Mexican political caricature: the crises of the early 1900s and 1990s

Abigail Garces
Florida International University

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

MEXICAN POLITICAL CARICATURE:
THE CRISES OF THE EARLY 1900S AND 1990S

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

by

Abigail Garces

2001
To: Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences  

This thesis, written by Abigail Garces, and entitled Mexican Political Caricature: The Crises of the Early 1900s and 1990s, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Eduardo Gamarra  

Theodore Young  

Victor Uribé, Major Professor  

Date of Defense: June 22, 2001  

The thesis of Abigail Garces is approved.

Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences  

Dean Douglas Wartzok  
Graduate School  

Florida International University, 2001
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and to my husband, Alejandro. Without their constant support, none of this would have been possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the members of my committee for their support and patience. Dr. Theodore Young gave me valuable advice regarding the importance of rescuing visual material and the correct usage of the English language. Dr. Eduardo Gamarra has supported me every step of the way during my completion of the program. His expertise and enthusiasm for the Latin American culture were fundamental in this research project. My sincere gratitude goes to him. I also want to thank my major professor, Dr. Victor Uribe, who believed in this project from the beginning. His guidance and instruction in historical methodology and Mexican history were essential to complete this thesis, as well as his patience in directing this project long distance.

Finally, I wish to thank the Graduate Students Association and the Latin American and Caribbean Center, which provided financial support to the research of this project.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

MEXICAN POLITICAL CARICATURE:
THE CRISES OF THE EARLY 1900S AND 1990S

by

Abigail Garces

Florida International University, 2001

Miami, Florida

Professor Victor Uribe, Major Professor

The purpose of this study was to compare the political, economic and social problematic of Mexico in the early 1900s and the 1990s, using political caricatures as primary sources of information.

To fully understand the Porfiriato regime during the early 1900s, images from the Mexican newspapers El Diablito Rojo, El Hijo del Ahuizote and El Paladin were selected and analyzed, while Carlos Salinas’ government of the early 1990s was studied through the caricatures found in La Jornada.

The political caricatures demonstrated that similar conflicts existed during the early 1900s and the 1990s, such as the abuse of an authoritarian government, corrupt elections, an evident polarization between a small elite and the masses, the exploitation of the agricultural sectors, and a strive for the modernization of the country.
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I. PREFACE

Mexico’s presidential elections for the year 2000 established a significant moment in the history of the nation. On Sunday, July 2, more than 37 million Mexican citizens participated in the electoral process by voting for the presidential candidate of their choice.¹ Later that night, the first announcements broadcasted by the Instituto Federal Electoral suggested an unprecedented outcome in the elections. After 71 years of government rule by the official party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the electoral institute publicly declared that the candidate of an opposition party had taken the lead towards the presidential seat.

The news signaled the possibility of a substantial change in the country’s political system. A change of government that had been longed for by many people who had become disenchanted with the official party that had remained in power for seven decades by manipulating the elections to their convenience.

That same night, without waiting for the final countdown, President Ernesto Zedillo surprisingly acknowledged the triumph of Vicente Fox, candidate of the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), who was already winning the race by a considerable margin.² The PRI had been defeated.

A number of factors contributed to the downfall of the ruling party. The strengthening of the opposition parties, as well as the growing inconformity of the people

¹ According to the data provided by the Instituto Federal Electoral, 63.97 percent of the registered voters participated in these elections. “Sistema de Consulta de la Estadística de las Elecciones Federales del 2000.” Instituto Federal Electoral. (http://www.ife.org.mx.) (January 8, 2001).

² Of the total number of votes, 42.52 percent favored the candidate of the Partido de Acción Nacional, 36.11 percent favored the Partido de la Revolución Institucional, and 16.64 percent favored the candidate of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática. Ibid.
towards an inefficient and corrupt government, encouraged the Mexican citizens to favor a different party, one which promised change.

The administration of out-going President Ernesto Zedillo had paved the road towards the beginning of real democratic elections in the country. His government recognized the victory of Vicente Fox. However, the PAN’s triumph was also a victory of the people who had voted for a radical change in the country’s administration.

Since a considerable portion of this research project relates to the political situation of contemporary Mexico, it is necessary to mention this event of utmost importance. It highlights not only the changes in government, but the involvement of the Mexican people in the future of their country and their awareness of the problems affecting the nation.

This project also intends to study the economic, social and political problems that have constantly affected Mexico, and how Mexicans perceive these conflicts. It will focus particularly in two different time periods, the early 1900s and the early 1990s. This research project will hopefully help to understand the parallel problematic of both periods in Mexican history, which ended in crisis. One of these ended in a violent revolution, the other is now being solved through peaceful means beginning with the recent aperture to democratic elections.
II. INTRODUCTION

Visual images have often been relegated to a secondary role in historical research. They have been used to illustrate written material while disregarding their significance as an independent source of information. Although there have been continuous efforts by art historians, archaeologists, and sociologists to establish the importance of visual material, their value as documents has yet to be pursued further.  

As a contribution to cultural and visual history, political caricatures will be employed as primary sources in the development of this thesis. In conjunction with written material, caricatures will help to compare the political, economic and social problematic of two different periods in the history of Mexico: the 1900s and the 1990s.

This project intends to study some of the political, social and economic factors that affected the country in the 1990s which have many parallels to the situation lived 90 years before, during the dictatorship of General Porfirio Díaz that ended with a violent revolution. Although each period mentioned beforehand ended in completely different circumstances, both witnessed growing tensions between the different sectors of the Mexican society.

The Díaz dictatorship was characterized by the slogans “order and progress,” as well as a strong belief in positivism. Porfirio Díaz, in fact, implemented heavy-handed rule and strived towards the progress of the country by promoting its infrastructure,

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3 David Perlmutter offers an example in the article “Visual Historical Methods. Problems, Prospects, Applications,” printed in Historical Methods, Fall 1994, vol.27, num.4, where the author not only discusses the challenges of using visual material in the reconstruction of history, but also applies the theorems to his own work. Perlmutter uses a visual analysis of the photographs of the Waffen SS to discuss the significance of the images for the Third Reich during WWII. Another work that can be cited is Patrick Frank’s Posada’s Broadsheets. Mexican Popular Imagery, 1890-1910 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), in which the author narrates some of the conflicts affecting Mexican society which were also portrayed in the broadsheets printed by José Guadalupe Posada during the ‘Porfiriato’.
especially in transportation, which was necessary to improve the communication system and the control of the nation’s territory. These measures would not only ensure peace in the interior but would also spur the economic progress of the country, which was further enhanced by foreign investments.

However, the masses did not receive the benefits of Díaz’s progress; on the contrary, they seemed to be excluded from his modernizing plan. Their extreme conditions of illiteracy, poverty and subjugation to the wealthy landowners would become the focus of protest for Díaz’s opponents. The opposition not only managed to gather the support of the masses, but eventually pressured Díaz out of power. Unfortunately, the clash between political groups plunged the country into a civil war that devastated the country for nearly a decade.

The tensions of the early 1990s would also launch the country into a new crisis. By the end of the 1980s, the inefficiency of the Mexican political system had begun to create new tensions within the different sectors as well as the political groups in Mexican society. The crisis would also affect the core of the PRI with the desertion of a number of its members and their consequent organization into a new party, Partido de la Revolución Democrática. The government, which claimed to be the heir of the Mexican revolution, had failed to resolve many of the problems the people had fought for eight decades before.

The presidential elections of 1988, giving the victory to Carlos Salinas de Gortari, offered one of the least credible electoral outcomes, which the people tolerated, like many other irregularities, but not without great skepticism. Salinas immediately used the power bestowed upon him to control the opposition and to initiate a series of economic
and political changes that caused many controversies. While the world praised Salinas for his innovative policies geared towards implementing a neo-liberal economy, the tensions within the country began to crack the political system.

Alas, the “modernization” of the country which President Salinas de Gortari proclaimed during the negotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement, to be put into effect in 1994, was challenged by a violent uprising in the southern state of Chiapas. The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional would unveil not only the poor conditions lived by the Indigenous groups of the region, but the conditions of the agricultural sectors in general around the country. In addition, the uprising would establish that the corruption and inefficiency of the political system had become a reality difficult to ignore by the Mexican population.

This project intends to demonstrate how both the governments of the early 1900s and the 1990s were characterized by similar problems such as the abuse of an authoritarian government that controlled all levels of politics, corrupt elections, an evident polarization between a small elite and the masses, and failure to resolve the needs of the agricultural sectors. In both periods, the established government is challenged by political groups and social organizations, which find the progress and modernization of the country to be promoted by the higher spheres of society for the benefit of a small group of people and not the majority.

In order to make a comparative study of both periods, and to find the similarities and differences in the political, economic and social context of each period, I plan to use political caricatures published in anti-regime Mexican newspapers. Caricatures constitute an invaluable source additional to written material that can help in the reconstruction of
history as well as give insight to the “non-official” story, the one lived and perceived by the people.

I originally intended to analyze the symbolism and content of the caricatures printed in both liberal, anti-regime newspapers and conservative, pro-government journals of the early 1900s and 1990s. However, I found that it was the images printed in the anti-regime newspapers of the early 1900s that offered comments on the political events of each period, while the pro-government journals, such as *El Imparcial*, rarely used them or used them in a limited way—namely, to illustrate the news (see Figure 1), and to portray the stereotypes of Mexican society (Figure 2).

Thus, I decided to focus on the political caricatures of the anti-regime journals in the development of this project. In the chapter that refers to the early 1900s, I will use the printed material from *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, *El Diablito Rojo*, and *El Paladin*. It must also be mentioned that the anonymity of most of the illustrations found in this journals makes it hard to attribute them to a particular author, except for Posada’s work that has been identified and documented in other studies.

These are only three of the many publications known as the “satiric” or “penny” press of Mexico which became popular in the early XX century and were influenced by the worker newspapers that circulated in the second half of the eighteen hundreds. By the turn of the century, the satiric press was nearly as much read as the independent

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4 By liberal or anti-regime newspapers, I refer to the journals that sought political aperture to democracy and championed the rights of the people. In contrast, the conservative newspapers supported the elite group in power.

5 This caricature makes direct reference to the drinking habits of the lower classes and the popularity of the ‘cantinas’.
Figure 1  “EL General Francisco Ramírez” in El Imparcial, May 6, 1900.

In this illustration General Francisco Ramírez is portrayed with his rural troops.
Figure 2  "Perdida de la voluntad" in *El Imparcial*, February 8, 1903.

This drawing makes reference to the drinking habits of the lower classes.
newspapers; *El Diablito Rojo* reached 25,000 prints, while *El Hijo del Ahuizote* published around 24,000.⁶

The satiric press used caricatures to illustrate rhymes and sayings, popular among the non-illustrated masses, but it also condemned all kinds of injustices committed by the industries, the reduction of salaries, imposition of sanctions on the workers, the “tiendas de raya,” among other ailments of the working class. Another favorite theme of the satiric press’s illustrations was the abuses committed by government authorities. The intentions of these caricatures were not only to denounce publicly, but also pressure the government to resolve the conflicts.⁷

*El Hijo del Ahuizote*, “*semanario feroz, aunque de nobles instintos, político y sin subvencion, como su padre, y como su padre matrero y calaveron (No tiene madre)*” appeared the 23 of August, 1885. The journal had three different editions, while the title suffered a few variations, including “*Semanario de oposición e intransigente con todo lo malo: México para los mexicanos.*” The first editor, Florencio Castro, and the subsequent editors criticized the government of Porfirio Díaz.⁸

Like many other journals in opposition to the dictator’s regime, the editors, journalists and collaborators of *El Hijo del Ahuizote* were often persecuted by the President and incarcerated. However, while many independent newspapers were forced to close their press, *El Hijo del Ahuizote* managed to survive for more than a decade during the Porfiriato.

