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Parties and Society in Mexico and Venezuela

Why Competition Matters

Michael Coppedge

Mexico and Venezuela are not usually considered similar political systems. Since most observers classify Venezuela as a democracy and Mexico as an authoritarian regime, it is commonly assumed that political life in these two countries is fundamentally and thoroughly dissimilar. The distinction between democracy and authoritarianism, however, masks striking similarities in the political institutions and practices of the two countries, in particular, the ways in which political parties have penetrated and gained control over other actors in civil society. This article highlights these similarities, not to tar Venezuela's good reputation nor to whitewash Mexico's political shortcomings, but to concentrate attention more narrowly on the essential remaining difference—the competitiveness of the party system. This comparison of Mexico and Venezuela, while odd, reveals some of the differences that democracy can make in developing countries.

This article argues that these differences can be discerned at the grass-roots level. In labor unions, when the party system is competitive, there is less violent repression of workers. Also, whether workers vote, and how they vote, depends less on the unions' or parties' mobilization efforts than on the workers' own abilities and interests. In rural and urban communities, party competition makes local bosses (*caciques*) less abusive, intimidating, and violent toward their clients, and therefore more respectful of citizens' property, persons, and opinions. In national politics as well, a competitive party system encourages governmental responsiveness, moderate opposition, and peaceful evolution of the political system.

While this article is by no means the first examination of the consequences of party competition, it is one of only a handful of empirical studies that compare competitive and noncompetitive systems to draw conclusions about the impact of party competition below the macro level of regime change, stability, and national public policy.¹ Most of what we know about the impact of party competition is based on comparisons of democratic countries. Since all of these countries possess, by definition, competitive party systems, the conclusions drawn from such comparisons reveal the impact of a relatively small difference in levels of competition, that is, two-party versus multiparty systems.² This article looks at the more fundamental difference between a competitive party system (Venezuela) and an uncompetitive system (Mexico). Studies that compare democratic and nondemocratic systems have tended to focus on either the conditions for stable democracy or the consequences of democracy for elite decision making on national public policy.³ This article, in contrast, focuses on the immediate, personal, day-to-day consequences for ordinary citizens. Democratic theorists have long asserted that democracy matters even at the grass roots, and almost all of the recent writing on democratization assumes that the

theorists are correct.⁴ This study provides evidence to support their assertions and assumptions.

The dominant position enjoyed by the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) before the near-victory of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in 1988 is well-known. Not only was it a dominant party in every sense of the word, it was a highly penetrative party as well, one that effectively controlled most organizations in Mexican society by formal incorporation through its labor, peasant, and popular "sectors" (wings) or by informal means such as cooptation and intimidation.

Venezuela's parties were very much like the PRI in their relations with other groups in civil society, with the crucial difference that they operated in a competitive system. Two large parties, *Acción Democrática* (AD) and the Social Christian Party COPEI, shared 80–90 percent of the vote after 1973 and alternated in the presidency four times since 1958. While neither of these parties was dominant, both were structured like the PRI: they were built on labor, peasant, and middle class wings subject to tight party discipline, and they actively coopted and infiltrated other organizations in society in order to extend their control, relying on state resources (when available) to achieve their ends.

The conclusions of this particular comparison would not necessarily hold for all varieties of democracy or authoritarianism. However, a comparison of Mexico and Venezuela is appropriate in isolating the most basic consequences of democracy or its absence in certain types of political systems: relatively well-institutionalized regimes based on strong party control of society. The competitiveness of the party systems in Mexico and Venezuela differs just enough to make one system authoritarian and the other democratic.

Since fundamental changes have been taking place in both countries in the last decade, the generalizations made in these pages about the political environment at the grass roots refer to periods in each country's history during which political institutions were changing less drastically and less rapidly. For Mexico, these are the years of "stabilizing development," roughly 1946 to 1970; for Venezuela, they are the years between the founding of the democratic regime in 1958 and the onset of the debt crisis in the mid 1980s. Some of the generalizations would be valid beyond those dates, but delimiting the periods in this narrow fashion simplifies the argument and avoids confusion. However, this analysis is also relevant for politics at the national level, and in some respects the generalizations about the earlier periods help explain differences in the two countries' subsequent evolution. The concluding section contains a brief case study of contemporary reform efforts that illustrates the continuing relevance of party competition.

Parties and Organized Labor

From 1946 through the 1970s, most trade unions in Mexico cooperated with the PRI through one institutional arrangement or another, most commonly through formal affiliation with the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM), which was the official labor "sector," or wing, of the PRI. In 1978, 63.9 percent of the unions in the largest peak labor organization, the *Congreso del Trabajo*, were affiliated with the CTM.⁵ In practice, members of affiliated unions were automatically members of the PRI as well.

While some important unions stayed outside the CTM and engaged in short-lived

militance that caused problems for the government, during most of their history these unions were as cooperative as any union in the CTM. Among them were the FSTSE (white collar federal employees incorporated separately in the PRI's CNOP, or "popular," sector), the STFRM (railway workers), SUTERM (electrical workers), SNTIMSS (social security workers), and the STMMSRM (miners and metallurgical workers). The railway workers, for example, were led in the 1940s and 1950s by the original *charro*, whose nickname has become the slang for a corrupt and coopted labor leader. The smaller confederations that now belong to the *Congreso del Trabajo*—CROM, CROC, and CGT—were coopted much like these unions.⁶ The CROC, in fact, was created in 1952 as a loyal counterbalance to the CTM during a period of labor disturbances. There were independent confederations, notably the *Unidad Obrera Independiente* (UOI) and the Christian-Democratic *Frente Auténtico de Trabajo* (FAT), but they were small in comparison to the official and semiofficial organizations.

The relationship between the PRI and PRI-affiliated unions was asymmetrical, but there was give as well as take. For example, all of the affiliates of the *Congreso del Trabajo* were heavily dependent on government subsidies for their operating expenses, since they were not able to collect dues from an estimated ninety percent of their membership.⁷ The government also indirectly subsidized some unions and federations by awarding them contracts from state enterprises, which the unions subcontracted to private firms in exchange for a percentage of the award, reportedly up to 35 percent.⁸

Other benefits went directly to individual labor leaders. Loyal labor leaders were recruited by the PRI as candidates for congress, and once elected, they had few legislative responsibilities but enjoyed extra income, greater prestige, and access to additional money-making opportunities.⁹ Similar benefits came with appointments to positions in the PRI itself and in executive agencies and government boards. Needless to say, leaders who accepted these benefits were expected to cooperate with the PRI. Davis summarizes the result, saying that the CTM "tends, ultimately, to close ranks in support of PRI economic policies even when workers' interests seem to be sacrificed by the party. The rules of the Mexican political game are generally respected. These norms preclude open criticism of the president, limit mobilization, and call for the closing of ranks around presidential policy decisions."¹⁰ Leaders who refused to cooperate found that they were vulnerable to charges of corruption or subversive activity and were easily removed from their positions.

Union leaders who were coopted in turn coopted the rank and file in their unions. Again, the relationship was asymmetrical, but not without benefits for the members. Unionized workers, estimated to comprise about 15 percent of the national work force and 25 percent of the urban work force, were a labor elite in Mexico that received much better wages, access to subsidized credit and housing, health care, basic consumer goods, technical training, and participation in profit-sharing plans.¹¹ Real wages for unionized workers remained fairly constant from the 1950s until the mid 1970s, and many union leaders enjoyed genuine support for years after the prolabor Cárdenas government (1934–1940).¹²

All of these benefits, however, were manipulated to maximize the leadership's control. The *cláusula de exclusión* of the Federal Labor Law established a closed shop, which in effect gave union officials control over hiring and firing decisions, and they abused this control to sell jobs (for as much as \$2,000) to workers who would not make trouble and to get rid of workers who challenged their leadership.¹³ In some plants, workers had to be in

good standing with the union leadership even to receive benefits to which they were entitled by law. And union politics were far from democratic, especially in the CTM and unions not considered strategically important: assemblies to hear grievances and elect new leaders were sometimes postponed, votes were manipulated, and voters intimidated.¹⁴

These tactics worked very effectively to keep opposition to PRI dominance under control. While some unions, even some CTM-affiliated unions, were militant in their wage demands, ties with political organizations outside the “revolutionary family” of the PRI were likely to bring down repression. Unions and federations outside the PRI structure were discouraged by the government’s authority to withdraw their legal registration and to declare their strikes illegal (and therefore subject to violent repression), as well as by the disadvantage of not having access to all the subsidies, concessions, and benefits used to coopt the other organizations.

