

2.4.3. Mexico

I. General conditions

Political system

Political system Mexico has a presidential system. All voters above the age of 18 elect their executive for a six-year, non-renewable term in a single, national constituency. The candidate that obtains a plurality of the vote becomes the president of the United States of Mexico, as the country is officially called. Mexico is only one of five presidential systems (Honduras, México, Panama, Paraguay, and Venezuela are the other four) that allow a minority of voters to select its chief executive. The closeness of the 2006 presidential race – one in which Felipe Calderón of the National Action Party (PAN) beat first runner-up Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) by 36.69 to 36.11 per cent of the valid vote – has generated a debate about the utility of a plurality formula for electing the country's president (Schedler 2007). Debate now revolves around the use of a majority runoff or a qualified plurality system to increase the percentage of votes – and therefore the mandate – the new president has (Shugart 2007).

Electoral system

Electoral system A bicameral legislature is elected independently of the president. Though the electoral systems for deputies and senators have undergone numerous changes since 1963, several features have remained constant (Molinar 2001). First, no legislator has been allowed to run for consecutive re-election since 1933, a ban that remains popular with the public, even if specialists call for citizens to be empowered to reward or punish their legislators at the end of their terms in office. Second, single-member plurality districts (SMPDs) are the strongest component of Mexico's mixed electoral systems. Between 1857 (the date in which a constituent assembly approved the 1917 constitution's predecessor) and 1963, all deputies were elected from SMPDs. Between 1963 and 1977, opposition parties were allowed to take 'list' seats in the Chamber of Deputies if they obtained more than 2.5 per cent of the national vote (1.5 per cent after 1973 and 2 per cent after 1996). Since 1977, the constitution has been

reformed to set the number of SMPDs at 300. Until 1985, citizens also cast ballots for 100 proportional representation (PR) legislators in one of several regional constituencies. Since 1986, there have been 300 SMPDs and 200 PR seats. The third feature that has remained constant is the SMPDs allocated among the 32 states of Mexico according to their respective shares of the population. The remaining 200 PR deputies stand for election in one of four districts, each of which has 50 representatives.

Every three years, citizens cast ballots for members of the lower house (the Chamber of Deputies). The electoral system for electing deputies has a superficial resemblance to the German mixed-system for electing the Bundestag. The first of the key differences between both systems is that voters only get one ballot for both the PR and SMPD seats (between 1977 and 1988, citizens had two votes). Second, there is no provision to equalise the party shares of the PR seats with the overall distribution of parliamentary seats. Electoral laws permit disproportionality of up to 8 per cent between the popular vote and seat shares. Between 1997 and 2003, when the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the party that wielded power undemocratically for 70 years, lost its overwhelming majority of SMPDs, the PRI had done sufficiently well in the SMPDs to obtain an average of 7.3 more in seat shares than in the popular vote.

Electoral
thresholds

Senators are elected from one of 32 states to serve six-year terms. Since 1994, each state has had four senators. The first and second seats are awarded to the winner in a state's popular vote, with the third seat going to the runner-up. Performance in a national senate race determines which party obtains each state's fourth senator seat. Between 1940 and 1988, each state had two senators, both of whom were elected in separate races, but concurrent with that of the presidential race.

The Mexican electoral system does not benefit special groups of the population. In other words, there are no consociational elements in Mexican democracy. Since 1996, parties need to obtain at least 2 per cent of the national vote to send their candidates to one of the houses of the legislature or to win one SMPD outright.

Group
privileges

Elections in Mexico since the mid-1990s have conformed to internationally recognised democratic standards. Any group of citizens can create a party and register candidates for elections, subject to the requirements in the Fedral Code of

Democratic
standards

Electoral Institutions and Procedures (COFIPE). Every vote is equally weighted in the vote tally; periodic redrawing of the boundaries also prevents some legislators having more voters in their districts than others (e.g. disproportionality is kept at a minimum; the Federal Electoral Institute – IFE – is responsible for redrawing the boundaries). The ballots are of high quality. The IFE prints them, under the supervision of party representatives, and controls their distribution. The Federal Registry of Voters, an agency located within the IFE, is also responsible for electoral identification, which has become the de facto identity card for Mexican citizens. Citizens cast ballots under conditions of secrecy.

Legal regulation of political parties

Legal basis The 1917 constitution did not originally mention political parties. The 1977 reform to article 41 of the constitution recognised parties as ‘entities of public interest’. It entrusts them with the responsibility of promoting participation in politics and in filling elected offices. The constitution does not recognise any particular party in any way.

