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Regionalism, Regime Transformation, and PRONASOL: The Politics of the National Solidarity Programme in Four Mexican States

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Abstract. Political change in Mexico since the crisis of 1994 has been characterised by the breakdown of centralised hierarchies and the dispersion of power across geographical regions. We examine the changing relations between regional officials of the National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL) and local PRI politicians in four Mexican states: Puebla, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Baja California.* Although PRONASOL was dismantled after 1994, the influence of anti-poverty bureaucrats has varied across geographic regions, depending on whether they had been authorised to engage in grass-roots mobilisation and/or party politics under Salinas. We emphasise the importance of regional politics in transitions from dominant-party regimes, and the impact of conflicts *within* the political hierarchies of the old regime.

Political change in Mexico since the crisis of 1994 has been characterised by the breakdown of centralised hierarchies and the dispersion of power across geographical regions. The power elite has splintered, the ruling party is in disarray, and political violence has markedly increased. Challenges to Mexico's authoritarian system had been mounting for decades, but until 1994 the powerful presidents who dominated the regime had successfully deflected these challenges with political and economic reforms managed 'from above'. However, presidential authority declined substantially during and after the transfer of office from Carlos Salinas (1988–94) to his successor, Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000). This decline has opened the way for more complex forms of centre–periphery bargaining, in which regional power contenders have gained substantial leverage.

In this paper we examine the way political decentralisation has affected regional actors linked to the traditional government and party hierarchies in four Mexican states: Puebla, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Baja California.

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How has the weakening of centralised hierarchies affected the political options of these regional power contenders? To what extent have they been able to redeploy resources accumulated under the old regime in order to rebuild local power bases? How might this affect the emerging regional power structures, and Mexico's transition?

To address these questions we focus on the changing relationships between regional officials of the Secretariat of Social Development (SEDESOL), and actors within the local government and party power structures – governors, mayors, and local party and corporatist leaders. State and municipal politicians and local officials from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) had long served as pillars of the old regime; but by the 1980s, their capacity to deliver support for the national political elite was slipping, and in some parts of the country they constituted important sources of opposition to the consolidation of *salinismo*.

On the other hand, within SEDESOL Carlos Salinas had organised a vast anti-poverty bureaucracy (the National Solidarity Programme, PRONASOL), which aimed at 'modernising' the regime, and broadening its social base. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s a number of presidents had utilised deconcentrated federal agencies – including the powerful Secretariat of Budget and Planning (the SPP) – to augment their control over local power structures. The launching of PRONASOL in 1989, and its incorporation into SEDESOL in 1992, marked high points of such efforts, providing Salinas with unprecedented control over the states. Regional SEDESOL delegates were key agents in the implementation of this strategy.

The collapse of *salinismo* after 1994 marked a sharp inversion in the relative influence of these actors within the Mexican system. During the Salinas period, regional SEDESOL officials managed funds rivalling those available to governors and mayors, whereas the latter were clearly on the defensive vis-à-vis the central government. Conversely, in the post-Salinas era many local politicians launched strong campaigns to increase their influence and political autonomy, while the PRONASOL programme was dismantled. Nevertheless, the political role played by ex-SEDESOL officials since 1994 has varied widely across the geographic regions, and in some circumstances former SEDESOL officials have remained important actors in the newly emerging regional power structures. As we shall see, they have made a variety of contributions – both negative and positive – to the possibilities of a democratic transition.

The relative influence of SEDESOL delegates was shaped in the first instance by centralised, but regionally differentiated decisions made under Salinas: decisions over whether to accommodate local PRI elites, or to encourage SEDESOL officials to challenge them, by entering electoral

politics and/or mobilising new grass-roots bases of support. After 1994, however, these choices led to a variety of outcomes that were not intended by the Salinas presidential elite.

In states that remained under the PRI's electoral domination, Salinas and his top aides generally encouraged SEDESOL officials to avoid challenges to the old guard's control over the ruling party, but they adopted different strategies with respect to pro-poor and grass-roots activism. In the post-Salinas era the capacity of such regional agents to retain influence depended in large part on whether they had previously been encouraged to mobilise grass-roots support. Where such efforts were discouraged (Puebla), local PRI elites were able to capture most PRONASOL resources, and SEDESOL officials succumbed rather quickly to the anti-Salinas backlash after 1994. On the other hand, where SEDESOL leaders had previously been allowed to seek ties with grass-roots organisations (Nayarit) they were in a better position to contest the power of old-guard governors. Throughout 1996, they sought to do so within the framework of the ruling party, but kept open the possibility of joining the political opposition. Either way, their capacity to act as a check on the consolidation of the power of local strongmen can contribute to the evolution of a more pluralistic political system.

In states characterised by greater electoral competition (Baja California and Tamaulipas), the Salinas government sought to deploy anti-poverty resources in ways that would encourage the emergence of a new *salinista* elite that would take over the local PRI and recapture control over the state. In these states SEDESOL delegates succeeded in establishing themselves as key PRI politicians in the Salinas era, and retained their power base in the post-Salinas era, although not always in ways conducive to democracy. In Taumalipas SEDESOL provided a mechanism for the consolidation of an independent, but highly autocratic, new political elite. In Baja California the anti-poverty programme had more ambiguous implications for a democratic transition: it served as a focal point of significant factional conflict within the PRI, but also as a platform for the emergence of a leader with links to the democratic left.

The local struggles we describe are still unfolding, and cannot in any case provide a full picture of the forces influencing contemporary political change in Mexico. In particular, we do not attempt to deal at length with the opposition parties, despite their obvious importance for the prospects of a transition that results in a democratic outcome. We do, however, raise three points of relevance to an understanding of the Mexican transition, and more generally to those occurring in highly centralised dominant-party systems.

First, transitions in dominant-party regimes such as Mexico's highlight

the importance of conflict and bargaining *within* the multiple political hierarchies of the old regime.[1] Military dictatorships – at least those that have ruled in Latin America – generally did not displace pre-authoritarian parties and interest groups with new political leaders and organisations. As a consequence, political groups formed prior to the regime have tended to fill the spaces opened up by the withdrawal of military rulers. In dominant-party regimes, on the other hand, political actors have had to pursue public careers within encompassing party and bureaucratic organisations created by the regime, or risk marginalisation. Thus, as these regimes break down, the evolution of new institutions is more likely to be influenced by politicians and bureaucrats who have capitalised on their positions within the old order to build networks of support.

In Mexico, unlike Communist one-party states, the existence of a private sector and of limited multi-party politics has long offered opportunities for opponents of the regime – most notably, the National Action Party (PAN) – to acquire political resources outside the dominant party and the federal bureaucracy. As noted above, these forces have been key actors in the transition process. Nevertheless, the transformation of Mexico's long-lived dominant-party system may more closely approximate those in the former communist regimes than earlier transitions from military rule in Latin America.[2] Like Russia and most of Eastern Europe, Mexico had only a fleeting experience of democratic rule in the twentieth century. Also like these countries – and unlike most other Latin American cases – the Mexican military has been subject to civilian authority since the 1940s and has not been a significant factor in the transition process. Instead, the PRI, like the Leninist and Communist parties in the East, has enhanced the role of civilian elites whose power derived from their links to the central rulers. Political transformation in Mexico has been shaped by the weakening of these links, and particularly by the deflation of presidential authority.

A second point is that formal rules and procedures established during authoritarian rule – as embodied in constitutions and electoral laws – can be crucial in shaping expectations about these relations during periods of transition. In dominant-party systems such as Mexico's, these rules had

[1] See Steven L. Solnick, 'The Breakdown of Hierarchies in the Soviet Union and China: A Neo-Institutional Perspective', *World Politics*, vol. 48, no. 2 (January 1996).