Despite these obstacles, the history of the Mexican labor movement has been punctuated by bouts of militant strike activity, and strikes by railway workers, electrical workers, petroleum workers, and teachers have received considerable scholarly attention.¹⁵ Furthermore, some unions have stood out as being relatively democratic, and efforts to achieve union democracy have intensified in recent years. The work of Ian Roxborough and Kevin Middlebrook has provided a healthy corrective to the earlier notion that all Mexican unions were completely docile and violently repressed by the state.¹⁶ These studies must be kept in perspective, however. The unions studied by Roxborough and Middlebrook are large unions in one of the most modern and strategic sectors of the economy—the automobile industry—and are therefore not typical of the small unions in nonstrategic, labor-intensive industries that make up the majority of the unions. Also, it must be remembered that the most militant unions were eventually repressed, and that some of the most important unions, such as the STPRM in the petroleum industry, were dominated by archetypical *charros*. Finally, even the more militant unions that defected to confederations free of the CTM, such as the UOI and the FAT in the 1970s and 1980s, were careful to avoid explicitly political activity and chose to concentrate their efforts on plant-level wage and benefit demands.¹⁷

As in Mexico, most of the Venezuelan labor movement was effectively subordinated to the general policy aims of a single party—*Acción Democrática*.¹⁸ The Venezuelan labor movement in general was highly politicized, since most unions were founded by party organizers starting in the late 1930s. Unlike Mexico, however, Venezuela had a competitive system: union leadership was chosen in union elections using party slates. This was the practice at all levels, including elections within the *Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela* (CTV), which was the peak association for over 80 percent of Venezuela’s organized workers.¹⁹ AD had the largest representation in the CTV ever since its second national congress in 1944.²⁰ Except during a brief period following a division of AD in 1967, 50 to 70 percent of the members of the national congresses and executive committee of the CTV were affiliated with AD from 1959 to the present.²¹

Party loyalty was very strong among AD labor leaders, as it was among the labor leaders of all the other parties. It is useful, however, to distinguish between the loyalty of labor leaders to their respective party labor wings and the loyalty of the labor wings to the national party leadership as a whole. The loyalty of AD’s representatives on the executive committee of the CTV to their party’s labor bureau (*buró sindical*) was absolute and unvarying, just as

one would expect the representatives of the CTM to behave in the *Congreso del Trabajo* in Mexico. During research conducted during 1985, I asked sixteen of the seventeen AD members of the CTV executive committee the following question: "Does the Executive Committee of the CTV sometimes make decisions about legislative bills, political demonstrations, strikes, or other important matters before they have been discussed by the labor bureaus of one or more of the political parties, or only afterwards?" Eighty-one percent (thirteen) said that the parties must discuss the matters first, and the three who claimed otherwise, when asked to support their claim, were unable to come up with a counterexample.

This fact, combined with AD's majority, means that AD's labor bureau enjoyed at least veto power over the CTV's actions. When asked whether "the Executive Committee of the CTV sometimes makes decisions that the Labor Bureau of AD opposes," all but one AD representative (94 percent) replied that it does not. In light of the overlap in the membership of the two bodies, the situation could hardly be otherwise: three-quarters of the *Adecos* in the CTV leadership were also members of the labor bureau.

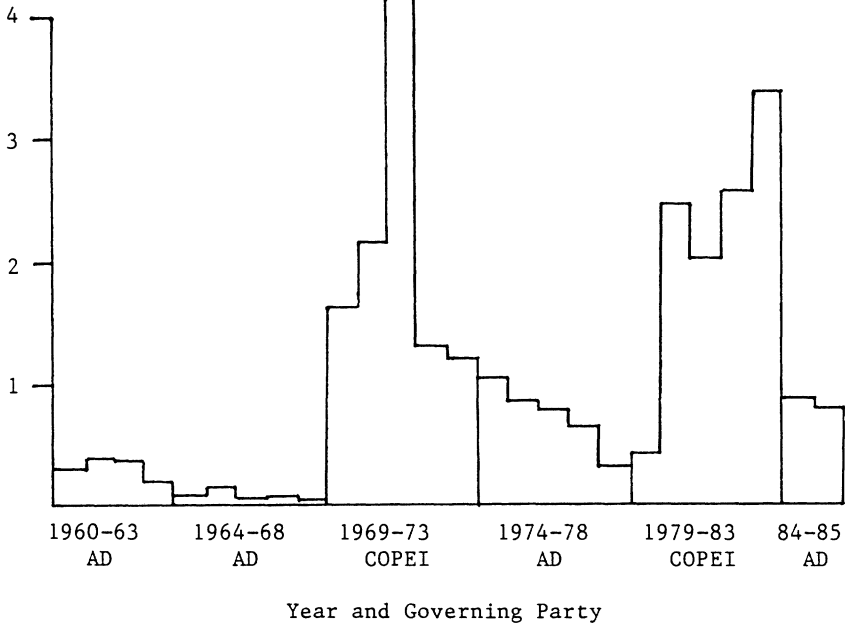
The relationship between the AD labor bureau and the party as a whole was more complicated, but it was strikingly similar to the relationship between the CTM and the PRI. Both are best described as loose alliances that benefited both the labor wing and the party while reserving ultimate authority for the party.²²

Top AD labor leaders, like other AD leaders, knew that AD was not a labor party, and the great majority of them did not wish that it were. They believed that the interests of the Venezuelan working class were best served by having a close relationship with a powerful political party.²³ There is ample reason to believe that they were right. For example, labor conflicts were referred automatically to tripartite commissions on which labor and government representatives loyal to AD could always outvote management.²⁴ And many of the benefits enjoyed by organized workers were not the product of collective bargaining but were decreed by Venezuelan presidents.²⁵ In this environment, labor leaders were wise to maintain close ties to the government, and one way to accomplish this goal was to be a powerful base of support for the governing party.

Labor got access because the politicians placed a high value on labor support. No group was more useful than the labor unions in getting out the vote in general, as well as internal, elections. The human resources of the labor unions and federations of the state were at the disposal of the state labor secretary (frequently because he was a leader of the state labor federation), and this power allowed him to act as a powerbroker in state politics. Labor leaders even became general secretaries at the state level.²⁶

The cooperation of the unions was also valuable to a government faced with a political or economic crisis. Betancourt's government gained legitimacy in the eyes of conservatives and the military in part because he and the AD labor leaders were able to convince the unions to avoid strikes in the crucial first years of democracy and even to accept wage cuts in the face of an economic crisis.²⁷ Conversely, the CTV's cooperation was also useful to AD in the opposition, as a way of embarrassing COPEI governments with spectacular increases in strike activity. Figure 1 leaves no doubt that the ties between the president's party and organized labor were the principal regulator of labor militancy in Venezuela: the two peaks in man-hours lost to strikes both occurred during COPEI governments, while AD was leading the opposition.²⁸

Figure 1 Man-Hours Lost to Strikes (millions)



SOURCE: Graph drawn from statistics in Carlos Eduardo Febres, "El movimiento sindical: Actor social o gestor institucional?" in Moisés Naím and Ramón Piñango, eds., *El caso Venezuela: una ilusión de armonía* (Caracas: Ediciones IESA, 1984), pp. 306-307 (1960-1980) and the *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1987* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1987), table 9A (1981-1985).