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⁶ Around this same period, the conservative newspaper *Diario Oficial* printed between 40,000 and 100,000 prints. See in José Guadalupe Posada. *Ilustrador de la vida mexicana*, (México: Fondo Editorial de la Plástica Mexicana, 1992), 92.
⁷ Ibid.,100.
⁸ Other editors of the journal were José L. Méndez, Néstor González, Juan S. Díaz, Juan Sarabia, and Daniel Cabrera.
Well known caricaturists such as Santiago Hernández, José María Villasana and Daniel Cabrera collaborated in this journal with their illustrations which, in any case, often appeared without signature. These caricatures usually satirized and commented on Díaz’s administration and the important political events.

According to one source, in 1902 the newspaper was acquired by the Flores Magón brothers, along with Evaristo Guillén and Federico Pérez Hernández. However, due to their direct criticisms to the government, the journal was closed and its collaborators were incarcerated.9

*El Diablito Rojo, “semanario breve de combate: o aman a Dios o se los lleva el Diablo”* published between 1906 and 1910, also satirized the government of Díaz and the abuse of his followers towards the working class. The journal was edited by Ramón Alvarez Soto, and the caricaturist was none other than José Guadalupe Posada. He would also collaborate with a number of journals, among them, *El Paladin, “Periódico liberal e independiente. Del pueblo y para el pueblo”* which was printed for the first time in 1900. Other opposition newspapers were *Argos, El Amigo de los Pueblos, El Popular, and Gil Blas.*

Posada also collaborated with the shop of Antonio Vanegas Arroyo, where he printed many of his most popular broadsheets, which were widely distributed on the streets. The broadsheets informed the people of the latest news concerning accidents, murders and other sensationalistic events. According to Patrick Frank, these sheets

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conformed “a people’s history of life in Mexico City during the years bracketing the turn of the twentieth century.”  

Although the artist was forgotten for many years, the muralist painters rediscovered his name and championed Posada as the precursor of modern Mexican art. The popular Mexican engraver not only displayed a deep concern for the social problems affecting his country, but also used the subject of death to create a statement.

In the chapter that refers to the problematic of Mexico in the 1990s, I will use the caricatures published in the newspaper *La Jornada*. It was the caricatures printed in this newspaper that I found by far, the most interesting and useful to this project, compared to the illustrations published in other journals.

It must also be mentioned that most newspapers are very careful when directing their criticisms on the President. This practice becomes quite evident during Salinas’s government, since hardly any caricatures will make direct references to his persona. However, once he steps out of power and due to the escalating evidence linking his brother to criminal acts, the critique becomes much more direct.

*La Jornada* prints its first edition in September 1984 under the direction of Carlos Payán. The newspaper had sprung from the desire of a group of intellectuals to publish a journal that would focus on making public the news and events that affected the Mexican

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12 Other newspapers that were consulted were *El Día* and *Excélsior*.
13 Carlos Salinas de Gortari did not tolerate personal criticisms. On this matter, Vicente Leñero narrates the details of a meeting and the conversation he held with Salinas in relation to the critiques published in the magazine *Proceso*, edited by Julio Scherer. Even though the meeting took place before Salinas became President, the article was published two years after he had stepped out of power. “El día en que Salinas pensó en ‘trascender’ a Julio Scherer,” *La Jornada* (México: July 7, 1996).
society in the entire nation. Since then, *La Jornada* has consistently demonstrated its commitment towards the “workers, *campesinos*, intellectuals, indigenous people, academics, students, women, artists, the economically marginalized.”\(^{14}\) Thus, the newspaper has acquired a reputation for favoring the marginalized in opposition to the government. Among the many caricaturists that have collaborated in *La Jornada*, we find, Rafael Barajas Durán *El Fisgón*, Manuel Ahumada, Ulises Culebro, Gonzalo Rocha and Eduardo del Río García *Rius*.

Besides the political caricatures published in the journals mentioned above, I consulted many written sources during the development of this project, along with other material concerning the role of caricature in Mexican journalism, which I will discuss later.\(^{15}\)

One of the main sources for my research, *La política del desarrollo mexicano*, written by Roger Hansen, discusses the tendencies that affected the Mexican economic development in the years prior to the Porfiriato until 1970, when the book is published. In order to do this, he studies the economic, political and social problematic which permeates the development of Mexican society in the XX century. He also focuses on the authoritarian characteristics of the government and the way in which it has been able to respond to the social demands of the society. He not only discusses the role of the “revolutionary coalition”, which took control of the government, in using the official

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15 The material was gathered from different resources such as the special collections from the Biblioteca Daniel Cosío Villegas at El Colegio de México, the Archivo General de la Nación, the Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero at the Universidad Iberoamericana, and the Biblioteca Nacional de México at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
party to legitimize their interests, but he foresees the need to open the country to
democratic elections.\textsuperscript{16}

His study is important to understand the different mechanisms the PRI has
implemented to control the country for seven decades. However, by the 1980s, this
revolutionary family or coalition was evidently losing control of the Mexican political
scene. There was an obvious conflict of interests within the PRI by the new breed of
technocrats seeking power, but there was also a strengthening of the opposition parties as
well.

Another key source, the recent study by Lorenzo Meyer \textit{Liberalismo autoritario,}
las contradicicones del sistema politico mexicano, analyzes the contradictions of the
Mexican political system. He not only tries to analyze the historic permanence of an
authoritarian government in Mexico, but also reviews the new trends of the nineties
towards democratization. In his opinion, although it might render benefits in the future,
the change of the Mexican economy from a protected and statist economy to a liberal
market economy, was imposed regardless of the high social costs that only stressed the
contradictions between authoritarianism and a modern democracy.

Meyer defines many of the terms now often used such as “liberalism” and
“democracy” in order to show the incongruity of the implementation of a “liberal
economy” by an authoritarian government that has failed to provide the basic needs for
its people, the protection of their rights and the enforcement of the law.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Roger Hansen, \textit{La politica del desarrollo mexicano} (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1993), XIII.
\textsuperscript{17} Lorenzo Meyer. \textit{Liberalismo autoritario. Las contradicicones del sistema politico mexicano.} (México:
OCEANO, 1995), 15.
His analysis helps the contemporary reader to find, not only the inefficiency of Salinas’s impositions, but also the reasons why the public in general felt skeptical about implementing reforms that were based on a modern, democratic political scenario, that was fairly distant from the reality of Mexico. Salinas’s policies sounded both impressive and innovative, but there was the constant question as to how he was going to resolve the internal problems and the poverty faced by the masses.

An additional source that was key to my research was Enrique Krauze’s, *La presidencia imperial*, which narrates the political history of Mexico by using each president as a pivotal axis in the country’s history. The author strongly believes that each president in turn imbued the administration with his own personality.

Krauze studies the history of Mexico’s political system, which was born with the revolution, and its development until the presidency of Salinas de Gortari. In the final chapter, the author looks towards a democratic future for Mexico, one that will also diminish the power of the presidents, by limiting their constitutional functions.

Following Krauze’s analysis based on each presidential term, I intend to study the two periods I have chosen by stressing the characteristics of each government. This paper also intends to portray the non-official history of each period.

The first chapter of this thesis reviews the political, economic and social situation of Mexico during the Porfiriato. The chapter is accompanied by caricatures found in the satiric press that portray the popular perspective about the role of the authorities and the injustices committed towards the people.

The second chapter follows the same scheme as the first in analyzing the government and the situation of the country in the early 1990s. It is further enriched with
caricatures from *La Jornada*, a popular liberal newspaper that often criticized the government policies implemented by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

The third and final chapter is a comparison of the situations portrayed in the first two, in order to find the similarities and differences between both periods. The social, economic, and political scenarios are reviewed in order to find the recurring problems affecting the country which remained unresolved through the XX century.

**THE ROLE OF CARICATURE IN SOCIAL COMMENTARY AND THE MEXICAN POLITICAL SCENE**

Since I will support and extend my thesis with the caricatures that I selected from anti-regime newspapers of each period, which satirize the politics of both presidents in office, it is necessary to pause briefly over this artistic genre. The importance of caricatures as visual documents cannot be over stressed.

It is difficult to indicate the exact date in which caricatures appear as a form of pictorial expression for the very first time. However, many art historians believe the art of caricature, as social satire, emerges during the Renaissance, when “high” or refined art is separated from the popular and folkloric expressions. Thus, caricature, from the Italian word “caricare,” “to exaggerate, change, or overload,” surfaced as an opposite form of high art and was practiced by many of the well-known artists of the time.\(^{18}\)

It is believed that the first caricature in Mexico appeared in 1826 printed in *El Iris*, a liberal journal published by Italian artist Claudio Linati. However, it wasn’t until

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\(^{18}\) This definition of caricature is given in the preface of Paul P. Somers, Jr., in *Editorial Cartooning and Caricature. A Reference Guide* (Westport, 1998).
the second half of the century that political caricatures became a constant in Mexican journalism. *El Sombrero, La Orquesta, El Ahuizote* and *El Palo de Ciego* are some of the newspapers that would publish the work of many Mexican caricaturists during this period. Evidently, these artists demonstrated the influence of the French political satires created by recognized caricaturists such as Daumier, Monnier, Grandville and Gavarni.19

According to art historian Lorenz Eitner, it is around this same period that the first serious study of caricature as a popular art form, or an art for the people, was begun by ethnologist Champfleury, who in 1869 published his *Histoire de l'imagerie populaire*. However, Eitner believes political caricature only became popular in the nineteenth hundreds, as scientific awareness spread among the French public, increasing their "interest in the realities of modern life, including its ragged edges of beggary and crime, … by no means confined to a small, socially aware avant-garde, but basically expressed the unromantic positivism of the middle classes."20

In the case of Mexico, the culmination for political caricatures will come by the turn of the century, as opposition towards Díaz’s regime became stronger. The power of the press was such that a large number of newspapers, which constantly attacked the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz through written and graphic material, were forced to close by the president, who had remained in power for more than three decades. These journals criticized many of President Díaz’s cabinet members, the corruption of both government

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19 Esther Acevedo offers an example of the French influence in Mexican caricature in *La caricatura política en México en el siglo XIX* (México: CONACULTA, 2000), 22.
and church officials, the imminent poverty of the peasants, and the mistrust of the people towards modernization, among other social and political themes.

Similar concerns to those of the satiric press in the 1900s can be found as well in the political caricatures that appeared in the liberal newspaper *La Jornada* during the 1990s. Their political caricatures reflect the growing inconformity with government policies and the growing opposition towards the Mexican official political party that ruled the country for over seven decades.

In order to understand how caricatures during these two periods, the early 1900s and 1990s, reflect the people’s perceptions of economic, political and social problems in their country, it is necessary to consider the importance of caricature, not only as an art form, but as an instrument of journalism and a source of historical information as well.

Salvador Pruneda’s *La caricatura como arma política*, offers an invaluable study in which he traces the development of political caricature and its relationship to the political events of Mexico during the XIX century. He successfully complements the history of the period with a selection of caricatures from diverse journals that satirize the historical events he narrates.

Pruneda defines caricature as an art form that seeks to portray “people, ideas or situations with the purpose of ridiculing or making an emphasis on the grotesque, ironic or humorous” of that particular person or scene. Nevertheless, he also believes in the power of caricature to interpret popular opinion and portray society’s disconformities.

In *La caricatura política*, Manuel Gonzalez Ramirez takes a more interesting approach, when he analyzes the role of caricature as a political weapon during the years

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preceding the Mexican Revolution. Many writers believe political caricatures were able to activate as well as give expression to the inconformity of the poor while also denouncing the harsh conditions of the masses. According to González Ramírez, an image is worth as much as an idea, whereby, caricatures were intended precisely for the consumption of the illiterate masses. González Ramírez studies the role caricatures played during the Mexican Revolution, and how they provoked the sentiments of the people to react against the injustice committed by the actions of the government. The caricaturists not only used their drawing abilities to attack the on-going government, but also used it to portray the hunger and misery of the masses.22

Justino Fernández, a predominant figure in the study of Mexican art history, also highlights the role of caricature in society. He believed the significance of caricature was relevant as long as it maintained a relationship with a real object or event. Without this relationship, the image loses its meaning and becomes a simple drawing.23 Caricature’s importance relies thereof in its relationship to reality. The intention of political caricature is to refer to events and public figures, which the masses will be able to recognize.