There is no ‘party law’ in Mexico, but the COFIPE does have an entire ‘book’ (the basic divisions of this law) on parties. It discusses how parties can become registered, their rights and obligations, and, most importantly, public financing of party activities. The COFIPE book on parties is silent on matters of internal organisation. This book delegates such issues to each party, and asks that these included in each party’s statutes. The constitution and specialised laws treat all parties equally.

The COFIPE book on political parties is vital for parties because of the public campaign funds lavished on parties. Parties try to circumvent its rules, but by challenging the relevant administrative and judicial rulings on it. If a party, for example, can get IFE and the Electoral Tribunal of the Judicial Branch of the Federation (TEPJF) to issue rulings it likes, it only strengthens the overall system of electoral governance.

Both the IFE and the TEPJF are fundamental parts of the Mexican system of electoral governance (Eisenstadt 2004). The IFE is largely an administrative entity. It organises elections and conducts the counting of the vote. It does issue rulings of an administrative nature and its council does arbitrate disagreements among parties regarding the

application of electoral law. Most matters of interpretation, however, are reserved for the TEPJF. Only the TEPJF certifies election outcomes. Disagreements with IFE's decision-making can also be taken to the TEPJF. Only on some matters (e.g., disputes about the extent and nature of individual rights and guarantees with a bearing on elections) can Supreme Court rulings take precedence (and the TEPJF is a part of the federal judiciary).

There have been three key changes to electoral laws affecting parties over the past five years. First, congress reformed the COFIPE (article 175-A) in 2002 to the effect that parties must not allow one gender to dominate candidacies to elected posts. At least 30 per cent of candidacies for similar types of elected offices (e.g. SMPD) must come from the other gender. Second, congress reformed the COFIPE in 2003 (article 24) so that it is harder for an organisation to become registered as a political party. Before this reform, a group could register to become a political party with at least 3,000 members in 10 states or if it had 300 members in each of 100 SMPDs. It also needed to obtain the endorsement of the equivalent of 0.13 per cent of the Federal Electoral Registry. After the 2003 reform, a party must, according to COFIPE article 24, '(a) formulate a declaration of principles, and in congruence with them, a programme of action and statutes that ground its activities' and '(b) possess 3,000 members in at least 20 states or have 300 members in at least 200 SMPD. In neither case, can the total number of its members be less than 0.26 of the Federal Electoral Registry that was used in the federal election immediately prior to presentation of the request to become a political party' Third, congress reformed various articles of the COFIPE in 2005 to permit Mexican citizens residing abroad to vote for the president in federal elections.

Changes in
the past five
years

According to article 24 of the COFIPE, an organisation interested in becoming a 'national political party' must satisfy several requirements, spelled out in articles 24–28 of the COFIPE. There are two stages for establishing a party. The first stage consists of an organisation obtaining definitive registration as a party (see previous paragraph). The second stage consists of 'constituting a national political party'. According to COFIPE article 28, it must notify the IFE of its interest in constituting itself as a political party between 1 January and 31 July in the year after an election in which it participates. It must also demonstrate that it satisfied the conditions listed in article 24. It must convene

Party
formation

state or district assemblies in the presence of a municipal judge, a judge of first instance or of a district or a public official accredited for such purposes. The citizens present in the state or district assemblies must sign a petition and list their voter ID card numbers. Constituting a political party also requires holding a national assembly in the presence of an IFE delegate.

Candidacy regulation	Political parties take the COFIPE seriously. Political authorities do not help choose parties, platforms, or anything else 'political' with respect to the formation of new parties. The IFE applies the same rules to all parties or potential parties. The IFE decides whether an organisation has satisfied the conditions outlined in the COFIPE. The IFE can only ban parties <i>de jure</i> . Only parties that have obtained less than 2 per cent of the valid vote lose their registration. Approximately four to six parties had failed to obtain enough votes to survive as political parties in every election since 1997.
Party banning	
Group privileges	There are no population groups which are legally restricted from membership or party activities. Special groups of the population also are not restricted from inner-party appointments.