[2] Comparisons between the transitions in South America, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe were pioneered by Adam Przeworski in his *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge, 1991). For diverse views of the cross-regional comparability of transitions, see Phillippe C. Schmitter and Terry Karl, 'The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East They Attempt to Go?', *Slavic Review*, vol. 52, no. 1 (Spring 1994); Claus Offe, 'Capitalism by Democratic Design?', *Social Research*, vol. 58, no. 4 (Winter 1991); and Meinxin Pei, *From Reform to Revolution. The Demise of Communism in China and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, 1994).

been transfigured or displaced by the formal and informal hierarchies of party and state bureaucracies headed by the president. As these hierarchies weaken, however, formal rules defining constitutional powers and electoral processes can become important in reshaping the arenas of contestation. This argument has been made in general terms in recent work by Linz and Stepan and has been discussed with specific reference to Russia and China.[3] It seems highly relevant to Mexico as well. As expectations converging on presidential authority erode, previously dormant constitutional rules relating to federalism have – by default – begun to structure the strategy and options of actors within the Mexican system.

Finally, the experience within the Mexican case – like a number of transitions in Communist one-party states – underscores the significance of regional politics in the process of political change. Although the importance of regional politics has been acknowledged in specific cases, such as Brazil,[4] most general models of transitions have conventionally focused on bargaining among factions of the ruling bloc and the democratic opposition at the national level.[5] In systems dominated by pervasive governmental and party hierarchies, however, it has often been at the regional level where the greatest challenges to the existing order were mounted. This is evident in the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the politics of reform in China's one-party state.

In Mexico's dominant party regime, the deflation of central authority and the growing autonomy of regional actors has resulted in a transition process in which the old informal 'rules' of political contestation have been dramatically transformed. It must be strongly emphasised that multiparty democracy is not the only possible outcome of such a transformation. Political decentralisation can also result in the formation of regionally based autocracies, in armed local stalemates, or even in attempts by national elites to reassert authoritarian control. Still, any of these outcomes – or a number of conceivable combinations of them – would constitute a fundamental change in the nature of the regime that has dominated Mexico for almost seven decades. All involve the breakdown of the understandings that have traditionally structured relations between the central government and the periphery.

[3] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, 'Political Identities and Electoral Sequences: Spain, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia', *Daedalus*, no. 121 (1992). For the Soviet Union see Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset. The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton, 1993). For China see Susan L. Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China* (Los Angeles, 1993).

[4] See Frances Hagopian, *Traditional Politics and Regime Change in Brazil* (Cambridge, 1996).

[5] Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore, 1986).

We begin our analysis with a general review of the role that PRONASOL and SEDESOL played in Salinas's effort to broaden the base of the political regime, and the changes in the programme during the Zedillo period. In the second section, we present our state-level case studies and suggest some of the factors which have conditioned the strategic calculations of SEDESOL delegates. In the conclusion, we return to some more general considerations about the politics of transition in dominant-party regimes and the circumstances specific to Mexico.

I. *National politics and the solidarity programme: reform from above and political decentralisation*

By the early 1990s, Mexico's ruling party, the PRI, had served as one of the main institutional pillars of the world's oldest surviving authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, its hold on the urban electorate had been slipping for decades, and the pace of political change quickened notably after the onset of the debt crisis of the 1980s.[6] The highly contested presidential election of 1988 which brought Salinas to power marked one major step in this process, leading to Salinas's ambitious attempt to transform the system from above. In turn the crisis of 1994 marked an even more fundamental watershed, opening the way to an accelerated process of political decentralisation, in which the potential for political change rapidly shifted to the regions. In this section, we situate our discussion of the Solidarity Programme and SEDESOL within the context of these broader transformations in the Mexican system.

Political reform under Salinas

The 1988 presidential election was an important turning point in contemporary Mexican history because it highlighted the political alienation of middle-classes and urban poor, and their discontent with the accumulated social costs of economic crisis and adjustment. For much of the preceding decade significant challenges to the PRI's hegemony had been launched by the PAN in state and local elections; the PAN pursued a long-term 'federalist' transition strategy aimed at conquering local and regional governments first, then Congress, and eventually the presidency.[7] The strong showing of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's left-of-centre coalition and the near-miss of Salinas's candidacy in the presidential election

[6] Juan Molinar Horcasitas, *El tiempo de la legitimidad: Elecciones, autoritarismo y democracia en México* (Mexico City, 1991).

[7] Alonso Lujambio, *Federalismo y Congreso* (Mexico City, 1995), and Peter Ward and Victoria Rodríguez (eds.), *Opposition Government in Mexico: Past Experiences and Future Opportunities* (Alburquerque, 1995).

underscored what was already increasingly evident at the regional level: that the PRI was not well-prepared to win in a genuinely competitive game.

The Salinas government responded to these challenges by opting for a path of centrally controlled political liberalisation. This project consisted of three interrelated components. The first component was the piecemeal reform of the rules of electoral competition, designed in part to coopt the PAN opposition. Salinas succeeded in enlisting the PAN's support for constitutional amendments intended to reduce opportunities for fraud in registration and voting procedures.[8] To reward the PAN's cooperative behaviour, Salinas responded to local post-election protests by agreeing to recognise PAN's victory in three gubernatorial races. One of the PAN victories was in Baja California, included in our case studies below.

The second component of the Salinas political reform was the reform of the PRI. The aim was to arrest the long-term decline in the electoral strength of the party, particularly among low-income and middle-class urban voters not linked to the traditional corporatist sectors. Initiatives to 'modernise' the PRI centred on shifting power away from union and peasant sectoral organisations and strengthening territorially based party organisations that would presumably be more responsive to urban voters.[9] Such efforts, however met with only limited success: in many states, governors and corporatist leaders were able to utilise patronage resources to capture the territorial organisations themselves. After the PRI's victory in the 1991 mid-term elections, Salinas abandoned attempts to 'modernise' the party in states where its control remained dominant.

The launching of PRONASOL in 1989 was the third component of Salinas's reform strategy. In many ways, it was the most important, because it quickly became a major new foundation of presidential power.[10] The new anti-poverty bureaucracy served simultaneously to reduce Salinas's dependence on the traditional party hierarchy and to build his personal support in low-income communities. Over time it also became an instrument through which the presidential elite sought to recruit new local political leaders, who might spearhead the reform of the PRI itself.

[8] A concise account of the electoral reforms under the Salinas administration can be found in Jorge Alcocer V., 'Recent Electoral Reforms in Mexico: Prospects for a Real Multiparty Democracy', in Riordan Roett (ed.), *The Challenge of Institutional Reform in Mexico* (Boulder, 1995).

[9] Rogelio Hernández, 'La reforma interna y los conflictos en el PRI', *Foro Internacional*, vol. 31, no. 4 (1991).

[10] For an overview of the Solidarity programme see Wayne Cornelius, Ann Craig and Jonathan Fox (eds.), *Transforming State–Society Relations in Mexico: The National Solidarity Strategy* (La Jolla, 1994) and Denise Dresser, *Neopopulist Solutions to Neoliberal Problems* (La Jolla, 1991).

During the first phase of the programme, from 1989 to 1992, the primary emphasis was on the first two of these objectives, rather than on the modernisation of the PRI. Salinas entrusted the implementation of the programme and the organisation of the anti-poverty bureaucracy to Carlos Rojas, a close aide in the powerful SPP, who had previously worked in grass-roots mobilisation programmes sponsored by the National Indigenous Institute (INI). Although electoral considerations played a systematic role in the allocation of PRONASOL funds,[11] initial recruitment into the PRONASOL bureaucracy tended to emphasise people with expertise in budget and planning or in community organisation, rather than those with direct interest in electoral careers.

