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THE NATURE OF THE MEXICAN STATE

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The Mexican state, apparently a solid and stable ruling coalition, is in reality a precarious association of ruling groups and interests finely balanced on a knife edge between repressive authoritarianism, probably military in nature, and political instability with mass politicization. While a few observers have from time to time suggested this characterization of the Mexican state, it is not, we believe, the most common current interpretation.[1]

The Mexican state is a "balancing act" because it is a political bargain among several ruling groups and interests representing a broad range of ideological tendencies and social bases. To a greater degree than in most stable and mature modern states, the political bargain is at the forefront of Mexican politics and of the administrative decision-making process. Because the Mexican state is a constantly renewed political bargain among ruling groups, the politics of daily renewal takes precedence over "politics as usual." Viewed another way, those who play "politics as usual" must be constantly aware of their interest in keeping together the fragile association which has served them so well.

In a sense, every new state represents a political bargain. With time, the bargain is transformed into a series of institutions which, if they work, make all but the most historically minded political participant forget the original terms of the bargain. The institutions, in other words, develop a life of their own.

The Mexican state is unique, however, in that it has never evolved from its original bargain into an institutionalized entity. The bargain that achieved political stability in the 1930's was one constructed between the representatives of lower-class revolutionaries and middle-class revolutionaries. The bargain was and remains an agreement to share power among the proponents of quite different interests and constituencies. It is the rigid discipline of the elites in not overstepping the bounds of the bargain, not institutions, which holds the system together. The system is therefore less a set of institutionalized structures (though structures like the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI] are there to trap the unwary observer) than a complex of well-established, even ritualized, strategies and tactics appropriate to political, bureaucratic and even private interaction <u>throughout</u> the system. More than anything else, the Mexican political system is a set of <u>ways of doing things</u>. The mechanisms for constantly renewing the political bargain necessary to keep diverse elements together account for the strange mixture of authoritarianism and negotiation observed in Mexican politics.

Some may object that our characterization of Mexican politics as a clearly defined set of "ways of doing things" is precisely what is meant by the term institutionalization. At one level this is true. It is important to note, however, that institutions in this very general sense differ widely in the degree to which they are structured and formalized. At one extreme are political structures (whether legally or constitutionally defined or not) such as legislatures, executive branches or parties. At the other are the very loose, informal institutions constituted by social conventions governing most and even the minutest aspects of daily life. Somewhere in between are social institutions, such as marriage. Marriage is governed and delimited by formal and legal rules but in essence its content is worked out and negotiated through polonged and intimate face-to-face interaction. At least in the United States today there is nothing inevitable about the maintenance of the "bargain"; its future depends on the constant efforts and sensitivity of the partners. It is at this latter level of the meaning of institution that we wish to explore the nature of the Mexican state.

To cite but one example of the problems confronting a structural institutional approach, Samuel Huntington uses Mexico as a major example of an institutionalized system which he contrasts with the praetorianism of most of the Third World.[2] His analysis suggests that whereas institutionalized systems can be analyzed in terms of the adaptiveness and flexibility of their (structured) institutions (particularly political parties), praetorian systems are most adequately understood (in the absence of viable institutions) in terms of common political tactics that include direct action by social forces, corruption and the "sell out" by political leaders of their followers.[3] As we shall see below, however, some of these praetorian tactics are not only commonly used in Mexico--indeed are "institutionalized"--but a strong argument can be made that they contribute in a very basic way to the stability of the system.[4]

We may resolve this apparent incongruity by viewing Mexican political stability as resting primarily not upon institutions such as the party or the presidency but rather upon two <u>themes of political action</u>. These themes are <u>political discipline</u> and <u>political negotiation</u>. They combine to reinforce and provide the flexibility for the bargain among the ruling groups. Their combination also accounts for the strong impression of dualism and paradox that has long been noted and explored by some of Mexico's most brilliant poets and philosophers.[5] Contemporary political analyses further reflect this dualism. Some observers have seen the Mexican president as extremely strong, others as quite weak. Some have viewed Mexico as an authoritarian system, others as a proto-democracy. Some have emphasized hierarchy, others, horizontal relationships and negotiation.[6]

The two themes of political discipline (closely linked to the concept of authoritarianism) and political negotiation (linked more to the proto-democratic concept) have in turn mixed and combined into a variety of quasi-institutions that we shall call <u>modes of political action</u>. The list of modes of political action presented here is probably not exhaustive, but includes what in our opinion are the most important: political clientelism (including the <u>camarilla</u> system), political turnover (elite circulation), the

reliance on political middlemen, and corruption, patronage and political entrepreneurism.

From the perspective of modes of political action, the structured institutions of Mexican politics that receive so much attention, the party, the presidency and the bureaucracy, are simply convenient formal frameworks within which the true balancing act, so necessary for the heterogeneous Mexican state to survive, is performed. This political "fine tuning" is carried out by means of fairly specific sets of rules and expectations which, while they may be regarded as institutions, are not structures. They do not, even in principle, have specific boundaries or a consistent internal organization. They are personalistic and at any given time they reflect the style, personality and goals of their members. In addition, the configuration of these personalistic relationships at any given instant is often secret, known only to a select few.

In the body of this paper we will first briefly examine the historical background of the bargain that gave rise not only to the institutional structure of the Mexican political system but also helped to institutionalize the specific modes of political action that hold it together. The next section will be devoted to a more detailed examination of the modes themselves and the final section to a discussion of the manner in which these interact to produce a pattern of political and administrative decision-making that we characterize as policy incoherence. In the conclusion we offer a characterization of the Mexican state with particular reference to its uniqueness among other Latin American states.

Intra-Elite and Elite-Constituency Relations

It is impossible to understand the contemporary Mexican political system without reference to its genesis. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 ended the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, a dictatorship that managed fairly successfully to hold in check the pronounced centrifugal forces of Mexican society. With the fall of Diaz, Mexico was plunged into a decade of civil war, as one group after another attempted to establish its hegemony over the others. None ever really succeeded in doing so. This helps to explain why the basis upon which the fighting ultimately terminated was a kind of pact among the competing revolutionary leaders and their personal followings in which they pledged themselves to mutual toleration and a division of the spoils that reflected the existing balance of power among them. The pact was symbolized by the still extant Constitution of 1917.

In the 1920's, two of the strongest leaders, Plutarco Elías Calles and Alvaro Obregón, entered into an alliance that tipped the balance of power sufficiently to enable them to alternate control of the Mexican presidency between them. The murder of Obregon in 1928, just as he was about to assume the presidency for the second time (after stitting out a term in favor of Calles), was a persuasive reminder of the consequences that could and probably would ensure from failure to abide by the original distributive bargain. Faced with the impossibility of succeeding himself in office, yet desiring to maintain control of the political system, Calles set up a catch-all official party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PRN), known since 1946 as the Partido Revolucionario

Institucional (PRI). Although his original intention was to rule indefinitely through a succession of puppet presidents, the plan was short lived. Others wanted their turn to lead and the opposition to the continuismo of Calles coalesced around Lázaro Cárdenas, president of Mexico from 1934-1940. Committed more than most to the previously ignored social justice goals of the Mexican Revolution, and also to building a power base for himself independent of that of Calles, he initiated a massive land distribution program, restructured the official party so as to bring the weight of the organized workers and peasants into play, and built up the state bureaucracy at the expense of the political party. By the end of his term, the Mexican political system looked more or less as it does today.

Given its origins as a pact among revolutionary leaders, it comes as no surprise that one of the most striking aspects of the Mexican political system is emphasis on hierarchy. It is an alliance among the few that is the basis for the prevailing authoritarian conceptualization of the Mexican political system. As in the past, the leaders come from varied socio-economic backgrounds, but they share more or less equitably in the spoils of government. The gap between their living standards and those of the masses is extremely large, and their common interest is to avoid conflict, social movements, and the like that would threaten the continued viability of the alliance that has served them so well. This helps explain the emphasis on political control and the preference for behind-the-scenes decision-making limited to as few participants as possible. It also explains the avoidance of public discussion of policy options that would tend to expand the arena of conflict, the opposition to spontaneous mass movements that are viewed as destabilizing and the ruthless intolerance of aspiring counter-elites who refuse to be co-opted and of existing members of the coalition who cease to abide by the rules of the political game.

