wake of the Human Rights Commission's report, and one after newspaper articles documented his business connections to Figueroa. Investigations by the third special prosecutor -- like his predecessors a Figueroa ally -- triggered a flurry of arrests and revealed that top state government officials had flown over the scene of the massacre in a helicopter within an hour of the killings. Nevertheless, the governor himself managed to escape incrimination. In mid-February 1996, eight months after the massacre, the state special prosecutor publicly declared that there was no evidence to implicate Figueroa or his four top aides in the affair. Although

the PRD continued to boycott national-level talks on political reform and opposition protests continued sporadically, the federal government still declined to intervene. And in the absence of direct federal intervention, it appeared that Figueroa might actually weather the crisis and survive to complete his term.

And then came the jolt. On February 25, 1996, in the second broadcast of his weekly television program *Detrás de la noticia* (*Behind the News*), newscaster Ricardo Rocha stunned his audience by broadcasting sixteen minutes of the original, undoctored videotape of the massacre. The images left no doubt about who initiated the attack: police were shown waiting for the peasants' truck, stopping it, and executing several of its occupants before firing indiscriminately into the vehicle. Rocha closed the program with a series of pointed questions that implicitly accused Figueroa of responsibility for the Aguas Blancas massacre and for Guerrero's climate of violence in general.

As writer Carlos Monsiváis put it, the video turned everyone who saw it into a material witness to the massacre.⁵⁰⁹ Independent media immediately attacked the story with renewed vigor, and opposition calls for Figueroa's resignation reached a crescendo. Although the state special prosecutor submitted his final report two days later, officially exonerating Figueroa of responsibility in the affair, public outrage propelled events forward. The National Human Rights Commission, leading opposition parties, and (most tellingly) the federal Interior Ministry, all issued statements reporting that they did not consider the Aguas Blancas case closed. At the same time, the PRD announced a new mass mobilization campaign with the explicit goal of removing Figueroa. Finally, on March 4, President Ernesto Zedillo formally asked the federal Supreme Court to investigate the Aguas Blancas affair.

Federal intervention, however late and tentative, left Figueroa in an untenable position. Although he succeeded in organizing a series of mass rallies in his favor in the state capital, his fate was already sealed. The governor flew secretly to Mexico City to negotiate his resignation with Interior Minister Emilio Chuayfett, and on March 12 officially requested an indefinite leave of absence.⁵¹⁰

Theoretically, further legal and political action against the governor was still eminently possible. On April 23, the Supreme Court returned its unanimous report accusing the governor of systematically violating human rights in Guerrero, thus opening up the road to both direct federal rule in the state and legal proceedings

⁵⁰⁹"El video de Aguas Blancas y las dos renunciaciones," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 8.

against Figueroa himself. But on May 6 (presumably as part of the deal for Figueroa's resignation) the federal attorney general's office declined to investigate the case and remanded it to Guerrero state. One month later, the PRI's majority in the federal Congress quashed opposition-crafted legislation aimed at political retaliation against the governor, and a week after that the state party organization in Guerrero took the same step. Finally, on June 15, 1996 -- almost one year after the massacre -- the state attorney general formally exonerated Figueroa and his top three aides of any criminal responsibility in the affair (though it left open prosecution of 47 lower-ranking officials). With that decision, legal action against Figueroa himself was officially foreclosed. Despite further revelations about the massacre from media, opposition, and government sources, the Aguas Blancas affair was officially over.

Or was it? On June 28, 1996, a ceremony in Guerrero commemorating the first anniversary of the Aguas Blancas massacre was interrupted by forty armed men and women. Declaring themselves to be members of a new guerrilla organization, the group read a revolutionary communiqué announcing their commitment to the violent overthrow of Guerrero's state government. The Revolutionary People's Army (EPR), as the group called itself, carried out its first military operations that same day. Precisely one year after the massacre at Aguas Blancas, Guerrero had descended into a new cycle of political violence.

Actors and explanations

Like other major political scandals, the Aguas Blancas affair was not the result of any one political actor operating in a vacuum; a constellation of organizations and individuals worked together to propel the scandal to its climax. Opposition political parties, Congress, local pressure groups, the courts, the federal Attorney General's office, the Guerrero state political machine, the National Human Rights Commission, the Presidency, international organizations, and the press all played politically consequential roles. But the role of the mass media is particularly noteworthy. Without prior opening in both Mexico's print and broadcast media, the massacre at Aguas Blancas would never have mushroomed into an affair that ultimately triggered the demise of one of President Ernesto Zedillo's prominent political allies.

⁵¹⁰Daniel Moreno and Sergio Flores, "Pacta Figueroa Sucesor, Renuncia A Gobernacion; Designan a Angel Aguirre," *Reforma*, March 13, 1996.

Opposition parties: Throughout the unfolding scandal, a number of opposition political parties actively sought to investigate the affair and force Figueroa's resignation. Predictably, reactions to the massacre were sharpest in the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), whose members had been the targets of vicious repression in Guerrero since 1989.⁵¹¹ Throughout 1995-96, PRD activists carried out a series of demonstrations, marches and other acts of civil disobedience - - some of them deliberately boisterous -- designed to put pressure on all levels of government: municipal, state, and federal. Meanwhile, PRD leaders and legislators continued to bombard government agencies, human rights groups, and the media with documentation of abuse and murder by Guerrero state authorities. Most significant of all, the PRD's top leadership continually threatened to withdraw from high-level talks over political reform as a result of government failure to resolve the case. Presumably, this threat influenced the president's decision to intervene following the videotape of the massacre. In other words, without PRD pressure the scandal might have had a less obvious political impact.

Congress: Throughout the Aguas Blancas case, both opposition and PRI legislators took advantage of the issue to attract media coverage for their party's point of view. In the first few days after the massacre, legislators from all four political parties with representation in the Congress -- the PRI, PAN, PRD, and Labor Party (PT) -- traveled to Guerrero to survey the scene. PRD legislators also pushed hard for the appointment of a federal special prosecutor and the initiation of an extraordinary session of the Senate to authorize the dissolution of Guerrero's state government. PT representatives proposed the establishment of a special parliamentary commission that would investigate the massacre and presumably expose the mendacity of Guerrero state officials. But all these attempts were frustrated when PRI legislators, voting as a block, defeated the opposition proposals. PRI dominance of the both houses thus severely restricted Congress' role.

Local pressure groups: Following the Aguas Blancas massacre, leftist activists in Guerrero and elsewhere staged a number of protests, from funeral vigils to the seizure of municipal offices in the municipality of Coyuca de Benítez, Guerrero

⁵¹¹However, the massacre also provoked strong reactions from the PAN and the center-left Labor Party (PT) -- in other words, across the political spectrum.

(which includes the hamlet of Aguas Blancas). Peasant groups marched on the state capital to file petitions and demonstrate against Governor Figueroa; local PRD leaders organized a tax boycott. Like opposition efforts in the Congress, however, these actions were largely ineffectual. Governor Figueroa managed to avoid another bloody incident while simultaneously organizing even larger counter-demonstrations in his favor.⁵¹² Although local pressure groups were the source of sporadic anti-Figueroa mobilization, they never succeeded in cracking the state-level political apparatus that the governor controlled, let alone in altering the calculus of decision-makers at the federal level.

The Guerrero state government: Because prosecution was a matter for the state government, most legal investigation was handled by two offices in Guerrero: the state Attorney General and the state special prosecutor. Unfortunately, both these posts were controlled by Figueroa's cronies. The state Attorney General's office had actually helped to plan the massacre and had orchestrated the ensuing cover-up. As for the state special prosecutors, the first was deeply involved in obstruction of justice; the second was willfully ineffectual; and the third completed his investigations by clearing Figueroa and his three top aides of any wrongdoing.⁵¹³ In other words, the PRI-government apparatus in Guerrero state remained firmly under Figueroa's control throughout the scandal. Though this apparatus leaked -- as the broadcast of the unedited video on Televisa suggests -- it did not crack.

The National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH): Of all the government agencies that played a role in the scandal, the National Human Rights Commission was undoubtedly the most important. Not only did the CNDH investigate at its own initiative, but its report both repudiated the official version of the massacre and documented the extent of the cover-up. Furthermore, the Commission periodically reminded the press that its recommendations regarding the affair were not being followed and that the exoneration of Figueroa by local authorities did not signify the

⁵¹²That is, Figueroa managed to avoid another bloody confrontation with the OCSS and the PRD over Aguas Blancas. There were three other massacres in Guerrero during the final eight months of Figueroa's tenure, the last of which (on February 18, 1996) was universally acknowledged to have been committed by police.

⁵¹³Unlike Figueroa, his aides did not completely escape the threat of prosecution. On January 20, 1997, the State Human Rights Commission in Guerrero recommended their indictment for the murder of Nomberto Flores-Baños, an academic and political rival, in May 1995. (See Sergio Flores, "Piden abrir investigación a ex-empleados de Figueroa," *Reforma*, January 21, 1996.)

closure of the case. Its reports and investigations thus fed anti-Figueroa pressures in the media and the public at large.

Created by former president Carlos Salinas as an attempt to preempt criticism of Mexico's record in the United States, the Human Rights Commission had become increasingly assertive during Zedillo's term. Under the direction of Jorge Madrazo, a political independent whom Zedillo would later appoint as federal Attorney General, the CNDH was called on to investigate several bloody incidents in Guerrero before Aguas Blancas. As a result of these investigations, the CNDH had recommended -- among other things -- the removal of one senior officer who led the police unit involved in the Aguas Blancas massacre. In other words, Figueroa's administration was already in violation of the Commission's recommendations before Aguas Blancas, and the particular official whose dismissal the CNDH had previously demanded was directly implicated in the massacre and ensuing cover-up. The Commission thus faced strong incentives to investigate the events at Aguas Blancas, if only to preserve its institutional credibility.⁵¹⁴

The CNDH, however, did suffer from two serious liabilities. First, although it enjoyed relatively broad authority to investigate and report on what it found, the Commission lacked the legal means to enforce these recommendations. The examples of perjury, obstruction, and abuse of authority it uncovered had to be followed up by the relevant government agencies -- in this case, the Guerrero state Attorney General and special prosecutor. Although these entities did arrest and prosecute a number of government officials in connection with the massacre, they clearly lacked the investigative zeal necessary to follow up on further leads -- especially those that pointed to the governor himself.

Second, although the CNDH was nominally autonomous, its efficacy depended on executive goodwill. In Madrazo's case, presidential favor was particularly crucial; his professional advancement hinged on balancing the appearance of independence with a measure of political sensitivity. Even an aggressive and independent-minded Commissioner would have had to choose his battles. The fact that the CNDH never obtained a complete version of the massacre video, or obtained it and declined to release it publicly, suggests that its investigations were not as vigorous as they might have been.

⁵¹⁴Author's interview with Amalia García of the PRD, Mexico City, August 15, 1995.

The presidency: Given the imperial power of Mexico's presidency, it is hardly surprising that President Ernesto Zedillo played a role in the Aguas Blancas case. It was, in fact, Zedillo's decision to request Supreme Court investigation of the incident that ultimately forced Figueroa's resignation. Nevertheless, the president was a reluctant and tentative actor throughout most of the scandal.

Aguas Blancas presented Mexico's president with a particularly unpleasant dilemma. Zedillo could ill-afford to lose a political ally, but he could equally ill-afford to compromise his personal prestige and popularity. Both these problems were exacerbated by the president's perceived closeness to Figueroa. On the one hand, Figueroa's continuation in office made it look as if the president were protecting a corrupt and abusive crony – the very opposite of the reformist image Zedillo had tried to cultivate and on which his slender margin of approval depended. At worst, the government's failure to resolve the Aguas Blancas case threatened the cornerstone of Zedillo's presidency: namely, the political reform package that was concurrently being negotiated by Mexico's main parties. Certain calculations thus argued for dumping Figueroa early in the scandal.

On the other hand, a series of personal, political and national security considerations favored supporting the governor. Already faced with the Zapatista National Liberation Front insurgency in nearby Chiapas state, the Zedillo administration was frankly desperate to prevent the extension of armed conflict to other poorer regions of Mexico. Top advisors to the president were convinced that the OCSS was not just a local nuisance but rather the embryo of a new insurgency. Because no one in Los Pinos (the presidential palace) believed that Figueroa himself had deliberately ordered a massacre of unarmed peasants, the incident seemed to like a lamentable consequence of overzealous police work. The last thing the Zedillo administration wished to do was punish a political ally for containing an incipient guerrilla movement.⁵¹⁵

Certain political considerations also increased presidential reluctance to move against Figueroa. Since Zedillo's inauguration in 1994, both local PRI organizations and the national PRI leadership had proven increasingly willing to resist reformist intrusions from Los Pinos. Zedillo had already lost a public battle with one local power-broker from his own party, Governor Roberto Madrazo-Pintado of Tabasco, when federal pressure failed to convince Madrazo to abandon

⁵¹⁵Interview with senior official at the Office of the Presidency, Mexico City, February 26, 1997.

his post after a notoriously questionable election.⁵¹⁶ Any direct attempts to remove Figueroa, therefore, would only have sharpened opposition to Zedillo from within his own party and, if Zedillo lost the confrontation, further weakened the president. For this reason, aggressive action against Figueroa carried its own political risks.

Finally, presidential reticence was undoubtedly exacerbated by the fact that Zedillo was personally close to Figueroa's family. Figueroa's father had been a political mentor and promoter of the president, and Figueroa Jr., alone among Mexico's thirty-one state governors, was a member of Zedillo's own *camarilla* (political clique). Even though Zedillo was not technically his *compadre* (that is, neither was godfather to the other's child), Figueroa publicly used that term to refer to the president. The two men were thus bound together by ties of family, affect, and political alliance.

In 1995-96, Ernesto Zedillo was not a man who could afford to squander political allies. A technocrat with no prior electoral experience, Zedillo had been chosen by outgoing president Carlos Salinas as the PRI's presidential candidate after the party's original standard-bearer, Luís Donaldo Colosio, was assassinated in March 1994. Dubbed "the accidental president" by Mexico's pundits, Zedillo had subsequently lost much of his natural support base within the PRI following the arrest of Raúl Salinas in 1995 and an ensuing rupture with Salinas faction. His first two years in office were marked by deep economic crisis, a series of PRI electoral defeats, embarrassing confrontations with hard-line factions of his own party, and -- for the first time in two decades -- rumors of a military coup attempt.

Given the competing pressures of politics and personal ties, the president opted for a middle course. Senior officials spent most of the scandal engaged in damage control, rhetorically encouraging a thorough investigation and privately hoping the whole issue would disappear. As long as the official version was not completely discredited, and as long as Figueroa himself was not directly implicated in the massacre, federal non-intervention seemed a viable strategy.

The broadcast of the video, however, dramatically altered this political calculus. Regardless of the two men's friendship, regardless of Figueroa's legal responsibility for the massacre and cover-up, and regardless of the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Guerrero, the governor had simply become too much of a political liability. The result was gentle, indirect, but nevertheless decisive federal intervention to assure Figueroa's removal.

⁵¹⁶Roberto Madrazo-Pintado is not related to Jorge Madrazo-Cuellar, head of the National Human

International actors: In hindsight, initial coverage of the Aguas Blancas massacre in the foreign press was remarkably tardy and sporadic. Few stories or images of the event appeared in the main North American newspapers, the international wire services, and the major English-language networks. Although the foreign press did break some touchy stories on Mexico in previous years, during the Aguas Blancas scandal foreign reporters generally took their cues from Mexican media rather than the other way around.

What was true of the foreign press was also true of the international community more broadly. Although the Organization of American States eventually sent a team to report on the massacre, the affair was over before the results of its investigations became known. The OAS' arrival, departure, and final report made headlines in the press, but the mission itself contributed little to the ultimate outcome of the affair. In other words, the Aguas Blancas scandal was played out in Mexico, by Mexican actors.

The independent media: Throughout the Aguas Blancas affair, important sections of Mexico's media pursued the affair with assertiveness and vigor. Independent newspapers like *La Jornada* and *Reforma* gave saturation coverage to the massacre and subsequent cover-up. Moreover, front-page news reports and hard-hitting editorials were accompanied by investigative reporting that consistently yielded new revelations of official complicity. Interviews with local eyewitnesses and government sources had thoroughly discredited the official version long before the CNDH, the state special prosecutors, the Supreme Court, or the OAS concluded their investigations.

Although these ongoing investigations also produced leads for the media to follow up, as often as not the press uncovered new information that propelled legal inquiries. Whenever there were no specific leads tying high-level officials to the massacre, the independent press followed circumstantial ones -- such as the fact that police officers charged in the massacre were receiving special treatment in prison and that the state special prosecutor and Governor Figueroa were linked through business dealings. Figueroa himself had no doubts about the identity of his

Rights Commission and subsequently Attorney General.

principal tormenter. As he put it in an interview with two *Reforma* editors, the scandal was “fundamentally, an affair of the press, the media.”⁵¹⁷

Eventually, it became clear to government agencies and opposition parties that the best way to stimulate action on the case was to pass material to the media. The ultimate example, of course, was the unedited video of the massacre. With its broadcast, Figueroa’s fate was sealed; all ties to Zedillo aside, he became simply indefensible. As one newspaper columnist concluded:

Who provoked the resignation of Rubén Figueroa: the PRD and “civil society,” or Televisa? The mobilizations and protests did not accomplish much in over two hundred days; the broadcast of the video, by contrast, achieved in less than a month what looked impossible: it forced the president of the republic to request the intervention of the Supreme Court and led to the resignation of the governor.⁵¹⁸

This logically raises the question of why Televisa, so long a reliable ally of the PRI, decided to broadcast the videotape. At the time of the leak, some observers speculated that Televisa had aired the video with the specific blessing of the presidency or the Interior Ministry (perhaps even at their behest). According to this line of reasoning, the president sought an excuse to jettison Figueroa, thereby preserving his reformist image without appearing to sacrifice a loyal supporter until events forced his hand. But the fact that Televisa fired its news director, Alejandro Burillo-Azcárraga, shortly after the video was broadcast suggests precisely the opposite. Rather than doing the government’s bidding, the network actually suffered from official retribution.⁵¹⁹ The most plausible scenario, therefore is that Televisa was sent the videotape by another source – according to some observers, a PRD legislator who had bought a copy of the original videotape from a PRI or government official in Guerrero. The network then felt compelled to air it for commercial reasons. Had they not done so, Televisa’s source would have simply passed the videotape to Televisión Azteca, handing its rival not only high ratings

⁵¹⁷Raymundo Riva-Palacio and Ciro Gómez-Leyva, “Entrevista con Rubén Figueroa: ‘Esas preguntas me perjudican,’” *Reforma*, July 14, 1995.

⁵¹⁸Jaime Sánchez-Susarrey, “Aguas Blancas,” *Reforma*, March 16, 1996.

⁵¹⁹“El video de Aguas Blancas y las dos renunciaciones,” *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 8. Senior officials at the Interior Ministry and the Office of the President confirmed this version of events, although they denied explicitly demanding Burillo’s resignation. (Author’s interviews, Mexico City, February 26, 1997 and March 18, 1997).

from the broadcast itself but also the reputational benefits that would flow from airing something Televisa had declined to broadcast.

To summarize, the media played a crucial role throughout the Aguas Blancas scandal. Independent journalists, hot on the trail of official misconduct, attacked the story with investigative zeal; television, driven by commercial pressures, ultimately followed suit. Although opposition and civic pressures helped shape the outcome of the scandal, they did not provoke it. It was Mexico's media who exposed the facts and propelled the scandal to its ultimate conclusion.

The scandal, in turn, had a significant effect on Mexican political life. Within Guerrero, it delegitimized the Figueroa administration, encouraged anti-government mobilization, and gave rise to a new insurgency. At the federal level, it called into question the sincerity of the regime's reformist efforts and threatened to delegitimize the Zedillo administration in the eyes of many citizens if appropriate action were not taken. At the same time, it also signaled to political elites that government actions were being subjected to greater scrutiny and that, as a result, former practices were no longer tenable. As Governor Figueroa himself lamented, "How the rules of politics in Mexico have changed! Now being a friend of the president is a point against you."⁵²⁰

The effects of scandal

To date, most scholarship has held that the political consequences of scandals are largely ephemeral.⁵²¹ Officials may resign or be indicted; politicians may back away from particular initiatives, and political parties may even lose elections. But underlying partisan alignments are unlikely to change. Thus, the Profumo Affair cost Britain's Conservatives their hold on power temporarily, but they soon returned with a cabinet full of fresh faces. According to this conventional wisdom, Mexico's recent wave of scandals might affect popular perceptions of particular leaders, including the Salinas and Figueroa families. It might even encourage opposition voting (as in Guerrero in the wake of Aguas Blancas). But it would not alter long-term public attitudes toward the PRI or Mexico's political system. In other words, the new politics of scandal would not influence Mexico's process of regime transition.