In 1992, this began to change. PRONASOL was upgraded to cabinet-level status as SEDESOL, and placed under the direction of Luis Donaldo Colosio, then chairman of the PRI. Although Rojas served as Undersecretary in charge of the management of PRONASOL, and was later promoted to Minister, the creation of SEDESOL both increased the power of the Solidarity programme, and altered its orientation. Colosio was a man with clear presidential ambitions, who attached a higher priority to utilising the anti-poverty bureaucracy as a means of reforming the PRI, particularly in electorally competitive states.

Under Colosio, SEDESOL quickly became one of the most powerful ministries in the executive branch. In addition to the implementation of PRONASOL, SEDESOL absorbed a wide variety of urban development and environmental policies previously scattered through other ministries. At the state level, operations of the agency were placed in hands of delegates, who soon became key political players in state politics. Potential for conflict between SEDESOL delegates and governors, mayors, and local brokers emerged from the outset. On the one hand, governors had to negotiate their annual programmes of socio-economic development with the delegates. On the other, in light of increasing budgetary restrictions, the mayors of small and medium-size cities often had to approach the delegates for spare funds. For other traditional local political brokers, such as state legislators, the conflict stemmed from the fact that delegates were gaining control of resources that once served as their political *raison d'être*.

Salinas's capacity to control the process of political liberalisation, like those of his predecessors, rested on his dual role as head of government and *de facto* head of the PRI. Like his immediate predecessor, he rose to

[11] Juan Molinar and Jeffrey Weldon, 'Electoral Determinants and Effects of PRONASOL', and Denise Dresser, 'Bringing the Poor Back In: National Solidarity as a Strategy of Regime Legitimation', both in Wayne Cornelius, Ann Craig and Jonathan Fox (eds.), *Transforming State–Society Relations in Mexico*.

the presidency from his position as Secretary of SPP.[12] Control of the SPP and the subsequent establishment of SEDESOL provided a crucial power base, since it allowed Salinas and his lieutenants to manage the disbursement of federal funding across states and the overall coordination of the federal bureaucracy.

At the same time, as *de facto* head of the ruling party, Salinas controlled nominations of PRI candidates for all major elective officials, including governors and federal legislators. Constrained by the no reelection principle, federal legislators and governors were also dependent on the president for transfer to new positions of power once their terms ended. The dual role of the president allowed him continuously to rotate government officials and 'popular' representatives from the federal bureaucracy to congress and state governments, and back.[13]

Control over appointments and funding enabled the presidential elite to exercise extensive authority over the SEDESOL delegates. In principle, regional SEDESOL officials were to administer a programme driven by local demands and planning; in practice, they were dependent on their superiors for their jobs, resources, and possible reassignments, and had limited margin for independent action. Although the delegates were instructed to 'adapt' to local political conditions, the form of adaptation was managed from the centre, and both Rojas and Colosio were willing to reassign delegates continuously until they found personnel who could meet their objectives for particular states. The collapse of this hierarchical control marks one of the most fundamental changes of the post-Salinas era, forcing both SEDESOL delegates and other power holders to redefine career alternatives and political relationships.

The politics of the post-Salinas period

In 1994, the process of controlled political liberalisation was shattered by the turmoil surrounding the presidential succession: the Zapatista uprising, the murders of PRI presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, and of PRI Secretary General, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, and the peso crisis. These events were themselves rooted in long-standing social inequalities and in conflicts within the ruling party. Nevertheless,

[12] Miguel Angel Centeno, *Democracy Within Reason. Technocratic Revolution in Mexico* (Pennsylvania, 1994) and Rogelio Hernández, 'Los hombres del presidente de la Madrid', *Foro Internacional*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1987).

[13] Salinas kept all state governors under unprecedentedly tight control. During his administration, he replaced eighteen governors before the end of their term, a record that surpasses the centralised presidencies of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) and Miguel Alemán (1946–52). Moreover, in contested state elections, Salinas emerged as the ultimate judge of post-electoral disputes: the 'grand elector' in Mexico's 'second-round elections'. See Alcocer, 'Recent Electoral Reforms in Mexico', p. 71.

their conjunction dealt a severe blow to the centralised system of power and to the capacity of the incoming presidential elite to manage political reform. The assassination of Colosio exacerbated the already deep divisions within the PRI; rival factions bitterly opposed Salinas's decision to name Zedillo as the new nominee. In turn, the devastating economic impact of the collapse of the peso provided strong incentives for such groups to distance themselves from the incoming president and his market-oriented policies.

Political decentralisation was accelerated by Zedillo's governing style, which was characterised by an unprecedented preference for shrinking and depoliticising the authority of the chief executive. Whereas Colosio would probably have attempted to draw on the political capital he had accumulated as head of the PRI and of SEDESOL, Zedillo had few ties with either hierarchy; faced with crisis and protest, he initially sought to establish a new role for the president as a politically neutral guarantor of the rule of law. Zedillo's attempt to decouple the presidency from the PRI and other conventional levers of power constituted a drastic rupture with earlier practices. During the first two years of his term, the new president mostly drew back from personal intervention in the internal affairs of the PRI, while seeking to establish more cooperative relations with the right and left opposition parties. To signal his commitment to the rule of law, he appointed a PANista to the post of Attorney General and authorised him to investigate the charges of corruption that swirled around the political elite.

In a system built around dense clientelistic networks, this stance of non-partisan legality was difficult to sustain without becoming politically isolated, and Zedillo was in fact quickly drawn into bitter conflicts with virtually all segments of the PRI. At the national level, conflicts with the *salinistas* centred on the widening investigation into earlier political assassinations and corruption, leading to the arrest of Raúl Salinas, the president's brother. At the local level, opposition gains in the wake of the economic crisis led to severe frictions between the president and regional leaders; the latter called openly for greater state autonomy, an end to Zedillo's 'politics of neutrality', and a return to the PRI's ideology of economic nationalism. PRI legislators also showed unprecedented independence, defeating several key presidential initiatives in the Congress; and in the party's 16th General Assembly, angry delegates passed resolutions that criticised the government's economic programme and limited the right of technocrats to run for elective office under the PRI banner.

In the aftermath of the party's General Assembly and in the runup to the mid-term congressional elections in 1997, Zedillo began to take steps

to reassert his authority, appointing loyalists to head the PRI National Executive Committee and taking a more direct personal role in the party's nominating process. By this point, however, it was no longer fully possible for the president to contain the centrifugal forces unleashed during the previous years. While the strongest challenges came from PAN governors and mayors, they were clearly evident within the PRI as well. Conservative PRI governors in the poorer central and southern states pressed especially hard for greater autonomy. Their leverage in the political process was considerably augmented by fiscal decentralisation legislated under Zedillo, and by the new nominating procedures established in the PRI's assembly.

During this period the fate of PRONASOL both reflected and contributed to this broader transformation. Although SEDESOL survived the first years of the Zedillo administration, with Carlos Rojas still at its head, budget and personnel were drastically reduced, and approximately one-third of the agencies previously incorporated into SEDESOL were transferred to other ministries. Even more important were changes in the way community development funds were funnelled through the federal system. In 1996 two-thirds of the funds formally administered under PRONASOL, including all investments in physical infrastructure, were transferred directly to state and local governments. Responsibility for the implementation of such programmes was shifted from SEDESOL delegates to municipal governments, and newly-established Municipal Councils of Development, which were to consist of members elected through neighbourhood committees. By early 1996 PRONASOL and the anti-poverty bureaucracy operating within SEDESOL had for all practical purposes disappeared.

