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INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE:
THE MEXICAN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

Institutional Change:
The Mexican Chamber of Deputies

by

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This research investigates the linkage between political change and legislative institutional change in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies since 1970. A series of electoral reforms beginning in 1977 allowed the opposition parties to increase their Chamber representation. How were issues of internal organization resolved in the new political context of strengthened opposition conflict? How did these institutional changes affect the Chamber activity? In contrast to the efficiency and specialization perspective from Organization Theory, the theoretical approach to these questions directs attention to how members try to shape the legislative structure and rules to advantage themselves. In this research, I track the institutional and behavioral changes in the Chamber floor and committee system since 1970 with an interrupted time series design. These political and institutional changes reflect the power and strategic interaction between the opposition and ruling majority party, PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). The majority party restricted the institutional rules and structures in the early post-reform legislatures until the opposition increased to an average of 41% of the seats in the 1988-97 legislatures. Then, the opposition parties were able to force some institutional changes to allow them more political space. Currently, the opposition holds a majority in the Chamber and has capitalized on the gradual changes that have been taking place since the late 1970s.
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Chapter 1

Legislative Institutional Change

The study of comparative legislatures has become more prominent over the last decade. The global wave of democratization has increased our attention on state institutions, particularly with the concern for designing new institutions. In general, this growing research area has more cases and new sources of cross-national data with which to explore various legislative questions. The study of regime change reminds us that legislatures are dynamic institutions, capable of both changing and leading to change (Liebert and Cotta 1990; Remington 1994; Close 1995; Olson and Norton 1996). For example, legislatures in the former Soviet bloc nations are frequently in the news headlines as a major site of political conflict over economic and political reform.

The political significance of many Latin American legislatures has also increased. The Mexican Chamber of Deputies in particular has recently become the focus of national and international attention. In July 1997, the ruling majority party, PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party) lost its majority within the Chamber for the first time in 70 years. The opposition parties coordinated their efforts and took control of the Chamber leadership, including the floor and committee system.

"This is a legislature that is just waking up from a 70 year sleep," said Santiago Creel Miranda, a newly-elected member from the conservative National Action Party. He said many of the internal rules of the Congress were written on the assumption that the Government’s party would always dwarf other parties.... The most basic procedures and customs of the legislature are now up for renegotiation," (Preston 1997).
How did this Chamber of Deputies evolve from a rubber stamp for the President into a raucous legislature where PRI is fighting for its political life? The Mexican political system has undergone gradual change over the last two decades, partly as an unintended consequence of electoral reform. Electoral reforms increased the number of opposition parties competing in the electoral process and expanded their representation in the Chamber. As a result, there was an increase of political conflict both inside and outside the Chamber institution during the 1980s and 1990s. In this research, I outline systematic, empirical evidence of how the ruling majority party and opposition reacted both institutionally and politically in this newly conflictual legislative setting. How were issues of internal organization resolved in the new political context of strengthened opposition representation? How did these institutional changes affect the Chamber activity and output?

This research fits within the more general theoretical area of institutional change. Kiser and Ostrom (1982) define institutions as:

"Rules used by individuals for determining who and what are included in decision situations, how information is structured, what actions can be taken and in what sequence, and how individual actions will be aggregated into collective decisions...all of which exist in a language shared by some community of individuals rather than as the physical parts of some external environment," (Kiser and Ostrom 1982:179).

An institution is a rule or set of rules (both formal and informal) that structure the interaction among a particular group of actors. Institutions are a common subject of investigation in political science because they are a large part of the political landscape, particularly national-level institutions such as national legislatures.
Institutional change in particular has been a widely studied topic. There have been a number of different theoretical approaches to address questions of legislative institutional change, including Old Institutionalism, Structural-Functionalism, Institutionalization, Organization Theory, and the different variants of New Institutionalism. Each approach has its own unique insight into the study of legislative institutions and their change. In this chapter, I briefly outline each of these approaches, with concentration on the Organization Theory and the New Institutionalism approaches. In particular, I develop a political conflict model that focuses on the process of institutional change as the conflictual interaction between the minority opposition and the majority party.

*Old Institutionalism*

Institutional theory dominated political science in the United States from the late 19th century through the first half of this century. European scholarship influenced the essence of this early political science, with its normative concerns for civic duty, training future government leaders and detailed description of government institutions. Through formal, structural analysis based upon legal codes and constitutional laws, scholars provided detailed description of the government institutions (Eckstein 1963; Scott 1995). Among the few early comparative scholars, this approach did not move beyond the study of European governments (Burgess 1902).

By concentrating on the legal setting, these scholars emphasized the static nature of government institutions. For legislative studies, description and codification of rules and structure was supposed to provide complete understanding of the institution.
Problems of institutional change were not addressed within this approach (Macridis 1955). This work also lacked a driving theoretical focus because more attention was given to historical reconstruction and description rather than to theoretical development (Easton 1965; 1985). Finally, normative bias and moral judgments were closely tied with the early analysis of institutions. Many scholars were motivated to investigate whether the ideal principals of government were upheld by the institutions.

The subsequent behavioral revolution brought a concern with explicit theoretical development and quantitative testing. Advances in public opinion survey techniques and other quantitative methods focused explanation on informal distributions of power, attitudes and political behavior - not just the institutional setting of politics. Before any real level of understanding about institutions had been achieved, attention shifted to political behavior.

"Behavioralism was tremendously important to the scientific study of politics because it emphasized...precise observation, counting and measuring where possible, the clear statement of hypotheses and unambiguous standards for accepting or rejecting them. In each of these respects there was a clear break with the past, a clear differentiation from literary essays, catalogues of legal and institutional minutiae, and philosophical discourse," (Shepsle 1989:133).

While institutions did not disappear from focus, the dominance of behavioralism pushed institutional variables away from the center of explanation. Thus, while this "Old Institutionalism" might have been a necessary first step, it did not focus upon the political conflict of actors and its affect upon the institution. In fact, institutional change was markedly absent.
**Structural-Functionalism**

In the early 1960s, comparative scholars were looking for a theoretical framework to incorporate a widening scope of countries with the more traditional set of Western European countries. Structural-functionalism was an attempt by comparative scholars to conceptualize every political system as a set of functions and structures. Almond and Coleman (1960) outline a common framework of functions, including political socialization, elite recruitment, interest articulation and aggregation, political communication, and law-making. Scholars could then compare this set of functions across all countries and determine the structures that perform them. This approach used a stylized account of institutions and their functions.

There have been many different attempts to determine an adequate list of functions for legislatures (Kornberg and Musolf 1970; Packenham 1970; Agor 1971a; Hirsch and Hancock 1971; Kornberg 1971; Loewenberg and Patterson 1979; Mezey 1983). Legislative scholars set out to map the functions of these institutions: Mezey (policy-making, representation, system-maintenance), Packenham (legitimation, recruitment, decision-making), and Loewenberg and Patterson (linkage, recruiting leaders, conflict management). De la Garza (1972) uses a functional framework for the Mexican Chamber of Deputies (lawmaking, communication, legitimation, and elite recruitment) and asks the standard structural-functionalist question: if this legislature does not legislate, what does it do?

By the 1970s, the usefulness of this approach was in question. As Mezey (1983) points out, the focus on functions widened our horizons, but also greatly confused the question of definition. Different variables that had been ignored by this approach gained
academic attention, such as class conflict and international constraints. More importantly, this framework did not produce testable hypotheses because it was too broad and vague. Structural-functionalism was not really an explanation but rather a descriptive tool. By discussing these legislative functions, scholars had not explained them, but just described them more systematically. Finally, structural-functionalism was also considered ethnocentric because Western scholars paid too little attention to ideology, traditional structures and religion (LaPalombara 1968; Wiarda 1981).

For the purpose of explaining legislative change, this approach was inadequate. While not precluding system change, it did not incorporate any conditions or mechanisms for change.

“Functionalists always run the risk of indulging in a self-deceiving, conservative, and complacent commentary on the status quo. When analyzing the tendency to remain stable and to perpetuate itself manifested by a complex set of interrelationships they often forgot how a system has developed and why it will ultimately have to change....Functionalists usually forget to discuss why, when, how, and under what circumstances strains that had heretofore reinforced the hold of the central pattern become too burdensome for it and force it to transform itself or even disappear,” (Crozier 1964:294-95).

The problems associated with the structural-functionalist approach highlight the concern against a rigid framework to describe every political system. Instead, a general theory of institutions and their change must be flexible and include variables, not descriptive categories.

_institutionalization_

Institutionalization and structural-functionalism both use descriptive categories to determine the level of development of a country’s political institutions. Yet the
institutionalization approach has some distinct differences and refinements over structural-functionalism and is still used today by some scholars. Institutionalization is conceptualized as a change process, with scholars focusing on a framework of core concepts to describe the end-point. What should a fully developed institution look like? This approach has been used to study different types of institutions, mostly notably political parties and legislatures. However, there still exists a debate over the definition of institutionalization and its core concepts.¹

Polsby (1968) states that an institutionalized organization has three components: well-boundedness, complex organization, and universal/automatic decision-making. For Polsby, institutionalization is a monotonic and unidirectional process. While he identifies elements of institutionalization in the US Congress, a causal explanation of legislative change is not included; there is not a generalized model of institutionalization. Yet his work encouraged other scholars to test the generalizability of this concept by extending Polsby’s components to other legislatures.

In contrast to Polsby, Sisson (1971) conceptualizes institutionalization in more general terms so it can be useful for a wide variety of developing countries. Unlike the Western European countries, new states do not have an extended process of institutional development. Sisson’s definition of institutionalization is the “creation and persistence of valued rules, procedures, and patterns of behavior that enable the successful

¹ Eisenstadt states that institutionalization is the “organization of a societally prescribed system of differentiated behavior oriented to the solution of certain problems inherent in a major area of social life,” (Eisenstadt 1964:35). Huntington’s more minimal definition is that institutionalization refers to “the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability,” (Huntington 1968:12). His components of institutionalization are: adaptability; structural complexity; autonomy; and coherence (consensus on procedures for resolving disputes). In their work on party systems in Latin America, Mainwaring and Scully (1995) define institutionalization as a “process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and widely known, if not universally accepted. Actors develop expectations,
accommodation of new configurations of political claimants and/or demands within a
given organization whether it be a party, a legislature, or a state,” (Sisson 1971:19).
Adaptability and change are vital to this perspective on legislative institutions in
(potentially) volatile settings. He outlines three criteria by which the external
environment and the internal order of the legislature can be compared: structure
(autonomy and complexity), culture (institutional behavior and institutional goals), and
the level of elite and mass support.

Jewell and Patterson (1977) characterize an institutionalized organization as more
complex, autonomous, coherent, adaptive, and universalistic. Likewise, Copeland and
Patterson (1994) state that the concept of institutionalization involves “establishing and
maintaining organizational structures, and linking the organization to its environment. A
highly institutionalized legislature exhibits autonomy, formality, uniformity, and
complexity,” (Copeland and Patterson 1994:4). They discuss how the well-established
parliaments in Western Europe continued to increase their power within the system over
the last half century through institutionalization.

As these examples demonstrate, this approach has not produced a common
definition of institutionalization or a universal set of core components because it is not
connected to a more general theory of institutions. Hibbing (1988) criticizes how this
approach has been ad hoc because the relationships have not been adequately specified.
He states that institutionalization boils down to how institutions adopt particular qualities
and lose others over time. In addition, Liebert (1996) argues that this perspective does
not include the level of political conflict - the politics of institutionalization.

orientations, and behavior based on the premise that this practice or organization will prevail in the
Hibbing suggests that organization theory rather than the amorphous concept of institutionalization should be used to model the process of legislative change. Organization theory would allow scholars to determine more systematically how legislatures change rather than using ad hoc, descriptive criteria that differs between scholars. Organization theory would also allow for variation and inconsistencies in these trends. Instead of an ‘invisible hand’ of institutionalization across legislatures, change would not have to follow a prescribed sequence.

Organization Theory

Early organization theory originated in the business and public administration context. These scholars wanted to identify the tasks necessary to achieve the organization’s goals and what structure best maximizes organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Barnard 1938; Weber 1947; March and Simon 1958; Udy 1965; Negandhi 1969; Spray 1976). Even in the more recent work on business organization, Daft (1995) states that the dominant perspective is the search for a more effective organization with increased efficiency in performance.

Organization theory has contributed to the fields of sociology, psychology, political science and economics, with wide diversity found within this framework (Spray 1976). The organizational structure is used as both a dependent and independent variable. Organization scholars investigate the impact of such variables as size, technology, workload, and environment on the organizational structure. In turn,

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2Barnard (1938) distinguishes between organizational effectiveness and efficiency whereby effectiveness is the accomplishment of recognized objectives and efficiency is accomplishing them with the lowest cost. Together, these two concepts indicate the desire to achieve the organization’s objectives with little wasted effort and low cost.
structural characteristics of the organization such as complexity, formalization and centralization are also used as independent variables to explain the organization’s performance.

The use of organization theory within legislative studies began largely with the work of Froman (1968):

“If we view Congress as a formal organization...we will be able to avoid strictly ad hoc interpretations of Congressional phenomena, and in their place, substitute a somewhat organized and consistent set of empirical generalizations which have been found to be true of other formal organizations. Such propositions, used in explanations, may be quite powerful and parsimonious and aid immeasurably in our understanding of why Congress is as it is,” (Froman 1968:520).

Thus, scholars could trace the lines of commonality between legislatures and other types of organizations, thereby maintaining a level of generality to the discussion of legislatures. Organization theory provides a systematic explanation of the general evolution of legislatures through a framework of important concepts such as division of labor, organizational technology, adaptation, specialization, consolidation, efficiency, environment, complexity and formalization (Hedlund 1984).

The impetus for organizational change can arise from external stress and/or internal strain on the organization (Davidson and Oleszek 1976). External pressures include technology changes, public attitudes, relationships with other institutions, and workload. Internal pressures include change in organizational size, personnel and norms. The organization must adapt itself in response to these pressures. Davidson and Oleszek suggest that organizational consolidation relieves internal pressure and that organizational adaptation relieves external pressure. Many legislative scholars have used this adaptation rubric. For Hibbing’s (1988) case of the British House of Commons, the

Organization theory does not disallow political motivations or consequences to institutional change. In fact, political change is one of several possible pressures on the organization. After all, organizational change is caused by stress or strain on the organization, which can include a myriad of different factors. Moe states that:

"[organization theory] really is not a theory at all, but a conceptual framework that provides a language for thinking about organizations. Scholars seem to rely on it because it makes so much sense and because it is so vacuous it can accommodate almost any set of organizational concerns. But it cannot explain anything, and most of the time it serves as little more than a cataloging device for listing large numbers of internal and external factors that allegedly need to be taken into account in understanding organizations," (Moe 1991:114).

Yet many of these scholars focus on a more narrow set of variables such as technology, workload, organization size, norms, environment, and public support. Hedlund (1985) outlines factors affecting the performance of a legislative organization, including environment, history, demographic and membership traits and organizational structure. Hedlund and Hamm (1994) investigate external and internal sources of organizational specialization including workload, complexity of bureaucracy, scope of
legislative authority, chamber size, time constraints and membership preferences. The need for specialization is one of the primary causes of procedural or structural change.

For example, workload and chamber size are two prominent independent variables which put pressure on the legislative organization. As a result of this pressure, the organization experiences rule/structural change to improve the organization’s performance (Cooper 1977; Stewart 1992). When chamber size increases, legislative business becomes more unwieldy. Therefore, the organizational rules are reformed to become a more hierarchically controlled structure with more rigid rules for conducting business (Kornberg 1967; Dodd and Oppenheimer 1981; Hedlund 1984). Francis and Riddlesperger (1982) argue that larger chambers have more restrictive floor rules because there are more members to debate and introduce bills and amendments. From this perspective the concern is to keep the legislative process moving smoothly.

Legislative workload is the number, type, and degree of technical complexity of legislation introduced into the legislature. Workload changes when the volume and scope of government activity expands (Damgaard 1977). As workload increases, legislative floor rules are changed to more effectively deal with increased demand on the legislative process. These rule changes are not specifically targeted at any particular partisan group of legislators, but are general restrictions on all legislators’ ability to affect the legislative process. In a variety of legislative settings, organization scholars have found that with increases in legislative workload, the procedural rules were changed to restrict the behavior of members and thus allow for a more efficient legislative process (Kornberg and Mishler 1976; Judge 1984; Opello 1986).
Organization theory’s notion of change as the result of internal or external pressures makes a great deal of sense. Political conflict is just another “stress” on the organization but has not been central to this explanation. Specialization has been a primary motivation for explanation. Therefore, the types of explanations for the structure and performance of organizations are constrained by this de-emphasis on politics by many scholars. Much of its use in political science work on legislative change has not bridged the gap between organization theory and the essentially political nature of legislative institutions. In contrast, scholars within New Institutionalism bring politics back into the heart of any institutional explanation.

**New Institutionalism**

The renewed interest in institutional explanations since the early 1980s has spawned the label of “New Institutionalism” in reaction to the excesses of the behavioral revolution and the clear differences with “Old Institutionalism.” While not a sharp break with the past, there are new emphases and insights. The current work seeks to reestablish the study of the institutions in the political process (March and Olsen 1989). For many, the intersection between behavior and institutions has come to the forefront of explanation. In this way, the treatment of institutional explanations is more complex than before. Yet among the social scientists that argue ‘institutions matter’, there are differences over the extent to which institutions matter and how that influence is manifested. The main differences can be determined with a comparison between rational choice, historical-institutional, and New Institutional Economics scholars.
Rational Choice

Rational choice theory originated in the social choice literature, which focused upon voting rules and their consequences. These theorists were concerned with why voting rules, which have inherent instability in theory, result in stability in the real world (Arrow 1971). Rational choice scholars suggest that institutions account for this stability in outcome. Institutions exist for coordination of actions and therefore reduce uncertainty of individual behavior and outcomes.

Rational choice models in political science have been through several different generations, with the recent scholars creating more institutionally rich models (see, Shepsle and Weingast 1994). Many rational choice scholars investigate legislative institutions (primarily the US Congress) because it regularly uses voting mechanisms to arrive at outcomes. They try to determine what motivates the institutional arrangements in that legislative body. What are the problems that legislators are trying to solve? And, what are the institutions they are using to solve these problems - the committee system? parties? procedural rules?

One approach points to structure-induced equilibrium. Using the logic of exchange, the congressional committee system is regarded as one institutional solution to the problem of individual deal-making over each piece of legislation. Committees, with unique jurisdictions, solve the problem of disequilibrium of preferences and provides stability for the whole system. Thus, the rules and structure impose conditions that influence the decision-making process (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Shepsle and Weingast 1994).3

3There is some disagreement over the relative stability of institutions. McKelvey and Ordeshook (1984) and Riker (1982) argue that institutional procedures do not adequately constrain actors: “In the end,
Other scholars stress the importance of information and uncertainty (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1989; Krehbiel 1991). They assert that the majority controls all institutional choices and that legislators have uncertainty about the connection between their policy decisions and their consequences. The majority creates the committee system to provide specialized information for policy-making. This specialization and information leads to collective benefits. The provision of information by the committee system as a structural division of labor is a key solution to the uncertainty problem, while voting on the floor keeps committees in check.

Scholars also point to the legislative parties as a key institutional mechanism for collective action in the U.S. Congress (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Rohde 1991; Davidson 1992; Cox and McCubbins 1993). For Cox and McCubbins, parties are used to solve various collective dilemmas. They define collective dilemmas as “situations in which the rational but unorganized action of group members may lead to an outcome that all consider worse than outcomes attainable by organized action,” (Cox and McCubbins 1993:84). Party leaders enhance the prospects of achieving members’ collective interests by using such tools as restrictive rules to advantage their party members (Sinclair 1994). The party members empower their leadership to provide institutional advantages.

“Delegation of tasks, powers and resources to an agent should therefore be a function of the costs and benefits to the membership of that particular set of arrangements and should therefore, institutions are no more than rules and rules are themselves the product of social decisions. Consequently, the rules are also not in equilibrium. One can expect that losers on a series of decisions under a particular set of rules will attempt (often successfully) to change institutions and hence the kind of decisions produced under them,” (Riker 1982:444). From their perspective, institutions are only ‘concealed tastes’ and therefore can change almost as easily as equilibria based on preferences. For Shepsle and Weingast, changes in rules are costly and therefore not easily undertaken, even by majorities. Institutions are more binding from the Shepsle and Weingast perspective.
change when those costs and benefits change,” (Sinclair 1994:487). This shift in cost and benefit for the individual members sets the stage for institutional change.

For rational choice scholars, utility-maximizing individuals create institutions. Political institutions do not emerge spontaneously but rather through the deliberate actions of rational individuals. “Institutions are structures that emerge and take the specific form they do because they solve collective-action problems,” (Moe 1990a:217-218). The next group of scholars assert a more active role for institutions on the political outcome.