Thus, Fernández believed caricatures were valuable documental material based on specific dates and happenings. “Precisamente por no poder desatarse de una individualidad absoluta- tan absoluta que ‘tiene una fecha y no vuelve a repetirse jamás’-, toda caricatura tendrá que rebajarse un día u otro, a documento biográfico” (Precisely, by not being able to release itself from an absolute individuality-so absolute that it has a date

and will never repeat itself-, every caricature will one day be reduced to a biographical
document).\textsuperscript{24}

This is confirmed in this project, for several of the caricatures regarding political
life and social realities in the Mexico of the early 1900s and the 1990s do provide
valuable biographical/factual information (i.e. see Figure 6 regarding Limantour’s
finances and Figure 9 which refers to the murder of opposition members in early 1990).

Not only do caricatures contain biographical significance, they also fulfill vital
functions in journalism. The Cuban writer Evora Tamayo believes political caricatures
express graphically the editorial’s opinion regarding current events, and considers
“editorial caricatures” an essential element for journalism. Caricatures have the potential
to express through forms and representations a vast number of ideas. She also adds that
these caricatures can “extend the information, interpret, and simplify it, at the same time;
make visible aspects of the events that would otherwise go unnoticed; reveal the essence
of the facts, … [a caricature] discovers and analyzes through a wide range of expressive
resources, the internal springs behind the news, as well as the hidden strings of the
events, men and women that move them and the real interests that they represent.”\textsuperscript{25}

Although the importance of caricature appears evident, there is still the problem
as to what methodological approach should be used when analyzing the content of
caricatures. In “Visual Historical Methods, Problems, Prospects, Applications,” David D.
Perlmutter not only explains the difficult task of analyzing images but also suggests some
of the questions that should be taken into consideration in the study of visual material.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{25} Tamayo, \textit{La caricatura editorial}, 5-6.
Besides the usual questions of how, who, what and why, Perlmutter discusses the methods needed to analyze the content of an image. Although it is first necessary to identify the content of the object, the researcher must also question its function in society, as well as its expressional and moral meanings.26

Thus, the first step begins with the identification of objects in the image and how they interact to tell a particular story. The second characteristic to keep in mind, in the case of caricature, is its function or purpose. One must take into consideration the kind of journal in which the image was printed as well as the people it was directed to. Another important aspect to consider is the emotions represented by the characters in the image as well as the feelings that will be provoked in the viewer. However, there is another aspect besides the emotional that should be taken into account. Political caricatures, in particular, are produced with specific ideas in mind that comment on a specific event or figure, thus giving the image a moral meaning which “expresses the persuasive goal...intended by its author, patron, and/or displayer”.27

Furthermore, one must also consider the challenge of using the interpretations of these caricatures in a historical dialogue. This problem is one of the issues discussed by Eric Van Young in “The New Cultural History Comes to Old Mexico,” in which he attempts to assess the value of cultural history. If we begin with the premises set forth by the author, in which all aspects of social life are interconnected, such as institutions or

26 David Perlmutter defines and gives examples of these categories in “Visual Historical Methods, Problems, Prospects, Applications” in Historical Methods, Fall 1994, Volume 27, Number 4, 168.
social relationships, we can also reach the meaning these structures have on the individuals of a particular society.\textsuperscript{28}

Taking these proposals into consideration, caricatures can be utilized to discern social, political and economic patterns in Mexican society. Although many of the caricatures used in this project focus on a particular problem, they help us understand how different social groups interact. For example many of these images portray an evident abuse of power by authorities and elite groups over the masses. We can also assume that the masses who view the prints will identify themselves with the oppressed characters of these images. Thus, caricatures have the power, not only to create awareness, but also augment the discontent towards specific social conflicts.

This project intends to analyze the content of each selected image, as well as its meaning, intention and the emotions it could possibly cause in the viewer during each period. By doing this, I hope to help the contemporary readers consider the enormous value of these images in the context in which they were produced and help them understand how a large number of Mexican people viewed the economic, political and social problematic that affected their country during the early 1900s and 1990s.

\textsuperscript{28} Eric Van Young, “The New Cultural History Comes to Old Mexico” in \textit{Hispanic American Historical Review}, Volume 79, Number 2.
III. THE DICTATORSHIP OF DÍAZ IN THE EARLY 1900s

The present chapter seeks to portray some of the prominent economic, social and political characteristics in the government of Porfirio Díaz, who served as president of the Mexican Republic during 1876-1880 and from 1884 to 1911. His regime would be characterized by three paradigms, “peace,” “order” and “progress”.

It is during his first two terms in the office that President Díaz would manage to bring order throughout the Mexican territory, creating a stability that had been non-existent for many decades. He also promoted the industrial development of the country and an increase in the production of raw materials necessary to enter the world market and attract foreign capital. However, his lack of democratic principles and the increasing poverty of the majority of the people would culminate in the outbreak of a bloody revolution in 1910.

It is important to comprehend how Díaz’s career developed and the conditions under which he became President of Mexico. By 1876, General Porfirio Díaz had forged a long career as a military leader. He not only opposed Santa Anna’s 1850s dictatorship, but also fought for President Juárez and the liberal cause, and opposed the invasion of the French. He attained many important victories and became a distinguished military figure. His liberal political ideals along with his military experience and his indigenous roots, would make him a favorite political figure among the Mexican people, specially the masses.

Díaz was born and raised in the state of Oaxaca, which contains a significant mass of indigenous population. Porfirio himself had a mother of Mixteca origins. During his youth, he attended the Instituto de Ciencias de Oaxaca where he studied law. At the
Instituto he became acquainted with Benito Juárez, who would later become the first President of indigenous descent in Mexico and would be especially remembered for enforcing the Leyes de Reforma, separating the Church from the State.

General Porfirio Díaz would run several times for the presidency of the country. However, the ultimate government position would remain occupied by Benito Juárez for several terms. Proclaiming the need for “sufragio efectivo, no re-elección” (“valid suffrage, non-reelection”), Díaz decides to raise an army in the state of Oaxaca against the federal government of Juárez, which failed. By 1876, he would once again launch an attack in the revolution of Tuxtepec, which finally led him to the presidential chair.29

Although he had fought many times in favor of political liberties, suffrage and individual guarantees, once in power, Díaz neglected these necessities. The fortification of the nation’s infrastructure and economic development became Díaz’s main priorities in order to secure unity in the large Mexican territory. Progress became one of the principal paradigms of Díaz’s administration.

However, in order to bring progress to the country, Díaz believed order and peace were to be secured first. “Peace was indispensable, even if it was an enforced peace, for the nation to have time to reflect and work.”30 However, how would General Díaz promote order in the country after nearly fifty years of internal conflicts, in which more than fifty governments tried to rule the nation, but failed to create long-lasting stability? According to Roger Hansen, the previous governments had failed to “provide either the

necessary peace to attract foreign investment or create internal improvements that could stimulate the reserves and the national investment.\textsuperscript{31}

It is during his first years at the head of the Mexican government that Díaz began to take drastic measures to ensure peace in the country. He displayed a strict intolerance towards bandits and criminals. With what was known as the “Ley Fuga,” the government got rid of criminals, as well as enemies of the government. They would be arrested by the police and shot during their alleged attempt to escape. He also removed the rebellious Yaqui Indians of the North who were often sold and deported to the haciendas in the southern territories of Oaxaca and Yucatan.

However, although Díaz did not hesitate to punish those who stood against him, he also compensated those who were in favor of his administration. The military leaders and regional caudillos who tended to disregard the central government were invited to participate in the government.

During the XIX century, the caciques or caudillos were the most powerful men in their region. They usually owned or controlled large extensions of land and everything within the area, including the workers and their families. The caudillos also had the power to raise an army against the federal government, thus becoming a threat to the presidency. However, as mentioned before, Díaz found another clever way to turn his possible enemies into allies by granting them government positions. The powerful caudillos found they could benefit, economically and politically, by taking sides with Díaz and, at the same time, acquire a new social prestige.

\textsuperscript{31} Hansen, \textit{La política del desarrollo} (México: Siglo XXI Editores, 1993), 21.
Figure 3  José Guadalupe Posada, “Caciques” in El Paladín. Periódico liberal e independiente. Del pueblo y para el pueblo, 1904.

The people show their faith and devotion to General Porfirio Díaz, whose portrait hangs on the wall, while the caciques oppress the indigenous workers.
Despite the usual abuse and mistreatment they were subjected to, the people tended to view the cacique as their protector and respected their position. The conformity of the people with these relationships has often been studied and found to go back to colonial administration, and even further back to the hierarchical indigenous social organization.32

In “Caciques” (Figure 3), the author creates a satire reflecting the relationship between the caciques, the owners of the land, and the indigenous peasant workers. On the left side of the scene, a group of people turn the wheel of a press. They are dressed in the garb usually worn by the ranchers and caciques. A very unfriendly gesture is fixed upon their faces. Between the two planks of the press lies the figure of a man with no shoes, he represents the oppressed “pueblo,” or the people.

On the right hand side, a smaller group of people dressed in rags, some kneeling down, raise their hands to implore an image hung on the wall before them. The people show their faith and devotion to General Porfirio Díaz, whose portrait is revered with burning candles, resembling a Catholic altarpiece. In this image, Diaz is perceived by the people as the ultimate paternal figure, who has the power to relieve the suffering of the masses.

This caricature satirizes the cacique’s oppression of the workers, as well as the masses’ blind faith on the war hero who brought peace to the nation. The illustration also draws attention to the fact that the people saw the President as their protector and benefactor in spite of the support he gave to the caciques and his disdain towards the indigenous groups and the lower classes.

32 Krauze, Siglo de Caudillos, 290.
Acting as government representatives gave the caudillos many business advantages, which they often exploited without reservations. It was known that the President elected and placed the people he favored in the most important positions including the governorships of each state. In turn, these governors designated the people of their trust in key positions.

Although Díaz appointed all senators, deputies and governors, official elections were held in which the people could vote for the candidates of their choice. However, the votes were usually bought, enforced or fabricated. Those who refused to vote in favor of Díaz and his government were usually punished. Many political activists, including newspaper reporters and caricaturists were often arrested and imprisoned due to their open opposition to the “official” candidates.33

The following caricature openly depicts the electoral situation in Mexico. The first figure portrayed on the left of “Elecciones Primarias” (Figure 4) is sitting down on the floor, with legs clasped to chain balls, barefoot, hands tied, and a gag in his mouth. His chains are held to the post of “re-election.” With a condescending attitude, a man standing beside is patting him on the head. The standing figure, elegantly dressed in a dark suit, represents the “elegidos,” the chosen ones, as can be read in his coat pocket. In the back, a policeman hands in the captive’s election card, with the other hand he raises his club, ominously. The overseers at the voting table look down, none of them showing any awareness of what is happening around them, nor willing to protest against the

33 Salvador Pruneda not only narrates the perils of speaking against the government of Porfirio Díaz, but he also describes the conditions under which the news reporters and collaborators lived inside the prison of Belén, where they were usually incarcerated. He also includes his own testimony of the vexations suffered by his father, the caricaturist Alvaro Pruneda, who was also imprisoned at Belén. *La caricatura como arma política*, 329.
The captive on the floor represents the majority of the people who are unable to participate freely in government elections.
fraudulent schemes of the “elected.” Once again, the man in simple dress, on the floor represents the majority of the people who are unable to participate freely in government elections.

The caption underneath the scene reads – “Despierta, mi bien despierta, mira que ya amaneció, y elige a tus diputados: tu eres el gran elector!” (Wake up, my dear wake up, see the sun has risen, and elect your deputies: you are the great elector!) This line from a popular Mexican song, has been modified to refer to the election of deputies, which are supposed to be chosen by the “electors” or the people. However, the one and only “great Elector,” is none other than President Díaz. The caricaturist has succeeded to satirize the electoral situation of the country: while the government proclaims free elections, in reality, there is no such thing.