These steps not only dismantled the bureaucratic empire constructed under Salinas, but also surrendered to state governments key welfare resources that had been available to the federal government since the 1970s. Although the federal government was to allocate funds according to a formula based on state-level poverty indices, governors retained considerable leverage over how these were to be distributed among municipalities.[14] Mayors were charged with organising elections for the new Municipal Councils of Development, offering both them and governors the chance to pack the councils with political loyalists.

The dismantling of the anti-poverty bureaucracy dealt a severe blow to delegates and former delegates who had charted careers within PRONASOL. While some stayed on as SEDESOL officials, they had virtually no direct control over financial resources and their responsi-

[14] Olivia Mogollón 'Pobreza y Distribución de Recursos Descentralizados del Fondo de Desarrollo Social Municipal' (unpublished paper, 1996).

bilities were greatly reduced. Their responses to such challenges are explored in detail in the case studies below. As indicated above, we argue that these responses depended to an important extent on whether they could draw on previously established political connections and grass-roots support in order to enter electoral and party politics.

Under Salinas, as noted above, the direction delegates had received from the centre depended on two factors: the degree of electoral competitiveness in state and municipal elections and the prior history of grass-roots mobilisation. SEDESOL officials had been encouraged to accommodate local elites in states where the PRI retained its hegemony and where grass-roots mobilisation remained limited. Predictably, this legacy left former PRONASOL activists highly vulnerable to the counter-offensive of conservative governors during the Zedillo period.

The options were wider for SEDESOL officials who had been based in states in which the opposition had gained electoral ground, or where strong grass-roots movements could challenge the 'governability' of the state. In competitive states, *salinistas* had deployed PRONASOL resources to recruit new regional elites that might spearhead the reform of the PRI. After 1994, these activities provided PRONASOL officials with a new platform for electoral activity. Finally, where grass-roots movements were strong, the Salinas government had encouraged locally-recruited PRONASOL officials to promote support for the Salinas project through the formation of politically independent committees and the 'non-partisan' disbursement of funds. Under Zedillo, the support generated through such activities provided opportunities for ex-PRONASOL activists to break with the ruling party and forge new ties to independent political forces, or to the left.

II. *Politics at the state level: Puebla, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Baja California*

Our discussion of the changing strategies of regional PRONASOL officials is based on two rounds of state-level field research: the first during the presidential campaign of 1994, and the second following the political and economic crisis that erupted at the end of that year. Puebla, Nayarit, Tamaulipas, and Baja California – the four states we examine – provide a partial, but still reasonably wide cross-section of the regional differences within Mexico's federal system.[15]

[15] The field research was conducted in August 1994 and June 1995. Interviews included SEDESOL officials in Mexico City, and SEDESOL delegates, underdelegates, chiefs of units of social organisation, and PRONASOL promoters in Puebla, Nayarit, Baja California and Tamaulipas.

Table 1. *Economic structure and level of socio-economic development, selected states (1990)*

	Economic activity	Relative GDP per capita	Relative poverty
Puebla	Manufactures, services, and agriculture	Moderately low	High
Nayarit	Agriculture and services	Moderately low	Medium
Tamaulipas	Oil, *maquila* and agriculture	Medium	Moderately low
Baja California	Services and *maquila*	High	Low

Source: Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO) and Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI) *XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda* (Aguascalientes, 1991).

Table 2. *Degree of electoral competitiveness and level of grass-roots mobilisation, selected states (1988–93)*

	Electoral regime	Opposition's mobilisation capacity
Puebla	Hegemonic	PAN/PRD (low)
Nayarit	Semi-hegemonic	PRD (high)
Tamaulipas	Semi-competitive	PAN/PRD (medium)
Baja California	Competitive	PRI (low)

Sources: Castillo (1994), Pacheco (1994), Guillén (1993), and Alvarado (1994). See notes 17, 18, 20, and 21.

Case selection was made on the basis of three criteria: The first was level of development. We assume that this is an important contextual factor, because states with relatively wealthy and diversified economies are likely to provide more favourable opportunities for challenges to the traditional dominant party structure of the old regime. The second criterion was the degree of electoral competitiveness in state and municipal elections in the 1988–93 period. The final criterion was the prior history of grass-roots mobilisation, which is largely independent of level of development.

The way our specific cases vary on these dimensions is summarised in Tables 1 and 2. In economic terms, Baja California is one of the more developed states in Mexico, specialising in service and *maquila* activities, while Puebla and Nayarit are among the poorest. Tamaulipas lies between

these extremes. Its economy is based in oil, *maquila* and agricultural activities.

In political terms, there are substantial differences in the degrees of electoral competitiveness and prior histories of grass-roots social mobilisation. Puebla and Nayarit, predictably, are hegemonic and semi-hegemonic states controlled by the most traditional and authoritarian groups of the PRI. Important differences do exist, however, with respect to past histories of social mobilisation. In Nayarit, a long tradition of urban popular protest associated with the Tepic Urban Popular Movement has provided the left opposition with the expertise and logistical capabilities to engage in substantial post-election mobilisations.

Tamaulipas and Baja California are characterised by higher degrees of electoral competitiveness. In Tamaulipas, both the PRD and the PAN gained in the aftermath of severe confrontations between Salinas and the corporatist groups led by the boss of the petroleum workers union, Joaquín Hernández, 'La Quina'; in 1992, a PAN candidate was elected to the municipal presidency of the capital city. In Baja California, finally, the PAN became the first opposition party to capture a state governorship; by 1992, it had also won a majority the state legislature and the mayoralty of all of the main municipalities except for the capital city, Mexicali.

While no four cases can reflect the full diversity of all thirty-one states in Mexico's federal system, these do provide reasonably representative starting points for an empirical exploration of the variations in regional politics. Puebla, for instance, reflects the relative backwardness and the PRI hegemony prevailing in states like Hidalgo, Tlaxcala, Morelos, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Campeche. Like Nayarit, PRI hegemony has been challenged by grass-roots mobilisations in a number of moderately poor states, including San Luis Potosí, Durango, Michoacán, Tabasco, and Yucatán. As in Tamaulipas, opposition electoral challenges mounted during the Salinas administration in moderately and highly developed states such as Guanajuato, Jalisco, Estado de México, Sonora, Coahuila, and Nuevo León. Finally, Baja California mirrors the electoral competitiveness of highly developed states such as Chihuahua.[16]

During the Salinas period, the evolution of PRONASOL within each of our four states was closely supervised by the president and his close advisors, Rojas and Colosio. Not all regional PRONASOL officials were able to conform to the direction they received from the centre, but the elite's power of appointment allowed it continuously to reassign personnel

[16] Mexico City is excluded from our discussion because PRONASOL was operated directly by the SEDESOL federal bureaucracy and also because, prior to the 1996 constitutional reform, the mayor of the city was not elected by direct popular vote but appointed by the president.

until it found agents who could meet its objectives for particular states. As the programme first evolved, therefore, the strategic preferences of this elite shaped cross-regional variations in the operations of PRONASOL. In the following sections, we first trace the evolution of PRONASOL under Salinas and then turn to the evolution of local politics in the post-1994 period.

Puebla

The Salinas period

Until the end of the Salinas period, the PRI's corporatist elite in Puebla was able to deliver large shares of votes in federal elections, and to secure local victories, without significant contestation.[17] The party's hegemony in the state provided few incentives for the Salinas government to penetrate the traditional power structure through PRONASOL.

