



# DICTA BLANDA

||||| POLITICS, WORK, AND CULTURE IN MEXICO, 1938-1968 |||||

PAUL GILLINGHAM  
and  
BENJAMIN T. SMITH,  
editors

**DICTABLANDA**

AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS/GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

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This book is about power in a place beyond dichotomies of democracy or dictatorship, namely modern Mexico. The authors come from distinct disciplines and different historiographical traditions, have diverse research interests, and were brought together without any single theoretical *diktat*. It was in part the very breadth of interests and approaches that suggested their incorporation, in a deliberate search for academic biodiversity. We encouraged disagreement. This approach to collaborative work has been dubbed a dog's breakfast.<sup>1</sup> We hoped instead for a cat's cradle: a skein of threads that, when drawn tight, might reveal a pattern.

Initially the only evident common factor was a shared curiosity in the no man's land of historicizing power in the mid-century, those three decades between 1938 and 1968 when dominant party rule coalesced and peaked. A preference for controlled eclecticism over theoretical monoculture did not, however, mean the absence of a framework.<sup>2</sup> We sought contributors whose work fell into one of three broad categories: high and low politics; work and resource regulation; and culture and ideology. These thematic choices presupposed an organizing concept: that the relations between rulers and ruled were characterized by authoritarianism, competitive politics, and resistance, making Mexico an early variant of a *dictablanda*, a hybrid regime that combines democratic and authoritarian elements; and that such hybrid regimes are profoundly complex, dynamic, and ambiguous, demanding heterodox approaches.<sup>3</sup> They reflected a debt to those scholars who have made empirical cases for the ability of everyday subjects to resist the projects of the powerful, shaping their lives in constant haggling with authority; for the state as a masque; and for the causal significance of popular culture in determining dynamic political outcomes.<sup>4</sup> They also reflected the proposition that this was not the whole story.<sup>5</sup>

We posited that cultural and materialist explanations were not so much dichotomous as complementary<sup>6</sup> and that struggles for power encompassed additional phenomena. Some were previously hidden. Cumulative case studies and once-unobtainable sources, notably declassified intelligence, revealed the underestimated violence deployed by both rulers and ruled; the related salience of popular political inputs; the enduringly central role of petty authoritarianism, also known as *caciquismo*; and the way that local autonomies and a fragmented public sphere—“many Mexicos”—might strengthen rather than weaken central power. Other phenomena were more obvious and as such might be undervalued by the seductive episteme of the hidden. They should not be: laws, institutions, and budgets were more than façades under which deeper causal mechanisms lurked. Moreover, the importance of an economic model that overtly privileged towns at the expense of countryside was unmistakable. Finally—and critically—we were struck by the ubiquitous phenomenon of actors who shifted fluently along a spectrum of resistance to, tolerance of, and alliance with the state.

The resulting framework identifies three arenas of power: the political, the material, and the cultural.<sup>7</sup> It conceptualizes power as the ability to do things, to get other people to do things, and/or to stop other people from doing things. This draws on two resistance-centric definitions: that of Max Weber, who deemed power an actor’s capacity “to carry out his will despite resistance,” and George Tsebelis’s idea of veto players, those “individual or collective actors whose agreement (by majority rule for collective actors) is required for a change of the status quo.”<sup>8</sup> In between the extreme outcomes of imposition or veto lies negotiation, in itself both a process and an outcome: a statement of a balance, albeit skewed, of power.

Negotiation was central to rule in Mexico, but that does not imply the pre-eminence of a consent-based cultural hegemony because negotiation in hybrid regimes involves violence past, violence present, and the fear of violence in the future. This is incompatible with one type of Gramscian hegemony, which opposes hegemony to “authority” and “dictatorship,” quarantines it from violence, and stresses instead its consensual core.<sup>9</sup> It is compatible with Gramsci’s alternative idea of hegemony as the balance (or “dual perspective” or “dialectical unity”) of “force and consent,” which, when effective, establishes a “compromise equilibrium” between rulers and ruled.<sup>10</sup> Yet advancing this is (as Michael Taussig observed regarding social construction) “nothing more than an invitation, a preamble to investigation,” rather than a conclusion.<sup>11</sup> As Kate Crehan suggests, “rather than being a precisely bounded theoretical concept, hegemony for Gramsci simply names the problem—that of how the power relations underpinning various forms of inequality are produced and reproduced—that he is interested in exploring. What in any given

context constitutes hegemony can only be discovered through careful empirical analysis.”<sup>12</sup> The question is not whether Mexican elites achieved stability, however rudimentary, on a national level through a balance of force and consent; they did. The questions, rather, are where that balance fell, how it was struck, and how it swayed from time to time and from place to place.

We discuss these questions in specific terms in the introduction. In general terms, gauging answers to those questions involves all three arenas of power: the political, the material, and the cultural. There is no single independent variable that provides a comprehensive explanation for the processes of state formation and its outcome. The three are, rather, tightly interwoven. For example, the political function of any state’s management of economic resources is coalition-building, but in Mexico, at all levels, those resources were leveraged by a cultural phenomenon: the pervasive revolutionary rhetoric that gave the excluded some hope of joining such coalitions in the future. Revolutionary nationalism did provide something of a common language for both hegemonies and counter-hegemonies, but that language was underpinned by violence. Everyday people were coerced into nationalist ceremonies by the threats of fines or jailing; archaeological artifacts were appropriated by platoons of soldiers despite village protests; journalists and Catholic militants, or *agraristas* and teachers, could face beatings or assassination.<sup>13</sup> Bribery—lunches for marches—was also salient. Moreover, rulers and ruled were polyglot, and in addition to the common language of revolutionary nationalism (which some refused to speak) there were other common languages that were tactically adopted as political mores shifted, such as the rhetorics of democracy and development. To see economic processes at work shaping culture, cultural forces shaping economies, and politics—both formal and informal—at the intersection of the two; to posit that causal primacy varies from case to case, when it can be pinned down at all; and to note a high prevalence of equifinality—different processes leading to similar outcomes—is not a “live-and-let-live” conceptual mush. It is a reasonable reflection of the case studies we have.

Mexican historiography is highly dependent on case studies for the obvious epistemological reasons of a large and diverse territory and population. This should not shut the door on systematic comparison both across and beyond Latin America.<sup>14</sup> Deviant case studies, exploring the exceptions that test the rule, can revise broad generalizations, as regional histories of revolution demonstrated.<sup>15</sup> Most likely (those where a theory should if anywhere work), least likely (those that should lie beyond the limits of a theory), and crucial case studies can test, extend, and even suggest theories. These may be less grand and more middle-range: universal but comparatively narrow proposals of social processes founded on the concrete, the specific, and the

time-sensitive.<sup>16</sup> Yet such generalizations are particularly apt for Mexico in the mid-century, with its neither-fish-nor-fowl relationships of power. As Fernando Coronil observed, “fragmentation, ambiguity, and disjunctions are features of complex systems”<sup>17</sup>; in Mexico and other hybrid regimes the fragmentation and the ambiguity are not just down to complexity but also form part of the ruling class’s strategies of domination: divide, confuse, and rule. The limitations of methodology are, in other words, perhaps less limiting in Mexico than elsewhere. At the same time history’s strengths—broad and deep empiricism, the explanatory richness that creates, and a sophisticated appreciation of the diverse rhythms and causal effects of time—might allow historians of Mexico to advance more universal discussions.<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult (but not impossible) to generalize about the frequency of the processes of domination and resistance that studies in this field are starting to trace. But in identifying and tracing the multiplicity of those processes, combining case studies, qualitative overviews, and basic cliometrics, we might come up with a coherent model of mid-century Mexico. That model is neither of a system based on consensual cultural hegemony nor one of Althusser’s Repressive State Apparatuses, such as bureaucratic authoritarianism.<sup>19</sup> The essays in this book argue that force was real, strategically applied, and successfully masked. It also was exercised by both rulers and ruled. It went hand in hand with a certain degree of consent: one produced by economic growth and a coalition-building distribution of resources, by political accommodation, and by culture. The outcome was not stasis but rather something like a chemist’s dynamic equilibrium, in which reactions move in opposite directions at broadly similar speeds.

This can be described by the term *dictablanda*: the combination of *dictadura* (dictatorship) with the switch of *dura* (hard) for *blanda* (soft). This has, as Jeffrey Rubin argues, a powerful, untranslatable resonance. It also enjoys a record of some usage inside Mexico, bypassing the more misleading labels of the democracy with adjectives, the perfect dictatorship, or even the *PRI*ista state. *Dictablanda*, in both popular and general terms, is good to think for mid-century Mexico.<sup>20</sup> In comparative terms, however, Guillermo O’Donnell and Philip Schmitter’s definition, which denotes liberalizing authoritarian regimes, without elections, in transition,<sup>21</sup> suggests the need for translation, for a parallel, more precise, and broadly understood category. Translating the *dictablanda* seems particularly relevant given that Mexico shared some aspects of old Latin American authoritarian states while foreshadowing the post-Cold War genus of hybrid regimes, species of which encompass between a quarter and a third of all contemporary states.<sup>22</sup> In our period Mexico was in many ways a competitive authoritarian regime, a type of civilian regime “in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed

as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents. Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favour of incumbents. Competition is thus real but unfair."<sup>23</sup> Some of the characteristics behind the Mexican regime's resilience—the institutionalized circulation of national elites within a single party, a powerful national story, and a deliberately fragmented public sphere, the negotiated nature of rule, the hidden violence, the local electoral contests—might interest political scientists who apply this historically contingent theory to places like contemporary Malaysia, Russia, or Tanzania, extending its ambit beyond the electoral and the elite toward a model of power that is simultaneously comprehensive and disaggregated, one that gives full play to the local and the informal and the cultural: soft authoritarianism.<sup>24</sup>

#### Notes

1. Barrington Moore, cited in James Scott, Foreword, in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), vii.

2. For controlled eclecticism, see Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (2 vols.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), vol. I, 84. See also Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 3–10; Terence J. McDonald, "Introduction," in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terence J. McDonald, 1–17 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

3. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Larry Diamond, "Elections without Democracy: Thinking about Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 21–35.

4. The classics are Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Jeffrey W. Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*.

5. Emilia Viotti da Costa, "New Publics, New Politics, New Histories: From Economic Reductionism to Cultural Reductionism—in Search of Dialectics," in *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, 17–31 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

6. While, as David Nugent points out, "It is a curious fact that neither of the two approaches to the state that currently inform academic debate—the organizational nor the representational—has had much to say to each other," scholars have long indicated the potential of such dialogues. David Nugent, "Conclusion: Reflections on State Theory Through the Lens of the Mexican Military," in *Forced Marches: Soldiers and*

Military Caciques in Modern Mexico, ed. Ben Fallaw and Terry Rugeley (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 240; William Roseberry, "Marxism and Culture," in *Anthropologies and Histories: Essays in Culture, History, and Political Economy*, 30–54 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991); William B. Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Richard Biernacki, "Method and Metaphor after the New Cultural History," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, 62–94 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 47–48.

7. This identification of loci of power complements Wil Panster's more process-based model of state formation, which identifies zones of hegemony, zones of coercion, and gray zones in between. Wil G. Pansters, "Introduction," in *Violence, Coercion and State-Making in Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Other Half of the Centaur*, ed. Wil G. Pansters, 3–39 (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

8. Weber as cited in Alan Knight, "The Weight of the State in Modern Mexico," in *Studies in the Formation of the Nation-State in Latin America*, ed. James Dunkerley, 212–53, 215 (London: ILAS, 2002); George Tsebelis, "Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism and Mutipartyism," *British Journal of Political Science* 25 (July 1995): 289–325, 289.

9. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996), 124, 170, 239. See, for example, Claudio Lomnitz's definition of hegemony as "an institutionalized structure of interactional frames, localist ideologies, and intimate cultures which allow for consensus around a particular regime." Claudio Lomnitz, *Exits from the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 40.

10. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 124, 161.

11. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993), xvi.

12. An analysis that fully recognizes Gramsci's "intense concern with the materiality of power"; a concern that, Crehan argues, has been largely lost in anthropologists' usage. Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 104, 172–76.

13. Sandra Rozental, "Mobilizing the Monolith: Patrimonio and the Production of Mexico through Its Fragments" (PhD dissertation, New York University, New York, 2012); Carlos Moncada, *Del México violento: periodistas asesinados* (Mexico City: Edomex, 1991); Pablo Serrano Alvarez, *La batalla del espíritu: el movimiento sinarquista en El Bajío, 1932–1951* (2 vols.) (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992), vol. II, 80; Tanalis Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priista, 1940–1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

14. For Latin Americanists' (largely missed) potential to shape theory in the social sciences, see the introduction to Miguel Angel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves, eds., *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America*, 3–23, 14 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

15. Important works include Luis González y González, *Pueblo en vilo* (Mexico City: SEP, 1984); Heather Fowler-Salamini, *Agrarian radicalism in Veracruz, 1920–38* (Lincoln:

University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Romana Falcón, *Revolución y caciquismo: San Luis Potosí, 1910–1938* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1984); Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman, eds., *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional Mexican History, 1910–1929* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990); Barry Carr, “Recent Regional Studies of the Mexican Revolution,” *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 1 (1980): 3–14, 7.