Hierarchy and elitism, however, are only half the story. Because of the revolutionary origins of the political system, the constituencies or bases of support of the rulers are not exclusively elitist. The original ruling alliance was superimposed upon a society that included mobilized peasants and urban workers. From the very beginning, therefore, at least some leaders had peasant or working-class constituencies and/or backgrounds. This produced the great paradox of the Mexican political system. It is simultaneously an elitist and mass-based system. The consituencies of the rulers run the gamut from the richest to the poorest in society.

The political system established in the 1920's was essentially an alliance among elites for the distribution rather than the redistribution of wealth. It was a system concerned with ratifying existing political and economic relationships, not with changing them. In fact, as was already noted, the rulers had a common interest in keeping the system as elitist as possible, which meant avoiding the formation of broad social movements aimed at changing the status quo. And although the system from the very beginning contained a populist element because of the links between various revolutionary leaders and their peasant and worker constituents, it was a unique kind of populism. Unlike the populism characteristic of Brazil, Chile and Argentine in recent years, Mexican populism

has tended to mobilize functional and geographical sections of the population (tobacco growers in Nayarit but not those in Veracruz, for example). Mexican populism has always been highly successful at mobilizing particular categories of people in the name of specific bread-and-butter demands while dampening, through cooptation and repression, either further demands or the rapid spread of these demands to other groups. Tiny segments of social classes are mobilized in the name of social justice but class-based mobilization is firmly and successfully discouraged. In this sense Mexican populism has had a disaggregated quality that elites in other Latin American countries might envy but have had difficulty duplicating.

It is important to point out, however, that although the populism of the system was channeled into a distributive and disaggregative mode, it built into the system the possibility for a very gradual wider distribution of new resources. Because of the populist strain in the political system, it has always been legitimate in Mexico for aspiring members of the political elite to mobilize the have-nots as long as their goal is the incorporation of the disadvantaged group into the existing distributive framework rather than the destruction of the system. The rules of the game also required, however, that once the aspiring leader became a member of the elite alliance and his followers had been rewarded, the leader would be amenable to keeping his newfound constituents' demands under control in return for his advancement to elite status.

The continuous expansion of the political elite as a result of this process also implies the expansion of the number of people who receive economic payoffs and thereby improve their standard of living. Whether such improvement is at the expense of those who already receive economic benefits or not depends on the rate at which the economy is able to grow. If the economy can keep pace with the new demands being placed on it, the newly incorporated groups will be given new resources and conflict will be kept to a minimum. If the economy cannot grow fast enough, the new groups will be paid off with a portion of existing resources and such redistribution of resources will put a visible strain on the distributive system. The latter was the situation during the Echeverria administration, while the former characterized the halcyon days of desarrollo estabilizador or stabilizing development under President Díaz Ordaz.

We might also add here that although reliable data are lacking it is our strong impression that Mexico's "distributive populism" is producing an expanded middle class. The groups that manage to gain entry to the distributive network are never the poorest, since these are not organized. Recent assertions, therefore, that the gap between the richest and the poorest people in Mexico is increasing are probably accurate. But the new groups that are improving their economic situation, whether as a result of higher prices for their products (as is the case of the tobacco workers) or access to subsidized basic foodstuffs via the expansion of CONASUPO outlets,[7] are moving toward middle-class living standards. Income distribution statistics conceal their progress because they do not take account of the numerous non-wage economic benefits that are distributed in Mexico. Studies are needed to verify this hypothesis.

Despite the obviously inequitable distribution of resources in Mexico, therefore, the conclusion that the economically disadvantaged groups in society lack political leverage is not inevitable. Mexican political leaders are often severely circumscribed in terms of what they can or cannot do to or with their lower-class constituents. Let us cite some examples. Although the ejido system (the system of collective agricultural holdings) is often viewed as unproductive from the perspective of the national capitalist economy, the government is unable to abolish it. Nor can it cease channeling funds into the ejidos. It cannot even make credits contingent on productivity or sanction peasants for failure to repay loans. As one informant explained, "I don't think the government wants to create any new Zapatas." When urban or rural land invasions occur in Brazil, the hapless invaders are summarily removed.[8] In Mexico the government solution to peasant invasions is to allow the peasants to remain on the land and sometimes even to give them tools and money with which to work it as well as to compensate the landowners for their loss.

The same pattern is followed in urban areas. Rather than remove the invaders, the government has set up new agencies such as CORETT, whose principal role is to regularize title to the invaded lands. CORETT does this by purchasing the lands from their owners and selling it to the invaders at reasonable prices. In Brazil, when the government decides that slums are unsightly and make poor use of valuable urban real estate, the favela dwellers are bulldozed off the site. In Mexico, the most recent attempt to do that resulted in the political fall of Ernesto Uruchurtu, the powerful Regent of the Federal District who had been unremovable until then.

The situation with organized labor is similar. Although most analyses correctly stress the control of organized labor, and the way in which its corrupt leaders enrich themselves at the expense of their rank and file and in return for keeping labor gains low, the full picture is somewhat more complicated. Employers complain that they cannot fire union members and small businessmen in particular find their profits continually squeezed by obligatory contributions for social security, profit-sharing, worker housing and the like. There is now a system of annual negotiations over minimum wages and according to participants, the bargaining is real and rough. One student of the labor movement went so far as to state that "the government controls labor basically by giving it what it wants."[9] This overstatement nevertheless calls attention to the distinction and trade-off between the government's political and economic control of organized labor.

Not all ruling groups in Mexico, however, have lower class bases of support. Nor are all constituencies exclusively extra-governmental. For various reasons, among which are included the fact that Mexico is a late-industrializing country with a long tradition of state involvement in its capitalist economy, the government bureaucracy is extremely large. There are many members of the political elite whose constituencies are within the state enterprises and decentralized agencies like PEMEX (Petróleos Mexicanos, the nationalized oil industry), government ministries or the like. These political elites use the resources of the public sector

of the economy as a power base in a similar way to that in which the resources of the private sector of the economy are used by business elites. Still other leaders base their power on groups both within and outside the government. Finally, there are members of the ruling coalition, mainly highly trained economists and technicians, who have no visible constituency support but who rise to positions of great power simply because they can provide their expertise to a particular president at a particular point in time to help solve a particular set of problems.

Themes and Modes of Political Action

The preceding overview has emphasized the importance of both the vertical links between elites and their constituencies and the horizontal intra-elite connections. It is now relevant to ask: What are the mechanisms that make these connections work? We suggested at the outset that the answer could be posed in terms of two general themes of political action: political discipline and political negotiation. The former is more easily observable because it constitutes the outward display of the gross institutional structure.

Virtually all recent analyses of Mexican politics refer to Mexico as an authoritarian system. The concept of authoritarianism has been discussed extensively elsewhere and we do not need to repeat here what we and others have said.[10] Very briefly, an authoritarian system emphasizes the centralization of power, the flow of decisions from "the top down" rather than demands from "the bottom up," deference to authority, limited pluralism, and the willingness to use violent repression when other methods of cooptation and control fail.

Many observers have noted the use of repression in Mexican politics; what has been less thoroughly explored is the importance of self-discipline by competing elites. One element of the political bargain in Mexico is that it rests less on a traditional authoritarian structure than on a system of rational calculation and realistic expectations (for elites). The structure of authority at the political decision-making level in Mexico is overwhelmingly utilitarian even for political actors at very low levels. Political culture and traditional authority patterns based on them obviously have a part to play in understanding the system but it is striking how much of Mexican politics can be comprehended by assuming a model of the rational political actor. Traditional political authority patterns appear to be incorporated and made to serve the ends of a finely tuned pattern of political discipline based on rational calculation of strategy by political actors with clean perceptions of the limits and opportunities inherent in their environment.