In 1992 Manuel Bartlett was elected governor of Puebla under an implicit agreement that he would secure the *status quo* in the state. As Minister of Interior under de la Madrid (1982–8), Bartlett managed the 'breakdown' of the computerised vote-counting system which contributed to Salinas's victory in the 1988 election. Although he had previously been Salinas's rival for the PRI nomination he was rewarded for his assistance with an appointment as Minister of Education, and then in 1992 as governor of his home-state.

Before Bartlett assumed power in Puebla, the politics of PRONASOL in the state were marked by continuous confrontations between Nestor Martínez, the delegate of SPP, and the PRI local political class. However, once Colosio was promoted to head SEDESOL and Bartlett took office, the government appointed a new delegate, Alejandro Villar, who was encouraged to avoid conflicts with the state's power brokers, especially in the capital and other large urban centres. Villar's mandate did not preclude attempts to organise grass-roots solidarity committees in the rural areas, and his attempts to do so brought him into bitter conflicts with local rural bosses. Nevertheless, he stayed away from the cities, and carefully avoided challenges in the urban strongholds of the corporatist elite.

In 1994 Villar was transferred to the delegation in Chiapas, where his grass-roots emphasis was much needed after the Zapatista uprising. His replacement, Jesús Hermoso, was encouraged again to respect the local

[17] In the 1988 federal elections Puebla's old-guard provided 8% of the PRI vote nationwide. See María del Carmen Díaz, 'Puebla', in 'Carta Político-electoral de México 1987–1994', *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 15 July 1994, and Jaime Castillo Palma, 'Puebla', in Pablo González Casanova and Jorge Cadena Roa (coords.), *La República Mexicana*, *vol. II* (Mexico City, 1994).

status quo. Unlike his former boss, Hermoso avoided any hostilities by concentrating primarily on administrative reorganisation; PRONASOL was run mainly from the headquarters in the capital city, and all attempts at grass-roots organisation were abandoned.

The Zedillo period

As in several other states, the deflation of presidential authority under Zedillo offered an opportunity for Bartlett to launch a political comeback at both the local and national levels. Within the state itself, Bartlett mounted an aggressive campaign to capture all politically relevant positions within the ruling party and the government. In the run-up to the municipal elections of 1995 he appointed close allies in the PRI State Executive Committee to control nominations, and placed his people in key political positions across the state bureaucracy.

The governor also sought to eliminate any potential threat that might have come from the limited Solidarity organisation by launching a public attack against the SEDESOL delegate, Jesús Hermoso, early in 1995. Carlos Rojas attempted to counter this offensive by replacing Hermoso with Manuel Silva, a more grass-roots oriented official, who was urged to accelerate the creation of solidarity committees. But unlike the case of Nayarit, which we will discuss below, the disinclination of previous delegates to challenge the state's traditional political class left Silva with little to build on.

Like several other PRI governors across the country, Bartlett was thus in a good position to control the anti-poverty resources transferred by the Zedillo administration to state and municipal governments. Opposition mayors will also contend for these resources, but Bartlett has already packed the Municipal Councils of Development with PRI loyalists. Ironically, the decentralisation of PRONASOL resources may have helped Bartlett to avoid a state-wide victory of the PAN in the 1996 midterm elections, and so to continue his domination of local politics. The PAN captured the capital city and other key urban centres, but the PRI's continuing control of rural and indigenous municipalities in the northern part of the state allowed the ruling party to maintain its hold on the state legislature.

In turn, consolidation of a strong base in Puebla, has contributed to Bartlett's bid for influence at the national level. Under Salinas, Bartlett's 'appointment' as governor had been, in effect, a 'consolation prize' – a face-saving way to end a political career. After 1994, however, he re-emerged as an outspoken figure in the national debate on 'fiscal federalism' and the concomitant struggle for the decentralisation of fiscal resources. He also supported the anti-Zedillo rebellion of the local PRI in

Tabasco, joining the emerging bloc of hardline governors in Quintana Roo, Tabasco and Yucatán. Thus, control over former PRONASOL funds has helped an erstwhile enemy of this programme to sustain his local power base, and has enabled him to assume a position of leadership among emerging groups of PRI hardliners in the country.

Nayarit

The Salinas period

Nayarit, like Puebla, has been dominated electorally by conservative political forces; rival corporatist groups linked to the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) alternated in control of the governorship between 1981 and the mid-1990s.[18] Unlike in Puebla, however, a long tradition of popular protest in Tepic, the capital city, has provided the expertise and logistical capabilities for the mobilisation of challenges to the legitimacy of the dominant political forces. The most recent challenge occurred in 1993, when widespread protests and demonstrations disrupted the inauguration of a CTM hardliner, Rigoberto Ochoa, as governor.[19] The capacity for grass-roots mobilisation led to a much more active SEDESOL delegation during the Salinas period, and to a more influential role for these actors under Zedillo.

The key figure in this political process has been Antonio Meza, the PRONASOL state coordinator from 1989 to 1994, and subsequently the delegate of SEDESOL. During the five-year period that Meza served as PRONASOL state coordinator, four delegates were rotated through Nayarit; most were SPP bureaucrats and political outsiders, and were either unable to reach working understandings with the regional political class or accepted their clientelistic control over PRONASOL resources. As PRONASOL coordinator, Meza was able to gain a measure of independence from the local political establishment, and to construct a significant political infrastructure.

Meza had been appointed as PRONASOL coordinator at the request of the incumbent CNC governor, Celso Delgado (1987–93), and was able to maintain correct relations with much of the CNC leadership. His relationship with other PRI officials and brokers, however, was highly

[18] See Lourdes C. Pacheco Ladrón de Guevara, 'Nayarit', in Pablo González Casanova and Jorge Cadena Roa (coords.), *La República Mexicana*, *vol. II* (Mexico City, 1994).

[19] See Felipe Cobián and Roberto Zamarripa, 'Rigoberto Ochoa unifica, levanta y moviliza a los nayaritas, pero en su contra', in *Proceso*, no. 886 (25 October 1993), and Lourdes C. Pacheco Ladrón de Guevara, 'Nayarit', in 'Carta político-electoral de México (1987–1994)', *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 5 July 1994.

problematic, and conflict grew particularly intense after the designation of CTM's candidate Rigoberto Ochoa as governor in 1993.

In dealing with these pressures, Meza could draw both on local ties and on the sponsorship of his superiors in Mexico City. Unlike the delegates, Meza had strong roots in Nayarit. He had taught economics for a brief time at the Autonomous University of Nayarit, and had held positions within the local PRI and in BANRURAL. It was through these activities that he established links to the CNC and to Celso Delgado. Even more important were the alliances Meza built in Mexico City. His primary sponsor was Carlos Rojas who, as noted, emphasised the long-term advantages of grass-roots organisation. As conflicts intensified between Meza and members of the traditional party hierarchy, Rojas's support proved crucial.

The gravest threat to Meza's position came with Ochoa's succession to the governorship. The incoming governor viewed the solidarity committees formed under Meza as 'communist cells', and quickly demanded his dismissal as coordinator. With Ochoa assuming office in the context of widespread protest, however, Rojas insisted that Meza remain in his post, and when Rojas became head of SEDESOL in 1993, he placed Meza in charge of the state delegation.

As SEDESOL delegate, Meza expanded the size and scope of his organisation. A team of solidarity promoters was established in every municipality in the state, many recruited from urban social movements. Meza's strategy reflected both the difficulty of challenging the old-guard dominance of the local PRI and Rojas's emphasis on the establishment of a more independent regional political leadership with significant community support. Thus, although the delegate was a staunch *salinista*, he sought to maintain positive relations with opposition party leaders and to discourage close organisational links between the solidarity committees and the PRI. By the end of the Salinas period, this approach had proven highly effective. Meza had become a popular figure in the state, with widespread support among local community leaders and grass-root organisations.

