
The Transformation of Mexican Presidentialism, 1929-2000¹

LUIS CARLOS UGALDE

Electoral democracy has come of age in Mexico. After several decades in which one party dominated political life, in July 2000 an opposition party won the presidency, setting the stage for a new era in Mexican politics. For decades, analysts, intellectuals, and members of opposition parties claimed that limited democracy in Mexico was the result of an all-powerful executive branch monopolized by one party, the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI). The corollary was that alternation in that office was a necessary condition for democracy to exist. However, Mexico's democracy was not born as a result of an opposition candidate winning the chief executive office. That event was only a reflection of a long, and sometimes delayed, process of democratic transformation under way for almost two decades.

Now that Vicente Fox, a non-PRI president, has taken office as of December 2000, it will be interesting to analyze the evolution of the presidential institution that comes as a result of this change. On the one hand, formal and constitutional powers will remain intact, unless Congress passes constitutional reforms to expand or limit presidential powers. However, the president's informal and partisan powers will suffer the most, because Vicente Fox will not wield the kind of leverage that his PRI predecessors exerted over their party. Consequently, Fox will have fewer resources with which to reward allies and punish adversaries, and therefore he will be able to exercise less control over the leadership of his party, the National Action Party (PAN). In fact, Felipe Calderon, the leader of the PAN delegation to the Chamber of Deputies, has stated that the PAN parliamentary group intends to display autonomy and independence when dealing

LUIS CARLOS UGALDE WAS CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE AMBASSADOR OF MEXICO TO THE UNITED STATES FROM NOVEMBER 1997 TO DECEMBER 2000. HE IS CURRENTLY A VISITING SCHOLAR AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOKS *The Mexican Congress, Old Actor, New Power* AND *Vigilando al Ejecutivo*. UGALDE HOLDS A PH.D. IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND A MASTER'S DEGREE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FROM COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

with the chief executive. Luis Felipe Bravo Mena, president of the PAN National Committee, reiterated Calderon's statement, saying that his party will maintain a respectful but independent relationship with the new president. As partisan powers slip from the presidential office, the nature and logic of presidential politics will undoubtedly undergo a dramatic transformation. This article describes the evolution of Mexican presidentialism during the 1929-2000 period and discusses the likely impact of Vicente Fox's administration on the Mexican presidential system.

THE PRESIDENTIAL INSTITUTION IN MEXICO

The president is the most important figure in Mexican politics, and the presidency is the most powerful organization in the political system. By occupying the office, regardless of personal qualifications, the Mexican president commands a wide array of political, economic, intelligence, and military resources. Even as Vicente Fox's presidency is expected to display less control over political actors, the president will continue to be the most influential player in Mexican politics.

Over the last decades, many scholars have studied the Mexican presidency and they tend to agree that it is the pivotal office of political power in the country. Jack Gabbert noted that "the presidency is the keystone in the governmental and political structure of the Mexican republic...the decision-making center of the Mexican political system."² For Mexican political analyst Crespo, the presidential institution is the "central column of the [Mexican] regime... the point of convergence...the arbiter of the conflicts among political and social groups."³ In 1972, renowned Mexican historian Cosío Villegas wrote that the two most important institutions in the Mexican political system are the presidential institution and the official party, the PRI. Finally, Córdova saw Mexico's president as the "supreme arbiter" to whom major political actors appeal to gain legitimacy and to resolve differences.⁴ Because of the common perception that too much power was concentrated in the Mexican presidency, various terms reflecting "excessiveness" were applied to describe the nature of Mexico's system. These terms included hyper-presidential, highly presidential, authoritarian presidency, absolute sexennial monarchy, and omnipotent presidency.⁵