The emphasis on political discipline is clear in most public manifestations of Mexican politics. The state's principal spokesman, the Mexican president, is never publicly criticized. In fact, his words echo throughout the system and all politicians appear to be speaking with one voice. The president sets the tone for the nation during his six-year term, and all below him follow his lead. When the tone is radical and conflictual, as it was during the Echeverría sexenio, the country teems with social revolutionaries. When the tone is more conservative and conciliatory, as it became once López Portillor took office, the same

politicians "demagogically denounce demagogery," as one Mexican put it, and extoll the virtues of increased efficiency and productivity.

Perhaps this sense of political discipline and control is projected most clearly in the presidential selection process. The competition for the top office is intense and all aspiring members of the political elite give the campaign their best. But once the official candidate is announced, political differences are buried and the race to jump on the political bandwagon of the vitorious candidate ("irse a la cargada"), begins. Nowhere in Latin America is the closing of ranks behind the winner so impressive, as the visibly hurt losers publicly declare that "the best man won" and governors and other high-ranking politicians announce in the newspapers how they had always supported the winning candidate. The same closing of ranks characterizes the political decision-making process. All groups involved in the decision process, despite their original stand on the issue, greet its result with joyous announcements of unanimous support for the outcome.

Self-discipline of course rests to some extent on the threat of imposed discipline. The image of the strong state is reinforced by the way in which it deals with dissent. Even members of the ruling coalition who exceed the narrow limits of allowable opposition are dealt with harshly. When the outspoken editor of Excelsior took President Echeverría's "democratic opening" too seriously and persisted in criticizing high-ranking government officials, the government organized a peasant invasion of the lands owned by the Excelsior cooperative, a maneuver that "encouraged" the shareholders to vote Excelsior's editor out of office. For less well-placed dissenters, the costs of dissent may prove even higher. When popular peasant leader Rubén Jaramillo could not be dissuaded from continuing his efforts to organize dissatisfied peasants, his body, together with those of his family, were found riddled with army bullets at the side of a country road. The brutal repression of student demonstrations, resulting in several hundred dead in 1968 and 1971, has been repeated on a smaller scale at frequent intervals.

Members of the private sector are not exempt from political discipline. Most members of the private sector interviewed by us expressed the understanding that they would be severely punished for major political sins such as publicly insulting the president, or too obviously thwarting the goals of powerful political figures. Indeed there is evidence that over the last decade or so two or three major economic "empires" have fallen at least partly because of bad political relationships between their leaders and powerful politicians or bureaucrats.[11]

Since maintenance of self-discipline and acceptance of discipline when it is imposed do not rest entirely upon the threat of punishment, rational calculation of individual or group interest is important. Such calculation must be based on an understanding of how personal and ideological goals may be realized within the context of political discipline. In this way the negotiation theme legitimizes the political discipline theme but at the same time modifies it. It is the interaction between these two themes that helps us to comprehend the extraordinary stability of elite interaction in Mexico in recent decades. We will spend considerably

more time on the theme of negotiation in this paper not because it is more important but simply because it has received less attention in the context of the analysis of the authoritarian state.[12] It should be kept in mind, however, that the discipline theme creates much of the environment in which the four modes of political action discussed below operate. In some cases discipline forms an important "other face" to the theme of negotiation. This is particularly true of political clientelism, which introduces our discussion of the modes of political action.

The present Mexican political system, as noted above, evolved from an alliance among elites, each of whom had their specific followings. From the beginning and into the present therefore, the patron-client relationship was an essential aspect of Mexican politics.[13]

The patron-client relationship is essentially a personalistic relationship between unequals. The more powerful member of the alliance commits himself to provide protection, material rewards and intangible benefits such as improvements in status. In return, the subordinate member of the relationship offers loyalty and support to the patron. Since there are many levels of authority, one patron's client may be the patron of a client even lower than himself in the power hierarchy.

Each client picks his patron carefully, since if a patron's fortunes improve, it implies material and status advancement for the client. It is obvious that a patron needs more than one client, but it is equally true that a client requires more than one patron, since it is risky to put all one's eggs in one basket.

The grouping of several levels of patron-client relations together is called in Mexico a camarilla. The camarilla takes on the name of the highest-ranking person or supreme patron. Below him are his clients, all of whom are basically equal in status. Below them are their own followers. A camarilla therefore combines people who are equal in rank and those who are unequal.

In a political system where there is little change at the top, there is a tendency for patron-client networks and camarillas to crystallize and perhaps for polarization to set in among them. When there is little movement at the top of an authoritarian system, it becomes fairly easy to identify who is in and who is out of power, as well as to know which patrons go with which clients. In Mexico, however, this is not the case.

Since the murder of Obregón in 1928, no Mexican president has served more than a single term in office. And since the presidency of Cárdenas (1934-1940), a presidential term has been fixed at six years. This means that every six years in Mexico the supreme patron is removed and replaced by another who has different loyal followers. They in turn have different followers and so on down the system. The fact that there is a high degree of turnover of positions with the advent of a new president has never been disputed. Brandenburg, for example, estimated over a decade ago that each sexenio approximately 18,000 elective offices and 25,000 appointed posts changed hands.[14] What was disputed, however, was whether what was occurring was a game of musical chairs, or whether most

of a substantial proportion of the dispossessed job-holders actually left politics to pursue their private interests. Recent research by Peter H. Smith has confirmed that the latter is the case.[15] According to his data, approximately one third of the former officeholders leave the government at the end of a presidential sexenio. Every three sexenios (or eighteen years) there is a complete turnover of personnel.

The high degree of turnover is combined in Mexico with a presidential selection process that to this day remains a mystery. Despite its secretive nature, there was a point at which people began perceiving a pattern, as several presidents succeeded to the presidency from their position as Minister of the Interior. This supposed pattern was broken in 1958 with the selection of the Minister of Labor as the presidential candidate, and again in 1976 with the nomination of Treasury Minister José López Portillo. And by naming Jesús Reyes Heroles as Minister of the Interior, a man who is constitutionally unable to become president because his parents are not Mexican citizens, President López Portillo has eliminated any semblance of a patterned ascent route to the presidency.

The high turnover and unpatterned presidential success process give vertical linkages in Mexico a particular and unique character. Patron-client links must be less permanent and more flexible, since today's high-powered patron may be tomorrow's loser. As one informant expressed it, "You have to play by the rules and this essentially means showing loyalty but not too much. You get burned if you're too close to somebody who is very high up."

Contacts must be as broad as possible, since they increase your chances of picking a winner. Ideological differences are downplayed and patrons are sought who cover the entire ideological spectrum. This is especially important in Mexico where the presidency appears to alternate between presidents who are flamboyantly reform-oriented and those who are consolidators of the status quo. Care must also be taken never to write anyone off in the political game prematurely. As one businessman told us, "Mexican politicians are like the phoenix. They are capable of rising from the ashes." López Portillo's cabinet choices illustrate this well. The new Minister of Health, Emilio Martínez Manatou, was one of Echeverría's principal rivals for the presidential nomination, and Reyes Heroles of the Interior Ministry resigned from the presidency of the official party after a falling out with Echeverría. Their relationship with the new president, however, not with the old, is what counts.

The extreme pragmatism and flexibility that characterizes personalistic relationships in Mexico is highlighted by this anecdote:

> While Mr. X was Director of Credit, he played squash every week with Mr. Y. After he had left his post as Director of Credit, the squash game ceased. The one day the ex-Director of Credit ran into his former squash partner and asked what had happened to their squash game. The man replied, "Oh, I still play golf every week with the Director of Credit."

The fact that the basic interpersonal links of the system are always in flux makes it difficult to identify the structure of the camarillas, since that too is always changing. And to a certain extent, it is in everybody's interest to keep their alliances from becoming public knowledge, since disclosure decreases flexibility and maneuverability. Nevertheless, the identities of some of their higher-ranking members often become public knowledge as a result of the inability to contain inter-camarilla competition at the ministerial level. The political column of the newspaper El Universal, for example, frequently provided blow-by-blow descriptions of the political battles waged within the Agrarian Reform Secretariat during 1976:

> The fight in the SRA is said to be between Agusto Gómez Villanueva and Hugo Cervantes del Río. The circumstantial evidence offered in support is that the Official Mayor, Guillermo Romero Martínez, supposedly directed by Agusto, attacked Sergio Reyes Osorio, whom Gómez Villanueva wants to eliminate from the SRA before the next sexenio begins, because he has shown ideological flexibility and has taken refuge near the ex-secretary of the presidency (Cervantes del Río). This is why Hugo tried almost the impossible task of putting in as Sub-secretary of New Population Centers, a position that has just been vacated, Pedro Vázquez Colmenares, who has always been loyal to him.[16]

This kind of infighting goes on constantly and at all levels of the political system, because the top position, the presidency, is up for grabs every six years. The most powerful members of the political elite must therefore constantly expand their network of alliances while ensuring that their principal competitors do not outmaneuver them.