**Historical-Institutionalism**

There are historical-institutionalist scholars for whom the institutional context has an even more important role in defining the interests, constraints, and strategies of actors (Scott 1996). According to this approach, preferences of actors are not established prior to investigating the institutional context. “When making decisions, individuals do not ask the question ‘how do I maximize my interests in this situation?’ but instead ‘what is the appropriate response [that is] expected?” (Koelble 1995:233). Individual preference results from the interaction between various groups, interests, ideas and institutional structures. Thelen and Steinmo state that:

“Historical Institutionalists would not have trouble with the rational choice idea that political actors are acting strategically to achieve their ends. But clearly it is not very useful simply to leave it at that. We need a historically based analysis to tell us what they are trying to maximize and why they emphasize certain goals over others...In sum, institutions are not just another variable and the institutionalist claim is more than just that ‘institutions matter too.’ By shaping not just actors’ strategies, but their goals as well, and by mediating their relations of cooperation and conflict, institutions structure political situation and leave their own imprint on political outcomes,” (Thelen and Steinmo 1992:9).
For example, Peter Hall (1986) explores the impact of politics on the economic policy-making process in Britain and France. Why did Britain experience an economic downturn and a failure of government intervention after WWII while France experienced successful macro-economic policy intervention by the government? He places primacy on how institutions define and articulate interests, disseminate ideas and influence policy. Institutional factors play two important roles: they affect the degree of power held by different sets of actors and they influence the actors' definition of their interests, by establishing individual's institutional role/responsibility and their relationship to others. Similarly, Sikkink (1991) uses the cases of Argentina and Brazil and the economic development model of the 1960s to study how institutions and ideas converge around economic policies adopted by governments. Again, the core variables for the model are institutions, ideas, configuration of interests, and the international constraints.

The struggle over institutional change provides an insight into the conflict over interests, ideas and power. Political systems are not neutral arenas within which interests compete. The structure of the political system matters, so these scholars emphasize historical reconstruction (see, Skocpol 1985; Hall 1986; Katzenstein 1978; and Sikkink 1991). In essence, individuals calculate their utility but outcomes are shaped by a number of structural factors beyond individual control. There is also much more stability of institutions than in some of the rational choice models discussed above. However, the historical-institutional models are broad, sweeping epics of explanation that include a very large number of variables. In contrast, work within the New Institutional Economics tries to reduce this complexity by identifying the basic causal forces at work.
New Institutional Economics

Neoclassical economic theory suggested that institutions to regulate economic exchange are created through the free exchange of goods and services coordinated only by market forces (i.e. Adam Smith). Through the ongoing economic interactions of individuals, the “Invisible Hand” of the market would create efficient institutions.

As an alternative, the New Institutional Economics (NIE) approach does not assume an exchange process without cost. It modifies neoclassic economics by introducing information, agency theory and transaction costs (Williamson 1974, 1985a; Eggertsson 1990; North 1990; Ensminger 1992). The NIE approach is concerned with the development and evolution of economic institutions in addition to their performance. How do people structure their relations to reduce the costs of exchange? Transaction costs provide the essence of why economic institutions exist and how they operate. Transaction costs include the time and effort associated with gathering information, measuring value, negotiating, monitoring and enforcing agreements.

Institutions provide some consistency and cooperation to human interaction over time, with information about previous, current, and future interactions. They reduce some of the uncertainty associated with economic exchange. For example, Milgrom, North, and Weingast (1990) examine the origin of the Law Merchants as a system of judges to enforce commercial law in medieval Europe. This institution encouraged merchants to conduct honest exchange by providing information about their past behavior, collecting evidence against contract violators, imposing sanctions on violators and collecting judgments assessed against violators. While costly to undertake on an
individual basis, the institution of the Law Merchants allowed information gathering, contract negotiation, monitoring and enforcement to take place at a lower cost.

While transaction costs are central to this perspective, whether the existing institutions have the most efficient structure for minimizing these transaction costs has led to some debate within the NIE literature. Williamson (1985) argues that institutions are designed to directly reduce transaction costs and create more efficiency. Only the most efficient institutions survive in the competitive market, a trait heralded by strong the pure capitalist systems. In contrast, North (1990) argues that existing institutions do not necessarily have the most efficient structure because they are based upon an inefficient development process. The development of institutions is plagued by the same transaction costs that they are supposed to reduce.

"As North puts it (personal communication), 'if institutional change results in increasing efficiency, it is usually an accident.' One of the best illustrations of the sort of motivation that may drive institutional change is Bates' (1989) study of African agricultural policy. He finds that politicians promote agricultural policies that satisfy their political aspirations to be reelected, but are far less successful in promoting general agricultural development. As Bates notes, far more effective institutional methods exist to increase agricultural production, but they are not implemented, because they could not be selectively employed to achieve the ends most desired by the politicians, namely, their personal gain,” (Ensminger 1992:22).

North (1990) and Ensminger (1992) present a model for the analysis of institutional development and change. Institutional change happens because some actors want to improve their situation by altering the institution. At this point, the relative bargaining power and ideology of different actors become important for analysis of institutional change. Power allows one actor to make others do what they otherwise would not. Ideology is the set of beliefs and values with which individuals interpret the
world around them. Power determines which actors can push for change and ideology determines the desired direction of that change. Ensminger provides a model of change, which outlines a three-step process for the analysis of institutional choice:

"The first [step] is to consider how the available institutions distribute costs and benefits across society. The next step is to model the desires of the people and groups who are choosing, to see how they rank the alternatives, including what they consider to be the legitimate distribution of costs and benefits. Ideology must be explicitly considered in these assessments, because people may consider more than narrow economic effects on themselves. The final step is to consider the politics of institutions, or the way in which the political system treats the desires of different groups. This determines how the various groups control the outcomes. This three-step approach is especially useful for analyzing the path of institutional change, including the timing and direction of change," (Ensminger 1992:19).

The introduction of power and ideology are important additions to the study of economic institutions. Yet Moe (1991) argues that the NIE approach has still not fully integrated politics into its explanation of institutions. He states that:

"The topics may sometimes be political, but the theory itself remains economic in design and mission. If real progress is to be made, the economic theory - or a branch of it, anyway, must be transformed into a truly political theory, one that captures and builds upon the essential features of politics. The new economics of organization [NIE] is based on a world of voluntary exchange among rational individuals. Its state of nature is the structure-free market, and the most basic theoretical questions have to do with the conditions under which self-interested actors in the marketplace will find it desirable to internalize their transactions through mutually agreeable structures," (Moe 1991:122).

Moe outlines several ways in which political institutions are different than those institutions embraced by the NIE scholars, including public authority, legal coercion and redistribution. "They are structures by which winners impose their will on everyone

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4 Neoclassical economics assumes that economic profit-maximization is the main goal of individuals. However, the NIE approach is more complex in how it views the valued goals of actors. Ideology indicates
else...politics is a game of winners and losers, not a game of mutual benefit,” (Moe 1991:123-124). The political game that they play affects the institution and should be taken into affect in the theory we use to explain and understand them. Legislatures have an essentially political nature so a theory of legislative change must be grounded in politics.

**Political Conflict Model**

Jack Knight (1992) integrates politics into a theory of institutions and institutional change. In contrast to the collective gains from trade/transaction cost theories outlined above, Knight argues that there are a number of different ways to structure social institutions for collective benefits. The provision of collective benefits is not what is unique or important about institutions. Instead, Knight argues that there is a much more narrow rationality underlying institutions. The distinction between institutions lies in their distributional consequences. The explicit connection between institutions and political conflict separates Knight from much of the previous work.

Institutions are best explained in terms of their distributional consequences and they are a direct consequence of this distributional conflict. Essentially, institutional development and change are political problems. Institutions emerge from and reflect the strategic interaction between rational actors to produce outcomes that favor themselves and constrain the actions of others. Any collective benefits from institutions are the by-product of this pursuit of individual gain instead of the primary motivation for the institution. Under Knight’s framework, rational actors would not undertake the costly actions of creating an institution simply to provide collective benefits.

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what the actors want to maximize and why they emphasize certain goods over others.
The logic of formal institutional structure is to constrain the actions of others. Power determines an actors' capacity to influence the institutional structure and rules for this purpose, but power is not uniformly distributed among groups in society. As a result, more powerful actors have a disproportionate influence over the institution. Institutions reinforce the advantage of those in power. They receive a larger share of benefits from the institution. Binder (1995) states that:

“there is arguably a link between procedural rules and the balance of power within an institution (Knight 1992). By setting the bounds of permissible action, and thereby limiting choices of an institution’s members, rules distribute power amongst decision-makers (Levi 1990; Schauer 1991). Rules, in other words, may be said to reflect the prevailing balance of forces within an institution,” (Binder 1995:6).

Inherent in this same distributional asymmetry is the possibility of institutional change.

Institutional change can be instigated by several different trends. Shifts in the external conditions of the institution can change the relative power of the groups inside the institution. Another possibility would be if the distributional consequences of the institution changed (but the power relationships remained constant). Then, the actors’ preferences for the status quo would also change because of these unanticipated consequences of the existing institution. Both of these possibilities suggest that there are external and internal sources of institutional change.

Thus, institutional change can come from the disadvantaged actors or opposition whose power is growing. The “losers” in a particular institution are expected to seek change in the institution and thereby reduce their disadvantage. With increased power, they would push for institutional change to bring the institution more in line with their
new, more powerful position. The opposition can put pressure on the more powerful actors for institutional change through united action.

Together the factors of power and ideology indicate when institutional change is more likely and what form it might take. For Knight, institutions themselves also shape the political struggle because they indicate the relevant groups of actors and help determine their power and different ideologies. Formal institutions reflect the political conflict already established in society. In this way, the political conflict model is contextually-rich. There is a theoretical connection between formal institutions and their environment without being deterministic.

Political conflict is inherent to institutional change - the conflict between groups of actors is based on their political advantage or disadvantage. This is an expressly political rationale behind institutional change. By contrast, many scholars within the organization theory literature have not traditionally placed great attention on the political conflict between the different groups of actors. Political pressure is simply one of many different possible factors of institutional change (Daft 1995).

However, legislatures have actors with distinctly different levels of power, scarce resources and conflicts of interest. Politics is at the heart of this type of institution. Therefore, political conflict is an essential component of any explanation of legislative change. Knight’s approach underlines how political struggle interacts with the institutional setting. By taking political conflict and change as a primary factor for explaining legislative change, Knight’s work provides a more theoretically developed model of how politics affects institutions and how institutions affect politics.
With the use of a political conflict approach, we gain another important piece of the explanation for institutions and their change. While this approach does not negate the understanding gained from the organization literature, collective gains from trade, or transaction costs approaches, there are important political aspects that have not been given the systematic, theoretical attention. Legislative institutions benefit from a theoretical approach that is grounded in the political conflict surrounding these institutions. It would ultimately lead to a more complete explanation of legislative institutional change.

**Conclusion**

There are several important conclusions about the utility of the political conflict approach. It places emphasis on political variables and allows a more direct method of drawing comparisons between legislatures. As a consequence, a number of questions and variables previously unexplored in a vast amount of legislatures become relevant.

For those scholars who investigate legislatures after an event of political [regime] change, many use the legislature as an independent variable - what is the role/power of the legislature in the new system? Very few scholars actually use the legislature as a dependent variable in order to explain changes in the legislative institution given new political circumstances. Clearly, these legislative cases are heavily influenced by the previous legislative institution and by the political conflict surrounding the regime change. Instead, many of the current legislative scholars of new democracies start their analysis at the beginning of the new regime. This type of research design tends to underemphasize how the political shift (from the old to the new regime) affects the legislative
institution. Zirker accurately states that it is a "weakness of social science that its analytic lens does not usually focus upon specific institutions until they have already emerged as critical actors in society," (Zirker 1995:89). Thus, it is important to study these institutions over time, both before and after political change.

In this research project, I use the Mexican legislature as an example of a legislative institution which has undergone (and is still experiencing) political change. This political change has not resulted in dramatic regime change, but there has been gradual and significant change in the relative power of different legislative actors. Scholars of Mexican politics traditionally have concentrated their analysis of political change on the Mexican presidential, partisan, and electoral politics. However, important political changes have been taking place within the Chamber of Deputies that affect the institution, its relationship with the executive, and the direction of democratic trends in Mexico. The Chamber of Deputies is an important setting because in no other national level institution was there such an influx of larger numbers and different kinds of opposition members, which threatened the established advantage of the government party. In essence, how was the legislative institution affected by this increase in partisan conflict?

The Chamber floor and committee system are the specific focus of the research. They are the main legislative arenas where the different partisan actors interact and therefore provide the highest possibility of political conflict over the institutional rules and structure. The Chamber floor is an obvious arena to observe the influence of political change. It is a national platform for partisan battles over a wide-ranging number of issues. Committees are an important organizational structure within the legislature and
are a more focused forum where partisans can articulate their views on focused policy topics.

The Chamber floor and committee system provide a set of dependent variables of legislative institutional change. Most of these dependent variables are tracked from the 1970 to the 1994 legislatures, providing for changes in the relative power of the legislative actors over time. In the next chapter, I outline the independent variable of political change as well as detail some of the important context of Mexican politics, the political actors, their changes in power, and ideologies. In addition, I describe the status quo of the pre-reform Chamber of Deputies for an initial point of institutional comparison. Finally, I outline how the political conflict model guides the investigation of these political changes and the legislative institution. This discussion sets up the following chapters which investigate in more detail how the political changes affected the Chamber floor and committee system.

The third chapter focuses on the legislative rules with an emphasis on the floor and committee system rules. These structural and procedural rules affect the behavior of the deputies and thus are the object of political conflict. The fourth and fifth chapters turn to the committee system with its structural and membership variables. Political changes and institutional rule changes are expected to affect these aspects of the committee system. Finally, the sixth chapter investigates the activity and output of the Chamber floor and committee system.
Chapter 2

Political Context of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies

In the political conflict model (Knight 1992), the political context is directly relevant to the discussion of institutional change. Institutions do not exist in a vacuum. In fact, the political context identifies the other major political institutions and the important actors that appear in the subsequent analysis of legislative change. In this chapter, I discuss the Chamber of Deputies and set it within the larger political context. I also outline how the Mexican Chamber fits into the comparative literature on legislative stability and change and develop the political conflict model for the following investigation of institutional change in the Mexican Chamber.

The current Mexican regime developed a strong set of informal and formal institutions that structure political interaction. These institutions helped establish the remarkable stability of the Mexican state as compared to the country’s own history and the rest of Latin America. These informal and formal institutions were established after the Mexican Revolution, which overthrew the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. The regime of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1911) was a highly centralized dictatorship that tightly controlled access to political power. After Diaz was overthrown, the competition among different groups for power resulted in many years of violent civil war. Groups of elites who had been disadvantaged by the previous regime were determined to capture power, using

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5Diaz was quickly overthrown and the next six years of struggle was not a social revolution which redistributed resources from the elites to the lower sectors of society (Gentleman 1987; Camp 1993). Instead, the revolution was actually a civil war which reorganized intra-elitie relations.
violent force and political bargaining in an attempt to reorganize the social and formal
institutions of the state to advantage themselves.

The new state institutions supported and maintained the power relationships
established from years of civil war. The 1917 Mexican Constitution set up a federal
presidential system with formal separation of powers between the executive, legislature,
and judiciary, a direct structural parallel with the United States Constitution. However,
there has been an extreme centralization of power in the hands of the executive
(presidencialismo). The Mexican president dominates the other federal, state, and local
actors. How did the formal and informal institutions in Mexico interact to create this
situation of presidential dominance and how did it affect the Chamber of Deputies? In
turn, how have politics and institutions changed in the last two decades to create the
conditions (independent variables) for legislative change?

*Strong Presidency*

The Mexican president has a six-year term (called the sexenio) without
consecutive re-election. This regular turnover of power has helped to maintain political
stability. The regular turnover of the presidency has assured different factions within the
ruling elite access to power (Grindle 1977a,b; Camp 1980, 1984, 1993; Bailey 1990;
Morris 1991; Cothran 1994). No group or faction within the ruling Institutional
Revolutionary Party (PRI) is permanently locked out of power and therefore most elites
have a direct interest in perpetuating the system because they have the chance to flourish
in a future administration.
This process of presidential turnover resulted in a general oscillation between ideological factions of the ruling party, described as the "pendulum" theory. There has been a regular shift between progressive and conservative presidents from PRI, as shown in Figure 2.1. In this way, the different ideological elite factions were kept satisfied with their routine access to political power. They would thereby benefit from working within the system instead of opposing it. These actors were assured to get their 'turn' at power, making candidate selection within PRI an important factor.

<Figure 2.1 about here>

While the president cannot be immediately re-elected, an informal rule has developed that he can personally select his own successor. Instead of open competition for the presidential nomination, this informal institution fosters (at least outward) loyalty to the president within PRI. The president does not reveal his chosen candidate until late in his administration. Therefore, competing groups do not know who will be the next presidential candidate and must be careful in their relationships with each other and with the president.

Along with regular presidential turnover, there is a great deal of electoral and appointive turnover, especially at the beginning of every presidential administration. All elected positions have the same restriction against consecutive re-election. Between 18,000 and 25,000 elected and appointed positions are reshuffled every six years (Morris 1991). As the executive directly or indirectly determines the nomination and appointment of large numbers of public officials, this political power further enforces
discipline and loyalty to him. A key element of *presidencialismo* is the incumbent’s ability to both select and remove appointed or elected office holders. For example, Mexican presidents have been able to remove state governors.

With no formal job security and a highly centralized appointment system, there is a great deal of risk for career politicians. It is necessary to cultivate a network of personal, patron-client alliances (called a *camarilla*) for career advancement. Each group works together to advance their political power and move into more powerful government or party positions. When the patron of the group moves higher on the political ladder, the group moves up with him (Grindle 1977; Cornelius and Craig 1991; Camp 1993). This system, while organizing and containing elite political conflict, ultimately favors the president as the arbiter between groups.

However, the regular turnover of power to different elite factions is an informal institution that was not fully consolidated until the early 1940s. To guarantee control, the government wanted to increase the costs for challenging the regime and increase the benefits for compliance. To accomplish both goals, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was created.  

*Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)*

The PRI was created in 1929 to bring the competing groups into a controlled, institutional setting. The party established the rules governing political relations, united the different powerful groups behind a common goal, and incorporated a grassroots base of support for this new system. It is an organizational forum for intra-elite competition

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6 The party was originally named the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), was renamed the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana in 1938 and finally took its current name in 1946.
and a mechanism for controlling supporters (Middlebrook 1986; Story 1986; Camp 1993; Molinar Horcasitas 1996; Weldon 1997). *Presidencialismo* is fundamentally supported by the president’s control over PRI. “The legal authority granted to the president [through the 1917 Constitution] was insufficient in creating stability and efficiency through centralization, and it was necessary to increase the centralization within the party as well. Only then, did full *presidencialismo* take hold in Mexico,” (Weldon 1996:2).

The president determines the composition of PRI’s National Executive Committee (CEN) which, in turn, controls the party’s organization and activities. The party is highly centralized with the president as its political head and arbiter between competing forces within the party.

More than an institution to control intra-elite conflict, PRI is an inclusive organization that “provides the president with the necessary political legitimacy, the symbolic aura of the Revolution, and the machinery for running campaigns, winning elections, and maintaining contacts with the masses,” (Story 1986:132). During the Cardenas administration (1934-1940), the party was reorganized into a closely controlled, top-down organization for the political mobilization of workers, peasants, and the popular sectors of society. The relationship between these groups and the president is asymmetrical, with power concentrated more in the hands of the president.

Yet this relationship is not exclusively one-sided; the president cannot risk the loss of their support. For their support, these groups were given various political, economic and social benefits. One of the political rewards has been the distribution of electoral positions between the party sectors. In addition, workers were provided more
rights, better working conditions, pensions, and special housing. Union leaders were largely protected against competition from independent unions and were provided financial support for their organization. In return, labor leaders moderated strikes, discouraged radical ideologies, and contributed a large voting bloc for the government. For the peasants, the government redistributed land and provided other kinds of agricultural support. These diverse benefits made it very costly for the party sectors to lose if they did not support the regime.

The regime also raised the cost of non-compliance through a number of different mechanisms including coercion (violent and non-violent), co-optation, corruption, socialization, and the manipulation of symbols/ideology (Story 1986; Cornelius 1987; Grayson 1988, 1990; Gomez 1991; Morris 1991; Philip 1992; Camp 1996). These different methods, especially co-optation, enforced the rules of the political game. We can better understand how these different factors work together to produce ‘presidentialismo’ by looking more closely at legislative-executive relations.

Legislative-Executive Relations

The role of the president as head of a disciplined, hegemonic party is a key factor in influencing the nature of legislative-executive relations in Mexico. A political system with a strong, majority party and a powerful executive weakens the independent role of the legislator in the policy-making process (Blondel 1973; Sartori 1987; Olson and Mezey 1991; Damgaard 1994; Olson and Norton 1994). According to a number of scholars, legislators would have more policy influence if: the executive branch is more

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7The military sector of the party was abolished in 1942. The popular sector is a catch-all faction that represents diverse groups, such as government workers, teachers, consumer groups, youth and women’s
open and decentralized; the electoral system is decentralized and candidate-centered rather than party-centered; there are more parties in the legislature; the legislative parties are weakly organized or fragmented and autonomous from the external parties. In contrast, a centralized, cohesive majority party does not leave room in the decision-making process for individual legislators (Weinbaum 1975; Brady and Bullock 1983; Olson and Mezey 1991).