Díaz would also designate many technocrats, or so-called “científicos,” educated in the theories of positivism to his government. The President himself was considerably influenced by these theories and believed the majority of the Mexican people, of Indian and mixed blood, were incapable of participating in a democratic government. Following the theories of positivism and social darwinism, that spread through Latin America at the time, Díaz believed the indigenous groups of the country had not reached sufficient development to allow them a free participation in the politics of their government. Theirs was an allegedly submissive and apathetic nature, whereby a patriarchal figure was necessary to control their society. Díaz believed he was this necessary figure for the Mexican people, thus adopting a patriarchal administration “guiding and restricting

34 The “Científicos” created their own party in 1892. Among their premises they declared “the Constitution of '57 a utopia. The ideas of liberty/equality/fraternity should be replaced by the notion of perpetual progress conquered by science.” In “El ascenso de los científicos”, in Tiempo de México. Primera Epoca, de octubre de 1807 a junio de 1911, n.21 (México: SEP, 1982).
From the mouth of General Díaz slip out slithering creatures, representing the sins the government had committed against the Church.
popular tendencies, with plain faith that an enforced peace would allow the education, industry and commerce to develop elements of stability and unity.’’35

The re-establishment of ties with the Catholic Church was seen as another form, implemented by Díaz, to enforce patriarchal rule. Díaz practiced a “conciliatory policy” with the Church that would avoid the strict implementation of the Leyes de Reforma that had divided the country into two factions during the Juárez administration and had alienated the conservative groups. The Church was allowed to open again their hospitals, schools and dioceses, while the nuns returned to their monasteries and the Jesuits were welcomed back to the country.

The caricature of “En Cuaresma” (Figure 5) portrays an elder man covered with a cloak, kneeling at the confessionary, the word “conciliación” written over the window. His facial features and mustache give him away, it is General Díaz, still wearing spurs on his boots and his sword “la matona” on his belt. It must be mentioned that the sword became a symbol of the Dictator’s relentlessness in destroying the enemies of his government (see also Figure 14).

From his mouth slip out slithering creatures, representing the sins the government has committed against the Church. The animals wear the names “Guerra de Reforma,” “Guerra de Intervención” and “Liberalism.” The man also holds a pile of money in one hand, which he offers to the priest on the other side of the confessional. The latter wears on his head the miter of the “clerical party.”

In the caption, Díaz accuses himself of being liberal, republican and favoring anti-reelection. He repents from these “sins” and promises to follow the “crucified” one.

35 Díaz in interview with Creelman, in Enrique Krauze, Siglo de Caudillos, 306.
However, the figure shown in the crucifix behind him is not the representation of Jesus, but perhaps that of a common thief. The priest, on the other hand, doesn’t seem to take the man’s gestures too kindly.

The caricature offers an ironic image of the General repenting of his actions, while still wearing his sword. Yet more disturbing was the fact that he betrayed his own convictions by re-electing himself to the presidency several times and ignoring the liberal ideas which he once championed. The conciliation between the government and the Church allowed it to re-establish its spiritual and political strength. However, it would also upset the liberal groups, which had fought for many years to diminish the power of the Church in the country.

Other tensions resulted from the economic situation during the Porfiriato, especially in reference to land tenure. During the Porfiriato years, the land continued to be concentrated in the haciendas, and few territories were left to the indigenous communities. Díaz also created a new program intended to define and colonize public property, which promoted the surge and prosperity of the “compañías deslindadoras.” He also implemented the Ley Lerdo of 1856 to its full extent. The law, which did not allow religious and civil corporations to own land, had been partially overlooked by President Juárez, since it also affected the communal lands of the indigenous people. However, under Díaz’s government, around 800 thousand acres of communal lands were turned to the “latifundistas” and the “compañías deslindadoras.”

It is believed that Díaz ignored any limitations to the number of acres a person could gather as a way to compensate his political supporters and ensure his power in

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government. Many haciendas grew to incredible proportions, holding nearly 50 percent of the total rural population.  

Unfortunately, Hansen argues, agricultural production did not increase sufficiently to be equally distributed among the people. It only grew an approximate 0.7% annually, while the population grew at a much larger pace. While the production of prime materials grew 2.5% for the internal market and the production for the external market grew 6.5%, “the production of nourishments and drinks for the internal Mexican market decreased to an annual rate of 0.5 percent.” To make the matter worse, the profits obtained by the hacendados were used to buy luxurious imports instead of investing in the internal market.

Nevertheless, the country achieved a solid financial status that was recognized by the international markets. Much of the nation’s financial achievements corresponded to the work of José Yves Limantour who was appointed Minister of the Hacienda by Díaz. Limantour would supervise the country’s finances during the later part of the Porfiriato, which was characterized by a substantial increase in the government’s reserves. Thus, he was considered by the elite an excellent administrator of the nation’s finances.

However, a different perspective is portrayed in “El ponderado bienestar económico” (Figure 6). This caricature portrays a scale representing “Limantour’s finances,” in which the Minister, himself, delivers a huge basket of money to a group of well-dressed, wealthy-looking individuals, the “parasites of power.”

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37 Ibid., 39.
38 Ibid., 40.
Figure 6  “El ponderado bienestar económico” in El Hijo del Ahuizote, Feb. 1, 1903, no. 836.

Limantour, Minister of Hacienda, delivers a basket of money to a group of wealthy individuals, the “parasites of power.”
On the other end of the scale, a small basket hangs over the “people” represented by a figure wearing traditional indigenous clothes, no shoes and a hat over his head. Looking thin and worn out, he holds his own weight with the help of a rugged wooden cane, gazing longingly at the unreachable basket above him.

The caption underneath the scene reads “Brillante situación, sobre pan y sobre fiambre; pero es la triste cuestión, que el pueblo se muere de hambre,” (brilliant situation, of bread and cold meat, but the sad issue, is the people die of hunger) referring to the hunger experienced by the masses. It must also be noted that whoever wrote the caption, also used his creative gifts to turn a pressing issue into a nice rhyme.

Nevertheless, the caricaturist is openly describing the real and desperate situation of the indigenous population who were left out of the bonanza experienced by the country and enjoyed by the small elite who held both power and vast amounts of wealth.

On the other hand, the land was not the only commodity concentrated in the hands of a small number of families. New concessions were made by the government to attract foreign investment that would help develop the nation’s industry. A large number of investors came from the United States, situation that created a lot of skepticism among many Mexican nationalists, since the American expansionist policy was viewed as a constant threat towards the nation’s integrity. Only a few decades back, in 1848, the Unites States had annexed a large portion of the Mexican territory as the result of the Mexican-U.S. War. Now, the same power continued to intrude upon Mexico’s resources.

In “Camino de Ultratumba” (Figure 7), the viewer can perceive the skepticism felt by the caricaturist, and no doubt by many other people as well, towards the railways.
Figure 7    José Guadalupe Posada, “Caminos de ultratumba” in El Diablito Rojo, 1908.

This satire reflects the uneasiness and mistrust of the people towards North America and their investment in the Mexican industries.
constructed by American companies. One of the trains has fallen off the tracks, its passengers tumbling out of the cars. To make matters worse, the train has fallen over the innocent people participating in a religious peregrination.

On the left stands a bearded man, an American, resembling the early portrayals of Uncle Sam. He observes the accident with a smile on his face, while on the right, the devil stands rejoicing at the incident. Above him, among the clouds, Porfirio Díaz sits omnipresent in his throne. The three characters witness the scene, without showing any concern for the victims of the accident. The caption alludes to the “gringos’” refusal to indemnify the victims and to the Mexican government’s complacent attitude. There is hardly any doubt that this kind of satire reflected the uneasiness and mistrust of the Mexican people towards the United States and their investment in the country.

Nevertheless, the concessions Díaz gave to American railroad companies had generated nearly 19 thousand kilometers of railways by 1910, which would help to communicate and unite the country, bringing new economic power and control to the government.39

Díaz also gave concessions to foreign oil extracting and mining companies, which eventually helped Díaz reach the progress he longed for. Foreign investment also produced the diversification and growth of Mexican imports, which surpassed 600 percent between 1877 and 1910.40

The increasing opposition towards Díaz’s government would protest, among many other issues, against the foreign control of the country’s natural resources. They

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39 Ibid., 23.
40 Ibid., 24.
Each banner has been used by the Díaz administration to suit its particular interests rather than to benefit the country.
would also fight to acquire the land that had been taken from them, which was necessary for the subsistence of their families and communities. The new liberal groups would oppose Díaz’s long-lasting dictatorship of 35 years and the corruption of his bureaucratic government. They questioned many of Díaz’s actions towards the order and progress of the country which he had convinced the world of attaining. By the year 1900, according to Enrique Krauze, 84% of the population was illiterate, one out of two children died of an infectious disease, and the plantations of the southeast were known to savagely exploit the indigenous peasants.41

“Las Grandes matracas de la temporada” (Figure 8) nicely sums up some of these uneasy sentiments towards the regime’s goals. In this caricature, different figures of Díaz’s government, each hold a “matraca,” a popular toy which is swung around to make noise during festivities. Each figure has a symbol representing an important element of the Díaz administration.

At the center we find a matraca with the word progress written on the vapors that come out of the chimney of a train. To the left, the matraca of the country’s reserves, symbolized by a locked savings box, which is held by Yves Limantour, minister of the Hacienda. To the right, a matraca held by a man in military uniform, his symbol is a soldier riding on a horse, with a raised spade in his hand. Next is a sneering representation of a priest holding the matraca of Catholicism, with a hog representing the greed of the Church. It is followed by the matraca of sanitation represented ironically by a snake. It must be mentioned that although the Mexican government claimed to have improved the conditions of the masses by implementing a modern sanitary code and

improving the sewage system in Mexico City, the conditions of the people in the rest of
the country hardly improved at all.\(^{42}\) Finally, we find the image of Díaz himself wearing
his military uniform, holding the matraca of peace symbolized by a small woman holding
a leafy branch in her hand.

The caption at the end reads “Cual de estas aturde más?” (Which of these stuns the most?) The author obviously doesn’t believe in the banners boasted by Díaz and his administration. Each has been used by the government to suit its particular interests, rather than to benefit the country. The caricaturist evidences his skepticism about each issue and wants the viewer to also question each of these paradigms.

As the opposition against the Díaz regime grew, the caricatures printed in the independent press also became more and more critical of the dictator’s regime, “los dibujos eran burla que no admitía la restauración de la dignidad, antes bien los prosélitos deberian tenerlos como armas destructivas, pues armas destructivas eran en la lucha contra la Dictadura,” (the drawings were satires that did not admit the restoration of dignity, the proselytes should use them as destructive weapons, since they were destructive weapons in the fight against the Dictatorship).\(^{43}\) The images not only had the intention of unmasking the system of oppression followed by the government, but to stir the emotions of the people who had suffered its abuse.

Although Díaz had publicly acknowledged he would not contend during the 1910 presidential elections, he succeeded to remain in power by treacherously defeating the popular opposition candidate, Francisco I. Madero. Nevertheless, with the support of the

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\(^{42}\) “Agua y salud”, in *Tiempo de México*, n.21 (México: SEP, 1982).

liberal groups and the masses, Madero would fight for the presidential chair that was unjustly taken from him. He forced Díaz to renounce and allowed him to leave the country. Once in the presidential chair, Madero began a series of policies geared to benefit the Mexican masses.

Unfortunately, different interests guided many of his alleged collaborators, who betrayed him and plunged the nation into a war that would last more than ten years. It would take nearly another ten to bring back the stability of the country. In the late 1920s President Calles would create an official party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario, which slowly developed the mechanisms that would secure peace in the nation. Ironically, it would also secure its power to rule the nation for 71 years.