Since the alliance system is fluid, and people are always looking for useful contacts or for ways of broadening their bases of support, it is also never too late for outsiders to be brought into the personalistic networks, providing they agree to abide by the rules of the game. This helps explain how former leaders of the 1968 student movement were able to become high-ranking political officials during the Echeverría administration a short time later.

The fluidity and flexibility also shed some light on the phenomenon of the omnipresent middleman in Mexican politics. The middleman is a person who is unique for the exceptionally broad range of contacts that he has cultivated. He spends his time bringing together people whose paths would otherwise never cross. This facilitates the integration of very varied kinds of people and interests into the political system and enables high-ranking members of the political elite to broaden considerably their bases of support when they deem it expedient to do so. Middlemen in Mexico are used to touch bases with the alienated left as well as the alienated right. During the Echeverría administration, they helped to establish contact with the guerrillas in Guerrero state as well as with the angry businessmen of Monterrey.

How is such an intricate system of personalistic alliances held together? The fact that there is continuous turnover of political positions helps, since there is always the promise, and often the reality, of a political appointment, if not this year, then next, if not this sexenio, then next sexenio. And if there is not enough patronage available, new jobs can be created. The Mexican bureaucracy expands at an amazing rate, providing the opportunity to reward loyal supporters and attract new ones. One study found a 144% increase in the number of department heads between 1956 and 1972.[17] Measured in monetary terms, the increases are even more impressive. In 1970, for example, the old Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization had a budget of 125,000,000 pesos; in 1976, after it had been transformed into the Secretariat of Agrarian Reform, its budget totaled 1,164,000,000 pesos.[18]

The additional people who are hired in the process of bureaucratic expansion may actually have little work to do. Frequently, however, the new positions correspond to new functions or duties of the bureaucratic agency. As one informant illustrated:

> The Secretariat of Hydraulic Resources, for example, is supposed to build irrigation works. It should do this exclusively. But one of the strategies of the bureaucracy in Mexico is to broaden its own function so that it expands, and the SRH is doing many things that are really within the jurisdiction of the Secretariat of Agriculture, like setting up demonstration farms.

Bureaucratic expansion, however, no matter how dramatic, cannot provide the number of rewards necessary, and so it is supplemented by corruption. Political corruption in Mexico permeates all levels of the hierarchy. The local comisariado ejidal (the person in charge of supervising the ejido) can supplement his salary by illegally renting ejido lands to private farmers, or by organizing "his" peasants to invade private landholdings and subsequently negotiating their removal in return for a payoff from the landowner. Union leaders also do not lack means for supplementing their earnings. During 1976, for example, the Secretary-General of a section of the Petroleum Union was accused of selling 308 union positions to temporary workers at the cost of 50,000 to 60,000 pesos (4,000-4,8000 dollars) each.[19]

At a somewhat higher level is a top official of the Secretariat of Agriculture who bought a building for a new program housed in the Secretariat and earned a million pesos on the deal. And finally there are the impossible to prove but widely believed rumors regarding the astronomical fortunes made by ex-presidents. As a popular Mexican joke put it: "Question: How do you say fraud in Chinese? Answer: Can cun." (In reference to the recently developed tourist resort of Cancun.)

Not only is corruption found at all levels, it is also highly institutionalized. There are apparently unwritten rules regarding what is considered to be a reasonable amount to skim off. As one official

explained: "When bribing on import permits, the rule of thumb is 7% of the value of the product." Another informant, a Mexican businessman, more or less confirmed this estimate: "Mordidas [bribes] have increased tremendously in recent years. They used to be about 5%. Now this is not considered enough." Still another government official summed it up by saying: "As you go up in the political hierarchy, augment the quantity [of corruption] by zeros."

Perhaps the ultimate in institutionalization of corruption is the "Año de Hidalgo," which derives its name from a poem that goes: "Este es el Año de Hidalgo; Buey el que no roba algo." (This is the Year of Hidalgo; He is a fool who doesn't steal something.) The Year of Hidalgo is the final year of a six-year presidential term and the reference to Hidalgo no doubt refers to the picture of Miguel Hidalgo that appears on the peso note. The Year of Hidalgo is a year especially set aside for wholesale private appropriation of public monies. In a political system where there is such a large turnover of political elites, something must be done to compensate those members of the political elite who are about to be retired from public office. The Year of Hidalogo is the Mexican solution to the problem of how to retire politicians without provoking intraelite conflict. And thus every six years, as a presidential administration draws to a close, important politicians are named to positions where the opportunities for personal enrichment are seemingly limitless.

Also related to the need to retire a portion of the political elite every six years is the existence of a category of people whom we have tentatively labeled the political entrepreneurs. Such individuals are usually important ex-politicians (although the category sometimes includes political incumbents), who have availed themselves of the privileges and contacts of high office in order to acquire substantial economic interests. These people are not entrepreneurs in the classic sense of the term, because, as one businessman explained, "They don't create anything. They simply buy up things that already exist." The businesses they choose to enter are usually those which depend for their existence on concessions from, or a special relationship with, a government ministry, state enterprise, or decentralized agency. It is thus a case of the political elites looking out for one of their own.

Political entrepreneurs come in various shapes and sizes. There are the high-ranking engineer in Pemex and his brother, who were accused of being owners of 200 pipes with a value of one million pesos each, which they rent to Pemex.[20] There is "La Quina," the head of a section of the Petroleum Workers Union who "makes the petroleum workers work without pay in the enterprises that he runs--supermarkets, clothing factories, factories that make utensils, movie theatres, restaurants, housing developments and farms."[21] There is the former governor of Guerrero State who owns the so-called whale and dolphin buses that operate under a government concession thoughout the Mexico City area.[22] And there are the "generals, ex-deputies, ex-governors, ex-public-functionaries and the chauffeurs of ex-presidents, as well as movie stars and other influential people" who are given the highly lucrative concessions to operate the gas stations of the state petroleum monopoly, Pemex.[23]

Many political entrepreneurs also invest heavily in urban and rural real estate. Between late 1975 and mid-1976, the following revelations were among those that appeared in the Mexico City newspapers: The ex-governor of Chihuahua owns thousands of hectares of land in the state. The former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court owns 120,000 hectares of forest land in the state of Chiapas. The former head of the Department of the Federal District, as well as the former Minister of Public Works, own ejidal and community lands. And the Director of the National Bank of Public Works owns 30,000 hectares of land divided among ten ranchos in the state of San Luis Potosi.[24] It was also common knowledge that the former Governor of the State of Mexico had extensive landholdings in the urban areas developed during his tenure in office, not to mention the ownership of highly valuable Ciudad Satellite lands by former Mexican President Miguel Alemán Valdés.

Some ex-politicians do become industrial leaders, but they are the exception. The Roldan petrochemical group, for example, was started by a former director of Pemex, who, an informant said, "believed in redistribution of income--toward himself." Aaron Saenz, a general who fought in the Mexican Revolution, later became the owner of some of the largest sugar mills in the country, and ultimately diversified his holdings to include airlines, banks, insurance companies and the like. But perhaps the most well-known such person in Mexico is former President Miguel Alemán, who, in addition to his extensive real estate holdings, owns hotels, television stations, and, operating behind front men, reputedly owns controlling interest in Tubos de Acero de México (which sells great numbers of pipes to Pemex) and controlling interest in Celulose de Chihuahua, a prosperous rayon pulp mill.