Legislators in this type of setting exhibit a number of common traits. They are typically more involved with narrow, detail-oriented matters. The site of real decision-making power rests with the legislative party leadership and executive. The legislators are not provided the ability or opportunity to really scrutinize legislation. By the time a bill reaches the legislature, the members are supposed to simply ratify the decisions taken elsewhere. The ruling party leaders use political and institutional means to keep their own members and the opposition under control. Party members are usually discouraged from publicly opposing the government, such as in public debate and floor votes in the legislature. Finally, the opposition is generally unable to influence the substance of legislation. Instead, they might turn to other more unorthodox methods in an attempt to either delay bills or embarrass the government. In all, these characteristics are the result of the power asymmetry between the individual members and the party leadership/executive.

In Mexico, the executive has historically dominated the legislature through political means, in particular as the head of a hegemonic majority party with tight, internal discipline. In fact, the president does not have great formal legislative powers. In their book on presidentialism in Latin America, Mainwaring and Shugart (1997)
categorize the Mexican president’s formal legislative authority as “potentially marginal.” The constitution provides more formal power to the legislature over the executive. For example, the president does not have the formal power to propose constitutional amendments or make unilateral decrees. More importantly, the president can only veto legislation that is passed by both chambers of the legislature. This is significant because the Chamber alone considers the government budget. Thus, the president cannot veto the Chamber’s amendments to the budget (Portes 1977; Weldon 1996). However, the president, in reality, uses great political power to control the Chamber.

Yet, the political power of the president over the legislature is not a constant. Before 1940, the president was not the political head of the party. As a result, there was occasional conflict between the legislature and the president. This was especially true when there was intense personal or policy rivalry between the party leaders and the president. For example, Presidents Portes Gil (1928-1930), Ortiz Rubio (1930-32) and Rodriguez (1932-34) were weak with respect to the party leadership in Congress because they did not control the newly formed party. The conflict between these presidents and the party leadership centered within the legislative arena. The Chamber was used as an arena for various groups to oppose the president (Cothran 1994; Weldon 1996).

In general, this early competition between powerful groups helps explain why and how politics affects the legislative-executive relationship. When PRI legislators break with the party leadership or when there are larger opposition parties, the legislature’s power vis-à-vis the executive increases. Legislators’ willingness and ability to oppose the president diminish his political control. Thus, politics is essential for understanding legislative-executive relations. The next section characterizes the Chamber of Deputies
during the period from 1940-1979, when the executive had the highest degree of control over the legislature. This descriptive account of the Chamber of Deputies suggests how the legislative institution (both formally and informally) reflected and maintained the power asymmetry of the political system. During these years, the executive held a tight reign over the PRI members and the opposition parties were very small.

**Chamber of Deputies: 1940-1979**

Deputies are elected every three years and there is no consecutive re-election, creating two completely new legislatures during the six-year term of the president. This institutional rule of no consecutive re-election had an important impact upon legislators’ behavior and their attachment to the legislative institution (Carey 1996; Lujambio 1996). With the massive turnover during the middle of the presidential administration, deputies had difficulty building legislative expertise, seniority or institutional loyalty. During the 1940-1979 period, floor meetings were held only twice a week during four months of the year (from September to December). In general, deputies had a small stake in the legislative institution where they only served a small amount of time.

From 1917 to 1964, all deputies were elected through single-member, simple majority districts. This electoral rule greatly favored PRI, by far the largest and best-organized party in the country. It was difficult for the small minority parties to garner enough support to win a majority of the vote in each district and thereby gain any representation (Duverger 1964, Rae 1967, Lijphart 1990, 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). To increase minor party representation in the Chamber and the outward democratic credentials of the government, the electoral system was reformed in 1963.
With this reform, five seats (called ‘party deputy’ seats) were given to each opposition party with at least 2.5 percent of the national vote and an additional seat (to a limit of 20) for each additional .5 percent of the vote. In 1973, the minimum threshold was lowered to 1.5 percent. Yet even with these electoral reforms, the opposition parties were still very small. Table 2.1 provides the number of seats between the majority party and the opposition parties during this period.

Table 2.1
Partisan Distribution of Seats in the Chamber, 1943-1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>PPS</th>
<th>PARM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>147</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Story (1986:53)
Note: PAN, PPS, and PARM are opposition parties

From this table, the ruling PRI maintained a hegemonic role within the Chamber, even after the opposition parties increased their representation because of the electoral reform that was implemented in the 1964 election. PRI representation decreased from around 96% of the Chamber seats to around 83% of the seats. The justification given for this reform by President Lopez Mateos was that the small parties should have a voice, but no policy making power (Story 1986). Thus, even with the opposition parties having a small level of ‘voice’ in the Chamber, the ruling majority party had tight control over the legislative process. The leader of this powerful legislative force is the majority party leader.
**Majority Party Leader**

The majority party leader, who was the most powerful deputy in the Chamber, controlled the Chamber. He was directly chosen by the president and therefore would wield enormous political and institutional power at the behest of the president. The majority party leader controlled the legislative calendar, procedural rules, floor debate, and was the President of the Grand Committee (which made all the committee assignments, controlled committee activities, and hired the administrative staff). This strong party leader did not hold a formal leadership position on the Chamber floor, however. The formal Chamber officers (including a president, several vice-presidents and secretaries) were kept weak with frequent rotation; they had one-month terms during the legislative session and the same member could not be re-elected during the same year. With the very short terms of office, political power did not accumulate in these formal positions. One former Chamber president stated:

> "Being president of the Chamber is only a bureaucratic position. Of course, it is an honor; there are only four presidents each year. Determining how a president is selected is a $64,000 question. He is always selected according to dominant political currents. Selecting him is never discussed with us [deputies]. We are told who the candidates are."

(De la Garza 1972:166).

The tight, internal discipline within PRI’s legislative delegation was another important factor that supported the power of the majority party leader (and executive). The party leadership controlled access to the PRI electoral ballot for legislative seats, which were distributed between official party sectors as a form of party patronage. PRI deputies were generally beholden to the political leadership for his or her seat (De la Garza 1972; Portes 1977).
Party cohesion was also maintained through informal norms. One important norm centered on career advancement. Some PRI deputies had political ambition and served in the Chamber to enhance their career possibilities. Membership in the Chamber was seen as a step toward a more desired public or party position. These deputies networked with national leaders and learned the internal politics of Mexico City, which was especially important for politicians from outside the Federal District.

"Serving in the Chamber gives you contacts. As a comparison, I have spent 20 years in politics in X state. If I had been in Mexico City, I would likely have a more important national position. The fact that I am here allows me to get to know who is active in national politics and it is an opportunity to have them get to know me. Coming here is really the first step in a national career," (De la Garza 1972:154).

De la Garza (1972) determines that the PRI deputies who advanced to a national political career held a higher proportion of Chamber leadership positions and demonstrated higher levels of activity while serving in the legislature. Deputies with political career aspirations worked to demonstrate their leadership potential and develop political relationships. While in the legislature, they closely followed the established norms of elite interaction. To get ahead, they did not stand defiant to the executive or party leadership who serve as gatekeepers to further political advancement.

"Aspiring politicians realize that their political future is dependent on their ability to establish themselves with the president, with the leaders of the Chamber or of the Senate, or with the party hierarchy. They are obliged to praise their superiors and to be submissive. This is an important part of the reason for legislative submission to the executive," (De la Garza 1972:41-42).

At the same time, other PRI deputies had little political ambition for further public office. Some became deputies as a reward for their party or union service. Legislative
seats were used to "decorously 'retire' politicians past their prime or out of favor with the executive, or for rewarding deserving but mediocre party cadres..." (Portes 1977:196).

One deputy voiced this idea:

"I consider my position as transitory and not as part of a political career. I owe my position to my organization. I work in a textile plant and when this legislature ends I will return to my base and serve my organization. I disregard the political career aspect of serving here, although I do try to be of service to the nation and the party," (De la Garza 1972:153).

These PRI members would not push the legislature into conflict with the executive. They were less likely to have the motivation to challenge the party leadership because of their long years of loyal service to the party. They were also not able to challenge the leadership because the deputies lacked adequate information resources to assist in drafting or amending major legislation (Gil, 1992). During this period, the legislature did not have adequate informational resources, such as modern library services or policy research personnel (Gil 1992). Without an independent source of information, it was very difficult for the deputies to critically investigate the executive's legislation. In contrast, the president had the executive bureaucracy to provide information and resources for policy-making. Therefore, the executive's power increased due to an expertise and information monopoly (Miller 1992; Shugart and Carey 1992).

**Opposition Parties**

There were few true opposition members in the Chamber during the 1940-1979 era. The only real opposition party was the National Action Party (PAN), whose members were committed to opposing the majority party. During that period, PAN's strategy was to work within the system for gradual reform (Von Sauer 1974; Molinar
Horcasitas 1996). The other parties were the PPS (the Popular Socialist Party) and the PARM (the Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution), which were 'satellite' parties of the ruling party; they were little more than appendages to PRI. The PPS was founded in 1947 by a PRI-affiliated labor union leader, Lombardo Toledano. Ex-military leaders whose political influence had been curtailed by the growing civilian nature of the administration founded the PARM in 1954. The government favored these two "loyal" opposition parties. For example, they were both over-represented in the Chamber, even receiving "party deputy" seats when they did not reach the minimum threshold. In return, these satellite parties generally supported the majority power in the legislature.

PAN, was not represented in the formal institutional positions that controlled the legislative process or output. The majority party also used political means to prevent the activity of opposition members. For example, PRI systematically excluded PAN from participating in committee activities. One PAN congressional leader related numerous unsuccessful attempts to learn where and when committee meetings would be held, often receiving notification of meetings after they had been held. PRI officials responded to his protests by stating they had "no control over mail service." Some PAN deputies had not seen bills prior to the meeting where they were to be voted. They complained about the difficulty of even obtaining copies of the committee dictamen so they might indicate their approval or disapproval (De la Garza, 1972). 8

There was little opposition activity in these pre-reform years both because of the small presence of the opposition and because of the political and institutional means used to control them. By looking more closely at the Chamber floor and committee system,

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8 The committee returns the dictamen, not the original bill, to the floor. The dictamen describes the bill, contains any committee changes and its recommendation to the Chamber to pass or defeat the bill.
we can see the institutional and political dynamics within the PRI delegation and between the PRI and opposition.

Chamber Floor

Individual participation during the floor debate was tightly controlled by the majority leader. Only committee members responsible for the bill could speak more than once, which greatly limited the amount of participation. Deputies not on the original list of speakers (controlled by the majority party leader) could only make factual statements. Interview respondents stated that “only on rare occasions did deputies speak without the majority leader’s approval, and those who did suffered for it. The deputy who did so was put ‘on ice’ for over a year,” (De la Garza 1972:164). If PRI deputies were allowed to raise any questions or problems over legislation, they did so in the secrecy of committee hearings and not on the Chamber floor in order to prevent the appearance of party division. One deputy stated:

“You are surprised we do not criticize bills from the rostrum. Well, we do not do it at the rostrum. We discuss them within committees; there we make the corrections we think necessary. We do not make a spectacle. Why not? Because we are one party, and as one party we have a commitment to the party and also because we have another avenue by which to make our views known. We do not criticize and insult the President from the tribune because there is no need to,” (De la Garza 1972:48).

When government secretaries appeared in the Chamber, deputies could only ask one question and could not ask follow-up questions, even if the secretary’s response was “totally unrelated to the original question they asked,” (De la Garza 1972:126). PAN deputies complained that this strict procedure prevented genuine questioning of the
government representatives. PAN also tried to use the Chamber floor for the ‘political communication’ of their opposition. Congress still represented the only national forum or arena where PAN’s views could be presented to the Mexican people. PAN could receive a level of national exposure through the public debate (von Sauer, 1974).

“The PAN deputies are certain their proposals will be ignored, but they know there is a testimonial of their views [through their statements on the floor] and they hope the press will report this. The press does not always do this since almost all reporters receive some sort of subsidy from the government. There is an explicit understanding that the PAN will not be played up,” (De la Garza 1972:121).

Again, the political dominance of PRI hampered the opposition’s legislative influence.

The amount of legislative activity also reflected the power asymmetry with the executive. While the deputies could initiate, amend, and defeat bills, they seldom did. Not one executive bill was defeated during the years examined by De la Garza (1940-1970) even though the Chamber “filed” or tabled several of them. Controlling for minority party initiatives, legislative-initiated bills actually declined from the 1940s to 1970. De la Garza attributes this trend to the increased PRI hegemonic control. Opposition party deputies attempted to use the floor debate to amend legislation, but they were largely unsuccessful. In fact, only when there were larger number of opposition deputies were most bills even discussed on the floor.

The executive was the active lawmaker. Much of the legislative formation and deliberation took place in the extra-parliamentary arena (Olson and Mezey 1991). While concerned deputies may have been involved in the private negotiations of bills before they were delivered to the Chamber, the executive naturally dominated this stage or arena of policy-making. Basically, the Mexican legislature was not the important arena for
policy-making. Its members were tightly constrained by the hegemonic majority party, which controlled such a predominant number of seats, that the government could push through its bills without any problems.9

Committee System

We can gain further insight into the formal and informal power hierarchy by how the majority party leadership maintained their control over the committee system. The Grand Commission was the important leadership committee that assigned all committee members and leaders. Its membership consisted of one representative from each state delegation and opposition party members were excluded from this committee. The majority party leader was always the president of this important leadership committee, thus enhancing the party leadership's control over the entire committee system. The committee assignment process was highly centralized into the hands of the PRI leadership, guaranteeing its majority on all committees and control over all the leadership positions.

Each committee president was responsible for calling the committee meetings and setting the agenda. Through enforced party loyalty, the PRI leadership could guarantee their control over the committee's activity within the legislative process. Even when committee members raised questions or problems, they did not have the political power to make changes in the legislation. The tight chain of command within the party dictated

9While this blanket statement is generally valid, there has been variation in the level of legislative activity vis-à-vis the executive. At times, PRI members could not be totally controlled when a particular issue mobilized them. For example, in 1942, PRI deputies were divided over the issue of the death penalty; in 1962, PRI deputies amended the Copyright Law; in 1970, the Agrarian Reform bill was amended over 100 times.
that any deputy's suggestions had to be cleared by the party/executive leadership (De la Garza 1972).

The PRI members used political and institutional means to reduce the opposition's ability to influence the committee process and output. For example, PAN deputies were sometimes not even informed of committee meetings or provided copies of the committee business. One PRI member justified why the opposition had been shut out of the committee activities:

"No, they [PAN deputies] do not participate, and why should they? If they came to the sessions with the idea of contributing positively, that would be all right. If they came to the sessions with their present attitudes, they would come like hunters on the prowl, and as long as they have that attitude, they are not going to participate. Here is what would happen if they did. A PRI deputy would voice a criticism of a bill that a PAN member also held but had not raised. If the committee did not accept it, the PRI man would drop it and not speak out in debate. At that point, however, the PAN man would go to the rostrum, voice his view and add this criticism is shared by X of the PRI, but he does not have the courage to come up here and speak out. Also, if the PAN were to participate in committee hearing, we would know their views and be prepared for them in the debates. They do not want that," (De la Garza 1972:58).

The extent of this control can be seen by the small number of amendments introduced by the committees. In his analysis, De la Garza generalizes that only a small minority of bills were ever amended in committee. With data from five selected legislative terms (1940-42, 1946-48, 1952-54, 1961-64, and 1964-67), only an average of 7% of all bills were amended (substantively or stylistically) in committee. The opposition deputies argued that even the few committee amendments were not substantive changes in legislation. Therefore, the majority party leadership effectively controlled its own members and the opposition within the committee system.
Comparative Setting

From this description of the Chamber of Deputies, what are the lines of commonality between Mexico and other countries? The connection between politics and the legislative institution is a key point of comparison. The dominant majority party and powerful executive are important political factors that are not unique to Mexico. For example, in the comparative literature on committee systems, many scholars have suggested that partisan strength and committee strength have an inverse relationship (Blondel 1973; Shaw 1979; Sartori 1987; Damgaard 1994; Olson and Norton 1994). In a legislative setting with a strong government party and a powerful executive, there is a greater probability that legislators will have weak decision-making influence.

In their edited book on cross-national committee systems, Lees and Shaw (1979) compare the committee systems in eight countries. One key set of independent variables that explained the variation in committee system strength was the influence of political parties, in particular the number of major parties, their cohesiveness, the degree of competitiveness between parties, whether one party controlled the executive, and the ideological spread of parties. For Canada, Britain, India, and Japan, the presence of a cohesive, dominant, governing party (to differing degrees) was associated with weak committees. “If the same cohesive party maintains a dominant position in national politics persistently over time then the committees may become exceptionally weak. A possible explanation of this is that governing parties (e.g. in India and Japan) which have no expectation of becoming opposition parties are less sensitive to the ‘rights’ of

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10From the most important to the least, they rank the countries in the following order: the United States, Italy, West Germany, the Philippines, Canada, Great Britain, India, and Japan. Committee systems were classified as important: when they influenced the legislative output, similar to Packenham’s (1970) “decisional” function of legislatures.
committee minorities than parties which expect to become minorities themselves from
time to time,” (Shaw 1979:396).

For example, Japan’s committee members had very little influence on the
legislative process. While they might identify a particular problem with a bill, it was not
within their power to change it. At the same time, the LDP might have allowed the
opposition to “let off steam” within the committee system but then pushed the
executive’s bill through the process unaltered. The opposition could only delay the
process and embarrass the government, not affect the substance of legislation (Kim 1975;
Baerwald 1979; Shaw 1979; Clemons 1987).

In several studies of Latin American legislatures, the dominance of the majority
party and executive prevented legislators from having a very large role in the policy
process. The executive, through his control over the majority party, generally dominated
the legislative arena in this type of political context. Legislators did not have
independent influence on policy but were to expedite the executive’s legislation through
the legislative process, becoming a rubber-stamp for the president’s proposals (Jones

With this dominant party context, whenever the legislators were allowed an
opening to voice their views on bills, it was usually on detail-oriented, practical matters
and in more private settings within the legislature. They could not question the basic
parameters of the executive’s legislation or publicly oppose the government. They could
only raise objections in closed party discussions or within the committee system where
they could be a private airing of opposition (Jones 1940; Hopkins 1970; Hakes and
Helgerson 1973). The government’s tolerance of opposition from its own party and from other parties greatly influenced the legislative-executive relationship.

“This notion of private rather than public influence on policy decision recurs in various discussions of committee systems in Third World legislatures. The constant theme is that while legislative influence is not very great, it is likely to be greatest when exercised in the relative privacy of committee meetings. Thus, it was reported that the final shape of agrarian reform legislation in Colombia and in Peru was significantly influenced by deliberations in the committees to which this legislation was assigned (McCoy 1971, p.349; Duff 1971, pp. 384-386). Studies of the Lebanese and Afghanistani Parliaments done during the 1960s produced evidence that frequent and substantial changes were made in government-sponsored legislation in committee (Crowe 1970, p.292; Weinbaum, 1972, p.68),” (Mezey 1983:517).

In light of these comparisons, the Mexican Chamber of Deputies from 1940 to 1979 was rather typical given these political factors. It had stagnated under a stable, hegemonic political setting where the PRI party leadership had direct control over the legislative institution and agenda. The PRI rank-and-file members were kept under tight political control within the party, which prevented the use of the legislature as an arena to advance political or policy interests. The PRI leadership used both political and institutional means to prevent the opposition from having much influence in the legislature.

However, it is important to recognize that these political relationships are not static. Many of these political variables can (and do) change over time. Some of the more important political changes that affect legislative institutions include 1) a shift in executive powers and strategy, 2) modification in the party system (increase in opposition), 3) the revision of formal rules, and 4) changes in the level of public support for the legislature (Weinbaum 1975; Arter 1984; Harmel 1986; Jewell and Miller 1988;
Damgaard 1992; Rommetvedt 1996). The following examples detail the relationship between these political changes and the legislative institution.

During military rule in Brazil (1964-1985), military leaders used different methods to control the legislature including limiting committee membership terms, rotating floor leadership, restrictive procedures, and constraining the amount of staff and resources. However, the use and success of these methods were not constant over time. The activity and influence of legislative members varied with political changes such as size of the opposition parties (party system change), the strategies by different executives (executive power), and public opinion toward the legislature. As these different political variables changed, so did the legislative institution, its level of activity and political power (Baaklini 1976, 1977, 1992).

After nearly forty years of authoritarian rule in Taiwan, parliamentary politics is gaining momentum given political changes. Internal factionalism has increased and party loyalty has declined within the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) legislative party. The growth of the opposition party also increases partisan conflict within the legislature. For example, the opposition leaders have conducted a campaign of disruptive (sometimes violent) behavior to draw public attention to the KMT’s hegemonic control of the legislature (Shubert 1992; Liao 1994).