The Zedillo period

As in Puebla, the erosion of traditional presidential authority offered a significant opportunity for the conservative governor to take the offensive. In the runup to the 1995 municipal elections, Ochoa purged reformists from the PRI State Executive Committee and replaced them with his own close collaborators. At the same time, he sought to capitalise on Rojas's weakened position in the Zedillo cabinet to renew his attack against Antonio Meza. Early in the year, Ochoa publicly denounced SEDESOL

for allocating funds on a personalistic basis and for favouring opposition parties.

On the defensive, Meza and his team generally attempted to maintain a low profile. Specifically, they refrained from opposing Ochoa's efforts to pack the new Municipal Councils. Unlike in Puebla, however, the local political capital Meza had accumulated in previous years made it difficult for the governor to push him aside. Meza countered the most immediate challenge to his position – the governor's attack on the management of PRONASOL resources – with the mobilisation of his grass-roots constituency in Tepic and public support from presidents of solidarity committees. The attacks on Meza and SEDESOL soon ceased.

For the longer run, Meza and his supporters began to prepare a comeback in a realm they had avoided under Salinas: the electoral arena. In 1996 and 1997, Meza tested his leverage within the ruling party itself, first by seeking the PRI nomination for mayor of Tepic, then the nomination for federal deputy. Meza was defeated in both instances, but given the control which Ochoa and the CTM maintained over local party organisation, the results were not unpromising. In his bid for the mayoral nomination, for example, Meza lost to the head of the trucker's union by less than five per cent of the delegates to the party convention, despite the CTM's overwhelming control of patronage resources.

Challenging the governor's power from within the PRI, however, has been an uphill fight – as is clearly indicated by the failure of Meza's subsequent attempt to win the nomination for federal deputy. If Meza cannot overcome the obstacles to influence within the ruling party, it is possible that he will opt for two other alternatives. One would be an alliance with the left. As a 'non-partisan' SEDESOL official, Meza worked closely with the Tepic Urban Popular Movement, whose members were predominantly from the left-of-centre Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). Although in the past hardline followers of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas have generally opposed local alliances with *PRIísta*s or government officials, the new president of the PRD elected in 1997, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, has placed a much greater emphasis on grass-roots mobilisation and cross-party alliances. This opens a new window of opportunity for Meza.

The second option for Meza would be to link up to a new national political movement. This choice would be most likely if the hardliners in the PRI (Ochoa) and PRD consolidate or expand their control of local party organisations. As we shall discuss further with respect to Baja California, there is evidence that a new political bloc could be in the making. Were this to materialise, Meza would have a national force to join.

Each of these latter options reflect the magnitude of the changes that have occurred in the fluid political context of the post-Salinas era. Challenging the old guard from within the framework of the ruling party might have salutary effects for Mexican democracy, but could also serve as a mechanism for coopting dissidence and reinforcing the political *status quo*. On the other hand, if Meza leads his large personal following into the political opposition, this could significantly improve the prospects for multiparty competition within the state.

Tamaulipas

The Salinas period

During the 1980s Tamaulipas was one of several northern states in which opposition parties effectively challenged the PRI's electoral hegemony. The deterioration of electoral support for the PRI was evident in the 1988 presidential race; and the vulnerability of the ruling party became even clearer during the local elections of 1992, when important electoral districts and the capital city itself fell to opposition forces of both the left and right.[20] In this context Salinas launched a concerted attempt to reconstruct the PRI's power base in the state. In 1989, at the beginning of his term, he dealt a severe blow to the old PRI leadership with the arrest of the petroleum union Czar, Joaquín Hernández, 'La Quina.' In the years that followed, PRONASOL became the main instrument through which Salinas sought to recapture and strengthen the local PRI organisation.

The task of rebuilding the party fell to Manuel Cavazos, a prominent member of the core Salinas elite, who had been serving as a Senator since 1988. During Salinas's term, PRONASOL was headed by seven different delegates, but Cavazos was the power behind the throne. He was appointed coordinator of PRONASOL while still serving as Senator, and the clear agenda from the outset was to assure his victory in the gubernatorial election of 1993.

As PRONASOL state coordinator Cavazos assembled a team of young professional social workers from all over the state to serve as municipal coordinators of PRONASOL and organisers of solidarity committees. Many of these coordinators were explicitly groomed as local political figures, and in the state's largest cities they were elected as municipal presidents on the PRI ticket. As indicated, this political machinery helped to guarantee Cavazos's victory in the 1993 gubernatorial election.

[20] See Arturo Alvarado, 'Tamaulipas', in Pablo González Casanova and Jorge Cadena Roa (coords.), *La República Mexicana*, *vol. III* (Mexico City, 1994).

The Zedillo period

Under Salinas, the anti-poverty programme had been aimed at shoring up the control of the ruling party in Tamaulipas, but not at establishing the basis for an independent political fiefdom. In the post-Salinas period, however, this is precisely what happened; the PRONASOL machinery provided Cavazos with the organisational foundation of a new *cacicazgo*.

To consolidate power, the governor moved along three tracks. First, although he partly accommodated lower levels of the traditional leadership, negotiating agreements with leaders of local labour unions, he thoroughly purged and replaced the top and mid-level corporatist leadership of the party. Cavazos also purged the PRI State Executive Committee, imposing his closest allies as replacements, and placed other *cavacistas* in local executive positions throughout the state. Until 1995, at least half the mayors in the state were also Cavazos loyalists.

Second, Cavazos tried to strengthen his ties with Zedillo. The governor's interest in so doing may derive in part from his need to distance himself from the discredited *salinista* elite. Given the current weakness of his former patron and the federalist rhetoric of Zedillo, it paid Cavazos to keep on good terms with the president, while at the same time consolidating his power base in Tamaulipas.

Finally, Cavazos continued to use SEDESOL as a key instrument in this effort at consolidation. Former PRONASOL municipal coordinators were appointed to represent the state government in every *municipio*, and they worked hand-in-hand with SEDESOL to expand the solidarity committees and construct Municipal Councils of Development. SEDESOL co-sponsors every major public work with Cavazos' Secretariat of Social Development. This machine clearly helped the governor to withstand major electoral challenges in the November 1995 municipal elections. Although the opposition won some key urban centres, Cavazos retained 29 out of 39 municipalities in the state, and regained control of the capital city from the PAN. Cavazos retains considerable personal popularity throughout the state.

With the aid of SEDESOL, Cavazos thus created a powerful personal machine in a relatively short period of time. Indeed, in many ways, he has begun to behave like a traditional political boss, harassing opponents and pressuring the local news media. Cavazos' autocratic style has provoked protests and raised concerns about human rights violations among international organisations. For the moment, however, his hold on the state appears secure. The consolidation of his local power in turn places Cavazos in a good position to act, like Bartlett, as a power broker at the national level.

Baja California

The Salinas period

During the 1980s and early 1990s, Baja California was one of the most competitive multiparty states in Mexico. Throughout most of Salinas's term, the PAN held the governorship, and three of the state's four municipalities, including Tijuana, the largest city in Baja California; only Mexicali, the state capital, remained under PRI rule.[21] Recovering control of the state became a major objective of the Salinas elite, and as in Tamaulipas, PRONASOL became one of the main tools of this enterprise. The *salinistas*' efforts resulted in substantial gains for individual PRI politicians in the congressional elections of 1994. The reorganisation of the party, however, was impeded by numerous internal conflicts, including control over PRONASOL resources, and the party remained in substantial disarray.