Modes of Political Action and Policy Incoherence

The mechanisms that have evolved for maintaining the delicate balance among elites and between elites and masses has a highly fragmentive impact upon the formation of public policy. On one hand it is true that at a certain level, political discipline extends to areas of economic and social policy. Whether a Mexican president goes down in history as a reformer or supporter of the status quo, his announced priorities, parroted by all below him, are always the same: the implementation of the social justice goals of the Mexican Revolution. All Mexican politicians are by definition"revolutionaries" and the improvement of the standard of living of the peasants and workers is their most highly publicized public policy priority. When inequities continue to persist, the culprit is always the same: it is the "malos mexicanos" (bad Mexicans), usually members of the private sector, or "fuerzas oscuras" (hidden forces), often foreign business and political opponents, who are responsible for the failure to achieve social justice. More interested in profits than in Mexico's progress, they are antirevolutionary parasites who take from the state and give little in return. On the other hand, when we turn our attention to the day-to-day decision-making process, a different impression emerges.

Despite the one voice with which Mexican politicians speak publicly, "dentro del gobierno hay muchas lenguajes" (within the government, many languages are spoken). Within Mexico there is no firm agreement on how to classify this variety of voices. One respondent divided the public sector into four main groupings, each of which includes more than one ministry and none of which encompasses all high-ranking members of each ministry:

> First there are Il Vaticani or the Curia. This group includes prominent Treasury and Bank of Mexico people. Popes come and go but the Curia remains. Then there are the Corleones, to use a more modern analogy. They are attached to the Interior and Justice Ministries and the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional). Next come the Técnicos. These are the engineers centered mainly in Ministries like Hydraulic Resources. Finally there are the Guerillas, the left-wing ideologues who, during the Echeverría administration, have been concentrated in the National Patrimony Ministry.

An overlapping model of the Mexican state placed each ministry in a category by itself, along a basically left-right spectrum. A particular ministry's policy stance was attributed to the interests of its constituents:

> In Mexico, whatever balance of power there is exists within the executive branch. . . . Power groups work through the different ministers. All different political leanings from right to left are represented. The Treasury represents the banks' point of view, Industry and Commerce represents industry's point of view, Agriculture represents that of the small farmers, Agrarian Reform, that of the ejidatarios, and National Patrimony represents the views of the state enterprises.

Both classification schemes attribute specific, identifiable policy positions to particular ministries. In the course of our research, however, we found that some ministries exhibited greater policy consistency than others, for reasons that will be discussed below. The two polar extremes during the Echeverría administration were the Treasury and the Ministry of National Patrimony. The latter represented, to paraphrase a remark by former President López Mateos, the extreme left within the Constitution. They were the above-mentioned "guerrillas," the vocal nationalists who attacked the absues of multinational corporations, criticized the pampered national businessmen, and favored the expansion of the state into the economy and the nationalization of important industries. The Treasury, in contrast, was the home of the "Curia." It advocated a balanced budget, low taxes on the private sector to encourage savings and investment, a controlled labor movement to keep wage demands down and wages low, and the creation of a good investment climate to attract foreign investment.

On the major policy issues we studied, the fiscal conservatism of the Treasury was always apparent. The Treasury did not favor the construction of the Las Truchas steel complex in Michoacan state because of the huge expense

such an investment would entail. It feared the project would be inflationary and further unbalance Mexico's budget. Major opposition to the elimination of bearer (or anonymous) shares came from the Treasury and the Bank of Mexico during the intragovernmental bargaining over fiscal reform. The argument was that such a reform would damage Mexico's investment climate and would cause capital to flee abroad. Nacional Financiera (the government development bank) had to scale down its plans for setting up industries to produce capital goods, also because of Treasury concern with overspending; and it was the Treasury Minister who in the 1960's favored increasing the domestic price of sugar so as to increase government revenues and avoid subsidizing the industry. When all else failed, as often happened, the Treasury and the Bank of Mexico used the threat of devaluation as a means to counteract President Echeverría's propensity to spend money.

The Ministry of National Patrimony, which regulates and controls the ever-growing number of state enterprises and decentralized industries, not surprisingly took a statist position on all issues. In stark contrast to the Treasury, it showed very low sensitivity to the interests and concerns of the private sector. It pushed, for example, increased state involvement in and control of the Mining Industry, and the new Mining Law, which originated in National Patrimony, achieved just that. National Patrimony also strongly supported the building of Las Truchas, arguing that it would open a new growth pole within Mexico and that increased steel production was necessary for the continued rapid industrialization of Mexico. Under the leadership of Horacio Flores de la Pena in particular, the long-standing practice of allowing public enterprises to show deficits in order to subsidize the infrastructure costs of private industrialists began to be reversed, and the state enterprises were encouraged to improve the efficiency of their operations. This state-oriented ministry also supported the inclusion of private agricultural banks under the new Agrarian Reform Law, which increased government regulation of agricultural lending practices. Finally, when the tobacco industry became a focus of conflict, the Minister of National Patrimony reportedly offered the mainly foreign tobacco companies the choice between "Chileanization or Mexicanization." The latter was ultimately achieved, for as one member of the private sector put it, "When the government offers you two soups and one is poison, the other seems delicious."

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (SIC) during the Echeverría years had a less consistent, but nonetheless identifiable, position on policy issues. It combined moderate statism with a high sensitivity to the interests of foreign and domestic businesses, supported the creation and implementation of laws to control foreign investment, the transfer of technology and patents and marks, but fought hard against the more radical versions of such legislation emanating from CONACYT.[25] It favored Mexicanization in principle, but opposed it for industries where it felt that Mexico stood to lose more than it gained by pushing for Mexicanization. It kept improving the enforcement capabilities of its Foreign Investment Commission while insisting on its need and right to allow exceptions to the Law when it felt it was in Mexico's interest to do so. And although it supported industrial decentralization, it did not want to use a harsh penalty system against industries in order to ensure the success of such a program.

In contrast to the ministries just discussed, there are those that seem to lack any ideological coherence. They are plagued by intra-ministerial conflict and highly visible corruption. particularly noteworthy in this regard is the cabinet-status Department of the Federal District (DDF), which has the responsibility for Mexico City and its surrounding area. The DDF seems to spend a great deal of its time drawing up plans for the development of the Mexico City metropolitan area. Despite the existence of these plans, it is difficult to ascertain with any degree of accuracy what its position is on even basic issues such as the desirability or undesirability of the continued growth of Mexico City. During the Díaz Ordaz administration, the Department was highly praised for supporting and constructing the metro. Under the succeeding administration of Luis Echeverría, however, it resisted efforts to extend the metro, despite the city's obvious need for a more extensive subway system, and instead constructed the infamous Circuito Interior, a circular freeway within the city, to facilitate travel in automobiles--in a city where traffic moves at the average arate of three miles per hour and where the overwhelming number of inhabitants are too poor to own a car.

The Secretariat of Agrarian Reform also lacks a clear policy orientation. Some functionaries favor collectivization of the ejido, others want the ejidos to continue being farmed as discrete units; some favor the expropriation of private agricultural holdings and their redistribution is not the answer to Mexico's rural problems and favor programs encouraging rural industries; some favor the devolution of significant decision-making power to the peasants; others believe this would seriously threaten Mexico's political stability and economic growth.[26]

What accounts for variations in the policy coherence of the various ministries? One explanation has to do with patterns of recruitment. Some ministries draw people from many sources, others from one or two with rather defined policy perspectives. An example of the latter is the Treasury, which hires most of its top officials from the Bank of Mexico:

> The Bank of Mexico has been a central institution for the recruitment and socialization of leaders in the economic sphere. It was the first important domestic institution to create a civil service with security of tenure and a certain independence from the executive. . . . The Bank has produced more people than it could assimilate. The biggest demand outside the Bank was the Treasury, and it is almost entirely made up of people from the Bank.

Many Bank "alumni" work in the Treasury while on leave from the Bank. They continue to receive the benefits that come with Bank affiliation--generous financing for houses and care, inexpensive insurance, medical services, and substantial discounts on food and household items. There is a sense of belonging to an exclusive club among Bank people. Emphasizing the impact of the Bank's socialization process, one "club" member states, "You can even tell which people are from the Bank by the way they draw up statistical tables." It may be added that Bank alumni are also

recognizable by their fiscal conservatism. Central banks the world over support noninflationary economic policies and living within one's means. The Bank of Mexico is no exception.