Ultimately, however, the labor bureau's right to act autonomously was limited, and the limitations were placed there by the national labor leaders themselves. They were unwilling to challenge party or government policy in ways that would bring their loyalty to the party into question. They tried to defend the interests of their class by exerting pressure privately through proper channels, asking, arguing, and persuading. In extreme instances they also took their case to the media. But they stopped short of threatening or condoning strikes, demonstrations, or other forms of force.²⁹ Such actions would have been considered embarrassing and damaging to the party or government and could have endangered the chief benefits the labor wing received from its alliance with the party—the trust and good will of the politicians. One might expect that AD labor leaders were ashamed of their position, but in reality they defended it as "politically responsible."³⁰

The party loyalty of union leaders was reinforced by many of the same practices that were common in Mexico. All of the labor confederations in Venezuela were heavily subsidized by the national government; labor leaders were rewarded with seats on official boards, party

leadership positions, and seats in congress by AD and other parties; many labor leaders (from all parties) benefited handsomely from large government subsidies and lax government regulation of union enterprises such as the *Banco de los Trabajadores de Venezuela* (BTV);³¹ and unionists who embarrassed an AD government, such as those who supported the “wrong” presidential precandidate within AD in 1967–68, were expelled from the party, voted out of union posts, harassed, and intimidated.³²

Many union leaders in Venezuela controlled their members in much the same way as Mexican *charros*. The genuine benefits of unionization were as important in Venezuela as they were in Mexico, as organized labor had privileged access to higher wages, social security and health care, food and transportation subsidies, and other benefits, compared to the nonunionized work force.³³ But control was also maintained through more coercive means. Venezuela had no closed shop, but union leaders found other ways to keep challengers to their leadership in line: entitlements were distributed preferentially along party lines, and some unions were notorious for the lack of turnover in their leadership, which perpetuated itself in power by postponing assemblies or manipulating union elections.³⁵

The high degree of party penetration of unions created a similar style of unionism in Mexico and Venezuela. In both countries, union leaders preferred to concentrate on wages and the resolution of plant-level grievances rather than on political unionism designed to transform the system.³⁶ Furthermore, strike rates were rather low by international standards. In Venezuela, never as many as three percent of the unions went on strike in any given year between 1970 and 1985.³⁷ Despite all the attention paid to the more militant unions in Mexico, strike activity there was lower than in most of the rest of Latin America. In one of the few systematic attempts to compare the autonomy of labor movements in Latin America, Mexico and Venezuela were both rated “medium-low” (along with Colombia, Uruguay before 1985, and Chile under the last decade of the Pinochet regime).³⁸

Nevertheless, the fact of party competition in Venezuela created a less violent and more open environment for workers than was possible in dominant-party Mexico. In Venezuela, the labor bureau of AD had to at least appear to defend working class interests actively because it was competing with other parties for the allegiance of workers within the unions, federations, and the CTV. Competition required a greater respect for workers’ property, persons, and opinions than was necessary in the PRI-dominated unions of Mexico. In his excellent comparative study of the political socialization of workers in Mexico and Venezuela, Charles Davis reported that “such extralegal repression as the use of thugs to disrupt opposition activities, arbitrary firings, or disappearances and assassinations are far more common in Mexico than in Venezuela.”³⁹

While this observation was based on impressionistic evidence, Davis reached firmer conclusions on the basis of a survey of nearly one thousand workers in the two countries. One conclusion was that Venezuelan workers were marginally more likely to vote independently of the “hegemonic” parties AD and COPEI and instead cast protest or leftist votes and that the competitive party system in Venezuela explained more of this cross-national difference in leftist/protest voting than any other variable.⁴⁰ Another conclusion was that, compared to Mexican workers, Venezuelan workers had greater “cognitive mobilization” and psychological involvement in politics, that is, their participation was motivated more by their own interests than by external inducements.

Workers vote in Mexico primarily because of ties to the PRI, not because of resources or cognitive mobilization. . . . By contrast, evidence of more self-directed participation in elections is found among workers in the more competitive electoral system of Venezuela. . . . Loyalty to the PRI leads to perfunctory voting with minimal psychological involvement in politics or attention to government performance. By contrast, hegemonic partisans [*Adecos* and *Copeyanos*] in Venezuela are likely to be attentive to politics and to form their partisan loyalties consistent with their assessments of performance. Hence, hegemonic partisans in Venezuela have greater potential to become autonomous participants in the political process than do their counterparts in Mexico.⁴¹

Mexico versus Venezuela: State versus Societal Corporatism?

It has been suggested that this comparison of Mexico and Venezuela yields conclusions about the differences between state and societal corporatism.⁴² On first consideration, this interpretation is appealing. Mexico has long been considered a classic example of state corporatism, and some authors have noted certain societal corporatist features in Venezuela.⁴³ In its use of party slates in union elections, social democratic party dominance in the peak labor confederation, and the prominent place of a labor wing within the social democratic party, Venezuela's institutional structure was virtually identical to that of two societal corporatist states, Germany and Austria.⁴⁴ Furthermore, representation of the CTV on the boards of ministries and state enterprises was made mandatory in 1966, and Venezuelan presidents created several tripartite commissions to consider questions of price increases, immigration, and worker dismissals.⁴⁵

A more careful consideration of the question, however, suggests that the distinction between state and societal corporatism is neither the most appropriate analytic tool nor the best interpretive framework for a comparison of Mexico and Venezuela. In the first place, the boards and commissions that allegedly provided for corporatist representation in Venezuela were not as well institutionalized as those in the European cases. The peak tripartite commission on economic policy set up by President Pérez in the late 1970s was dismantled when his successor, Luis Herrera Campíns, came to power. President Lusinchi's *Comisión sobre Costos, Precios, y Salarios* (CONACOPRESA), set up in 1984, was, in Ellner's words, "gutted of the binding power with which its CTV architects had originally endowed it," boycotted by business representatives in 1985, and abandoned by the CTV itself in 1987.⁴⁶ Moreover, many of the lower-level commissions never became operational.⁴⁷

Second, Venezuelan labor did not enjoy the same degree of autonomy that is found in the European instances of societal corporatism. As an ideal type, corporatism is "the formal recognition by the state of the social power of strategic interests, [which] entails the institutionalization of such interests as permanent public clients who may claim a legitimate share of power as a function of their economic role."⁴⁸ This ideal type implies complete autonomy for strategic interests such as labor which is never realized in practice even in the most liberal societal corporatist systems. Labor autonomy is usually compromised to some degree by the mediating role of parties. There has always been some ambiguity in the "new corporatist" literature on this question, stemming from the need to claim that labor has less

autonomy in state corporatism than in the societal variant, while insisting that its autonomy is also limited in societal corporatism.⁴⁹ Lehmbruch resolves this tension most satisfactorily by treating societal corporatism as an auxiliary channel of representation in which parties delegate authority to labor to bargain directly with capital and the state on certain issues of high economic policy.⁵⁰

The problem in applying the corporatist label to Venezuela is that its parties played such a dominant mediating role that they delegated little authority to the labor representatives, and consequently the auxiliary channels played a relatively unimportant role in the policymaking process. As one Venezuelan writer observed:

Even when the labor and peasant representatives began to participate more regularly in the plural bodies [tripartite boards] after the late sixties, their presence continued to be markedly irrelevant. The unions have not been able to affect the formation and execution of government policies on their own, that is, without prior assimilation of their positions by the sponsoring party, especially AD. . . . In sum, the economic plural organs established by the government during the democratic period have been, fundamentally, arenas for carrying out negotiations between the respective party elite in the government and the representatives of the so-called private sector, in spite of the constitutional requirement of a broad representation of the corporate groups with interests in economic life.⁵¹

Because Venezuela's corporatist structures were poorly institutionalized and its labor sector enjoyed little autonomy vis-à-vis parties, conclusions about societal corporatism based on the Venezuelan case are not likely to hold for the standard European cases of societal corporatism. If any conclusion about corporatism is to be drawn from a comparison of Mexico and Venezuela, it is that Venezuela belonged in some intermediate position between societal and state corporatism and that, to the extent that labor enjoyed more autonomy in Venezuela than in Mexico, this extra autonomy should be credited to the competitiveness of the Venezuelan party system.