China is another setting for studying legislative change (O’Brien 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1992). In the Maoist era, the National People’s Congress (NPC) was an inactive and unimportant legislative body. After Mao’s death, the reformist leadership wanted the legislature to legitimize their economic reforms and enhance political stability by incorporating opposing elites. An electoral reform in 1979 changed the composition of
the legislative membership and reduced the degree of Communist party's dominance. As a result, the legislature turned more attention to lawmaking and supervision. "Although the legislature rarely rejected executive proposals or initiated bills, the NPC and its committees occasionally drafted legislation, often revised and edited it, and always oversaw the drafting process," (O'Brien 1990b:7). However, these reforms did not give the legislature remarkably more influence vis-a-vis the executive because of the realities of continued Communist Party rule.

Olson and Simon (1980) and Racz (1989) investigate political changes in the Polish and Hungarian parliaments. The Polish legislative committee system developed the potential for a more powerful role through institutional reforms. When regime change arrived almost a decade later, the more highly competitive party system provided the Sejm with real political influence. Communist Hungary experienced political changes set under way by an electoral reform in 1983. The new opposition members were tightly constrained within the restrictive political environment of the institution but their presence did create internal institutional reforms. For example, new committees were added which reflected the concerns of the new opposition members and their constituents. The legislature moved toward a more active role in lawmaking and administrative supervision.

Brazil, Taiwan, China, Poland, and Hungary provide a direct comparison to Mexico because each had (or continues to have) an authoritarian or communist regime with a dominant ruling party and/or a strong executive. These countries have used a dominant political party to control the legislative institution (among others) and its centralization of power has been extreme. These comparative scholars have investigated
how gradual political change affects the legislature. Institutional changes happened because of two really important political factors: increase in opposition representation and/or change in executive leadership, strategy or power.

The connection between changes in partisan conflict and institutional reform is at the heart of this research. The Mexican regime has experienced important systemic political changes. While the powerful executive and majority party still exert enormous influence, political change has introduced shifts in these traditional relationships. It is primarily through political means that the executive has such a drastic advantage over the legislature. Thus, it is through politics that this relationship has been changing. The next section outlines the major contours of these political changes as the independent variables used in this research project.

**Stability and Change in Mexico**

The Mexican regime has maintained unequaled stability but this does not mean that politics or institutions have been static. Political change became more dramatic in the late 1960s because of the culmination of long-term economic and social changes. During the thirty years from 1940 to 1970, the economic policies followed by the Mexican government favored domestic industrialization with trade protection (import-substitution industrialization). These policies led to the Mexican ‘economic miracle’ with an average percent growth in GDP of 6.3 percent between 1940 and 1970.

However, this extremely high rate of economic growth masked the growing inequality between the rich and the poor. Business elites were greatly advantaged with high profit margins and a steady flow of investment capital. The size of the middle class
increased during this period from around 16% of society in 1940 to 34% in 1960. Yet this ‘economic miracle’ was at the expense of the poorest groups in society as it created economic and social dislocation. The share of national income going to the poorest groups declined steadily. Economic growth started to decline in the 1970s and earlier progress proved to be fragile.

Political discontent was also rising. By the 1960s, more groups in society began to question the corruption and favoritism of a party machine that increasingly did not represent their interests. One important group was the middle class, which could not be incorporated and controlled by PRI as easily as unionized labor and peasants. They pressed for greater participation and political influence along with their economic success, something that the closed political system was unable to provide (Gomez 1991).

The political and social strains of the economic growth, the increased international climate of dissent, and the heightened need by the government for order and stability because of the Olympic Games converged in 1968. The 1968 massacre of student demonstrators in Mexico City was a watershed event because it brought these tensions to the surface. This confrontation between students and the government ended with the death and injury of many students and the arrest of at least two thousand protesters. The government’s violent repression of the student movement further demonstrated the regime’s authoritarian nature and undermined its legitimacy. Members of the middle class began to publicly question the efficacy of Mexico’s political and economic institutions. It had become clear that political and social justice had not accompanied economic growth, as the revolutionary ideology had promised (Bailey 1987; Cornelius 1987; Klesner 1987; Camp 1990; Mendez 1990; Cothran 1994).
These events touched off a wave of opposition within the Mexican society during the Echeverria administration (1970-1976). There was intense mobilization as new opposition groups were created, including numerous new leftist political parties.\textsuperscript{11} They mobilized supporters outside of the structured electoral/political arena to force change in the system.

There was growing voter abstention rates during the 1970s, further indicating PRI's weakening mobilization capacity (Mendez 1990). Advances in communications, education, and urbanization had weakened PRI's ability to mobilize support and channel demands. These changes increased the independence of many different groups in society from the traditional party machine. The increase in the level of voter abstention showed the increase in frustration with a corrupt and unresponsive electoral system (Baez 1990a; Mendez 1990; Story 1986).

President Lopez Portillo (1976-1982) reformed the party and electoral systems in 1977 to encourage more partisan and electoral competitiveness, reinvigorate PRI, and reverse voter abstention. Government repression had weakened most of the violent opposition groups but had not moved the moderate opposition back into the regime's institutions. The reforms were to increase the perceived benefits for working inside the system without jeopardizing the government's control on power. By placating the moderate opposition with more legislative representation, the government could move this important group away from violent action/fundamental regime change and into a controlled arena (Middlebrook 1986; Lehoucq 1995; Morris 1995; Molinar Horcasitas 1996).

\textsuperscript{11} Mexican Democratic Party (1971); Socialist Workers' Party (1973); Communist Left Group (1973); Movement for Socialist Action and Unity (1973); Mexican Workers' Party (1974); Mexican Popular Party
Knight (1992) argues that one cause of institutional change is a shift in the relative bargaining power between actors. In Mexico, the political, economic and social changes outlined above worked together to change the relative power of different groups. For example, the middle class increased in size, economic strength and political organization, thus changing their relative power within the system. The leftist opposition also increased their relative bargaining position because they could mobilize large demonstrations and use violence to threaten the continued legitimacy and stability of the regime. Together, these groups forced the government into a position where some kind of change was necessary. They were opposed to the existing institution that blocked their political influence. Thus, the 1977 electoral reform was a safety-valve for the growing opposition but the underlying assumption was that PRI would continue its electoral hegemony.

*Electoral Reforms*

Several components of the 1977 Reform worked together to increase opposition representation in the Chamber of Deputies. First, opposition parties could become officially registered by two methods, a definitive and a conditional registry. For a definitive registry, the party had to demonstrate the official support of more than 3,000 members in at least half of the states or more than 300 in at least half of the single-member districts, for a total of at least 65,000 members. Previously, the law required a minimum of 2,000 members in two thirds of the states, which was difficult for the regionally based opposition parties. The opposition parties had clear geographic regions

(1975); Revolutionary Socialist Party (1976); Revolutionary Workers' Party (1976).
of support and found it very difficult to muster enough widespread support across most of the regions as required under the previous system.

A conditional registry would be given to parties with at least 1.5 percent of the total national vote in the election for which they are seeking registration. This way, the voters could decide on the registration of minor parties, not the government. This was an important change because it substantially eased the costs of registration for parties with scarce financial and human resources. This method did not place any restrictions on the geographic spread of supporters. It also permitted their supporters to remain anonymous, which was particularly advantageous in the repressive political climate of Mexico.

More importantly, the electoral rules were changed for the Chamber of Deputies. First, the single-member, simple-majority seats were increased from 200 to 300. Second, another 100 new seats were set aside for the minority parties and were elected by proportional representation (PR) in large multimember districts. In each of these PR districts, minority parties nominated a list of candidates to be elected by their party’s proportion of vote obtained in that region. To qualify for these PR seats, parties had to field candidates in at least 100 ‘regular’ (single member, simple-majority) districts, but win in less than 60 of them. The minority party had to be viable, but not too powerful. In addition, if two or more minority parties obtained over 90 majority seats, only half of the 100 PR seats would be distributed.

During the de la Madrid administration (1982-1988), the drastic increase in electoral fraud and the economic crisis became a powerful issue on which all of the opposition groups could unite. Democratic elections became an end in itself. A number of opposition parties (PAN, PSUM, PMT, and PRT) and a host of civic organizations
formed the National Democratic Movement to promote democracy and respect for the
electoral process. In response, President de la Madrid enacted an electoral reform in
1986. He introduced proportional representation into the elections for state legislatures
and added 100 more PR seats to the national Chamber of Deputies. This reform (as with
the 1977 electoral reform) was supposed to give the appearance of electoral opening
without threatening PRI control. To ensure PRI control, the reform also gave PRI access
to the PR seats if its representation dropped below a simple majority. Most of the
opposition parties opposed the reform because they did not believe that it would create
cleaner, fairer elections. “The basic difference [between the opposition and PRI] is the
PRI’s perception that a majority party protected by law is necessary to make Mexico’s
political system stable, and that the government should have control over the election
process itself,” (Kultenbrouwer 1986).

There was another series of electoral law reforms during the Salinas
administration. As with 1977 and 1986 reforms, President Salinas (1988-1994) needed to
reduce political conflict and create the appearance of greater democracy without true
political liberalization. He needed to lower the opposition to his administration in order
to calm the fears of foreign investors and continue his economic program (Alcocer 1995).

The 1990 electoral reform created a new electoral roll, voter ID cards, a new
Electoral Commission, and the right of the opposition to oversee voting stations. The
presumably independent Federal Election Institute would administer elections through a
permanent civil service, not a government ministry. However, the President still chose
the head of the Electoral Commission and thus the PRI/government still had control of
the electoral process at key junctures. The 1990 reform outlawed coalitions candidates

12By 1994, there were 5 of these large ‘plurinominal’ districts.
by requiring the different groups to merge into a formal party. This reform was targeted at the kind of informal coalition that had united behind the Left opposition’s presidential candidate, Cardenas, in 1988. The government was betting that these small parties would not submerge their identities into a formal party and therefore the Left opposition would remain small and fragmented. In general, the 1990 reform halted the trend of making it easier for minority parties to gain representation. The government needed to ensure PRI control in a legislature that had become more competitive. As such, the reform did not curb criticism of electoral fraud and did not lessen opposition to the government.

The 1993 electoral reforms introduced proportional representation seats into the Senate, campaign finance reform, legitimized the role of election observers, and overturned the ‘governability clause.’ The Senate size was increased from 64 seats to 128 seats, creating more plurality within the Senate (Instituto Federal Electoral 1995:12). The 1994 reform gave citizen representatives the majority on the policy-making board of the Federal Electoral Institute. The procedures for observing the elections were also broadened.

Through these different electoral reforms, the government ensured that the minority opposition would increase their representation, but within strict limits. The opposition could not grow too large through the use of PR seats and threaten the government’s majority in the Chamber. However, these electoral reforms had a number of politically significant consequences.
Partisan Changes

First, electoral rules are an important set of institutional rules that can favor one party or group of parties over others (Duverger 1964; Rae 1967; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1990, 1994; Shugart 1992a, 1992b; Brady and Mo 1992; Lehoczky 1995). As predicted from the electoral system literature, the 1977 Electoral Reforms increased the number of opposition parties represented in the legislature. The number of opposition parties more than doubled after the reform. Before the electoral reform was implemented in the 1979 election, there had been three opposition parties - PAN and two satellite parties, PPS and PARM. After the reform, the number of opposition parties/coalitions increased to a peak of eight in 1985. The introduction of the conditional registration and the use of PR electoral districts greatly facilitated the entry of opposition parties into the legislative arena.

Second, the opposition parties expanded their relative size in the legislature. Table 2.2 presents the number of seats for each party represented in the Chamber from 1970-1994. The number of single-member, simple-majority seats is indicated beside the date of the election. For the three pre-1979 legislative elections, the row labeled “party” indicates the additional “party deputy” seats given to the smaller parties who met the 1.5% national vote minimum threshold. For the post-1979 legislatures, the row labeled “PR” indicates the number of proportional representation seats.
Table 2.2
Seats in the Chamber of Deputies, 1970-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>PPS</th>
<th>PARM</th>
<th>PDM</th>
<th>PSUM</th>
<th>PST</th>
<th>PRT</th>
<th>PMT</th>
<th>PRD</th>
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<td>Party</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>PR</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>63</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Roderic Camp (1995:29)
PRI - Institutional Revolutionary Party
PAN - National Action Party
PPS - Socialist Popular Party
PARM - Authentic Party of the Mexican Rev.
PDM - Mexican Democratic Party
PSUM - United Socialist Party of Mexico
PT - Workers’ Party
PST - Socialist Workers’ Party
PRT - Revolutionary Workers’ Party
PMT - Mexican Workers’ Party
PRD - Democratic Rev. Party
PFCRN - Party of the Cardenista Front for National Reconstruction

The level of minority party representation increased substantially following both electoral reforms (1979 and 1988) in large part because of the increase in seats set aside for them. Table 2.3 shows the aggregate changes in legislative representation for the ruling majority party versus the opposition.

Table 2.3
Seat Distribution between PRI and Opposition Parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>PRI seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Opposition Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-73</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-76</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-79</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-82</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-85</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-88</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-91</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-94</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-97</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Camp (1995)
This table clearly demonstrates the increase in opposition members. The average opposition representation in the early post-reform legislatures (1979, 1982, 1985) was 26% of the seats, a 9% increase over the pre-reform average. In the later post-reform legislatures (1988, 1991, 1994), the average opposition representation increased to 41% of the seats. The closest point between the government and opposition was in the 1988 legislature when the opposition had 48% of the seats. The PRI faced a new political situation in the Chamber of Deputies when it no longer held a two-thirds majority of the legislative seats.

A two-thirds majority is a significant threshold because constitutional amendments require two-thirds support. During the late 1980s, the economic reforms pushed by President Salinas required constitutional changes. If the president could no longer depend on the legislature to rubber-stamp his decisions, then the overwhelming power of the executive was constrained (Weldon 1997). President Salinas had to genuinely negotiate with the opposition forces in the Chamber in order to pass his constitutional amendments. Throughout the Salinas administration, the Chamber no longer played its traditional passive role vis-a-vis the executive. The Chamber offered a greater level of resistance to the president than before.

“Although their legislative power remained highly constrained, especially since the PRI never let internal divisions carry over into splits in the vote, opposition parties nevertheless now had a foot in the door. Both the activity and quality of debate in the Chamber of Deputies improved, no longer blindly supportive of PRI and executive-initiated legislation,” (Rodriguez and Ward 1995:5).

Third, there was an increase in overall electoral competition, including the ‘regular’ legislative seats. Table 2.4 indicates how the number of opposition candidates
competing in the single-member, simple-majority district elections doubled after the 1977 electoral reform.

### Table 2.4
Electoral Competition for Single District, Majority Vote Seats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislatures</th>
<th># of Districts with Opposition Candidates</th>
<th># Opposition Candidates competing in election</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2099</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2390</td>
<td>7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gomez (1991)

The opposition parties were fielding more candidates in these electoral districts, resulting in a jump from an average of 2.6 opposition candidates per district in 1976 to 5.6 in 1979. In addition to the opposition fielding more candidates, the distribution of votes between parties moved the electoral districts toward more competitiveness.

According to data collected by Craig and Cornelius (1995), the percent of districts where PRI received more than 95% of the official vote declined from 27% in 1970 to 1% in 1988. The number of districts where PRI received between 70% and 95% of the vote declined from 54% in 1970 to 19% in 1988. Basically, the level of two-party and multi-party competition at the local levels was increasing.

Fourth, partisan composition in the post-reform Chamber changed because there were new types of opposition parties represented in the institution. Before the electoral reforms, the only real opposition party was the conservative PAN (National Action Party). The only other pre-reform opposition parties were PPS and PARM, the ‘satellite’ parties to PRI. They were more “symbolic opposition” to PRI. The PPS, created by
labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, had a leftist platform including concern for nationalism, income redistribution, and agrarian reform. The PARM was created in 1952 by a group of retired generals and was more loyal to the right wing of PRI.

After the 1977 electoral reform, there was a significant expansion of opposition parties on the Left. The PSUM, the Marxist-Leninist Unified Socialist Party of Mexico, was founded by the merger of several leftist parties of which the Mexican Communist Party was the largest. By 1985, there were five independent parties of the Left represented in the Chamber of Deputies. For example, the PRT’s platform focused on human rights, the PST emphasized the expropriation of industry and financial institutions, and the PMT favored economic nationalism, workers’ rights, and a state-run economy. Carr (1987) states that “there are more self-styled socialist parties represented in Congress in Mexico than in any other Latin American legislature,” (Carr 1987:294). Together these Left parties pushed for a number of common public policy goals, including land reform, workers rights, human rights, a strong role of the state in the economy, and reducing socio-economic inequality.

In all, the opposition increased its ability and willingness to participate within the electoral system because of growing organizational strength and political capabilities. The electoral reform achieved its goal of increasing the competition within the electoral and party systems. However, the electoral reform was also supposed to deflate the larger, more fundamental political tensions building within the system, not exacerbate them. Instead, electoral politics became the center of political controversy and had a number of unintended consequences. Following the reform, electoral dynamics at all levels of

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13 The PDM, Mexican Democratic Party, was the only new conservative party. It was a more conservative version of PAN, with radical support for private enterprise and a “Christian” way of life.
government became considerably more confrontational. The opposition had an increased ability and willingness for greater participation within the Chamber of Deputies. The representation of diverse ideologies enhanced the national political prominence of the Chamber because it became a forum for opposition party activity.

As underscored by the comparative literature, legislative change depends in part on partisan change and in part on the executive’s power and strategy towards the different actors within the legislature. The executive can have particular strategies or relationships with the different parties or groups of parties within the legislature. Separating apart these different political dynamics allows us to better understand legislative politics in Mexico or any other setting (King 1976; Andewig 1992).

Executive Strategies

The first political dynamic is between the executive and the opposition. In Mexico, it is necessary to distinguish between the Left Opposition and the Right Opposition. These two opposition groups could agree on a common goal of democracy/political opening yet they divided sharply over economics. The Right Opposition, represented largely by PAN with its business and middle class interests, supported private enterprise and neoliberal, market-oriented economic policies. The Left Opposition contained a wider array of actors including independent labor, numerous leftist parties, intellectuals, students, and civic/popular movements. While this group also pressed for more political democracy, it rejected the neoliberal economic model for a populist economic program with continued state protectionism (Gil 1992; Morris 1995; Camp 1996).
The other political dynamic is between the executive and his own legislative contingent. The relationship between the president and his legislative delegation generally reflected, in part, the political dynamics between the president and his party. This political dynamic includes the growing split between factions of the ruling party.

Morris (1995) identifies this split according to their economic and political preferences for either the status quo or reform. One group favored the status-quo (a state-protected economy and no democratic opening) while the other favored reform (neoliberal economic reforms and some political opening to placate the opposition). The status-quo oriented deputies included PRI’s labor and peasant sectors and the party’s more nationalistic, left-wing members. The more reform-minded group included the technocrats in the executive bureaucracy and upper ranks of the government, the middle class and business supporters of PRI, and some of the more reform-minded elements within the party.14

Other Mexican scholars have discussed a split in the ruling elite between the “tecnico" and “politico" (Camp 1985; Smith 1986; Lindau 1992; Camp 1996).15 The tecnico have advanced educational training, usually in economics and public administration and have government careers centered in the federal bureaucracy. They generally support neo-liberal, economic reforms and limited political reforms to preserve their power and ability to implement their economic reforms. In contrast, the politico are the career party/union politicians who support the status quo within the system.

14In the democratization literature, a similar breakdown has been used between hardliners (duros) and softliners (blandos) (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Both groups support a perpetuation of the authoritarian regime. “What turns them into softliners is their increasing awareness that the regime [needs] some degree or some form of electoral legitimation,” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986:16).
15This left versus right ideological split within the ruling elites does not fall perfectly along this technico/politico division. Some career politicians support economic and political reforms while not all technically trained economists are neoliberal in perspective (see, Lindau 1992).
because of their vested interests in the continued monopoly of the party machine. They are political leaders who have cultivated their careers in the electoral and party politics within PRI and they resist efforts to give more space to the opposition. Many políticos are on the left wing of the party and support continued state involvement in the economy. In general, both groups agree on the importance of maintaining the current regime and their hold on power yet they divide over the best means for achieving this goal.

When President de la Madrid (1982-1988) appointed Carlos Salinas as the next PRI presidential candidate, this growing split within the party became very public and very serious. In the 1980s, the técnicos had been replacing the políticos in the national executive. The last four presidents spent their careers in the economic or technocratic ministries of the federal bureaucracy with little electoral experience of mass politics or with the party organization. As shown in Figure 2.2, this trend was a very significant event in Mexican politics because it ended the “pendulum theory” of candidate ideological alteration, which helped to maintain regime stability for many decades.