A well-defined policy stance is also produced by the need to defend bureaucratic self-interest. In Mexico's mixed economy, both the state and the private sector are important economic actors. A ministry such as National Patrimony, which regulates public-sector industries, reinforces its constituency as the state's involvement in the economy increases. The Secretariat of Industry and Commerce, in contrast, which deals mainly with private industrial and commercial interests, has a large stake in the continued existence and expansion of the private sector of the economy. A dynamic tension is thus built into the Mexican economy and it is reflected in the competing policy stances of relevant government institutions.

The most significant element to an observer of political decision-making, however, is not that most ministries have consistent policy positions, but rather that so few do. Polarization over policy issues is not the exception but the norm. The ministries able to sustain a policy orientation do so because they have constituencies whose interests are clearly affected by what type of economic growth policy is pursued. A statist orientation severely threatens the ministries with strong links to the private sector, while a strategy that emphasizes expansion and the strengthening of private economic interests undercuts the power and influence of those ministries whose constituency is mainly within the state.

Most ministries or agencies, however, have constituencies whose growth and expansion is not necessarily dependent upon one or another kind of economic growth policy, and are less motivated to pursue a particular policy line. The absence of the structural necessity for a policy orientation enables them to pursue whatever activities reinforce their own competitive position.

The result of this situation is vicious bureaucratic infighting that leads to a time-consuming and wasteful duplication of efforts in some areas, to a total lack of needed attention in others. A prime example was in the area of agricultural credit, where the three government agricultural banks competed among themselves to attract the same groups of ejidatarios. This occurred while more than 50% of Mexican peasants lacked access to any institutional credit at all, either public or private. In the housing field, there are numerous agencies such as Indeco, CORETT, and Fideurbe, all of which enable essentially the same workers (i.e., those who earn at least the minimum wage) to get access to low-cost housing.

Bureaucratic competition also causes each ministry or agency to refuse to give up any functions for the sake of a greater rationalization of government decision-making. As one government technocrat complained: "There's no real coordination of effort in agriculture. There's a dilution of responsibility. The Secretariat of Agriculture operates in the rainfall areas, the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources operates in the irrigation districts, the official bank gives credit, CONASUPO buys crops,

the Secretariat of Agrarian Reform takes land, and Guanos y Fertilizantes (the government fertilizer company) makes fertilizer. No one wants to give up his slice of the pie." In the area of import control, a similar situation exists. Tariffs are handled by the Ministry of Finance and import permits by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Neither ministry wants to relinquish its power and the result is an often uncoordinated import policy.[27]

Efforts to establish some kind of coordination have brought disheartening results. The coordinating agencies that are set up are no match for the politically powerful heads of government ministries, state agencies, and the like. One veteran of such a coordinating committee summed up the essence of the problem like this: "It's very difficult for a rat to coordinate 10 elephants." Another individual who was offered and refused a position to head a committee to coordinate the steel industry said, jokingly, "I should have taken the job. It would have been easy since I would supposedly have been coordinating three or four of the most powerful men in the country. No one would have listened to me and I could have just sat in my office and collected my salary."

Planning fares even worse than coordination in Mexico. As one informant explained the problem:

> Formal planning began in 1954 with the Committee on Investments. It reported directly to President López Mateos. There was no intervening agency between the president and the commission. The commission then became the Secretariat of the Presidency. This means that there is now an intervening variable since the Secretary of the Presidency is automatically a candidate for the presidency of the country. The Secretary thus wants to protect his candidacy and will not take personal risks for the general good. The result is that the Secretary prefers to do nothing in the way of planning. He doesn't want to put forward anything that will compromise him.

On a more general level, however, the crux of the problem is that the entire *camarilla* system discourages treating problems in policy terms. It is better not to define issues too clearly, lest people get identified with the wrong side. It is better not to group issues together into plans, since that serves to create larger blocs of opponents. Planning creates big winners and big losers, and what Mexican political elites require for the continued existence of their elite alliances is a system enabling everyone to win as much as possible and to lose as little as possible.

Rather than planning or a defined government policy-line, the system in normal times produces a continuous stream of public decisions benefitting first one group of elites and their constituencies, then another: *ejidatarios* and private landholders, workers and businessmen, state-sector firms and private-sector firms.

This is essentially a decision-making process and style that favors the *status quo*. All the political elites live well, but the situation of

their constituents varies. Those groups in society that are the most politicized and most privileged exact more from their leaders than those less highly politicized and poorer.

The above description is of the decision-making system in normal times. This is politics-as-usual. There are times, however, when the Mexican political system enters periods of severe crisis. The causes are varied. During the initial years of the Echeverría administration, for example, international factors such as the world food shortage, the depression in world trade, petroleum price increases, and the devaluation of the dollar combined with internal factors such as an annual population growth rate of 3.5%, declining productivity of the agricultural sector, a spiraling foreign debt, growing unemployment and decreasing industrial productivity to produce a sudden and drastic decline in the economic growth rate and an escalation of political demands.

Since the political elites recognize the need for continuous economic growth for the continued viability of their distributive alliance, their search for solutions to the problem of the stagnating economy began immediately.

It is the search for a solution that produces the atmosphere of political crisis in Mexico. A sluggishly performing economy and the attempts to remedy it provide the more reform-oriented elites with a justification for reorienting the distributive elite alliance toward social-justice goals. As long as the mixed economy "works," criticism is muffled. Once its performance begins to falter, it becomes legitimate to criticize the old "model" and to suggest innovative policy alternatives.

Because of the ideological legacy of the Mexican Revolution, and the obviously privileged status of private economic interests, the reform-oriented elites almost always blame the economic slowdown on the behavior of the private sector, both domestic and foreign. The solutions proposed usually involve a reduction in the privileges and an increase in government regulation of the private sector, as well as an expansion of the state into new areas of the economy.

The crisis administration of President Echeverría was thus a period of transition. The slowdown of the economy immediately resulted in wholesale criticism of the model of "stabilizing development" and its emphasis on high profits and low taxes for businessmen (supposedly to encourage private capital accumulation and investment), low wages for labor (to discourage inflation), and unrestricted government borrowing abroad to make up for the small amount of income the government received from taxes.

Taking advantage of the unique opportunity confronting them, groups of young, reform-oriented <u>técnicos</u> brought into government by Echeverría, in alliance with reformists already in government, attempted to convert their ideas quickly into legislation and programs. Their efforts gave the Mexican political system one of its rare moments of a certain policy

coherence. The reformers were only partially successful, however. Too many elites have their constituencies in the private sector, too many camarillas include private-sector members, and too many ex-politicians have private economic interests to allow any major reform program easy passage. The result was a kind of compromise. The most radical reforms failed because of resistance from a segment of the political elite and its constituents. On the other hand, more incremental reforms that focused on a reorientation of the relationship between the state and the private sector were put through. While many reforms such as the celebrated attempt to abolish bearer shares and eliminate prestanombres to increase the tax burden on the wealthy never left the government, many reforms were at least initiated. These include new laws to regulate foreign investment, the transfer of technology and patents and trademarks, programs to collectivize the ejido, higher taxes for the upper and middle classes, annual revision of minimum-wage legislation, a worker housing program financed by employers, and the elimination of many protective tariffs, among other things.

The private sector did not accept its partial loss of privileges gracefully. Businessmen and business groups publicly attacked the government, private investment declined, and large amounts of money were withdrawn from the country, with the justification that the government no longer merited the confidence of the private sector. The end of President Echeverría's six-year term brought in, as it has in other similar episodes of Mexican history, a successor who immediately moved to smooth ruffled feathers and to assure those elites whose interests had returned to normal and that all could profit from the new equilibrium.

It is important to note, however, that while the crisis atmosphere has ended and the rhetoric of the new regime is placatory toward the private sector, the system has not moved back to the old equilibrium of the Díaz Ordaz period. Lopez Portillo has committed himself to the enforcement and implementation of the reforms instituted under Echeverría. What we observe is a new equilibrium, a period of adjustment to new rules and relationships.