In sum, the caricatures produced in the early 20th century reflected the popular discontent over the regime’s caudillo-backed authoritarianism, its electoral corruption, the reliance on the Catholic Church to appease the populace, its economic policies leading to the concentration of land in a few hands and the concentration of strategic economic assets in the hands of foreign capitalists. Surprisingly, the situation facing Mexico in the 1990s would echo some of the same concerns.
IV. THE EARLY 1990s UNDER THE SALINAS’ REGIME

In the early 1920s there was still a visible lack of stability in the country and a constant friction between political groups. By 1924, Plutarco Elías Calles, a well-known military leader of the revolution, would take the presidential seat and manage to consolidate his power throughout the country. His creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario in 1929 was meant to unite in one political group, the military leaders who had fought during the revolutionary war. The official party, later named the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), would continue to hold the country’s political power for the next 71 years. During those seven decades the party was imbued with different characteristics, as each president in turn was able to adapt the party to his own political interests. 44

The new, Mexican political system based on a presidential government with a division of powers allegedly demonstrated the triumph of democracy in the country. Unfortunately, the power was largely concentrated in the figure of the President. This characteristic was the most evident legacy of Porfirio Díaz to the government of Calles and the subsequent administrations of the country. Nevertheless, the economic and social crisis produced by the government’s inefficiency to resolve the country’s problems would continue to permeate the apparent stability of the nation, culminating in the mid 1990s under the presidency of a controversial leader, Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

This chapter intends to focus on the latter’s administration and the crisis it instigated. However, in order to fully understand the pressures imposed on his

44 Enrique Krauze, La presidencia imperial (México: Tusquets Editores, 1997), xxx.
government, it is also important to review the history of the Mexican political system, which Salinas inherited.

In the years after the revolution, provincial military leaders became, once more, the most powerful figures in their region. Many of the new political members had been middle class workers, such as teachers and carpenters, who had fought for the cause of the workers, the peasants, and their individual guarantees. Ultimately, though, they would fight for both wealth and power.

By 1929, most of the *caudillos* joined the official party in order to avoid a confrontation with Calles. Those who did not were decimated. Emulating the Porfiriato, Calles used government positions to compensate the allies of his administration. He also gave the governors relative freedom to exercise their power in their own state. Once again political assignments would serve the particular interests of the figures in power, and corruption became characteristic of the political system.

The politicians used their assignments to acquire land and build new industries. They would slowly begin the re-development of the country’s economy and infrastructure, which had been devastated during the war. The country’s renewed stability would allow the growth of private and foreign investments.

The emerging economy, along with the bureaucratic system would also increase the possibility for social mobility. In fact, the bureaucratic apparatus would continue to grow, at one point, hiring nearly 20% of the workforce.\(^45\) Unfortunately, the profits of the growing economy would be concentrated in a small percentage of the population and would remain that way through the decades.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 463.
On the other hand, the existing opposition parties were no rivals to the official party during elections. The PRI exercised all its power to win the government positions through any means. For nearly sixty years, the President and the PRI would continue to assign the governors of each state and the seats of the senate, not allowing the opposition to win until the late 1980s.

Nevertheless, violence in the country persisted until President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) ordered the inclusion of all the military in the party, achieving a considerable detriment of their power. He also wanted to balance the power of the military and industrial sectors allied to Calles, by including the workers and peasants into the party as well. Thus, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), was born to protect the interests of the Mexican workers, while the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC) represented the agrarian sectors. By including all the sectors of the Mexican economy, Cárdenas had also managed to centralize all the power in the official party.

However, although the industrial workers and peasant sectors were supposed to elect the party leaders according to Cárdenas's plans, corruption and the inefficiency of the system prevented their participation in the decision making of public policy. Their inclusion in the political system soon became limited to their participation in ceremonies and other political acts. Their vote, of course, was guaranteed to the official party. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the worker and peasant sector succeeded in reducing the conflicts by limiting their political activism, while legitimizing the official party, which claimed the votes of the many different sectors of the Mexican society.

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46 The one-party system found ways to enforce the support of the military through partisanship.
Another important achievement of Cárdenas was a greater impulse to the
distribution of land among the agrarian sectors, thus, diminishing the number of the
haciendas. He understood that this was only the first step towards the development of the
rural sectors. However, subsequent governments oversaw the numerous necessities of the
agrarian class, giving wide support to the larger farms.\(^{48}\) Any kind of protest from the
agrarian sectors were easily appeased or decimated by the military.

Many historians believe Cárdenas was the last Mexican president to recognize the
necessities of the people and to ensure their welfare. He not only wanted to include the
masses in the political system, but also wanted to re-establish the sovereignty of the
country, which he accomplished by expropriating the foreign companies extracting
natural resources in Mexican territory.

After 1940, Cárdenas slowed down the changes, probably to reduce the risk of
uprisings by the middle classes and the elite. He would name Manuel Avila Camacho as
successor to the Presidency. The latter would in fact, bring back equilibrium to the party,
which was renamed Partido de la Revolución Mexicana in 1938.

Under President Avila Camacho, the Mexican economy diversified and the
industrial sector began a considerable growth. A military alliance with the United States
eased the tensions created by Cárdenas’s earlier expropriation of petroleum.

By 1945, the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos, under the leadership of
Fidel Velázquez, would sign a pact to secure the cooperation between workers and
industrialists, in order to reduce tensions between them. However, instead of serving the

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 237.
workers’ interests, the leaders of the CTM would increasingly become closer to the ruling elite’s political agenda.

In 1946, the official party changed its name once again to Partido Revolucionario Institucional, and postulated Miguel Alemán as presidential candidate. Alemán would replace old politicians with his own associates in the administration, beginning a new tradition in the Mexican political scene.

His administration managed to create a booming economy that would be remembered as the “Mexican miracle.” The following governments would eventually succeed in using the apparent economic stability of the country to promote it as a developed and modern nation. Nevertheless, social unrest and several crises would begin to create cracks in the system.

Many historians believe the first of these crisis exploded in 1968 under the presidency of Díaz Ordaz. The middle class sectors protested against the unequal distribution of wealth, but it was mainly the students who became politically active. The authoritarian force of the government was felt by the Mexican society when the movement was crushed by the military on October 2 with the assassination of hundreds of students in the Plaza of Tlatelolco in Mexico City.

The next president, Luis Echeverría, also believed to be directly involved with the incident of Tlatelolco, would inaugurate the use of “populismo” to regain the trust of the Mexican people. However, his administration only managed to increase the amount spent by the state. The squandering of resources would eventually cause the devaluation of the Mexican peso, which would begin to create economic tensions within the country. The next presidents would not only have to face a difficult financial situation, but the growing
pressures and criticisms of the people and the media against the inefficiency of the government to secure a democratic political system.

In the elections of 1988, the PRI had lost its credibility and faced both internal and external crisis, which were further enhanced with the defection of a group of *priistas* led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and Porfirio Muñoz Ledo. The PRI’s presidential candidate contested against Cuauhtémoc, son of the late Lázaro Cárdenas, whose popularity had grown to tremendous proportions at the time. On the election day, while the votes were being counted, the PRI declared a failure in the computer system counting the votes, which many believe was due to the unexpected turn-out in favor of Cuauhtémoc. Cárdenas lost the elections and the PRI’s candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, was declared the new President. In the next months, Salinas’s government worked hard to legitimize his place in the presidency.

During the elections of state governorships, however, Salinas demonstrated his reticence to accept free elections while many of the states protested against the evident fraud practiced during the polls. Most of the PRI candidates still won the governorships, but exterior and interior pressures were placed on Salinas. He had given the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) the governorship of Baja California Norte, but the conservative PAN, as well as the newly founded Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), would protest against the evident electoral frauds taking place in other states.

Such was the case when the PRI announced their victory in Guanajuato against Vicente Fox, a business entrepreneur and candidate of the PAN. Most of the opposition was sure Fox had won the majority of votes. Their protests succeeded to overturn the
A month before this drawing appeared in *La Jornada*, several members of the opposition were shot in the state of Michoacán.
PRI’s decision. They withdrew their candidate, while an interim governor of the PAN was placed in the seat.

It is also important to mention that, although the PAN had survived as an opposition party since 1939, it was the PRD which would succeed to create a wider platform for protests against the government. The leftist protests against the corruption of the authoritarian government would be supported by the critics and the social media, who were well aware of the new democratic trends experienced around the world.

For decades, electoral fraud had taken place through a diverse number of resources such as the elaboration of electoral credentials that were non-existent, expulsion of the opposition in the electoral booths, lack of voting ballots, and the extraction of cast ballots, among many forms of coercion.

Reminding us of some of the images depicting Díaz’s political corruption in the early 1990s (see Figure 4), in “Modernización electoral” (Figure 9) we see a disturbing image of a large man, a rural guard, holding a smoking gun with one hand, while receiving money offered to him with the other. He wears boots, pants and a shirt with rolled up sleeves that has been smudged with a dark color. Underneath his left boot, lies an anonymous figure in a pool of blood. The rural also carries a bottle of liquor in his shirt and wears a hat over his head. Close to the brim we see a circle divided into three different colors, the symbol of the official party.

On the left side of the viewer a man in dark suit stands on a podium. The words “Asumiremos los costos de la democracia,” (We will assume the costs of democracy), are pronounced, likely, during a political speech to the people. With his left hand behind his back, he pays the rural for his “job.”
The author of this caricature is giving a twisted meaning to the words of the politician, which were originally intended to make the people believe the party will secure a democratic participation despite the costs of the change. Yet, he is also crudely depicting what many people believe, that politicians pay to decimate the opposition through any means. It must also be mentioned, that only a month before this drawing appeared in the newspaper, several members of the opposition parties had been shot in the state of Michoacán.49

Carlos Salinas de Gortari, an economist graduated from Harvard, continued the trend initiated by Miguel de la Madrid, his predecessor, by bringing a younger generation of “technocrats” into the government. Most of these were economists forged in the best-known universities of the United States. Together, Salinas believed they could achieve the modernization of the Mexican economy as well as the political system.

His administration began several financial strategies aimed at re-negotiating the external debt and regenerating the internal investment. By 1994, the debt of the public sector had been cut to 24.8% of the GNP, reducing it by half of the debt recorded in 1988. Salinas also privatized most of the state-controlled businesses (except railroads, petroleum and energy), acquiring nearly 22,500 million dollars. He also privatized the banks, attracting new investors to the Mexican economy.

Salinas’s economic reforms also gained him international recognition, appearing in many of the most important magazines and newspapers worldwide. His government claimed to have privatized the banks and the state enterprises in order to generate a more

49 The crimes committed against the members of the PRD at Jungapeo, Michoacán, were denounced in La Jornada (México: January 20, 1990).
active economy. However, his critics saw this as another form of strengthening his alliance with the industrial sectors.

A new scandal broke out when the media made public Salinas’s intentions to form a fund for the official party. Twenty-five of the richest businessmen in Mexico had been invited to a dinner party with the President, where they had been asked for a contribution of 25 million dollars each.

The guests, members of the “Consejo Mexicano de Hombres de Negocios,” an exclusive society which can only be accessed by invitation, have direct access to the President. However, their participation is always extremely discrete, in tone with the Mexican political system.\(^50\)

When the news of the dinner party was filtrated to the media, the PRI immediately objected and succeeded to obstruct the creation of the funds. The majority of the PRI did not want further subordination to the industrial sectors.

Some analysts, including Lorenzo Meyer, believe the funds would be used to separate the PRI from the government, as one of the many political reforms Salinas was eager to implement in order to break away from the traditional political system.

Nevertheless, the President was not only strengthening his ties with the industrial sector, but also with the labor unions, and the Church as well. Similar to what Díaz did during his rule (see Figure 5), Salinas began a process of reconciliation with the Catholic Church in order to recognize its rights as an institution, including the clergy’s right to participate in political elections.

\(^{50}\) Lorenzo Meyer, *Liberalismo autoritario*, 129.
Figure 10  Helguera, “Encuentro en el Vaticano” in *La Jornada*, February 16, 1990.