16. Harry Eckstein, “Case Studies and Theory in Political Science,” in *Handbook of Political Science. Political Science: Scope and Theory*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, vol. 01.7, 94, 137 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975). For a skeptical consideration of Mexico and grand theory, see Alan Knight, “The Modern Mexican State: Theory and Practice,” in Centeno and López-Alves, *The Other Mirror*, 177–218.

17. Fernando Coronil, “Foreword,” in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, Ricardo D. Salvatore, vii–xi (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

18. Patrick Joyce, “What Is the Social in Social History?” *Past and Present* 206, no. 1 (2010): 213–48, 216.

19. Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. Louis Althusser, 145 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

20. The term was coined to describe Spanish politics under General Berenguer during the 1930s and subsequently applied to the last years of the Franco regime. By the 1950s it had been adopted by Mexican intellectuals to describe first the Porfirian and later the PRIísta state. It lay at the heart of the stormy exchange between Octavio Paz, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Enrique Krauze of 1990s televised “Encuentro Vuelta,” in which Vargas Llosa dubbed modern Mexico the “perfect dictatorship,” Paz reacted furiously, and Krauze suggested the compromise of *dictablanda*. (Paz abruptly cancelled the ensuing round table; Vargas Llosa left the country adducing “family reasons.”) William D. Phillips, Carla Rahn Phillips, *A Concise History of Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 246; Daniel Cosío Villegas quoted in Enrique Krauze, *Místico de la autoridad: Porfirio Díaz* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987), 34; Xavier Rodríguez Ledesma, *El pensamiento político de Octavio Paz: Las trampas de la ideología* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 1996), 414–18.

21. Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 8–14.

22. Andreas Schedler, “The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism,” in *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, ed. Andreas Schedler, 1–14, 3 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 3; Diamond, “Elections Without Democracy,” 27.

23. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

24. There are several extant types of what might be called authoritarianism with adjectives. While cautious to introduce one more, we think it is useful in this instance to think as splitters rather than lumpers: hegemonic party autocracies, for example, are generally thought of as noncompetitive, whereas competitive authoritarianism does not capture the distinct origins and multiple strategies of domination that characterize mid-century Mexico. Neither does Tocqueville’s concept of “soft despotism,”

with its subtle capture of “free agency” in the bureaucratic “networks of small, complicated rules” elaborated by an “immense and tutelary power,” which ends up securing “servitude of the regular, quiet, and gentle kind”; and neither does Joseph Nye’s formulation of “soft power” as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want.” Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeves, vol. II, 392–93 (Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1863); Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5–6.

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## GLOSSARY OF INSTITUTIONS AND ACRONYMS

### Institutions

Agrarian Department	Departamento Agraria (1934–1960); Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización (1960–1974)
Attorney General	Procurador General
Department of Agriculture	Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento (1917–1946); Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería (1946–1976)
Department of Defense	Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SEDENA)
Department of Education	Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP)
Department of Foreign of Affairs	Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores
Department of Health and Social Security	Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia
Department of the Interior	Secretaría de Gobernación
Department of Public Works	Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (1920–1959); Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (1959–)
Federal Security Directorate	<i>Dirección Federal de Seguridad</i> , (DFS)
General Directorate of Political and Social Investigations	Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (IPS)
Office of the State Prosecutor	Ministerio Público
Treasury	Secretaría de Hacienda

## Acronyms

AGN	Archivo General de la Nación
ACPEO	Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca
AHEV	Archivo Histórico del Estado de Veracruz
AHSDN	Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Defensa Nacional
ALM	Adolfo López Mateos
AMI	Archivo Municipal de Ixcateopan
BCCG	Biblioteca Carmen Castañeda García
CMGUF	Colección María Guadalupe Urzúa Flores
CNCA	Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes
CNTE	Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación
CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores de México
DFS	Dirección Federal de Seguridad
DGG	Dirección General de Gobierno
DGIPS	Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales
FCE	Fondo Cultura Económica
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
FO	National Archives, Foreign Office
ILAS	Institute of Latin American Studies
INAH	Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
IPN	Instituto Politécnico Nacional
LC	Presidentes, Lázaro Cardenas
LCA	Liga de Comunidades Agrarias
MAC	Manuel Avila Camacho
MAV	Miguel Alemán Valdés
MIDRF	Military Intelligence Division Regional Files
MRM	Movimiento Revolucionario del Magisterio
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NARG	National Archives Record Group
ONIR	Obra Nacional de Instrucción Religiosa
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional
PCM	Partido Comunista Mexicana
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PRM	Partido de la Revolución Mexicana
PRO	Public Records Office
SCM	Secretaría de Defensa Nacional
SEP	Department of Education

## THE PARADOXES OF REVOLUTION

Revolutions have unintended consequences. In 1910 Mexicans rebelled against an imperfect dictatorship; after 1940 they ended up with what some called the perfect dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> Mexico was ruled by a single—admittedly mutation-prone—party from 1929 to 2000, a record of longevity surpassed only by Liberia’s True Whig Party (1878–1980), the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (1921–1996), and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1917–1989).<sup>2</sup> While everyday people and scholars debated the details of this long-running regime, a compelling story survived the passing of time, governments, and scholarly fashions. This metanarrative held that the revolution had evolved from violent popular upheaval to sweeping social reform in the 1930s. Mexico’s new rulers of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional—the PRI—had with that reform signed a revolutionary social contract to reestablish central control.<sup>3</sup> Peasants traded in their radicalism for land grants; a diverse labor movement mutated into a monolithic servant of government. The new state delivered economic growth, political stability, and a discourse—partially fulfilled—of social justice. The years between 1940 and 1968 were consequently a golden age.<sup>4</sup> History, in the pejorative sense of one damn thing after another, ended in 1940.

Yet this vision of a thirty-year *pax priísta* doesn’t add up: it “drops history out at every turn.”<sup>5</sup> Numerous studies of the revolutionary period have demonstrated that Mexico was nowhere near this sort of synchronic stability in 1940. The state that emerged from Cárdenas’s agrarian, labor, and educational reforms was inchoate and often ineffective. The political class remained fragmented, a “loose, heterogeneous, and shifting coalition” of radicals, reformers, moderates,

opportunists, and veiled reactionaries. The party's peasant corporatist bloc—still supposed to represent (and control) a majority of the population—was an umbrella organization of little practical import. Vigorous electoral competition endured, particularly in the provinces; managing the 1940 presidential election required a massacre in the capital.<sup>6</sup> Mexico's state apparatus remained underfunded, understaffed, and ill-informed.<sup>7</sup> Although social spending increased, bureaucrats complained that they lacked the competent agronomists, teachers, and indigenous advocates to implement central policies.<sup>8</sup> Socialist education failed, Cárdenas concluded, not just through conservative opposition but also because "the Secretaría de Educación Pública didn't have enough socialist teachers."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, political factions cannibalized critical government agencies, reorienting them to service local and rent-seeking goals.<sup>10</sup> Popular groups, from the Mayo and Tarahumara in the north, to the Sinarquistas of the Bajío, to the Zapotecs and Triquis of Oaxaca, resisted state integration.<sup>11</sup> And economic elites—ranging from rural ruffians like Manuel Parra to industrial heavyweights like the Monterrey group—used "the weapons of the strong" to press for the reversal of state reforms.<sup>12</sup>

Cárdenas's failure to construct a corporatist *Rechtsstaat* casts doubt on prevailing interpretations of the succeeding decades and leaves the historian with two paradoxes. There is the paradox of revolution: how did millions of Mexicans who made anarchic popular revolution end up as apparently peaceable subjects in the world's most successful authoritarian state?<sup>13</sup> And there is the further paradox of state capitalism. Transitions from revolution to authoritarianism are relatively commonplace; France, Russia, China, and England all underwent similar shifts.<sup>14</sup> Simultaneous, drastic shifts toward highly inequitable economic models are less common. Mexico is extraordinary in that a revolutionary movement, which experimented with collectivist and even socialist modes of production, led to such a deeply inequitable capitalist regime. Mexico experienced strong economic growth across the period: gross domestic product rose at an average rate of 6.4 percent and manufacturing output 8.2 percent per annum. Agricultural production more than tripled. Yet urban real wages declined, only regaining 1940 levels in 1967, and rural wages fell 40 percent.<sup>15</sup> Wage earners, moreover, were not the hardest hit: peasant household income was statistically "not just insufficient but ridiculous."<sup>16</sup> Government policies of retrenched per capita social spending and effectively regressive taxation further increased inequality.<sup>17</sup> In comparative terms, Mexico's Gini coefficient, a compound measure of national inequality in the distribution of wealth, averaged 0.55 between 1950 and 1968. By the end of the 1960s it had risen to 0.58. This outstripped every other Latin American country bar Honduras and Brazil,<sup>18</sup> and was only comparable, outside the region, with the economies of sub-Saharan Africa; the countries of

**TABLE I.1.** Income Inequality in Mexico and Nine Comparatives, 1968–1970

Country	Mean Gini Coefficient	Year
Mexico	0.58	1968
Brazil	0.58	1970
Colombia	0.52	1970
Chile	0.46	1968
Turkey	0.56	1968
India	0.32	1968
Taiwan	0.29	1968
Japan	0.35	1968
Tanzania	0.39	1969
Sierra Leone	0.61	1968

Source: Klaus Deininger and Lyn Squire, “A New Data Set Measuring Income Inequality,” *World Bank Economic Review* 10 (1996): 565–91, restricted to “high quality” data points.

postcolonial Asia and North Africa all developed significantly more equitable economies in this period (see table I.1).<sup>19</sup> Even after the populist reforms of the 1970s a marked inequality endured, and nutritionists estimated that nearly a third of the population suffered severe malnutrition.<sup>20</sup> Behind upbeat stories of Mexico’s extraordinary political and economic models lay a more complicated reality—one masked, relatively successfully, by the cultural managers of the state.

#### *Mechanical Metaphors, Messy Realities*

The success story of the “revolution made government” was written by Mexican politicians, “official” historians, and social scientists such as Frank Brandenburg, whose influential work was dedicated to “the visionaries of the Revolutionary Family.”<sup>21</sup> It was not unanimously accepted in Mexico, where people across classes, regions, and ideologies bitterly criticized the postrevolutionary state. Politicians struggled under the fire of what James Scott called “the weapons of the weak”: gossip, slurs, satirical songs, black jokes, and other means of character assassination.<sup>22</sup> Discourse deemed them “vampires”; when President Adolfo Ruiz Cortines flickered across a cinema screen his gigantic image met with cries of “Dracula!”<sup>23</sup> From joke to threat was no big step. A peasant told his village treasurer that he “was a whoreson just like the other municipal authorities and very soon they’d get fucked up.”<sup>24</sup> Even the president was not immune to the subversive violence of gossip. In 1948 a spy inside the miners’ union reported one worker saying “that the President of

the Republic and the bunch of bandits who surround him were to blame [for the economic crisis], that they were sick of it and should exercise direct action against the Government, and that Chapultepec woods had lots of fine trees to go and hang every last one of them.”<sup>25</sup> The listeners laughed, perhaps a bit nervously. They might also have laughed at Abel Quezada’s cartoons, in which bandolier-festooned revolutionaries sliced golf shots, or new elites wore diamonds on their noses and sported names like Gastón Billeles.<sup>26</sup> In the theaters and cinemas they could see comedians like Cantinflas or Palillo flirting with similar dissidence or hear Rodolfo Usigli’s bitter denunciations of revolutionary cant.<sup>27</sup> If they read Carlos Fuentes or Mariano Azuela they could be shocked by the cynical intermarriages of pre- and postrevolutionary elites, knowing exchanges skewered as “give me class and I’ll give you cash.”<sup>28</sup> The government could restrain popular revisionism, but it could not end it.

Across the mid-century, historians including Daniel Cosío Villegas, Jesús Silva Herzog, Jorge Vera Estaño, and Moisés González Navarro all imported some of that popular revisionism into the early historiography of the revolution.<sup>29</sup> Others subsequently reconstructed some of the tricky juggling acts underlying elite endurance in power.<sup>30</sup> Yet these were exceptions, and until recently most historians ignored the period after 1940, leaving interpretation to anthropologists, sociologists, and, above all, political scientists. The latter’s models of state/society relations were ambiguous from the start: was Mexico a democracy or a dictatorship? Such incertitude was exemplified in Brandenburg’s work, which evolved in the late 1950s from considering Mexico a “one-party democracy” to concluding that it was a “liberal authoritarian” system.<sup>31</sup> As the 1960s ended—with the landmark student massacre at Tlatelolco and without alternation in power—uncertainties dwindled. By the 1970s broad consensus held that Mexico was an authoritarian state, where a powerful corporatist party exercised tight social control through its three class-defined subentities, which marshaled peasants, workers, and the middle classes in massive support, part coerced and part founded on the social compact of revolutionary reform.<sup>32</sup> And Mexico was a hyper-presidentialist state in which a single man and his coterie monopolized national power.