This trend threatened the party politicians (políticos) because they were relegated to the legislature and the state/local level public offices while the técnicos continued their dominance of the national executive. The party politicians were largely blocked from further political advancement and the economic restructuring continued to hurt their supporters. As a result, a number of prominent PRI members from the party’s left wing formed a dissident movement called the Democratic Current (CD) in 1986. The best
known members were Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the son of a former President, and Porfirio Munoz Ledo, a former PRI party president. This group eventually split off from PRI and joined with the Left opposition to run in the 1988 elections and eventually created the a new party, the Democratic Revolutionary Party, PRD.

These different political dynamics are important for understanding legislative change because they are connected to the legislative-executive relationship. They demonstrate the power and goals of each group. These political/economic dynamics suggest how the relative power of each group changes and indicate what goals they value (ideology). The dynamics of opposition-majority party changes over time with the general political and economic context and also with the executive leadership. In the years after the 1977 Electoral Reform, different presidents have taken distinct strategies toward each of the opposition groups. Before outlying these political strategies, the general economic context was an important trigger for these specific dynamics.

**Economic Context**

The economic situation took a dramatic downturn in the early 1980s and this had an enormous affect on politics in Mexico. The Lopez Portillo government (1976-1982) had dramatically expanded the level of public spending with foreign loans because of the discovery of massive new oil reserves. In 1981, oil prices plummeted and the interest rates for the government’s massive foreign loans skyrocketed. Inflation rates increased while the government maintained a fixed exchange rate, leading to an overvalued peso, trade deficit, and massive capital flight. For example, the exchange rate for the peso had been on a fixed one-to-one ratio with the US dollar until the late 1970s. By Dec. 1987,
the exchange rate was 2,300 pesos to the dollar. Mexico, in step with the rest of Latin America, experienced a “lost decade” during the 1980s as a result of the deep economic crisis. Table 2.5 presents a few economic indicators of this debt crisis. The generally bad economic situation was further exacerbated in the mid-1980s with another drop in oil prices and devastating earthquakes in Mexico City.

**Table 2.5**
**Economic Indicators, 1981-1989**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-4.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>105.7</td>
<td>159.2</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-21.9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-10.5</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


By the end of his administration (1976-1982), President Lopez Portillo seemed unable to control the economic situation. After declaring that he would defend the value of the peso “like a dog”, he devalued it several days later. He nationalized the banking system without consulting with his cabinet. Lopez Portillo attempted to use the banks as a scapegoat for the capital flight and worsening economic situation (Gomez 1991; Philip 1992).

President Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) was a moderate conservative who emphasized financial stabilization as well as economic restructuring for combating the economic crisis. An agreement with the IMF (International Monetary Fund) emphasized economic austerity measures to reduce the public sector deficit, curb inflation, and balance the external trade deficit. De la Madrid reduced state subsidies and social spending, froze government hires, and even cut some 51,000 federal jobs. More importantly, he determined that the Mexican economy would continue to suffer in the long-run unless it was restructured, including privatization and trade liberalization. For
example, around 800 public enterprises were sold\textsuperscript{16} and Mexico joined GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade).

President Carlos Salinas (1988-1994) was a technocrat who had been the Secretary of Planning and Budget during the previous administration and was able to build on the work of earlier economic reforms. He took more decisive steps toward economic recovery and restructure. Two hundred and fifty more state enterprises were sold and the cooperative land holdings, or \textit{ejidos}, were privatization. The traditional state protectionism was dismantled through reductions in tariffs and the elimination of official prices. To further eliminate barriers to trade and investment, Salinas spearheaded the creation of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, in 1993. Free trade had become the economic centerpiece of the Salinas administration.

Economic crisis and the response by the different executive administrations is important for this discussion because they challenged the regime’s traditional adaptive capacity. The economic problems and the neoliberal market solutions reduced the subsidies and spoils available to co-opt groups into supporting the government. It could no longer finance stability. In addition, the opposition was better organized and more active against the government because of the economic crisis and the executive’s policy solutions. These changes in opposition-government relations are divided into the two different ideological opposition blocs - the Left and Right opposition.

\textsuperscript{16} From the early 1940s, this “parastatal sector” played a central role in the development model. These government-owned businesses and industries were administered by the federal government and supplied key production inputs (steel, petroleum, gas, electricity) at subsidized prices. They also expanded the economic infrastructure and channeled resources to disadvantaged groups (i.e. the National Commission of}
Executive-Right Opposition Dynamics

The Right Opposition (PAN) experienced shifts in its relationship with the executive over time. The informal alliance between business and the government began to dissolve at the end of the Lopez Portillo administration, especially because of his nationalization of the banking system. The business sector realized that the closed, centralized presidency could not be trusted if it was capricious and hurt their interests. While moderate businessmen preferred to continue their private relations with the government, many business interests joined the electoral process by becoming active in PAN (Escobar Toledo 1987; Guadarrama 1987; Gomez 1991; Philip 1992).

PAN was more overtly hostile to the government during the De la Madrid government. President De la Madrid attempted an electoral opening in 1983 by signaling the government’s willingness to tolerate real competition at the local level. He took a calculated risk at the local level because he needed an outlet for popular frustrations over the economic crisis and his unpopular economic policies (Regional Reports: Mexico and Central America 1983). This new strategy would be to recognize some municipal-level victories by PAN. In 1983, PAN won 31 city elections, including the state capitals in Chihuahua, Durango, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosi, Hermosillo, and the major border city of Ciudad Juarez. However, this executive strategy to maintain regime stability directly threatened the vested interests within PRI. The local PRI party machines responded with massive electoral fraud and forced the president to contract the electoral opening. In turn, PAN became more hard-line against the government because they had been given a taste of electoral victory only to have it taken away. PAN organized civil disobedience

Popular Subsistence). However, when the economic pie began to shrink, the losses incurred by the parastatal sector could not be easily absorbed by the government.
campaigns and gave these local events national and international prominence (Cornelius 1987; Morris 1995; Camp 1996).

In contrast, President Salinas used a ‘divide and conquer’ strategy toward the opposition that favored PAN (over the Left Opposition). He openly co-opted key support groups within PAN, such as business, by opening up profit opportunities and controlling labor. There was also an enhanced role for business in politics, especially with economic policymaking. As a result, business groups generally downplayed their previous hard-line approach and returned to more private interaction with the government. President Salinas also courted the religious supporters of PAN. He altered the state-church relations with a 1991 constitutional reform that lifted restrictions on the Church (Morris 1995; Blancarte 1995).

Salinas also allowed more electoral space for PAN. For example, when PAN protested electoral fraud in several state elections, he forced the resignation of the PRI candidates and allowed the PAN candidate to take power. In this way, Salinas allowed PAN victories in several gubernatorial elections - Baja California Norte in 1989 (the first opposition governor), Guanajuanto and San Luis Potosi in 1991 and Chihuahua in 1992. In return, PAN showed a greater willingness to behave as a loyal opposition. PAN gave Salinas support in Congress to pass important legislation such as the reprivatization of banks and the reform of Church-State relations (Camp 1995; Morris 1995; Rodriguez and Ward 1995). PAN and PRI also negotiated the electoral reforms in 1991. “[T]he PRI granted many of the PAN’s demands regarding the organization and oversight of the electoral process...in exchange for an electoral formula that benefited the winning party. In return, the PAN voted in favor of the restrictive regulation of electoral alliances -
especially the one allowing joint candidates, which the *cardinistas* used so successfully in 1988,” (Molinar Horcasitas 1996:150).

In summary, the Right opposition moved into more open opposition at the end of the Lopez Portillo administration. As a result, De la Madrid was caught between his party’s interests and the need to lower opposition pressure from the Right. The Right opposition was the strongest at the end of the de la Madrid administration and beginning of the Salinas administration, leading to more concessions from Salinas. In return, PAN opposition moderated, especially because Salinas’ economic policies favored their own economic ideology.

*Executive-Left Opposition Dynamics*

The poor, workers, and other leftist supporters were the hardest hit by the economic crisis and the government’s stabilization program. The government’s economic policies resulted in a 50% decrease in the minimum wage from 1982 to 1988 and an increase in unemployment and consumer prices. The leftist parties and organizations responded with massive opposition. These small, fragmented parties began to coordinate with joint candidates and new alliances with popular movements, independent labor, and intellectuals (Bortz 1987; Morris 1995; Handelman 1997).

The decline in government support among the populist groups was further supported by the rise in civic organizations. They became new vehicles to articulate opposition to the government on such issues as land ownership and improvements in public services (Foweraker and Craig 1990). They often had to act collectively, something that was easily translated into electoral support for the Left parties.
By the 1988 election, the Left Opposition had risen in political prominence, with the coalescence of these different groups (including the breakaway group of former PRI members) into a broad electoral front called the National Democratic Front (FDN). By the 1988 election, the Left had reached a high point in unity and strength. Former PRI member and presidential candidate for the FDN, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, sought to rally the Mexican people with the themes of nationalism, sovereignty, social justice, and reform (Carr 1989; Middlebrook 1986; Roett 1993; Craig and Cornelius 1995; Camp 1996).

After the 1988 election, the Left Opposition was organized around the remnants of the 1988 electoral coalition, renamed the PRD, the Democratic Revolutionary Party. Its program focused on populism/nationalism yet there were deep divisions within this coalition because of different ideologies, personalistic leaders, and opposition strategies. The PRD groups also split apart on their strategy toward the government - whether to work against the administration from outside or inside the system (Craig and Cornelius 1995).

Despite the disunity, the Left Opposition represented a threat to regime stability because they competed for the same populist base of support as PRI and they were opposed to both the government’s economic and political policies. For this, President Salinas was less favorable to the Left Opposition (PRD) than to PAN. Many Mexicans believed that Cardenas and the FDN had actually won the presidential election in 1988, which fundamentally challenged Salinas’ legitimacy. He tried to weaken PRD at every opportunity. For example, while PAN received several governorships the PRD was left
in the cold and its' supporters and activists were also subjected to coercion (Morris 1995; Camp 1996).

President Salinas also used the redistributive programs under Solidarity to win back Left supporters (Bruhn 1996). The Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (PRONASOL), or Solidarity, funded public works such as schools, roads, clinics, electricity, and water services. The administration used this program to selectively alleviate the economic demands of the urban and rural poor and draw these populist groups closer to the government. Solidarity would depoliticize the civic organizations by increasing the money and attention of the government on the local development demands of these groups.

Thus, the De la Madrid presidency did not have a unified, strong Left opposition until the very end. In contrast, President Salinas used both positive (Solidarity) and negative tactics to keep down the Left coalition. Thus, the Left and the Right opposition had different relations with the three presidents. The Right opposition was stronger and more intransigent during the early to mid-1980s and the Left came on strong in the later 1980s. As a result of the pressures coming from the Left and the Right, all three presidents instituted electoral reforms in an attempt to placate this growing opposition.

In sum, the power of these different opposition groups has risen or fallen depending on the strategies of the particular executive, each opposition group's relative size and electoral support, and the economic context. These dynamics between the executive and the opposition groups are important for the development of the political conflict model and the expectations of institutional change in the Mexican Chamber because they are connected to the legislative-executive relationship.
Conclusions and Theoretical Implications

The political-conflict model contends that institutions are sensitive to changes in the relative power of different groups. The comparative legislative literature on institutional change toward a more competitive political context also focuses on the change in partisan power and executive power/strategies. In this chapter, I have detailed both of these independent variables and how and why they have changed over time in Mexico.

The last few sections outlined how the different opposition groups interacted with the executive and summarized their relative power and ideologies over time. For changes in a legislative institution, the distribution of power can be empirically measured by the parties’ percentage of legislative seats. The various electoral reforms enabled more minority opposition members to successfully compete in elections, which worked together with the political and economic context to change the relative bargaining power of the opposition parties.

The ruling party still held a firm majority in the legislative institution and therefore, its advantage was generally upheld in the Chamber. However, the uncertainty of increased partisan conflict makes the advantages and disadvantages of the existing rules and structures more salient. Prior to the 1977 electoral reform, the PRI could rely on the near absence of opposition parties and public attention to ensure its institutional advantage. Yet the uncertainty facing PRI in 1979 brought into question the automatic advantage of the majority party. The PRI majority party leader for the 1979-82 legislature, Luis M. Farias, said that the opposition will “have every opportunity to air its view and to claim whatever right it sees fit...[but that the opposition members must also
offer] respect, tolerance, attentiveness and seriousness,” (EFE 1979). The PRI was willing to only tolerate opposition activity within particular boundaries.

The PRI legislative leaders faced an uncertain future of increased opposition activity and it was their job to make sure that it did not become transformed into real influence over the legislative process. Therefore, they are generally expected to push for institutional reforms that would enhance the ruling party’s control over the legislature and committee system. PRI is expected to either formalize previously restrictive practices or further restrict the ability of the minority to interfere with the government agenda. Those hypotheses are derived from the political conflict model and will be developed in the following chapters.

Meanwhile, there are greater numbers of opposition members in the post-reform Chamber who are more willing and able to bear the cost of institutional change to reduce their institutional disadvantage. They are expected to push for less restrictive procedures and structures in order to have more effective legislative participation. To increase their effectiveness within the legislature, the opposition is expected to concentrate their efforts on the Chamber floor and committee system. These are the two important arenas where the opposition parties can oppose the government majority and put forth their partisan message. The institutional status quo greatly disadvantaged the opposition. It is therefore hypothesized that they would attempt changes in these rules and structures.

The opposition is also expected to resist the government/PRI agenda through obstrusive strategies. The obstructionist strategy by the opposition would affect the ability of the government majority to achieve its preferred outcomes. The opposition was a minority and did not have the numbers to vote down the government legislation. Yet
they can use their actions and words to create as many problems as possible for the majority.

The actions and reactions between the PRI majority and the minority opposition are the basis for internal institutional changes, according to the political conflict model. If the opposition parties entered the legislature and sat quietly in the back of the Chamber, then institutional change would not be expected. The majority would not push for institutional changes against minority rights if the opposition did not try to exercise those rights. This political conflict between the government majority and opposition within the Chamber is at the root of institutional change.

From the larger political context discussed above, the different dynamics between the government majority and opposition provide important clues as to the potential timing and direction of legislative change. The timing and direction of legislative change are not expected to be constant because they are determined by the changing political dynamics. The general idea is for the government majority party to preserve their control over the Chamber while the opposition would push outward on the restrictiveness of the Chamber institution. Yet the strategies for achieving these goals could very easily take different forms over time. A recent statement made about the different (and sometimes contradictory) strategies over time by PRI to the liberalization challenges captures these arguments:

"The Mexican political system and its authoritarian presidentialism – like a huge army that is in retreat, yet undefeated – have concentrated their best elements in the rear guard. It continues the fight. Its withdrawal is slow and orderly, but it retreats, since it is clear that it no longer owns the future. The system yields ground to a democratic future, but it does so little by little, controlling the timing and the conditions of the transition....The authoritarian regime is, indeed, in retreat, but no one knows where it is heading or when its demise will occur. What is
important is avoiding the final battle. The immediate objective of Mexico authoritarianism is to protract the march and hold the army together, for the individual salvation of the PRI chiefs depends upon it,” (Meyer 1993 as quoted in Molinar Horcasitas 1996:155).

Subsequent chapters explore in greater detail the political conflict between parties and the process of institutional change in the Chamber floor and committee system. These two legislative arenas are selected because they are where the different partisan actors interact and provide the possibility of political conflict over the institutional rules and structure. How was the legislative institution affected by the increase in partisan conflict? How were issues of internal organization resolved in the new context of strengthened opposition representation? How did these organizational decisions affect legislative activity and outcomes? In Chapter 3, the focus is on legislative rules for both the floor and the committee system. The legislative rules are a primary target of reform because of their influence over the institutional outcome.
Figure 2.1

Pendulum Theory of the Mexican Presidency

Progressive

Cardenas
(1934-40)

Avila Camacho
(1940-46)

Aleman
(1946-1952)

Ruiz Cortines
(1952-58)

Lopez Mateos
(1958-64)

Diaz Ordaz
(1964-70)

Echeverria
(1970-76)

Lopez Portillo
(1976-82)

Conservative

Calles
(1929-33)

De la Madrid
(1982-88)
Figure 2.2
Pendulum Theory of the Mexican Presidency

Progressive
Cardenas (1934-40)

Avila Camacho (1940-46)

Aleman (1946-1952)

Ruiz Cortines (1952-58)

Conservative

Lopez Mateos (1958-64)

Diaz Ordaz (1964-70)

Echeverria (1970-76)

Lopez Portillo (1976-82)

De la Madrid (1982-88)

Salinas (1988-94)

Zedillo (1994-2000)
Chapter 3
Legislative Rules

Institutional rules are commonly the focus of political conflict because they advantage some groups of actors over others. Rules define what actions are “required, prohibited, or permitted, and the sanctions authorized if the rules are not followed,” (Crawford and Ostrom 1993). Politics is a game of winners and losers and institutional rules are used by the winners to impose their will on others. Those who “lose” in the decisions are generally expected to abide by the rules or attempt to change them.

In this chapter, the floor and committee system rules are investigated because they are the two legislative arenas where most of the partisan interaction takes place. They became a focus of political conflict once the opposition parties increased their representation in the post-reform Mexican Chamber. How did the opposition parties target the institutional rules and how successful were they? What was the PRI reaction? This chapter will begin to unravel these partisan relationships and their influence on the Chamber institution. After outlining the theoretical expectations and the institutional status quo on internal rules before 1979, I provide evidence of the successful and unsuccessful attempts at rule change by the different partisan groups.

Legislative Rules and Partisan Advantage

Procedural rules convey partisan advantage. They advantage one actor or group of actors over others by granting some sort of political leverage (Carol, Parodi, and Ysmal 1976; Di Palma 1976; Kornberg and Mischler 1976; Baerwald 1979; Rush 1979;
Judge 1984; Opello 1986; Jewell and Miller 1988; Damgaard 1992; Huber 1992; Lehoucq 1995). This political leverage is not constant, however. The relative size and cohesion of the majority versus opposition are important for the analysis of political change (Huber 1992; Binder 1995; Fink and Humes 1995). A large, cohesive majority party does not need to bear the costs of rule changes in order to maintain its partisan advantage. Large majorities either do not need restrictive rules to support its advantage or their size simply allows the restrictive rules to be even more effective (Andrews 1978).

With the political conflict model (Knight 1992), there is an explicit connection between political change and institutional change. Changes in political composition of the legislature can lead to increased conflict between the government majority party versus the minority opposition. As this conflict increases, institutional rules become a target of the partisan struggle to gain advantage within the legislature. The shrinking majority party size increases its desire to restrict the institutional rules and thus shore up its power because of increased uncertainty about its legislative control associated with the rise in opposition size and strength. The majority party is generally expected to change the rules in order to deter interference and obstruction by the opposition and avoid political embarrassment. So, as the majority party shrinks, it is expected to protect its advantage through the institutional rules.

At the same time, the growing opposition parties are expected to push for institutional changes to reduce their relative disadvantage. When the opposition’s size and strength passes the 33% threshold of representation, their efforts to push liberalization reforms are expected to be more successful. The 33% representation is a significant threshold in the Mexican Chamber as well as other cases because of the 2/3
requirement of support for constitutional amendments, to establish that a particular bill warrants urgent attention (and thus bypass the committee system altogether), and other procedural maneuvers (Rundquist 1998). In general, the 33% threshold is significant because it portrays a level at which the minority can become more of a negative or obstructionist force in the legislative process by preventing particular actions the majority party may want. Thus, past the 33% threshold of opposition representation, the majority-minority interaction is expected to shift. The majority party would become more reliant upon informal support from some of the opposition members/parties. The opposition parties would therefore be in a better position to push their desired liberalization changes in the legislative institution. How did this process take place in the Mexican Chamber?

In the years before the 1977 electoral reform, the majority party used primarily political means to control the legislative arena in Mexico. The large PRI delegation was under tight internal discipline by the majority party leader and therefore could easily isolate the few opposition members, who were allowed little voice and no influence (De la Garza 1972; Portes 1977; Camp 1995).

Beginning with the 1979 legislative election, however, the majority party was faced with greater numbers and different kinds of opposition members represented in the Chamber. The opposition parties increased their representation from an average of 17% in the 1970s to an average of 26% in the early post-reform legislatures (1979-1982, 1982-1985, and 1985-1988). The opposition was also more active and vocal than ever before (Regional Reports 1979; Needler 1982; Middlebrook 1986; Camp 1995). They were more deeply committed to acting on their opposition to the government and bringing public attention to their criticisms of the current regime. Having reached more of a
critical mass, the opposition within the legislature reflected the heightened conflict within the political system.

The most effective weapons of the opposition in this type of legislative setting are delay and embarrassment. The opposition can use the legislative arena to turn public opinion against the government through embarrassing votes or debates (Miller 1977; Baerwald 1979; Racz 1989). At the same time, an opposition that desires a role in policy making within the legislature is directly interested in reducing the majority’s unfair advantage. With their increasing power, the opposition parties are expected to push institutional changes that broaden the institutional space for their activities. They are expected to challenge the rules that disadvantage them. The opposition parties in the post-reform legislatures are expected to liberalize the Chamber institution and reduce the institutional means of PRI control.