However, such a conclusion would miss the larger implications of the comparison, for the phenomenon whose characteristics are being analyzed here is not confined to the arena of corporatist bargaining. It is a phenomenon that is also present in the politics of rural communities and urban barrios, in corporatist countries of either stripe, and in countries that are hardly corporatist at all. This phenomenon—the degree of competition in the party system—is more narrowly defined than the multifaceted corporatist syndrome, but the simplicity of the phenomenon allows for much broader applicability and therefore supports conclusions that transcend the literature on corporatism. Mexico and Venezuela were chosen, not because they might be corporatist or support conclusions about corporatism, but because the similarities in the way their parties penetrated society, corporatist or not, largely satisfy the assumption of “other things being equal.” Mexico and Venezuela are unusually good candidates for comparative analysis, since they are strikingly similar in many respects but not in the most basic one—the democratic or authoritarian nature of the regime.

Parties and Rural Communities

In the rural communities and small towns of Mexico and Venezuela, politics took on a different character. It was not party politics in the national sense, because the national issues

around which parties build their symbols, ideologies, programs, and rhetoric have little meaning at the local level. It was, instead, clientelism, built around personalities and connections and favors. Political brokers maintained asymmetric face-to-face relationships with clients in the communities, exchanging particularistic benefits for votes in elections and attendance at rallies. The exact nature of the tie between these brokers and political parties varied—sometimes the brokers were party officials themselves, sometimes they were party loyalists holding positions in government or sectoral organizations, and other times they were independent mediators between clients and parties—but the effect of the brokerage was the same: they obtained and enforced the support, cooperation, or acquiescence of anyone who mattered in the community.

The terms of the exchanges between these brokers and their clients varied considerably, depending on the resources at the broker's disposal. In Mexico, a *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) leader would win support by agitating for titles to land; an irrigation district chief would manipulate the distribution of water during the crucial weeks of the growing season; a *presidente municipal* would find a job for a supporter on the public payroll; a *jefe conciliador* would have dissidents arrested or arrange for their release.⁵²

Most of these brokers had counterparts in Venezuela. For example, while there was no official peasant confederation, the *Federación de Campesinos de Venezuela* (FCV) was not all that different from the CNC: its constituent peasant leagues were organized by party militants, it grew rapidly by brokering the distribution of land titles after the Agrarian Reform of 1961, it was heavily subsidized by the government, and an estimated 80 percent of its leagues were dominated by one party, *Acción Democrática*.⁵³ The peasant population was never organized collectively like the *ejidos*, and the FCV was never quite as important to AD as the CNC was to the PRI, but the FCV was always a most reliable ally of AD and AD governments. Outside the FCV, local party officers and government officials (all of whom were tied to party clientele) actively used the resources at their disposal—jobs, food baskets, authority over the placement of public works, and access to higher officials—to negotiate support for their party or clientele.

The clienteles built by these brokers ultimately translated into support for a political party due to the brokers' own clientelistic relationships with higher party and government officials. In Mexico, the local bosses (*caciques*) may or may not have attained their positions with the help of the official party, but once in power they invariably allied with a PRI governor, deputy, or senator to insure good connections with the government.⁵⁴ In exchange, they mobilized their local clienteles to support the PRI in staged protests, demonstrations, and elections.⁵⁵ Eventually, many of these *caciques* became PRI deputies, senators, or governors themselves.⁵⁶

In Venezuela, local brokers were much more likely to owe their positions to their party, which nominated them for a council position, appointed them to a judicial or administrative post, or commissioned them to organize the peasants in the community.⁵⁷ Their functions, however, were the same as in Mexico: they mobilized their clienteles to support a political party in rallies, demonstrations, and elections in exchange for favors from higher government and party officials, possibly including their own candidacy for a legislative seat, or even an appointment as governor.⁵⁸ The effect was similar because in both countries the line separating government and governing party became increasingly blurred as one descended from the national to the local level. Mexico was notorious for this, but even in

Venezuela local and state officials routinely used public vehicles to transport “supporters” to rallies, government printing presses to print party leaflets, and legislative funds to play host to visiting party leaders.⁵⁹

Still, there was a tremendous difference between local brokers in Venezuela and the *caciques* in Mexico, and the difference was one of competition. Since 1958 no party has been so dominant in Venezuela that competition has been eliminated, even at the local level. Municipal elections are usually more lopsided than national elections in Venezuela, but even in the most lopsided year (1984), when AD won nearly two-thirds of the municipal council seats overall, there was no district (the smallest unit of representation) in the country in which some other party failed to win at least one seat. In the median district, the opposition won two seats out of seven.⁶⁰ In Mexico, the only officials elected at the local level were chosen under winner-take-all rules until 1977.⁶¹

This lack of complete dominance by AD had an important consequence: it meant that citizens in the rural communities had a choice among brokers whose clientelistic hierarchies remained separate all the way to the national level. If promises were not kept or rights were abused, there were brokers from other parties who had an interest in exposing the failure and offering redress.⁶² Moreover, these alternative brokers had connections to powerful state and national party leaders who were constantly looking for incidents they could publicize in order to embarrass the governing party. If the local brokers for the governing party were exposed in this way, they would risk losing their chief advantage over the local opposition—their connections with the government—for the leaders of the governing party would very likely disown them. The prospect of political isolation created incentives for local officials to be respectful of and responsive toward their clients.

In Mexico, the *caciques* were truly dominant in their local communities. Almost all local authorities, whether police or judges or municipal presidents or peasant leaders, had been coopted or intimidated by the *cacique* and his faction. In some communities, a dissident faction might arise from time to time, but it was not likely to be nearly as effective as local opposition in Venezuela, for two reasons. First, the *cacique* himself would harass the faction ruthlessly.⁶³ If he could not coopt its leaders, the *cacique* would threaten, extort, or arrest and imprison his opponents (with the cooperation of the judge and police in his faction). Murder was also a possibility.⁶⁴

Second, dissident factions were necessarily isolated factions. Most of them had no ties to any larger organization, and those that did had ties to parties or confederations that were at best regionally strong, and often either embattled themselves or only ambiguously in the opposition. There was no opposition party that was organized in every state and community, large enough to have a chance of actually winning a national election, and consequently important enough to provide significant protection for a small group fighting a *cacique* backed by the PRI. Eventually, most dissident factions were coopted or eliminated by the *cacique*.⁶⁵

The lack of competition at the local level gave rise to, and then reinforced, other aspects of political life in Mexican rural communities. While it is hard to document, I believe that *caciques* were more intent on abusing their power for self-enrichment than Venezuelan party brokers were. This is not to say that all of the Venezuelans were beyond reproach; my impression is that many local leaders sought bribes and kickbacks and insider deals, and a few of them became quite wealthy. But there is a world of difference between this level of

abuse and the notorious greed of the *caciques*, men who enlarged their estates by tricking, intimidating, and murdering peasant farmers, who stole harvested crops, who made themselves partners in any profitable ventures in their region, and who gained monopolistic control over the local economy in order to extract the greatest possible profit from farmers living at lower-than-subsistence levels.⁶⁶ A *cacique* necessarily was, or became, not just the most powerful figure in the community, but also the wealthiest. Indeed, it is hard to escape the impression that this was the whole point of being a *cacique* in the first place.