These interpretations and their everyday counterparts drew heavily on mechanical metaphors: the country was run by *el sistema*, *la maquinaria oficial*, the party machine, “a political solar system,” in which Mexicans “rotated around the presidential sun and his electoral machinery.”<sup>33</sup> Less mechanical metaphors were similarly sweeping: Mexico was, commonplace held, a Leviathan state.<sup>34</sup> Its immediate past, particularly in the *época de oro* before 1968, was one of static and uncontested domination over an apathetic people.<sup>35</sup> Such ideas were not wholly to the distaste of Mexican elites: the PRI elite’s “image of invincibility” was a key tool for survival.<sup>36</sup> Across the period both

sympathetic and skeptical analyses centered on these two assumptions: that the postrevolutionary state was powerful, dominating a largely unresisting population, and as a consequence was—by the standards of both the Mexican past and the Latin American present—exceptionally stable.

Such assumptions begged clear questions of class conflict and resistance: how had the state either hidden or bypassed them? These interpretive problems led historians to reconsider state formation from a cultural perspective, embracing the poststructuralist textual analyses and anthropology-inflected works of European cultural historians. In doing so, they challenged “reified” Marxist or Weberian examinations of the state “as a material object of study,” preferring Philip Abrams’s interpretation of the state as an “a-historical mask of legitimating illusion.”<sup>37</sup> In the most influential formulation of this shift, Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent leaned selectively on the work of Derek Sayer and Philip Corrigan to argue that the state’s power derived not from its laws, its institutions, its armed forces, or even its broad capitalist underpinnings, but rather from “the centuries-long cultural process which was embodied in the forms, routines, rituals, and discourses of rule.”<sup>38</sup> As state formation was “nothing less than a cultural ‘revolution,’” it was festivals, comic books, education programs, and murals—rather than parties, bureaucracies, or systems of land tenure—that created the modern Mexican state.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, historians drew on the insights of subaltern studies theorists to investigate the relationship between these state-building efforts and popular culture, arguing that peasants neither blithely accepted nor bitterly rejected revolutionary cultural shifts.<sup>40</sup> Instead, they argued that country people tactically negotiated, appropriated, and reformulated state discourses and rituals. Eliding cultural interpretations of the state and a sophisticated conception of popular responses, scholars concluded that this hegemonic process of appropriation and negotiation produced “a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination” and that this framework underpinned the postrevolutionary state’s endurance.<sup>41</sup> It was neither “a shared ideology” nor a low-rent “false consciousness” but rather a shared language that led to a consensus on the cultural bases for (and scope of) political action.<sup>42</sup>

This approach had several advantages. In analytical terms it reestablished the sheer messiness of reality, meshing neatly with studies of *caciquismo*.<sup>43</sup> It stressed that resistance existed in everyday forms, outside of set-piece battles, and argued cogently for its impact. In so doing it unearthed multiple examples of popular inputs to state formation, corrected earlier concepts of popular passivity, and continued social historians’ traditional appreciation of the difficulty and complexity of achieving order. It furthered Nora Hamilton’s

pathfinding analysis, lowering estimates of elite autonomy and stressing the flimsiness of central power.<sup>44</sup> Finally, it argued that hegemonic discourses over revolution, nation, and gender both subsumed and were shaped by counter-hegemonic voices, a process that channeled resistance and hence, ironically enough, helped to explain the state's apparent stability.<sup>45</sup>

Yet employing cultural hegemony as an exclusive framework for understanding PRIísta dominance also has constraints because reality is complicated in conceptual terms as well. Reducing the state to a "mask" and the process of state formation to a cultural revolution or a series of discursive acts can promulgate a model of the state as one-dimensional as earlier reifications. As Mary Kay Vaughan observed, the new cultural history requires "those practicing it [to] combine culturalist approaches with continued attention to economic processes and to layers of political power."<sup>46</sup> Festivals, rituals, state narratives, and discourses did all play fundamental roles in distorting visions of the state, shaping popular opinion and elite policy, and generating some consensus. But contrary to Abram's original formulation, which works best as constructive challenge rather than stand-alone theory, the state—for all its flaws—did exist as a "social fact"; the state, to paraphrase Alan Knight, had weight.<sup>47</sup> It was a series of political-bureaucratic institutions with dedicated personnel who developed an array of distinct interests, preferences, and capacities.<sup>48</sup> Some of those bureaucratic institutions—the Banco de México, the Secretaría de Hacienda, the Departamento Agrario—were considerably more Weberian than others, such as the Secretaría de Comunicaciones e Obras Públicas or the Departamento General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales. The state both reflected and regulated economic relations. While it was never a simple instrument of bourgeois rule, as tax collector, investor, and policy-maker it formed what Bob Jessop terms a "social relation": not just a product, but also a generator of various class strategies.<sup>49</sup> Revolutionary nationalism may have mitigated the political impact of growing inequality, but state fiscal and economic policy bankrupted peasants, impoverished the urban poor, and benefited the rich. Circuses were important; so too was bread; and so too were guns.

The rapidly expanding historiography of the last decade or so tacitly reflects this realization. There are four principal themes that have drawn historically minded Mexicanists to this period, namely national and elite politics, popular politics and violence, religion and the right, and culture. The study of elites spans individuals; *camarillas*, such as the Grupo Atlacomulco; critical analyses of (long-overlooked) institutions such as the Supreme Court and the Secretaria de Hacienda; and critical conjunctures, such as the Henriquista campaign of the early 1950s and the textbook conflict of the 1960s.<sup>50</sup> Building on the regional studies of Cardenismo, works on popular politics and vio-

lence comprise analyses of social movements, caciquismo, governorships, and increasingly guerrilla campaigns and state repression.<sup>51</sup> Scholarship on religion and the right, which cover Sinarquismo, the PAN (Partido Acción Nacional), and Protestant sects, amply demonstrates how enduring divisions over state land reform and anticlericalism shaped the succeeding decades.<sup>52</sup> Finally, works on culture, from comics to Cantinflas to rock 'n' roll, pick apart the intimate ties between the state and the media industry and suggest the multiplicity of responses of Mexico's new generation of cinema-going, radio-owning, record-collecting mass media consumers.<sup>53</sup> Much remains to be done, and smart, hybrid works, mixing high and low politics, labor and identity, such as those of Steven Bachelor, Gabriela Soto Laveaga and Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, may show the way forward.<sup>54</sup> For the moment, though, despite the recent flurry of publications, fundamental questions over sources, approaches, chronologies, and overarching frameworks remain.

#### Historicizing Authoritarianism: Problems and Possibilities

In looking for answers there is no shortage of data. Historians of the mid-century face a data flood: one driven by archival liberalization (and the new technology to deal with it), the possibilities of oral histories, the post-war surge of print production, and a new level of government and international agency technocratic output. Moreover, these years saw a dramatic expansion of the social sciences, and Mexico proved an area of positive fascination for both foreign and domestic scholars. Their work needs to be engaged with: it provides both irreplaceable data and analyses that fell from favor yet anticipate, in cases, our own. Merely reviewing such a body of sources is one challenge. Sorting the reliable from the unreliable is another. This is particularly the case with the two most positivist groups of sources, namely statistics and intelligence.

PRIístas relied heavily on the positivist magic of numbers. Governors claimed to have implemented imaginary land grants and built hypothetical roads; the statistical blizzards of presidential reports systematically and dramatically inflated agricultural production figures.<sup>55</sup> Some sneered: the Agriculture Secretary, one journalist wrote, “knew how to make such marvellous, eloquent statistics that the hungriest, after reading them, would be full up and burping chicken.”<sup>56</sup> (Forty years later the bitter jokes continued: cartoonists invented a statistics ministry called the *Secretaría de Verificación Nacional del Discurso Estatal*, SEVENDE for short.)<sup>57</sup> But politicians were right to bet on a residual popular faith in statistics, and spies eavesdropping in cafés found that statistics claiming increased production “caused the best impression.”<sup>58</sup> Historians need to beware the same trap. Quite often the state had no way of counting accurately, or it counted with a pronounced optimism.<sup>59</sup> Yet a

rough-and-ready cliometrics remains valuable. Even unbelievable statistics reveal what rulers wanted the ruled to believe; they are as useful as cultural artifacts as they are useless for straightforward representation. Furthermore, grassroots or backdoor statistics—those assembled by local bean-counting or induction—can tell us what the state either didn't want known or couldn't itself know. Chris Boyer's chapter, for example, estimates deforestation through the backdoor of the volume of timber transported by rail. Finally, some statistics of questionable absolute worth are of great relative worth. Pablo Piccato's official homicide statistics do not believably reflect real murder rates (although they may well reflect the state's systematic massaging of those rates), but they do believably indicate their long-term decline.

Mexico's intelligence archives pose a similar mixture of problems and possibilities. They have multiple uses: spies wrestled with the same problems of the unknown provinces as historians do now, and they enjoyed the advantage of actually being there in trying to resolve them. They were given unambiguous—unfortunately, usually verbal—briefs: one inspector in San Luis Potosí was asked, "Why are there unopposed candidates? Why do they have overwhelming political power? Through the townsmen's fear of the authorities? Through the indifference of the voting masses? For other reasons?"<sup>60</sup> Questions like these—and some of their answers—offer insights not just into politics, but also into the federal government's priorities and *mentalité*. Some of the raw data collected by agents also are useful for social, cultural, and economic history. Yet the darker corners of the PRIísta state are now in some ways too accessible, the intelligence archives one-stop shops on an archival motorway. This poses three problems. One is what psychologists call the availability heuristic: "the tendency to judge the frequency or likelihood of an event by the ease with which relevant instances come to mind."<sup>61</sup> Another follows Hibbert's stricture that people who "rely excessively on information from secret sources . . . are bound to receive a distorted view of the world."<sup>62</sup> Finally, these agencies were marked by amateurism, clientelism, and political bias. For much of the 1940s and 1950s they remained small, ad hoc, and amateurish agencies. In 1952 the state could only spare fifteen Gobernación agents to oversee the contested federal elections throughout the country; in 1957 the staff of one service seems to have totaled all of twenty-eight agents.<sup>63</sup> Even in police states, intelligence material demands careful contextualization, and with a handful of agents, many of whom were incompetent, Mexico was no police state.<sup>64</sup>

The host of competing voices in these and other sources demand (and enable) creative triangulation and elegant research design. Michael Snodgrass, for example, analyzes the growing subordination of miners and metalworkers in the North before shifting to rural Jalisco, where he explores one of the

rewards of union acquiescence: privileged entry to the limited good of the Bracero Program. Piccato uses an unholy mix of tabloid crime reporting and intelligence to examine murder as an optic onto—and a critical exchange with—the state. Wil Pansters's least-likely case study selects the most notoriously *cacical* region of the period, San Luis Potosí, to investigate the balance of power between local actors and state representatives, reasoning that conclusions regarding popular inputs in such unpromising circumstances are generalizable across the country. Gladys McCormick's most-likely case study of Zacatepec, one of Mexico's largest peasant cooperatives, reasons that the processes of domination are most likely to be revealed among those who cooperated in a zone of endemic rebellion. These and other contributors move fluently from the micro to the macro and from detailed case studies to the broadest sustainable conclusions; their work shares Eric Wolf's idea that society is "a totality of interconnected processes, and [that] inquiries that disassemble this totality into bits and then fail to reassemble it falsify reality."<sup>65</sup>

The combination of local and national, popular and elite realities is complemented by a heterodox approach that strives to avoid cultural or economic reductionism. Some essays center on culture: Andrew Paxman's analysis of mass media, Jaime Pensado's tracing of student protest, and Guillermo de la Peña's examination of *indigenismo*. Others seem more political or materialist: Thom Rath's work on the military, Benjamin Smith's analysis of the state's fiscal impotence, or Roberto Blancarte's overview of church/state relations. In reality these and the other authors were characterized by their explorations of the interstices of culture, economics, and politics. While Rath's chapter demonstrates civilian governments' continuing dependence on the military, it is equally concerned with the causal impact of a linguistic phenomenon: the mystifying discourse of demilitarization. Paxman's enthusiasm for media production and consumption is intertwined with the institutional and business histories of culture. Snodgrass's work on the political economy of unionized and transnational labor ends up outlining a "culture of migration"; Pansters's history of Gonzalo N. Santos's political reach begins by considering that literary gunman's textual strategies. Such an integrated scholarship—studying local and national actors in tandem, blending grassroots and elite sources, considering among others linguistic, institutional, electoral, infrapolitical, and economic variables—is particularly indicated for hybrid regimes like Mexico, where neither Namierite nor subaltern approaches capture the complexities and subtle dialectics of history.<sup>66</sup>

#### Toward a Model

Moving from different starting points, these essays add up to a working model of PRIísta Mexico. Future debates are foreshadowed in the following

chapters. Certain basic agreements also are evident. Some are not startling: restatements, rediscoveries, or refinements of earlier scholars' work. Others are less anticipated. Taken together, they suggest that the diversity, dynamism, and contradictions of mid-century Mexico are best captured in a series of mid-range theories and an emic label: *dictablanda*.