Nevertheless, from a strictly constitutional perspective, Mexico has always been classified as having a presidential system with average powers—neither too excessive nor too limited.⁶ According to one categorization, countries like Korea, Chile, Paraguay, and Brazil, for example, have presidencies with greater power than in Mexico.⁷ Furthermore, formal presidential authority has diminished over the last two decades, while congressional powers have expanded.⁸ However, it is misleading to focus solely on analyses of formal and constitutional powers because, during the era of PRI presidents, partisan powers were a major source of

presidential power. Informal or metaconstitutional presidential powers explain why Mexican executives were able to govern with such considerable authority. There is almost universal agreement that the dual role played by the chief executive as head of both the PRI and the executive branch was the key element of the meta-constitutional powers and therefore the peculiar "strength" found in the Mexican presidency.⁹ Nonetheless, the metaconstitutional dimension has also been reduced in recent years and will certainly be severely curtailed now that Vicente Fox has taken office.

In order to evaluate both the constitutional and the partisan aspects of presidential power in Mexico, an "institutionalist" definition can be proposed. According to this definition, the Mexican presidential institution consists of a set of formal and informal powers that guide and set norms for the president's behavior, constrain his or her actions, and shape the behavior and expectations of other political actors in Mexico.¹⁰ Formal powers are established in the constitution and make the president the head of state as well as the head of government. Metaconstitutional powers are, on the other hand, informal rules that are not contained in any law. Their roots are in tradition and the nature of the political system, and, even though they are unwritten laws, all political players know them and abide by them. It was these meta-constitutional powers that made the president the head of the PRI party during the period covered by this study.¹¹

CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

Article 89 of the constitution is the main source that defines the formal powers of the president. The most important powers are the following:

1. To appoint and remove freely (that is, without congressional approval) ministers of state, and heads and senior managers of public enterprises;
 2. With the approval of the Senate, to appoint the attorney general, justices, consuls, ambassadors, military officers, high-level employees of the treasury ministry, and justices of the Supreme Court;
 3. To promulgate and enforce laws enacted by Congress (the president has line-item veto powers);
 4. To submit proposed laws directly to Congress;
 5. To maintain and preserve the internal and the international security of the state through the use of the armed forces and the National Guard and, with congressional approval, to declare war;
 6. To conduct monetary policy and decide on issues of domestic and foreign investment;
 7. To propose the revenue law and draft the annual budget bill;
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8. With the approval of Congress, to formalize international treaties and diplomatic negotiations;
9. To expropriate private property for reasons of general interest.

PARTISAN POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY

The partisan powers of Mexican presidents include the influence they had both in the selection and control of the PRI's leadership and its members in Congress, and in decisions on the party's candidates for elected offices. Presidential partisan powers emerged in the mid-1930s, when then president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) became the *jefe máximo* of the "revolutionary family," meaning that he was not only the head of government but also the "indisputable leader" of the party. The process of attaining this position was twofold. First, Cárdenas was able to eliminate other sources of leadership outside the presidency that had given rise to *caudillismo*: political instability, civil war, and coups d'état in the years preceding his rise to power. To do so, he built a broad coalition and expelled Plutarco Elías Calles from the country. Calles had founded the National Revolutionary Party (forerunner of the PRI) in 1929 and served as the party's de facto leader for many years.¹² Second, he changed the structure and the name of the original PNR to Mexican Revolutionary Party (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, PRM) in 1938. He reorganized the party along sectoral lines—workers, peasants, and the military—and, by doing so, became the indisputable leader not only of the party but also of the entire "revolutionary family." This corporatist structure allowed successive presidents and leaders of the PRM—and later of the PRI (starting in 1946)—to control party members and reward them via allocation of elected offices based on a quota system, which prevailed until the late 1980s.