Basically, political changes in the relative size of the opposition affects the nature of political relationships in the Chamber. The majority party is no longer completely confident of its control over the institution. Thus, the government majority is expected to reduce the minority’s opportunities to obstruct its agenda in the early post-reform legislatures (1979-1981, 1982-1984, & 1985-1987 legislatures). PRI can formalize its previously restrictive practices and/or further restrict the legislative rules to underscore its dominant legislative position and keep the opposition activity under control. Specifically, were the floor and committee system rules restricted in a way that minority legislators cannot obstruct the flow of legislation or use the legislative platform for their partisan activity?
After the 1988 election, however, the opposition parties achieved a level of representation over the 33% threshold of representation. In addition, the new executive, President Salinas, used a more accommodative strategy toward at least some of the opposition parties in order to push through his constitutional amendments (Grayson 1988). Thus, between the growing opposition power and a changing executive strategy, the opposition’s attempts to liberalize the Chamber institution are expected to be more successful after the 1988 election.

**Proposition 3.1:** The opposition parties’ attempts to make reforms in the Chamber institution are expected to increase in the early post-reform legislatures (1979, 1982, 1985 legislatures).

**Proposition 3.2:** The opposition parties’ attempts to make reforms in the Chamber institution are expected to be more successful in the later post-reform legislature (1988, 1991, 1994 legislatures).

**Data Sources**

There are three basic sources of formal rules for the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. The first is the Mexican Constitution, which covers the elections and installation of legislators, initiation of laws, systemic responsibilities of the Congress, and the Permanent Committee. The section of the Mexican Constitution that focuses on the Chamber of Deputies has been reformed numerous times, especially the articles about elections and the systemic powers of Congress. In fact, Article 73 that outlines Congress’ scope of authority has been reformed 36 times, more than any other article in the Constitution (SIID 1993d). While the Constitution outlines the basic parameters of the Chamber within the political system, it does not provide all of the necessary detail about the internal processes.
The second source outlines the internal rules for the Chamber, the *Reglamento Para el Gobierno Interior del Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, or the Rules for the Internal Governing of the Mexican Congress. The original *Reglamento* dates back to 1824, with a revised version in 1934. This document covers the following topics: the installation of the deputies, the floor leadership (Presidents, Vice-Presidents, & Secretaries), legislative sessions, initiation of laws, the committee system, floor debate, amendments, voting procedures, the Permanent Committee, the daily record, legislative ceremonies and public galleries.

The third document that details the legislative rules for the Chamber is the *Ley Organica del Congreso General de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, the Organic Law of the Mexican Congress. This document dates back to 1934, but its current form focuses on the following areas in the Chamber of Deputies: installation of deputies, qualifying the Presidential election, the floor leadership, parliamentary groups, the Grand Commission, and the committee system.

Information on the successful and unsuccessful attempts to change the floor and committee system rules is provided largely by documents published by the Information and Documentation Services of the Mexican Congressional Library (SIID). SIID produces numerous *Cuadernos de Apoyo* that are packets of information covering various topics of interest for legislators and scholars. For this analysis, there are several relevant *Cuadernos* from the 1992-1993 series: “Successful and Unsuccessful Reforms to the Organic Law”; “Successful and Unsuccessful Reforms to the Internal Rules”; “Reforms to the Mexican Constitution 1917-1993”; and “Information about the Organic Law of Congress.” Information about the Chamber rules is also supplemented with various
articles from the Chamber magazines, *Cronica Legislativa* and *Quorum*, plus news articles from *Excelsior*, a major newspaper in Mexico City for government information.

In the following section, some of the basic institutional rules of the Chamber are briefly outlined in order to lay the background for a discussion on changes in rules. It is not possible to convey all of the relevant institutional rules and structures, but these are some of the more important floor and committee system rules. This discussion reflects the status quo at the end of the 1970s, before the 1979 election.

**Institutional Setting Prior to 1979**

Deputies were elected for three-year terms with no consecutive re-election. The legislative sessions were from September 1 to December 31 with the possibility of special sessions called by the Permanent Committee. The Permanent Committee consisted of a small number of Deputies and Senators who carried out some of the symbolic duties of the legislature during the congressional recess such as the approval of executive appointees to the judiciary and diplomatic service, military promotion, and reception of foreign visitors. The Permanent Committee maintained the legislature’s symbolic role of popular representation (Sirvent 1995; Rundquist 1998).

The Chamber usually held floor meetings twice a week except toward the end of the yearly legislative session (in December) when meetings became more frequent and longer in order to finish the legislative business. Regular floor sessions were generally open to the public and attendance was mandatory. The Constitution stipulated that deputies would not be paid for sessions where they were absent and could be dismissed for extended absences. However, prior to 1979:
“Attendance rules are virtually ignored. In 1957, the Chamber failed to have a quorum for 11 consecutive sessions. Only then did the Chamber president warn that he would apply the rules governing attendance (Excelsior Nov 23, 1957:1). During the 1971 session, numerous deputies were frequently absent, and on one occasion attendance was so low that Chamber employees invited members of the public, including this researcher, to sit in the Chamber so as to give the appearance of a quorum,” (De la Garza 1972:40 and footnote 28).

In the pre-reform Chamber, the floor leadership (called the mesa directiva) consisted of a President, two Vice-Presidents, and a number of Secretaries (usually three). The Chamber members elected (by secret ballot) a new President and Vice-Presidents for every month of the legislative session. The same member could not be elected to the floor leadership more than once in the same year. These floor leaders were expected to administer and facilitate the floor business, with the understanding that the PRI majority party leader was actually in charge (De la Garza 1972).

The Grand Commission was the leadership group for the committee system. It designated all of the committee system members and leaders, hired the staff, and coordinated the committee activities. The Grand Commission members were made up of two representatives from each state (always PRI members) and the president of this Commission was always the majority party leader. Therefore, the majority party leader was in direct control over the committee system.

The president, deputies, senators, and state legislatures were able to introduce bills into the Chamber. After bills were introduced into the Chamber, they were sent to the appropriate committees. All bills were sent to committee except when two-thirds of the Chamber voted to suspend the regular procedures in the case of “urgency or obvious resolution” (Reglamento Interior, Article 61). Committees had the “right of access to any
documents pertinent to their needs, and they may meet with any government official to
discuss their work. Deputies may attend any committee meeting he chooses, and he may
participate in its deliberations but may not vote unless he is a member of that committee,”
(De la Garza 1972:39).

The committee then sent a report (called the dictamen) back to the floor for
discussion, not the original bill. The committees had 5 days to produce a committee
report unless it explained the reason for the delay to the Chamber. “If a committee holds
a bill longer than the limit, and without having advised the chamber, the secretary of the
chamber should advise the president of the chamber of the delay and the latter will decide
whether to ask the committee to issue a report....The Reglamento does not suggest what
the president of the chamber should do, nor are there formal discharge procedures,”
(Weldon 1996:8).

The committee report could be favorable or unfavorable to the bill and had to be
signed by a majority of the committee members. Those who disagreed with their
committee’s report could create a minority report to outline their objections. Once the
committee report had been sent out of committee, it was given a second and third reading
on the Chamber floor. The debate had two phases whereby the committee report was
discussed as a whole and then each article was discussed separately. The Chamber
president administered the debate but the majority party leader was really in charge of
who could participate in the floor debate. Any member who was not put on the original
list of speakers (approved by the majority party leader) could only speak for five minutes
on the floor to make “factual explanations or to answer personal allusions.” Only the
committee members could speak more than twice during the debate and speakers could not take more than 30 minutes to address the floor (De la Garza 1972; Sirvent 1995).

The floor vote on legislation was also divided between the bill (actually the committee report) as a whole and each article in the bill. Again, it was the committee's report that actually received the action on the floor - the Chamber members debated the committee report and they voted on the committee report. "If the Chamber accepts a favorable report, the bill is sent on to the executive or to the Senate. If the Chamber accepts an unfavorable report, the bill is rejected. If the floor rejects a report (positive or negative), it is usually sent back to committee," (Weldon 1996:8-9).

If the Chamber voted in general to approve, in general, a favorable committee report, then each article in the bill was voted on separately. At that point, individual articles could be voted down and either sent back to committee or tabled separately from the rest of the bill. Weldon (1996) states that most floor amendments were made through this procedure whereby individual articles could be changed. It was at this time that the minority report from the committee, if it exists, came into play. The chamber could discuss the minority report and replace any or all of the rejected portions of the original bill with the minority report recommendations.

Amendments on the Chamber floor could be offered only after all of the votes on the bill have been taken. Amendments could only be considered for the articles that have already been approved in general.

"Only the sponsor [of the amendment] may speak in favor, and the amendments are immediately voted upon; if approved, they are sent to the committee for a report (not incorporated into the bill in question). Technically, therefore, in order for amendments from the floor to be

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17Opposition members were sometimes kept unaware of committee business so that they could not file reports (De la Garza 1972).
incorporated, the chamber would have to first refer the (already approved) bill back to committee and hope that the committee makes the suggested changes. In actual practice, however, during the [floor] discussion...an amendment can be offered before an article is approved: in this case, the president of the chamber asks a member of the committee if the committee approves of the changes, and if so, the amendment is incorporated directly into the bill by the chamber before final passage of that article,” (Weldon 1996:9).

These rules made it relatively difficult for amendments (especially by the opposition) to succeed. There was little time given for debate and study of amendments and the committee did not have to include the approved amendment into the bill.

This brief summary of some of the important Chamber floor and committee system rules provides a basic understanding of the legislative setting for comparison to any changes made after the 1979 election. Many of these rules demonstrate how little room the ruling majority allowed for the opposition in the legislative process. In the next section, I investigate rule reforms made in the years before the 1979 election.

**Institutional Rules Reform – Prior to the 1979 Election**

Before the 1979 legislature, there were eight reforms and additions to the *Reglamento* by PRI deputies, with most (five) in the 1930s (SIID 1992). The only opposition-initiated reforms were by PAN, the Right Opposition party, in 1965 and 1974. The reform in 1965 addressed rules for committee work during the congressional recess. This reform called for the committees to function during the congressional recess. Before the reform, only the Administration and two other similar administrative-type committees were maintained during congressional recess. This reform stated that all committees
must function during recess. The committee presidents were charged with coordinating legislative business during the recess (*Diario de los Debates* 11/16/65 and 12/17/65).

The PAN reform in 1974 referred to the appearance of cabinet secretaries and other government officials before the Chamber and the committees. The reform made it possible for the committees and the Chamber members to force government officials to appear before them and answer any questions they felt “pertinent” (SIID 1992; *Diario de los Debates* 10/17/74 and 12/11/74).

Most important was a major reform spearheaded by PRI of the *Ley Organica del Congreso General* in 1979, immediately before the election for the first post-reform legislature. There was a special session of Congress convened in May 1979 by the Permanent Committee to approve a new *Ley Organica*. Jorge Cruickshank Garcia, leader of the PPS (one of the PRI Satellite parties) said that the rules document was “an old, inoperable document” that reduced the freedom of expression for legislators and was frequently used in a very arbitrary manner. It was considered by the opposition to be a “diabolical” set of rules, (*Excelsior* May 8, 1979). The opposition parties recognized their disadvantage within this set of internal rules. However, it was not the opposition that reformed the *Ley Organica* in 1979. A more restrictive set of rule reforms was processed during the congressional recess by PRI.

The president of the Permanent Commission was Senator Joaquin Gamboa Pasco. According to opposition members, he controlled the Permanent Commission as he did the Senate - in an undemocratic manner. The Senate had become a “freezer” for the more progressive initiatives and Senator Gamboa Pasco maintained his hard-line stance while the Permanent Commission was creating the new *Ley Organica* (*Excelsior* May 4,8,9,
1979). The new *Ley Organica* was approved on May 15, 1978; Gonzalo Dimas Altamirano (PAN) said that these changes were made by the PRI in order to keep the doors closed to the opposition and guarantee the control of PRI over the Chamber (*Excelsior* May 16, 1979).

The opposition parties accused PRI of using the new *Ley Organica* to limit minority rights and thus weaken or reverse any democratic reform brought about by the electoral reform. Using very colorful language, Hector Ramirez Cuellar (PPS) said that the PRI deputies were resisting any increase in minority party legislative influence (*Excelsior* May 9, 1979). Members of the opposition parties PDM, PCM, & PST said that the new *Ley Organica* demonstrated the government's fear of future opposition strength; it was a "backward march" because of the government's fear of the increasing political power of both the Right and Left opposition groups (*Excelsior* May 12, 1979).

So, the anti-democratic forces within PRI had successfully reformed the *Ley Organica* to be more restrictive on the minority opposition members. The opposition parties were rankled by this additional institutional disadvantage against them within the Chamber.

For example, the reformed rules created a new electoral college within the Chamber which could be tightly controlled by PRI (SIID 1993a). In this way, the majority party could dominate the process of seating each new legislature. It also created a new set of rules by which the new proportional representation seats could be installed and determined how conflicts over the election outcomes can be resolved. The opposition parties argued against how the majority party deputies qualify their own elections and those of the minority.
The new *Ley Organica* recognized the legislative responsibilities of parliamentary parties but also formalized their subordinate relationship to the floor leadership. It determined the rules for establishing internal Chamber party groups and charged them with keeping their members in line. The parliamentary parties were supposed to coordinate their activities with the *Mesa Directiva* (the floor leadership) and the majority party leader. While the new rules recognized them, the newly represented opposition parties would be kept in check by the majority party leader. Their freedom of legislative activity had been curtailed before it was even realized.

The Grand Commission and its political responsibilities were put into the organization rules, thereby formalizing its power within the Chamber. The Grand Commission was recognized formally as the “conductor and coordinator of legislative business, acknowledging its efficiency and parliamentary tradition.....[It’s presence was seen as] congruent with the fundamental principle of democratic representation by majority rule” (*Diario de los Debates* 5/12/79). PRI explicitly acknowledged its commitment to maintain control of the Chamber through the use of the Grand Commission. They tried to deny that the Grand Commission had a very political role in the legislature. However, the majority party clearly was trying to preserve the institutional structure that had spearheaded its dominance of the Chamber (*Excelsior* May 9, 1979).

For the opposition parties, the continuation of the Grand Commission and its increased formal power over the Chamber was a setback for liberalization within the Chamber. They recognized that no matter what positive spin the PRI put on the presence of the Grand Commission, it was a powerful tool to be used against them in the Chamber.
The PARM deputies stated that with this new *Ley Organica*, the opposition parties were constrained by the "obsolete and inoperative" Grand Commission that would continue to support the PRI majority advantage and block the minority parties; the Senate and Chamber PRI members were called "reactionaries, enemies of democratic opening," (*Excelsior* May 12, 1979). Now, with their growing power, the opposition parties wanted to change this institution which clearly disadvantaged them.

Members of the opposition parties stated that they were going to challenge the new *Ley Organica* and try to reform it. Opposition members from many different parties asserted that they would push for structural changes and other modifications in the new rules. Some suggested that the Grand Commission ought to disappear in order to make the Congress more democratic. Other opposition members argued that the legislative term should be six years because three years was too short to accomplish much of their legislative agenda. They also wanted consecutive re-election for legislators (*Excelsior* May 12, 22 1979). In sum, the opposition party members wanted to assert themselves into the legislative game. The opposition's feelings could be summed up by Arnoldo Martinez Verdugo, the Secretary General of the Communist Party: "We are going to fight to break the rigid control that the *Ley Organica* establishes for the minority party deputies; to break the PRI dictatorship and the monopoly that it exercises [in the Chamber]; to convert the Chamber into a real platform for denouncing the government" and win the confidence of the Mexican people (*Excelsior* June 10, 1979).

This reform of the *Ley Organica* by the ruling majority party and the reaction by various opposition members fall in line with the theoretical expectations from the political conflict model. The institutional reform took place just before the legislative
election, while PRI still dominated the Chamber. In anticipation of a legislature with a larger and more vocal opposition, the majority party formalized and further restricted the Chamber procedures. As the majority party decreased in size, it was expected to change the institutional rules in order to maintain its advantage. In this case, the majority party took advantage of the last days of its hegemonic role within the Chamber to spearhead rule changes that would continue its political control after the July 1979 election.

The opposition parties were displeased with how the newly restrictive rules further underscored their institutional disadvantage. According to the theoretical model, the opposition parties would be expected to attempt rule changes because of the heightened political conflict and their greater relative power in the post-reform Chamber. As many opposition members had stated, they planned to fight against these restrictive rules in order to lessen their relative disadvantage. In fact, they made good on these threats to struggle against the repressiveness of the institution. In the rest of the chapter, I present evidence of the opposition’s attempts (unsuccessful and successful) to liberalize the chamber rules.

Institutional Rule Reforms - Unsuccessful Attempts

Between 1979 and 1988, there were 36 unsuccessful reform attempts, against both the Reglamento and the Ley Organica. This was a dramatic increase in reform attempts by the opposition as compared to the two reforms identified in 1965 and 1974. This evidence strongly supports Proposition 3.1, that the opposition parties’ attempts to make reforms in the Chamber institution increased in the early post-reform legislatures (1979, 1982, 1985 legislatures). As expected, the opposition parties pushed against the
restrictiveness of the institution. They were protesting their exclusion from legislative leadership and were demanding more participation in the legislative process (*Cronica Legislativa* 1992a).

Table 3.1 presents a summary of these attempted rule reforms including when each was presented, which party sponsored it, and what type of rule it addressed. Altogether, these unsuccessful reform attempts addressed different types of institutional rules, including the legislative leadership, floor sessions, and the committee system. Table 3.1 separates these reform attempts according to type of reform and places emphasis on the two legislative arenas that are of specific interest in this research - the Chamber floor and committee system. Within these two arenas, the opposition could make the best use of their legislative activity because the floor and the committee system are national platforms to voice their concerns against the government and PRI. They could also attempt a fair hearing for their own policy concerns within the legislature and force their issues on the political agenda.

<Table 3.1 about here>

*Chamber Floor*

From Table 3.1, the first set of unsuccessful reform attempts by the opposition addressed activities on the Chamber floor. There were numerous attempts by the opposition to increase their access to the floor proceedings and thereby increase their participation. One reform initiative argued that all parties should be allowed to participate in the floor debate without limitations. The opposition was trying to reduce the discrimination against their participation in floor debate, an important partisan tool
for the opposition. All of the opposition parties presented a common reform proposal in December 1986, which pushed for greater participation for all parties in the Chamber and greater space for political deliberation. Again, the opposition was trying to increase their ability to use the floor as a public platform against the government.

Another reform initiative proposed that all deputies have the right to intervene in the floor discussion even if the topic is not their specialty. This reform would have changed the restriction that speakers cannot be interrupted on the floor unless on a factual basis and cannot engage the speaker in the form of a dialogue. By that rule, it was difficult for opposition party members to challenge PRI on the floor or force a debate. This reform attempt was to lessen the restrictions against their using the floor debate to address important issues for their party and engage the majority party in debate.

Other types of floor participation were also targeted. The rules governing the appearance of government officials before the Chamber were the focus of two separate reform attempts. This type of reform was important especially when the president or cabinet minister came before the Chamber floor to present or defend the government’s policies. The opposition parties wanted to increase their opportunities to address and challenge these government officials. The opposition was generally unable to gain real access to the floor during these events. For example, when government secretaries appeared in the Chamber, deputies could only ask one question, which had to be approved by the majority party leader. Deputies could not ask follow-up questions even if the secretary’s response was “totally unrelated to the original question they asked,” (De la Garza 1972:126). PAN deputies complained that this strict procedure prevented genuine questioning of the government representatives.
The rules for political protest by legislators were also tested by PARM in 1985. PARM deputies wanted to eliminate the rule that legislators who show up at the Chamber to protest must be met outside the Chamber by two legislators, including a Chamber secretary. Thus, any protesters could be blocked by PRI representatives. This reform attempt would have reduced the ability of the ruling majority to set formal limitations on opposition deputies who want to protest during the legislative session. These restrictive rules were placing the minority at a disadvantage because they could not fully utilize obstructive strategies, one of the few ways the opposition in this type of setting can be active.

Another set of reform initiatives pressed for the written rules concerning the Chamber floor to be enforced. Many scholars of the Mexican Chamber have suggested that the rules were not enforced if they did not advantage the ruling majority party (De la Garza 1972; Portes 1977). One reform attempt argued for Articles 28, 29, and 31 of the Reglamento to be observed. These articles outline rules for holding floor session such as how many days and hours the floor session can generally be held. They also state that every Wednesday should be set aside for public business. The Wednesday session would not have such a strict legislative calendar controlled by the majority party. The opposition was pushing for the maximum floor session time and to allow the special Wednesday floor session so they could address a whole range of important issues that might not otherwise be put on the legislative agenda. This special floor session could be used by the opposition for their partisan business.

A final reform attempt for the Chamber floor called for an investigation into how the Chamber President and Secretaries’ responsibilities were being carried out. The
opposition was trying to reduce the political bias in the manner that the Chamber leadership conducted its business. By curbing PRI’s use of informal or political restraints through the Chamber leadership, the opposition parties could possibly reduce their relative disadvantage on the floor. These floor rules are of particular importance because of the more public nature of the Chamber floor. With greater political freedom on the legislative floor, the opposition could become a more vocal and active force against the majority. The opposition’s only real power was to draw public attention and thereby force their issues onto the political agenda.