Perhaps the most basic agreement (unsurprising given the predominance of historians) was that time mattered. While prior studies were dominated by more synchronic disciplines, our contributors emphasize what William Sewell Jr. calls "the temporalities of social life," the understanding that outcomes are contingent "not only upon a wide range of other actions, trends, or events, but also upon the precise temporal sequence in which these occur."<sup>67</sup> This reveals how different social processes with diverse temporalities—from long-running trends to sudden individual decisions—affected the entire period, for the decades between 1938 and 1968 were extremely dynamic. Mexicans experienced shifts at all three levels of the *annaliste* concept of time, imagined as an ocean marked by the rapid movements of surface flotsam, by the tides of mid-level change, and by the deep, slow-moving currents of the *longue durée*.<sup>68</sup> At the surface *sexenios* moved from left to right and, to a lesser extent, back again. The tides of growing industrialization and fluctuating control in the provinces ran fast. Finally, the period witnessed two bursts of that rarest brand of change, marked shifts in *longue durée* patterns. After three centuries of stability the population trebled in three decades. People flocked to the growing cities: by 1960 more Mexicans lived in cities than in the countryside.<sup>69</sup> Simultaneously, in part consequently, people fundamentally reshaped their environments: whether through deforestation, irrigation canals, land grabs by squatters, or developmentalist macroprojects. Such objective shifts were complemented by shifts in subjective experiences of time. These ranged from the adoption of mechanical time—by the 1950s a majority of tenement dwellers in downtown Mexico City owned watches—to the pacifying acceleration of time that Paxman tentatively links to high consumption of mass media.<sup>70</sup> They included the PRIístas' adept management of boom and bust cycles of hope, drip-feeding Mexicans with politicians who proclaimed renewed political and social reform. This may well have delayed popular classification of the state as authoritarian, its economy inequitable, its revolution past.

Reintroducing time begs the questions of periodization, continuity, and change. Current schemes end the revolution in 1940 and the "golden age" in 1968. These traditional watersheds are here to stay, in part because they also are embedded in popular memory, products of a nostalgia that invoked (and invokes) Cardenismo as a critique of PRIísmo, and the early PRI as a critique of the later PRI. In analytical terms they need to be qualified. Across the mid-

century there was no steady progression into authoritarianism but rather a series of lurches in the dynamic balance of power between rulers and ruled and a series of turning points. The “beginning of the end” of the revolution came in 1938, Knight argues; from a Church perspective, Blancarte demonstrates that it occurred even earlier. The government of the early 1940s was more tight-fisted, repressive, and conservative than its predecessor, a shift that stretched beyond peasant and labor politics to encompass phenomena as diverse as teacher training and conservation strategy.<sup>71</sup> Pent-up political demand after the war, however, shaped the early PRI and lent electoral substance to its modish rhetoric of democracy. Both mode and substance largely died across Latin America in the late 1940s, and Mexico was no exception. The 1950 end to party primaries restricted competitive politics; 1952 proved the last threatening presidential election for thirty years<sup>72</sup> yet also marked the end of the army’s overt meddling in presidential politics. The year 1959 saw not just the repression of the railroad workers’ strike but also a mass extinction of the biggest regional caciques,<sup>73</sup> a purge of the army’s top regional commanders and—a year later—the nationalization of the Jenkins film monopoly.<sup>74</sup> The early 1960s combined increasing antisystemic revolt and increasing authoritarianism with increased land grants and increased avenues for limited electoral pluralism; a modicum of proportional representation in 1963, a brief fling with primaries in 1965. Such ambiguities—a defining characteristic of a *dictablanda*—leave room for debate over the significance of each shift. One argument is clear and runs across several chapters: 1968 was a turning point more in perception than in reality.<sup>75</sup> Military repression had never left the countryside and urban protests had never ended. As Pensado demonstrates, multiple pro-democracy student movements—countered with soldiers—stretched back over a decade. Imagining the golden age as a clearly bounded period is as much a function of the ideological remembering of time as of dramatic historical rupture.

The most revision-proof aspect of the golden age is macroeconomic. Between 1940 and 1970 the state implemented protectionist and investment policies designed to develop key industries and stimulate the economy. This project—Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI)—generated impressive growth and one of the lowest import coefficients in Latin America. Quality of life indicators such as literacy and longevity rose alongside the economy.<sup>76</sup> Yet the former originated in the 1930s and the latter was in part a product of global medical advances. Mid-century economic growth was quantitatively strong but qualitatively weak. Government investment channeled growth toward two sectors: manufacturing and export agriculture.<sup>77</sup> Development also was geographically concentrated: between 1940 and 1955 more than three quarters of industrial value added occurred in the north or Mexico City.<sup>78</sup> In

northern cities wages were more than double the national average.<sup>79</sup> Yet huge swathes of the urban population remained outside the country's explosive economic growth, forced to earn low wages in a (largely unmeasured) informal economy; urban women remained particularly marginalized.<sup>80</sup> Rural workers, above all, paid the bills for ISI. Population growth was not matched with land or credit; the agrarian reform was curtailed amid accusations of congenital low productivity. The role of agriculture was to supply export crops to the north and cheap food to the cities, permitting the low urban wages that enabled industrialization. The state supported agribusiness through massive irrigation projects and tax breaks and credits, policies that—combined with price controls—undermined *ejidatarios* and smallholders.<sup>81</sup> Between 1939 and 1947 the purchasing power of agricultural workers declined 47 percent; corn prices, adjusted for inflation, fell 33 percent between 1957 and 1973.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile fiscal policy failed to redistribute wealth from richer urban to poorer rural zones. The “Mexican miracle” presupposed, in short, a systematic transfer of resources from countryside to city and from south and center to north.

Why did peasants accept this? The second clear consensus of this volume is that many did not. Rural communities across Mexico protested vigorously and at times violently against stolen elections; against crooked politicians, tax collectors, alcohol inspectors, or forestry wardens; and against enduring poverty. Insurgencies did not begin in the 1960s: they were a constant during the earlier period.<sup>83</sup> The state consequently relied on violence, exercised by *pistoleros*, policemen, and soldiers, far more than is traditionally appreciated. The petty undeclared counterinsurgencies of the 1940s gave way in the 1950s to repression of peasant movements linked to *Henriquismo* or the Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México (UGOCM), peaking with the crushing of the 1961 Gasca rebellion.<sup>84</sup> Even—perhaps especially—petty local rebellions or jacqueries could be met with extreme, performative violence. In 1955 villagers from La Trinitaria, Chiapas, rebelled, citing high corn prices and local corruption; an army captain beheaded five of them in the main square.<sup>85</sup> In 1956 Triquis from northwest Oaxaca murdered a lieutenant and two soldiers who had raped a local woman; the army called in planes to bomb the village.<sup>86</sup> In 1957 soldiers in Cuaxocota, Puebla, countered plans for an *ejido* with beatings, mass arrests, and the threat to burn the village.<sup>87</sup> This was all in the mid-1950s, generally considered to be the most peaceful stretch of the mid-century. Such unequivocal object lessons in state terror were, as one soldier told a spy, “standard (if secretive) practice.” The army was critical to rural order: in the early 1950s, Rath finds, some 20 percent of *municipios* held small garrisons, and conflict zones often were ruled by unelected councils headed by an officer.<sup>88</sup> State violence was carefully masked—deployments

often began by night, soldiers killed while dressed as peasants—and carefully targeted. It continued the tradition of decapitating social movements by selectively killing their cadres.<sup>89</sup>

Yet there was more to violence than draconian repression, and popular violence sometimes secured popular demands. A Mexican variant of what Eric Hobsbawm dubbed collective bargaining by riot obtained, as rulers and ruled haggled through choreographed low-intensity violence, which ranged from street fights to riots to simulacra of rebellion.<sup>90</sup> Collective bargaining by riot characterized both electoral and economic protests, and even the most radical, antisystemic mobilizations often led to concessions once they had been repressed. The 1965 guerrilla attack on an army base in Ciudad Madera, Chihuahua, led to the army hunting down and killing the attackers, but it also led to a tour of inspection by ex-president Cárdenas, which in turn generated a major redistribution of land.<sup>91</sup> When local agrarian protests threatened to spread across regions of high-yield agricultural production the government would sometimes revive the agrarista largesse of the 1930s. In 1957 Jacinto López and the UGOCM invaded the sugar *latifundias* of Los Mochis, Sinaloa, and the lands of the U.S.-owned Cananea Cattle Company in Sonora, invasions that spread to the Yaqui and Mayo valleys, the Laguna, Colima, and Nayarit.<sup>92</sup> Although soldiers arrested López, President López Mateos responded by expropriating the Cananea lands and creating seven ejidos covering a quarter of a million hectares.<sup>93</sup> Collective bargaining by riot was time-honored practice: it was obtained in resource regulation and in the local elections, and it was salient in the PRI's retreat from power in the 1990s.<sup>94</sup> It applied to both policy and personnel choices, was partially protected by revolutionary rhetoric, and underlay much co-option by the state.

The main mass beneficiaries of state co-option were workers. As Kevin Middlebrook details, the state largely subordinated labor by engineering union *cacicazgos* between 1949 and 1951. Yet although that subordination held down real wages, it was offset by new social benefits: subsidized food staples, housing, health care, and eventually worker profit-sharing.<sup>95</sup> As Snodgrass demonstrates, the sheer range of those benefits outweighed, in popular memory, the high costs of repression; it was—again paradoxically—a “golden age of charrismo.”<sup>96</sup> Moreover, economic co-option stretched far beyond ownership of the means of production or benefit packages. One of the hallmarks of the period was the “dramatic expansion” of state control over the access points to a mixed economy, epitomized in legislation such as the 1950 Law on Federal Executive Powers in Economic Matters.<sup>97</sup> Governments could buy consent by direct and indirect means; both involved rigging the competition for limited resources, broadly defined as any generator, whether tangible or intangible, of wealth. Intensive direct incentives to cooperation—state benefits,

development funding—rewarded relatively narrow sectors, above all unionized labor, bureaucrats, and soldiers. Yet government revenues were exiguous, and such benefits were perforce limited: the state had to pay market price (in cash) for the Cananea expropriation.<sup>98</sup> As Boyer, Snodgrass, Paxman, and McCormick all show, less tangible resources were many and ranged from the natural—water, forestry, grazing—to the institutional, such as licenses for transport businesses, cantinas, television and radio stations, factories, imports and exports, street vendors, bureaucratic sinecures, or *bracero* permits. Government permits were ubiquitous: one cartoonist drew a policeman demanding that the three kings produce their permit to distribute Christmas presents.<sup>99</sup> Regulating such a wide range of resources cost the state relatively little, while tactically ceding access to local, national, and export markets purchased support across classes, spanning the unemployed who got street vendors' permits, the workers and peasants who were granted *bracero* permits, the middle classes who received transport concessions for taxis, buses, trucks, and drugs plazas,<sup>100</sup> and the major industrialists who won favorable shares of national import and export quotas.<sup>101</sup> (Permit-givers at all levels—from crony capitalist presidents like Rodríguez or Alemán down to the lowest bureaucrat—also personally profited from controlling entry to the broadest range of economic activity.) Failure to support the government could be punished by blocking that entry: Azcárraga waited a decade for his TV concession after backing Almazán.<sup>102</sup> This regulation of resources was critical in building coalitions of consenters on the cheap because it lent Mexico one of the main advantages of a gatekeeper state: the counteracting of state weakness by the stabilizing, coalition-building tool of controlling access to capitalist markets.<sup>103</sup>

The third consensus of this book's case studies is that rowdy mass politics never ended in the cities, where in between large-scale, set-piece confrontations and everyday forms of resistance a mid-range rumbling of dissent and mobilization persisted. During the early 1940s protests focused on the combination of spiraling food costs and ostentatious corruption.<sup>104</sup> The harvest crisis of 1943 precipitated bread riots in Mexico City and Monterrey; two years later, dissidents blockaded downtown Xalapa to protest the price of bread.<sup>105</sup> In the later 1940s urban grievances turned toward taxes, and social movements—some nominally attached to fly-by-night parties or unions—emerged to veto fiscal increases.<sup>106</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s the focus of urban discontent shifted to student organizations from Puebla, Michoacán, Sonora, and San Luis Potosí.<sup>107</sup> Throughout the period, squatter (*paracaidista*) organizations invaded private lands, demanded services and *ejidos*, and rejected state regulation. Governments were forced to respond, im-

porting grain, desperately attempting to control food prices, punishing high-taxing state officials, titling lands, and dishing out water and electricity. These measures were costly and often ineffective. Lasting alliances between the state and single-issue movements were slow to build and unreliable. It took twenty years of repeated ad hoc concessions to co-opt the market women of Oaxaca City into the official apparatus of the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares (CNOP), and even then they occasionally held the government to ransom.<sup>108</sup> Although Ernesto Uruchurtu built thousands of market stalls for traders, in 1966 they turned on the mayor and helped topple him when he tried to dislodge paracaídistas groups.<sup>109</sup> Some researchers conducting fieldwork in the 1970s observed a well-regimented party, lording it over a populace committed to “conformity to the rules rather than manipulation of them” and avoiding “violent or clearly illegal forms of political action.”<sup>110</sup> Others, slightly earlier, did not: in the late 1960s, for example, Carlos Vélez-Ibañez witnessed groups of “viejas chingonas” burning down mortgage offices and throwing managers into sewage ditches in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl.<sup>111</sup> Collective bargaining by riot was not confined to the countryside.