The caricature not only alludes to the conciliatory policies between the government and the Church, but also to the enormous power invested in the President.
In “Encuentro con el Vaticano” (Figure 10), a man is portrayed with his back to the viewer. However, a three-color badge on his coat gives him away as a partisan of the PRI. He greets the other figure dressed in pontifical attire, who we recognize as Pope John Paul II. The statuesque figure of the Pope addresses the man indicating he represents the almighty, to which the man replies, “me, too.” The caricature not only alludes to the conciliatory policies between the PRI and the Church, but also to the enormous power invested in the President of the country.

Salinas also strengthened his relation with Fidel Velázquez, the legendary leader of the CTM, who would remain in power for nearly 60 years, until his death in 1997. Fidel was a necessary instrument to control the masses and the minimum salary. Thus, the worker’s interests were subordinated to those of the industrial owners, and the government.

The main business corporations, Grupo Carso, Grupo México, Grupo Empresarial del Sureste, etc., grew with the purchase of both state-controlled and other private companies. Many of them also created new alliances with the banks. Salinas’s reforms helped to increase the power and wealth of a few families, such as those headed by Carlos Slim (Grupo Carso, Telmex), Emilio Azcárraga (Televisa), Jorge Larrea (Grupo México), Jorge Lankenau (Grupo Abaco), Carlos Cabal Peniche (Grupo Empresarial del Sureste), among others.

The caricature “Ford” (Figure 11) displays the abuse of the workers by the industrialists. A man dressed in short-sleeves, pants and boots has been run over by a car. He still holds a sign between his hands declaring “No más atropellos a los trabajadores”
Figure 11  Ulises, “Ford” in *La Jornada*, January 14, 1990.

The scene portrays the abuse of the industrialists towards the workers’ rights.
or no more trampling over the workers. In this case, the author has used the word “atropello,” to portray an automobile literally running over the worker.

In the distance we see a large car speeding away. The passenger in the automobile inquires about the object they just ran over. His chauffeur, or another member of his service, answers it was a “dent in the route towards modernity.”

The scene is portraying the typical indifference of the wealthy towards the conditions of the masses, as well as the abuse of the industrialists towards the workers’ rights. While the wealthy elite is on the path to a modern life style, the lower working class has been left behind. This is quite similar to the conditions workers and the people faced under Porfirio Díaz (see Figure 3 and 6).

Besides the many political and economic tensions faced by Salinas’s government, there were other social problems affecting the country. For decades the needs of the agrarian sectors had been left unattended. Salinas declared he would make the necessary reforms that would apparently benefit the small agricultural workers or “ejidatarios.” By reforming the article 127 of the Constitution, the peasantry and indigenous communities could chose between the private property and the “ejido.” The government also granted them the titles to their land. Ultimately, this reform would overwhelmingly benefit those who had the power to purchase the land.

“Modernización del campo” (Figure 12) portrays the crude reality of the Mexican ejidatario in relation to the caciques. Two well-dressed, well-fed men wearing coats and ties, the usual garb of the caciques, watch as a poor worker plows his land. One of the men explains to the other that it is just a matter of time before he (the worker) gets desperate due to the lack of bank credits, and they’ll be able to buy his land and set up a
The "tiendas de raya" the caciques refer to, are one of the many forms of abuse which they have used to exploit the agrarian workers for decades.
store. The “tienda de raya” which they refer to, is the traditional store set up in the haciendas where the workers can buy their goods through installments with heavy interests placed on them. These stores are seen as one of the many forms of abuse, which the powerful landowners, the caciques, have used to exploit the agrarian workers for decades.

Clearly, the title of the caricature is ironic, since the situation between the agrarian workers and the caciques has not changed much in the last decades, nor have the conditions of the agrarian sectors improved much. However, one of the major innovations of the Salinas’s administration was the creation of a new program called “Solidaridad,” designed to help the masses and especially, the agricultural sectors. The people would be given economic support that was to be invested in their communities. Unfortunately, the money intended to reach the masses, seldom did, and the program failed to create long-lasting changes. Rumors were spread that “Solidaridad” was meant to become a political party headed by Salinas that would propitiate his re-election in the Presidency of the year 2000.⁵¹

Salinas was well aware of the fact that the Mexican economy was already largely dependant on access to the American market, since the United States consumed nearly 65% of Mexican exports. In order to secure this exchange and bring further investments to the country, he negotiated a Free Trade Agreement with Canada and the United States. Overall, this would be seen as a major project intended to create a North American alliance to counteract the economic power of the European Union.

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⁵¹ Krauze, *La Presidencia Imperial*, 461.
This man represents the poorest sectors of the Mexican population who have not benefited from the “progress” made by the Mexican economy.
Salinas was successful in convincing the world economies he had achieved the stability of the Mexican economy by controlling both the inflation and turning the deficit into a surplus. However, Mexican critics were suspicious of the NAFTA, arguing it would only benefit the top industrial sector, but would ruin the micro and small businesses.

The caricature “Globalizacion” (Figure 13) is an example of the irony perceived by the Mexican people towards the opening up of the Mexican economy and its inclusion in the global markets. The caricature portrays one of the many homeless in Mexico, sitting on the floor, dressed in ragged clothes and barefoot. The man sits on the floor and extends a hat with his left hand, begging for money. A note, attached to the hat reads “Una ayuda, por amor de Dios,” but as the beggar needs to target a global audience, the Spanish sign is followed by the translations in English and French: “Gimme some money please,” and “De l’aumone por l’amour de Dieu”.

This man, representing the poorest sectors of the Mexican population have not benefited from the “progress” the Mexican economy has made. He can only hope for the compassion and charity of others, whether Mexican, or foreign. This is his only participation in the “globalization” of the country.

The irony of this caricature not only lies in the fact that the poorer classes remain highly uneducated and would hardly be capable of speaking three different languages, but that there continues to be a small elite that proclaims the modernization of the entire country. According to the data provided by analyst Lorenzo Meyer, by 1992 unemployment had surpassed 9% of the total workforce, while another 35.12% were underemployed. Nevertheless, the top 10% of the society had succeeded to increase their
income by 63% during Salinas’s administration.\textsuperscript{52} Closely resembling the economic situation created by Porfirio Díaz (see Figure 6 and 7), the President had managed to benefit the higher industrial sectors in the hands of a small elite.

Only a couple of months after Salinas signed the Free Trade Agreement, a guerilla war broke out in the southern state of Chiapas on January 1, 1994, creating a commotion among the Mexican people. Violent protest had finally broken out in a state where the land was still concentrated in a few powerful hands and any kind of protest was pacified with the force of the army, resulting in the deaths of many Indian peasants.

The country, which Salinas had successfully promoted as a first world country, was being shaken by the lower peasant classes that had finally taken up arms to fight against the lack of democracy, opportunities and equal distribution of wealth they had never ceased to experience. The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional would claim the “destitución del ‘dictador’ (Salinas), la derrota del ejército federal mexicano, la justicia social y la formación de un “gobierno libre y democrático”.\textsuperscript{53}

The movement failed to provoke a general revolution, like the one following the downfall of Porfirio Díaz, but it did open the eyes of the Mexican people and the world. They had succeeded to unveil the reality of most of the indigenous Mexican population living in poverty and under the oppression of the larger “terranientes” or caciques, whose interests were often supported by the army. Salinas would soon have to face other problems. As his presidential term was ending, he had to choose between democratizing the elections or continue with the practice of the “dedazo,” assigning his successor to the

\textsuperscript{52} Meyer, \textit{Liberalismo autoritario}, 139.
\textsuperscript{53} “Declaración de la selva lacandona” published in the newspaper \textit{La Jornada} (México: January 2, 1994).
presidency. Following the tradition, Salinas chose to assign his successor, Luis Donaldo Colosio, Salinas’ protégée, and the head of the “Solidaridad” program.

Some historians, such as Enrique Krauze, believe Salinas intended to place Luis Donaldo Colosio in power in order to remain in control of the country’s administration and perhaps later re-elect himself to the presidency. However, once Colosio was publicly named the official candidate, and began the usual electoral campaign around the country, he also seemed to distance himself from Salinas’ political perspectives. As part of his campaign, he would re-visit the State of Baja California Norte, which Salinas had turned over to the PAN, despite the inconformity of the local PRI. On, March 23, 1994, Colosio was publicly assassinated in that same state.

The crime has yet to be resolved, but many believed his death had been ordered by either Salinas himself, or some other powerful figures within the government. Among the many theories behind Colosio’s death, Enrique Krauze offers a possible scenario in which the candidate’s death is ordered by the drug lords of the region, in agreement with other political figures that wanted him, or Salinas, out of power.

Colosio’s death would be followed by other political crimes, an increase of drug-traffic related violence and insecurity. President Salinas was forced to name a new candidate, Ernesto Zedillo, another “technocrat” and economist, as presidential candidate.

In the elections of 1994, the people once more voted for the PRI, either driven by apathy or perhaps wanting nothing more but a peaceful resolution of the country’s problems. However, Salinas’s image would be further discredited as the judicial system accused his brother, Raúl Salinas de Gortari, of corruption and his implication in the
murder of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, Secretary General of the PRI. Raúl was apprehended despite the inconformity and protests of the ex-president. Once elected to the presidency, Ernesto Zedillo, under the evident pressure of the society, the critics, and foreign governments and observers, saw the necessity to call the two opposition parties to negotiate a new democratic system. He did not solve the murders of the political figures, and his term was plagued with rising street violence, public demonstrations, and a higher rate of insecurity.

However, in the elections for state-governorships in mid 1997, the PRI recognized the triumph of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática, in the Distrito Federal, the capital of the country. This was the first time the capital had ever been administered by a different party.

The new transition towards democracy, which was begun by Zedillo, would culminate two years later. He finally did what no other president from the PRI had done before: he refused to name his preferred candidate for the next presidential term.

In the elections of the year 2000, the people would vote against the PRI, giving the victory to Vicente Fox, the candidate of the oldest opposition party, Partido de Acción Nacional. The slogan used by the latter “vote for change” had appealed to the people tired of the inefficiency, corruption, and lack of credibility towards the previous governments and the PRI. The people succeeded to change their government, not through a violent revolution as in the 1910s, but through peaceful, democratic participation in the electoral process.
V. CONCLUSIONS

Although many research studies have focused on the social, economic and political situation of Mexico, I have decided to take a different approach by using political caricatures as primary sources to develop a comparison between the early 1900s and the 1990s. Obviously, each period is the product of very specific circumstances that do not repeat themselves in the same way. However, both moments in the history of Mexico present many similar characteristics, some of which I would like to discuss in this final chapter.

I believe that during both periods, each ending in a severe crises, there are at least five common issues that seriously affected the nation. These issues or characteristics are the practice of a dictatorship or an authoritarian government, the practice of electoral fraud, the concentration of wealth and power by the caciques/industrial elite, the exploitation of the agricultural workers, and a strive for the progress and modernization of the country.

It is also important to mention that the problems that affected Mexico were reflected in many of the caricatures printed in the anti-regime newspapers of both periods. The parallelism between these images is more than a mere coincidence. Not only do they reveal some of the perceptions of the Mexican people toward these problems, but also an evident empathy of the critics during the 1990s, with the problems that affected the nation during the Porfiriato.
The Dictator used whatever means were necessary to pacify all kinds of social unrest.
THE PREVALENCE OF AN AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT

It is evident that the governments of both periods were characterized by a use of unlimited power to control the different sectors of the country and secure its stability. In the late eighteen hundreds, Porfirio Díaz found a way to reduce the regional leaderships of the caciques by inviting them to participate in his administration. Many of these leaders preferred to collaborate with the dictator, rather than hold a direct confrontation with Díaz’s military. The opposition to the regime was also strongly discouraged by either incarcerating or annihilating the enemies of the Porfiriato. It was popular knowledge that the dictator used whatever means were necessary to pacify any kind of social unrest, whether it came from the Yaqui Indians of the North, or the provocative critics from liberal newspapers. Thus, many caricatures published during this period, picture Díaz with a spade, “la matona,” symbolizing the force he used against the opposition (see Figure 14).