⁵²⁰*Reforma*, "Perder el poder en 9 días," March 13, 1996.

⁵²¹See Andrei S. Markovits and Mark Silverstein, *The Politics of Scandal: Power and Process in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988).

In this section, I argue precisely the opposite. Based on the Aguas Blancas affair and other incidents described above, I conclude that scandals have two potent long-term consequences. First, they undermine the legitimacy of political institutions among the mass public. Where scandals follow each other in rapid succession and appear to indict the system as a whole, this delegitimation can be powerful and widespread. Second, scandals signal to political elites that the rules of the game have changed and that certain older practices may now be exposed to public scrutiny. More aggressive media coverage thus creates a new context for political decision-making.

Mass delegitimation

One salient feature of recent scandals in Mexico is that they illuminate the true workings of Mexico's one-party regime. In other words, they reveal the dark underside of Mexican authoritarianism -- corruption, cronyism, drug trafficking, murder, and repression. And in doing so, they serve to delegitimize that regime and its electoral arm, the PRI.

The cumulative weight of recent scandals is deeply delegitimizing. But at least as devastating for the regime is their increasingly web-like interconnectedness. Each new scandal in Mexico confirmed that corruption was institutionalized and that the political system was rotten to its core. The effects of recent scandals in Mexico thus went far beyond the public outrage that follows occasional reports of official corruption. The problem was not just that Raúl Salinas' Swiss bank accounts held enough money to buy milk for every schoolchild in Mexico for a year -- as PAN leader Felipe Calderón pointed out in 1997.⁵²² Nor was it the fact that a number of high-level officials were linked to Raúl through suspect financial dealings. Rather, it was the sense that Raúl Salinas' ill-gotten fortune and a dozen other scandals like it captured the essence of the way the system operated. Leaders promised clean government but then abused their power, and -- given the country's autocratic political system -- were never held accountable. They conspired with each other and rich businessmen to steal money and buy elections, and when this failed, they cheated opposition parties out of victory. Opposition activists and political rivals who appeared to threaten their position were murdered. This was a picture that ordinary people could understand and perhaps even corroborate based on their own experience with the regime, such as encounters with policemen and bureaucrats.

⁵²²See Miguel Angel Granados-Chapa, "Plaza Pública," *Reforma*, July 3, 1997.

Documenting the role of scandals in delegitimizing a political system is a daunting task. Despite years of research, scholars do not agree on a definition of legitimacy, let alone how to measure it.⁵²³ Even if clear measurements of legitimacy could be devised in theory, operationalizing them would be very difficult. To begin with, any attempt to measure legitimacy using survey data would be suspect wherever respondents were afraid to answer questions truthfully. Although fear is no longer a problem for pollsters in most of Mexico, but it probably was as little as five years ago. As a result, it would have been difficult to record declines in legitimacy even if scholars had designed and asked the right questions in previous surveys. Given these obstacles, it is hardly surprising that reliable time-series survey data on governmental legitimacy is scarce.

With these limitations in mind, what information can be culled from existing surveys? In general, survey data suggest four conclusions, all of which are consistent with the notion that scandal has contributed to regime delegitimation. First, Mexicans tend to remember scandalous incidents. According to private polls conducted by the Office of the President in 1995-96, news about drug trafficking, official corruption, opposition protest, and political violence have high recall rates (20-50%) -- similar to those for major accidents and natural disasters. Other political events, such as summits, presidential activities, policy initiatives, and similar events have much lower recall rates (around 5-15%). By itself this fact does not prove that scandalous events shape public opinion, but it at least demonstrates that they may do so.

Second, public perceptions of official corruption and illegitimacy are quite high. Most Mexicans, for instance, believe that their government is corrupt and that corruption is not just the product of a few individuals. Large majorities of the population also believe the system needs substantial reform. Third, cross-sectional survey data indicate a strong statistical relationship between believing the government is corrupt, disliking the PRI and supporting political change.⁵²⁴ In other words, Mexicans appear to make the sorts of political connections that one would expect regarding scandals and regime legitimacy.

⁵²³Some scholars might even argue that legitimacy is not only subjective but subconscious: people may not always be able to articulate whether something is illegitimate or why it is so.

⁵²⁴See James A. McCann and Jorge I. Dominguez, "Mexicans React to Electoral Fraud and Political Corruption: an Assessment of Public Opinion and Voting Behavior," *Electoral Studies*, 1998, 17 (4):483-503.

Finally, public perceptions of government corruption, distaste for the PRI, and support for democratization have increased during the same period as recent scandals. Since 1991 and especially since 1994, the percentage of Mexicans believing their government is honest, supporting the PRI, favoring one-party rule, and feeling that the political system works well as it is have dropped substantially.⁵²⁵ More significantly, Mexicans generally feel that corruption has increased in recent years, despite the fact that public administration was almost certainly less corrupt under Zedillo than it was during Salinas's tenure.⁵²⁶ This finding suggests that public impressions of official corruption are driven at least as much by media coverage as by actual corruption or other abuses of power.

In other words, survey data do not permit us to say definitively that recent scandals have undermined regime legitimacy in Mexico. But they do indicate that Mexicans remember the events that provoke to political scandals, that popular perceptions of legitimacy are low, that perceptions of legitimacy are correlated with distrust for the ruling party and perceptions of official corruption, and that public perceptions of official corruption have increased with coverage of recent scandals. Circumstantial evidence thus supports the notion that successive scandals have undermined the legitimacy of Mexico's old regime.

Elite calculation

As with mass opinion, documenting the impact of scandals on elite attitudes and behavior is a difficult task. Interviews with Mexican politicians and government officials do, however, suggest that scandals have had a dramatic effect on how political elites perceive their political environment and their place in it. In the

⁵²⁵See, for instance, a poll of 1,500 Mexican adults by the *Los Angeles Times* (Poll No. 381), in conjunction with *Reforma* and *El Norte* newspapers, August 1-7, 1996; the Belden & Russonello poll of 1,526 potential voters carried out on July 23-August 1, 1994 (press release: Results of a National Poll of Mexican Voters, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1994; Belden & Russonello y Ciencia Aplicada, "Resumen de una encuesta sobre preferencias electorales en México," *Este País*, No. 44, November 1994, special supplement, p. 7); and the Belden & Russonello poll of 1,546 adults in September 11-October 2, 1991; poll by the *Los Angeles Times* of 1,835 Mexican adults, August 5-13, 1989.

⁵²⁶The percent believing that bribery or corruption has increased in the last three years went from 41% in 1991 to 49% in 1994 to 69% in 1996. See a poll of 1,500 Mexican adults by the *Los Angeles Times* (Poll No. 381), in conjunction with *Reforma* and *El Norte* newspapers, August 1-7, 1996. See also the Belden & Russonello poll of 1,526 potential voters carried out on July 23-August 1, 1994 (press release: Results of a National Poll of Mexican Voters, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1994 and Belden & Russonello y Ciencia Aplicada, "Resumen de una encuesta sobre preferencias electorales en México," *Este País*, No. 44, November 1994, special supplement, p.

"Falzati" affair, for instance, many aspiring functionaries quickly drew the conclusion that old-style mendacity now entailed substantial political risks. As the scandal was breaking, *Reforma* received a flurry of letters from other high-level government officials, calling attention to "typos" in their own resumes. Other scandals -- such as those involving Raúl Salinas -- have underscored in an even more dramatic fashion the fact that high-level officials (including close relatives of former presidents) are no longer untouchable.

Perhaps the most striking example is the Aguas Blancas scandal. What Mexican politicians noticed was not the relatively light punishment that Governor Figueroa received. (He was not prosecuted and even remained governor, the fig leaf of a leave of absence standing between him and resignation.) Rather, officials registered the fact that he was forced to step down. The spectacle of a well-established and well-connected political figure being pursued by a swarm of journalists and opposition activists was truly novel in Mexico. In this sense, Aguas Blancas focused elite attention on the increasing pluralism and participativeness of Mexico's changing political system. Mexico had not completed its transition to democracy in 1996, but the behavior of key political actors during the Aguas Blancas affair highlighted for all to see that the rules of the game were changing.

The very fact that political elites believe certain rules no longer apply inevitably hastens the decomposition of the old system. If the president will not or cannot protect supporters from unwanted scrutiny, why should I offer him my unquestioning loyalty? If I realize that everyone else must also recognize the limits to presidential protection, and that therefore they will also be less obedient, and that therefore the president will be even less able to protect me, perhaps I should not offer him my loyalty at all. While reality is not as knife-edged as such strategic calculations imply, it is clear that the durability of particular institutional arrangements depends in part on perceptions of their durability. These perceptions can be altered by dramatic events, including political scandals.

Conclusions

Chapters Three and Four showed how increasing competition in the broadcast media and growing professionalism within the print media led to greater assertiveness by elements of the Mexican press. In recent years, independent newspapers, radio shows, and television programs have begun to cover topics that

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were previously off-limits and expose the less savory aspects of one-party rule. This chapter has documented how changes in media coverage led to the proliferation of political scandals. Recurring scandals undermined support for existing institutions, generated pressure for reform, shaped elite calculations, and generally drove forward the process of political transition.

The findings presented here thus provide evidence for two of the hypotheses discussed in Chapter One about the impact of media opening on democratization. Media opening contributed to democratization by (1) delegitimizing old institutions and practices and (2) sharpening elite cleavages. The Mexican case also suggests, however, ways in which these hypotheses can be refined and made more explicit.

Mass delegitimation and democratization

As hypothesized in Chapter One, increasing assertiveness in the press tends to expose nefarious practices of the old regime, thus leading to its delegitimation. Presumably, mass delegitimation hastens the regime's collapse and ultimately its replacement by more democratic institutions. In other words, media opening contributes to delegitimation of the old regime, which in turn accelerates its collapse, and finally leads to its replacement by a democratic system. The Mexican case indicates that this basic causal sequence is correct, but it also suggests three revisions or caveats -- one at each step in the sequence.

Corrective measures: First, the step between the exposure of authoritarian practices and mass delegitimation is not automatic. Delegitimation can be mitigated by punishment of officials who are implicated in scandal and by subsequent reforms designed to give the impression that scandalous behavior will be prevented. If the acts that triggered scandal are subsequently investigated and punished -- an unlikely scenario in an authoritarian system, but one that is nevertheless conceivable -- the regime may be able to polish its tarnished image. In that case, the long-term political consequences of scandal for regime legitimacy may be relatively minor. The scandal itself can be written off as the aberrant behavior of corrupt individuals, rather than the normal operation of the system. In fact, by holding those culpable to account, the regime may actually show itself to be working properly. As a result, citizens will not necessarily draw the conclusion that the political system requires fundamental revision.

Several examples from Mexico illustrate this point. In the case of Aguas Blancas, punishment of the most important officials implicated in the affair was

relatively tardy and mild. Many (including Governor Figueroa) were probably vulnerable to criminal charges and escaped prosecution because of their political connections. Such impunity undoubtedly damaged the regime's legitimacy. At the same time, the consequences if Figueroa had emerged from the scandal unscathed would have been far worse. In that case, public opinion would undoubtedly have turned even more vehemently against the ruling party and the president. Partial punishment of Figueroa thus salvaged some of the regime's credibility and bolstered (or at least salvaged) Zedillo's reformist credentials. More generally, punishment of those officials whose corruption is exposed can minimize the political consequences of scandal. The imprisonment and ultimate conviction of Raúl Salinas (for the murder of José Francisco Ruíz-Massieu) also illustrate this point. Most observers drew the conclusion that Mexico had taken a tremendous step forward in eliminating impunity. Although the case against Raúl was marred by prosecutorial abuse and other failings, the government's ability to secure a conviction seemed to indicate that the era of untouchability was over. Undoubtedly, the result of the case enhanced support for President Zedillo and his government. As a result, the scandal did not have as devastating an effect on the PRI's hold on power.

In addition to punishing particular individuals, authoritarian leaders can also contain the fallout from scandals by implementing reforms that appear designed to prevent scandalous behavior in the future. If within a relatively short time, leaders are able to institute reforms that would ensure punishment for similar abuses in the future, the regime may recoup some of its lost standing. Elites can then argue that the old defects of the system have been corrected, and the public should once again accept the regime's authority.

Mexican leaders have repeatedly used this tactic, trumpeting reforms designed to restore public confidence in the regime at the beginning of their administrations. The last five Mexican presidents, in particular, have made rather gymnastic attempts to distance themselves from their predecessors as a way of gaining credibility -- Luís Echeverría through limited electoral reform, José López-Portillo through unsuccessful political reform, Miguel de la Madrid through a quixotic anti-corruption initiative, Carlos Salinas through sweeping institutional restructuring, and Ernesto Zedillo through judicial reform and democratization. Typically, they have supplemented these reformist gestures with selective punishment of the most notorious actors from the old administration. For instance, revelations about the scope of corruption under the López-Portillo administration led

to the former president's temporary exile from the country at the beginning of President de la Madrid's term. Similarly, President Salinas' first few months in office saw the dramatic arrest of a number of corrupt figures — including a prominent financier, a leading union boss, and the corrupt former police chief of Mexico City. President Zedillo, of course, began his term by arresting Raúl Salinas. All these efforts helped divert some portion of public resentment and ameliorate the delegitimizing consequences of earlier scandals.

Elements of this approach can be detected in the government's handling of some of the scandals discussed above. For instance, reports of the Ortiz Mena dinner led President Salinas to propose a package of reforms in campaign finance legislation in an attempt to convey the impression of remedial government action. Although such measures may not have been credible enough to prevent delegitimation, they may have deflected some of the damage from political scandals. Thus, both punishment of officials and institutional reforms can loosen the connection between revelations of official misconduct and regime delegitimation.

Delegitimation and disengagement: A second caveat suggested by the Mexican case concerns the link between mass delegitimation and regime collapse. In theory, mass disaffection with the regime should translate into widespread refusal to participate in government-organized activities, increased voting for opposition parties, and other acts of protest that undermine the regime. But scandals may also contribute to a sense of alienation or cynicism about public life in general. Citizens may come to feel that the entire political process is rotten or that all politicians are inherently corrupt without distinguishing between one party and another. In that case, the result is likely to be political apathy and disengagement rather than mass pressure for reform. For instance, disillusioned voters may choose to abstain rather than cast their ballots for the opposition. Ultimately, cynicism provoked by repeated scandals might actually prolong authoritarian rule by costing opposition groups a portion of their potential base.

In Mexico, many citizens have silently expressed their disaffection from the regime by simply withdrawing from political life. In the electoral arena, for example, opposition support has long been correlated negatively with turnout at the district level, implying that anti-government sentiment can lead to both activism and political alienation.⁵²⁷ In fact, it is only recently (e.g., the 1997 elections) that long-term

⁵²⁷See Jorge I. Domínguez and James McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and*

trends in favor of abstentionism have begun to reverse. Thus, although mass delegitimation undoubtedly weakens the regime, it may not do so as directly and forcefully as might be expected.

Transition to what?: A third revision suggested by the Mexican experience concerns the link between the collapse of the old regime and its replacement with a democratic system. Scandals may hasten the decomposition of the old system, but they say little about what system may replace it. In other words, scandals promote regime change but not necessarily democratization. In the Mexican context, certain radical groups (such as the Revolutionary People's Army in Guerrero) have clearly capitalized on government abuses. To the extent that scandals benefit such groups, they are unlikely to promote the establishment of a democratic system. Although scandals should logically stimulate calls for greater governmental transparency and accountability, they may also encourage support for revolutionary movements, salvationist leaders, and other undemocratic groups that promise a thorough house-cleaning. In other words, as observers of regime change know, "transition from authoritarian rule" is not the same thing as "democratization."

In Mexico, democratic-minded opposition forces are well-established and electoral vehicles already exist to channel mass discontent. Consequently, the principal beneficiaries from regime decomposition have been civic organizations and opposition parties. In this context, increasing media assertiveness has undoubtedly promoted democratization. In other contexts, however, the distinction between democratization and some other form of regime change may be crucial.

With these three caveats in mind, we can reformulate our first hypothesis about the impact of media opening on democratization as follows: *Increasing media assertiveness leads to the exposure of unsavory practices that were previously kept reliably secret. Where mass reactions are not defused by the punishment of guilty individuals, institutional reforms, or a combination of the two, regime legitimacy declines. The effects of delegitimation may be partly sterilized by apathy, but growing disaffection with the regime typically encourages political transition. One potential outcome of this transition is the replacement of the old regime with a democratic form of government.* As discussed further in the

Electoral Choices (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 155-64; Joseph L. Klesner, "The Enigma of Electoral Participation in Mexico: Electoral Reform, the Rise of Opposition Contestation, and Voter Turnout, 1967-1994," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, April 10-12, 1998.

concluding chapter, this is an argument that appears generalizable to a range of countries undergoing political transition.

Elite polarization

As noted above, increasing media assertiveness creates a new context for elite decision-making. In many of the cases discussed above (Aguas Blancas, Raúl Salinas, Fausto Alzati, etc.), growing media scrutiny has tended to promote more accountable elite behavior. But the reaction of elites to other scandals in Mexico has been precisely the opposite -- namely, vigorous attempts to silence the media through repression. In other words, by sharpening cleavages within the authoritarian regime and signaling to elites that the rules of the political game are changing, increasing assertiveness in the media elicits two different sets of responses. First, it raises the costs of engaging in inappropriate conduct and thus encourages elites to behave differently. Second, it provokes elites who are already immersed in scandalous activity to throw their full weight against the process of media opening. Elites may even conspire to halt or roll back the broader process of institutional reform that makes media revelations more politically and legally consequential.

In Mexico, much of the resistance to democratization has undoubtedly stemmed from a fear that traditional ways of doing business will be publicized, raining public opprobrium and even legal sanctions on tainted officials. Just as some politicians within the ruling party have concluded that the PRI must reform itself and shed its bad habits, others have drawn precisely the opposite lesson. In other words, the prospect of exposure may make particularly dirty officials even more hard-line. Scandals have thus polarized the ruling elite as much as they have nudged it toward more accountable norms of behavior.

As Chapters Two Three, and Four made clear, the Mexican case provides substantial evidence of such counter-reactions by officials who fear that greater media assertiveness will compromise their prestige and position. In fact, the surge of violent reprisals against journalists in Mexico over the last fifteen years is the result of precisely this dynamic. Of the twenty Mexican reporters that the Committee to Protect Journalists believes were murdered as a result of their work in the last decade, virtually all were killed by corrupt officials who feared exposure.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁸Committee to Project Journalists *Attacks on the Press in 1996: A Worldwide Survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists* (New York: Committee to Protect Journalists, March 1997), p. 121-24.

In most cases, this corruption was drug-related, making revelations particularly damaging. Thus, the role of media assertiveness in sharpening elite cleavages is double-edged. It promotes changes in elite calculation, but not uniformly benign changes. The result of media assertiveness is likely to be both increasing accountability and increasing repression. This pattern should be familiar to observers of other countries besides Mexico.

The revised version of our second hypothesis can thus be stated as follows: *Increasing media assertiveness exposes unsavory practices by political leaders that were once kept reliably secret, damaging the standing of particular officials. One result is a change in elite calculation, inducing certain leaders to adopt more accountable standards of behavior and others to engage in repression against independent media. This process of elite polarization is ultimately supportive of political transition, but it can prove extremely messy in the short run.*

The new politics of scandal in Mexico thus sheds light on two of our original hypotheses regarding media opening and democratization. The erosion of selective silence in the media has triggered political scandals, which have in turn undermined regime legitimacy and exacerbated elite cleavages. Media opening in Mexico, however, has not been confined to increasing coverage of sensitive topics. It has also included greater attention to the viewpoints of civil society at the expense of Mexican officialdom and increasingly balanced coverage of electoral campaigns. As the next chapter discusses, these changes in coverage facilitated opposition victory at the polls, thus promoting Mexican democratization.

6. Selling Democracy: Media Opening and Elections

On July 6, 1997 something remarkable occurred: Mexican voters went to the polls to choose their representatives in a free and fair election. Aside from scattered reports of fraud and violence, balloting was generally orderly. In fact, other than a muted excitement that played over the faces of some voters, the process seemed almost mundane.

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

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

Meanwhile, observers of Mexican politics remained glued to results from legislative races that would determine the composition of the lower house of Congress (the Chamber of Deputies). Under Mexico's new hybrid electoral system, the PRI had to win 42.2% of the national vote to retain control of the Chamber. Initial returns indicated that the PRI's share hovered around 40%. By eleven-thirty in the evening, small clusters of people at the newly independent Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) had begun to toast to the successful conclusion of the campaign, and privately, to the PRI's apparent defeat. Just after midnight, IFE head José Woldenberg set aside his trademark cigar long enough to officially certify the electoral process. Amid the cacophony of squawking cellphones, official announcements, and spontaneous applause from the assembled guests, Woldenberg thanked the candidates, the voters, and the media for guaranteeing a free and fair election. Although the results were not yet final, everyone understood what had occurred: the PRI had lost control of the Chamber of Deputies. Mexican voters had thus ended nearly seventy years of one-party rule and ushered in a new era of multiparty government.