It was during the Cárdenas presidency that the chief executive assumed de facto leadership of the party, and with it the informal power to handpick PRI candidates for elected office. By expelling *caudillo* Elías Calles in 1935, Cárdenas made the office of the presidency dependent on the institution rather than on the person who occupied it, and this established the foundations of modern Mexican presidentialism.¹³ By corporatizing the party structure and making its leader his agents, Cárdenas acquired partisan powers that laid the basis for future Mexican presidents to control PRI policies and decisions, and as a by-product, to curb *caudillismo* and violence. According to Centeno, "both the PRI and the strong presidency did provide the institutional stability which allowed Mexico to recuperate from the Revolution. The concentration of power in the incumbent, combined with the nonreelection clause, also prevented the consolidation of one-man rule."

Indeed, the Cárdenas period has been described as constituting the second period of the era of presidentialism in Mexico. The first corresponds to the drafting of the 1917 Constitution, in which the formal foundations of the presidency

were laid out. The second, corresponding to Cárdenas's term as president, set the foundation for the partisan powers of the presidency and made its occupant the indisputable leader of the political elite. The third era translated these powers into actual policy and political decisions—on economic, social, and political issues—making the presidency the most important institution in Mexico's social and political life.¹⁴

The partisan powers that emerged in the 1930s expanded presidential authority well beyond its constitutional boundaries and contributed to an image of "excess" and lack of accountability.¹⁵ Consequently, presidentialism in Mexico became synonymous with unrestrained and even authoritarian rule. As informal presidential authority diminished (as has been the case in recent years), Mexican presidentialism has become increasingly restricted to its purely legal domain and is destined to become part of a constitutional and democratic form of government. In all probability, this tendency will be consolidated under Vicente Fox, because—unlike the PRI presidents who preceded him—he will not have the informal powers and political instruments needed to control his party and its congressional delegations. The following section provides a description and a brief history of the development of the principal partisan powers of PRI presidents.

LEADERSHIP OF THE PRI

Although there has always been an official chair and a formal hierarchy within the party, it was the president who made or approved major decisions and designated the party leadership.¹⁶ Heading the party was a necessary condition for all metaconstitutional powers. By virtue of being the party's real leader, the president had the power to select its candidates for office as well as its leaders in Congress.

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

One of the immediate consequences of nonreelection was the president's personal involvement in the selection of PRI candidates for governorships, the Senate, key positions in Congress, and some mayoralties, in addition to his or her own successor. Nonreelectability created a system of mandatory office rotation at federal, state, and municipal levels—a situation that limited the voters' role in rewarding incumbents and increased the influence of the party and the president in the selection of candidates. Indeed, Cárdenas was the first beneficiary of the nonreelection clause, when in 1934, still as a presidential candidate, he participated in drafting lists of candidates for Congress. This informal practice not only continued after Cárdenas left office but also was reinforced as time went by; it became one of the primary informal institutions governing the behavior of PRI-affiliated politicians in Mexico.

During the period of study, the president had full control over the selection of PRI candidates for all elected offices. The most important example was the use of so-called *dedazo* (handpicking) in determining presidential succession. This process operated via *el destape* (unveiling of the candidate), by which the president concealed his or her preferred candidate (*el tapado*) until the proper time and then simply communicated the choice to party leaders. Then, the *tapado* was *destapado*, that is, the candidate was unveiled and nominated. These terms denote a highly vertical and closed process, yet one that enjoyed legitimacy and effectiveness until the early 1980s. According to Cornelius and Craig, "state governors...the leaders of Congress and the PRI, some high-ranking military officers, the heads of state-owned industrial enterprises, and hundreds of other officeholders [were] handpicked by each incoming president."¹⁷ In his book, Carpizo wrote that "the president [had] the final say in choosing governors," and as an example, quoted Braulio Maldonado, former governor of Baja California, who told the following story about his own selection process and that of other leaders: "I was chosen...by the president of the republic...and all officeholders of our country, high- or low-ranking, have been chosen in the same way, from 1928 to the present. This is an axiomatic truth."¹⁸

During his term in office, President Zedillo (1994-2000) limited his interference in these selection processes. Over the last few years, as the PRI began to hold open primary elections to select candidates, the president's influence decreased accordingly. However, for most of the period under study, the president had the final word in decisions about candidacies after negotiations among party leaders and other political actors had taken place. Former president López Portillo (1976-1982) coined the phrase that presidents are "*el fiel de la balanza*," meaning that they allowed everyone to express opinions, but that they made the final decision. Most recently, former president Carlos Salinas openly wrote in an autobiographical book that he had decided the presidential candidacies of both Luis Donaldo Colosio (assassinated while campaigning in 1994) and of Ernesto Zedillo, who substituted for Colosio after his death.