Compared to the Porfiriato, the post-revolutionary government of Calles seemed far more modernized, proclaiming a division of powers, as well as the inclusion of the different sectors of the Mexican society in the decision making process. However, Díaz’s legacy of a powerful presidential leader would remain, and the official party created by Calles would eventually find the necessary mechanisms to enforce its own interests.

During the early 1990s, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari may not have used a sword to kill his enemies, but used the force of the PRI to control the different sectors that comprise the Mexican society. On one hand, the workers were kept under restraint by the labor unions, which were led by the long-lived Fidel Velázquez in collaboration with the official party. Thus, the PRI was able to control the demands of the working class by
pretending to be a democratic and inclusive party. Furthermore, the militia was still used by the government to crush the protests against local authorities, electoral fraud, and the abuse of caudillos.

As Roger Hansen had accurately foreseen more than two decades earlier, the PRI had continued to exercise its power, “while applying enough of our actual democratic norms, to reduce to the minimum the appearance, as well as the presence, of a dictatorial government.”

Although the media openly criticized the party and the local authorities, they were very careful in directing their attacks on the President. It was rumored that Salinas was not very receptive to admitting critics of his persona. Many even believed this was one of the main reasons he had Joaquin Hernández “La Quina,” leader of the petroleum workers, incarcerated. The latter had openly discredited Salinas’s image by promoting a book in which Carlos was blamed for the murder of a servant when he was still a small child. Yet, others believe Salinas used the arrest of “La Quina” to send a warning to the workers of the different sectors, who were beginning to slip away from the PRI and into the rows of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática.

On the other hand, Salinas strengthened the alliances between the government and the industrialists, in an effort to re-organize the economy of the country. Many believed this alliance with the industrial sectors, along with his group of technocrats, would allow him to regain not only the control of the Mexican economy, but also political power as

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54 Hansen, La política del desarrollo, 212.
55 Marco Rascón, Memorias de un líder moderno (México: Editorial Grijalbo, 1997), 129.
Figure 15 Helguera, “México Moderno” in La Jornada, March 28, 1990.

The diplomas obtained by the new group of Mexican politicians, the technocrats, in foreign universities are used to decorate the office where the decision-making process takes place.
well. As Meyer mentions, “En la actualidad, como hace noventa años, en la élite del poder prevalece la idea de que los pocos pero ilustrados –“los científicos” entonces, los tecnócratas ahora – pueden y deben tomar por sí y ante sí, aunque en nombre de las mayorías, las decisiones fundamentales,” (Today, as ninety years ago, in the elite in power permeates the idea that the few illustrated, the scientists, then, the technocrats today, should make the fundamental decisions on their own).56 The technocrats and the elite group of industrialists would eventually hold all the decision making power in the government, disdaining a consensus of the majority, as expected in a modern democratic society.

When we look at a caricature such as “México Moderno” (Figure 15), we know the critics were probably not very impressed by either Salinas’s government or their policies in resolving the country’s problems. This image refers to the new group of “científicos”, the technocrats in power under the Salinas administration. The walls of the room are decorated with their diplomas from “Stanford”, “Yale” and “Princeton,” alluding to the group of economists who completed postgraduate studies in the top universities of the United States.

As if all their studies had not helped them find better resolutions to the country’s problems, one of them declares they should beat up (most likely) a group of workers on strike. The author obviously ridicules their higher foreign education while criticizing their lack of democracy in the decision making process, as well as their abuse of power to control social conflict. The “modern” Mexican government of the late twentieth century had evidently failed to recognize and respect the opposition.

56 Meyer, Liberalismo autoritario, 63-64.
A parallel can be drawn between this image and some of the satires printed during the Porfiriato (see Figure 14). If we compare the caricatures that were printed during both periods of this study, we find a similar view of the Mexican government as an abusive organism. Many of these illustrations evidence the abuse of force by the authorities to impose government policies, and to deploy the opposition. Not only do they criticize the lack of democratic principles, but also the evident manipulation of government policies geared to benefit the elite group allied to the authorities rather than the people in general. In this chapter, we will discuss further the repercussions of these alliances between the government and the elite.

THE INEFFICIENCY OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Both periods were also affected by the lack of democracy in the electoral process. To secure his power, Díaz recurred to amending the Constitution in order to allow his re-election to the presidency. Ironically, the dictator allowed official elections to take place, although, he continued to designate all senators, deputies and governors.

Evidently, the elections were nothing but a staged comedy. There was no significant opposition to Díaz’s government, and if there was any, his administration did everything possible to ensure the vote would be favorable to them. Electoral fraud took place in many forms, such as the purchase of votes, the extraction of ballots and other kinds of coercion. To make matters worse, those who refused to vote in favor of Díaz and his government were usually punished.

The PRI also used all its power to control the outcome of the elections in their favor. Not only were irregularities continuously detected, but there were also other
Madero re-appears rallying in favor "effective suffrage," ninety years after he defeated General Díaz.
mechanisms to ensure the votes for the party. The close links between the government and the leaders of the labor unions allowed them to secure, and enforce, if necessary, the workers’ votes for the official candidates.

Furthermore, the candidates to the higher government positions continued to be appointed from above. Thus, the “elected” hardly represented the needs of the people they governed. This explains why the problems affecting the majority of the people have remained unsolved to this day. As in the Porfiriato, government positions have continued to be used for self-interest purposes as well as to procure the interests of the higher group in power.

The circumstances under which Salinas was declared president, and the subsequent protests by the opposition during the elections of state governorships, only deepened the lack of credibility in the prevailing electoral system, as well as the longstanding and evident corruption of the Mexican electoral process, dating back to the times of Díaz.

The caricaturists of both periods seemed determined to reveal the many resources the government implemented to win the elections. The evident corruption of the electoral process in both periods is the motif of the caricature “Revolución y Reforma” (Figure 16). The drawing shows the legendary Francisco I. Madero, who defied the long-lasting Dictator and succeeded to remove him from office. In the 1990s, Madero reappears raising a banner in favor of “effective suffrage,” while another figure suggests he may receive a check instead. The author of this image plays with the word “efectivo” which is also used to designate cash in Mexico. He intends to show how the PRI is much more willing to pay for the votes and silence the protests, rather than accept the actual results
Entre col y col, lechuga

El cacicazgo infeliz
no hay ambición que no cobre,
y para arruinar al pobre
tiene un bárbaro cariz;
le basta un frítil desliz
y cualquier delito abulta;
y tan odioso resulta,
que á quien declara enemigo,
lo hace soldado, en castigo,
después de prisión y multa.

Así ha logrado dejar
pueblos muy dichosos ante,
hoy pobres, sin habitantes
y en continuo malestar.
Todos tratan de emigrar
que vivir allí es martirio,
y hasta parece delirio
que no hay nadie que lo explique,
que donde manda un cacique
no manda ni Don Porfirio.

Figure 17 José Guadalupe Posada, “Entre col y col, lechuga” in El Diablito Rojo, 1909.

The cacique had the power to imprison any of his workers and have them enlisted in the army as punishment.
of the elections in the 1990s. Ironically, Madero’s image rallying in favor of “effective suffrage” during the 1990s, is contemporary to the situation lived 90 years earlier.

The elections that allowed the PRD, an opposition party to the PRI, to rule the nation’s capital city in 1997, and the recent election of PAN’s candidate Vicente Fox, to the Presidency, are the first clear signs of democratic aperture and a transparent electoral process. These examples must be followed at a local level as well, where the disruptions and protests, due to the evident corruption of electoral results, have continued to undermine the practice of democracy in Mexico.

THE ELITE IN POWER

When General Díaz arrived to the Presidential chair, he considered it of utmost importance to invite the powerful regional leaders to become part of his government. The caciques not only had the capacity to destabilize the country, but also held a tight control over the their territory and the people living within its boundaries.

“Entre col y col, lechuga” (Figure 17), is a caricature portraying the abuse, which the caciques exercised on their workers. In this illustration, we see a wealthy cacique sending a worker to prison. As the caption explains, not only did the cacique have the power to imprison any of his workers if they disobeyed their orders or rebel against the work regime, but he could also have them enlisted in the army as a punishment. The cacique evidently worked in alliance with the local authorities in the exercise of these drastic measures. The caption also makes reference to the power of the caciques to control the lives of his workers and neighboring communities, which in local spheres, was a power even greater than the President’s.
The industrialists use the idea of a “free-market” to openly abuse the worker’s rights.
If Díaz cleverly sought to maintain peace in the country by creating alliances with the powerful regional caciques, Salinas followed a similar pattern, establishing close ties with the industrial sector. In the late twentieth century, it was not the “hacendados” but the industrialists, who had become the new powerful elite. It was their industries that maintained the economy of the country. The government, interested in protecting the industrial sectors, kept a tight control over the labor unions, offered them (the industrialists) facilities to achieve the state-enterprises, and disregarded the regulations against the alliances between industrialists and bankers. During Salinas’s presidential term, many of the most powerful Mexican entrepreneurs were able to accumulate massive fortunes, while some of them even appeared listed as the wealthiest people in the world. Salinas reforms, intended to increase the percentage of exports, succeeded, but at a great cost for the internal economy of the country. Furthermore, the growing economic progress did not include the distribution of wealth among the majority. Thus, as was also the case under Díaz (see Figure 6), the polarization between the masses and the elite was further enhanced.

In “Paradigma Neoliberal” (Figure 18) two wealthy industrialists in dark suits and bow ties are the characters of a sardonic caricature. With a big smile on his face, one of them argues he has “eradicated the poverty in his industry by firing it,” obviously, referring to the workers. Both figures laugh at his witty solution to the problem. The caricature helps to unveil the sentiments of the author, and perhaps, those of the masses towards the industrialists. It portrays the disinterest of the elite towards the working class as well as their responsibility in the economic situation of Mexico. The title itself, also
plays with the neoliberal ideas of a “free-market,” to satirize the conveniency of these paradigms for the industrial elite.

When we compare this caricature to Figure 17, “Entre col y col, lechuga” it becomes easier to perceive the kind of power the elite has enjoyed, as well as the overwhelming control they had over the workers. There is an evident sympathy of the critics towards the working class and the masses in general.

THE PROBLEM OF LAND TENURE

The tenure of land has been another constant problem in the country. Many believe the problem of the land goes back to the fifteenth century, when the Spanish began the colonization of Indigenous territory. Nevertheless, in spite of the imposition of the Spanish culture in the New Hemisphere, a few indigenous communities retained their relative independence, as well as the titles to their lands.

However, under Díaz’s government, thousands of acres which were once tended by the indigenous communities, were taken over by the haciendas. Not only was the land largely concentrated in the hands of a small number of families, it was also sold by the government to foreign companies, eager to invest in the nation’s industry. It is believed the government failed to regulate the accumulation of land as a way to compensate their political supporters, and spur the economic progress of the country.

The later apparition of the compañías deslindadoras and the ejidos would only complicate further the situation of the Indians. The bonanza experienced by the country was enjoyed by a small elite who held both wealth and power, while the indigenous population was reduced by famine and poverty.
After the revolution, an original intent to reform the tenure of the land was consolidated during Lázaro Cárdenas’s administration, and continued by the next president in turn. However, the needs of the agricultural sectors would remain unattended. Furthermore, their territory was diminished with the growing power of the *haciendas ganaderas*, which maintained close relationships with the local authorities.

Carlos Salinas also focused on the tenure of the land during his presidency. Salinas proposed to reform article 127 of the Constitution, which would grant the agricultural sectors and communities the titles to their land and the opportunity to choose between the private property and the *ejido*. Ultimately, this reform would overwhelmingly benefit those who had the power to purchase the land, instead of the agricultural population, who lacked the necessary means to keep their parcels producing.

The lack of support from the government to control the prices of staples has also proved detrimental to the agricultural sectors. For example, it has been found that between 1982 and 1999, the corn production in Mexico lost 59.3% of its value, while wheat lost 50.7% and soy lost 58.2% of their value.\(^57\)

The problem regarding the tenure of the land would become a national issue again with the revolt of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional in the southern state of Chiapas, in early 1994. Since the mid XX century, the land for pasture had grown at a considerable rate, creating a greater antagonism and violent confrontations between the Indian agricultural workers and the wealthy “ganaderos” of Chiapas.