Hand in hand with this depth of greed was brutality. *Caciques* were known to maintain networks of informants and enforcers with instructions to threaten and physically intimidate anyone who spoke out against the *cacique*. There are tales of dissidents who were buried up to their necks and then trampled on by horses, peasants behind on their debts who were kept in cages in the *cacique*'s patio, peasants who were forced off their land at gunpoint, and so on.⁶⁷ It is hard to imagine such things taking place in contemporary Venezuela. There was violence in Venezuela, too, but word of it tended to get out, and when it did, the opposition had a field day. In Mexico, the victims were often afraid to tell anyone. Explanations that point to cultural differences rooted in the Conquest and the preceding Aztec culture are not convincing, because no cruelty has been committed under PRI rule that was not equaled by the Gómez dictatorship in Venezuela. The crucial difference between then and now, and between Mexico and Venezuela, is a competitive party system. *Caciques* who have to compete use more carrots than sticks, while a broker who is the only game in town can operate with impunity.

Parties and the Urban Barrios

The *caciques* of Mexican rural communities had counterparts in the urban *caciques* of the Mexican *colonias proletarias*. Residents were incorporated into the PRI through the *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares* (CNOP, now renamed UNE) rather than the CNC; they sought land for squatter settlements rather than for agriculture; and their most frequent government contacts were with the Federal District government rather than the agrarian reform or agriculture ministries. But these were superficial differences.⁶⁸

In most important respects, urban *caciques* played a broker role very similar to that of the rural *caciques*.⁶⁹ They established clientelistic relationships with the residents of their squatter communities by organizing, and then manipulating, the distribution of land, building materials, titles, and services; in exchange they expected participation in committee meetings and rallies and financial contributions for public services, bribery, and remuneration for work on behalf of the *colonia*. In turn, the urban *caciques* mobilized their clientele for elections and progovernment rallies, persecuted or ostracized dissidents, and defended the government in exchange for personal rewards and access to government and party officials to press for satisfaction of the clientele's demands.⁷⁰ While the porousness of urban life prevented most urban *caciques* from becoming as wealthy or as brutal as their rural counterparts, many of them came to exercise absolute dominance over the affairs of their *colonia*, to the point of evicting uncooperative residents and requiring heavy and unexpected contributions to, for example, purchase a car for their personal use.⁷¹

One important difference between rural and urban *caciquismo*, however, lay in the greater

degree of organization in city politics. In the rural areas, there were few politically relevant organizations besides the CNC, the *ejido*, the schools, the church, and government boards. In Mexico City there was a greater variety of organizations (for example, for sports, occupational groups, mothers, public service interest groups, the *colonias*) that could conceivably become politically relevant. Consequently, the PRI had to resort to a broader variety of strategies of cooptation and control, and the nature of *cacicazgo* varied depending on the type of organization being controlled.

Nevertheless, the same basic tactic was used again and again to accomplish the party's purposes: if an organization started to move into opposition, the PRI or the government would divide it, coopt one half, and repress the other.⁷² In the *colonias*, for example, if a leader embarrassed the government, he might simply find that government officials were no longer responsive to his petitions for the community and at the same time find that one of his clients was becoming increasingly critical of him for not "delivering the goods." Soon, his movement would be split between his supporters and those who sided with the critical client, and eventually the former client would replace him as the new *cacique*. Naturally, the new leader was being encouraged in his boldness by the PRI all along, and after winning some benefits for the community to consolidate his position, he would turn out to be no more effective than his predecessor.⁷³

Politics in the barrios of Venezuela was very similar to the Mexican situation just described. By 1958, Caracas was surrounded by a large migrant population living in squatter settlements, seeking titles to the land, and petitioning for roads and utilities. *Caciques* (the same term was used) arose to champion the concerns of each of the barrios; they perpetuated themselves in "office" by manipulating local junta elections with party backing and returned the favor by mobilizing their clientele for party rallies and demonstrations and general elections.⁷⁴ While it is hard to be sure without rigorous comparative study, Venezuelan *caciques* seem to have been less abusive of their clientele and less secure in their positions. Still, this is a difference of degree. Both Mexican and Venezuelan urban *caciques* brokered the exchange of land titles and community development assistance for mobilization of squatter communities in favor of a political party.

Even the tactics used to control organizations within the barrio were similar to those applied in Mexico. There were attempts to establish organizations that would be free of domination by the political parties. The parties, however, recognized that such autonomy posed a threat to their power and actively subverted such attempts.⁷⁵ Sometimes party loyalists were sent to infiltrate a new organization and eventually elect one of their own as its leader. More often, a party would coopt an independent leader with an offer of a position in the government or a seat on a commission, in a party body, or in the congress. Since there were so few channels for influence outside the parties, few leaders could resist these offers. Indeed, especially during campaign season, enterprising leaders would create "independent" organizations in order to invite cooptation, a practice well known to Mexicans.⁷⁶

If cooptation failed, parties would create parallel organizations that tended to attract more support than the independents because, having a party connection to the government, they could achieve better results. This strategy, known as *paralelismo*, was used often to recruit support in the squatter settlements in the early 1960s.⁷⁷ This was also the parties' response to the neighborhood association movement beginning in the late 1970s.⁷⁸ In urban areas, many *asociaciones de vecinos* sprang up to petition city councils for better police protection,

road repairs, better sewer systems, and other improvements in public services. *Acción Democrática's* response was to set up a municipal affairs department with a seat on its national executive committee, which actively encouraged AD's municipal councilmen to create AD-affiliated neighborhood associations to preempt the creation of independent ones.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Venezuela was unlike Mexico in having a multiparty system. In urban communities, this meant that barrio residents had someone to turn to besides the *cacique* if their demands were not met. As Talton Ray observed in the mid 1960s:

. . . the most realistic means of exerting pressure is through the opposition parties. Those are the only organized groups available to the barrio man which represent a serious threat or challenge to the government because they are the only ones that compete with it for what it really needs in order to exist—votes.⁸⁰

And party competition was especially intense in the Caracas metropolitan area in the 1960s because the largest party in the system was weak there. In 1963, AD received less than 13 percent of the vote in the Federal District. It took years of intense party competition to bring the urban AD vote up into its "normal" national range. In the meantime, Venezuelan parties and their representatives in government assiduously courted the barrios.

In sharp contrast to the stereotyped image of the Latin American official who stands aloof from the activities of the lower-class citizens, government officials in Venezuelan cities . . . leave their doors open to petitioners and receive them warmly. . . . Officials frequently visit the barrios, attending inaugurations of improvement projects, sports events, and junta meetings. In some cities, mayors and even state governors take Saturday excursions through the poorer communities and talk with the people about their problems. This contact with the urban poor is very important to the officials: on the one hand, it keeps them abreast of the people's political tendencies; and, on the other, it gives them exposure to the families whom they must persuade to vote for them.⁸¹

Why Competition Matters

The differences between party-society relations in Mexico and Venezuela before the mid 1980s were so slight that they cause one to wonder how meaningful it is to distinguish between authoritarian and democratic regimes. In some ways, Mexico was about as democratic as a country could be and still be authoritarian: no other authoritarian regime can claim to have had as many elections over as long a period of time, or as well-organized a party that campaigned so hard. Most observers agree that, until recently, the PRI would have won elections (without a majority, of course) even without the fraud and coercion that have become customary.⁸² And Venezuela, with its aggressively penetrative parties obsessed with controlling other organizations, was about as authoritarian as a country could be and still claim to be democratic. Criticisms that it was really a *partidocracia*, or partyarchy, are warranted.⁸³

Yet, even though Venezuelan democracy was not up to first world standards, and even though it shared some surprising similarities with Mexico, the comparison of political life at

the grass roots has shown that Venezuela's competitive party system reduced violent repression and encouraged local officials to treat their clients with greater respect than was customary in Mexico. Critics on the extreme left used to argue that the benefits of democracy are overrated, especially in developing countries, because voting and civil liberties supposedly mean little to people who lack adequate shelter or enough to eat. Even writers who praise democracy as an ideal sometimes criticize actual "democracies" for falling so far short of those ideals that they bring few real benefits to ordinary citizens. Comparison of Venezuela and Mexico offers strong evidence that one essential component of democracy—party competition—does make a difference, even at the grass roots, even in a "democracy" that is far from perfect.