As the last example suggests, and several of our contributors demonstrate, these movements also saw women enter the political sphere with increased force. The revolution ushered in a new wave of feminists, who linked demands for voting rights with broader social claims. Some sought to work within the system, exchanging conditional loyalty for economic benefits, forming their own unions, and supporting state-linked cacicazgos.<sup>112</sup> Others joined the Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM) and harassed the government for female suffrage from the outside.<sup>113</sup> At the other end of the ideological spectrum, Catholic women’s groups mobilized against government anticlericalism, especially socialist schools.<sup>114</sup> Improving church-state relations, the co-option of leaders, and the political demobilization of World War II probably combined to suffocate more radical demands.<sup>115</sup> But, during the succeeding decades, these left- and right-wing discourses and organizational structures percolated down to the urban and rural poor. In the process, peasants, workers, street vendors, and paracaídistas housewives blended and reconfigured previously polarized ideals and redirected them toward immediate goals. In Morelos, women provided foot soldiers for Rubén Jaramillo’s radical agrarismo.<sup>116</sup> In the 1940s in Oaxaca City women harnessed the organizational power of the Acción Católica Mexicana (ACM) to press the government to cut taxes and fulfill its promise of greater democracy, which they defined as having their newly granted vote actually count.<sup>117</sup> By the 1960s, women also embraced the new biopolitics of fertility. Despite Catholic opprobrium,

Mexican women overwhelmingly accepted the use of contraception, which they adopted in soaring numbers across the 1970s, in some cases whether their husbands liked it or not.<sup>118</sup>

Elites were forced to react to this new level of power and treated women as a distinct political category. They established female branches of the PRI, publicly endorsing a handful of female deputies and *cacicas*, and channeled social spending toward women's organizations.<sup>119</sup> Mexican women developed longer school careers than women in countries of comparable wealth, which translated into significantly lower infant mortality.<sup>120</sup> The Secretaría de Salubridad y Asistencia concentrated its paltry funds on constructing hospitals, kindergartens, and education centers for poor working mothers.<sup>121</sup> Throughout the country community organizers, such as Celia Ramírez, head of the Unión de Mujeres de las Colonias 20 in the Federal District, and Guadalupe Urzúa Flores, the "advocate of the outcasts" of Jalisco, gained government support.<sup>122</sup> Offers of state largesse and political leadership brought results. As María Teresa Fernández Aceves argues, second-generation female leaders, by securing unevenly distributed social services, assured widespread female backing for the PRI after full suffrage was granted in 1952. Women could also be, as Heather Fowler-Salamini points out, *caciques* of much the same stripe as their male counterparts: the leaders of the Veracruz coffee sorters negotiated notable benefits for their constituents while simultaneously grafting and getting seats on the Córdoba town council.<sup>123</sup> Some PAN-istas brokered similar deals. Genoveva Medina, *cacica* of the Oaxaca City stallholders association, drafted her union into the PRI after accepting a seat in congress.<sup>124</sup> By the mid-1950s, the growing numbers of working women, suffragettes, aspirant *caciques*, and militant Catholics all offered conditional support to the PRI. As a result, women voters in general, Blancarte reminds us, left PRIísta fears of their generic opposition unfulfilled.

PRIísta hopes for cultural engineering through education, on the other hand, generated ambiguous results. Rafael Segovia found the schoolhouse to be the main space for political discussion.<sup>125</sup> However, the contents of many such discussions were often critical of the state. As Tanalís Padilla notes, by the 1960s "the very schools the revolutionary government had once designed to create a loyal citizenry were now producing its most militant foes." Guerrilla leaders from Chihuahua and Guerrero were teachers; Subcomandante Marcos's parents were *maestros rurales*.<sup>126</sup> The cities were the most educated zones, where the state lavished its greatest efforts in controlling the public sphere. Yet city-dwellers seemed skeptical from the start. Café gossip was virulent and all-encompassing: presidential untouchability did not obtain over a coffee or a beer.<sup>127</sup> That gossip translated into political opposition is clear not just in informal politics but also in election results. Unmanipulated

figures show Alemán winning a mere 59 percent in Mexico City in 1946; more manicured numbers still showed the PRI facing consistent and substantial opposition in both the center-west and north.<sup>128</sup> Cultural production and reception reflected, in short, the double-edged legacy of revolutionary discourse, an instrument of both control and contestation.

Various authors question the state's control of the public sphere and of mass media in particular. Some were overtly controlled by the government: *El Nacional* billed itself as "the official organ of the government" (in sales pitches pressuring town councils to subscribe).<sup>129</sup> The government credit agency Nacional Financiera (NAFINSA) owned 51 percent of the shares in Clasa Films Mundiales SA, which made many of the newsreels.<sup>130</sup> From 1955 on there was only one television provider, TSM (later Televisa), whose owner declared the network "part of the governmental system" and the President "his boss."<sup>131</sup> Wartime censorship agencies endured, supposedly controlling everything from newsreels to comics. The censors' work was supplemented by an array of covert control strategies that targeted the mainstream, officially pluralist press. The government used advertising contracts, soft loans, and its control of newsprint through a state monopoly supplier, PIPSA, to induce compliance. Most of the time this worked.<sup>132</sup> Survey data from the 1940s to the 1970s suggest a certain core belief in the national state—in abstract—that may be causally linked to this virtual world of state-approved mass media.<sup>133</sup> As Paxman argues, however, that world was not just a product of dominant party social engineering but also straightforward profit-maximizing; in ceding much control to the private sector the state also bet on the controlling effect of sheer quantity rather than on hegemonic quality alone.

Media control was also a lot more partial than generally thought. Censorship agencies enjoyed mixed results: newsreel and film censorship was dynamic and effective, while comics flourished despite the best efforts of the cultural bureaucrats.<sup>134</sup> There were backdoors to effective social commentary, as Piccato's analysis of the national crime pages demonstrates. There was a muckraking oppositional press *en provincia*. Newspapers such as *La Verdad de Acapulco*, *El Diario de Xalapa*, *El Chapulín* in Oaxaca, *El Informador* in Guadalajara, *El Sol del Centro* in Aguascalientes, and Tampico's *El Mundo* and Apizaco's *Don Paco* all managed, at times at least, to follow profoundly critical editorial lines. They constituted a fourth estate. They were joined by traveling corrido sellers, modern-day troubadours equipped with thin sheets of popular songs, which were read out and sung in markets, cantinas, and town squares. Many such Mexican *samizdat* explicitly criticized the state, from the *Corrido del bracero*, which decried the "brutal taxes/the fines and donations/the vile monopolies/of repulsive individuals," to the *Corrido de Jaramillo*, which warned prospective peasant leaders that presidential hugs might be followed by a

“jaramillazo”: a bullet and a coffin.<sup>135</sup> They were, the U.S. embassy concluded, “truly a mass medium.”<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, even when bureaucrats could control the medium, they were unable to regiment reception. Vélez-Ibañez described the atmosphere at a cinema in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl as a cacophony of “boos, jokes, plays on words, whistling, commentaries, flatus, shuffling of feet . . . munching, belching, name calling, and cursing at friends, all combined with the sound track of the movie.” There was also “laughter (usually at the most inappropriate times).”<sup>137</sup>

Such humor is interesting both as a constituent of and an optic onto state-society relations. Earthy ranchero jokes were a key recruiting tool for politicians from Alvaro Obregón through Ezequiel “Scarface” Cruz to Vicente Fox.<sup>138</sup> Gonzalo N. Santos claimed to be a lifelong Obregonista because of a joke: when a general commiserated with Obregón on the loss of his arm, Obregón replied, “Thanks a lot, brother, but it would’ve been worse if they’d cut my cock off.” “This man,” enthused Santos, “really was one of us, because he really spoke like us! This one had to be our *jefe*.”<sup>139</sup> At the same time, equally earthy jokes were a medium of subversion. They were not hard to find: on one bathroom wall rhyming couplets described the PRI as “a total son of a bitch . . . like this cubicle, smelling of shit.”<sup>140</sup> Not all attacks were abstract: corridos nicknamed Alemán (“the biggest thief of all”) Ali Baba, while jokers mocked President Díaz Ordaz’s ugliness and the elderly Ruiz Cortines’s sexual weediness.<sup>141</sup> During the successful 1952 movement to rid Oaxaca of an unpopular governor, guitar-wielding comics urged on female protestors, deriding rural heavies as impotent bumpkins.<sup>142</sup> Even *relajo*—relatively mild and nonsensical communal wordplay and mockery designed to deflate serious situations—could focus discontent.<sup>143</sup> When cultural missionaries arrived in the small town of Tezoatlán, Oaxaca, they publically catalogued the “many advantages” of their outfit, listing the “many ploughs,” “many crops,” and “many educated citizens” they had bestowed on other fortunate villages. In the midst of the speech, the local priest interjected “*muchos maestros, mucha mierda*,” deflating the missionaries’ serious tone and causing the meeting to disintegrate into “obscene jokes and name-calling.”<sup>144</sup>

If humor occupied the intersection of politics and culture, what were its functions? The stock answer is resistance; jokes are widely accepted as one of the key weapons of the weak. Contemporary elites sometimes agreed. During the late 1940s a blend of devaluation, inflation, and baroque corruption proved a boon for aspirant satirists, who took street humor to the boards of Mexico City’s cabaret bars, mobile playhouses, and official theaters.<sup>145</sup> Most performances passed without interference. But if the authorities suspected that critiques were sweepingly systemic or that dramatists had directly insulted the president, then repression was swift: performances were closed,

actors were jailed. Alemán ordered Usigli's acid denunciation of contemporary politics, *El gesticulador*, to shorten its run.<sup>146</sup> Government thugs shut down Roberto Blanco Moheno's attack on state corruption, *El cuarto poder*, after only a few shows.<sup>147</sup> Other heavies smashed the printing presses of *Presente*, the most critical magazine of the time.<sup>148</sup> The somewhat simian Gustavo Díaz Ordaz gave the most celebrated demonstration of state humorlessness, closing down *El Diario de México* for switching captions beneath his portrait and that of the monkeys at the local zoo.<sup>149</sup>

Other PRIístas, though, tolerated and even participated in the cynical, oft-obscene, and profoundly black humor of the age. Many seemed to bet that by embracing that subversive humor they might draw its satiric sting and even establish new if *inconcesable* solidarities with their constituents. Santos's claim that his methods of "*encierra, destierro y entierro*" meant he needed gravediggers not bureaucrats, or that "in this state, the only politician who is allowed to steal is me," may have played well with his *ranchero* supporters while demonstrating more widely that he was "more bastard than dickhead."<sup>150</sup> Other in-jokes had their roots in the interiors of government offices rather than the fireside banter of the revolution, but they were no less rhetorically effective. Tuxpan politician César Garizurieta's gag that "*vivir fuera del presupuesto es vivir en error*" or Mexico City mayor Carlos Hank González's observation that "a poor politician is a poor politician" undoubtedly enraged some of the ruled; they may well have persuaded others that the politicians were "*muy gente*" or "one of us."<sup>151</sup> The reception of jokes like these (and their political impact) is self-evidently speculative. Yet their prevalence strongly suggests that they were not just matters of taste but also deliberate instruments to foster what Michael Herzfeld has called cultural intimacy, "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation."<sup>152</sup>

FINALLY, IT IS demonstrable that PRIístas, even when not cracking jokes themselves, appreciated the benefits of letting others do the same. Satire can vaccinate against more serious disorder; hence medieval elites' tolerance of carnival excess, which actually "maintain[ed] local society in working order."<sup>153</sup> Censorship in Mexico alternated with periods of comic *laissez-faire*, when authorities allowed satirical newspapers like *Presente*, cabaret acts like Jesús Martínez "Palillo," columnists like Carlos Monsiváis and Renato Leduc, cartoonists like Abel Quezada or Rius, and writers like Jorge Ibarguengoitía to ridicule with only limited interference. At the same time, government

agents only rarely persecuted popular satire on the street. PRI leaders understood that much of the humor directed at the government served to express frustration in a nonthreatening manner: that the ability to pay a handful of centavos, sit before *Ahí está el detalle*, and watch Cantinflas mock the *apretado* elites could lend them legitimacy, while tolerating outbreaks of popular *relajo* merely acknowledged the lack of real revolutionary purpose behind the disorder.<sup>154</sup> According to Palillo, President Alemán believed that “it was good that criticisms of a government occurred in a play and were designed to make people laugh, instead of building up hatred and provoking strikes, marches, and coups d’état as in South America.”<sup>155</sup>