A common description of the cycle of succeeding administrations in Mexico is the so-called "pendulum theory." According to this "theory" each administration is followed by one that swings the other way. A radical administration is followed by a conservative one and so forth. While the pendulum theory is overstated, particularly with regard to "radical" and "conservative" administrations, alternation between "activist" and "consolidating" presidents can be observed. For example "activist" presidents such as Cardenas, Alemán, López Mateos and Echeverría have been followed by more consolidating presidents like Avila Camacho, Ruiz Cortines, Díaz Ordaz and Lopez Portillo.

It is important to understand that the swings of the pendulum are not between two fixed ideological positions. Institutions and changes in the relationship between public and private sectors tend to be cumulative. The new strata of institutions and relationships laid down by one president

form the basic materials with which the succeeding one must work even if his style of doing so is different.

The differences between succeeding sexenios may be viewed, therefore, as attempts to deal with the tensions generated by six years of any particular policy line and presidential style. No matter what posture an administration adopts, the heterogeneity of the ruling association guarantess that some important groups will feel that their interests are being disregarded and this produces the danger of political instability. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the most clearly perceived danger was from the left: students, workers and some campesino groups as well as a growing urban and rural guerrilla movement. By the mid-1970's, all talk was of the disaffection of the right: the private sector, large portions of the middle class and even the possibility of direct action by the military.

Conclusion

We have said that the Mexican state, unlike most stable and mature modern states, is a constantly renewed political bargain among ruling groups with different political interests. An anaology, which is only a partial analogy, but which illustrates the fineness of the political balance, are multi-ethnic states that have achieved a modus vivendi among the competing ethnic groups. We do not wish to conjure up images of "consociational democracy"[28] by suggesting this analogy, and we readily accept that the balancing of ethnic or other corporate groups is very different from what we see as the balancing of ideological tendencies in Mexico. If there is value to the analogy it rests in the idea that unlike more homogeneous systems such as the United States, or heterogeneous systems where one ruling group has temporarily eliminated others from the governing coalition (as in much of Latin America), the balancing act itself is always at the forefront among political priorities. It is not simply a matter of logrolling and porkbarrel but of combining these negotiation modes with just the "right" mix of discipline and repression. Viewed from the other perspective it is not just a matter of maintaining authoritarian control through a mixture of repression and cooperation, but of combining this mode with just the "right" mix of responsiveness and compromise.

Approached in this way, Mexico is less institutionalized than it might seem, given its history of stable government. In times of crisis, as during the Echeverría sexenio, uncontrolled conflict and political breakdown are possibilities taken very seriously by political leaders. It is times like these which emphasize the fragility of the "revolutionary bargain" and the possible limits of what we have called the modes of political action. These modes of action operate very well in normal times and at this level the Mexican system appears to be institutionalized. Nevertheless the authoritarian nature of Mexico's political institutions places a major burden on the personal political skills and judgement of the president and a few other powerful leaders to arrest the always present tendencies toward irreconcilable conflict within the governing

coalition and within the society as a whole. The authoritarian institutions themselves, because they are largely oriented toward control, cannot play the bargaining and negotiating role required to maintain flexibility. To give only one example, the party, though it formally incorporates working class, peasant and middle-class groups, is not the primary locus of interclass or intergroup bargaining, the most important aspects of which take place in ad hoc, informal settings.

Until now, our discussion has focused upon the terms of the political bargain, a little upon its origin and a great deal upon the mechanics of its maintenance. If we are to explore the question of the nature of the Mexican state, however, we must deal with the question: Who or what groups or categories is the bargain between? What is the basic unit of analysis for understanding the nature of the Mexican state?

Our task is made more difficult by the fact that most theoretical approaches carry the basic unit of analysis with them as a given. Marxist and neo-Marxist analyses speak in terms of classes or fractions of classes. Pluralists tend to prefer interest groups or other kinds of functional categories. Other narrower or overlapping approaches may emphasize corporate groups or categories, patron-client structures, factions, ethnic, religious or territorial groupings or institutions like parties, bureaucracies and so forth. The possibilities are virtually limitless.

We can simplify the issue somewhat by declaring that our interest in this paper is the cleavages and concomitant social and political categories most relevant for day-to-day politics, what C. Wright Mills called the "clash and clang of politics," and to which the political bargain we have described in this paper directly refers. What class fractions, groups' interests, corporate categories or what-have-you must be taken into account in order that the tensions inherent in the Mexican state will not cause political breakdown?

Class analysis of Mexican politics is compelling under many circumstances and perhaps it is necessary to a "basic" understanding of the Mexican state. Nevertheless most forms of class analysis of Mexico are not entirely satisfying especially when applied to the day-to-day politics of the political bargain. Many important groups and factions do not have a clear enough class basis to enable the observer to feel comfortable with any direct translation of these into class "fractions." Of course, as any proponent of class analysis can tell us, this does not invalidate a class approach which would tend to be at a "deeper" level of analysis. A full examination of this problem is beyond the scope of this paper. Our concerns here are much more modest in that they are focused at the level of political stability.

Corporate groups or categories have often been noted as important political units in Mexico and Latin America generally. However in Mexico at least, corporate structures, such as the worker-peasant-popular sector structure of the PRI, are less a reflection of Mexican society or even key political alliances, than they are a technique of control developed by the association of ruling groups.

For Latin America, including Mexico, a rather less "pure" form of political cleavage appears to be most evident. As Douglas Chalmers points out, political cleavages and groupings in Latin America are a confusing mixture of class, geographic and personalistic factional interests, sometimes combined within the same party.[29] This kind of cleavage and the factionalism it produces tends to cut across class, functional or corporate lines most of the time. Chalmers' description of factionalism in Brazil and other Latin American countries corresponds quite closely with patterns observed in Mexico with two important differences: factions are more fluid and (to continue the image), ideology is more "free-floating" with respect to its factional bases.

The instability of many Latin American regimes appears to be related to the crystallization of various factional alliances and their opposition to one another, sometimes over a period of decades.[30] Factions that have very little "logical" or coherent basis for existence may over the years develop a reality, solidity and permanence simply through the process fo competing for power and because of the fact that various leading political personalities depend upon them as a power base. The difference in Mexico is not that at any given instant one cannot identify personalistic factions with a combination of regional, class or functional, bases, but rather that these are impermanent and fluid instead of long-lasting and crystallized.

In Latin America generally, ad hoc factions acquire particular ideological slants from left-wing populism to various shades of conservatism. While the ideology is not necessarily congruent with the social base of the faction or party, the two become wedded over time. In this way ideologies rise and fall with the fortunes of the factions that have appropriated them. Many Latin American states are characterized by a serial sharing of power among different factions associated with varying ideological tendencies as they overthrow one another and are in turn overthrown, usually in a military coup.

In Mexico a somewhat similar phenomenon appears to take place as one six-year presidential regime gives way to another. However the appearance is deceiving. In the first place conflicting ideological tendencies coexist within any given presidential administration in Mexico. Proponents of left-wing populism are present, often in high positions, within "conservative" administrations, while more "radical" administrations are bedeviled by conservatives in their midst. We put forward as a hypothesis which needs verification that the tendency to combine groups with diverse ideological positions in the same administration is much more characteristic of Mexico than of other Latin American states. This is part of the political bargain.

The second important difference we shall hypothesize between Mexico and other Latin American states is that the institutionalization of rapid political turnover in Mexico means that factions do not exist long enough to become firmly identified with and to appropriate a particular ideology. Rather, certain "standard" ideological tendencies (usually with roots in the Constitution of 1917) are available to be

"borrowed" by an aspiring faction for a period of usually no more than one sexenio.[31] Thus it is the ideological tendencies (polished up and rehabilitated for application to present circumstances) that have persisted while the political groupings that espouse them come and go.

In this view, ideology represents a free-floating resource in Mexican politics, not associated permanently with any one group or party. The ruling party, the PRI, must accommodate all tendencies and thus cannot totally espouse one or another except temporarily. This is true to a lesser extent of each presidential administration. The political bargain we have discussed in this paper is aimed at maintaining the balance among ideological tendencies (which do of course have real, objective interests associated with them in Mexican society). But it is also aimed at making sure that these ideological tendencies are never appropriated in any permanent way by particular factions or groups, and furthermore that such factions and groups remain fluid and flexible. The modes fo political action described in the body of the paper are mechanisms for maintaining the separation between ideology and its social base.