Comparison of Mexico and Venezuela also suggests that three of the benefits of party competition carry over into the arena of national politics. First, it makes for healthier relations between government and opposition. In a competitive party system, the government is more sensitive to the criticism of the opposition. This does not mean that the government is necessarily more responsive to the opposition after criticism; it does necessarily mean that the government anticipates possible criticisms and acts so as to rob them of force. It empowers the opposition through anticipated reaction. The latent power of the opposition is revealed in the meetings of the parliamentary fraction of AD, in which the leadership frequently justifies its decisions by saying that they were necessary "in order not to play into the hands of the opposition."⁸⁴

The sensitivity of the government encourages a more moderate style of opposition behavior as well. In Venezuela, the opposition parties rarely went beyond verbal criticism and peaceful demonstrations, because this was all they had to do to get a reaction. The opposition's energies were all directed towards embarrassing or shaming the government. In Mexico, however, the government could ignore mere criticism as long as the PRI's dominance was secure. In order to provoke a reaction, the opposition had to take more drastic measures—highway blockades, plant seizures, and other forms of civil disobedience. The severity of the governments' responses corresponded to the severity of opposition actions. In Venezuela, the governing party would respond with rhetoric, denial, cooptation, infiltration, and *paralelismo*. The Mexican government's response would include all of the above tactics, plus violent repression, which is rarely used against political opponents in Venezuela.⁸⁵

A clarification may be necessary at this point. Not all democracies with competitive party systems exhibit the same sensitivity of the government and moderation of the opposition that Venezuela did, but this does not mean that this conclusion is invalid. The polarization, praetorian struggle, extreme tactics, and even violence found in the "democratic" experience of Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, El Salvador, and other countries are not properly associated with democratic regimes, because their democracy was not consolidated. A comparison based on stable, institutionalized regimes, such as Mexico and Venezuela, yields the most reliable generalization.

A second benefit of competitive party politics pertains to the autonomy of the opposition. In Mexico it was not always clear which groups were in the opposition and which were supporting the government. There were "parastatal" political parties with independent origins and separate representation in the congress that always voted with the PRI on important questions;⁸⁶ labor unions outside the CTM that were nevertheless dominated by

classic *charros*; sports clubs founded independently for nonpolitical purposes that ended up turning out their membership for PRI rallies. It was in the interest of both the leaders of these organizations and the PRI to encourage this ambiguity, because the costs of both autonomy and subservience were high. In Venezuela, the lines between government and opposition were clearly drawn. Parties were either cooperating with the government (through a formal coalition or an explicit pact) or openly opposing it. Leaders of labor unions and other social organizations might deny any partisan affiliation of their organization, but not because party ties were murky but rather, because they were clear but pluralistic. This behavior reflects a fundamental difference between an authoritarian, dominant party system and a democratic, competitive system: in the former, real opposition is not legitimate in the eyes of the government, and explicit cooperation is viewed as a sell-out by the opposition. In the latter, opposition is recognized as legitimate, and honest cooperation with the government is respected, because collaboration does not require a surrender of autonomy.

The final and perhaps the most important benefit of party competition is that it affords a greater potential for peaceful evolution of the political system. In the long run, all political systems need to evolve in order to respond to changes in society. New groups arise, people expect different things from their leaders, and new issues become salient. If a regime does not adapt to these changes, leaders lose their ability to govern effectively and must rely less on institutional mechanisms of control and more on repression if they are to stay in power. This adaptation is difficult in a dominant party system because most of the actors who have the power to change the system have a personal stake in preserving it the way it is. In a competitive party system, the opposition parties have a stake in proposing popular political reforms that will return them to power. Therefore, other things being equal, a competitive system is better able to adapt than a dominant party system.

A comparison of political trends in Mexico and Venezuela in the 1980s will serve as a brief case study that supports these broad generalizations. By the mid 1980s the need for political reform in both countries was impossible to ignore. The system of stability built on cooptation and party penetration had been in place for decades, and a more urban, better educated, more middle class population was no longer willing to support this old political style.

In Mexico, it took a long time before the government responded to the population's new aspirations, and when it did, the response was inadequate. Demands for change began surfacing earlier than in Venezuela, with the student demonstrations of 1968, the autonomous peasant organizations of the 1970s, and the independent currents within the unions in the 1980s.⁸⁷ Mexican presidents periodically announced reform efforts to deal with some of the complaints about the regime—Echeverría's Integrated Rural Development designed to undermine the rural *caciques*, López Portillo's electoral reform of 1977, de la Madrid's Moral Renovation campaign against corruption—but all of these programs either were largely symbolic or were frustrated by opposition to them within the PRI. When the de la Madrid government committed obvious fraud to prevent Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas from winning the 1988 presidential election, democratization became a much more distant goal.⁸⁸

The Salinas government elected in that year finally carried out significant reforms, including the first recognition of an opposition victory in a gubernatorial election, a

reorganization of the PRI that has begun the shift from indirect corporate membership to direct individual membership, and the arrest or replacement of several corrupt *charro* leaders. Nevertheless, a new biased electoral law, continuing electoral fraud, and resistance to reform by state and local PRI cadres have made it clear that the PRI will not surrender power at the national level to another group anytime soon.⁸⁹

In Venezuela, demands for “democratization of democracy” hardly began to be voiced before the government responded with serious reform, and its quick response can be traced directly to the incentives created by party competition. In 1984, to fulfill a minor campaign promise, President Lusinchi created a Presidential Commission for the Reform of the State (COPRE). The commission, composed of representatives of all of the major parties as well as highly respected business, church, and university leaders, produced a surprisingly sharp critique of Venezuelan democracy and proposed far-reaching reforms that would have the effect of weakening the political parties.⁹⁰

The government could have ignored COPRE’s recommendations, since no interest groups were actively calling for such reforms, and the governing party had many self-interested reasons to resist them. But during the election campaign of 1988, the presidential candidate of COPEI, Eduardo Fernández, sensed that he stood little chance of winning the election unless he found a powerful new issue. COPEI had done poorly in the 1983 elections, and according to the opinion polls of 1987–88 its position had hardly improved. Fernández therefore began advocating the implementation of COPRE’s recommendations. The presidential candidate of AD, Carlos Andrés Pérez, understood that this issue could give COPEI an edge in the competition and decided to make the issue his own.

After that point, the two parties competed to present themselves as the champions of political reform, and as a result the first legislative actions were taken even before the election was held. A consensus on the need for reform took hold and has led to the adoption of further reforms during the Pérez government. Direct elections were held for state governors and mayors in 1989, and the electoral law was modified to make legislators more accountable to local constituencies.⁹¹

Some of these reforms may be partially frustrated by entrenched interests, and further reforms will certainly be needed if Venezuela is to attain the kind of democracy associated with the industrialized countries. Still, it is a developing democracy that has shown its ability to reform itself peacefully, while remaining politically stable. The Mexican regime has been at least as stable as Venezuela, but in several ways it is not as democratic. One telling proof of its authoritarian nature is the fact that it has not been able to reform itself without major turmoil and may not be able to reform itself peacefully at all.

The recent histories of political reform in Venezuela and Mexico support the superior adaptability of democracy only if *ceteris paribus* conditions hold. Obviously, other things are not always equal. In the wake of the 1989 riots and the 1992 coup attempts in Venezuela, Mexico seems to be the superior adaptor. Due to the superior leadership and skill of Carlos Salinas and his technocratic team, Mexico’s more realistic prospects for free trade with the United States, and the opposition’s wish to avoid a second bloody Mexican revolution, the limited reforms sanctioned by the Mexican government have been more efficacious than the sweeping reforms passed in Venezuela. However, the Venezuela regime’s greater *willingness* to adapt is demonstrated by the fact that it adopted deeper reforms, earlier in the game, and in response to milder protest. At this writing, a thorough

constitutional reform is being debated. In the long run, Venezuelan democracy may yet demonstrate a superior ability to evolve peacefully.