Nine years before, in the presidential elections of 1988, Mexicans had trudged to the polls to vote against economic austerity, corruption, and

authoritarianism. To their great chagrin, however, that contest proved neither free nor fair. Not only was the campaign marked by radical inequalities in resources (including access to the media), the ballots themselves were not counted honestly. As initial returns began to cast doubt on PRI claims of victory, Mexico's Interior Ministry announced that the computer system for tabulating votes had "broken down."⁵²⁹ The phrase itself -- *el sistema se cayó* -- later became a symbol of the PRI's increasing recourse to electoral fraud. Many suspected that the "system" which had broken down was not the computer at all but rather the PRI's vast vote-getting machine.

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

The elections of 1997 were different, in large measure because of political reforms implemented during the intervening three years. During 1995-96, Mexico's main political parties negotiated a series of sweeping constitutional revisions that guaranteed the autonomy of the IFE, broadened access to the mass media, and provided opposition parties with extensive campaign funds. All told, these reforms created a context in which Mexico's opposition parties could expect to compete on a roughly equal footing with the PRI and win. In 1997 this new electoral regime was put to the test, and it passed with flying colors. Mexican voters selected their representatives in a free, fair, and inclusive election that was endorsed by all major political actors. The ruling party competed, lost, and recognized the results. In short, by conventional, "electoralist" definitions of the term, on July 6, 1997 Mexico became a democracy.

The mass media played a crucial role in Mexico's "founding elections."⁵³⁰ In 1997, opposition political parties had their first real opportunity to present their

⁵²⁹See José Barberán, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and Alicia López Montjardín, *Radiografía del fraude: Análisis de los resultados oficiales del 6 de julio* (Mexico City: Nuestro Tiempo, 1988).

⁵³⁰For the original discussion of "founding elections," see Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 61-3.

message directly to voters through ordinary news coverage and televised advertisements. The results were telling: shifts in coverage on Mexico's principal television network eroded support for the ruling party, while television spots and increased political awareness as a result of the campaign transformed public attitudes toward Mexico's leftist opposition. Media opening thus facilitated opposition victory in a crucial election and accelerated Mexico's political transition.

Because understanding media effects on Mexican elections requires some background on Mexican voting behavior, the first section of this chapter paints a broad profile of the electorate on the eve of the 1997 elections. The second section reviews the available data on media influences in Mexico. The third section draws on panel data from Mexico City to document the impact of media messages on voters' preferences in 1997. The fourth section discusses why media effects were so pronounced. The chapter concludes by summarizing how these findings confirm one of the principal hypotheses presented in Chapter One about the impact of media opening on democratization.

Voting behavior in Mexico

For decades, elections in Mexico were eminently predictable and uninspired affairs. Thanks to its usual tricks, the PRI always won important contests (even when it actually lost). As a result, electoral campaigns were less about energizing partisans or persuading undecided voters than guaranteeing popular participation in carefully scripted rituals of power transfer.⁵³¹ Voters were mobilized to affirm PRI rule, not to contest it.

The gradual erosion of Mexico's hegemonic party system, however, altered the dynamics of participation in two fundamental ways.⁵³² First, the simple act of voting was no longer synonymous with endorsing the one-party regime. Citizens who disliked the government or its policies could express their views at the ballot

⁵³¹Joseph L. Klesner, "Changing Patterns of Electoral Participation and Official Party Support in Mexico," in Judith Gentleman, ed., *Mexican Politics in Transition* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987); Joseph L. Klesner, "The Enigma of Electoral Participation in Mexico: Electoral Reform, the Rise of Opposition Contestation, and Voter Turnout, 1967-1994," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, April 10-12, 1998; Ilya Adler, "The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993).

⁵³²For the original distinction between single party, hegemonic party, and dominant party systems, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

box and -- especially at the state and local levels -- expect some possibility of success. In recent years, therefore, increasing competitiveness has encouraged opposition voting at the expense of abstention.

Second, the PRI had to earn the votes it received. Ongoing political reforms constrained its use of fraud and coercion, and financial insolvency limited its ability to buy votes. As the PRI's traditional machinery broke down, it became increasingly dependent on perceptions of economic performance, public fears about political instability, pro-government media coverage, candidate-based appeals, and campaign strategy. Each election, it had to lure back to the fold a number of voters who had "dealigned" and no longer identified automatically with the ruling party. Most likely to defect from the ruling party were Mexico's well-educated or politically engaged voters, urban dwellers, and the young.

Detachment from the PRI, however, did not necessarily mean reattachment to any particular opposition party. Until the late 1980s, these parties were relatively unknown in most of the country. As a result, many disenchanted voters simply cast their ballots for whichever party seemed most likely to defeat the PRI. It was not uncommon for opponents of the government to vote for one opposition party (for instance, the Christian Democratic-oriented PAN) in one election and an entirely different one (for instance, the leftist PRD) only a few years later.⁵³³ Opposition voters thus tended to have more in common with each other than they did with supporters of the ruling party, and the dominant electoral cleavage in Mexican politics continued to pit opponents of the regime (as a group) against the PRI.

As Mexico's two main opposition parties became more established in the 1990s, however, they began to develop their own mutually exclusive bases of support. Thus, well-educated citizens, regular churchgoers, urbanites, and those living in the more prosperous North of the country gravitated to the PAN. The PRD, by contrast, tended to draw its support from politically engaged members of the working classes, Southerners, and residents of Mexico City.⁵³⁴ Continuing

⁵³³See Jorge I. Domínguez and James McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁵³⁴For the realignment/realignment debate, see Joseph Klesner, "Realignment or Dealignment? Consequences of Economic Crisis and Restructuring for the Mexican Party System," in Maria Lorena Cook, Kevin Middlebrook, and Juan Molinar, eds., *Politics of Economic Restructuring: State-Society Relations and Regime Change in Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1994); Keith Yanner, "An Emerging Mexican Voter? The Structure of Partisan Cleavages and Candidate Preferences in the 1997 Mexican Elections," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, September 24-26, 1998; and Joseph L. Klesner, "Electoral Alignment and the New Party System

realignment is likely to divide the electorate further along social and ideological lines, making crossovers between different opposition parties less common than in the past.

This process of realignment was still playing itself out during the 1997 elections. Supporters of the PAN and PRD remained ideologically closer to each other than either group did to the PRI. At the same time, though, the two principal opposition factions drew support from different social groups. The PAN continued to attract more affluent, educated, religious, and conservative voters. Regionally, it did particularly well in the North, West, and the state of Yucatan -- all traditionally Catholic areas where local elites had long opposed centralized rule by the PRI and where the PAN had a long history of political activism. PRD voters, by contrast, were more likely to be from working-class backgrounds, to oppose neoliberal economic reforms, to favor radical political change, and to attend church only sporadically. Regionally, the PRD did best in the South and the metropolis.

For the last two decades, then, the Mexican electorate has undergone two principal changes: (1) widespread detachment from the ruling party and (2) gradual reattachment to different opposition parties. The first of these changes has proceeded much faster than the second. As a result, Mexico's electorate includes a large pool of voters who do not identify firmly with any particular party. Although these citizens are not without political convictions and opinions, they tend to begin each campaign undecided about which party they will support. As with independent voters in other contexts, weak partisan loyalties makes these voters less predictable and more susceptible to campaign influences -- including media effects.⁵³⁵

The 1997 elections amply demonstrated the extraordinary volatility of Mexico's electorate. Vast numbers of voters switched sides during the campaign, both among the opposition parties and from the PRI to rival opposition groups. From January 1997 to election day in July, the PRI's base eroded slightly, support for the PAN slipped, and the PRD reemerged as a major challenge to the ruling

in Mexico," paper presented at the conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Chicago, September 24-26, 1998.

⁵³⁵See David M. Farrell, "Campaign Strategies and Tactics," in Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Neimi, and Pippa Norris, eds., *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996); Steven E. Finkel, "Reexamining the 'Minimal Effects' Model in Recent Presidential Campaigns," *The Journal of Politics*, February 1993, 55 (1): 1-21; Ronald E. Rice and Charles K. Atkins, *Public Communication Campaigns* (London: Sage, 1989).

party.⁵³⁶ All these trends were particularly pronounced in the Mexico City mayoral contest, where the PRI performed badly, PRD support rose by more than 20 points in the course of the campaign, and PAN virtually collapsed.

Corruption scandals in 1995-96, the poor state of the economy, and preexisting political cleavages undoubtedly influenced the outcome of the election. But these conditions pre-dated the campaign and cannot by themselves explain swings in partisan support in the run-up to the election. Rather, the campaign itself triggered major shifts in support for the main parties.

Media effects and Mexican voting behavior

Voter shifts during the 1997 Mexico City race provide strong evidence for campaign effects. Not all campaign effects, however, are attributable to the media. Swings in partisan support may instead be the result of evangelism by party stalwarts, conversations with friends and family, political learning not related to media coverage, or other factors.

In 1997, for instance, candidates clearly played a role in persuading citizens to switch their political allegiances. Candidate effects were most prominent in the Mexico City contest, where both the PRD and PRI fielded strong candidates while the PAN made a disastrous choice. But because all three major-party candidates were men of national stature, and because the mass media (based in Mexico City) gave disproportionate coverage to the contest, the mayoral race had repercussions throughout the country. In other words, the high-profile mayoral race gave the 1997 campaign features of a presidential contest, complete with coattails.

House-to-house canvassing by PRD “volunteers” (the so-called Sun Brigades) also appears to have played an important role by arousing popular support for the Left in 1997. As a leading expert on the PRD has pointed out:

party activists in Mexico City frequently credited the Sun Brigades with giving the PRD a kinder, gentler image among a population terrified by [pre-1997] media portrayals of the PRD as a violent and anti-social party.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁶These aggregate trends actually conceal even greater ferment within the electorate, as many switchers canceled each other out. In one panel sample of Mexico City residents in 1997 – the only panel data available – approximately three-quarters of voters switched their preferences between March and July. This panel is discussed further below.

⁵³⁷See Kathleen Bruhn, “The Resurrection of the Mexican Left: Implications for the Party System,” in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico’s Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

Presumably, PAN mobilization in other contests also played a role in its electoral success. In short, campaign effects may be large, but they may not be the result of media messages. The question then becomes whether there is any evidence for media effects more specifically.

Media effects before 1997

Anecdotal evidence suggests that media effects in Mexico are pronounced in Mexico. Politicians, party activists, and journalists themselves all believe that the mass media, especially television, play a critical role in shaping public perceptions of different candidates and parties. Precisely for this reason, opposition party leaders made equitable access to the mass media a crucial issue in the 1995-96 negotiations over political reform.⁵³⁸

Unfortunately, statistical evidence in support of these claims is limited by the paucity of reliable data. Accurate polls -- the normal instrument for measuring changes in public opinion and voting behavior -- did not really exist in Mexico before the 1988 elections. Even polling data from the last ten years are of dubious utility, as most surveys do not include even minimally adequate measures of media use.

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

Eloquent, articulate, impressive, and aggressive in his demeanor, Fernández de Cevallos was the unquestioned winner of the debate. Nearly every week during the campaign, Miguel Basañez, on behalf of MORI de México and the magazine *Este País*, had surveyed public opinion in five of Mexico's largest cities (including Mexico City). His polls had been showing Colosio, and then Zedillo, well ahead of the opposition, with Cárdenas and Fernández running neck and neck for the second spot. On the day after the debate, May 13, Basañez's poll showed that Zedillo's support had plummeted and Cárdenas's had dipped, with Fernández de Cevallos leading the race for the presidency (the number of undecided voters also increased sharply). Basañez's surveys would show Fernández de Cevallos and Zedillo disputing the lead in these five cities for the remainder of

⁵³⁸ Author's interviews with journalists, academics, and officials of the PRD, PAN and the Office of Technical Advisory to the President.

May and June. Other larger public-opinion polls reflected a similar trend....⁵³⁹

Or, as one veteran observer of Mexican politics put it more bluntly:

After the presidential debate, when National Action Party (PAN) candidate Diego Fernández de Cevallos jumped from 15 to 30 percent in the polls, it appeared that the Mexican electorate was extremely volatile and could be swayed overnight by a successful media performance.⁵⁴⁰

The impact of the debate on voting behavior has since been documented by more rigorous statistical analysis. As Alejandro Poiré has demonstrated, those voters who relied on television for political information and made up their minds in the period following the debate were significantly more likely to vote for the opposition.⁵⁴¹ This effect was particularly pronounced for the PAN -- a predictable finding given that its candidate was widely viewed as the winner of the debate. But somewhat remarkably, the debate also benefited Cárdenas, whose performance that evening was widely regarded as disappointing.⁵⁴² It seems that merely appearing on the same stage with the other candidates enhanced Cárdenas's standing. Voters who saw Cárdenas speak for himself, without the distorting filter of Televisa coverage, warmed to him. However limited his oratorical skills, he was clearly not the monster he had been portrayed to be. In other words, a level playing field -- even one on which Cárdenas played badly -- represented a profound improvement over earlier media bias.

What was true of the debate was also true of media influence more generally. In 1994, television bias against the PRD and in favor of the PRI

⁵³⁹Jorge I. Domínguez and James McCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴⁰Denise Dresser, "Mexico: The Decline of Dominant Party Rule," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Abraham F. Lowenthal, eds., *Constructing Democratic Governance: Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in the 1990s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 162.

⁵⁴¹See Alejandro Poiré, "Retrospective voting, Partisanship and Loyalty in the Presidential Elections: Mexico 1994," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming). Poiré's analysis controls for many confounding variables, such as education, class, etc.

⁵⁴²Alejandro Poiré, "Retrospective voting, Partisanship and Loyalty in the Presidential Elections: Mexico 1994," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

encouraged voters who relied primarily on that medium to favor the ruling party over the Cardenist alternative.⁵⁴³ This effect was not found for the PAN, suggesting that either television coverage was not as biased against the PAN during the election or that pre-election anti-PRD bias had already made television viewers especially hostile toward the leftist opposition.⁵⁴⁴

Measuring media effects in 1997

Research to date thus suggests two tentative conclusions. First, there are grounds for suspecting that media effects may be substantial. Second, what scattered empirical evidence already exists also supports this notion. Unfortunately, these findings are hardly overwhelming. One problem is the fact that statistical analyses to date have been based on cross-sectional surveys, which make it difficult to separate the impact of media messages themselves from other variables that might be responsible for changes in public opinion. For instance, Mexicans who watch a televised debate may be more likely to vote for the opposition, but it is not clear they do so because they saw the debate. Rather, they might watch the debate because they are already poorly disposed toward the regime and anxious to learn more about the opposition candidates. Teasing out these relationships is difficult, if not impossible, with traditional cross-sectional surveys.

To more firmly establish the impact of media messages on Mexican voting behavior, I designed and (in conjunction with *Reforma* newspaper) carried out a panel study of voters during the 1997 campaign. The panel consists of 402 residents of the Federal District who were surveyed three times in the course of the campaign – in March, just after candidates were announced; in June, just after the mayoral debate, and immediately after the election in July. In each round of the panel, respondents were asked a series of questions about their backgrounds, political attitudes, voting intentions, and other issues. Many of the survey's 135

⁵⁴³Alejandro Poiré, "Retrospective Voting, Partisanship and Loyalty in the Presidential Elections: Mexico 1994," in Jorge I. Domínguez and Alejandro Poiré, eds., *Toward Mexico's Democratization: Parties, Campaigns, Elections, and Public Opinion* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming). See also Adolfo Aguilar-Zinzer, *Vamos a Ganar! La pugna de Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas por el poder*, (Mexico City: Oceano, 1995).

⁵⁴⁴Content analysis of leading media provides ammunition for both interpretations. In the 1994 elections, the PRD and the PAN received about the same (limited) quantity of airtime during the campaign, but coverage of the PRD was slightly more hostile. (See the Mexican Academy of Human Rights, in collaboration with the Civic Alliance/Observation 94, *The Media and the 1994 Federal Elections in Mexico: A Content Analysis of Television News Coverage of the Political*

items were consciously designed to evaluate media influences in ways that previous polls could not. The survey thus represents a substantial improvement over earlier studies.

Even more importantly, the panel nature of the survey controls for the effects of self-selection. That is, it reveals not only whether people who watched the debate were more likely to vote for the opposition, but also whether, controlling for other factors, they were more likely to switch to the opposition after being exposed to these influences than people who relied on pro-government media. It is precisely this aspect of panel surveys that has made them the instrument of choice for measuring media effects.⁵⁴⁵

Of course, relying on panel data also entails certain tradeoffs and compromises. In general, panel surveys fall between pure experiments (which effectively control for confounding variables through randomization but may not produce results that are generalizable outside the laboratory) and traditional survey research (where generalizability is high but controls are less thorough). Panel surveys allow us to measure individual-level changes in a real-world setting with better controls than traditional survey research, but because of attrition they rely on a less-than-perfectly-representative sample of the population.

The survey analyzed here, in which attrition totaled almost 50%, is no exception. In general, it underrepresents the affluent and overrepresents housewives (who were more available to answer pollsters' queries). As a result of the panel's demographic profile, voting patterns do not perfectly mirror those of the electorate as a whole. For instance, the panel contained a decidedly lower percentage of PAN supporters than the electorate at large. In addition, because of attrition, predictors of partisan support within the sample are not always the same as those in background population. For instance, socioeconomic status was not a statistically significant predictor of partisan preferences in the final panel sample. The reason is not that class was irrelevant in 1997 but simply that upper-middle and upper class voters tended to drop out of the panel, making it more difficult to discern how their voting patterns differed from those of poorer Mexicans. For these reasons, some caution must be exercised in extrapolating from panel findings to the rest of the population.

Parties and Presidential Candidates, May 19, 1994.) The PAN, however, fared even better in relative terms during the Salinas administration, as discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁴⁵See Thomas E. Patterson, *The Mass Media Election* (New York: Praeger Press, 1980); Thomas E. Patterson and Robert McClure, *The Unseeing Eye: The Myth of Television Power in National Elections* (New York: Putnam, 1976).

A second drawback of panel surveys is the risk of contamination -- that is, the danger that repeated interviews may themselves inadvertently influence respondents' thinking. To the extent that it occurs, contamination would be especially problematic for the subset of the sample that normally pays little attention to politics. In the 1997 panel, approximately one-quarter of respondents reported talking about politics with family, friends, and co-workers an average of once a month or less. The panel itself consisted of three separate interviews in the course of approximately four months. For the least politically engaged respondents, then, merely participating in the panel may have doubled the amount they talked about politics!

For these reasons, panel data is inappropriate for some analyses. For instance, one cannot reliably measure political learning in the course of a campaign by repeating the same battery of questions and then attributing any increase in the percent of correct responses to the campaign rather than the effects of being surveyed. A series of cross-sectional surveys would be better suited to that task.

The working assumption here (as in other analyses of panel data) is that underlying drivers of attitude change within the panel were the same as those in the rest of the population. For instance, panel respondents who initially mistrusted Cárdenas but grew to like him more after seeing the PRD's political advertisements were responding in the same way as other citizens with the same predilections and backgrounds who were exposed to the same information. There was a higher proportion of such people in the panel, but they presumably behaved like their counterparts in the general population. Stated another way, the assumption is that contamination was not responsible for observed changes in opinions that appear to be the result of media use: either contamination did not occur or its impact was uncorrelated with media-induced attitude change.

Media effects in 1997

The 1997 data are extremely rich and provide support for a number of claims about media influence. For instance, voters who saw the debate tended to favor the opposition, as did those who relied on newspapers for political information. Two types of media effects, however, stood out. First, news coverage on one network in particular, Televisa, played a major role in eroding support for the PRI. Second, television advertising played a major role in generating sympathy for Cárdenas. Both of these effects are discussed in more detail below.

Television coverage

Table 12 highlights the influence of television coverage on support for the PRI. In this table, the panel is divided into three groups: those who relied primarily on the Televisa for their news; those who relied on the rival Televisión Azteca network; and the sample as a whole (which includes those individuals who did not rely on television for information about politics).⁵⁴⁶ The first column shows the percentage of each group that intended to vote for the PRI in March, at the beginning of the campaign. As this column indicates, Televisa viewers were initially much more likely to vote for the ruling party (28%) than the sample as a whole (21%) or Televisión Azteca viewers (14%). This difference is hardly surprising, as Televisa has long been identified with the ruling party and many independent-minded voters abandoned the network when Televisión Azteca was created in 1992-93. It may also reflect the fact that Televisa viewers had previously been exposed to a thoroughly pro-government message and were consequently more sympathetic to the ruling party than other audiences.