For the legislative process, one reform attempt tried to ensure that bills introduced at the end of session would automatically roll over to the following session. This reform would prevent opposition bills from being put at the back of the legislative calendar and buried when they are not addressed before the end of session. Another initiative proposed that all bills pass through the same legislative process, independent of their partisan source. The opposition was searching for ways to prevent their bills from being treated unfairly by the majority. One failed reform attempt would have set a date during the legislative session by which the executive’s initiatives would have to be presented. Otherwise, the initiatives would be taken up in the following legislative session or during a special session. In that way, the Chamber would have adequate time to address the legislation.

Taken together, there were 14 unsuccessful reform attempts that targeted the floor rules of the Chamber. All but two were introduced by opposition members and they attempted to lessen the restrictiveness of the floor procedural rules. The opposition’s actions, however unsuccessful, were theoretically important. The opposition pressed
against the rules and the government majority prevented these changes from taking place. Floor rules were obviously an important tool used by the majority party to keep opposition obstruction and activity to a minimum within this public legislative arena.

Committee System

The committee system was another focus of these unsuccessful institutional reforms (Table 3.1). The committee system, while less public, allows for more focused attention on particular policy issues. The committee system became more integrated with opposition members after 1979. As a result, they were expected to push outward against restrictions on their political activity within the committees. The opposition could better use the committee system for their partisan activity if the restrictiveness of the procedural and structural rules was decreased.

For example, several reform attempts tried to create a mechanism to force bills out of committee. Other reforms were to establish sanctions for committees that do not discuss or output the bills under their jurisdiction. The rule that committees must output a report within 5 days obviously was not being upheld for the opposition bills. When the majority party found it politically inconvenient to enforce the rules, they did not. If this reform had been successful, the majority party would not be able to bury opposition bills by just ignoring them in committee. The majority party could not use the committee system to suppress the opposition initiatives. The opposition could then force the majority to at least address and acknowledge their policy issues.

Committee leadership was another contentious issue. A reform bill addressed the use of secret votes by the Grand Commission for appointing the committee leadership
positions. The opposition members were kept out of this important leadership committee which (among other things) appointed the committee system members and leaders. The opposition was not allowed to participate in these meetings where the committee system composition was decided by the majority party. This reform attempt was trying to open up this decision making structure to their influence. Without a seniority system for committee membership and leadership, these assignment become highly political, especially if the majority party has complete control over the process without any accountability for their decisions.

Another reform bill stated that the committee presidents should be dismissed if they do not carry out their responsibilities. This reform attempt was similar to the attempted action against the floor leadership. The opposition was pressuring the leadership to act in a more fair-minded manner. A new leadership group for the committee system was also proposed by the opposition. This leadership group would have had a more plural nature by including all of the different parties. The status quo was the Grand Commission with its PRI monopoly. Instead, the opposition wanted a greater influence in the leadership of the committee system. In order to have this increased influence, the opposition would need representation on the leadership commission. The opposition parties were pushing for more fairness in the way that the committee system operated.

One reform attempt tried to create a special committee to investigate the organization and activities of the various public security (police) agencies in Mexico. For the opposition (especially the Left opposition), the use of force by the government against their party activists and supporters is an important issue. The standing rule stated that
these special investigative committees must meet in secret. Instead, an important aspect of this proposed “extraordinary” committee would have been its public nature. By creating this special committee, an important set of issues for the opposition would be placed in the public forum for the publicity of their actions if not the oversight.

From these examples, it is apparent that the committee system had come under fire from the opposition. They were pushing against the restrictiveness of the committee system and the majority party’s continued hegemonic control over it. There was only one successful reform between 1979 and 1988. It was initiated by PAN in November 1979. This reform stated that any legislative petition from a source without the formal authority to introduce bills would pass directly to its appropriate committee. There, the committee would decide whether or not it will consider the petition, not the normal gatekeeper - the majority party leader. With this reform, the committee members (some of whom are opposition) would have a better chance of influencing the decision on whether to admit the legislation.

During the years from 1979 to 1988, the minority opposition parties were not large enough to push through their institutional reforms. The opposition parties held an average of 26% of the Chamber seats, which was not high enough to force their reforms onto the majority. The evidence presented thus far uncovers a dramatic increase in the unsuccessful reform attempts by the opposition parties in the early post-reform legislatures. Even though they could not win, the opposition continued to be vocal proponents of institutional change. In general, their proposals called for rules that would allow for more freedom of expression and partisan action on the Chamber floor and committee system.
From Table 3.1, the opposition party with the most reform attempts was PARM, the leftist coalition group. With one exception, all of their reform initiatives were introduced by Nabor Camacho Nava, the party’s president. The second most numerous reform attempts were made by PAN, the largest and oldest Chamber opposition party. Altogether, most of these reform initiatives were made during the 1985-1988 legislature, during the contentious years leading up to the 1988 national election. The opposition parties were more vigilant and active in the political system and their legislators were equally active in the Chamber against the political bias of the existing system.

These reform attempts reveal how the opposition was pressing against the institution. They were largely unsuccessful during these legislative terms because while the opposition was growing, they still had only 26% of seats on average during these legislatures. Yet these unsuccessful attempts are theoretically important for demonstrating how the opposition recognized and acted against their institutional constraints.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 1988 election had a profound influence upon the political relationships in the Chamber. The opposition parties held 48% of the seats, so PRI no longer controlled 2/3 of the votes necessary to pass constitutional amendments. In the 1988, 1991, and 1994 legislatures, there was an unprecedented rise in political conflict as opposition parties grew larger and stronger with the conflict surrounding and penetrating the Chamber. This political context posed many problems for the PRI legislative delegation.
Institutional Reform: A Strengthened Opposition

From these political changes, more intense pressure was placed on PRI by the opposition to make the internal rules reflect the heightened plurality of the Chamber’s composition (Gaceta Parlamentaria 1991). The opposition parties wanted to lessen PRI’s one-party dominant control in the Chamber. They thought that the enhanced membership plurality in the Chamber in the later post-reform legislatures ought to be reflected in the institutional rules (Ortiz Arena 1993). And, some important institutional reforms were soon made. The opposition parties used their enhanced power and influence in the 1988-1991 legislature to pressure the majority party for institutional changes (Cronica Legislativa 1992b; Cronica Legislativa 1994a). By the installation of the 1991-1994 legislature, the Rules, Regulations, and Parliamentary Practice Committee was given the task of reforming the Ley Organica.

For the 1991 legislature, a new leadership group for the Chamber was created - the Regimen Interno y Concertacion Politica Commission (Internal Rules and Political Coordination). The opposition had been actively trying to reform the Grand Commission since 1979. With this reform, the Grand Commission was no longer a leadership group for the entire Chamber but instead became a leadership caucus for the PRI legislative delegation.

The Regimen Interno y Concertacion Politica Commission took over many of the same important leadership duties of the old Grand Commission. For example, this group appointed all committee members and leaders, determined the Chamber budget and administrative personnel, appointed the members of the Federal Electoral Institute, created the legislative calendar, and coordinated legislative business between the parties.
As the overall governing body, it helped to negotiate political agreements over legislative business within the newly conflictual setting (Cronica Legislativa 1993a; de Lima y Gil 1995; Sirvent 1995).

Unlike the old Grand Commission, however, the composition of this new leadership group was more plural. In the 1991-1994 legislature, there were six PRI members and one member each from PAN and PRD. In the 1994-1997 legislature, there were five PRI members and one member each from PAN, PRD, and PT. Thus, while this powerful leadership committee naturally maintained a PRI majority, all of the different parties at least have a ‘seat at the table’. The opposition had a formal place in the decision-making process over the institutional structure and the legislative process (Ortiz Arena 1993; Gonzalez Avelar 1994a; Sirvent 1995). This plural membership made the Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commission a very important step in the process of liberalization of the Chamber.

In 1989, the number of legislative sessions per year increased from one (September to December) to two (November-December and April 15-July 15). The proponents of this change in legislative session argued that the Chamber needed longer yearly legislative sessions in order to better complete its work and help balance the power of the executive vis-a-vis the legislature. Some of the opposition party members argued that this was still insufficient time for the yearly legislative session (Cronica Legislativa 1993b).

After several years of debate (beginning in the 1988-1991 legislature), a new Ley Organica was passed in 1992 by the Chamber with 312 votes in favor and only 4 votes against (Cronica Legislativa 1994a; Gonzalez Avelar 1994b; Sirvent 1995). This reform
was not jammed through the process during congressional recess without allowing much
debate or investigation as in the 1979 reform. Instead, the newly reformed *Ley Organica*
was the product of intense negotiation between the different political parties given the
increased plurality and power of the opposition (*Gaceta Parlamentaria* 1991; Ortiz
committee, Miguel Gonzalez Avelar (PRI), presided over the reform project. There were
more than 30 deputies from all parties participating in the preparation of the reform.
Formally, three PRI members, two PAN, three PRD, two PFCRN, one PARM, and one
PPS member were in charge of the reform (*Cronica Legislativa* 1993a). Therefore, the
opposition parties were heavily involved with the reform process.

There were reforms to more than 40 articles of the *Ley Organica*, which can be
grouped into four basic categories: 1) the Electoral Institute; 2) formal recognition of
changes already made through practice; 3) more plurality in the institution; and 4) the
committee system. The emphasis of many reforms was to increase the opportunities for
opposition participation and influence within the Chamber, especially the floor and the
committee system (Ortiz Arana 1993; Gonzalez Avelar 1994a). Miguel Gonzalez
Avelar, president of the Rules, Regulations, and Parliamentary Practices committee,
stated that it was necessary to create more equilibrium between the different
parliamentary parties, establish more minority rights, allow more minority participation,
and make the committee system work more efficiently (*Cronica Legislativa* 1992c).

First, a new rule stated that after the president’s annual address to the Congress
(the *Informe*), one member of each party can take the floor for a 15 minute official,
partisan response. This was an important symbolic change because it guarantees the
opposition an opportunity to publicly respond to the president’s remarks. This is a very public platform for the opposition parties to outline their official views on important issues because it is one of the mostly widely covered political events for the Chamber.

As a result of the opposition’s disruptive behavior during President Salinas’ annual Informe, the new Ley Organica also prevented interruption of the president’s address. The opposition parties protested this restriction by insisting that their behavior enhances the equality of power between the legislature and executive. As a compromise, the cabinet secretaries for Government, Budget, Foreign Relations, and Social Development must come before the legislature and defend those particular topics from the president’s informe. Basically, the deputies were looking for more dialogue between the legislature and executive (Cronica Legislativa 1993a).

Second, the floor leadership positions were made more plural. The vice-presidents must be appointed from each different party. As before, the Vice-Presidents and now the floor secretaries rotate each month of the session. This procedure allows the different opposition members to preside over the floor deliberations, not just the PRI members. These floor positions are not the seats of real political power over the Chamber business because of PRI’s continued majority. Nevertheless, the fact of plurality in these formal leadership positions is a step toward more Chamber democracy. After all, these opposition members might be able to exercise a modest degree of influence over the floor business. At the very least, the presence of opposition members in these formal floor leadership positions might keep the majority members more ‘honest’ in the conduct of the floor business.
Third, the new set of rules stated that the Administrative Committee is now forced to elaborate on the Chamber’s spending on a regular basis. In this way, the opposition can have greater oversight on the Chamber’s business. The Chamber can no longer be run by the majority without supervision by the other members. There has been a history of abuse or excess in the Chamber. For example, some deputies misused the free airplane tickets from their home district to Mexico City by exchanging them for other destinations or endorsing them for other people (Reforma 10/9/97). The opposition did not want the resource allocation of the Chamber used by the majority in an unfair partisan manner or as a flagrant patronage system (Ortiz Arena 1993).

Fourth, the committee system was also reformed in the new Ley Organica. Deputies can now create special investigative committees that can solicit information and copies of documents from the executive’s bureaucracy. They can conduct public meetings with politicians and bureaucrats to force discussion on important matters. These committees can be used as special public forums to put political pressure on the government. The business of the committee system will not be as secretive as in the past, which had assisted the majority party’s advantage.

The new committee system rules also stated that committees cannot have more than 30 members. Before, the formal rule had been no more than 17 members, but many committees had a much larger number of members in reality. The new rule for committee size brought the rules more in line with the reality of larger committees. With the new limit of committee membership at 30, the rules reflect a more reasonable practice for the inclusion of opposition members. In addition, a new law stated that the committee leadership positions (presidents and secretaries) have to include the opposition parties. It
did not specify which committees would have opposition leadership, but did formalize the general practice of including the opposition in the committee leadership. These two reforms made the committee structure more manageable and the leadership more plural. The opposition party members could more completely infiltrate the committee system, especially in leadership positions. The committee system reforms opened up new opportunities for more opposition influence.

Thus, the opposition finally did receive some of the reforms they had been pressing during the 1979-1985 legislatures, including changes in the Chamber leadership, floor activities, and the committee system. This evidence supports Proposition 3.2, which states that the opposition parties' attempts to make reforms in the Chamber institution would be more successful in the later post-reform legislatures. The modernization and liberalization of the rules became a more widely supported issue after the 1988 election (Cronica Legislativa 1994d).

Conclusion

Institutional change stems from the strategic interaction between the different groups of actors as they struggle to gain advantage within the institution. The struggle between those who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged comes to a focal point when there are shifts in their relative power. The political conflict over legislative rules in the Mexican Chamber generally reflects this theory about institutional change.

The ruling majority party could see its size and power within the institution could become diluted and therefore wanted to bolster its' continued dominance through modifications in the institutional rules and structure. Indeed, the first major institutional
rule reform since 1934 in the Chamber took place in anticipation of a changing legislative setting after 1979. The majority party formalized their partisan practices and further restricted the procedural rules to maintain their dominance of the Chamber.

As a consequence, the opposition members found themselves in a more restrictive institution in the early post-reform years. From the political conflict model, it was hypothesized that the opposition, which was growing in size and power, would attempt institutional changes to relieve some of the constraints on their activity and influence within the Chamber. From their statements and their actions, the opposition parties tried to remove some of these restrictions against their participation, especially on the floor and committee system. However, the opposition’s attempts for institutional change were largely unsuccessful during the 1979, 1982, and 1985 legislatures because the majority party remained a strong force against change.

After the 1988 election, however, the political context both inside and outside the Chamber shifted dramatically. The intensity level of political conflict was raised once again because the opposition parties passed the 33% threshold of representation in the Chamber. The political context surrounding the Chamber had also reached a breaking point because of the intense mobilization of opposition forces for the 1988 election. As a result, President Salinas had to undertake serious negotiations with the opposition on important legislation for the first time since the 1940s (Morris 1995).

The opposition had the size and the external support to put more successful force behind their desired changes in the Chamber institution, including the ability for more participation on the Chamber floor and the committee system. There was another major rule reform that touched upon many different aspects of the Chamber institution. One of
the most important institutional changes was the creation of the new leadership committee that incorporates all of the legislative parties and makes many important decisions within the Chamber. While PRI still maintained its majority on this leadership committee, they could not completely ignore the minority party members.

This chapter focused on the more general connection between political and institutional change. The evidence presented lends support to the validity of that theoretical connection. The next two chapters focus more detailed attention on the committee system and how the increased partisan conflict and rule changes affected this particular institutional arena. The committee system was a frequent target in the political conflict because of its opportunities for partisan interaction and potential influence over legislation. The next two chapters investigate how this political conflict actually played out in this particular legislative arena, first with the committee structure and then with the committee membership variables.
Table 3.1
Unsuccessful Reforms to the *Reglamento* and the *Ley Organica*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Reglamento</em></th>
<th><em>Ley Organica</em></th>
<th>Leg.</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Type of Rule</th>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1979 PRI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chamber Floor</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Floor Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chamber leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appearance of Govt. Officials</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PARM</td>
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<td>Protest during Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PARM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appearance of Govt. Officials</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Session Quorum</td>
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<td>1979 PAN</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>1982</td>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PARM</td>
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<td>1979 PRI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Congressional Staff</td>
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<td>1979 PRI</td>
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<td>Call for all new rules</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>1979 PRI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Information Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PMS</td>
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<td>Deputies’ Rights</td>
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<td>1985 PRI</td>
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<td>Congressional Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1985 PRI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>new Ley Organica</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>1988 PRI</td>
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<td>All new Rules</td>
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Source: SIID (1993a,b,c)
Chapter 4

Committee Structure

Committees are important institutional structures for division of labor within legislatures. They are groups of members with a fixed policy jurisdiction area. As an integral part of the legislative process, the committee structure is also an arena for legislative politics. Committees provide a forum where parties and other organized interests can articulate their views at the national level. For the Mexican Chamber, the committees allow for working out legislative details and give the political parties the opportunity to let their points of view be known (Reporte Legislativo 1993).

Committee systems are the subject of scholarly investigation because they are an important legislative arena for political conflict and, at the most basic level, they are where some of the legislative work gets done. There have been several approaches for understanding the committee system (see, Shepsle and Weingast 1994; Mattson and Strom 1995). One particular approach is based on organization theory. Organization scholars use committee structure as a measure of organizational complexity. It is a system of interconnected committees and subcommittees: how many committees/subcommittees are there? what are their sizes? and how hierarchical are their connections? These basic structural variables such as the number, size, and jurisdiction of committees and subcommittees are a natural starting point for understanding organizational complexity. This committee structure can be reformulated to address problems of organizational productivity, efficiency, capacity, and specialization (Davidson and Oleszek 1976; Cooper 1981; Hedlund 1984; Hedlund and Hamm 1994).
From the organization approach, scholars suggest that changes in organizational complexity stem from numerous external and internal sources, including technological change, changes in public attitudes, relationships with other institutions, workload, organizational size, and internal norms. For example, changes in workload (the number and/or type of bills) put pressure on the legislative organization for a more specialized and efficient committee structure. All else being equal, more and larger committees permit higher levels and different kinds of legislation to be processed at the same time (Rosenthal and Forth 1978; Parris 1979; Cooper 1981; Davidson 1981; Salisbury and Sheplse 1981; Francis and Riddlesperger 1982; Hedlund 1984; Arter 1984; Keefe and Ogul 1985; Jewell and Patterson 1986; Kashyap 1990; Hedlund and Hamm 1994; Mattson and Strom 1995; Franks 1996; Hazan 1996).18

Organizational size is another example of how complexity has been linked to the committee structure. Increasing the chamber size creates pressure for larger committees (Mattson and Strom 1995).

“Legislators in chambers with larger memberships create larger standing committees. This creation of larger committees occurs in part no doubt simply because there are more members to place on committees, but perhaps also in part because there is need to reduce the risk of defeat [of committee bills or amendments] by maintaining sufficient representation of the full [Chamber] membership,” (Francis 1989:116).

Some scholars also find evidence to support a positive connection between chamber size and the number of committees (Froman 1968; Morris 1982; Francis and Riddlesperger 1982; Francis 1982, 1989; Hedlund and Hamm 1994). Generally, this connection has

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18 In turn, larger committees are associated with the use of more subcommittees. Large committees break down into smaller sub-sets or groups in order to address more narrowly defined issues within the committee’s jurisdiction and process even larger amounts of workload. This results in further
been made through legislative workload; larger chambers have more members to introduce bills and amendments and therefore this greater workload creates pressure for more committees.

However, the number of committees really should increase when the policy jurisdiction covered by the existing committee system needs to address new types of policies, not just more bills (in contrast to the arguments made above). Committees are added when new types of bills begin to filter into the legislature and do not cleanly fit into the existing policy divisions of the committee system. Does an increase in the number of members affect the types of legislation being introduced? The answer to this question depends upon what kinds of new members are being added. If there is an increase in the total number of seats but these new legislators are members of a ruling majority party with a strict hierarchy of power, then they should not have much affect on the legislative workload, especially on the types of bills introduced. In contrast, if these new legislators are opposition party members, then there is a higher probability that they will affect the number and types of bills introduced to the legislature. Thus, changes in the relative size of the parties in the Chamber become important.

A few scholars have included the size of political parties as a factor for explaining changes in the committee structure. Hedlund and Hamm (1994) hypothesize that larger majority parties are associated with larger numbers and sizes of committees:

"Increases in the size of the majority party from one session to the next place additional pressure on the chamber leader to increase the number of seats over those allocated in a previous session [because there are more majority party members demanding committee assignments]. From a cross-sectional perspective, the hypothesis should be that the

larger the majority party, the greater the number of committees, total committee positions, average size of committees, and committee assignments per member,” (Hedlund and Hamm 1994:14).

At the same time, Hedlund and Hamm hypothesize that a more centralized or hierarchical majority party will result in fewer and smaller committees. With the concentration of committee assignment power, the majority party leader can more easily control committee assignments and activity, especially within a smaller committee structure (Mattson and Strom 1995). But what if there is a large majority party that is also highly centralized? Will there be more/larger committees or fewer/smaller ones? Looking simply at the size of the majority party does not reveal enough of the politics of committee structural change.