The elite's strategy for electoral recovery involved a division of labour along territorial lines. SPP and SEDESOL delegates managed PRONASOL resources in the two smaller municipalities, Tecate and Ensenada, and competed for control of the programme in Mexicali with the city's PRIísta mayor, Francisco Pérez Tejada. In Tijuana, Rojas and Colosio by-passed the delegates entirely and assigned the implementation of PRONASOL to a municipal coordinator who reported directly to them. Recapturing this large urban centre was viewed by the elite as the key to recapturing the state as a whole.

Tijuana. The key figure in the effort to regain Tijuana was Jaime Martínez Veloz, a close aide to Rojas and a former coordinator of SPP regional programmes in northern border cities. Appointed in 1992, Martínez Veloz quickly forged a strong alliance with grass roots urban leaders, especially from the Tijuana Urban Popular Movement. With full presidential support and a blank cheque, Martínez Veloz assembled a team of well-paid promoters which launched a strong campaign to multiply the existing solidarity committees. He developed important networks in shanty-towns and low-income neighbourhoods across party lines. Through the Tijuana Urban Popular Movement he was able to establish links with the left. He also established a strong relationship with the leader of PRI's Popular Urban Territorial Movement in Tijuana.

The flow of PRONASOL funds in Tijuana was funnelled through Councils of Municipal Solidarity, headed by the mayor and formed by

[21] Tonatiuh Guillén, *Baja California 1989–1992. Alternancia política y transición democrática* (Tijuana, 1993), and José Negrete Mata, 'Baja California' in Pablo González Casanova and Jorge Cadena Roa (coords.), *La República Mexicana*, *vol. I* (Mexico City, 1994).

presidents of solidarity committees. Implementation of the programme was initially facilitated by a cooperative relationship which Martínez Veloz forged with the first PANista mayor of Tijuana, Carlos Montejo, a pragmatic businessman with no strong political ambitions. This honeymoon ended when Montejo was replaced as mayor by Hector Osuna (1992–5), a loyal ally of PAN Governor Ernesto Ruffo, who quickly became embroiled in heated conflicts with Martínez Veloz over the administration of the Solidarity programme. This struggle, however, provided the latter with a larger state-wide audience, and he was elected as a federal legislator in 1994 with the grass-roots support developed during his two years of PRONASOL work. During the Zedillo period Martínez Veloz became an important figure on the national political stage.

Mexicali, *Tecate*, *and Ensenada*. In the regions outside Tijuana, a number of political figures contended for influence. Several of these were close associates of Zedillo, then SPP Minister and a native of Baja California. One close friend, Hugo A. Castro Bojórquez, chaired the local PRI. Another was Luis López Moctezuma, a former rector of the Autonomous University of Baja California, who served as delegate from 1990 to 1993. López Moctezuma's successor, Rubén Adame, had been mayor of Tecate (1989–92) and was linked more closely to Colosio and Rojas. The PRI's highest elected official, finally was the mayor of Mexicali, Francisco Pérez Tejada, who would become the party's gubernatorial nominee in 1995.

Under the direction of delegates López Moctezuma and Adame, the Solidarity programme spread throughout the state. López Moctezuma initiated the process, notwithstanding considerable scepticism about the value of grass-roots organisation, and Adame tirelessly toured the state in both PRONASOL and party activities. In May 1995, Adame was rewarded for his efforts with an appointment as the new head of the state party organisation. In Mexicali, however, the administration of PRONASOL became the subject of a contentious turf battle between the mayor and the two delegates. With the encouragement of Carlos Rojas, the mayor became personally involved in the administration of PRONASOL funds, establishing a municipal General Directorate of Solidarity and taking over much of the resources and organisation of PRONASOL in Mexicali. To the consternation of Adame's teammembers, the neighbourhood leaders of many solidarity committees in Mexicali identified the mayor, rather than the delegate, as the head of PRONASOL. On the other hand, according to our interviews, Pérez Tejada did not follow the demand-based principles of PRONASOL, did not promote grass-root organisations, and disbursed funds on traditional clientelistic bases. This made it difficult for Pérez to act as a unifying force within the party during his race for governor in 1995.

The Zedillo period

Factional struggles intensified in Baja California after 1994, both as a consequence of the deflation of presidential authority and as a result of conflicts associated with upcoming state elections. On the one hand, the collapse of *salinismo* opened the way for Martínez Veloz from Tijuana to establish himself as a national political figure. Defeats in the 1995 local and gubernatorial elections, on the other hand, left the party without a coherent regional leadership or a clear sense of direction.

Tijuana. During the first two years of the Zedillo administration, Martínez Veloz became a significant figure in Congress, and an important bridge to social and political groups on the left. In Congress, Martínez Veloz was a leader in the formation of an alliance of centre-left legislators from the PRI, the PRD, and the Workers Party (the PT) that has positioned itself to participate in the negotiation of a transition process. As a member of a special congressional commission, Martínez has also participated in the peace negotiations in Chiapas. Besides these activities, he publishes a weekly column in *La Jornada*, an influential left-of-centre newspaper in the capital, and has acted as an observer in PRD General Assemblies.

While now located in Mexico City, Martínez Veloz also tried to maintain his base in Tijuana. His rivalry with the PANista mayor Osuna, however, created a major challenge. Osuna became a leading figure among the PANista mayors in the country as a whole, and pressed the federal government hard for fiscal decentralisation and the full transfer of PRONASOL funds to the municipal governments. With full support of the then PAN governor, Ernesto Ruffo, Osuna challenged Martínez Veloz by establishing a PAN programme of poverty alleviation in 1994, and by successfully engineering the election of its leaders to the new Municipal Councils of Development.

Martínez's team members remain in control of SEDESOL-Tijuana, but to their surprise, only a handful of solidarity committee leaders were elected to the Tijuana Municipal Council of Development. The committees that developed under Martínez Veloz appear to have had a strong political identification only in his own district. Elsewhere in the city, grass-roots leaders appear willing to work with whomever holds resources and public office, PRIístas or PANistas.

Mexicali, *Tecate*, *and Ensenada*. Contests for party nominations for the gubernatorial and mayoral races of 1995 sparked an unprecedented factional struggle within the PRI local political class. Under the traditional rules of the Mexican political system, the logical choice to be the PRI's gubernatorial candidate would have been Zedillo's friend, Castro

Bojórquez, then chair of the local PRI. But to demonstrate his willingness to relinquish control of the party organisation, Zedillo appointed Castro as Consul General in Seattle, thus blocking his gubernatorial nomination, and refrained from naming an alternative candidate. This opened the way to bitter contestation at all levels of the party.

The eventual winner in the race for the gubernatorial nomination was the mayor of Mexicali, Francisco Pérez Tejada. Pérez was able to draw extensively on PRONASOL resources in his bid for the nomination, and prevailed over the leaders of four other factions in a relatively democratic party convention. Yet Pérez failed to emerge from the convention as a unifying force within the local party, and after intense battles, nominations for municipal governments and the local legislature were allocated among representatives of the different factions. Rivalries were particularly explosive in Mexicali, Pérez's home city, where Pérez's candidate failed to win the mayoral nomination.

SEDESOL was also affected by the local elections. In 1994, López Moctezuma again replaced Rubén Adame as delegate when the latter was chosen to manage the gubernatorial election. With the collapse of *salinismo*, however, López Moctezuma had grown even more sceptical about the demand-based principles of PRONASOL and critical of the grass-roots orientation of SEDESOL officials in Tijuana. In fact, the small anti-poverty bureaucracy and grass-roots organisation built by Adame in Mexicali started to collapse in the aftermath of the 1995 local elections, and upon López Moctezuma's return to SEDESOL.