The deployment and management of humor is, in short, a microcosm of the blend of force and consent inside mid-century Mexico. Mexico was not Romania, where a famous joke went, “What did they give the winner of the national comedy awards? Fifteen years.”<sup>156</sup> As Roland Barthes argued, though, “a little confessed evil saves one from acknowledging a lot of hidden evil.”<sup>157</sup> Elites tolerated cutting café jokes at the same time as they killed peasant leaders, toppled local governments, winked at suspicious suicides, banned left-wing parties, and cut many Mexicans out of their economic model. That ambiguity, that interspersion of hard and soft power, of coercion and co-option and the shifting coalitions they built, are captured in a final joke of sorts: the dark, paradoxical pun of the *dictablanda*.<sup>158</sup>

#### Authoritarianism with Adjectives

In Juan Linz’s classic definition, an authoritarian system is one “with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive or intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises powers, within formally ill-defined limits but quite predictable ones.”<sup>159</sup> Mexico breaks these criteria in several key areas. It did lack elaborate ideology, being characterized above all by hard-nosed pragmatism, and it did have a distinctive mentality in the culture of revolutionary nationalism. In part because of that culture, however, its “limited pluralism” was often quite responsible, as elites juggled the competing interests of a broad range of social sectors. Party membership was impressive—by the early 1960s nearly 25 percent of the population belonged to the PRI<sup>160</sup>—but it reflected neither extensive nor intensive political mobilization; as Carlos Madrazo pointed out, the crowds at mass rallies were “herds,” affiliated with the PRI without choice or conviction and “forced” to attend.<sup>161</sup> There was some intensive mobilization in the frequent elections—across the twentieth century Mexico held well over eighty thousand elections<sup>162</sup>—but it

was generally that of dissident factions or opposition parties in those local societies where representative politics persisted; power was distributed across society, well beyond the narrow bounds of a national leadership.

Neither did Mexico reproduce the mechanisms of power that characterize other nondemocratic states. As Knight observes, totalitarian states—the USSR, Nazi Germany, or Spain in the first decade of Franco’s power—are characterized by overt, systematic, and massive violence against the ruled; Mexico was not. Other authoritarian states relied heavily on extensive secret police forces, such as the estimated fifty thousand employees of Brazil’s Serviço Nacional de Informações; Mexico did not.<sup>163</sup> The James Bond fallacy—that a spy agency might rely on a single agent to do everything—was actually realized in 1940s Mexico: at one point one man, Colonel Manuel Rios Thivol, ended up dealing with a large proportion of the government’s crises.<sup>164</sup> Most authoritarian states retain large armies: Pinochet’s Chile, for example, contained eleven soldiers for every thousand citizens.<sup>165</sup> Mexico in the early 1950s had all of two soldiers per thousand.<sup>166</sup> Finally, the unwritten rules meant that elite powers were indeed “formally ill-defined . . . but quite predictable.” Yet most authoritarian regimes are characterized by the stagnation of their elites, as strongmen and their coterie cling to power across decades. Mexico, in contrast, held to a constitutional mandate prohibiting re-election and smoothly circulated political elites every six years. Applying authoritarianism to mid-century Mexico clearly demands adjectives. Looking for them is not scholastic hair-splitting but rather a logical imperative: how can we discuss the *sui generis* nature of Mexican history without positing a genus in the first place?

Bureaucratic is not one of these adjectives. Like Argentina and Brazil, Mexico combined “high modernization” with decreasing real wages and attempts to control society through corporatist organizations. Unlike these countries, Mexico was not run by a narrow coalition of bureaucrats, large landowners, industrial bourgeoisie, and military. Landowners and soldiers were comparatively less significant in formal politics; the industrial proletariat was at least partially included, with a broad range of perks offsetting lower wages<sup>167</sup>; and peasants, for all their declining wealth, had greater bargaining possibilities for coveted roads, schools, and rural health clinics. Furthermore, the “black fiscal economy” of tacitly sanctioned tax evasion and loan default allowed governments to extend this broad (if conditional) coalition on the cheap.<sup>168</sup> As a result, even after historians unearthed significant levels of violence in Mexico, extreme coercion did not have the same “crucial importance” as in bureaucratic authoritarian regimes.<sup>169</sup> While the Argentine junta killed an estimated thirty-two per one hundred thousand, Mexico’s official homicide rate at the same time was thirteen per one hundred

thousand.<sup>170</sup> Authoritarianism is a well-populated genus, though, and two species do describe much of mid-century Mexico's political reality: electoral authoritarianism and competitive authoritarianism.

Electoral authoritarian regimes are those that “play the game of multi-party elections by holding regular elections for the chief executive and a national legislative assembly. Yet they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than instruments of democracy.”<sup>171</sup> Competitive authoritarian regimes are a subset in which there is “real but unfair” competition in elections. Neither is a perfect fit. Elections were more than “instruments of authoritarian rule”; at the same time, there was no real competition for executive power in Mexico after 1952, as one mass party was banned and the other's candidates failed to win more than 15 percent of the vote.<sup>172</sup> Yet the other central aspects of the competitive authoritarianism model were all present. Elections were “arenas of contestation through which oppositions [could] legally—and legitimately—challenge incumbents,” who “[were] forced to sweat.” The opposition did participate with “both votes and thugs”; the cost of toleration was comparatively low, the cost of suppression quite high; the circulation of elites provided the means for recovery after losing. Civil liberties were “nominally guaranteed and at least partially respected.” While informal institutions—smoke-filled rooms—were often the main sites of decision-making, the PRI also “[packed] judiciaries, electoral commissions, and other nominally independent arbiters and [manipulated] them via blackmail, bribery, and/or intimidation.” Finally, informal means of coercion were extremely important and ranged from the discretionary application of the law to the part-privatized, deniable violence that was salient but, like its critical military twin, subject to a “certain invisibility.”<sup>173</sup>

Yet the PRI arrived at this outcome through wholly different processes than those driving contemporary competitive authoritarianism. This is usually the product of a balance of exogenous pressures toward democratization and endogenous abilities to resist both foreign and domestic opposition through “incumbent organizational power.”<sup>174</sup> Neither applies to Mexico.

The United States fundamentally shaped Mexico's economy—through export markets, direct foreign investment, and consumer culture—albeit to an extent that remains open to debate.<sup>175</sup> In political terms, however, there was at best brief exogenous pressure on Mexico to democratize; for most of the period U.S. pressure on Latin American states was exerted in the opposite direction. In more general terms, a debate is implicit in the growing research on Mexico's international conjuncture: did the Cold War change all that much?<sup>176</sup> While several authors incorporate exogenous factors in their analy-

ses, this book does not dedicate a specific chapter to international relations; as such our argument is preliminary. We would, however, identify four main questions. Did the Cold War change the language of politics? Did it increase the degree of external—and particularly U.S.—influence? Did it radicalize Mexican society? Did it substantially redirect Mexican political development?

Following these lines, we posit that external linkages were not critical. It is obvious that contemporary actors adopted the dramatic language of the times. Alemán should have his term extended to ten years, opined one editorialist, as “the Cold War has to become a hot war.”<sup>177</sup> “Germany and Japan,” a Henriquista general told his followers, “had wanted to go through Mexico to attack the United States, and Russia would surely try the same thing.”<sup>178</sup> Normalistas listened to Radio Havana and held vigils for Che; even normalista socialites “were filled with socialist ideas.”<sup>179</sup> Yet it is not at all obvious that exogenous discursive influence translated into strategic or political influence. In terms of security, Mexico received exceptionally low amounts of aid, arms, and training from the United States: out of the sixty-one thousand troops the United States trained in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s, only 659 came from Mexico, despite U.S. aspirations to greater influence.<sup>180</sup> (This is unsurprising, perhaps, given that Mexico’s war planners identified the United States as their main external threat.<sup>181</sup>) In terms of policy, Mexico frequently demonstrated its autonomy, whether refusing to join the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, renegotiating the terms of the foot-and-mouth campaign, winking at Castro’s training in Mexico, condemning the Bay of Pigs, or recognizing Castro’s government.<sup>182</sup> Such foreign policy decisions were made for domestic rather than foreign purposes and consumption.<sup>183</sup> As for communist influence, the PCM was, as Barry Carr points out, strikingly weak, numbering—by U.S. sources, which are unlikely to undercount—all of sixteen hundred members in 1950 (and that before a 1953 schism created the dissident Partido Obrero-Campesino Mexicano). The party’s Thirteenth Congress in 1960 brought together all of seventy-six delegates in a disused brothel.<sup>184</sup> The Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina (CTAL), Mexico’s would-be continental labor anti-imperialists, received a grand total of thirty thousand dollars a year in Soviet subsidies.<sup>185</sup> The Cold War did become more significant in the later 1960s, and the success of the Cuban Revolution did inspire guerrilla warfare on the left and mass demonstrations, tragicomic attempted coups, and low-level terrorism on the right. Yet guerrilla movements remained small: at their 1970s peak, intelligence counted 1,860 fighters scattered between 29 different groups.<sup>186</sup> There were, moreover, no direct links between Cuba and Mexican guerrillas. By the standards of the 1910s or 1920s, mid-century governments were markedly more autonomous than their predecessors.

As for the radicalization of society, in Mexico the Cold War largely failed to inspire what Greg Grandin has termed the “politicization and internationalization” of everyday life.<sup>187</sup> For the majority of Mexicans the Cold War may instead have depoliticized everyday life. At the political extremes left and right-wing groups remained wedded to pre-existing rhetoric, alliances, and organizational structures. Rubén Jaramillo’s peasants were disenfranchised Cardenistas, the occasional burst of Marxist rhetoric as much a product of the CNC of the late 1930s as of international communism.<sup>188</sup> Genaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas were revolutionary nationalists first, Cuban-style socialists very much second.<sup>189</sup> Although the U.S. embassy and the Mexican government dressed up Celestino Gasca’s 1961 rebels as Che-reading revolutionaries, the blend of military officers, middle-class democrats, and angry peasants better resembled the 1940 Almazanista electoral alliance.<sup>190</sup> The Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN) was a classic Cardenista organization, well-meaning, inclusive, and ramshackle, its rhetoric “written within the vocabulary of reformist movements.”<sup>191</sup> Even anticommunist rebels, like the “últimos cristeros” who attacked Huajuapán’s garrison and Ciudad Hidalgo’s town hall in 1962, harked back to an earlier era and comprised radicalized members of the ACM.<sup>192</sup> What polarization did exist proved if anything a political windfall for the PRI. By exaggerating the threat of armed revolt and repressing both left and right, the government pushed Mexicans toward the political center. Cárdenas withdrew his support from the MLN and took state employment as the head of the Río Balsas irrigation project.<sup>193</sup> The new leader of the PAN, Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola, pulled back from the party’s policy of paranoid McCarthyism, ordered activists to withdraw from conflictive local elections, and accepted the PRI’s offer of watered-down electoral reforms.<sup>194</sup> Foreign policy, which balanced broad support for U.S. hemispheric defense with the right of Latin American countries to self-determination, exacerbated this shift, not only appeasing internal pressure groups but also solidifying the PRI’s reputation for maintaining the peace.<sup>195</sup> Gazing north to a United States embroiled in Korea and then Vietnam or south to a war-torn Guatemala, many Mexicans lauded their government’s pacific if inconsistent policies, feeling, perhaps, that Mexico remained “the best place to watch history from the ringside seats.”<sup>196</sup>

The other major factor in stabilizing competitive authoritarianism is a reasonably powerful state. Assessed through Joel Migdal’s schema of state characteristics—the power to penetrate society, extract resources, regulate social relationships, and appropriate resources—PRIísta Mexico was little stronger than its Cardenista predecessor.<sup>197</sup> The state had the technology and organization to extract resources and enjoyed some successes in penetrating society in material terms, including an expanding bureaucracy, social ser-

vices, rising school enrollment; in the cultural terms of disseminating revolutionary nationalism, crafting an image of inevitability for the party, and providing a common language for political debate; and in the political terms of recruiting a mass party membership. Yet the quality of that penetration was equivocal. Bureaucrats' cognitive capacity remained low, to the extent that basic geography sometimes escaped them; thus, in a fit of absent-mindedness, Ometepepec, Guerrero, was once relocated to Oaxaca, while Zirándaro was moved to Michoacán.<sup>198</sup> Basic data collection remained woe-ful, particularly in the south: one economist complained that data collection in Oaxaca rarely covered more than 40 percent of the territory, in Guerrero perhaps 70 percent.<sup>199</sup> Bureaucracies were bigger, but they often were cannibalized by caciques or local interest groups and redirected away from state projects toward regional or rent-seeking goals. At the serrano extremes, entire regions used *indigenismo* to carve out parallel, contradictory autonomous powers such as the Consejo Supremo Tarahumara.<sup>200</sup> Mexico continued to fail in the most basic regulation of social relationships, namely Weber's "monopoly of the legitimate use of violence"<sup>201</sup>: everyday Mexicans protested against extrajudicial and/or privatized violence that encompassed pre-electoral beatings, assassination, and petty massacre. As Piccato points out, "impunity . . . was more tangible in everyday life than presidential power."<sup>202</sup> Finally, critically, Mexico lacked the fundamental capability to appropriate resources. Traditional resistance to taxation combined with easy evasion to generate "incredibly low" revenues. In 1950 Mexicans paid the lowest taxes in Latin America—a region, as Miguel Angel Centeno pointed out, where the state was a "fiscal dwarf"—and little changed during the next fifty years.<sup>203</sup> Measured against the benchmarks of earlier scholarship, self-presentation, or extraregional comparative cases, the Mexican state was rather weak.