SELECTION OF CONGRESSIONAL PARTY LEADERSHIP

The president chose the majority leaders of both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate—which obviously required a PRI majority in both houses.¹⁹ In doing so, he was exerting control over legislators directly and indirectly through the congressional speaker, who was an agent of the chief executive.

The electoral predominance of the PRI over the period of study—from the executive branch to the legislative branch and across most of the state and local governments—played a major role in preserving these meta-constitutional powers. With the PRI in control of most political offices in Mexico, any ambitious politician

knew that the PRI was the only route to power. The more predominant the PRI was electorally, the stronger the president's leadership and control were over the political class. As political competition has grown, and other parties have become effective routes to political power, ambitious politicians are opting for affiliation to parties other than the PRI. Today, PRI candidacies have lost much of their appeal as an instrument of reward.

TRANSFORMATION OF PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

The presidential institution has undergone dramatic changes over the past few years, to such an extent that the nature of the Mexican presidential system has been altered forever. Even before Fox's election, the supposedly "omnipotent" powers of the president had already diminished considerably. Mexican historian Alicia Hernández labeled the years 1917-1940 "the empowerment period" of the presidency and the 1960s "the climax period," when a large public sector provided ample resources for presidential control and patronage.²⁰ Since the early 1980s, though, according to Hernández, presidential power has been gradually restricted as a result of various reforms that have been implemented from within the government (for example, electoral reforms and federalism). She defined this historical process as the "parabola of Mexican presidentialism." According to Mexican scholar Aguilar Villanueva, the Mexican process of democratic transition since the early 1980s was accompanied by a voluntary and gradual self-limiting process, in which the presidency itself retrenched from various activities in the economic and political arena.²¹ Jesús Orozco Henríquez wrote that, from the 1920s to the 1960s, presidential powers tended to increase in an effort to strengthen the president's role in guiding the building of the state.²² Starting in the 1970s, the process began to slowly reverse its course, strengthening the legislative and judicial branches of government.

However, beyond the formal constitutional limitations on presidential powers, the most important factor restricting the president's informal powers may be the limits Vicente Fox and his successors will likely face in their attempts to lead and control Congress and their parties. This change should help to bring about a more balanced and mutually independent relationship between the executive branch, on the one hand, and Congress, state governments, and other elected officials, on the other. Since 1997, President Zedillo had begun to face unprecedented autonomy and even conflict on the part of Congress members, but he maintained a tight grip on the PRI delegation to the Chamber of Deputies and the party's majority in the Senate, which provided a safety valve for him. Since he was declared president-elect in August 2000, Fox has faced a Congress in which his party does not command a majority in either house, and he himself does not exert political leadership and control over some important sectors of his own party.

APPOINTMENT POWERS

Over the past several years, various legal changes have limited the president's appointment powers:

1. The most relevant change is that the chief of the Federal District (the mayor of Mexico City) and the heads of the 16 city councils (*delegaciones*) are no longer appointed by the president but elected by popular vote. This is a change of major proportions in presidential powers because of the Mexico City government's capabilities and financial resources: the city has 8.5 million inhabitants, its budget is equivalent to 5.1 percent of federal outlays, and its production constitutes 24 percent of the country's GNP.²³
2. As of 1994, the appointment of the attorney general requires Senate confirmation, but the president is still responsible for nominating candidates.
3. Prior to 1994, the chief executive, subject to Senate confirmation, appointed Supreme Court justices. Now the president merely submits a list of candidates from which the Senate selects the justices.