We return now to the analogy with multi-ethnic states with which we began the section. In Europe some political observers have used the Dutch term verzuiling (the formation of pillars or columns) to describe the division of society into discrete corporate, ethnic, religious, or language groups which cut vertically through social strata.[32] To maintain political stability in the face of such cleavages, political institutions must exist to balance and accommodate the interests of these corporate groups at the top. This is possible (though certainly not inevitable) because the interests to be balanced are relatively clearly defined. In Latin America, such is not the case. There is an unpredicatability and lack of congruence to the factions that makes them harder to accommodate through any set of formal institutions as is done with the zuilen in some European states.

Mexico, we would argue, has arrived at a unique solution to the above problem of Latin American stability. It is a mirage to imagine that this solution is somehow through the incorporation of groups into the party on a corporate basis (this would be the functional equivalent of verzuiling). Rather, stability is achieved by creating (either through design or historical accident) certain mechanisms that balance idological tendencies and the specific policies associated with them, while divorcing them from existing interests in society that might tend to espouse and appropriate them permanently. In doing so of course, these mechanisms also create the means for perpetuating and even intensifying the extreme inequalities in wealth found in Mexico. Whether the current structure makes this level of inequality inevitable is a question for further study.

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[1]See especially Raymond Vernon, The Dilemma of Mexico's Development: The Roles of the Private and Public Sectors (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965). Interestingly, journalists are more likely to have this view than scholars, probably because they are influenced more by immediate considerations and they see Mexico in times of crisis. Scholars have more long-range views and tend to assume that because Mexico has been politically stable for a number of decades, it will remain so. For a recent interpretation of Mexican politics by a journalist emphasizing instability see Gene Lyons, "Inside the Volcano," Harper's, June 1977, pp. 41-55.

[2]Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), especially pp. 255-256 and 315-324.

[3]Ibid., pp. 59-71.

[4]See Roger Hansen's discussion of the praetorian aspects of Mexican politics in The Politics of Mexican Development (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 101-102.

[5]See, for example, the discussion by Octavio Paz of the dualism between the tlatoani (the institutional, impersonal ruler) and the caudillo (the personal ruler) in Octavio Paz, The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp. 102-105. See also the discussion of dualism in the works of Mexican thinkers such as José Vasconcelos, Antonio Caso, Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz and Leopoldo Zea in Michael A. Weinstein, The Polarity of Mexican Thought: Instrumentalism and Finalism (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University, 1976). Of course the substance of the dualisms described is not always the same nor are they precisely the ones developed here.

[6]The principal works that emphasize the proto-democratic aspects of the Mexican political system are Robert E. Scott, Mexican Government in Transition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), and Martin C. Needler, Politics and Society in Mexico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971). Writings that stress the authoritarian aspects of Mexican politics include Frank Brandenburg, The Making of Modern Mexico (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), Hanson (fn. 4), Evelyn P. Stevens, Protest and Response in Mexico (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1974), Susan Kaufman Purcell, The Mexican Profit-Sharing Decision: Politics in an Authoritarian Regime (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), and José Luis Reyna and Richard S. Weinert, eds., Authoritarianism in Mexico (Philadelphia: ISHI Press, 1977). See also the articles by Rafael Segovia, "Tendencias políticas en México," Foro Internacional, Vol. XVI, No. 4 (1976), pp. 421-428, and Lorenzo Meyer, "Veinticinco años de política mexicana" in Comercio Exterior (Mexico), vol. 25, no. 12 (diciembre de 1975), pp. 1334-1342.

[7]CONASUPO (Compania Nacional de Subsistencias Populares) is a decentralized government agency that buys agricultural commodities at fixed prices and sells basic foodstuffs in lower-class urban areas at reduced prices.

[8]Janice Perlman, The Myth of Marginality (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

[9]Interview, Mexico City, 1976. All quotations attributed to informants are from the interviews carried out by the authors in Mexico City between September 1975 and October 1976.

[10]On the concept of political authoritarianism in general see Juan J. Linz, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," in E. Allardt and Y. Littunen, eds., Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems: Contributions to Comparative Political Sociology (Helsinki: Transactions of the Westermarck Society, 1964), pp. 291-341. For an application of the Linz framework to Mexico see Susan Kaufman Purcell, "Decision-Making in an Authoritarian Regime: Theoretical Implications from a Mexican Case Study," World Politics, 26 (October 1973), pp. 28-54. See also the works cited in fn. 6.

[11]Examples of powerful families that are said by some observers to owe their fall at least partially to the hostility of the president or other powerful political figures include García Mora, Longorría and Sacristan.

[12]Among those who have focused on the theme of political negotiation are Roger Hansen (fn. 4), in certain aspects of that work, Merilee S. Grindle in Bureaucrats, Politicians, and Peasants in Mexico: A Case Study of Public Policy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). William P. Glade, "Entrepreneurship in the State Sector: CONASUPO of Mexico." Revised version of paper prepared for Seminar on "The Economic Anthropology of Investment Behavior in Latin America," School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 4-8 August 1975, Vernon (fn. 1), Wayne A. Cornelius, Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), L. Vincent Padgett, The Mexican Political System (first edition), (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1966), Scott (fn. 6) and Needler (fn. 6).

[13]For a more detailed discussion of clientelism in Mexico see Susan Kaufman Purcell, "Clientelism and Development in Mexico." Paper presented at a conference on "Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development," Bellagio, Italy, August 7-11, 1978.

[14]Brandenburg (fn. 6), p. 157.

[15]Peter Smith, "Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico," unpublished manuscript, November 1976.

[16]El Universal, April 9, 1976, p. 1.

[17]Ranier Horst Godau, "Mexico, A Bureaucratic Polity." Unpublished M.A. Thesis (Austin: University of Texas), October 1975, p. 137.

[18]El Universal, August 3, 1976, p. 7.

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[19]Excelsior, September 4, 1976, p. 28.

[20]El Universal, February 26, pp. 1, 13.

[21]Excelsior, March 19, 1976, p. 1.

[22]El Universal, June 30, 1976, p. 1.

[23]Excelsior, November 9, 1974, p. 1.

[24]The sources are Excelsior, November 19, 1975, p. 1; Excelsior, March 11, 1976, p. 1; Excelsior, May 29, 1976, p. 1; Excelsior, May 13, 1976, p. 19, respectively.

[25]CONACYT (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología) is the National Council of Science and Technology.

[26]A good recent description of these conflicting points of view is to be found in Dana Markiewicz, "Ejido Organization in Mexico, 1934-1976." An interdisciplinary paper submitted in partial satisfaction for the degree of Master of Arts in Latin American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, Winter 1978.

[27]Gerardo Bueno, "The Structure of Protection in Mexico," in Bela Belasa, The Structure of Protection in Developing Countries (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 181.

[28]Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," World Politics, 21 (January 1968), pp. 207-225.

[29]Douglas A. Chalmers, "Parties and Society in Latin America," Studies in Comparative International Development, 7, no. 2 (1972), pp. 102-130.

[30]Robert R. Kaufman, "Corporatism, Clientelism, and Partisan Conflict: A Study of Seven Latin American Countries," in Malloy (fn. 29), pp. 109-148.

[31]Of course these ideological tendencies are constantly updated and concepts and applications are borrowed from the rest of Latin America and elsewhere by Mexican intellectuals. On this score it is rather interesting how close the relationship is between the intellectual community and the government and how many professors and researchers enter the government (at least recently) at high levels or obtain well-paid government advisory positions. It is as if the importance of ideological resources to various political factions requires the constant manufacture of relevant and up-to-date ideological-cum-policy perspectives and a large number of government-oriented intellectuals to perform the task. From the point of view of the intellectual community the fact that reform-oriented and even radical ("within the constitution") perspectives have a potential "market" within the government, encourages those who in other Latin American countries might be hopelessly alienated to succumb, at times, to the temptation of policy relevance.

[32]Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignment: An Introduction," in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 15-16.