Table 12: Television viewership and support for the PRI

	Percent favoring PRI (March)	Percent voted for PRI (July)
Televisa viewers (N=162)	28%	13%
Televisión Azteca viewers (N=163)	14%	14%
Overall sample (N=387)	21%	14%

The second column in Table 12 shows the percentage of each group that actually voted for the PRI in July.⁵⁴⁷ In this case, Televisa viewers were, if anything, actually slightly less likely to vote for the PRI than Televisión Azteca viewers or the background population.⁵⁴⁸ In other words, those individuals who relied on Televisa for news switched much more frequently away from the PRI than did other respondents.

⁵⁴⁶Those who did not list their voting preferences or their media usage (N=15) were excluded from the sample. The question on television news read as follows: "Do you watch any news program on television? [If yes] Which one do you watch most? [After reply] How many days per week do you watch it?"

⁵⁴⁷Voters who declined to state a preference were excluded from the analysis.

⁵⁴⁸The difference between these three groups in July is not statistically significant.

The magnitude of this effect is remarkable, and it deserves special comment for two reasons. First, the swings recorded here are extremely unusual in survey research, which has generally failed to corroborate the powerful media effects sometimes found in laboratory settings.⁵⁴⁹ In this sample, Televisa viewers were several dozen times more likely to defect from the PRI than viewers of Televisión Azteca, whose likelihood of voting for the PRI did not change significantly. In fact, the entire net shift away from the ruling party in the course of the campaign can be explained solely by reference to television coverage.

Second, these effects are politically consequential. As discussed in Chapter Four, approximately 30-35% of the Mexican electorate relies primarily or exclusively on Televisa for its news. Huge vote shifts in this group (e.g., a drop in PRI support of more than 50%) thus have the potential to alter the outcome of elections. In the elections of 1997, for instance, the PRI lost control of the Chamber of Deputies by less than 3% of the national vote. To the extent that the dynamics of attitude change discussed here are generalizable to the rest of the Mexican population -- and I believe they are in this case -- shifts in Televisa coverage determined the outcome of the 1997 elections.

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

Table 13, below, takes these potentially confounding variables into account. It shows the results of multiple regression on opinion of the PRI in July (on a scale of one to ten), controlling for opinion of the PRI in March and June.⁵⁵⁰ This

⁵⁴⁹See Stephen Ansolabehere, Roy Behr, and Shanto Iyengar, "Mass Media and Elections: An Overview," *American Politics Quarterly*, 1991 (19): 109-139 and Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁵⁵⁰Data presented below are based on pairwise deletion. Listwise deletion produces the same, though slightly diluted, result (attributable to the loss of 44 observations). On why not to use listwise deletion, see Gary King, James Honaker, Anne Joseph, and Kenneth Scheve, "Listwise

analysis thus captures the change in respondents' attitudes toward the PRI during the final, television-intensive month of the campaign.⁵⁵¹ The second and third columns in Table 13 shows the standardized regression and p-values for each variable in the first column. (Coefficients with a p-value of less than .05 are normally considered statistically significant.) Although not a direct measure of vote shifts, opinion of the ruling is a useful proxy for voting. Moreover, because respondents rated the PRI on a ten-point scale, analyzing changes in opinion may allow us to capture more nuanced effects than would be possible through multinomial logit models of voting behavior.

Table 13: Campaign influences on opinion of the PRI

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

Deletion is Evil: What to Do About Missing Data in Political Science," paper presented at the conference of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 3-6, 1998.

⁵⁵¹Findings are similar when one measures change in the PRI from March to July, though the model has much lower explanatory power.

Controlling for opinion of the PRI in March and June, a number of factors influenced respondents' opinion of the PRI in July. Presidential approval played an important role in shaping voter attitudes toward the ruling party, as did opinion of the PRI's mayoral candidate. Attitudes toward the main opposition parties also played a role, with PAN and PRI supporters having more in common with each other than PRI and PRD supporters.

Most importantly for our purposes, Table 13 shows that Televisa viewership is a powerful influence on voters' opinions. Even controlling for other influences — such as education, socio-economic status, exposure to other media, and interpersonal communication about politics — reliance on Televisa for news was a statistically significant predictor of increasing distaste for the PRI. In fact, the results are exactly the reverse of what skeptics of large media effects would suspect. Not only does Televisa viewership remain significant, it wipes out the apparent influence of other factors. As Table 13 shows, none of the potentially confounding variables remained significant once patterns of media use were taken into account. In other words, the effects presented here are the product of media influences, not hidden propensities within segments of the electorate.

At first glance, these findings may seem surprising. After all, Televisa has long been regarded as a key pillar of authoritarian rule, and the network has accorded Mexico's official party highly preferential treatment in the past. Why, then, were Televisa viewers more likely to turn their backs on the PRI than users of other media?

The answer lies in the changing nature of television coverage in Mexico. As discussed in Chapter Two, Televisa coverage has long been profoundly biased. Traditionally, the opposition's share of coverage during electoral campaigns was virtually a rounding error on the PRI's. As late as 1988, the PRI claimed about 80% of all the television time devoted to political parties and candidates. Even during the much fairer contest of 1994, the ruling party and its candidates garnered at least 51% of television airtime.⁵⁵² Bias in campaign reporting also extended beyond disproportionate coverage of the ruling party to more subtle questions of

⁵⁵²For 1988 figures, see Ilya Adler, "The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993). Nineteen ninety-four figures are from the Alianza Cívica/Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos.

tone, framing, and priming -- all of which were meticulously documented by academics and civic watchdog groups.⁵⁵³

As Chapter Four discussed, however, reporting on Mexico's main network began to shift substantially in the 1990s. Market competition following the privatization of government-owned television channels in 1992-93 and the subsequent creation of Televisión Azteca led the corporation began to experiment with more balanced coverage. At the same time, political negotiations between the country's main political parties forced greater balance in Televisa's coverage. By the 1997 elections, a series of reforms had effectively guaranteed equal opposition access to the airwaves and altered the tone of Televisa coverage. In sharp contrast to previous elections, opposition parties were portrayed as legitimate political actors with reasonable agendas. Time on the airwaves was equitably divided; in fact, the PRI's share of election-related coverage on Televisa in 1997 actually fell below its share of the national vote.

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

By contrast, Televisión Azteca viewers changed their minds much less in the course of the campaign. They relied on a medium that was perceived to be slightly less biased than Televisa, but was if anything more hostile to the opposition.⁵⁵⁴ In fact, Cárdenas himself interrupted supporters who were protesting Televisa at a campaign rally on April 29, 1997 to point out that the network's coverage had changed while that of Televisión Azteca had not.⁵⁵⁵ In retrospect, then, it is not

⁵⁵³See Ilya Adler, "The Mexican Case: The Media in the 1988 Presidential Election," in Thomas Skidmore, ed., *Television, Politics, and the Transition to Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore/Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press/Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), p. 155; Daniel C. Hallin, "Dos instituciones, un camino: Television and the State in the 1994 Mexican Election," conference paper presented at Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, September 28-30, 1995; Patricia Cruz, *La práctica de la ética en los medios de comunicación* (Mexico City: Academia Mexicana de Derechos Humanos/Alianza Cívica, 1997).

⁵⁵⁴Media monitoring by Alianza Cívica and the Mexican Academy of Human Rights reveal that opposition parties received roughly the same amount of coverage on both networks in 1997. The tone of coverage, however, was more negative on Televisión Azteca, especially toward Cárdenas.

⁵⁵⁵*Reforma*, April 30, 1997.

altogether perplexing that viewers of Televisa deserted the ruling party more readily than viewers of Televisión Azteca.

Television advertisements

As mentioned above, television advertisements were an important factor in boosting support for the Left. In contrast to rather uninspiring PAN and PRI spots, the PRD's lengthy ads were widely considered professional and compelling. Using primarily negative tactics, they portrayed the election as a contest between the "real" opposition (represented by Cárdenas) and a Salinas-led coalition of PRI and PAN. Footage showed both Salinas and 1994 PAN presidential candidate Diego Fernández at their very worst: Salinas during the quixotic hunger strike he had waged to protest his brother's arrest and Fernández shouting "Shut up! Shut up!" at hecklers like a right-wing *caudillo*. The spots also presented a moderate, soothing image of the PRD -- one far removed from the polarizing and violent party many Mexicans expected. Television advertisements thus reinforced Cárdenas's basic campaign message of principled, responsible opposition to an authoritarian regime whose policies had benefited only a small coterie of privileged Mexicans.

The impact of television advertising is shown in Table 14, below, which essentially replicates for the PRD what was done in Table 13 for the ruling party.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁶Due to coding errors by pollsters, it is not possible to discern which respondents saw which parties' television advertisements. Instead, the data report only whether (1) respondents saw any type of propaganda for specific parties and, separately, (2) whether respondents saw any television advertisements. Propaganda in Mexico City took various forms, and few citizens could have missed the posters, flyers, and pennants that blanketed the metropolis. We cannot assume, therefore, that respondents who reported seeing a PRD advertisement actually saw a PRD television advertisement. They were at least as likely to have seen Cárdenas's smiling countenance staring back at them from a wall or lamppost. However, televised advertisements for the different parties tended to run at more or less the same times on both of the Mexico's main television networks. PRI and PRD advertisements also ran quite frequently in the last month of the campaign, making it very likely that respondents who saw one were likely to have seen the other. It is a much safer assumption that respondents who saw any television advertisement saw multiple spots.

Table 14: Change in opinion of the PRD

	Standardized coefficient	P-value
Opinion of PRD (March)	.07	.18
Opinion of PRD (June)	.34	.00
Opinion of Cárdenas (June)	.16	.04
Opinion of the President (March-July)	-.12	.86
Opinion of the PAN (March-July)	-.03	.60
Opinion of the PRI (March-July)	-.01	.86
Ideological self-identification (higher is right)	.03	.53
Attitude toward economic reform (higher is left)	.11	.01
Attitude toward democracy (higher is favorable)	.09	.06
Frequency respondent discusses politics	.12	.02
Church attendance	-.06	.18
Education	.05	.42
Socio-economic status	-.00	.99
Age	-.00	.96
Gender (1=female)	-.04	.38
Radio listenership per week	-.05	.25
Newspaper readership per week	.05	.26
Televisa viewership per week	.05	.42
Television Azteca viewership per week	.02	.82
Other TV viewership (mainly cable) per week	-.04	.50
Saw television advertisement	.10	.03
Saw televised mayoral debate	.07	.13
N:	364	
Adjusted R-squared:	.32	

As Table 14 shows, several familiar factors generated sympathy for the PRD: attitudes toward Cárdenas, leftism on economic issues, favorable attitudes toward democracy, and interpersonal communication about politics. These results make sense, given that democratization and repudiation of Salinas-era policies were major themes of the Cárdenas campaign and that political awareness tended to boost support for the opposition. Table 14 also suggests that changes in opinion of the PRD were not strongly related to attitudes toward the other major parties, opinions of the president, or ideology. In other words, the Left improved its standing across broad sections of the electorate rather than simply among its “natural” constituency.

Most importantly for our purposes, these findings indicate the influence of media messages in shaping opinion of the PRD. The types of messages that mattered, however, were not the same ones that influenced public opinion about the ruling party. Although Televisa viewers appeared to warm to the PRD more than other citizens, this effect was not significant. Exposure to television advertisements,

on the other hand, had a major impact on opinion of the PRD. Those who reported having seen televised spots -- controlling for how much television they watched on each network, their exposure to other media, and the frequency with which they discussed politics -- altered their opinions of the PRD. Because most of the sample (63%) reported seeing a television ad, this effect influenced a large number of voters.

The one campaign factor not explicitly tested in this analysis is the effect of the Sun Brigades. Unfortunately, the survey did not include any items covering contact with party activists. The impact of such contacts might well have been significant, thus reinforcing findings about the impact of political awareness and exposure to the opposition. It is unlikely, however, that including some measure of partisan activism in the model would have changed the findings regarding television advertisements, as there is no reason to suspect that contact with the Sun Brigades was strongly correlated with exposure to television advertisements.

In summary, media influences were pronounced in the elections of 1997 -- though not exactly in ways that would have been predicted beforehand. Television advertisements and increasing political engagement in the course of the campaign helped generate support for the PRD. Meanwhile, audience characteristics, perceptions of bias, and changes in television coverage interacted to deliver an unanticipated blow to the ruling party. The magnitude of these effects was extremely impressive -- possibly as large as those ever found in survey research on media effects. For this reason, they deserve further exploration.

Explaining media effects

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

Methodologically, the data were detailed and high-quality. They permitted much more specific and nuanced analysis than would normally have been the case in survey research. Measurement proved particularly crucial to documenting the impact of Televisa coverage on attitudes toward the PRI. Neither overall media exposure nor overall levels of television use were statistically significant predictors of how

respondents felt about the ruling party. Media effects only became evident once exposure to different types of media was disaggregated and particular outlets were considered separately.

Furthermore, these findings could only have been uncovered through panel data. They would have been completely undetectable in post-electoral surveys, which would have shown that different media audiences voted for the PRI in almost exactly the same proportions. Even a series of cross-sectional polls over the course of the campaign would only have revealed that the statistical significance of Televisa viewership as a predictor of PRI support gradually disappeared -- a finding whose immense import could easily have been overlooked.

If methodology alone is responsible for uncovering these media effects, then it would be wrong to regard them as especially large. Rather, analysts have failed to document large-scale media effects in the past because they lacked sufficiently granular measurements.⁵⁵⁷ This explanation seems improbable given the volume of past work on media effects. But it is not inconceivable and, if true, suggests a new direction for the study of political communication.

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

First, Mexico is a country with high levels of media exposure and media dependence. Although Mexicans have access to television and rely on it for their political information, for years they had little choice about which news programs to watch. Widespread dependence on particular media sources thus suggests that media effects should be large.⁵⁵⁸ Second, and related, most Mexican voters have relatively low levels of political engagement, political knowledge, and political

⁵⁵⁷For such an argument as applied to American politics, see Michael F. Meffert, "Political Information Flow in Context: The Influence of Media Sources and Personal Networks on Candidate Preferences in the 1992 Presidential Election," conference paper presented at the conference of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 3-6, 1998. See also, Steven E. Finkel, "Reexamining the 'Minimal Effects' Model in Recent Presidential Campaigns," *Journal of Politics*, February 1993, 55 (1):1-20.

⁵⁵⁸For the original media dependency argument, see Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur, "A dependency model of mass media effects," *Communication Research*, February 1976, 3 (1):3-21.

interest -- even by the standards of modern democracies.⁵⁵⁹ Although Mexicans are not ill-informed in comparison with voters in developed countries once levels of education are taken into account, education levels are substantially lower in Mexico. Thus, voters in Mexico may be more susceptible to media influences than voters in countries like the United States.

This combination of high levels of media penetration and low levels of education or political engagement is rare in the developed world. In the United States, for instance, media use, education, and political interest generally go together. However, the combination of high media exposure and limited education is not so rare in the developing world, where the penetration of television has often expanded faster than formal schooling or the crystallization of mass opinion about politics. In countries as diverse as Peru, Croatia, and China, large numbers of people who know relatively little about politics nevertheless receive a steady stream of (pro-government) messages from television.⁵⁶⁰ Media effects may be particularly strong among such dependent publics.

A third factor that may have contributed to pronounced media effects concerns lack of knowledge about the political opposition itself. Without prior experience with opposition rule at the national level -- experience that not a single Mexican voter had in 1997 -- voters' opinions of the opposition parties may be more volatile. As a result, voters may be more liable to switch to, from, or amongst opposition factions. Although opposition governments at the subnational level may have given some voters a better sense of what opposition administration would be like, Mexico City voters had never before experienced opposition rule. Lack of direct personal experience with the opposition was presumably accentuated by the relative newness of both major opposition parties (especially the PRD), and by their previous lack of coverage in the media. In other words, even well-educated and informed Mexican voters knew much less about the opposition in 1997 than they did about the PRI.

⁵⁵⁹See James A. McCann, "The Changing Mexican Electorate: Political Interest, Expertise, and Party Support in the 1980s and 1990s," in Mónica Serrano, ed., *Governing Mexico: Political Parties and Elections* (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998).

⁵⁶⁰For Croatia, see Ivan Grdesic, "Democratic Values, Participation and Local Democracy in Croatia," paper presented at the conference of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 3-6, 1998. According to Grdesic, almost 60% of urban residents watch a single nightly news program ("Dnevnik") every day. For China, see Steven Chaffee and S. M. Yang, "Communication and Political Socialization," in O. Ichilov, ed., *Political Socialization, Citizenship, and Democracy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990).

Pronounced asymmetries in knowledge about incumbent and opposition parties are not common in established democracies. In the United States, for instance, most voters have direct experience with both Republican and Democratic administrations at all levels of government, and the hoary age of both major parties undoubtedly contributes to voters' indirect knowledge of them.⁵⁶¹ But in countries undergoing political transition, pronounced informational asymmetries and substantial uncertainty about the opposition are the norm. Media effects may thus be more substantial in contexts of political transition than in already functioning democratic systems.

Fourth, and finally, the magnitude of media effects in 1997 appears to have been influenced by source credibility and perceptions of media bias. Televisa's coverage of the opposition in 1997 was distinctive precisely because it had never provided such balanced information in the past. In this sense, the one factor thought to work against strong media effects in Mexico -- perceptions of bias -- actually accentuated these effects within a segment of the population.

It is important to note that source credibility is not an absolute concept: sources are not simply reliable, unreliable, or somewhere in between. Rather sources are credible when the messages that they convey depart from their perceived slant.⁵⁶² It is this "surprise factor" that makes a message particularly salient, distinctive, and credible. Thus, Televisa was believable when it presented opposition viewpoints; it would not have been nearly as credible had it continued to regurgitate PRI propaganda. In that case, it seems likely that neither Televisa nor Televisión Azteca viewers would have changed their preferences much in the course of the campaign. Media effects would then have been undetectable or, at least, not clearly separable from the effects of self-selection.

⁵⁶¹In this sense, opposition parties in new democracies are more analogous to minor ("third") parties in the United States. Recent scholarly research seems to indicate that media coverage does exercise a powerful influence over popular perceptions of these parties. See John Zaller and Mark Hunt, *Politics as Usual: Ross Perot and the Popularization of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming); Michael Magoon, "Third-Party Presidential Candidates: Money, Media, and Television Ads," paper presented at the conference of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28-31, 1997; and Steven J. Rosenstone, Roy L. Behr, and Edward H. Lazarus, *Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). It may also exercise a powerful influence over public perceptions of unknown candidates from any parties.

⁵⁶²See Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, and Steven Greene, "Voting in Context: Personal, Media, and Organizational Intermediaries and Political Behavior," paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC, August 28-31, 1997.

It is not possible to say which of the four factors discussed above -- media dependence, low levels of cognitive sophistication, lack of information about the opposition, or source effects -- was most important. Presumably, they were important in differing degrees for different segments of the population. Among those voters who paid little attention to politics, lack of cognitive sophistication and high levels of media dependence were probably the most crucial factors in altering their views. For more educated and informed voters, lack of specific knowledge about the opposition and source credibility probably played a larger role.⁵⁶³

I suspect that the media influences identified here are the product of particular features of the Mexican context, rather than superior survey research methods. If so, they suggest some general conclusions about media effects that extend far beyond the 1997 elections in Mexico. Media effects will be strongest when: (1) levels of media exposure and dependence are high, (2) levels of cognitive sophistication are low, (3) audiences lack other information about specific political issues or choices, and (4) media sources are viewed as credible in the particular message they deliver. Under these conditions, audiences will rely on the mass media for information, and their views will be shaped accordingly.

Conclusions

As Chapter Two discussed, Mexican television was long dominated by a private monopoly linked to the ruling party. This monopoly reinforced Mexico's old regime in a number of ways, including biased coverage of electoral campaigns. During the 1990's, however, civic pressure, market competition, and political reform worked together to encourage opening in Mexican television. One salient aspect of this opening was the diminution or elimination of the traditional pro-PRI bias in electoral coverage. The transformation of Mexican television converted it into a medium less antithetical to Mexico's democratic transition.

Changes in television coverage enabled opposition parties to perform much better in the 1997 elections. Balanced reporting cost the PRI much-needed electoral support, and televised advertisements helped rejuvenate Mexico's Left. In part as a

⁵⁶³This claim finds support in a sophisticated recent study of media framing in Dutch elections. See Jan Kleinnijenhuis and Jan A. de Ridder, "Effects of Strategic News Framing on Party Preferences," paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 28-31, 1997. Kleinnijenhuis and de Ridder found that politically unsophisticated voters responded to horse race coverage (through bandwagoning) and criticisms without taking full account of source credibility. The politically engaged, by contrast, tended to discount criticisms by rival parties.

result of these changes, Mexico's opposition won control of the country's second most important elected office and the lower house of Congress. Media opening thus helped bring to an end nearly seventy years of one-party rule.