PARTISAN POWERS

President Zedillo's administration made many changes regarding the president's meta-constitutional power to select candidates and party officials. Although no set of stable and clear rules was passed, in 1997 a tendency arose—based on trial and error—to select candidates through primaries. As early as November 1994, then president-elect Zedillo had proposed to establish a “healthy distance” (*sana distancia*) between the party and the presidency. Although his proposal was not reflected in the way party leaders continued to be selected, the idea of holding primaries to select PRI candidates began to gain momentum after 1997. The first open and regulated exercise in primary elections occurred successfully in 1998, in the State of Chihuahua in northern Mexico, when a variety of PRI candidates openly campaigned across the state. In the end, a local politician, with no direct ties either to the center or to the president, was nominated to and subsequently won the governorship.²⁴ After that experiment, other states began to implement a similar selection process.

The most relevant case in point, however, was the primary election held in November 1999 to select the PRI's presidential candidate. Four candidates had campaigned across the country, and despite accusations that the “official candidate” was Francisco Labastida, the process established a precedent for future electoral experiments. Given Mexican presidents' previous influence over the political elite—derived from their powers to handpick the party's presidential candidates—holding a PRI primary in 1999 was a major transformation in the logic of presidential politics, even before the PRI's defeat at the polls in July 2000.

Nevertheless, other candidates continued to be picked behind the scenes. President Zedillo may have indeed retrenched from direct participation, but PRI governors and party officials still wielded a great deal of leverage in the selection of candidates. The selection of candidates for the 2000 elections to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, for example, produced disenchantment and discord among many PRI members, because the process was perceived as simply another round of clientelism and patronage that rewarded allies and party bosses.

The most significant change in presidential partisan powers is still to come, however, because Vicente Fox has undoubtedly fewer political resources—at least in comparison with past presidents—in commanding discipline and loyalty from members of Congress and his own party. Even if a PRI candidate were to win a presidential election in the future, the ability to exert the same influence and control over the party would be lost. Furthermore, as the PRI becomes an opposition party, the logic that guides its relationship with the executive branch will change forever.

THE IMPACT OF DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

Before the arrival of expanded democratic representation, the presidency was the focus of political bargaining and representation in Mexico. Other political actors—Congress, for example—had a limited voice and little influence in policymaking. With the emergence of plurality, most notably since 1997, Congress has become a principal player in the Mexican political arena. In that year, for the first time in modern history, Mexico began experiencing a divided government, in which the president's party did not enjoy an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies. That fact began to change the logic and nature of relations between the executive branch and the legislative branch and led to unprecedented forms of political bargaining and compromise.

The outcome of the July 2000 presidential election produced the second consecutive experience of divided government, but this time with a non-PRI president at the helm: Vicente Fox is the chief executive, but his party—the National Action Party (PAN)—does not enjoy a plurality of seats in either house of Congress. This situation is creating previously unimagined dynamics in relations between both branches of government. Will a PAN president behave differently than his PRI predecessors did when dealing with his party's congressional delegations? Will the deputies and senators from the PAN act independently of the president or will they try to please the chief executive? What will the attitude of opposition members in Congress, especially those of the PRI, be toward the executive branch?

The consolidation of Mexican democracy must pass through two rounds of political reforms. The first, already completed, refers to electoral reforms that allow citizens' preferences to be translated into votes and elected officials. This is

the input side of democracy. Once elected, politicians are constantly faced with the temptation to disregard their mandate and to govern in their own interests, or on behalf of interest groups with whom they are allied. Therefore, it is imperative to establish additional control mechanisms to ensure that elected officials, especially those in the executive branch, will perform their duties honestly and efficiently while simultaneously pursuing policies aimed at the public good. This is the output side of democracy. Regular elections can induce some sort of accountability, but the main vehicle for guaranteeing political responsibility, efficiency, and honesty on the part of elected public officials remains in the hands of Congress.