The caciques are largely responsible for the poignant situation between them and the Indigenous communities.
The first response from the government to the uprising was to send the army to fight against the guerrilla. However, the protests of the media, the intellectuals, and the public opinion, pressured the government into seeking alternative solutions to resolve the problem. Nonetheless, the revolt in Chiapas represented another crack in the Mexican political system that was already badly damaged.

The guerrilla group, which violently protested against the abuse of the local authorities in Chiapas and the regional caciques, would use Zapata’s name, nearly 80 years after the popular caudillo had risen in arms to defend the rights of the Indians.

The relationship between both periods did not go unnoticed by the press, especially from the newspaper *La Jornada*, which has closely followed the movements of the guerrilla and published the statements sent forth by the EZLN.

The satire “Caciques chiapanecos” (Figure 19) portrays the timeless image of the cacique. The figure of the traditional powerful rancher has not changed much in a hundred years (see Figures 3 and 17). He appears wearing boots, a hat to guard him against the sun, and a gun in his belt as a symbol of power and dominance. His attitude, his rugged face, and the figure of a skull engraved on his guns make him an ominous figure.

The cacique wonders why the situation has become so poignant, while he looks over his land, limited by barbed wire. There is no question that the caricaturist clearly intends to make the reader aware of the fact that it is the caciques who are largely responsible for the “poignant” situation between them and the Indigenous communities of Chiapas.
The indigenous revolts have placed Mexico in an awkward position before the world “which already believed that with NAFTA (Mexico would be) in the crossroads to the first world, white and developed.”
“La paz ante todo” (Figure 20) is a caricature referring, not only to the problem of the indigenous communities of Mexico, but also to the development of the country in relation to these communities. Although the text in this image says much more than the actual drawing, it succeeds to gather many of the issues we discuss in this chapter. The image, divided into three segments, portrays the elite of the country. In the first segment, a figure expresses his discontent towards Don Porfirio, who failed to finish the Indian population. The figures of the second segment argue that 50 years of PRI and 30 of Televisa (the largest television network in Mexico with strong ties to the PRI) “have not been enough to civilize the country.” The third segment portrays two individuals who discuss the problem in racial terms, acknowledging the existence of individuals with indigenous traits.

At the top, the author expresses some of the feelings felt by the elite towards the Indigenous uprising of Chiapas, which, they argue, have placed Mexico in an awkward situation before the world “which already believed that with NAFTA (Mexico would be) in the crossroads to the first world, white and developed.” The rest of the text argues that the Indians, civilians, children and women deserve to die, since they have “denigrated Mexico by rebelling” against the government.

Indeed, the caricature gives insight to the underlying problem of modernity. The country can only move forward by procuring the welfare of the majority and not just a few. However, the majority are also the marginalized, the indigenous segments and the lower classes of the social scale. The caricature also hints at the race issue as a constant barrier preventing the indigenous people to be treated and accepted as equal, not only in society, but by government policies as well.
The fate of the indigenous communities is still uncertain. At the turn of the century, the government has yet to decide whether or not it will grant the indigenous communities their autonomy, while there are some serious reforms still pending to support the agricultural sectors and their production.

THE MODERNITY OF THE COUNTRY

During most of the XIX century, the large Mexican territory lacked the strength of a federal government that would maintain the country united. The internal conflicts between political factions and regional leaderships also hindered the economic development of the country.

Thus, once elected to the presidency, General Porfirio Díaz used all the necessary means to enforce order and peace, which were necessary to secure the stability of the country. He would also focus his government policies to promote the development of the internal markets of the nation, as well as foreign investment. Peace, order and progress became the key issues of Díaz’s long-lasting administration.

His alliances with foreign markets would successfully activate the Mexican economy and the development of the nation’s infrastructure. The innovations of the industrial revolution such as the railroad trains, the use of electricity and electric cars, which became a symbol of material progress, were implemented in Mexico.

Unfortunately, the progress he initiated in the communication and transportation systems and the industrial sector, was staled with the revolution of 1910. Not until Plutarco Elías Calles reached the presidency was the country able to re-build the infrastructure Díaz had previously achieved.
By the decades of the fifties and sixties, the government had produced a growing economy. However, the vision of the “Mexican miracle” would soon begin to crumble. The country experienced several financial crises, product of the many errors committed by the previous administrations. The tax system was completely inefficient, the state-controlled industries were unproductive, and the wealth was unequally distributed. The economic crisis would be paired up with other social crises, such as the unforgettable murder of students in 1968 and the many deaths of agricultural workers and Indians by the military.

Ninety years after the Porfiriato, the modernity and progress of the country were once again championed. This time, President Salinas used all his knowledge in the country’s finances, to improve the conditions of the Mexican economy. He reiterated again and again the well being of the country’s economy, largely dependant on an alleged political and social stability that attracted the international markets and foreign investment. Salinas’s policies, supported by the FMI, based on the idea of a free-market, with no intervention from the state, were believed to be the ideal way for Mexico to reach economic development. The progress of the country’s economy would necessarily promote the modernization of the society as well. Salinas lobbied and signed the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and the United States, which would secure Mexico’s trade with his powerful neighbors. The treaty would also benefit the large industries, which had the capacity to export and endure the new wave of imports introduced into the country.

Ultimately, the NAFTA has largely benefited the large industrial sectors and generated a broader development of major industries in Mexico. Hypothetically, aperture
Figure 21 Helguera, “Indios de Chiapas” in La Jornada, January 13, 1994.

Two indigenous figures watch a modern military jet plane fly over their territory.
of the market would necessarily elevate the quality and productivity of the manufacturing companies. However, most of the small industries were completely unprepared for this action, which brought fatal consequences for nearly 90% of the small industrial sector.\textsuperscript{58}

Like many other caricatures printed in the 1990s, the theme of modernization is used once again in the caricature “Indios de Chiapas” (Figure 21). This drawing portrays two indigenous figures in the jungle, watching a military jet plane fly above their territory. One of them asks the other if that was the modernity that just passed over them. The caricaturist is evidently satirizing the modernization trends of the country that Salinas’s government has claimed by offering a glimpse of the type of contact the Indigenous communities have had with technology. It is also important to mention this caricature appears only a few days after the rise of the EZLN in the state of Chiapas, when the government has decided to retaliate using the force of the military.

When we look back at the caricatures printed in both periods, we find a similar preoccupation with the subject of progress or modernity. While many of the satires of the early 1900s refer to the progress hailed by Díaz (see Figure 6 and 7), the illustrations of the 1990s also tackle the subject of “modernity” in Mexican society. The imposition of technological and economic modernization is enforced by the “illustrated” elite, the “científicos” of the 1900s and the “technocrats” of the 1990s, who believe they are the only ones capable of governing the country, and will thus, try to perpetuate their seat in power at all costs.

In the earlier satires, there is an evident concern towards Díaz’s intention to thrust material progress into the country, which would evidently affect the Mexican traditional

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 7.
society. However, in the 1990s, progress and modernity were focused on the economic stability and operation of the nation. Nevertheless, both governments succeeded to implement and enforce modern trends while denying the actual conditions of the majority.

The term “modernization,” which became emblematic for the Salinas administration was also used by the contemporary caricaturists to parody the economic situation of the Mexican people. They not only satirized the allegedly “modern” conditions of the agricultural sectors (largely in poverty and living in backward conditions), but they also portrayed the evident contrast between the masses and the small percentage of wealthy families that were benefited by the modernizing trends. (See Figures 9, 11, 12 and 20).

THE CHALLENGES OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

The past administrations had equivocally believed the increase of material production would direct Mexico into the path of modernization experienced by other highly developed nations. Unfortunately, they failed to recognize the basic products and services needed by the majorities.

In spite of all the party’s efforts to maintain order, the rebellion of the Indians in the south became hard to ignore. Plus, the apparent rise of drug-trafficking and related violence, especially in the northern cities, began to create huge dents in the social stability. Furthermore, there was an increase of criminality in the police forces, which was also tied to the drug cartels. Evidently, the old and disintegrating PRI was failing to
control the diverse sectors of the society. The Mexican authoritarian government was facing an internal crisis that could only be resolved through a series of profound changes.

In the course of this research, it has become evident that the political, economic and social conditions of the country are closely related, each influencing the other in particular ways. There is no doubt that Mexico’s political system, and the PRI, had secured a relative stability within the country for many decades. As Lorenzo Meyer points out, both the authoritarian government along with one party system constituted the base for Mexico’s post-revolutionary stability. However, these two elements also became the main obstacles to overcome, in order to reach a real democratic system and a more equitable distribution of wealth in the country.

Although it might be argued that electoral fraud, corruption and the control of the political and economic policies by a small elite have been constant problems affecting the Mexican scenario since the Porfiriato, there is no doubt that these conflicts became even more evident with the economic aperture and modernization plans that characterize the governments in power during the early 1900s and the 1990s. The political, economic and social situation of Mexico during both periods allows us to establish several parallel problems that lead the country into extreme crises.

The newly elected government must address these conflicts, which have profoundly affected the Mexican society. Unfortunately, the overwhelming corruption that has permeated the entire system will probably be one of the toughest problems to resolve in order to make any kind of reform the new government undertakes. However, there is hope that with the establishment of a democratic electoral process, the people will
be able to choose those who they believe will best represent their interests and remove those who fail them.

Nevertheless, electoral democracy is only the first step. The re-organization and efficiency of the existing institutions is also necessary, as well as the recovery of the three powers in government. A reform in the judicial system must also be attained to provide, once more, the stability and security the country needs to move forward.

In relation to the agrarian industry, the government should not only offer development assistance, but also promote the production of low-cost staples and products, which can be consumed by the majorities. Additionally, a conscientious change in both the industrial sectors and the government can also produce a better re-distribution of the nation’s wealth. These are only some of the issues that need to be addressed by the new government. However, there are many other lessons to be learned from the errors committed by the past administrations.

EPILOGUE

There are numerous written materials criticizing the administration of the country, and I hope this project helped to add caricature as an important visual source of information. The political caricatures printed in Mexican anti-government newspapers have contributed to other media resources to protest against the injustices suffered by the people from particular groups of power, such as the caciques, the military or the government itself. The manner in which the authors of the illustrations represent the problems affecting the country can also help to understand how the people perceived the problems of their society. Furthermore, the caricatures help us grasp the continuation of
Figure 22  El Fisgón, “Preocupación” in La Jornada, May 24, 1994.

“The movement of forces are similar to those in the era of Don Porfirio: peasants uprising... zapatistas... technocrats in government... gringos tempted to invade Veracruz.”
certain viewpoints permeating the Mexican society, such as the mistrust towards modern
technology and foreign intervention, especially from the United States, which is seen as a
constant threat towards the cultural identity of the Mexican society.

The caricatures used in this project not only reflect evident signs of opposition to
the Porfiriato regime and to Salinas’s government policies, but also reveal a general
concern to similar conflicts (i.e. foreign presence, elitist rule, peasant unrest) affecting the
Mexican society in each period (see Figure 22). Whether they contributed to increasing
the social unrest lived in both stages would be difficult to prove, but there is no doubt
they intended to create awareness of the political, social and economic reality suffered by
the people. One way or the other, the opposition grew stronger during both crucial
moments in Mexican history, giving way to the end of both authoritarian regimes, and
rising hopes of re-constructing a better political and social scenario that would benefit the
majorities.

The immense value of caricatures in the re-construction of history and their role
as primary sources of information is clear. These sources facilitate a comparison of the
political, social and economic problems faced by Mexico during two particular time
periods. I hope this attempt to recapture the people’s view of the conflicts affecting their
nation and their creative practices in discussing these issues, will offer the contemporary
reader, if not a better understanding of these problems, at least a more humorous
approach to the conflicts that have constantly preoccupied the Mexican society.
LIST OF REFERENCES