In the 1995 local elections, the PRI recovered the city halls of Tecate and Ensenada, but lost the races for governor and the mayoralties of Mexicali and Tijuana. These defeats exacerbated intra-party factional conflict even further, and at least in mid-1997, none of the major figures appears in a position to provide a coherent direction for the party as a whole.

Martínez Veloz, however, remains an important player. Like his PANista rivals, he may next turn to municipal politics as a stepping stone to the governorship of the state; with his local base of power in Tijuana, he is in a position to contend for the PRI nomination in the mayoral race of 1998. Martínez's main problem, however, is that Baja California's PRI political class still views him as an outsider whose career was chartered by *salinistas* like Colosio or Rojas. If his political career in Baja California is effectively blocked by rival factions in the state Martínez Veloz could, like Meza in Nayarit, eventually choose to join the PRD, or push for the formation of a new political party.

III. *Concluding perspectives on regional politics and the Mexican transition*

Understandings of transition from authoritarian rule have changed with successive waves of democratisation. Basic models of democratic transition derived from experiences in Southern Europe and South America have focused primarily on the outcome of bargaining at the national level between factions of hardliners and reformers within the ruling bloc and moderates and radicals within the opposition. These categories were perhaps adequate for understanding the demise of military-backed governments that did not penetrate deeply into the pre-authoritarian institutions of civil society; but the process of change in dominant-party systems such as Mexico raises issues that were less salient, or perhaps simply undertheorised, in these earlier models of transition.

Whereas most analyses of earlier transitions focused on the displacement of central governmental elites, in Mexico and some parts of the communist world regional decentralisation has been an important component of regime transformation. During 1994 and 1995, as this paper has suggested, Mexico has experienced both a marked attenuation of the *vertical* lines of authority linking central authorities to their agents on the periphery, and a pronounced *horizontal* diversification of political alignments and local balances of power within geographic regions.

Within the four states discussed in the preceding section, we have seen various forms of multiparty politics, counteroffensives by old-guard politicians, and the construction of new political machines. The outcomes of these projects are still quite uncertain, both in the states discussed and the others within Mexico's federal system. What is clear, however, is the wide variety of actors and potential political alliances now emerging at the state and local level. The strength of such actors and the shape of the alliances they form will, to be sure, depend in part on developments at the national level. But more than at any time since the 1920s, outcomes in the national political arena also reflect influences that flow from the regional bases of power now under construction.

We also suggest that political conflicts *within* the ruling party and the federal bureaucracy constitute important elements in the process of political decentralisation and in the more general transformation of the Mexican regime. Regime opponents have played a crucial role in challenging established lines of authority; but these challenges have not so far led to the displacement of the actors that had accumulated political resources within existing governmental and party organisations. Old-guard PRIístas, 'reformists' within the ruling party, and some former PRONASOL officials and SEDESOL delegates – all remain important power contenders at both the local and national levels, with the capacity

to influence the reshaping of political institutions. Again, such a process contains some interesting parallels with transition experiences in former Communist regimes; and in this connection, it is important to recall that in many ex-Soviet and Eastern European countries, actors linked to the old regime have regained power within a more competitive and democratic context.[22] Thus, as David Stark suggests with respect to those countries, it is important to focus on the way new elements combine with 'adaptations, rearrangements, permutations, and reconfigurations of already existing institutional forms'.[23]

Finally, our study indicates that, as expectations about presidential authority and the dominance of the ruling party have weakened, formal constitutional and electoral rules relating to federalism have provided an important point of reference in the forging of new strategies for political survival. For over a decade, the federal framework has provided opportunities for opposition politicians to challenge the hegemony of the PRI in state and local elections. But, especially during the first years of the Zedillo administration, the control of elected state and municipal offices have become increasingly significant for PRI politicians and government bureaucrats seeking to reorganise political constituencies and construct new bases of political power.

It is to be expected that politicians who have benefited from this regionalisation will seek further changes in formal constitutional and electoral rules that might enhance their capacity to sustain state and local bases of support. Preferences with respect to such rules are likely to cut across party and ideological lines. As we have seen, for example, both PANista and old-guard PRI governors have been strong advocates of fiscal federalism and of the decentralisation of PRONASOL and other welfare programmes. Similarly, governors and mayors of all parties may well press for an end to the constitutional prohibition on immediate re-election, since this is a major hindrance to the consolidation of regional political machines.

The regionalisation of Mexican politics has ambiguous implications for the eventual consolidation of a democratic regime. On the one hand, as Mexican scholars have suggested, the federal Constitution has provided the framework for the spread of multiparty politics into states such as Baja California, and this offers a clear and encouraging indication of a trend toward pluralist democracy.[24] At the same time, however, the centrifugal

[22] Ronald G. Suny, 'Elite Transformation in Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Transcaucasia, or What Happens when the Ruling Class Can't Rule?', Working Paper, Russian Research Center, Harvard University (Massachusetts, April 1993).

[23] David Stark, 'Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in Eastern Central Europe', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Winter 1992), p. 22.

[24] Alonso Lujambio, *Federalismo y Congreso*.

forces discussed in this article raise important questions about the type of democracy that is likely to emerge and the way it will be governed. While regionalisation does not, as in the ex-Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, threaten the basic integrity of the central state, it does pose important challenges of political coordination and governability.

The most direct effect is on the bitter factional struggles now occurring within the PRI. The importance of local politics is evident not only in the construction of regional political machines, but also in intra-party turmoil in competitive states such as Baja California, and in the increasing temptation for left-oriented factions to break from the party. Such internal conflicts are common in democratisation processes, and can lead either to the enhancement of the PRI's capacity to compete within a more democratic framework or to fragmentation. But the stakes are high. For all its shortcomings, the PRI has historically occupied the centre of the Mexican political spectrum, and a breakup of the old ruling party could leave a dangerous political vacuum.

The strengthening of regional power contenders will also pose new challenges for executive and legislative relations at the federal level. In the days of PRI hegemony, a formally independent legislature had little real power, since all ruling-party representatives owed their office to the president and were dependent on him for 'reassignment' at the end of their terms. The institutionalisation of local mandates, on the other hand, will both strengthen effective checks on presidential authority and increase the risks of stalemate and rigidity highlighted by critics of presidential constitutions.[25] Presidential constitutions by no means preclude effective governance – even in situations of divided government. Even if the PRI were to survive as a majority party, however, legislative discipline would be difficult to maintain, and far more dependent on the capacity of the president to provide legislators with pork-barrel benefits in exchange for their support.

Finally, the process of political decentralisation described in the preceding pages opens the way for the establishment of regional autocracies as well as for more democratic local governments. Of special concern is the political offensive launched by old-guard governors in central and southern states. The experiences we describe in Puebla and Nayarit constitute parts of a broader pattern leading to the formation of a national bloc of conservative governors from Puebla, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, and Yucatán. This bloc of conservative governors has emerged as a leading voice for PRI hardliners across the country.

The transition to democracy in Mexico does not necessarily require the

[25] Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (eds.), *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: The Case of Latin America* (Baltimore, 1994).

uniform geographic spread of multiparty politics into all states. Nevertheless, the unchecked spread of local *cacicazgos* can have a major effect on the rule of law and the stability of the regime. This is why the outcomes of local power struggles in states such as Nayarit may be pivotal to the direction of Mexico's political transition, and why the strengthening of PRIísta governors in states such as Puebla and Tamaulipas is troubling. If PRI governors succeed in consolidating their power in such regions, we could see a widening of the gap between a relatively developed and democratic North and more autocratic rule in other parts of the country – especially, but not exclusively the South. Under these circumstances, the possibilities of Chiapas-like rebellions could well increase.