With the increase in the political strength of opposition parties under PRI presidents, especially between 1997 and 2000, Congress gained a stronger voice, but it lacked an adequate institutional framework to translate this impetus into actual and effective legislative oversight. As pluralism becomes the rule rather than the exception, a new set of standards will need to be designed to enable Congress to control the executive branch. The institutional framework that governed relations between the executive and legislative branches of the Mexican government during the twentieth century hindered timely and effective congressional oversight, which would have counterbalanced the executive branch. The PRI has often been accused of having distorted congressional oversight efforts. This criticism would have probably been raised against any party that had maintained unified control of the presidency and Congress for such an extensive period. Therefore, future political reforms in Mexico should be designed with a long-term perspective in order to formalize a system of checks and balances, regardless of which party controls the presidency or Congress, or both. As soon as electoral reforms have had an impact on the democratization of Mexico, it will be up to the Congress to exercise its role in consolidating the country's democracy. ■

NOTES

¹ This article bears extensively on chapter 5 from a recently released book by the author. See Luis Carlos Ugalde, *The Mexican Congress: Old Actor, New Power* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000).

² Jack B. Gabbert, "The Mexican Chief Executive," in *Chief Executives: National Political Leadership in the United States, Mexico, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan*, edited by Taketsugu Tsurutani and Jack B. Gabbert (Spokane: Washington State University Press, 1992), 61.

³ José Antonio Crespo, *Jaque al Rey: Hacia un Nuevo Presidencialismo en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1996), 12.

⁴ Arnaldo Córdova, *La Formación del Poder Político en México* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1993).

⁵ See María Amparo Casar, "Las Bases Político-Institucionales del Poder Presidencial en México" *Política y Gobierno* 1(1) (1996); George Philip, *The Presidency in Mexican Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Kenneth F. Johnson, "Mexico's Authoritarian Presidency," in *Presidential Power in Latin American Politics*, edited by Thomas V. DeBacco (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977); Daniel Cosío Villegas, *El Sistema Político Mexicano* (Mexico City: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1972); and Frank Ralph Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern Mexico* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

⁶ See María Amparo Casar, "Las Bases Político-Institucionales del Poder Presidencial en México" *Política y Gobierno* 1(1) (1996); and Federico Reyes Heróles, "Porqué del Presidencialismo," *Diálogo y Debate de Cultura Política* (July-September 1997).

⁷ Matthew Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 152-157.

⁸ As a system of government, presidentialism does not necessarily imply authoritarian forms of political control. On the contrary, most of the presidential regimes in the world, including those in the Americas (including the United States), are currently democratic. According to Sartori, the characteristics of a presidential system are the following: (1) the president is elected by popular vote, (2) the president cannot be removed by a parliamentary vote during the term in office, and (3) the president is the head of government and appoints its members. See Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives, and Outcomes* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 83-86.

⁹ See María Amparo Casar, "Las Bases Político-Institucionales del Poder Presidencial en México" *Política y Gobierno* 1(1) (1996); Manuel Camacho Solís, "Los Nudos Históricos del Sistema Político Mexicano," in *Las Crisis en el Sistema Político Mexicano, 1928-1977* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1977); Jack B. Gabbert, "The Mexican Chief Executive," in *Chief Executives: National Political Leadership in the United States, Mexico, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan*, edited by Taketsugu Tsurutani and Jack B. Gabbert (Spokane: Washington State University Press, 1992); and Federico Reyes Heróles, "Porqué del Presidencialismo," *Diálogo y Debate de Cultura Política* (July-September 1997).