Yet while the long-term fate of contemporary competitive authoritarianism is murky, that of Mexico's historical parallel was exceptional longevity. Some of the answers to the paradoxes of authoritarianism and enduring inequality are to be found in force: both physical violence and the resulting violent imaginaries that multiplied its impact. Half-hidden force inhabited all three arenas of power, from straightforward political repression to cultural control to the key transfer of resources from countryside to city, which helped buy off an urban population that could not be controlled militarily and that never completely bought the state's legitimacy. In the provinces caciques, gunmen, and soldiers were central to the exercise of power and the maintenance of authoritarian capitalism. Troops were sent to occupy ejidos, chase local dissidents or insurgents, and break strikes, from the oilfields of Poza Rica to the sugar mill at Zacatepec to the mines of Nueva Rosita to the hospital corridors of Mexico City.<sup>204</sup> They did more than just monitor elections:

they arrested leaders, beat protesters, toppled opposition ayuntamientos, and in *extremis* waded into marches and street fights to lethal effect. At key junctures the army was used in capital cities: troops were deployed against students in Oaxaca in 1952, Mexico City in 1956, Chilpancingo in 1960.<sup>205</sup> Even high-ranking politicians could suffer overt military pressure. One officer made the attorney general publicly retract insinuations of extrajudicial executions; army patrols surrounded Henríquez Guzmán's house before the 1952 transfer of powers.<sup>206</sup> Well before Tlatelolco, state domination relied on violence significantly more than traditionally realized; brute force that was managed through careful targeting, concealment, and deniability. At critical junctures and in critical places—Mexico City in 1940, Baja California in 1962, municipios across the country when popular mobilization took hold—violence had causal primacy in sustaining PRIísta rule.<sup>207</sup>

Yet while force was a *sine qua non* of PRIísta survival, consent weighed heavier in the balance as economic, cultural, and political accommodation attenuated the paradoxes of authoritarianism and inequality. In the economic arena, elites channeled the rewards of growth to key sectors, directly in the form of jobs in industry, salaries, and services and indirectly through regulating access to resources and, in particular, fast-growing national and international markets. Against a background of global postwar boom, demographic growth, infrastructural development, and the spread of consumer culture, acting as a gatekeeper to those markets helped build large coalitions on the cheap. Urban populations certainly did not buy state discourse wholesale, but faced with a series of economic dilemmas they did opt in large numbers for a grudging, conditional consent. Consent also was favored by the cultural legacy of revolution: a common language of power, a certain residual faith in a revolutionary state, and, on both sides of power, the memory of revolutionary apocalypse.<sup>208</sup> Mexico is the only country in Latin America that might fit the European bellicist model of state formation, whereby “states make wars and wars make states”<sup>209</sup>; but Mexico's own Great War, the revolution, seems to have promoted a more pragmatic and resigned approach to the counter-currents of regional autonomy.<sup>210</sup> At the intersection of culture and economics lay the practice of politics, in which institutional design and the high cost of repression favored co-option and the second chances that prevented elite exits. These rights were not granted free, although some PRIístas clearly were shrewd institutional designers; they also were gained by popular mobilization and by the veto power to which politicians and policies at all levels were subject. Consent was in part a product of the involuntary *laissez-faire* of a weak state, whose elites often were incapable of imposing their will; of the considerable cultural, local, and ethnic autonomies that weakness permitted; and of the dialectic of state formation that weakness imposed. And that

weakness, enforced flexibility, and inability to control local societies helped lend the state, for all the inequality of its economy, greater long-term stability than Latin America's harder and heavier authoritarian monoliths.

"One of the easiest ways to define a concept," Linz concluded, "is to say what it is not."<sup>211</sup> Mexico was not a perfect dictatorship: governments were too flexible yet institutional, popular inputs too great, and consent too negotiated to qualify as dictatorial, while politicians' frantic juggling and frequent recourse to violence made Mexico nothing like Orwell or Huxley's smooth-running dystopias. Neither was Mexico a classic, bureaucratic, or electoral authoritarian state. Among extant concepts, mid-century Mexico lay closest to competitive authoritarianism. Yet the processes underlying that outcome were utterly different. Mexican stability was not the product of a heavily political equation of external pressure versus sheer state power. External pressure for democratization was—with the brief exception of the mid-1940s—entirely absent. The aims, mechanisms, and results of Mexican state power were subject to multiple vetoes, which meant that quite often elites could not impose their will in the teeth of resistance and that the adroit exercise of soft power was critical. Single-factor theories—whether structural Marxism, cultural hegemony, or straightforward authoritarian repression—do not explain the ensuing balance of power as well as a historically contingent application of several middle-range theories. These span the circulation of elites, *caciquismo*, weapons of the weak, collective bargaining by riot, and local polyarchies; the interplay of hegemony, counter-hegemony, and cultural autonomy; and the cheap coalition-building characteristic of a gatekeeper state. This messy reality, with its contradictions, ambiguities, and considerable diversity, is captured when cultural, economic, and political analyses meet in a suitably contradictory term, *dictablanda*. Or, in comparative terms, soft authoritarianism: the combination of, on the one hand, a monopoly of national political office, carefully cultivated but thin cultural hegemony, lop-sided economic pay-offs, and resource regulation; and, on the other, hidden repressive violence with local autonomies, competitive if unequal elections, and salient popular bargaining and veto power. This produces unusually broad coalitions of political actors who shift fluently between opposition to, tolerance of, and support for a nondemocratic state. That shifting is central to the inherently ambiguous realities and legacies of a *dictablanda*, profoundly political ambiguities that in 2012 allowed the PRI out of the wilderness and back into Mexico's corridors of power.

#### Notes

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3. Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 137–49.
4. Arthur Schmidt, “Making it Real Compared to What? Reconceptualizing Mexican History since 1940,” in *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubinstein, and Eric Zolov, 23–66, 23–33 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).
5. Jeffrey Rubin, “Popular Mobilization and the Myth of State Corporatism,” in *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, ed. Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig, 247–67 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1990), 266.
6. Alan Knight, “Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26, no. 1 (February 1994): 73–107, 79; Jeffrey Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 52–54; Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 97–108; Adrian Bantjes, *As if Jesus Walked the Earth: Cardenismo, Sonora, and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 62–67, 192–203; Ben Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Emilio Portes Gil, *Autobiografía de la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Instituto Mexicano de Cultura, 1964), 633–34; Ariel José Contreras, *México 1940: Industrialización y crisis política: Estado y sociedad civil en las elecciones presidenciales* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1977); Albert L. Michaels, “The Crisis of Cardenismo,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2, no. 1 (1970): 51–79.
7. Alan Knight, “The Weight of the State in Modern Mexico,” in *Studies in the Formation of the Nation-State in Latin American*, ed. James Dunkerley (London: ILAS, 2002), 212–53.
8. James W. Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change Since 1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 158–59.
9. Cited in Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, *La formación del político mexicano: el caso de Carlos A. Madrazo* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1991), 38.
10. Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised*, 125–57; Fallaw, *Religion and State Formation*; Stephen Lewis, *The Ambivalent Revolution: Forging State and Nation in Chiapas, 1910–1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 119–36; Alexander Scott Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 163–64; Bantjes, *As if Jesus Walked the Earth*, 109–22; Paul Gillingham, “Ambiguous Missionaries: Rural Teachers and State Facades in Guerrero, 1930–1950,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 22, no. 2 (summer 2006), 331–60; Benjamin T. Smith, “Inventing Tradition at Gunpoint: Culture, Caciquismo and State Formation in the Región Mixe, Oaxaca (1930–1959),” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 27, no. 2 (April 2008): 215–34.
11. N. Ross Crumrine, *The Mayo Indians of Sonora* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), 151–56; Julia Cummings O’Hara, “Transforming the Sierra Tarahumara: Indians, Missionaries and the State in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1890–1960” (PhD dissertation, University of Indiana, 2004); Agustín García Alcaraz, *Tinujei: Los Triquis de Copala* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1997), 171–89; Rubin, *Decentering the Regime*, 45–63; N. L. Whetton, *Rural Mexico*

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13. Kevin Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1995), 290; Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 14, 19, 81.

14. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution*, 5.

15. Clark Reynolds, *The Mexican Economy: Twentieth-Century Structure and Growth* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 84; Roger Hansen, *The Politics of Mexican Development* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 8, 72, 74; Mike Everett, “The Role of the Mexican Trade Unions, 1950–1963” (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1997), 196; Jeffrey L. Bortz, *Industrial Wages in Mexico City, 1939–1975* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1987); Jeffrey L. Bortz and Marcos Aguila, “Earning a Living: A History of Real Wage Studies in Twentieth-Century Mexico,” *Latin American Research Review* 41, no. 2 (2006): 112–38; Roger Bartra, *Caciquismo y poder político en el México rural* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1975), 6.

16. Arturo Warman, cited in Tanalis Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priista, 1940–1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 166.

17. In 1963, the poorest 70 percent of Mexicans earned just 27.5 percent of national wealth, a drop of more than 4 percent since 1950. Hansen, *The Politics of Mexican Development*, 83, 87; Ifigenia Navarrete, “La distribución del ingreso en México, tendencias y perspectivas,” in *El perfil de México en 1980, La economía y la población*, ed. Jorge Martínez Ríos (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1971), 37.

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19. Deininger and Squire, “A New Data Set Measuring Income Inequality,” 565–91. Incorporating the estimates and incomplete survey data (the only available for much of the world in this period), outside the Americas, only Rhodesia, Gabon, Kenya, Zambia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria had higher Gini coefficients.

20. M. Szekely, “Pobreza y desigualdad en Mexico entre 1950 y 2004,” *El Trimestre Económico* 72, no. 4 (October–December 2005): 913–31, 916.

21. Frank Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern Mexico* (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), vi; Schmidt, “Making It Real Compared to What?,” 23–68.

22. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

23. It was noted that he actually resembled Boris Karloff rather than Bela Lugosi. Peñalosa Varo to Alemán, May 18, 1944, AGN/DGG-2/311 G(9)2 exp. “elecciones para gobernador” vol. 1v; Calvario to Catalán Calvo, January 2, 1945, AGN/DGG-2/311 M(9)

caja 4B; Taylor to Foreign Office, October 25, 1951, FO371-90820/AM1015/8; The San Diego Union, July 2, 1952.

24. Acta, October 14, 1948, Archivo Municipal de Ixcateopan (AMI), 1948.

25. Inspector no. 37 to Ortega Peregrino, August 5, 1948, AGN/DGIPS-111/2-1/260/82.

26. A loose translation might be "Chuck Cash." Abel Quezada, *El mejor de los mundos imposibles* (Mexico City: CNCA, 1999), 80-81.

27. Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Cantinflas and the Chaos of Mexican Modernity* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2001), 154; PS-16 to Gobernación, August 3, 1948, AGN/DGIPS-111/2-1/260/82; Rodolfo Usigli, *El gesticulador (pieza para demagogos en tres actos)* (Mexico City: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1985), 53, 65, 107; Enrique Krauze, *La Presidencia Imperial: ascenso y caída del sistema político mexicano (1940-1996)* (Mexico City: Fabula, 1997), 159.

28. Carlos Fuentes, *La región más transparente del aire* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996 [1958]), 50, 281; Mariano Azuela, *Nueva burguesía* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985).

29. Daniel Cosío Villegas, *La Crisis de México* (Mexico City: Clio, 1997 [1947]); Jorge Vera Estañol, *La revolución Mexicana: orígenes y resultados* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1957); Jesús Silva Herzog, *Un ensayo sobre la revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Cuadernos Americanos, 1946); Stanley Ross, ed., *Is the Mexican Revolution Dead?* (New York: Knopf, 1966); David C. Bailey, "Revisionism and the Recent Historiography of the Mexican Revolution," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 1 (February 1978): 68, 70-71.