Party funding

Main income sources	The COFIPE places strict limits on the amount of private money parties can generate. Since 1996, 90 per cent of the money parties spend comes from state subsidies (Lujambo 2003: 383). Public campaign funds are awarded annually from the IFE's budget, which in turn is approved as part of the federal annual government's budget. 30 per cent of this budget is split equally among all parties and the remaining 70 per cent is awarded to parties based upon their performance in the last legislative elections (lower house results).
Government subsidies	

Political parties spend most of their money on campaigning (e.g. for media consultants, public advertisements). The largest single item of campaign spending is on television and radio advertisements. More than a few critics have noted that the high cost of electoral campaigns means that taxpayers are financing media groups, especially the two key television-based media groups, Televisa and Tele Azteca. Indeed, the huge cost of buying air time has prompted calls

for a COFIPE reform to have the IFE purchase large chunks of air time, which it can then allocate to political parties.

The COFIPE (article 49, II, b, I) limits private contributions to parties. Members' contributions cannot exceed 10 per cent of the total amount of public finance that all parties receive for operating costs (*gastos ordinarios*). Individuals or companies or organisations have limits equivalent to 0.05 per cent of all of the public financing received by all parties for 'permanent ordinary activities.' Nevertheless, individuals and organisations can spend money on parallel activities. There is no data on the extent of these activities, but state and municipal governments can allocate money from their budgets for this purpose. So can individuals, companies, and organisations.

Legal
regulation

Dependence
on special
interests

The IFE monitors the behaviour of parties by scrutinising the campaign expenditures of parties. In exchange for public campaign finance, each party is required to submit detailed reports of its income and expenditure. The IFE regularly penalises parties for failing to follow the law. The penalties are not legally contested because the IFE simply deducts the amount of the fine from its regular disbursement of funds to said party. The spectrum ranges from fines to the abolition of a party. Typically, the IFE deducts a fine from the public subsidy that a party annually receives.

Critics point out that the IFE cannot effectively sanction parties for two reasons. First, parties face powerful incentives to spend much more than campaign limits permit. They can certainly be forced to pay a fine, but the fine for breaking a campaign finance law never includes being forced to forfeit an elected office for which such limits exist. In 2000, the IFE fined both the PRI and the PAN for having violated very different campaign finance laws. The IFE handed out a fine to the PRI of US\$100 million for having funnelled US\$45 million from Pemex, the state oil monopoly, to the Pemex union leadership and then to the PRI's 2000 electoral campaign. The IFE also fined the PAN approximately US\$30 million because an organisation known as 'Friends of Fox' spent US\$30 million on behalf of Vicente Fox's ultimately successful bid to be elected president in 2000. In other words, the temptation to break the law is high because the costs are not greater than the ultimate benefit of obtaining elective office. Second, there is very little that the IFE can do about campaign spending before the official start of a federal election campaign

(usually the six months before election day, typically held in July of election year). Both the pre- and primary stages of the campaign have no spending limits. Candidates – as opposed to parties – must disclose what they spend during the primary season (although not during the pre-primary season), but are not bound by campaign finance limits.

II. Types of political parties and structure of the party system

The Mexican party system does not follow the European logic of party formation, which makes it difficult to complete the following table. There is no religious party, though important sectors of the PAN are Roman Catholic. Mixing religion with politics has been forbidden since the anti-clerical post-revolutionary regime defeated a revolt by Roman Catholic activists in 1929 known as the Cristero revolt. Rural landowners do not have their party, in part because the Mexican revolution and agrarian reform redistributed much of the land the church and large landed estates controlled. There is also no liberal tradition in modern Mexican politics, even though economic liberals have been influential in both the PRI and PAN since the 1980s. There has been a Labour Party since 1990, but existing labour unions (whose members comprise approximately 15 per cent of the economically active population) have been part of the PRI.

Occupation is neither a good predictor of party identification, nor of vote choice. Since the 1990s, younger, more educated voters living in urban voters tend to identify with the PAN or the PRD. The sociological profile of the PRI voter is a citizen that is older, less educated, and more likely to live in a rural area (approximately a quarter of the population lives in the countryside). The PAN tends to draw its supporters disproportionately from northern states while the PRD is electorally dominant in the Federal District and in southern states. The PRI tends to attract voters proportionately throughout the 32 states of Mexico (Moreno 2003, 2007; Klesner 2007). There is no ethnic or regional party.