NOTES

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1. Questions similar to those in this study were also examined in Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), and Sidney Verba, Norman Nie, and Jae-On Kim, *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven-Nation Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

2. Prominent examples are Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); David Cameron, "The Expansion of the Public Economy," *American Political Science Review*, 72 (December 1978), 1243–1261; and G. Bingham Powell, *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

3. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries*, 4 vols. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), considers each country's democratic and nondemocratic experiences to explain the evolution of democracy, but not to justify it. On policy consequences, see Valerie Bunce, *Do New Leaders Make a Difference? Executive Succession and Public Policy under Capitalism and Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); and Karen L. Remmer, "The Politics of Economic Stabilization: IMF Standby Programs in Latin America, 1954–1984," *Comparative Politics*, 19 (October 1986), 1–24.

4. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), argues the assertion well in chapter 2. The most ambitious study of democratization is Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); their most extensive discussion of the justification for democracy is contained in the final volume, *Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, written by O'Donnell and Schmitter. Myron Weiner, "Empirical Democratic Theory," in Myron Weiner and Ergun Özbudun, eds., *Competitive Elections in Developing Countries* (Washington: AEI, 1987), pp. 3–34, is concerned primarily with institutionalizing democracy rather than justifying it. See also Terry Lynn Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics*, 23 (October 1990), 1–21, which distinguishes among types of democracy and speculates about their consequences.

5. Charles L. Davis, *Working Class Mobilization and Political Control: Venezuela and Mexico* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 62. However, Dale Story, *The Mexican Ruling Party: Stability and Authority* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), p. 86, reports that 70 to 90 percent of the unions were affiliated with the CTM.

6. Evelyn P. Stevens, *Protest and Response in Mexico* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1974), p. 171.

7. Story, pp. 87–88.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

9. Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 224.

10. Davis, p. 65. As Wayne Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, and Peter H. Smith, "Overview: The Dynamics of Political Change in Mexico," in Wayne Cornelius, Judith Gentleman, and Peter H. Smith, eds., *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1989), p. 22, have noted, the Mexican taboo against direct criticism of the president has been broken in the last decade. The mere fact that these violations are noteworthy, however, indicates the gap between the two systems: in Venezuela, disrespectful criticism of the president by opposition politicians, radio commentators, newspaper editorialists, and television satirists is taken for granted. What is newsworthy in Venezuela is any presidential attempt to stifle such criticism, such as Jaime Lusinchi's ban on coverage of his divorce. The gaps have narrowed in some respects but are still wide.

11. Davis, pp. 36–40.

12. Barry Carr, "The Mexican Economic Debacle and the Labor Movement: A New Era or More of the Same?," in Donald L. Wyman, ed., *Mexico's Economic Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1983), pp. 91–116.

13. Story, p. 89, and Stevens, p. 106.

14. Raúl Trejo Delarbre, "El movimiento obrero: Situación y perspectivas," in Pablo González Casanova and Enrique Florescano, eds., *México, hoy* (Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979), pp. 121–151. One example of the strategy of postponing elections is described in María Lorena Cook, "Organizing Opposition in the Teachers' Movement in Oaxaca," in Joe Foweraker and Ann L. Craig, eds., *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1990), p. 209.

15. Stephens, *Protest and Response*, is the best survey of the turbulence in Mexico's labor history.

16. Ian Roxborough, *Unions and Politics in Mexico: The Case of the Automobile Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Kevin J. Middlebrook, "Union Democratization in the Mexican Automobile Industry: A Reappraisal," *Latin American Research Review*, 24 (1989), 69–93.

17. Davis, pp. 26–27.

18. For more information on party penetration of the labor movement in Venezuela, see Andreas Boeckh, "Organized Labor and Government under Conditions of Economic Scarcity: The Case of Venezuela" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1972); Stuart I. Fagen, "Unionism and Democracy," in John D. Martz and David J. Myers, eds., *Venezuela: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), pp. 174–194; Julio Godio, *El movimiento obrero venezolano, 1965–1980*, vol. 3 (Caracas: ILDIS, 1982); Margarita López Maya and Luis Gómez Calcaño, "Desarrollo y hegemonía en la sociedad venezolana: 1958 a 1985" (mimeo, Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo, Caracas, June 1985); and Carlos Eduardo Febres, "El movimiento sindical: Actor social o gestor institucional?," in Moisés Naím and Ramón Piñango, eds., *El caso Venezuela: Una ilusión de armonía* (Caracas: Ediciones IESA, 1984), pp. 288–309.

19. *Latin American Regional Report*, 85–05 (June 21, 1985). The figure is approximately correct for 1985. Thirteen to twenty percent of the organized work force is affiliated with the Christian Democratic CODESA or the leftist CUTV.

20. Boeckh, pp. 173–178.

21. Charles L. Davis and Kenneth M. Coleman, "Political Control of Organized Labor in a Semi-Consociational Democracy: The Case of Venezuela," in Edward C. Epstein, ed., *Labor Autonomy and the State in Latin America* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 259.

22. Ellner describes the relationship between the political and labor leaders of AD in detail but exaggerates the labor bureau's autonomy and influence within the party during the 1960s. Steve Ellner, "Organized Labor's Political Influence and Party Ties in Venezuela: *Acción Democrática* and Its Labor Leadership," *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 31 (Winter 1989), 91–129. The labor wing did not prevail over the political leaders of AD in the mid 1960s so much as side with a majority faction against Rómulo Betancourt, who had lost his preeminence within his own party during those years. Many of Ellner's examples of labor's independence involved minority factions within the labor bureau whose actions were overruled by the majority of its leadership or who were expelled. See Michael Coppedge, "Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: A Study of the Quality and Stability of Venezuelan Democracy" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1988), ch. 7.

23. In a 1985 survey of AD leaders, 78 percent of the labor leaders and 63 percent of AD members of congress agreed that the labor leaders should push their demands even if they lacked party support. Coppedge, "Strong Parties and Lame Ducks," p. 41.

24. Jennifer L. McCoy, "Labor and the State in a Party-Mediated Democracy: Institutional Change in Venezuela," *Latin American Research Review*, 24 (1989), 35–67. According to a management source, the labor ministry sided with the unions over 80 percent of the time on appeals of "unjustified" dismissals. U.S. Embassy Annual Labor Report of 1977, cited in Cecilia Valente, *The Political, Economic, and Labor Climate in Venezuela* (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 1979), p. 121.

25. McCoy, pp. 50–51.

26. Confidential interview with an AD labor leader, August 3, 1985.

27. Public employees' salaries were twice cut by ten percent in 1960 and 1961. The second reduction provoked criticism by labor leaders affiliated with leftist parties, but the AD (and COPEI) leaders of the CTV supported the cuts and expelled the PCV and MIR from the CTV. Robert J. Alexander, *The Venezuelan Democratic Revolution: A Profile of the Regime of Rómulo Betancourt* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964), pp. 155–156 and 241–242.

28. McCoy, "Labor and the State in a Party-Mediated Democracy," has argued that labor militancy increased after 1969 due to the CTV's increased financial independence and its new corporatist role. Simple inspection of Figure I shows that, if there was any such secular increase, it was dwarfed by the effects of party control.

29. Davis and Coleman, pp. 253–254.

30. Manuel Peñalver, "La crisis y las bases de la democracia social" (Caracas: FETRATEL, 1985); and Manuel Peñalver, "Los trabajadores y la política" (Caracas: UTRAVE, 1985).