30. Notably Olga Pellicer de Brody and José Luis Reyna, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana, 1952-1960: El afianzamiento de la estabilidad política* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1978) (see also vols. 17-22 in the same series); Carlos R. Martínez Assad, *El henriquismo, una piedra en el camino* (Mexico City: Martín Casillas, 1982); Soledad Loaeza, *Clases medias y política en México: la querrela escolar, 1959-1963* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1998); Wil Pansters, *Politics and Power in Puebla: the Political History of a Mexican State, 1937-1987* (Amsterdam: CEDLA, 1990); Rafael Loyola Díaz, ed., *Entre la guerra y la estabilidad política: El México de los 40* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1990); Hernández Rodríguez, *La formación del político Mexicano*; Armando Bartra, *Los herederos de Zapata: Movimientos campesinos posrevolucionarios en México, 1920-1980* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1985); Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Serrano Alvarez, *La batalla del espíritu*; Ricardo Pozas Horcasitas, *La democracia en blanco: el movimiento médico en México, 1964-1965* (Mexico City: Siglo XIX, 1993); Hector Aguilar Camín and Lorenzo Meyer, *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary Mexican History, 1910-1989*, trans. Luis Fierro (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993)

31. Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern Mexico*, 164.

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33. Krauze, *La Presidencia Imperial*, 136.

34. Donald J. Mabry, "Changing Models of Mexican Politics: A Review Essay," *The New Scholar* 5, no. 1 (1976): 31-37.

35. Pablo González Casanova, *Democracy in Mexico*, trans. Danielle Salti (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 24–30, 103, 119–20, 127; Evelyn Stevens, “Protest Movement in an Authoritarian Regime: The Mexican Case,” *Comparative Politics* 7, no. 3 (1975): 376; Richard S. Weinert, “Introduction,” in Reyna and Weinert, *Authoritarianism in Mexico*, xiii; Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 12.
36. Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 9, 26, 52.
37. Philip Abrams, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1977), 58–89, 77; Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, “Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, 3–23 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 19. See also Ana Alonso, “The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 379–405.
38. While Corrigan and Sayer stressed the importance of laws as moral regulators in Great Britain, this was seemingly lost in translation into a Mexican setting (Joseph and Nugent, “Popular Culture,” 20).
39. Joseph and Nugent, “Popular Culture,” 19. Key works include Anne Rubenstein, *Bad Language, Naked Ladies, and Other Threats to the Nation: A Political History of Comic Books in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, William E. French, eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1994); Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis, eds., *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).
40. Florencia Mallon, “The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1491–515; Joseph and Nugent, “Popular Culture,” 21; Daniel Nugent and Ana Maria Alonso, “Multiple Selective Traditions in Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Struggle: Popular Culture and State Formation in the Ejido of Namiquipa, Chihuahua,” in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, 209–46; William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, 355–66; Ranajit Guha, “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India,” in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi, 1–7 (London: Verso, 2000); David Arnold, “Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India,” in Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies*, 24–49; Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Recovering the Subject: Subaltern Studies and Histories of Resistance in Colonial South Asia,” in Chaturvedi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies*, 72–115.
41. Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” 365.
42. Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 7, 22, 42.
43. Alan Knight, “Caciquismo in Mexico,” in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, ed. Alan Knight and Wil Pansters, 1–51 (London: ILAS, 2005).
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46. Mary Kay Vaughan, "Cultural Approaches to Peasant Politics in the Mexican Revolution," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1999): 274.

47. Peter Bratsis, "Unthinking the State: Reification, Ideology, and the State as a Social Fact," in *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*, ed. Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis, 247–67 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

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156. C. Banc and A. Dundes, *First Prize: Fifteen Years! An Annotated Collection of Romanian Political Jokes* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986).
157. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 41–43.
158. Paradox is revealingly ubiquitous in this volume, variously deployed to describe taxation, indigenismo, elections, media policy, and regional strongmen.
159. Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 159.
160. Joy Langston, "Why Rules Matter: Changes in Candidate Selection in Mexico's PRI, 1988–2000," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33, no. 3 (August 2001): 497.
161. Inaugural speech, quoted in Hernández Rodríguez, *La formación del político mexicano*, 126–27.

162. Paul Gillingham, "Mexican Elections, 1910–1994: Voters, Violence, and Veto Power," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, ed. Roderic Ai Camp, 53–76 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

163. David Mares, "The National Security State," in *A Companion to Latin American History*, ed. Thomas Holloway, 386–405 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011); David Fleischer and Robert Wesson, *Brazil in Transition* (London: Praeger, 1983), 127.

164. For Rios Thivol's packed 1947 schedule, see AGN/DGIPS-84/Manuel Rios Thivol/III.

165. Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 74.

166. Dirección General de Estadística, *Séptimo censo general de población 6 de junio de 1950 resumen general* (Mexico City, 1953); reports on the Mexican Army, 1951, 1953, FO-371/97547 and FO-371/109037.

167. Snodgrass, chapter 7, this volume.

168. Smith, chapter 11, and Paxman, chapter 13, this volume.

169. O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, 90–99.

170. Mares, "The National Security State," 399; Piccato, "Estadísticas del crimen en México: Series históricas, 1901–2001," <http://www.columbia.edu/estadisticascrimen/EstadísticasSigloXX.htm>; INEGI, *Estadísticas históricas CD-ROM*.

171. Schedler, "The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism" in *Electoral Authoritarianism*, ed. Andreas Schedler, 3 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006).

172. Until 1982. Gillingham, "Mexican Elections, 1910–1994," 53–58.

173. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–32.

174. Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 20–26.

175. While economic historians have revised the conclusions of the *dependentistas* in theoretical, quantitative, and qualitative terms, there remain important hidden inputs including the use of *prestanombres* to disguise U.S. firms, the government's masking of U.S. private credit to fund the Banco Ejidal, and the (deeply) discretionary application of the law on domestic ownership. For classic statements of the *dependista* argument, see José Luis Ceceña, *México en la órbita imperial* (Mexico City: Ediciones El Caballito, 1970); Enrique Semo (coordinator), *México, un pueblo en la historia, vol. 5, Nueva Burguesía, 1938–1957* (Mexico City: Editorial La Patria, 1989); James D. Cockcroft, "Mexico," in *Latin America: The Struggle with Dependency and Beyond*, ed. Ronald H. Chilcote and Joel C. Edelstein, 222–304 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974). Most revisions of *dependentista* theory have focused on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Stephen Haber, Armando Razo, and Noel Maurer, eds., *The Politics of Property Rights: Political Instability, Credible Commitments and Economic Growth in Mexico, 1876–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Stephen Haber, ed., *How Latin America Fell Behind: Essays on the Economic Histories of Brazil and Mexico, 1800–1914* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). For hidden inputs and the problems of highly quantitative approaches to economic history, see Pablo González Casanova, *Internal Colonialism and National Development* (St. Louis: Social Science Institute, 1965), 207–8; Ceceña, *México en la órbita imperial*, 245–70; Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexico in Crisis* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1971), 65–66; Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Mexico: Why a Few Are Rich and the People Poor* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010), 160–64; Nicole

Mottier, "What Agricultural Credit and Debt Can Tell Us About the State in Mid-Century Mexico," paper presented at the 126th American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, January 5–8, 2012.

176. In their case studies of armed resistance and state repression, Tanalís Padilla, Alejandro Aviña, and Aaron Navarro posit that the Cold War was deeply influential; O'Neill Blacker, Renata Keller, and José Luis Piñeyro are more skeptical, whereas Roberto Blancarte stresses the *sui generis* manifestation of anticommunism in Mexico. See Padilla, chapter 15, this volume; Navarro, *Political Intelligence*; O'Neill Blacker, "Cold War in the Countryside," 181–210; Renata Keller, "A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption: Mexico's Lukewarm Defense of Castro, 1959–1969," *Latin American Research Review* 47, no. 2 (2012): 100–119; José Luis Piñeyro, "Las fuerzas armadas y la guerrilla rural en México: pasado y presente," in *Movimientos armados en México*, ed. Oikión Solano and García Ugarte, vol. 1, 69–90, 71–74; Blancarte, chapter 2, this volume. In synthetic terms, Gil Joseph concludes that the United States' Cold War aims and capacities were "mediated through, and substantially muted" by the PRI; Friedrich Katz likewise argues for Mexican exceptionalism; and Pablo Piccato warns against the risk of totalizing explanations that risk subordinating "local and national processes to the polarity of global powers." Gilbert M. Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies," in *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, 3–46, 26 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Friedrich Katz, "La guerra fría en América Latina," in *Espejos de la guerra fría: México, América Central y el Caribe*, ed. Daniela Spenser, 11–31 (Mexico City: CIESAS, 2004); Pablo Piccato, "Comments: How to Build a Perspective on the Recent Past," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (July 2013): 92.

177. *El Universal*, June 2, 1950.

178. Inspectors RMA and VRA to Gobernación, October 13, 1952, AGN/DGIPS-104/2-1/131/1071.

179. Padilla, chapter 15, this volume.

180. The United States was admittedly significant in the formation of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad. Piñeyro, "Las fuerzas armadas y la guerrilla rural"; Navarro, *Political Intelligence*, 179–86.

181. Mónica Serrano, "The Armed Branch of the State: Civil-Military Relations in Mexico," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 2 (May 1995): 425.

182. Lorenzo Meyer, "La Guerra fría en el mundo periférico: el caso del régimen autoritario mexicano. La utilidad del anticomunismo discreto," in Spenser, *Espejos de la Guerra fría*, 95–117.

183. Keller, "A Foreign Policy for Domestic Consumption," 100–119.

184. NARG-812.00B/439, "Political Conditions in Mexico from March 16, 1950, through April 15, 1950," NARG-712.00/4-2150; Carr, *Marxism and Communism*, 176–95, 220.

185. Compare this to the "nearly four million dollars" that the U.S. spent on covert action in Chile to prevent the victory of a Socialist or Communist in the 1964 presidential election. Patrick Iber, "Managing Mexico's Cold War: Vicente Lombardo Tolezano and the Uses of Political Intelligence," in *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (July 2013), 15; *Hearings Before the Select Committee to Study Governmental*

Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 161.

186. Sergio Aguayo Quezada, "El impacto de la guerrilla en la vida Mexicana: algunas hipótesis," in *Movimientos armados en México*, ed. Oikión Solano and García Ugarte, vol. I, 91–98, 91–92.

187. Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 17.

188. Padilla, *Rural Resistance*, 91–98.

189. Blacker, "Cold War in the Countryside," 191–96, 207.

190. Servín, "Hacia el levantamiento armado," 314–15.

191. Olga Pellicer de Brody, *México y la revolución cubana* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 1972), 107.

192. *El Imparcial*, November 30, 1962; *La Prensa*, November 21, 1962.

193. Kate Doyle, "After the Revolution: Lázaro Cárdenas and the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book no. 124, accessed September 1, 2012, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB124/>.

194. Loaeza, *Clases Medias*, 392–94; Jean Meyer, "La Iglesia Católica En México," in *Conservadurismo y Derechas en la Historia de México*, Erika Pani (coord.), vol. 2, 599–647, 637 (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009); AGN, DFS, 100–1–18 H26 MRE, Informe of Manuel Rangel Escamilla, November 30, 1962.

195. Lorenzo Meyer, "La Guerra fría en el mundo periférico: El caso del regimen autoritario mexicano: La utilidad del anticomunismo discreto," in Spenser, *Especijos de la Guerra fría*, 95–117.

196. As Abel Quezada had observed thirty years earlier. Quezada, *El mejor de los mundos imposibles*, 321.

197. Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 4–9.

198. Follow up to Regino to Alemán, August 10, 1949, AGN/MAV-542.1/975; Liga to Alemán, November 17, 1947, AGN/MAV-551.2/7.

199. Smith, *Pistoleros*, 2; Moisés T. de la Peña, *Guerrero Económico*, vol. 2, 425.

200. De la Peña, chapter 12, this volume.

201. Hans Heinrich Gerth and Charles Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 78, 334.

202. Piccato, chapter 14, this volume.

203. INEGI, *Estadísticas históricas CD-ROM*; O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*, 140; Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 6; Smith, chapter 11, this volume.

204. Betancourt to Alemán, December 30, 1946, AGN/MAV-609/4; McCormick, chapter 8, and Snodgrass, chapter 7, this volume; Gabriela Soto Laveaga, "Shadowing the Professional Class: Reporting Fictions in Doctors' Strikes," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (July 2013): 31.

205. Buro de Investigaciones Políticas, March 31, 1952; Pensado, chapter 16, this volume; Castellanos, *México Armado*, 108–11.

206. Piccato, chapter 14, this volume; Inspectors VRA, RGM, and RMA to Gobernación, November 30, 1952, AGN/DGIPS-104/2–1/131/1071.

207. U.S. Consul Tijuana to state, September 24, 1962, NARG-712.00/9-2462.

208. As many as one in ten Mexicans may have died from violence, famine, or disease between 1910 and 1920. Robert McCaa, "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19, no. 2 (summer 2003): 367-400, 396-97.

209. Centeno, *Blood and Debt*, 2-17.

210. Mexico stands out in Latin America for experiencing two major international wars since Independence (three if we accept Aguilar Camín's description of the revolution as a war "between two distinct nations with parallel resources," i.e., Sonora and the center). Hector Aguilar Camín, *La Frontera Nomada: Sonora y la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1977).

211. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, 50.