Table 1
Parties by ideology

	Founding date	Present Situation		
		GA, GS, GJ	O	NR
Religious				X
Rural/landowner				X
Liberal				X
Conservative	PAN; 1939	X		
Labour	PT; 1990		X	
Ethnic/Regional				X
Others	PRI; 1946 (its predecessor existed since 1929)		X	
	PRD; 1989		X	

Key: GA = in government alone/without a coalition partner; GS = government/senior partner of a coalition; GJ = in government/junior partner of a coalition; O = in opposition; NR = no parliamentary representation.

So, while each party in Mexico has a broadly based constituency, each is best characterised as a catch-all party. This is a product of the fact that voters, on most issues, tend to concentrate in the centre (i.e. are normally distributed, see Moreno 2003). The highly competitive nature of elections also encourages parties to search for voters in the political centre, given that the plurality rules reward parties for diversifying their message to the electorate. Although the 2006 presidential election, which pitted the centre-right candidate, Calderón of the PAN against López Obrador of the PRD (as part of a three-party coalition which included Convergence and PT and was known as the 'Coalition for the Good of All') did polarise members of the political class during 2006, a hotly contested election did not divide voters along class or ideological lines (Bruhn/Greene 2007).

The non-competitive nature of Mexican politics during the 20th century also encouraged Mexicans to congregate into a catch-all party (Magaloni 2006). During its 70-year

domination of Mexican politics, the PRI created corporatist sectors to include influential members of the economy and society. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) began the sectoral organisation of Mexican society. Membership in the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) was based upon affiliation with the peasant, labour, military, and popular sectors. In return for receiving an *ejido* – common property bestowed on a group of peasant petitioners – landless farmers typically joined the National Confederation of Peasants (CNC). Industrial workers and urban artisans became members of the Mexican Confederation of Workers (CTM). The PRM also created a military sector out of recognition of the threat posed by large numbers of soldiers and officers who had fought during the Mexican Revolution (1910–20), during which one in ten Mexicans had perished. In 1940, the regime disbanded the military sector. Public sector employees, middle-class professionals, and anyone else not belonging to one of the aforementioned groups joined the National Confederation of Popular Sectors (CNOP). Though the revolutionary family did not have an official place for capitalists, the PRI also created peak-level associations for factory owners, merchants, and bankers. While revolutionary nationalist ideology – one that exalted the defence of national sovereignty and public control of the economy – could not admit businessmen into the fray, economic realism led the PRI to incorporate the private sector into the regime outside of the PRI and within officially recognised agencies. Corporatist leaders sat in congress and colonised executive departments and agencies.

Table 2
Presidential elections

Year	Winner/President	Party
1988	Carlos Salinas de Gortari	PRI
1994	Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León	PRI
2000	Vicente Fox Quesada	PAN
2006	Felipe Calderón Hinojosa	PAN

Source: Federal Electoral Institute (IFE)

The current multiparty system of Mexico is a product of three cleavages, one of which has receded in importance. First, an important cleavage stemmed from the struggle between the opposition and the PRI. With the election of Vicente Fox to the presidency in 2000 (and as the candidate of a coalition dominated by the PAN, the centre-right opposition party), the cleavage is no longer a key structuring principle of Mexican politics. Second, there is a 'moral' dimension to Mexican politics, which pits more conservative voters on such issues (opposition to abortion, rights for homosexuals, etc.) against more liberal voters. Conservative voters tend to vote for the PRI and the PAN.

Cleavages

The third dimension pivots around the role of the state in the economy. The PRD is the defender of Mexico's closed-economy state corporatist economic model, one that the PRI championed until the 1980s and that it began to dismantle during this decade. During the 1980s and 1990s, the PRI embraced market reform and enacted a fair number of such reforms with the support of the PAN. Since 2000, the PRI has shifted to the left on issues of political economy. The PAN is now the principle party supporting 'liberal' or structural reforms. These reforms include reforming the labour code (and thus reducing the power of public sector unions) and further opening up sectors of the economy dominated by public or private sector monopolies (petroleum and electricity remain nationalist icons and state monopolies). There are, however, no major differences among the parties regarding the use of the state to alleviate poverty, though they disagree on the way to do this. This is another way of saying that there is no liberal party in Mexico. The PAN, the most liberal of Mexican parties, is more like the German Christian Democrats than the Free Democrats.

Since 1997, Mexico has become a party system with a score of three on Taagepera's formula for calculating the effective number of parties (Taagepera 1999). The first of three key parties include the PRI, the long-time hegemonic party established in 1929 (though it did not adopt its current name until 1946) that lost its majority in the lower house of congress in the 1997 midterm elections. Since the late 1980s, as electoral competition became more intense, the PRI has tried to become a centrist, catch-all party. The second is the right-of-centre PAN (established in 1989). The third is the PRD (established in 1989). The PAN is a member of the

Relevant parties

Christian Democratic and People's Party International. The PRI and PRD are also members of the Socialist International.