¹⁰ Here I follow Keohane's definition of institutions as "persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) which prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations." See Robert Keohane, "Neoliberal Institutionalism: A Perspective on World Politics," in *International Institutions and State Power*, edited by Robert Keohane (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 3. North presented a similar definition. See Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). In the Mexican literature, Roberto Blum used an institutionalist definition: presidentialism as the set of formal and informal powers at the disposal of the president of the republic. See Roberto Blum Valenzuela, *De la Política Mexicana y sus Medios: Deterioro Institucional o Nuevo Pacto Político?* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo, A.C., and Editorial Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1996).

¹¹ Twenty years ago, Carpizo used legal terms to analyze and distinguish the sources of presidential power in Mexico, one being the Constitution and the rule of law, the other being tradition and conventions. See Jorge Carpizo, *El Presidencialismo Mexicano* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1978).

¹² Plutarco Elías Calles was president of the republic from 1924 to 1928. Alvaro Obregón, who was to become his successor in December 1928, was assassinated a few months before his inauguration. In order to curb political violence, end the *caudillista* era, and make the transition to an era of institutions, as he envisioned, Calles founded the PNR in 1929, but he himself also became a *caudillo* by becoming a key political boss of the political class, in addition to being the president. Indeed, the period 1929-1936, during which he was the de facto chief of the PNR, is known as *el maximato* because of the political control and influence he exerted at the time. For a detailed discussion of this era, see Luis Javier Garrido, *El Partido de la Revolución Institucionalizada: La Formación del Nuevo Estado en México, 1928-1945* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1982).

¹³ See Arnaldo Córdova, *La Formación del Poder Político en México* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1993); and Roberto Blum Valenzuela, *De la Política Mexicana y sus Medios: Deterioro Institucional o Nuevo Pacto Político?* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigación Para el Desarrollo and Editorial Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1996).

¹⁴ María Amparo Casar, "Las Bases Político-Institucionales del Poder Presidencial en México," *Política y Gobierno* 1(1) (1996), 82.

¹⁵ María Amparo Casar, "Las Relaciones Entre el Poder Ejecutivo y el Legislativo: El Caso de México," *Política y Gobierno* 6(1) (1999).

¹⁶ Ample journalistic work on how presidents handpicked PRI leaders has been published. One of the most recent and famous episodes occurred in April 1993, when then president Salinas dismissed PRI chief Genaro Borrego over the telephone. According to newspaper reports, the name of Ortiz Arana, who became Borrego's successor, was transmitted by the same means. More recently, close aides of PRI chief Santiago Oñate (1995-1996) have provided evidence about how he was dismissed by President Zedillo in 1997.

¹⁷ Wayne A. Cornelius and Ann L. Craig, *The Mexican Political System in Transition* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1991), 33.

¹⁸ Jorge Carpizo, *El Presidencialismo Mexicano* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1978), 97.

¹⁹ In 1997, the PRI lost its absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies for the first time in the party's history.

²⁰ Alicia Hernández Chávez, "La Parábola del Presidencialismo Mexicano," in *Presidencialismo y Sistema Político: México y los Estados Unidos*, edited by Alicia Hernández Chavez (Mexico City: Colegio de México and Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994).

²¹ Manuel Villa Aguilera, *La Institución Presidencial* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Editorial Miguel Angel Porrúa, 1987).

²² Jesús Orozco Henríquez, "El Sistema Presidencial en el Constituyente de Querétaro y su Evolución Posterior," in *El Sistema Presidencial Mexicano* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1988).

²³ Mexico City is the most important state-level government in political and economic terms, and it has the budgetary resources and the size to reward loyal followers. The removal of Mexico City's mayor from the sphere of presidential appointees was sudden, because the first elected mayor happened to be a member of the PRD, an opposition party that was antagonistic to the PRI and to the chief executive. The mayor's inauguration brought to an end the vast array of resources available for presidential promotions.

²⁴ The governorship had been in the hands of a PAN member (Francisco Barrio), a result that added visibility to the PRI democratic experiment.