In summary, political reforms in 1996 increased opposition access to the media, which in turn reinforced the process of political reform. Chapter Four concentrated on the first step -- how political reform and other factors transformed Mexican television. This chapter focused on the second -- how media opening helped reshape Mexico's political landscape. It thus lends strong support to the hypothesis advanced in Chapter One that media opening promotes democratization through more balanced coverage of electoral campaigns.

7. Media Opening and Democratization

This study began with a series of related questions. What factors lead to the emergence of independent media? What role do these media play in political transition? And, in general, what is the relationship between media opening and the broader process of democratization?

From most of the literature on democratization, one would suspect that this relationship is a one-way street; the media are shaped by larger political events but exercise only a trivial influence these events. Virtually every shred of evidence presented over the six chapters, however, suggests that scholars need to rethink these views. Mexico's experience over the last two decades is a story of parallel, reinforcing changes in the country's press and its crumbling authoritarian political system. The breakdown of that system undoubtedly facilitated media opening, but media opening also contributed to political transition.

The transformation of Mexico's media

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

All this began to change with the emergence of independent publications in the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Reporters and publishers with different journalistic goals and approaches challenged the traditional style of journalism and, with it, Mexico's broader political system. A more demanding public embraced this new journalism and shunned more traditional, collusive publications. Mexico's emerging fourth estate had to overcome a host of obstacles erected by the party-state -- including sporadic repression directed at independent journalists and the enterprises that employed them. But the financial success of independent media and journalists' desire to practice a new style of reporting sustained them. Ultimately, Mexico's gradual, halting process of political liberalization removed the most overt threats their survival. By the mid-1990s, independent journalism was well-established in Mexico.

Meanwhile, Mexico's electronic media had also begun to evolve. Starting with the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, a series of dramatic events made Mexican audiences particularly receptive to news styles of coverage. Assertive talk-radio

shows captured a large audience, bringing them higher ratings and advertising revenues. Competitive pressures encouraged other broadcasters to introduce changes as well, and independent programming came to dominate Mexican radio news.

By the mid-1990s, even Mexican television -- long the bastion of support for the one-party regime -- was showing signs of openness. Pressure from opposition parties and civic groups encouraged the country's principal private network, Televisa, to experiment with more critical coverage. These public pressures became financial imperatives after the 1992-93 privatization of government-run channels, Televisa's loss of market share to its newly-created rival (Televisión Azteca), and the economic crisis of 1995. Finally, political reforms in 1996 and leadership changes within Televisa cemented the transformation of Mexican television from a private "Ministry of Truth" to a semi-competitive, commercially-oriented medium.

The tectonic shifts in the media reverberated across Mexico's political landscape. Increasingly aggressive coverage -- especially in the print media -- led to the exposure of practices that were once reliably concealed. In the 1990s, this new assertiveness provoked a series of political scandals that discredited Mexico's authoritarian institutions and created a new context for elite decision-making. Both of these consequences encouraged political transition.

At the same time, greater balance in electoral coverage -- especially on television -- transformed the nature of political competition in Mexico. During the crucial legislative campaign of 1997, voters were finally exposed to a fair and equitable presentation of opposition perspectives from ordinary news reporting, televised debates, and televised political advertisements. Opposition access to the airwaves helped shape the outcome of the elections, in which the PRI lost control of the lower house of Congress. By the time the presidential elections of 2000 loomed on the horizon, Mexico's new fourth estate had emerged as a key player in the country's broader transition to democracy.

The future of Mexico's media

The mutually reinforcing nature of political liberalization and media opening should make observers optimistic about the future evolution of Mexico's press. Balanced media coverage in 2000 will provide an enormous boost to opposition parties, perhaps as great as it did in 1997. If opposition parties capture the presidency, they will in turn oversee further reform of Mexico's archaic media laws. Judging from the results of National Action Party (PAN) victories in the north and

west, an opposition triumph in 2000 would radically alter the distribution of official advertising and subsidies. Even more importantly, any opposition administration would almost surely introduce a new system for allocating broadcasting licenses, reducing the scope of official discretion and opening up broadcasting to small and medium-sized entrepreneurs.⁵⁶⁴ In fact, it is possible that reforms in the legal and regulatory architecture governing Mexico's media will be implemented even before 2000, given that opposition parties now control the lower house of Congress and President Zedillo may be interested in polishing his reformist credentials.⁵⁶⁵ The most likely scenario, therefore, is that Mexico's media will evolve toward further independence over the next few years.

A PRI victory in 2000 would presumably make this evolution more difficult. Political resistance would be worst if the ruling party recaptured the lower house of Congress (as well as the executive branch), and if the PRI's winning presidential candidate represented the most unreconstructed elements of his party. But it is not clear whether traditional pressures could succeed in reigning in Mexico's self-consciously independent media. Most of these media are economically solvent, even prosperous, and they evince little fear of the regime. To quote José Gutiérrez-Vivó of Radio Red, "we have faced all manner of government pressures -- audits, closings, threats, attacks, assaults, lawyers, public beratings, you name it -- and we are still here."⁵⁶⁶ Given the resilience of Mexico's independent media in the face of familiar regime tactics, it would take much sterner measures (such as those accompanying a coup d'état) to destroy the country's new fourth estate. As Javier Moreno-Valle, owner of Mexico City's Channel 40 put it:

The old rules don't operate. We are overcoming a political system and suddenly there are those who want it to work according to the old rules, but these no longer count.... We no longer remember control of the printed press through newsprint quotas from PIPSA; it's something that is no longer debated. I believe that within a short time we will no longer remember discussing whether censorship applies or not, or pressures or similar things. We are in a process of modernization, and I don't believe that anyone can stop us -- not from inside or from outside. There is a great deal of freedom in the

⁵⁶⁴ Author's interviews with Amalia García, Party of the Democratic Revolution, Mexico City, August 15, 1995; Deputy María Teresa Gómez-Mont, leader of PAN delegation in committee on media reform, Mexico City, March 25, 1996; and Jorge Zepeda, editor-in-chief, *Siglo 21*, Guadalajara, April 2, 1996.

⁵⁶⁵ For a more skeptical view on Zedillo's attitude toward the media, see *Proceso*, October 18, 1998, p. 6-12.

⁵⁶⁶ Author's interview with José Gutiérrez-Vivó, host of *Monitor*, April 18, 1996.

print media, in the radio. And now we are starting to see it in television...We are not worrying about what the government is going to think of what we are doing.⁵⁶⁷

As long as the Mexican regime permits a modicum of political space, it will have to contend with an increasingly assertive press. And the regime's capacity to close this space diminishes each day that Mexico's independent media continue to operate. In other words, the genies of market competition and journalistic professionalism are already out of the bottle. Barring a political earthquake, Mexico's media regime will continue to evolve toward openness.

A more nettlesome question is how far it will go in that direction. Unfortunately for advocates of a free press, sizable barriers remain to a fully open media regime in Mexico. One important obstacle to media diversity is the structure of Mexican capitalism, in which large swaths of the economy are dominated by private cartels linked directly or indirectly to the state.⁵⁶⁸ Concentration of financial and industrial enterprises encourages indirect control over the media through control of advertising. This danger is particularly acute in Mexico because many of the country's largest enterprises are family businesses, whose owners may be more likely to subordinate market considerations to their personal or political agendas. The fact that many of Mexico's latter-day oligarchs are prominent beneficiaries of the Salinas administration's privatization program only exacerbates the potential threat they might pose to media independence and pluralism.

The perils of industrial concentration are compounded by the persistence of statism in chunks of the Mexican economy. For instance, the maintenance of price controls on mass-consumption products, though potentially justified for reasons of social equity, has had the side effect of constraining advertising spending by companies would otherwise be crucial sources of revenue for the mass media. Given price controls, producers of staple products must cut their promotional costs to maintain reasonable margins.⁵⁶⁹ An artificially restricted supply of advertising

⁵⁶⁷Javier Moreno-Valle, quoted in Salvador Corro, "En televisión ya podemos hacer todo y decir todo; 'no creo que haya alguien que pueda pararnos': Moreno Valle, de Canal 40," *Proceso*, March 25, 1996, p. 12.

⁵⁶⁸Mexican economist Rogelio Ramírez de la O has characterized Mexico's economy as a model of "concessionary capitalism," in which profits are privatized to owners of large corporations while losses are socialized through government bailouts. (Remarks by Rogelio Ramírez at a meeting of the Pacific Council on International Policy, University of California at San Diego, May 11, 1997.)

⁵⁶⁹I thank radio journalist Ramy Schwartz for pointing this out to me. (Author's interview, Mexico City, January 23, 1997.)

revenues accentuates the influence of existing large advertisers, be they business oligarchs or state-owned firms (such as Pemex, the country's oil-and-gas monopoly).

One final obstacle to increasing pluralism and independence in Mexico's press is the ownership of key media outlets by private firms with clear political allegiances. Such ownership patterns are especially problematic for media openness because the firms in question are not modern corporations but family-owned enterprises, whose editorial decisions may be particularly vulnerable to their owners' personal predilections. Moreover, the traditional correctives for concentrated private ownership – vigorous enforcement of anti-monopoly laws, reallocation of broadcasting concessions, public management of certain media, etc. – depend on the creation of competent, politically neutral state bureaucracies. As a result, they are likely to prove elusive in the short run.

Some of the obstacles to continued media opening may fade over time. Media markets will grow; the conversion of family-owned businesses into modern corporations will limit politically-motivated manipulation of advertising and news coverage; continued economic reform will erode statist barriers and potentially break up industrial concentrations; and state regulatory capacity may improve. But for the near future, these obstacles to media independence and pluralism will linger. As one journalist put it, the Mexican media may soon reach eight on a ten-point scale of media openness, but it probably not get to ten.⁵⁷⁰

This caveat aside, the transformation of Mexico's media is impressive, and it seems fitting to conclude by emphasizing the positive. The difference between a 2 or 3 (as most journalists and politicians described the media before 1988) and a 6 or 7 (as most described it a decade later) is the difference between Orwellian reporting and serious coverage with flashes of investigative brilliance; between a corrupt, captive press that parrots official pronouncements and a reasonably vigorous fourth estate; between pusillanimous broadcasters who view their concessions as sinecures and private businessmen who fail to present all the facts; between a government that threatens journalists and one that does not return their phone calls; in short, between a closed media regime and a much more open one. Taken together, the changes in Mexico's media over the past two decades represent a remarkable transition. Although this transition remains incomplete, its size and scope are striking.

⁵⁷⁰Author's interview with radio journalist Ramy Schwartz, Mexico City, January 23, 1997.

The causes of media opening

The Mexican case provides support for most of the hypotheses discussed in Chapter One regarding the causes of media opening. For some of these hypotheses, the evidence is persuasive and consistent; market competition and journalistic professionalism strongly promoted media openness. For other hypotheses, such as the impact of political liberalization and economic development, the Mexican case provides somewhat weaker and more equivocal support. Finally, the Mexican case suggests that certain factors consistently encouraged media openness but, equally consistently, played a rather weak role. Technological innovation, international spillovers, and related variables promoted independence and diversity in the press, but their influence was not dramatic. These findings are summarized in Table 15 and discussed further below.

Table 15: Review of the principal hypotheses regarding media opening

Principal hypotheses	Supported by Mexican case?	Relative impact on media opening
1. Democratization causes media opening	Yes	Moderate
2. Socio-economic development causes media opening	Yes	Moderate
3. Market-oriented reform causes media opening	Yes	Strong
4. Innovation in communication technologies cause media opening	Yes	Weak
5. Penetration by international media causes media opening	Yes	Weak
6. Journalistic professionalism causes media opening	Yes	Strong
7. Market competition causes media opening	Yes	Strong

The Mexican case also suggests more precisely how these hypothesized relationships in practice, and how some of the main hypotheses should be amended or modified. For instance, the Mexican case provides substantial evidence that the gradual breakdown of Mexico's one-party authoritarian regime facilitated the emergence of a viable fourth estate. Independent provincial publications found it easier to survive when opposition parties controlled the governor's mansion, and political liberalization at the federal level undeniably made independent journalism easier to practice. But, if the Mexican experience is any indication, the effects of political liberalization on media opening should not be overstated. Indeed, it is remarkable how much changed in Mexico's media without opposition victory at the

national level or major reforms in the country's legal architecture. In large measure, media opening was the product of a number of other changes in Mexican society that occurred prior to or independently of political liberalization.

One of these was economic liberalization. Market-oriented reform contributed to media opening in Mexico in a number of ways: reducing state subsidies for pro-government publications; encouraging foreign investment in broadcast television and new communication technologies; broadening the pool of advertising revenues and reshuffling them in accordance with financial priorities; allowing independent publications to import paper that was previously provided by the government; stimulating competition through the privatization of government-run broadcasting channels; etc. At the same time, Mexico's system of oligopoly capitalism -- both in general and in the media -- highlights some of the dangers that can result from too much economic liberalization. Unregulated competition, leading to industrial monopolization or cartelization, generally discourages media openness. In other words, market-friendly reform in heavily state-controlled systems tends to enhance press freedom, but further restriction of the state's role in already liberal economies may actually undercut media pluralism.

Hypotheses based on socioeconomic development may also require some reconsideration and revision. In Mexico, mechanical explanations based on economic modernization generally failed to explain media opening. Socioeconomic development presumably contributed to the emergence of Mexico's fourth estate by providing what one journalist called the "social soil" for independent journalism.⁵⁷¹ But this role was difficult to detect; indicators of economic development like literacy and per capita income did not explain much of the variation in media openness across regions or across time. At best, the effects of modernization were strongly mediated by dramatic political events, which activated audiences that had previously benefited from economic development. These largely exogenous events made Mexican audiences more receptive to the types of messages conveyed by independent media. In the case of television, it also made them indifferent if not hostile toward more traditional outlets. In other words, audiences' habits and tastes evolved in ways that classic modernization theory would not necessarily have predicted.

Another interesting feature of the Mexican case was the relatively weak influence of "globalization" -- that is, the combination of technological innovation

⁵⁷¹ Author's interview with René Delgado, Mexico City, March 26, 1996.

and increasing penetration by foreign media. Such influences were undeniably important in Mexico -- both directly (as in the case of satellite transmissions) and indirectly (through foreign investment in Mexican media, increased scrutiny of Mexico by the U.S. press, exposure to U.S. journalistic practices, etc.). For the most part, though, the development of Mexico's fourth estate was largely an endogenous process, responding more to its own rhythm than to practices or standards imported from abroad. Although globalization may play a greater role in smaller, economically open countries, it was not one of the most important drivers of media opening in Mexico.

Perhaps the most important modification suggested by the Mexican case concerns the development of what I have called (for lack of a better term) journalistic professionalism. This protracted process of learning, experimentation, and identity-formation within the Mexican press was not the result of political liberalization; on the contrary, it was often the product of the regime's refusal to liberalize. But it was a crucial ingredient in the emergence of a fourth estate, especially in the print media. No other factor or combination of factors can explain why independent publications emerged where they did, when they did, in Mexico.⁵⁷²

Writing about the Third Wave of global democratization, Larry Diamond has noted that scholars often give too much weight to "structural" factors, underestimating the decisions and actions of individuals in civil society who converted theoretical opportunities into political realities. As he put it:

Democracy is not achieved simply by the hidden process of socioeconomic development bringing a country to a point where it has the necessary 'prerequisites' for it [democracy]. It is not delivered by the grace of some sociological *deus ex machina*. And neither is it simply the result of the divisions, strategies, tactics, negotiations and settlements of contending elites. Political scientists who conceive of democratic transitions in this way miss an important element. That element is struggle, personal risk-taking, mobilization and the imaginative organization on the part of a large number of citizens.⁵⁷³

What is true of democratization is even more true of media opening. Mexico's fourth estate did not appear magically in the wake of political transition or economic development. Still less was it the product of technologies and practices

⁵⁷²Recent research by Sallie Hughes of Tulane University on provincial newspapers in Mexico has reinforced this point.

introduced from abroad. Nor was it even the automatic result of the introduction of market competition into a rentier system. Rather, it depended on the imagination and risk-taking of committed, perspicacious people in civil society. These individuals created something more than a series of new media outlets; they created a new culture of journalism outside the old system of co-optation and control.

Their efforts helped reshape Mexican politics and society. Scandals resulting from media investigations have helped discredit authoritarian institutions in the eyes of many Mexicans. These same investigations have also rammed home to Mexican political leaders the realization that their actions and decisions are likely to be scrutinized by independent journalists. And increasing balance in campaign coverage has weakened the ruling party at the expense of its electoral rivals.

The media and democratization in Mexico

The Mexican case thus provides evidence for three important hypotheses about the impact of media opening on democratization -- namely, the media's role in (1) accentuating elite cleavages, (2) delegitimizing authoritarian institutions, and (3) shaping electoral outcomes. As with hypotheses regarding the causes of media opening, however, the Mexican case suggests how some of these hypotheses can be refined or stated more clearly. For instance, the impact of media opening on regime legitimacy may be moderated by institutional reform or the punishment of guilty officials, and the political consequences of delegitimation may not be immediate or pronounced. In addition, regime delegitimation may stimulate regime transition but not necessarily democratization. The same holds for the impact of media opening on elite calculations -- aggressive media coverage may lead to more accountable behavior, but it may also trigger intense repression.

In the case of electoral outcomes, the Mexican case suggests that media coverage during political campaigns can exercise an important influence on voting behavior. It also suggests, however, that the magnitude of this effect depends on several features of the political context: reliance on the media for information about politics, previous exposure to opposition parties, education levels, and perceptions of media credibility. Many emerging democracies fit the Mexican profile and can expect Brobdingnagian influences; other countries live in a world of Lilliputian media effects.

⁵⁷³Larry Diamond, ed., *The Democratic Revolution: Struggles for Freedom and Pluralism in the Developing World* (New York: Freedom House, 1992), p. 5.

In Mexico, the most salient political consequences of media opening were political scandals and shifts in voter preferences. Chapters Five and Six thus represent the “highlights” of media opening and democratization in Mexico. As is typical of highlights, these chapters fail to record other less spectacular examples of media influence. The Mexican case suggests that these influences were less important, but it does provide some evidence for them.

One hypothesis proposed in Chapter One has to do with the role of media opening in promoting the rebirth of Mexican civil society. In other words, Mexico’s emerging fourth estate may have encouraged the formation of new social organizations after decades of authoritarian state-corporatism. Chapters Three and Four described how media coverage of Mexican officialdom eroded substantially in the 1980s, giving greater voice to the perspectives of civic leaders, opposition politicians, non-partisan experts, and ordinary citizens. In theory, this change in coverage may have helped Mexican civil society become more conscious of itself and of its potential power. This argument is supported by media coverage of certain incidents -- such as the 1985 Mexico City earthquake -- which presumably helped stimulate citizens to come together, discuss their common problems, and work to solve them. Future research may uncover further examples by analyzing the formation of civic organizations in Mexico and documenting how media coverage shaped their identity.

Another hypothesis discussed in Chapter One concerns the impact of media opening on mobilizing opposition against the regime at specific, critical moments. According to this hypothesis, media opening enables civic and opposition groups to communicate with one another in periods of crisis and thus pool their energies to confront the regime. This study uncovered only spotty evidence of such a role for the media -- mainly in the context of reporting on particular scandals (e.g., the Aguas Blancas massacre). In the case of a massive electoral fraud or an attempted authoritarian coup in the future, however, Mexico’s new fourth estate might well play a pivotal role.

A final type of influence discussed in Chapter One concerns the role of independent media in promoting a democratic political culture. That is, more open media may inculcate democratic norms such as tolerance, trust, and peaceful political participation. As it applies to Mexico, this argument would predict that: (a) emerging independent media embraced democratic principles more fully than their pro-government rivals, and (b) these new messages helped to educate audiences about democracy and to mold their core political beliefs. The study uncovered some

evidence for the first part of this hypothesis: independent outlets tended to endorse democratic values, and pro-government media typically reinforced authoritarian perspectives. For instance, independent publications throughout the 1980s and 1990s repeatedly spoke of the need for democratization and went on to identify specific aspects of Mexican political life that needed to change. Traditional dailies, by contrast, spoke only of “improving” an already democratic system, and Televisa openly promoted authoritarian paradigms for many years (in both its news and entertainment coverage). It is less clear, however, that these differences in coverage shaped citizens’ core beliefs in a meaningful way. Media coverage undoubtedly influenced whether citizens were more or less likely to vote for the PRI, but framing campaign messages is a far cry from shaping fundamental values or notions of what democracy means. Although it is possible that media opening helped mold political beliefs in Mexico, it is at least as plausible that media messages played only a limited role in promoting a democratic culture or inculcating personal values. More likely, media messages exercised a somewhat less profound influence through priming, framing, and persuasion.