There are also several smaller parties, including the Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (PVEM, established in 1993), the Labour Party (PT, established in 1990), the Convergence Party (Convergence, established in 1998), the New Alliance Party (PANAL, established in 2005), and the Social Democratic and Peasant Alternative Party (PASC, established in 2005).

Each of these parties won legislative seats in the 2006 federal elections. The PRI obtained 104 deputies (63 SMPDs + 41 PR), the PVEM got 19 lower house legislative seats (2 SMPD + 17 PR), the PAN won 206 deputies (137 SMPD + 69 PR), the PRD obtained 126 seats (90 SMPD + 36 PR), the PT obtained 16 seats (3 SMPD + 13 PR), Convergence got 16 seats (5 SMPD + 11 PR), PANAL won 9 PR deputies, and the PASC obtained 4 PR seats. In the Senate, The PRI obtained 33 seats (27 majority seats + 6 PR), the PVEM got 6 seats (2 majority + 4 PR), the PAN won 52 seats (41 majority + 11 PR), the PRD obtained 29 seats (23 majority + 6 PR), the PT obtained 2 PR seats, Convergence got 5 seats (3 majority + 2 PR), and PANAL got 1 PR seats.

Changes in the past five years	Parties are crucial to the political process in Mexico. First, they retain a virtual monopoly on nominations to elected offices. Only in a 2006 ruling did the Supreme Court open up the possibility of having independent candidates for elected offices; until, however, the federal congress reforms the COFIPE to permit such candidacies, parties remain the only suppliers for a limited number of highly paid elected posts. So, only members of parties can deliberate on the affairs of state. Second, the congress remains the central lawmaking branch of government. If only parties can get their members elected to congress, then parties will play the central role in the political process.
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III. Parties and parliamentary representation

Free mandate	Legally speaking, a federal deputy or senator can vote the way he or she chooses. He or she can even switch parties or become independents. Mexican parties, however, tend to be highly disciplined. The Rice index of party discipline is in the excess of 90 per cent for all parties (Nacif 2002). Discipline is high because legislators from the same party typically agree on many issues and because displeasing the
Group discipline	

party leadership does have negative consequences for a politician's career prospects. Moreover, ambitious politicians still need the endorsement of a party to become a candidate for another elected office, even though a 1933 amendment to the constitution bans the consecutive re-election of legislators and mayors. If they misbehave, the national or state party leadership is unlikely to endorse their candidacy for another legislative slot. Finally, the national electoral committee (CEN) of each party controls public campaign funds (supplied by the IFE) and thus can punish maverick deputies for acts of disloyalty.

Table 3

Electoral results of the Chamber of Deputies, in per cent

Party	2000	2003	2006
PRI	41.2	44.8	20.8
PAN	41.4	29.8	41.2
PRD	10.6	19.4	25.2
PVEM	3.2	3.4	3.8
PT	1.6	1.2	3.2
CD-PPN (Convergencia)	0.4	1	3.2
PSN	0.6		
PAS	0.4		
PANAL			1.8
PASC			0.8
Independientes	0.6	0.4	
Total	100	100	100

Source: Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and 6th Presidential Report of President Vicente Fox.

IV. Internal organisation and decision-making

Formal party membership lists do not exist in Mexico. Mexican parties tend to be secretive about such figures (opacity is a longstanding Mexican tradition, one that 70 years of PRI governments reinforced. The willingness to be open about vital and non-vital information is increasing, but

Party
membership

some parties are more open than others). Moreover, citizens are reluctant to join parties because most do not want to pay membership fees (and 2006 surveys indicate that the median household income is approximately 3,200 pesos a month or roughly US\$300 monthly). There is no tradition for doing so, and parties get the lion's share of their funding from the state.

Internal
organisation

Finding information on the internal organisation of parties is never easy, especially for smaller parties. I restrict my discussion to the three largest parties in Mexico that collectively accounted for more than 87 per cent of the lower seats in the July 2006 federal elections (and my discussion draws heavily on Jiménez Badillo/Vivero/Báez 2003).