31. McCoy, "Labor and the State in a Party-Mediated Democracy."
32. Ellner, pp. 91–99.
33. Davis and Coleman, p. 262.
34. Ellner, p. 116.
35. Davis, *Working-Class Mobilization*, p. 32, documents the case of a COPEI-led oil workers' union in which no opposition slate had ever been presented in a union election. Venezuela's large federation of public employees held no national congress for the first twenty-six years of its existence. Confidential interview with a FEDE-UNEP leader, Caracas, June 6, 1985.
36. Davis, ch. 4. However, Davis and Coleman, pp. 247–273, note that the CTV moved in the direction of political unionism after 1980.
37. Davis and Coleman, p. 253.
38. Edward C. Epstein, "Conclusion," in Epstein, ed., *Labor Autonomy and the State in Latin America*, pp. 278–284.
39. Davis, p. 77.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 98 and 154.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 120 and 132.
42. This interpretation was suggested by an anonymous reviewer of this article. For the original distinction between state and societal corporatism, see Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?," in Frederick B. Pike and Thomas Stritch, eds., *The New Corporatism: Social-Political Structures in the Iberian World* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), pp. 85–131.
43. On corporatist arrangements in Venezuela, see McCoy, pp. 35–67; Luis Oropeza, *Tutelary Pluralism: A Critical Approach to Venezuelan Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); and Donald Herman, "Democratic and Authoritarian Traditions," in Herman, ed., *Democracy in Latin America: Colombia and Venezuela* (New York: Praeger, 1988), pp. 5–9.
44. Gerhard Lehmbruch, "Liberal Corporatism and Party Government," *Comparative Political Studies*, 10 (April 1977), 91–126.
45. McCoy, p. 53.
46. Ellner, pp. 113 and 101.
47. Eduardo Arroyo Talavera, *Elecciones y negociaciones: Los limites de la democracia en Venezuela* (Caracas: Fondo Editorial CONICIT/POMAIRES, 1988), p. 227.
48. Victor V. Magagna, "Representing Efficiency: Corporatism and Democratic Theory," *Review of Politics*, 50 (Summer 1988), 423.
49. Ross M. Martin, "Pluralism and the New Corporatism," *Political Studies*, 31 (March 1983), 90.
50. Lehmbruch, pp. 99–100.
51. Arroyo Talavera, pp. 215 and 230.
52. Luisa Paré, "Caciquismo y estructura de poder en la sierra Norte de Puebla," in Roger Bartra et al., *Caciquismo y poder político en el México rural*, 5th ed. (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1980), pp. 31–61; and Bo Anderson and James D. Cockroft, "Control and Cooptation in Mexican Politics," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 7 (March 1966), 11–28.
53. Confidential interviews with FCV leaders in 1985; see also John Duncan Powell, *Political Mobilization of the Venezuelan Peasant* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).
54. John G. Corbett, "Linkage as Manipulation: The Partido Revolucionario Institucional in Mexico," in Kay Lawson, ed., *Political Parties and Linkage* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 327–344.
55. Tonatiuh Guillén López, "The Social Bases of the PRI," in Cornelius, Gentleman, and Smith, eds., *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures*, pp. 243–264.
56. Carlos Martínez Assad and Alvaro Arreola Ayala, "El poder de los gobernadores," in Rafael Segovia and Soledad Loeza, eds., *La vida política mexicana en la crisis* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1987), pp. 107–130.
57. Rexene Hanes de Acevedo, "El control político en tiempos de crisis: Estudio de caso de una asociación de vecinos en Venezuela," paper presented at the Sixteenth International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., April 4–6, 1991.
58. Before 1989, Venezuelan governors were appointed by the president, not elected. Mexican governors have been elected since the revolution, although they are handpicked for candidacy by the president and all Mexican presidents have forced some of them to resign in order to replace them with new favorites.

59. Author's observations during a campaign swing in October 1985.
60. Consejo Supremo Electoral, *Elecciones municipales 1984* (Caracas: 1985), *passim*. The median is not changed when the large urban districts are excluded from the analysis.
61. José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, "Legislación electoral en México," in CAPEL, *Legislación electoral comparada: Colombia, México, Panamá, Venezuela, y Centroamérica* (San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones CAPEL, 1986), pp. 255 and 264.
62. Arturo Valenzuela, *Political Brokers in Chile* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1977), found the same consequence of competition at the local level in Chile before Pinochet.
63. Enrique Márquez Jaramillo, "El movimiento Navista y los procesos políticos de San Luis Potosí, 1958–1985," in Segovia and Loeza, eds., pp. 131–148.
64. Paré.
65. Frans Schryer, "Peasants and the Law: A History of Land Tenure and Conflict in the Huasteca," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 18 (1986), 283–311. See also Paré.
66. Paré, pp. 31–61.
67. These examples are drawn from Paré's detailed descriptions.
68. Susan Eckstein, "The State and the Urban Poor," in José Luis Reyna and Richard Weinert, eds., *Authoritarianism in Mexico* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1977), pp. 23–46.
69. Antonio Ugalde, *Power and Conflict in a Mexican Community: A Study of Political Integration* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1970).
70. Susan Eckstein, *The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban Poor in Mexico*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
71. Wayne A. Cornelius, *Politics and the Migrant Poor in Mexico City* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975); and Alejandra Moreno Toscano, "La crisis en la ciudad," in Casanova and Florescano, eds., pp. 152–176.
72. M. Pozas García, "Land Settlement by the Poor in Monterey," in Alan Gilbert, ed., *Housing and Land in Urban Mexico* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1989).
73. Eckstein, "The State and the Urban Poor," pp. 35–46.
74. Talton F. Ray, *The Politics of the Barrios of Venezuela* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), and Lisa R. Peattie, *View from the Barrio* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968).
75. Moisés Naím and Ramón Piñango, "El caso Venezuela: Una ilusión de armonía," in Naím and Piñango, eds., pp. 560–563.
76. Author's observations during the election campaigns of 1983.
77. Ray, p. 90.
78. Mina Silberberg, "Change and Continuity in 'Extra-Clientelist' Politics: Alternative Organizations of the Venezuelan Poor," paper presented at the Sixteenth International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., April 4–6, 1991.
79. Acción Democrática, Departamento de Política Municipal, *Reglamento sobre el funcionamiento de las fracciones de concejales de Acción Democrática, 1984: Reglamento del Departamento de Política Municipal*; and interview with the National Director of Municipal Policy, Lewis Pérez Daboín, July 25, 1985.
80. Ray, p. 97.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
82. The PRI was the most favored party in Mexico, even in opinion polls (rather than manipulated votes), even in 1987, even in the states where the opposition was strongest, according to Guillén López, pp. 243–264.
83. Coppedge, "Strong Parties and Lame Ducks," ch. 2.
84. Author's observations of meetings of the AD parliamentary fraction during 1985.
85. Venezuelan police and the National Guard can be quite brutal towards criminals (or suspected criminals), but violent repression was not systematically used against political opponents, unless they went into armed rebellion, as the FALN did in the 1960s.
86. Juan Molinar Horcasitas, "The Future of the Electoral System," in Cornelius, Gentleman, and Smith, eds., pp. 274–280.
87. These challenges arose from nonparty organizations before 1988, but they presented the government with what could be considered the functional equivalent of party competition. This experience would support a more basic argument, that *competition* matters, whether it is led by political parties or not.
88. Andrew Reding, "Mexico under Salinas: A Façade of Reform," *World Policy Journal* (Fall 1989), 685–729.

89. Michael Coppedge, "Mexican Democracy: You Can't Get There from Here," in Riordan Roett, ed., *The Politics of Economic Liberalization in Mexico* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

90. Luis Gómez Calcaño and Margarita López Maya, *El Tejido de Penélope: La Reforma del Estado en Venezuela (1984-1988)* (Caracas: CENDES/APUCV/IPP, 1990), pp. 117-160.

91. Margarita López Maya, "Tensiones sociopolíticas en el reciente proceso de descentralización en Venezuela," paper presented at the Forty-seventh International Congress of Americanists, New Orleans, July 1991.

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