The Mexican case thus suggests three important ways that media opening promotes political transition. Increased assertiveness in the press publicizes official misconduct, thus (1) delegitimizing old institutions and (2) sharpening elite divisions about the desirability of political liberalization. In addition, greater balance in electoral coverage helps level the playing field for opposition parties. These effects do not, however, represent a comprehensive catalogue of media effects on political transition in Mexico, nor do they rule out the possibility that different types of media influence may also play a role in other countries.

Generalizing from the Mexican case

Findings from the Mexican case suggest a broader set of arguments about the role of the media in political change. They indicate that political liberalization, market competition, and journalistic professionalism are the most important drivers of media opening. They also suggest how media opening in turn reinforces political transition (e.g., by triggering scandals and shaping voting behavior). One obstacle to drawing conclusions from a single country, however, is that that country may be something of an exception. Indeed, the Mexican case has a number of special features that might limit our ability to generalize from it. These features need to be addressed squarely before the conclusions presented here can be blithely extended to other countries.

First, Mexico's *ancien regime* is unique and has little in common with other autocratic regimes that succumbed to the most recent wave of global democratization. In a sense, authoritarian Mexico was neither fish nor fowl: a one-party system that was not Communist; a Latin country where the military played no significant political role; a corrupt, rent-seeking state whose subjects were much richer and better educated than their counterparts in Africa or Asia.

Second, Mexico's system of media control was also uncommon: rarely have authoritarian regimes achieved such control over the media through relatively subtle means.⁵⁷⁴ If the instruments used to control Mexico's media were different, then the factors that contributed to media opening in Mexico may also have been different. In other words, the Mexican case may present a distorted picture of how media opening occurs. For instance, the Mexican government's reliance on corruption and subsidies may have made the development of journalistic professionalism a more ingredient in media opening there than it would be in other contexts.

Third, Mexico's broadcast media is largely privately owned. Private of broadcasting ownership is the norm in Latin America, but it is less common in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.⁵⁷⁵ If the media are state-owned, opening may depend more on political liberalization than on market competition. In other words, the Mexican case may give us an exaggerated notion of the role of market competition in media opening.

Fourth, the breakdown of Mexico's old regime proceeded somewhat differently from other countries. Not only did it take much longer -- with the possible exception of Brazil, Mexico may hold the world record for longest political transition -- it proceeded more smoothly than most. So far, at least, democratization in Mexico has not been marked by a dramatic showdown between authoritarian rulers and their opponents. Mexico's political transition has been accomplished by without a "People Power" revolution (as in the Philippines), an escalating series of mass demonstrations (as in Czechoslovakia), or the intervention of a foreign power (as in Haiti and, less overtly, South Korea). Democracy will probably be

⁵⁷⁴To the extent that this style of media control can be found elsewhere, it is most likely to be found in other one-party dominant authoritarian regimes (such as Singapore, post-martial law Taiwan, Egypt, Indonesia, etc.). Mexico's regime is thus not *sui generis*, but rather exemplary of a particular type of authoritarian rule.

⁵⁷⁵It should be noted that this generalization applies only to *broadcasting*, not to narrowcast electronic media (cable, satellite, etc.) that compete with broadcast television. These media are almost uniformly private, and they tend to encourage privatization throughout the industry.

consolidated without a coup attempt by reactionary elements of the old regime (as in Spain and the Soviet Union), or some similar confrontation. Perhaps this gradual, electoral route to democratization skews our interpretation of the media's role in transition.

Fifth, Mexico (like all countries) has its own unique mix of media outlets. Television, dominated by two private networks, is the most important source of political information. This obviously distinguishes Mexico from many countries in Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and the "Southern cone" of South America, where print media play a larger role. It also sets Mexico apart from many poorer countries in the developing world, where radio remains the medium with the broadest reach. Geographical generalization becomes even more problematic when one takes into account the fact that even societies which employ the same types of communication technology use them in different ways. For instance, the penetration of radio in Mexico City and Guadalajara -- Mexico's largest urban centers -- is basically the same. But radio is almost exclusively an entertainment medium in Guadalajara, whereas talk radio represents a much larger portion of Mexico City programming. Thus, particular media may play very different roles even when the overall mix of outlets and communication technologies remains the same. For instance, increasing openness in television may have a completely different effect in Argentina, Russia, or Iran than it did in Mexico.

All these considerations force us to articulate more precisely how patterns of media opening in Mexico -- and their political effects -- can be extended to other contexts. The following discussion attempts to reformulate the conclusions from the Mexican case in a way that makes them applicable to countries with different authoritarian legacies, distinct styles of media control, different modes of transition, varied patterns of ownership, and dissimilar mixes of media.

The causes of media opening

One overriding theme of this study is that an open media regime does not appear automatically in the wake of regime transition. It must be built. In other words, political liberalization creates a climate in which the media may become more independent and pluralistic, but it does not determine whether they will actually do so. Other factors, most importantly market competition and journalistic professionalism, also shape media opening.

These factors influence how fast the media will open relative to the political system. As a result, they shape the media's role in political transition. If the media

have become professional, internally competitive, or otherwise independent and diverse under authoritarian rule, a slight relaxation in censorship will tend to unleash rapid changes in coverage. Increasingly assertive reporting will trigger revelations about official misconduct, delegitimizing elements of the authoritarian system and polarizing elite opinion about further political reform. At the same time, greater attention to the voices of civil society will encourage social mobilization, and more balanced coverage of the political opposition will influence public opinion and voting behavior. This cascade effect makes it harder for authoritarian rulers to hold onto the old regime.

On the other hand, if the press has not gone through its own purgative process when political reforms are initiated – if it remains corrupt, oligopolistic, and financially intertwined with the old regime – then it can hardly be expected to propel political change. Rather, most media will tend to reinforce existing institutions and encourage popular support for the authoritarian regime. Mexican television played this role for over two decades, before market competition and other pressures forced it to evolve.

All this means that the media can play different roles in different countries and in different stages of the transition process. Depending on their responsiveness to audience pressures and their own rules of conduct, the mass media can either propel democratization or slow it down. Media that must compete for audiences and advertising revenues, as well as media that have developed their own professional creed, will adapt rapidly to changing political circumstances and exploit opportunities created by initial reforms. Media concentrated in the hands of a few like-minded owners will tend not to. And media owned by the government will be the least responsive to audiences and most reflexively attentive to the views of their political minders.⁵⁷⁶

The degree of media concentration and state ownership, of course, are partly products of the outgoing authoritarian regime. Regimes with heavy degrees of state ownership will have less market competition and thus be less vulnerable to rapid shifts in media coverage once political reforms begin. In such countries, media opening will generally lag behind the larger process of political liberalization.

⁵⁷⁶For this reason, outgoing authoritarian leaders who wished to control the pace of political transition would do well to keep the media under control, ideally through subtle mechanisms like corruption.

Although the media may still be important in determining the pace and outcome of political transition, they will not influence it in the direction of democratization.

This general argument also implies that the different types of media are likely to play different roles in political transition. In television, economies of scale and the scarcity of broadcasting spectra tend to restrict competition. In addition (presumably because the technology of television appeared after the creation of modern nation-states), state ownership of television tends to be more common than state ownership of the press. Typically, these factors make broadcast television a laggard in democratization. At least during the early stages of political reform, therefore, broadcasters tend to reinforce existing institutions and ignore or deprecate opposition viewpoints.

Thus, the arguments advanced here do not predict a specific role for the press in political transitions. Rather, they lay out the conditions under which particular media will play particular roles. Where market competition and journalistic professionalism have taken root, the press will tend to play a positive role in promoting political change. Under other circumstances, it will not.

Are journalistic professionalism and market competition really the forces they appear to be from the Mexican case? Evidence from other countries suggests they are. Consider, for instance, the experience of Argentina in the late 1980s and early 1990s – a country with an entirely different political system, style of media control, and mix of media outlets. Perhaps surprisingly, the most salient influences on mass openness are more or less the same as in Mexico. As Silvio Waisbord asks in his analysis of scandals in Argentina:

Why, amid the deterioration of press freedom, have some elements of the media been actively involved in the welter of scandals? To answer this question, the argument that changes in the media landscape are directly responsible for this phenomenon needs to be considered. As put forward by media executives and journalists, the argument can be summarized as follows: by decreeing the privatization of two major television stations and bypassing the much-debated Article 45 of the 1980 broadcasting law, which barred newspaper companies from owning broadcasting media, the Menem administration let the genie of competition out of the bottle. Former legal barriers hindering the staunch efforts by newspapers to expand into different media sectors were removed. The allocation of two Buenos Aires-based television stations, channels 11 and 13, to two media consortia validated and, in turn, stimulated competition among rising conglomerates.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁷Silvio R. Waisbord, "Knocking on Newsroom Doors: The Press and Political Scandals in Argentina," *Political Communication*, January 1994, 11 (1):19-34, p. 27.

Waisbord finds this stereotyped view overstated and stresses that it fails to provide a full account for which media remained independent in the face of government pressure. Even more important than market competition, Waisbord argues, was the emergence of *Página 12* newspaper, whose staff retained a professional self-image and ideology that undergirded their independent stance toward the government.⁵⁷⁸ For our purposes, however, the disagreement between Waisbord and other observers of the Argentine press is less important than the issue on which they agree: two factors – market competition and journalistic professionalism – were most important in determining which role different media would play in Argentina.

Another case that illustrates these conclusions in Russia. During the initial period of *glasnost* (1986–90), mass media were still dependent on the state. In the print media, a core of writer, intellectuals, and journalists who emerged to play a crucial role in the construction of Russia's new media.⁵⁷⁹ But reforms were largely top-down, and the regime maintained control over broadcasting (which was state-owned).

State control began to disintegrate following legal reforms in August 1990 that introduced private ownership of media. Market competition stimulated some media to break official parameters – for instance, by criticizing Lenin as well as Stalin. Meanwhile, pioneering publications like *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* carved out a new mission centered around the notion of civic journalism. Although Soviet leaders attempted to reassert official control – with some success in state-owned television – privately owned media had already slipped out of their hands.⁵⁸⁰ Independent media subsequently played a crucial role in opposing the failed coup attempt of 1991 and guaranteeing political transition.⁵⁸¹ This pattern of rapid

⁵⁷⁸Silvio R. Waisbord, "Knocking on Newsroom Doors: The Press and Political Scandals in Argentina," *Political Communication*, January 1994, 11 (1):19-34.

⁵⁷⁹Brian McNair, "The Media in Post-Soviet Russia – An Overview," *European Journal of Communication*, June 1994, 9 (2):115-35, p. 117; see also Doug Haddix, "Glasnost, the Media, and Professionalism in the Soviet Union," *Gazette*, November 1990, 46 (3):155-73.

⁵⁸⁰Brian McNair, "The Media in Post-Soviet Russia – An Overview," *European Journal of Communication*, June 1994, 9 (2):115-35, p. 119.

⁵⁸¹See Brian McNair, "The Media in Post-Soviet Russia – An Overview," *European Journal of Communication*, June 1994, 9 (2):115-35, p. 120.

opening in the print media, tardy opening in broadcasting, and ultimately, potent media influence on political transition, appears generalizable to a range of cases.⁵⁸²

The media in political transition

The Mexican case highlighted several ways in which media opening promotes democratization. First, newly assertive media give coverage to potential scandals, thus delegitimizing authoritarian regimes and sharpening divisions in the ruling authoritarian coalition. Second, the media mold public opinion about particular parties and candidates, thus influencing the outcome of elections. Because elections in the midst of political transition determine not only the distribution of power within a given system but also the nature of the system itself, media effects on voting behavior can have profound and lasting impact. These principal effects -- scandals and elections -- seem to be generalizable to a range of countries undergoing political transition.

First, let us consider the issue of political scandals. In a number of countries, revelations about government repression have had powerful consequences akin to the impact of the Mexican scandals discussed above. In the Southern Cone of South America, for instance, government-appointed "truth commissions" charged with investigating human rights abuses under previous military regimes have helped expose the terrible costs of authoritarian rule. Though the legal consequences of government investigations have often proven illusory, the political consequences have been real and striking. The simple fact that government reports in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were all entitled "Never Again" speaks worlds for the degree to which they succeeded in delegitimizing military dictatorship.

As John Bailey and Arturo Valenzuela put it, "the issue of corruption in Mexico is comparable to that of human rights violations under military dictatorships in other countries."⁵⁸³ As with corruption scandals, revelations of torture and murder provoke scandals that help diminish potential mass support for autocratic rule. They also influence the calculations of elite actors by reminding future coup-

⁵⁸²For a discussion of the Hungarian and Polish cases, which also adhere to the pattern, see John English, "Hungarian TV and Film," and John English, "Polish Radio and TV," in Al Hester, L. Earle Reybold, and Kimberly Conger, eds., *The Post-Communist Press in Eastern and Central Europe: New Studies* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, Cox Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, 1992), especially pp. 76-8, 96-7.

⁵⁸³John Bailey and Arturo Valenzuela, "Mexico's New Politics: The Shape of the Future," *Journal of Democracy*, October 1997, 8 (4), p. 49.

makers that they may one day be held accountable for their conduct. In this way, scandals serve to delegitimize authoritarian institutions and generate support for democratization.

The impact of media opening on elections also seems to be generalizable to other countries undergoing political transition. Chapter Six suggested that media influences will be strongest when: (1) levels of media exposure are high, (2) levels of education are low, (3) audiences are heavily dependent on the mass media for information about political alternatives, and (4) media sources are viewed as credible in the particular message they deliver. This model suggests that media effects may be pronounced in a number of new democracies in the developing world -- Brazil, South Africa, Taiwan, etc.

Scandals and electoral shifts, however, do not represent a comprehensive catalogue of media influences. Mass media may shape political opinions and decisions in a number of other ways as well. For instance, media coverage may influence the degree of social mobilization -- a crucial currency of power in political crises. Though this type of media effect was not particularly salient in the Mexican case, it may be fundamental in other countries. Where political transition depends less on electoral outcomes and more on mass demonstrations, for instance, the mass media's role in sparking or sustaining social protests may prove as crucial as its role in triggering scandals or shaping voting behavior. Clearly, cataloging the other ways in which media help shape political transition represents a promising topic for future research.

Applying the model

This study has suggested a general argument about the emergence of independent media and their role in political transitions. It has outlined the conditions under which media may be expected to promote regime change and those under which they might be expected to restrain it. Finally, it has described specific ways in which media opening is likely to influence political transition, leaving open the possibility that others may also prove important.

One approach to illustrating the applicability of these general conclusions is to consider what role the media have actually played in political transitions elsewhere. If the general argument presented here is correct, the media would not have represented a positive force for democratization in the early stages of regime collapse in Eastern Europe (owing to high levels of state ownership and limited market competition before political transition). Within Eastern Europe, they would

have played a more assertive role in countries like Poland and Hungary (which had experimented with economic reforms) than in Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, or Romania. But compared to other regions, most Eastern European media would have jumped on the democratic bandwagon relatively late.

In Latin America, by contrast, one would expect to see some elements of the media in the forefront of change. Market competition would encourage assertiveness, especially in the print media, and relaxation in censorship would rapidly lead to a flurry of critical coverage. This sort of coverage would, in turn, undermine support for authoritarian institutions and practices. The media's role would have been most assertive in the case of competitive and professional media (such as newly-founded newspapers in the Southern Cone), and least so where media were dominated by a single firm (e.g., television in Mexico and Brazil).

Most Asian countries would fall in between the Latin American and Eastern European cases. Broadcast television, which is generally state-owned, would be most supportive of the old regime; print media would generally evolve faster. Where television penetration was high, biased coverage of the opposition would help authoritarian leaders (or their heirs) win elections and prolong their rule. This prediction seems to explain patterns of media opening in Korea and Taiwan, as well as the opposite roles that newspapers and broadcast television played during political transition there.

Explaining the past, of course, is often easier than predicting the future. Another useful exercise, then, is to consider what role the media can be expected to play in countries that may soon undergo some sort of political transition. If these predictions are plausible, and if they turn out to be correct, they further fortify the general argument advanced here.

One touchstone for this study has been China. Over the last two decades, economic reforms have provoked subtle but significant changes in the Chinese press. As media have gained financial autonomy, the levers that facilitated official control have gradually weakened, leaving the threat of repression as the principal weapon in the government's arsenal. Although censorship remains strict and explicitly political coverage has yet to change much, the media are beginning to cover issues like crime, corruption, and local governance. Print media, economically the most autonomous, have advanced the furthest, but radio coverage has also begun to evolve. Ultimately, opening will reach parts of the audio-visual media through the reorientation of local broadcasters, the spread of narrowcasting (cable, satellite, etc.), or both.

In other words, portions of the Chinese press are primed for independence. As a result, cracks in the Communist Party's repressive apparatus -- brought on by divisions in the ruling authoritarian coalition, the ascendancy of reformist elements, or political crises provoked by domestic mobilization -- may unleash dramatic changes in coverage. Were Tiananmen Square to repeat itself today, for instance, the media would undoubtedly prove much more assertive. Presumably, assertive coverage would in turn encourage wider protests, making repression more difficult.

Another country of interest is Iran, now in the nascent stages of political transition. Although Iran's political institutions remain dominated by hard-line clerics, reformist factions within the regime now control a number of important posts (including the presidency). Reformers have attempted to advance their agenda of international opening, economic pragmatism, and tentative political reform against the increasingly vociferous objections of hard-liners.

They may reap the whirlwind. The Iranian regime is a religious theocracy: its legitimacy depends on the notion that Iran's clergy are moral visionaries who will shepherd their countrymen along a divinely ordained path to human betterment. The trouble is, of course, that the country's leading mullahs are thoroughly corrupt. Investigations by pioneering independent newspapers have already begun to document some examples of official corruption, and -- should these investigations continue -- they will ultimately trigger devastating political scandals. In addition, if market-oriented reforms take hold, assertiveness in the print media will be reinforced and may even spill over into the country's more cautious broadcasting networks. In that case, media opening will undermine theocratic legitimacy, stimulate social mobilization, influence the outcome of increasingly competitive elections, and generally encourage political transition.

Iran and China are relatively hopeful cases (from the perspective of democratizers). They suggest that the press may play an assertive role in those countries' political transition when they ultimately occur. In other countries -- where the press remains hobbled by concentrated ownership and corruption -- the media will tend to reinforce existing political institutions and retard political change. Cubans, Kazaks, and Iraqis can expect little help from the domestic press in their struggles for popular, accountable government.

The media in new democracies

If we think of democracy in developmental terms, as a political system that emerges gradually in fragments or parts, and is always capable of becoming more liberal, inclusive, responsive, accountable, effective, and just, then we must see democratization not simply as a limited transition from one set of formal rules to another, but rather as an ongoing process, a perpetual challenge, a recurrent struggle.⁵⁸⁴

This study focused on the emergence of independent media and the impact of these media on democratization. It has not, however, discussed what role the media may play after political transition. As discussed at length in Chapter One, however, this role is crucial to the proper functioning of modern democratic institutions. Many citizens rely on the media for the information they need to make meaningful political choices, and independent media help hold political leaders accountable by scrutinizing their actions and decisions. The media's role in enhancing official accountability is especially salient in emerging democracies, where other political intermediaries are often weak or underdeveloped.

One possibility is that newly independent media may actually do too good a job monitoring public officials, burdening nascent democratic institutions with tasks they cannot yet handle. For instance, if full-fledged media opening precedes the consolidation of effective legal institutions (as it often does), then officials may be repeatedly implicated in scandals without ever facing punishment. In that case, citizens may lose confidence in the democratic system itself, withdrawing from politics or lending their support to extremist forces that promise a thorough housecleaning. In other words, political scandals resulting from media openness can delegitimize emerging democracies just as they do decaying authoritarian regimes.

The antidote, of course, is for emerging democracies to relegitimize themselves through institutional reform. On the whole, emerging democracies are more capable than authoritarian regimes of broader institutional renovation through the passage of new laws and the creation of new monitoring organizations to prevent or punish official misconduct. At the very least, the consolidation of a competitive electoral regime makes it easier to "throw the rascals out" -- an effective if sometimes inadequate sanction. For this reason, rapid media opening is likely to

⁵⁸⁴Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

lead to continuing pressure on new democracies for institutional reform and accountability.