Allocating a limited number of party positions and candidates for elected offices (with essentially public campaign funds, since there are severe limits on private contributions to parties) is the central problem that parties face. Parties have organisations at the federal, state, and even local levels (especially in more populated and wealthier municipalities). These are the basic administrative jurisdictions in effect in Mexico.

Each party has a number of deliberative and executive bodies. The national congress is the PRD's top deliberative body. The PRI's key deliberative body is the general assembly of delegates, which consists of representatives of the party's sectoral organisations and its territorial organisations. The national assembly is the PAN's deliberative body, which consists of delegates from the 32 state directive committees.

Parties also have sub-organisations. The PRI's has the most because it always sought to represent all of society functionally as well as territorially. It was quite open about its corporatist character; it created peasant, labour, and 'popular' (white collar workers) sections or sanctioned functionally specific organisations. PRI deputies and senators still belong to one of these sectors and these sectors play an important role in policymaking within their jurisdiction. The PRD has replicated some of these sectors and has very strong ideological currents that often overlap with these sectors. The PAN is the least sectorally based of the principal parties of Mexico.

The deliberative bodies mentioned above and the CENs of each party develop election platforms or programmes. Obtaining the registration of a party requires the development of such programmes. The CEN of each party has the final say on the production of a party platform or programme. Regional and sub-organisations can put motions at the national level. CENs, along with the parties as a whole, use television and radio to communicate with the electorate at large. Parties use telephones (especially cell phones) and the internet to communicate with party activists.

Programmatic
work and
communication

Parties select legislative candidates behind closed doors. Parties select candidates less for their ability to represent voters, than for their ability to cement alliances with key factions. Candidate choices reflect the preferences of several principles. First, the party president wants to maximise the number of legislators sympathetic to his thinking and, in the case of the federal president, willing to support his congressional bills. Second, governors have emerged as principal players since the late 1990s. They control state-level spending and are the linchpins of regional patronage groups that use federal elected offices as rewards for loyalty. Third, interest groups, especially within the PRI, also help place members in congress to protect the interests of their members.

Power
structures

For the 2006 federal elections, the PRI and the PAN held conventions to select their presidential candidates. The PRI's President Roberto Madrazo's domination of the party deterred or prevented a serious challenge to his longstanding interest in becoming its presidential candidate (he did eventually face an insignificant challenge from a member of the party who managed to get Madrazo to a public debate). The PAN saw a contest between Santiago Creel, a former secretary of the interior (*Gobernación*), and Calderón, a former president of the party. Despite having the support of President Vicente Fox, Creel lost the primary to Calderón. López Obrador's longstanding popularity and domination of the PRD made a contest superfluous.

The CENs have a lot of influence because they control public campaign monies. Nevertheless, governors are emerging as key brokers within parties because they also control governmental budgets (even though most state-level funds come from the federal government). Governors therefore play an important role in candidate nomination, both for

	federal, state, and municipal-level offices. The deliberative bodies mentioned above and the CENs of each party develop election platforms or programmes.
Relationship with civil society	Some parties have relations with social organisations. The PRI was built upon corporatist representation that included labour, peasant, and popular (white collar workers) organisations. The PRD has special relations with some labor and peasant organisations. It also works with social protest organisations. The PAN has no special relations with collective social organisations.

V. General assessment

Major obstacles	Voter turnout averages around 60 per cent of the eligible electorate (18+) in Mexico, placing it approximately in the middle range of rates of political participation. Mexican politics also suffers from a fair amount of cynicism. Using the World Values Survey results of 46 countries between 1995 and 2000, Moreno (2003: 230) finds that Mexicans ranked 41st with respect to citizen agreement that democracy, despite its problems, is the best form of government (65 per cent agreed with this statement). So, while most Mexicans support democratic government, they do so in substantially lower numbers. No doubt that a fair amount of both is a product of the PRI's 70-year autocracy, one that taught citizens that their preferences were not important for policymakers.
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The institutional architecture of Mexican politics also undermines accountability and therefore dampens political participation. Mexico is only one of two countries (Costa Rica is the other) that bans elected officials from seeking consecutive re-election. Accountability would no doubt increase if the constitution would be amended to permit consecutive re-election. The centralisation of power within parties also reduces the responsiveness of political parties. While strong parties can be useful for democracy, the absence of consecutive re-election and the centralisation of power within parties undermine the ability of citizens and elected officials to challenge the national party leadership. Weakening the power of CENs in one of several ways can only increase their responsiveness to citizen demands.

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