Unfortunately, new democracies today often confront the opposite problem - a media regime that is not yet sufficiently open. In many cases, limited government regulation of monopolies, corruption in the privatization of state enterprises, small media markets, and other factors may have combined to produce oligopoly media regimes. Control of the mass media by a few firms or individuals is especially pronounced in Latin America, where market-oriented reform has proceeded much faster than the construction of effective state regulatory agencies, but it is not limited to that region. As two experienced observers of Russia's emerging political landscape recently warned,

one of the most troubling developments characterizing this 'early middle' stage of Russia's transition [is]: a year after the presidential election, the continued retreat from developing a fair and unbiased media establishment to monitor this transition. What we're witnessing is a backpedaling away from a free press as a pillar of an informed society in favor of the increasing trend toward employing media outlets as an oligarchical tool for managing financial conglomerates and dictating political fortunes. Rather than the fourth estate, major newspapers and television networks are becoming merely estate holdings like oil companies and metals firms.⁵⁸⁵

Such oligopoly control of the mass media has a number of predictable consequences for democratic governance. First, and most obviously, it leads to spaces of silence where the interests of media oligarchs may be involved. If corporate holdings are linked through extensive cross-ownership, interlocking directorates, or intricate financial networks, these spaces can be very large. Media concentration thus protects and privileges media owners themselves, shielding them and their business partners from unwanted scrutiny.

Second, private media oligopolies typically inject a right-wing bias into political life. Media moguls tend to be conservative and to give preference to politically compatible forces over their progressive rivals, especially during electoral campaigns. Depending on one's orientation, this bias may be an unfair disadvantage foisted upon progressive forces in bourgeois democracy or a healthy

⁵⁸⁵Z. Blake Marshall and David F. Poritzky, "The Russian Government's Mid-Year Report Card: New Team Completes First Half, Duma Plans for Fall Clash, as Signs Point to Commercial Progress," special report by the U.S.-Russia Business Council, Washington, D.C., August 5, 1997, p. 16.

antidote to irresponsible populist appeals from the Left. Regardless, it means that the media are less open.

A third likely consequence of oligopolization is collusion between media owners and government officials. Where the media are controlled by a few individuals, it is easier for political leaders to strike bargains granting media owners special privileges in exchange for favorable coverage. In theory, oligopoly owners may have greater bargaining power vis-à-vis the government than smaller firms, thus making it easier for them to retain their independence in the face of government pressures. In practice, however, the profits they can expect to reap from a close alliance with the government are likely to outweigh any financial benefits they might derive from journalistic impartiality. In a rapidly changing and increasingly global industry, media owners need government contacts to retain their concessions, protect their markets, and exploit new technologies. Politicians, for their part, are less likely to worry about the long-term development of the commercial media than the outcome of the next election. If regulatory structures are too politicized or institutional checks too weak, oligopoly media owners and government officials will be apt to strike collusive bargains. The result is pro-government bias during election campaigns, extensive coverage of major public initiatives, and constrained reporting on particularly touchy subjects. All these factors tend to increase incumbents' already substantial advantages and to insulate government officials from public scrutiny.

One familiar solution to the problem of oligopolistic concentration is public intervention designed to foster media pluralism. This may take the form of government regulation designed to guarantee competition, an approach followed successfully for decades in the United States. Alternatively, states may subsidize certain media in an attempt to foster diversity, a strategy employed with varying degrees of effectiveness in Europe. Finally, public ownership of certain media -- and the careful insulation of publicly-owned media from capricious political interference -- can act as a counterweight to private monopolization. So far, however, few new democracies have managed to adopt any of these approaches in a reliable or effective way. As a result, many countries can expect continuing oligopoly media bias, with all the consequences described above.

Media oligopoly and the quality of democracy

This bias raises important questions about the role of the mass media in new democracies. As discussed at length in the beginning of this study, conventional

definitions of democracy focus on elections. Regimes that hold regular, free, fair, and inclusive elections are deemed democratic. And elections, the argument goes, are free and fair to the extent that voters are not coerced and ballots are counted faithfully. A series of international entitlements then flow from holding these elections: elected leaders can tour world capitals celebrating the democratic system that brought them to power; foreign banks and international lending institutions feel secure in ponying up needed cash; and U.S. military assistance programs open up like an overstuffed piñata.

Sadly, “electoralist” conceptions of democracy ignores most of what scholars know about the nature and origins of public opinion. Mass preferences are often malleable and, under certain conditions, deeply influenced by available information. Attitudes that have been manufactured by the systematic manipulation of this information may prove radically different from the preferences of citizens who have been treated to a balanced presentation of alternative viewpoints. If elections are to be reliable mechanisms for translating citizens’ preferences into public policies, opposition groups must be given the opportunity to persuade voters of their positions, intentions, and abilities. Where they are denied these opportunities -- because of media bias, repression, or other constraints -- political competition may prove as meaningless as if the elections themselves were nakedly rigged.

The findings discussed in Chapter Six strongly suggest that popular opinion toward the Left in Mexico was molded and remolded over a decade, in large measure by television coverage. Many of the negative characterizations of the leftist opposition in Mexico from 1988 to 1996 -- socially polarizing, economically populist, administratively incompetent, etc. -- were undoubtedly based in fact. But these same facts were wildly and systematically exaggerated by pro-government media. Equally important, all politically attractive aspects of the leftist message -- concern for Mexico’s poor majority, opposition to corrupt privatizations, etc. -- were systematically and consciously obscured. As a result, the Mexican mass public received a highly selective message consciously designed to isolate the Left and its leader, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. This message had a real and discernible impact on Mexican public opinion, suppressing support for Cárdenas after 1988. Once Mexicans were finally exposed to a more balanced view of the leftist opposition in 1997, however, large numbers returned to the Cárdenas standard. From this perspective, the outcome of electoral contests in 1991 and 1994 should be viewed --

in part -- as the fruits of a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign rather than an informed expression of popular volition.

Observers of Mexican politics continue to debate whether Cárdenas actually won the 1988 elections or whether he merely did better than the authorities admitted. This question seems less relevant than whether Cárdenas would have won in 1988 had he been allowed equitable access to the mass media (almost certainly) or whether he could possibly have done so well in 1997 without media access (almost certainly not). Precisely the same questions could be asked about Mexico's other major opposition party, the PAN, in the 1994 presidential race and various state-level elections over the last two decades. In dozens of contests, Mexicans may have given their consent to the continuation of PRI rule, but it was hardly an informed consent.

Most scholars familiar with Mexican politics will find this point uncontroversial, even trite. But it carries profound implications for our understanding of modern democracy that go far beyond Mexico itself. Without an open media regime, elections are unlikely to produce accountability. They may instead permit protracted minority rule, punctuated by empty rituals of popular acquiescence.

This does not mean that Jean Jacques Rousseau himself must be in charge of allocating media time for elections to be considered fair. Media openness is never perfect, and media biases exist in many well-functioning democracies. But it does mean that voters' decisions should not be based on information that has been thoroughly distorted as to systematically privilege one party over another.

Nor does the notion of powerful media effects mean that voters are so stupid and ill-informed as to be systematically misled by media messages alone. Media bias may not fool all of the people all of the time. But it does not have to. In close elections -- and many crucial elections are quite close -- selectively accentuating certain facts can swing enough votes to decide the outcome.

The consequences of media bias may not be particularly dramatic in established democracies. Audiences in the U.S., for instance, typically rely on multiple sources for information about politics, including both interpersonal communication and a variety of media outlets. They are comparatively well-educated and, despite the findings of "minimalists" over the last thirty-five years, possess a fair degree of information about their political environment by comparison

to citizens elsewhere.⁵⁸⁶ Although levels of political knowledge often seem shockingly low, the great majority of Americans can recognize the two major parties, identify their main features, and report which one they favor with impressive consistency. Their ability to do so is also enhanced by the stability of their political environment, as well as by their personal experience with the way government runs under both parties. These features of the political context make it much easier for voters to rely on heuristics not normally available to voters in countries undergoing political transition.⁵⁸⁷ Consequently, although certain audiences within the United States may fit a media-vulnerable profile, the electorate as a whole does not.

But what of new democracies in the developing world? In Brazil, approximately two-thirds of voters have less than a primary school education and one-third are functionally illiterate. Newspaper readership is predictably low, and most voters rely on television for news about the political world. Television coverage in Brazil, however, is profoundly biased toward candidates of the Right. Under such circumstances, one would expect potentially powerful media effects in favor of conservative political forces.

The Russian case also fits this description fairly well. Although relatively high levels of education and growing skepticism about media bias may confer a certain immunity from media influence, other factors increase dependence on media messages. Most parties are only a few years old, and even educated voters have little information about them. Voters are thus potentially susceptible to media influences, especially from television (on which citizens depend heavily for political information).

In Russia, as in Brazil, the potential influence of television makes biased electoral coverage a serious cause for concern. Television coverage systematically favors pro-reform parties – a product of the fact that major media are either state-

⁵⁸⁶See Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, and Steven Greene, "Voting in Context: Personal, Media, and Organizational Intermediaries and Political Behavior," paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28-31, 1997; Michael F. Meffert, "Political Information Flow in Context: The Influence of Media Sources and Personal Networks on Candidate Preferences in the 1992 Presidential Election."

⁵⁸⁷On how citizens can form reasonable political judgments given limited information about their political environment, see Diana C. Mutz, Paul M. Sniderman, and Richard Brody, eds., *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Paul M. Sniderman, Philip E. Tetlock, and Richard Brody, *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

run or owned by prominent beneficiaries of the reformist program. In Russia's 1996 presidential race, for instance:

the coverage ranged from ignoring Zyuganov [the Communist candidate] to failing to comment on Yeltsin's disappearance two weeks before the July election. Television stations even targeted entertainment programming as a medium for making this connection, including the scheduling of *Burnt by the Sun* -- a film set in the worst period of the Stalinist purges -- to air in the closing days of the campaign.⁵⁸⁸

For observers of Mexican politics, such descriptions are only too familiar.

In recent years, many scholars have turned their attention from the spread of democratic institutions around the world to the deepening of those institutions. The findings of this study speak to that new trend. Most importantly, they underscore the dangers that oligopoly media regimes pose for emerging democracies in the developing world. As a result, they raise unsettling questions about the quality of democracy in many countries that have recently completed transitions from authoritarian rule.

⁵⁸⁸Randy L. Zabel, "Campaign Message Effects and the 1996 Russian Presidential Elections," paper presented at the conference of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 28-31, 1997.

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Interviews

[Note: Subjects listed below include those with whom the author conducted formal interviews in which respondents agreed to be cited, whether by name or anonymously. They do not include several dozen informal conversations with journalists and others, nor those individuals who were unwilling to be cited in any form.]

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Senior official at the *Unión de Voceadores* (Street Vendor's Union); Mexico City; July 25, 1995.

Adalberto Santoya-Aztlavia, Secretary of Internal Affairs, *Unión de Voceadores* (Street Vendor's Union); Mexico City; July 26, 1995.

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Rafael Giménez, *Reforma*; Mexico City; March 21, 1996.

Roberto Zamarripa, *Reforma*; Mexico City; March 21, 1996.

Rebecca Romero, formerly of Televisa; Mexico City; March 21, 1996.

Middle managers 1-2 and staffers 1-4, Televisa; Mexico City; March-April 1996.

María Teresa Gómez Mont y Ureta, Federal Deputy of the National Action Party; Mexico City; March 25, 1996.

Former reporter, *La Jornada*, March 26, 1996.

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Appendices

A. Media Freedom Scores by Country, 1995

Country	Print	Broadcast	Overall
Afghanistan	45	45	90
Albania	33	34	67
Algeria	49	50	99
Angola	38	30	68
Antigua-Barbuda	16	19	35
Argentina	15	14	29
Armenia	33	24	57
Australia	4	3	7
Austria	6	12	18
Azerbaijan	39	26	65
Bahamas	4	4	8
Bahrain	28	29	57
Bangladesh	27	22	49
Barbados	6	13	19
Belarus	37	30	67
Belgium	5	2	7
Belize	12	10	22
Benin	12	19	31
Bhutan	31	31	62
Bolivia	7	10	17
Bosnia	34	38	72
Botswana	12	16	28
Brazil	18	12	30
Brunei	36	37	73
Bulgaria	16	23	39
Burkina Faso	18	19	37
Burma	50	49	99
Burundi	43	45	88
Cambodia	34	26	60
Cameroon	44	34	78
Canada	14	4	18
Cape Verde	16	16	32
Central African Republic	31	34	65
Chad	35	37	72
Chile	17	13	30
China	40	43	83
Colombia	22	26	48
Comoros	21	25	46
Congo	24	29	53
Costa Rica	7	14	21
Croatia	32	24	56
Cuba	45	45	90
Cyprus	10	14	24

Country	Print	Broadcast	Overall
Czech	12	9	21
Denmark	3	6	9
Djibouti	27	31	58
Dominica	9	7	16
Dominican Republic	21	14	35
Ecuador	13	28	41
Egypt	43	38	81
El Salvador	17	15	32
Equatorial Guinea	43	31	74
Eritrea	34	34	68
Estonia	16	9	25
Ethiopia	24	35	59
Fiji	33	23	56
Finland	6	9	15
France	18	9	27
Gabon	19	33	52
Gambia	39	24	63
Georgia	39	31	70
Germany	10	8	18
Ghana	34	28	62
Greece	14	12	26
Grenada	10	10	20
Guatemala	31	29	60
Guinea	30	36	66
Guinea-Bissau	25	25	50
Guyana	16	12	28
Haiti	23	28	51
Honduras	23	22	45
Hong Kong	16	14	30
Hungary	16	22	38
Iceland	7	5	12
India	25	24	49
Indonesia	42	29	71
Iran	45	38	83
Iraq	50	50	100
Ireland	7	8	15
Israel	18	12	30
Occupied Territories	47	47	94
Italy	18	12	30
Ivory Coast	31	32	63
Jamaica	6	12	18
Japan	13	7	20
Jordan	25	23	48
Kazakstan	30	31	61
Kenya	26	26	52

Country	Print	Broadcast	Overall
Kiribati	12	12	24
South Korea	15	13	28
North Korea	47	45	92
Kuwait	41	29	70
Kyrgyz Republic	29	23	52
Laos	34	34	68
Latvia	20	9	29
Lebanon	27	29	56
Lesotho	20	32	52
Liberia	39	32	71
Libya	45	40	85
Lithuania	16	13	29
Luxembourg	5	5	10
Macedonia	19	15	34
Madagascar	24	20	44
Malawi	23	20	43
Malaysia	34	30	64
Maldives	31	31	62
Mali	25	27	52
Malta	13	11	24
Marshall Islands	10	9	19
Mauritania	47	30	77
Mauritius	18	12	30
Mexico	31	23	54
Micronesia	11	12	23
Moldova	25	22	47
Mongolia	20	21	41
Morocco	28	25	53
Mozambique	31	23	54
Namibia	11	12	23
Nauru	8	10	18
Nepal	30	24	54
Netherlands	9	9	18
New Zealand	4	4	8
Nicaragua	29	24	53
Niger	38	23	61
Nigeria	45	24	69
Norway	4	4	8
Oman	35	34	69
Pakistan	35	24	59
Panama	13	9	22
Papua New Guinea	13	10	23
Paraguay	34	22	56
Peru	33	24	57
Philippines	23	23	46

Country	Print	Broadcast	Overall
Poland	14	15	29
Portugal	8	8	16
Qatar	32	32	64
Romania	26	24	50
Russia	32	23	55
St. Kitts-Nevis	10	9	19
St. Lucia	6	7	13
St. Vincent	8	4	12
Sao Tome & Principe	18	16	34
Saudi Arabia	41	35	76
Senegal	23	25	48
Serbia	49	38	87
Seychelles	31	26	57
Sierre Leone	42	30	72
Singapore	36	29	65
Slovak Republic	29	26	55
Slovenia	18	19	37
Solomon Islands	9	9	18
South Africa	21	9	30
Spain	16	7	23
Sri Lanka	24	17	41
Sudan	46	30	76
Suriname	26	19	45
Swaziland	37	36	73
Sweden	5	5	10
Switzerland	6	4	10
Syria	40	35	75
Taiwan	9	21	30
Tajikistan	46	47	93
Tanzania	27	22	49
Thailand	21	28	49
Togo	40	27	67
Tonga	18	19	37
Trinidad & Tobago	13	12	25
Tunisia	33	31	64
Turkey	43	30	73
Turkmenistan	44	40	84
Uganda	21	17	38
Ukraine	17	25	42
UAE	38	39	77
UK	12	10	22
USA	7	5	12
Uruguay	14	11	25
Uzbekistan	41	38	79
Vanuatu	29	25	54

Country	Print	Broadcast	Overall
Venezuela	26	23	49
Vietnam	38	30	68
Western Samoa	15	14	29
Yemen	35	28	63
Zaire	46	38	84
Zambia	31	30	61
Zimbabwe	30	29	59

B. Political Rights Scores by Country, 1995

Country	Score
Afghanistan	7
Albania	3
Algeria	7
Angola	7
Antigua-Barbuda	4
Argentina	2
Armenia	3
Australia	1
Austria	1
Azerbaijan	6
Bahamas	1
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	2
Barbados	1
Belarus	4
Belgium	1
Belize	1
Benin	2
Bhutan	7
Bolivia	2
Bosnia	6
Botswana	2
Brazil	2
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	2
Burkina Faso	5
Burma	7
Burundi	6
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	6
Canada	1
Cape Verde	1
Central African Republic	3
Chad	6
Chile	2
China	7
Colombia	3
Comoros	4
Congo	4
Costa Rica	1
Croatia	4
Cuba	7
Cyprus	1

Country	Score
Czech	1
Denmark	1
Djibouti	6
Dominica	2
Dominican Republic	4
Ecuador	2
Egypt	6
El Salvador	3
Equatorial Guinea	7
Eritrea	6
Estonia	3
Ethiopia	6
Fiji	4
Finland	1
France	1
Gabon	5
Gambia	7
Georgia	5
Germany	1
Ghana	5
Greece	1
Grenada	1
Guatemala	4
Guinea	6
Guinea-Bissau	3
Guyana	2
Haiti	5
Honduras	3
Hong Kong	5
Hungary	1
Iceland	1
India	4
Indonesia	7
Iran	6
Iraq	7
Ireland	1
Israel	1
Occupied Territories	6
Italy	1
Ivory Coast	6
Jamaica	2
Japan	2
Jordan	4
Kazakstan	6
Kenya	6

Country	Score
Kiribati	1
South Korea	2
North Korea	7
Kuwait	5
Kyrgyz Republic	4
Laos	7
Latvia	3
Lebanon	6
Lesotho	4
Liberia	7
Libya	7
Lithuania	1
Luxembourg	1
Macedonia	4
Madagascar	2
Malawi	2
Malaysia	4
Maldives	6
Mali	2
Malta	1
Marshall Islands	1
Mauritania	7
Mauritius	1
Mexico	4
Micronesia	1
Moldova	4
Mongolia	2
Morocco	5
Mozambique	3
Namibia	2
Nauru	1
Nepal	3
Netherlands	1
New Zealand	1
Nicaragua	4
Niger	3
Nigeria	7
Norway	1
Oman	6
Pakistan	3
Panama	2
Papua New Guinea	2
Paraguay	4
Peru	5
Philippines	3

Country	Score
Poland	2
Portugal	1
Qatar	7
Romania	4
Russia	3
St. Kitts-Nevis	2
St. Lucia	1
St. Vincent	2
Sao Tome & Principe	1
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	4
Serbia	6
Seychelles	3
Sierre Leone	7
Singapore	5
Slovak Republic	2
Slovenia	1
Solomon Islands	1
South Africa	2
Spain	1
Sri Lanka	4
Sudan	7
Suriname	3
Swaziland	6
Sweden	1
Switzerland	1
Syria	7
Taiwan	3
Tajikistan	7
Tanzania	6
Thailand	3
Togo	6
Tonga	5
Trinidad & Tobago	1
Tunisia	6
Turkey	5
Turkmenistan	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	3
UAE	6
UK	1
USA	1
Uruguay	2
Uzbekistan	7
Vanuatu	1

Country	Score
Venezuela	3
Vietnam	7
Western Samoa	2
Yemen	5
Zaire	7
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	5

C. Data for Table 3

Country	Population (1994 M)	Per capita income (\$PPP 1994)	Economic liberalism
Argentina	34.2	8,720	8
Australia	17.8	18,120	6
Austria	8.0	19,560	7
Azerbaijan	7.5	1,510	1
Bangladesh	117.9	1,330	3
Belarus	10.4	4,320	1
Belgium	10.1	20,270	7
Bolivia	7.2	2,400	8
Brazil	159.1	5,400	3
Bulgaria	8.4	4,380	6
Burma	45.6	930	0
Cambodia	10.0	630	5
Canada	29.2	19,960	7
Chile	14.0	8,890	7
China	1,190.9	2,510	1
Colombia	36.3	5,330	7
Costa Rica	3.3	5,050	5
Côte d'Ivoire	13.8	1,370	4
Cuba	11.0	1,260	0
Czech Republic	10.3	8,900	8
Denmark	5.2	19,880	8
Egypt	56.8	3,720	3
El Salvador	5.6	2,410	6
Estonia	1.5	4,510	6
Finland	5.1	16,150	6
France	57.9	19,670	7
Germany	81.5	19,480	7
Ghana	16.6	2,050	6
Greece	10.4	10,930	5
Haiti	7.0	930	3
Hungary	10.3	6,080	5
India	913.6	1,280	4
Indonesia	190.4	3,600	4
Iran, Islamic Rep.	62.6	4,720	2
Ireland	3.6	13,550	7
Israel	5.4	15,300	5
Italy	57.1	18,460	7
Jordan	4.0	4,100	4
Kazakstan	16.8	2,810	2
Kenya	26.0	1,310	4
Korea, Dem. Rep.	23.4	920	0
Korea, Rep.	44.5	10,330	3
Kyrgyz Republic	4.5	1,730	7
Latvia	2.5	3,220	7
Lithuania	3.7	3,290	7
Malaysia	19.7	8,440	6
Mexico	88.5	7,040	4
Mozambique	15.5	860	2
Netherlands	15.4	18,750	8
New Zealand	3.5	15,870	8

Country	Population (1994 M)	Per capita income (\$PPP 1994)	Economic liberalism
Nigeria	108.0	1,190	1
Norway	4.3	20,210	7
Pakistan	126.3	2,130	4
Peru	23.2	3,610	7
Philippines	67.0	2,740	4
Poland	38.5	5,480	8
Portugal	9.9	11,970	6
Romania	22.7	4,090	4
Saudi Arabia	17.8	9,480	4
Senegal	8.3	1,580	6
Singapore	2.9	21,900	7
Slovak Republic	5.3	6,070	5
South Africa	40.5	5,130	5
Spain	39.1	13,740	8
Sweden	8.8	17,130	8
Switzerland	7.0	25,150	6
Syrian Arab Republic	13.8	5,000	1
Taiwan	21.0	12,070	6
Thailand	58.0	6,970	7
Turkey	60.8	4,710	6
Turkmenistan	4.4	3,280	3
Ukraine	51.9	2,620	4
United Kingdom	58.4	17,970	8
United States	260.7	25,880	8
Uruguay	3.2	7,710	4
Uzbekistan	22.4	2,370	4
Venezuela	21.2	7,770	2
Vietnam	72.0	1,140	2
Zaire	42.5	440	2

D. Data for Figure 12

Country	State sector as percent of GDP (1994)
Australia	27.0
Austria	38.4
Belarus	31.9
Belgium	48.4
Bolivia	20.5
Botswana	32.8
Brazil	33.8
Bulgaria	42.8
Burkina Faso	30.0
Cameroon	16.1
Chile	17.8
Colombia	12.9
Costa Rica	28.1
Croatia	38.8
Cuba	89.0
Cyprus	36.0
Czech Republic	37.7
Denmark	44.3
Djibouti	40.0
Dominica	42.0
Ecuador	13.3
Egypt	34.9
El Salvador	11.2
Equatorial Guinea	12.8
Estonia	40.0
Finland	46.0
France	44.9
The Gambia	16.0
Germany	31.9
Ghana	17.9
Greece	38.6
Grenada	28.7
Guatemala	6.9
Guinea	11.2
Hong Kong	14.5
Hungary	45.0
Iceland	46.7
India	14.6
Indonesia	8.9
Iran	16.6
Ireland	44.0
Israel	39.8
Italy	48.5
Japan	26.5
Jordan	27.1

Country	State sector as percent of GDP (1994)
Kenya	25.3
North Korea	90.0
South Korea	16.0
Kuwait	43.6
Latvia	27.8
Lebanon	20.0
Liberia	18.9
Lithuania	18.9
Luxembourg	44.0
Madagascar	12.6
Malaysia	21.4
Maldives	39.7
Mauritius	18.9
Mexico	40.0
Mongolia	17.4
Morocco	24.2
Namibia	33.8
Netherlands	50.7
New Zealand	35.1
Nicaragua	31.3
Norway	47.9
Oman	41.7
Pakistan	20.7
Panama	25.8
Papua New Guinea	28.8
Paraguay	11.0
Peru	12.9
Philippines	15.0
Poland	43.1
Portugal	37.4
Romania	27.8
Russian Federation	26.2
Sierra Leone	17.6
Singapore	13.4
South Africa	34.4
Spain	34.0
Sri Lanka	22.3
Sweden	50.3
Thailand	11.4
Tunisia	26.2
Turkey	21.6
United Arab Emirates	11.0
United Kingdom	39.9
United States	22.2
Uruguay	34.3
Venezuela	16.9
Zambia	13.9

E. Data for Table 4

Country	Per capita income (\$ 1994)	Population (1994 M)	Grants of patents
Algeria	1,650	27.4	617
Argentina	8,110	34.2	406
Australia	18,000	17.8	12,636
Austria	24,630	8.0	13,354
Bangladesh	220	117.9	78
Belgium	22,870	10.1	14,291
Botswana	2,800	1.4	39
Brazil	2,970	159.1	2,419
Bulgaria	1,250	8.4	417
Burundi	160	6.2	2
Canada	19,510	29.2	15,473
Chile	3,520	14.0	506
China	530	1,190.9	4,122
Colombia	1,670	36.3	425
Costa Rica	2,400	3.3	12
Cuba	400	11.0	3
Cyprus	10,260	0.7	54
Denmark	27,970	5.2	2,609
Ecuador	1,280	11.2	102
Egypt	720	56.8	403
El Salvador	1,360	5.6	6
Finland	18,850	5.1	2,683
France	23,420	57.9	35,581
The Gambia	330	1.1	35
Germany	25,580	81.5	43,190
Ghana	410	16.6	37
Greece	7,700	10.4	3,688
Guatemala	1,200	10.3	123
Guyana	530	0.8	3
Haiti	230	7.0	8
Honduras	600	5.8	19
Hong Kong	21,650	6.1	1,079
Hungary	3,840	10.3	2,305
Iceland	24,630	0.3	30
India	320	913.6	1,572
Iran	2,500	62.6	286
Ireland	13,530	3.6	860
Israel	14,530	5.4	2,346
Italy	19,300	57.1	19,503
Jamaica	1,540	2.5	11
Japan	34,630	125.0	36,100
Kenya	250	26.0	47
North Korea	600	23.4	37
South Korea	8,260	44.5	8,691
Lesotho	720	1.9	29
Liberia	500	2.7	17
Luxembourg	39,600	0.4	7,337
Malawi	170	9.5	74
Malaysia	3,480	19.7	512

Country	Per capita income (\$ 1994)	Population (1994 M)	Grants of patents
Malta	7,500	0.4	24
Mauritius	3,150	1.1	11
Mexico	4,180	88.5	1,360
Mongolia	300	2.4	38
Morocco	1,140	26.4	303
Namibia	1,970	1.5	124
Netherlands	22,010	15.4	17,610
New Zealand	13,350	3.5	3,598
Nigeria	280	108.0	170
Norway	26,390	4.3	2,821
Pakistan	430	126.3	524
Panama	2,580	2.6	46
Paraguay	1,580	4.8	35
Peru	2,110	23.2	193
Philippines	950	67.0	944
Poland	2,410	38.5	3,788
Portugal	9,320	9.9	453
Romania	1,270	22.7	2,127
Singapore	22,500	2.9	1,091
South Africa	3,040	40.5	5,885
Spain	13,440	39.1	9,781
Sri Lanka	640	17.9	104
St. Lucia	3,130	0.2	2
Sudan	400	27.4	37
Swaziland	1,100	0.9	28
Sweden	23,530	8.8	16,767
Switzerland	37,930	7.0	16,808
Tanzania	140	28.8	23
Thailand	2,410	58.0	153
Tunisia	1,790	8.8	180
Turkey	2,500	60.8	694
Uganda	190	18.6	42
United Kingdom	18,340	58.4	34,074
United States	25,880	260.7	96,514
Uruguay	4,660	3.2	125
Venezuela	2,760	21.2	593
Vietnam	200	72.0	23
Zambia	350	9.2	73
Zimbabwe	500	10.8	222

Country	Per capita income (\$ 1994)	Population (1994 M)	Patents applications
Algeria	1,650	27.4	139
Australia	18,000	17.8	27,672
Austria	24,630	8.0	43,535
Bangladesh	220	117.9	113
Barbados	6,560	0.3	4,336
Belgium	22,870	10.1	42,047
Botswana	2,800	1.4	68
Brazil	2,970	159.1	12,769
Bulgaria	1,250	8.4	5,584
Burundi	160	6.2	3
Canada	19,510	29.2	38,380
Chile	3,520	14.0	1,000
China	530	1,190.9	11,423
Colombia	1,670	36.3	612
Costa Rica	2,400	3.3	66
Cuba	400	11.0	24
Cyprus	10,260	0.7	53
Denmark	27,970	5.2	39,764
Ecuador	1,280	11.2	88
Egypt	720	56.8	787
El Salvador	1,360	5.6	36
Finland	18,850	5.1	12,099
France	23,420	57.9	79,075
The Gambia	330	1.1	62
Germany	25,580	81.5	109,187
Ghana	410	16.6	87
Greece	7,700	10.4	32,359
Guatemala	1,200	10.3	95
Guyana	530	0.8	6
Haiti	230	7.0	8
Honduras	600	5.8	19
Hong Kong	21,650	6.1	1,092
Hungary	3,840	10.3	9,950
Iceland	24,630	0.3	133
India	320	913.6	3,595
Indonesia	880	190.4	1,336
Iran	2,500	62.6	427
Iraq	3,500	20.4	322
Ireland	13,530	3.6	4,580
Israel	14,530	5.4	3,717
Italy	19,300	57.1	53,300
Jamaica	1,540	2.5	41
Japan	34,630	125.0	380,453
Kenya	250	26.0	131
North Korea	600	23.4	4,549
South Korea	8,260	44.5	36,154
Lesotho	720	1.9	59
Liberia	500	2.7	17
Libya	4,000	5.2	47

Country	Per capita income (\$ 1994)	Population (1994 M)	Patents applications
Lithuania	1,350	3.7	29
Luxembourg	39,600	0.4	35,978
Malawi	170	9.5	4,402
Malaysia	3,480	19.7	2,427
Malta	7,500	0.4	27
Mauritius	3,150	1.1	10
Mexico	4,180	88.5	5,271
Mongolia	300	2.4	1,163
Morocco	1,140	26.4	356
Namibia	1,970	1.5	133
Netherlands	22,010	15.4	51,412
New Zealand	13,350	3.5	4,533
Nigeria	280	108.0	258
Norway	26,390	4.3	12,572
Pakistan	430	126.3	524
Panama	2,580	2.6	87
Paraguay	1,580	4.8	52
Peru	2,110	23.2	247
Philippines	950	67.0	1,921
Poland	2,410	38.5	8,817
Portugal	9,320	9.9	3,555
Romania	1,270	22.7	7,184
Russian Federation	2,650	148.4	1,203
Saudi Arabia	7,050	17.8	519
Singapore	22,500	2.9	1,104
South Africa	3,040	40.5	10,202
Spain	13,440	39.1	48,929
Sri Lanka	640	17.9	4,494
St. Lucia	3,130	0.2	2
Sudan	200	27.4	4,411
Swaziland	1,100	0.9	60
Sweden	23,530	8.8	48,568
Switzerland	37,930	7.0	48,496
Tanzania	140	28.8	23
Thailand	2,410	58.0	1,987
Tunisia	1,790	8.8	128
Turkey	2,500	60.8	1,205
Uganda	190	18.6	74
United Kingdom	18,340	58.4	95,533
United States	25,880	260.7	177,388
Uruguay	4,660	3.2	171
Venezuela	2,760	21.2	1,361
Vietnam	200	72.0	62
Zambia	350	9.2	120
Zimbabwe	500	10.8	270

F. Data for Table 5

Country	GDP (\$B)	Per capita income (\$)	Print imports (\$M)
Argentina	277.3	8,110	21.5
Australia	321.2	18,000	145.4
Austria	197.7	24,630	230.6
Barbados	1.7	6,560	1.1
Belgium	231.4	22,870	332.7
Belize	0.5	2,530	0.2
Bolivia	5.6	770	0.9
Brazil	472.6	2,970	26.3
Canada	570.6	19,510	568.0
Chile	49.3	3,520	6.6
China	631.2	530	10.3
Colombia	60.7	1,670	7.7
Croatia	12.2	2,560	0.6
Cyprus	7.4	10,260	8.9
Ecuador	14.4	1,280	4.9
Egypt	40.9	720	2.3
Finland	95.9	18,850	18.6
France	1,356.7	23,420	283.0
Germany	2,085.2	25,580	249.2
Greece	80.3	7,700	3.1
Hong Kong	131.2	21,650	30.0
Iceland	6.6	24,630	2.8
India	292.4	320	5.7
Indonesia	167.5	880	5.0
Ireland	48.3	13,530	62.6
Israel	78.2	14,530	5.3
Italy	1,102.4	19,300	88.8
Japan	4,327.4	34,630	142.9
Jordan	5.8	1,440	0.8
Korea, Rep.	367.2	8,260	29.2
Malaysia	68.4	3,480	12.2
Mexico	370.1	4,180	77.9
Mongolia	0.7	300	0.0
Morocco	30.1	1,140	2.0
Netherlands	338.5	22,010	122.3
New Zealand	46.6	13,350	52.1
Norway	114.5	26,390	35.0
Oman	10.8	5,140	1.3
Pakistan	54.3	430	0.4
Panama	6.7	2,580	5.9
Paraguay	7.6	1,580	0.2
Peru	49.0	2,110	4.4
Philippines	63.7	950	7.9
Poland	92.9	2,410	74.6
Portugal	92.3	9,320	8.3
Romania	28.9	1,270	0.7
Singapore	65.9	22,500	26.8
Slovenia	14.0	7,040	6.5
South Africa	123.2	3,040	7.9

Country	GDP (\$B)	Per capita income (\$)	Print imports (\$M)
Spain	526.1	13,440	123.3
Sweden	206.6	23,530	82.3
Switzerland	265.3	37,930	264.9
Thailand	139.8	2,410	10.5
Trinidad and Tobago	4.8	3,740	1.1
Tunisia	15.8	1,790	5.5
Turkey	152.1	2,500	11.1
United Kingdom	1,071.0	18,340	230.7
United States	6,745.6	25,880	256.4
Venezuela	58.4	2,760	15.9

G. Data for Figure 13 and Table 6

Country	Professionalism
Argentina	3.00
Brazil	3.43
China	1.86
France	4.57
Greece	2.86
Hong Kong	3.43
Indonesia	2.43
Japan	3.79
Korea	3.71
Malaysia	3.20
Mexico	2.50
Philippines	2.14
Singapore	2.71
Taiwan	3.17
Thailand	1.86
United States	4.71
Venezuela	2.93

H. Data for Figure 16

Newspaper	Circulation	Ideology	Independence
<i>Diario</i>	1,500	0%	26%
<i>Economista</i>	4,000	0%	31%
<i>El Día</i>	1,000	48%	25%
<i>Excelsior</i>	40,000	33%	25%
<i>Financiero</i>	90,000	-13%	37%
<i>Heraldo</i>	7,500	-26%	28%
<i>Jornada</i>	80,000	52%	49%
<i>Nacional</i>	3,000	41%	24%
<i>Novedades</i>	4,000	11%	33%
<i>Reforma</i>	85,000	-11%	50%
<i>Sol</i>	5,000	10%	25%
<i>Universal</i>	120,000	25%	31%
<i>Unomásuno</i>	6,000	12%	36%

I. Data for Figure 18

Year	Agenda-setting
1985	47%
1987	41%
1989	42%
1990	35%
1992	37%
1994	26%
1995	27%
1996	31%

Year	Assertiveness
1985	12%
1986	5%
1987	9%
1988	20%
1989	5%
1990	17%
1991	12%
1992	15%
1993	4%
1994	29%
1995	20%
1996	22%

J. Data for Figure 19

Year	News staff
1973	17
1979	100
1984	280
1991	400
1996	730

K. Data for Table 8

Metropolitan area	Adult literacy*	Per capita income**	Population in 1990	Independent papers	Percent independent
Aguascalientes-Jesús María	47%	\$971	547,366	0.0	0%
Mexicali	57%	\$2,269	601,938	0.0	0%
Tijuana	54%	\$2,269	747,381	1.0	25%
Saltillo-Ramos Arizpe	55%	\$851	469,116	0.0	0%
Torreón-Gómez Palacio-Lerdo	52%	\$851	791,891	0.5	25%
Ciudad Juárez	48%	\$739	798,499	0.0	0%
Chihuahua	59%	\$739	530,783	0.0	0%
Durango	50%	\$513	413,835	0.0	0%
León	39%	\$365	867,920	0.0	0%
Acapulco	50%	\$911	593,212	0.0	0%
Guadalajara	47%	\$1,435	2,797,586	1.0	30%
Toluca	55%	\$772	819,915	0.0	0%
Mexico City	58%	\$1,681	15,047,685	3.0	40%
Morelia	56%	\$333	492,901	0.0	0%
Cuernavaca	56%	\$686	511,779	0.0	0%
Monterrey	57%	\$2,187	2,213,711	1.5	63%
Puebla	43%	\$454	1,007,170	0.0	0%
Querétaro	52%	\$689	555,491	0.0	0%
San Luís Potosí	56%	\$840	658,712	0.0	0%
Culiacán	51%	\$913	601,123	0.5	25%
Hermosillo	62%	\$1,538	448,966	1.0	0%
Villahermosa	52%	\$1,366	386,776	0.0	0%
Tampico-Ciudad Madero-Altamira	53%	\$969	648,598	0.0	0%
Coatzacoalcos-Minatitlán	45%	\$520	514,074	0.0	0%
Córdoba-Orizaba	46%	\$520	513,914	0.0	0%
Veracruz-Boca del Río	53%	\$520	522,196	0.0	0%
Mérida-Progreso	51%	\$559	664,882	1.0	50%

*Percent of residents over age 15 with more than a primary school education in 1990

**Per capita income of state in which metropolitan area is located, in 1990

L. Data for Figure 20

Newspaper	Average independence rating	Estimated percent of revenue from government advertising	Estimated percentage of reporters who receive bribes
<i>Diario de México</i>	26%	60%	90%
<i>Economista</i>	31%	30%	15%
<i>El Día</i>	25%	65%	91%
<i>Excelsior</i>	25%	50%	90%
<i>Financiero</i>	37%	13%	27%
<i>Heraldo</i>	28%	50%	91%
<i>Jornada</i>	49%	40%	28%
<i>Nacional</i>	24%	75%	90%
<i>Novedades</i>	33%	50%	75%
<i>Reforma</i>	50%	10%	8%
<i>Sol</i>	25%	60%	90%
<i>Universal</i>	31%	25%	53%
<i>Unomásuno</i>	36%	60%	90%

M. Data for Figure 22

	Total	Televisa
	(\$ million)	(\$ million)
Broadcast television	782	688
Pay-television	46	23
Radio	115	5
Print	150	23
Other	58	18

N. Data for Figure 23

Year	Rating
1980	3.90
1981	3.80
1982	3.85
1983	3.75
1984	3.85
1985	3.80
1986	4.30
1987	4.40
1988	5.00
1989	6.20
1990	6.40
1991	6.10
1992	5.90
1993	5.20
1994	5.30
1995	6.70

O. Data for Figure 24

Month	Night	Morning	Afternoon
Jan-95	18%	6%	8%
Feb-95	20%	8%	21%
Mar-95	20%	9%	26%
Apr-95	17%	9%	30%
May-95	18%	10%	26%
Jun-95	20%	12%	25%
Jul-95	22%	14%	29%
Aug-95	20%	15%	28%
Sep-95	20%	17%	27%
Oct-95	20%	20%	27%
Nov-95	19%	17%	26%
Dec-95	21%	16%	27%
Jan-96	23%	17%	27%
Feb-96	21%	14%	27%
Mar-96	20%	17%	29%
Apr-96	26%	17%	36%
May-96	29%	18%	42%
Jun-96	26%	23%	48%
Jul-96	28%	26%	56%
Aug-96	27%	24%	57%
Sep-96	33%	25%	49%
Oct-96	29%	28%	51%
Nov-96	36%	36%	52%
Dec-96	35%	33%	50%

P. Data for Figure 25

Year	Percent of news time devoted to officialdom
1986	63%
1988	61%
1990	64%
1992	62%
1993	41%
1994	41%
1995	37%