Understanding institutional change, including its timing and direction, is enhanced at this point by the political conflict model (Knight 1992). This theoretical approach focuses attention on the different actors’ power and the ideology in the political conflict over the institution. The relative legislative size of their different parties is one important measurement of their power. The goals and strategies of both the majority and opposition parties are also important independent variables for the political conflict model because they can change the tone of internal legislative politics. This model brings in the larger political context as it influences these interactions.

The basic goal for the majority party leadership is to maintain power and ultimate control over the institution. However, the legislative leadership will still react to the increasing pressure of the opposition. After the 1979 legislative election in Mexico, the majority party was faced with the uncertain future of a shifting political environment within the Chamber. There was an increase in the number of opposition members, the
kinds of opposition parties, and the level of political conflict, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the three early post-reform legislatures (1979, 1982, 1985), the opposition parties averaged 26% of the seats, in contrast to the 17% of the seats in the pre-reform legislatures of the 1970s (Table 2.3).

The ruling party is expected to increase their control within the committee system because of this uncertainty. In particular, the majority party is expected to decrease the amount of institutional space for the opposition party within the committee system with smaller and fewer committees. Thus, while the opposition parties were still relatively moderate in size and strength, the majority party strategy is expected to be more repressive or hard-line against the opposition’s reform attempts, as found in Chapter 3 with the failed opposition institutional rule reforms.

However, as the opposition parties increase over the 33% threshold of representation and political conflict becomes more intense (after the 1988 election), the majority leadership is expected to allow a few of the opposition’s more moderate demands. Again, the 33% threshold of opposition representation is significant because of the opposition’s ability to block PRI’s constitutional amendments and other procedural maneuvers (Rundquist 1998). In that case, if the opposition’s intense demands for liberalization can be moderated with a few minor reforms, then the majority could possibly prevent more radical changes and the loss of their ultimate control over the Chamber (Lehoucq 1995). In the later post-reform legislatures (1988, 1991, 1994), the majority party was under more intense fire from the opposition and the cost of continued repression of any liberalization trends had dramatically risen. The majority party is

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19 This strategy has been used by the Mexican leadership in other political situations as well (Gomez 1991; Cothran 1994; Morris 1995; Molinar Horcasitas 1996).
therefore expected to allow moderate reforms in the institution. Thus, the opposition would be more successful in making the institution reflect their strengthened political power. Yet any of these reforms are not expected to fundamentally shift the control of the legislature away from PRI.

**Proposition 4.1:** As the opposition size in the legislature increases (especially above 33%) and the political context heats up, the majority strategy is expected to shift from a more repressive line against the opposition to a more co-optative strategy.

4.1a: Below this threshold, the majority is expected to restrict the size of the committee structure to lessen the minority’s opportunities for enhanced influence and activity. Specifically, this would mean smaller and fewer committees.

4.1b: In the aftermath of increased opposition power and conflict (over 33%), the majority party leader is expected to expand the committee system (in the direction desired by the opposition) in order to placate and co-opt the opposition, thereby reducing the overall level of partisan conflict.

In contrast, the basic goal for those who are disadvantaged within an institution is to push for institutional changes that will reduce their relative disadvantage (North 1990; Knight 1992). One way for the opposition to reduce their disadvantage is to increase their representation (political space) within the committee system (Mattson and Strom 1995; Agh 1996; Franks 1996; Haspel 1996; Kanev 1996). In general, the opposition can pressure for two types of changes - they can try to change their level of representation within the existing structure (the subject of chapter 5) and they can attempt changes in the committee structure itself.

Besides having more representation on existing committees, opposition parties are expected to push the government to address issues that are important to their party platforms. By forcing their issues onto the political agenda, the opposition can expand the types of bills addressed by the legislature and therefore can push outward on the committee system jurisdiction through the creation of new committees (Cronica
These new committees provide an arena within which the opposition can exert pressure for particular policies and increase attention on their issues and concerns (Reporte Legislativo 1993). The power of the opposition to force their issues onto the political agenda depends upon their relative size in the legislature and the level of conflict surrounding the legislature. Both factors work together to facilitate the opposition's political and institutional agenda.

Opposition parties are also expected to press for a larger share of the committee seats. For the committee structure, this goal would mean larger committee sizes. Instead of decreasing their own share of the seats, the majority party might simply increase the number of positions in the committee system (Ray and Smith 1984; Hedlund and Hamm 1994). Basically, these general expectations are related to changes in political power, not to changes in the organizational size.

These are different expectations from organization theory for the direction and timing of institutional change of some variables. From organization theory, as chamber size increases, so will the number of committees and committee size. From the political conflict model, there are some different predictions. In the Mexican Chamber, the opposition parties increased past the 33% threshold of legislative representation in the 1988 election. Thus, the opposition parties' attempts to increase the number (and kind) of committees and in committee size would be more successful during these later post-reform legislatures.

**Proposition 4.2:** When the minority opposition parties' legislative representation increases substantially (in particular when it tops 33% of the seats) and the political conflict surrounding the Chamber is intense, there is a higher probability that the opposition's attempts to expand the committees' jurisdiction and their share of the committee seats will be successful.

4.2a: Expansion in committee jurisdiction will increase the number of
committees and will add committees of special interest and concern to the opposition.

4.2 b: The size of the committees will increase to better accommodate the demands of the opposition parties for committee representation.

Therefore, Propositions 4.1 and 4.2 address the competing goals (and desired direction of change) of the majority party versus the opposition parties. Each proposition has a specific element of timing for when each direction of change is expected. The majority party is expected to more successfully maintain its hold over the institution and avoid unwanted committee structural changes in the early post-reform legislatures while the opposition’s representation is under 33% of the seats. In contrast, more of the opposition’s desired direction of changes are expected when their representation is above this threshold in the later post-reform legislatures. Even in these cases, the majority party would still be very careful about the types of institutional changes allowed. These changes may be in the liberalization directions but would not threaten their ultimate control of the institution.

Data and Findings

The committees used in this analysis are the permanent, standing legislative committees, not the ad hoc/special or administrative committees. Ad hoc or special committees have specific, narrow mandates such as a particular bill or issue to be investigated and are eliminated once their work is complete. The administrative and leadership committees are also set aside because they are significantly different in function, number, and size from the policy-oriented committees. The elimination of administrative committees from the data set also provides comparability with the literature.
The committee structural data for the first four legislatures (1970, 1973, 1976 and 1979) are collected from the daily record, the *Diario de los Debates de la Camara de Diputados*, and the Chamber membership directory, the *Directorio de la Camara de Diputados*. At the beginning of each legislative term, the organizational business of the new legislature is recorded into the daily record, including the members of each committee and subcommittee.²⁰

The data for the 1982, 1985, 1988, and 1991 legislatures is coded from the biographical information recorded for each legislative member in the personnel directory for the national government, the *Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano*. The committee assignments are systematically recorded for each member. Finally, the committee data for the 1994 legislature is gathered from the Chamber’s publication, *The Quorum*, which publishes descriptive statistics and various articles concerning the business of the legislature. The 1994 legislative data is also obtained from the Chamber’s extensive home page that presents detailed information about the committee structure. This home page is: http://www.cddhcu.gob.mx/

Table 4.1 shows the number and size of committees and subcommittees and the total size of the committee structure over time. There were a few very large and very small committees (outliers in this data set), which makes reporting an average committee size misleading as to the distribution of committee sizes. Therefore, the median committee size is indicated in parenthesis for each legislature. The median is the middle

²⁰ There was some disagreement between the list of committees and subcommittees from the daily record and the Chamber directory for the 1970 legislature. The daily record indicated 78 committees and 42 subcommittees. The Chamber directory recorded 47 committees and 82 subcommittees. By comparing the jurisdiction of these two different lists and comparing them with the other pre-reform legislatures, it becomes clear that the daily record mistakenly indicated some of the subcommittees as independent, permanent standing committees. Also, the structure recorded by the Chamber directory better matched the 1973 and 1976 legislatures. Therefore, I use the Chamber directory data for the 1970-73 legislature.
value within the distribution of committee sizes (50th percentile), where half of the frequencies lie above this value and half fall below. The difference between the average and the median committee size indicates the presence of outliers in the distribution of committee sizes. Finally, the variable of total committee size measures all of the committee positions in the whole committee structure and thus records its complete size.

### Table 4.1
**Chamber Committee Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Number of Committees</th>
<th>Number of Subcommittees</th>
<th>Avg. Committee Size*</th>
<th>Total Committee Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-73</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>22 (13)</td>
<td>858</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973-76</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30 (20)</td>
<td>1195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-79</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>38 (24)</td>
<td>1656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-82</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24 (22)</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-85</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985-88</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>37 (33)</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-91</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44 (33)</td>
<td>1548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-94</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48 (41)</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-97</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30 (30)</td>
<td>1086</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Source: Directorio de la Cámara de Diputados; Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados; Manual Biográfico Del Congreso De La Unión.*

* The median committee size is indicated in parenthesis in the committee size column.

From Table 4.1, the pre-reform committee system had a large number of committees and sub-committees. The number of committees in the Mexican Chamber had not varied much since 1940, during the years of a stable legislative setting under PRI hegemonic control (Gonzalez Oropeza 1985). However, there was a break in the committee system structure in 1979. The committee system structure was reduced in the first post-reform Chamber (1979) because PRI had restructured it in the new *Ley Organica*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the *Ley Organica* reform was pushed through the Chamber by PRI hard-liners just before the 1979 legislative elections. The reformed *Ley Organica* listed the new set of committees for the Chamber and stated that
there would be 17 members per committee (Articles 54 & 55). With these two articles, the size of the committee structure dramatically decreased.

The data from Table 4.1 clearly indicate the extent to which the majority party closed down the committee system in the 1979 legislature. From the 1976 to the 1979 legislature, the number of legislative committees decreased from 41 to 24. The number of sub-committees dropped from 119 to zero. In addition, the average size of legislative committees decreased from 38 members to 24 members, with the median size of committees even smaller. In the three pre-reform legislatures, there were many very large committees. With the 1979 reform, the committee sizes were made more homogenous because of the new *Ley Organica* rule that addressed committee size.\(^{21}\)

Finally, the total number of committee seats also underscores this trend. In the 1979 legislature, the committee system lost 1,119 total committee positions from the previous legislature, moving from 1656 total committee seats to 537. In all, the committee structure was significantly smaller because the majority party had pushed through its reform.

This 1979 structural change does not match the expectations from the organization literature on chamber size; committee structure was supposed to increase with the chamber size. Instead, the committee structure decreased in 1979. As hypothesized in Proposition 4.1a, the majority party strategy reduced the institutional space for the opposition parties within the committee system and therefore further centralized their own control.

\(^{21}\)Note, however, that the average size of the committees did not decrease to 17 members. Some of the more consistent exceptions were the Agriculture, Agriculture Reform, Labor, Foreign Relations, Education, Social Security, and Budget Committees.
To really constrict the opposition’s political opportunities within the committee system, did the majority eliminate those committees whose policy jurisdiction were of particular concern to the opposition? Table 4.2 presents a list of the committees in the three pre-reform legislatures, with the number of subcommittees for each committee indicated in parenthesis. The committees that were eliminated in the 1979 structural reform are shaded in the 1976 legislature column.

<Table 4.2 about here>

Most of the eliminated committees focused on issues that were of particular concern to the opposition parties, such as social and economic development concerns.22 The supporters of the new Leftist opposition parties were intensely interested in their declining social and economic situation and these committees could easily be used by the opposition parties to become active in these policy areas. The PRI leadership not only reduced the institutional space available for general opposition activity, but they generally eliminated the kinds of committees that might be focal points for the opposition’s efforts.

From the discussion thus far, the majority party reacted as expected from the political conflict model; they restricted and reduced the committee structure in the early post-reform legislatures, even eliminating committees of particular concern to the new opposition. However, this reformed structure did not remain constant. In the two legislatures following these committee structure reforms, there was a gradual increase in the number and size of committees (Table 4.1). Tables 4.3 and 4.4 outline the evolution

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22 The eliminated committees were: Public Support, Social Action, Consular and Diplomatic Affairs, Development of Craft and Small Industries, Forest and Vegetation Resources, Regional Development, Housing Development, Cooperative Promotion, Civic Programs and Special Functions, Migration,
of the committee system in the early and later post-reform legislatures. The new committees added in each legislature are listed at the bottom of each list.

< Tables 4.3 and 4.4 about here >

Most of the committees added to the structure in the 1982 and 1985 legislatures existed before the 1979 reform, such as Science and Technology, Radio, TV, and Cinema, Federal Highways, and Indian Concerns. The Border committee had even been a subcommittee for the Regional Development committee during the pre-reform legislatures. These committees had been eliminated during the 1979 structural reform but were added back into the committee structure soon afterwards. There was also a small increase in the size of committees, even though the average size of committees for the 1979, 1982, and 1985 legislatures was almost equal to the pre-reform average. Thus, while the majority party did not hold the line on the committee structure during the early post-reform legislatures, most of the increase was due to the reinstatement of previously discarded committees.

After the 1988 election, the opposition representation increased past the 33% threshold, there was intense political mobilization, and President Salinas took a more conciliatory approach to the opposition (especially the Right opposition). Thus, it is during the later post-reform legislatures that the opposition is expected to be more successful in championing their institutional changes in the committee structure (Proposition 4.2). As for the addition of new committees, twice as many committees were added during these three legislatures than in 1982 and 1985. More than just adding

new committees, Proposition 4.2a hypothesizes that these committees will be of a particular policy jurisdiction for the opposition.

From Tables 4.3 and 4.4, the shaded committees are completely new policy areas for the committee system. Most of these new committees are of particular interest to the opposition: Human Rights, Population and Development, Culture, Social Development, Citizen Participation, Youth, and Municipality Reform. These policy issues are not the exclusive domains of the opposition, but they constitute a substantial group of policy issues for the opposition. The addition of these new committees herald some success of the opposition parties in forcing their policy concerns onto the government agenda, particularly after 1988 (Cronica Legislativa 1992d; Philip 1992; Morris 1995; Camp 1996).

Most of these new committees were added after 1988. In fact, most were added in the 1994 legislature as a result of the reforms to the Ley Organica. These committees were added during the long process of negotiation over this reform. Unlike the 1979 PRI-controlled reform, there were no committees eliminated from the structure. There were only committees added, in particular those of special interest to the opposition parties.

Besides the policy-oriented committees added to the committee system, there were also new administrative committees: the Rules, Regulations, and Parliamentary Practices and the Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commissions. For example, the Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commission was created as part of the process of Ley Organica reform. Its members make all of the committee system appointments and control the overall committee system activities. The old version of this
commission, the Grand Commission, had been dominated by PRI but every party (or coalition) is represented in this new leadership group. Therefore, the opposition has a formal place in the decision-making process over the institutional structure and legislative process within the committee structure (Ortiz Arena 1993; Gonzalez Avelar 1994a, 1994b). With these changes, there is evidence to support Proposition 4.1b, which states that the majority party would allow some expansion of the committee system in order to placate the opposition parties. In particular, these committees were of particular concern to the opposition (Proposition 4.2a).

The newest rule reform states that committees should only have 30 members. The formal rule from 1979 to 1991 limited committee sizes to no more than 17 members but obviously this rule was not strictly enforced. Committee sizes had been increasing gradually over time (Table 4.1) and by the 1991 legislature, there was an average committee size of 48 members. With the new Ley Organica, the 30 member limit took effect in the 1994 legislature. The reform again set a limit that reduced many committee sizes. Large committee sizes had become a serious issue of concern of deputies, especially the opposition members (Cronica Legislativa 1992e, 1992f). There was a great deal of political will to reduce the committee sizes following the 1992 Ley Organica reform (Cronica Legislativa 1994d). The total committee system size decreased from 1827 to 1086 total committee seats. Even though there were even more committees in 1994, the standardization of committee sizes to 30 members constricted the total committee system size.

So, in both reforms of the formal rules, the committee sizes were reduced, once when the PRI was in charge of the reform and once when the opposition had an important
influence. In the first instance, the change is in the expected direction, but not for the second (Proposition 4.2b). This leaves mixed findings for both the organizational size change and the political conflict explanations of changes in committee size. Perhaps a more appropriate explanation would be that with such large and growing committee sizes, the reform was taken to reduce the ‘cheap seats’ in the large committees and make the committee more politically manageable. If the committees are too big then each committee members’ influence is diluted. More detailed research is necessary to detect the motivation behind these changes. This aggregate data do not indicate the types of members being added to (or eliminated from) the committees. In the next chapter, I explore the partisan distribution of committee members and leadership.

Conclusion

In the pre-reform years, the committee system was very large, with many committees and subcommittees. Their sizes, while varying widely, were quite large. In 1979, there was a drastic decrease in the number and size of committees because of the new Ley Organica. This major restructuring allowed PRI leaders to maintain effective control over the committee system by closing down the institutional space for the opposition, especially on many committees that could have addressed their interests.

In the early post-reform legislatures, there were a few new committees, mostly those that had been earlier eliminated. In addition, the committee sizes began to creep upward. After 1988, more new committees were added to the system, many because of the political pressure that was applied by the opposition both inside and outside the Chamber. Because of this change in political context and through the more active and
powerful opposition, new issues were forced onto the political agenda and into the committee system of the Chamber.

The committee size variable does not provide much evidence for support of either the organization change or the political conflict explanations. From the political conflict model, this variable is only an indirect proxy for the notion that opposition members are expected to push for increased representation on the committee system. In this discussion of committee structure, we cannot evaluate what kinds of members are being added to nor deleted from the committees when there are changes in committee size. These structural changes only tell one part of the story of committee system change.

To more directly investigate this hypothesized connection between increasing opposition power and their committee representation, the next chapter turns to the partisan distribution of the committee membership over the last two decades. The political conflict model more directly addresses the political nature of the committee membership. If the majority and minority parties are engaged in political conflict over the committee system, the dependent variables that capture aspects of committee membership and leadership should be affected. Together, chapters 4 and 5 provide a more complete picture of committee system change in the Chamber since 1970 by combining the discussion of structure and membership.
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C = 36; SC = 86

C = 36; SC = 90

C = 41; SC = 119

Source: Directora de la Cámara de Diputados XLVIII: Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados XLIX. L. 
C = total number of committees; SC = total number of subcommittees (in parenthesis)
### Table 4.3
Committee Structure 1979-1985

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<th>1985-88 Legislature</th>
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Source: *Directorio de la Cámara de Diputados XLVIII: Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados XLIX-L.*

*C* - total number of committees
Table 4.4
Committee Structure 1988-1994

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<td>Arts &amp; Crafts</td>
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<td>Water Resources</td>
<td>Water Resources</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C = 33
C = 37
C = 42

Source: Directorio de la Cámara de Diputados XLVIII: Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados XLIX. L
C = total number of committees
Chapter 5

Committee Membership

In the previous chapters, I showed that changes in the political size and power of the opposition affected the institutional rules and the committee structure. In this chapter, I investigate whether the partisan composition of the committees has been influenced by these changes. Direct partisan advantages are associated with committee membership/leadership composition because they affect the distribution of power between parties. The partisan distribution on a committee can affect the committee’s activities and output, especially in a legislature with a high degree of partisan conflict. Thus, the conflict between legislative parties filters through the committee assignment process in their attempt to gain advantage in the committee system.

It was hypothesized in Chapter 4 that increasingly powerful opposition parties would not only push outward on the committee structure but also would attempt to increase their representation in the committee system. By increasing their share of committee seats, the opposition parties could strengthen their influence over the committee system. Therefore, the committee membership variables are an important focus of the partisan conflict over the legislative institution. In this chapter, I investigate several different aspects of committee membership, including the number of committee assignments per member and party, party distribution of committee membership and leadership, party re-election rates to the Chamber, committee seniority, and personal expertise. They provide different ways to investigate how changes in partisan conflict affected the committee system.
Number of Committee Assignments per Party/Member

How much is the individual member burdened with committee assignments and how much total representation does each party have within the committee system? Organization scholars argue that the average number of committee assignments per member is an aspect of workload burden and specialization. Members must gather and process information on their committee’s policy jurisdiction and therefore cannot be effective if they have too many committee assignments. “Time is always limited, and adequate study and command of a broad range of matters is impossible. The casualties of multiple membership are specialization and expertise,” (Rosenthal 1974:46). More committee assignments per member result in less specialization and expertise (Rosenthal 1974; Francis and Riddlesperger 1982; Hamm and Moncief 1982; Hedlund and Hamm 1994; Mattson and Strom 1995).

With a cross-national survey, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) determines that in the 30 countries with formal rules to limit committee assignments, members are formally limited to less than two committee memberships. Otherwise, informal norms limit committee service to no more than one or two committees (IPU 1986). Thus, the specialization of committee members is greatly affected by their degree of burden from multiple assignments and most legislatures have rules (formal or informal) against too many committee assignments per member.

From the political conflict model, the interest is in the partisan differences in committee assignments. Does the majority party allow much political space for the opposition within the committee system? More committee assignments per party create greater political space for opposition activities. One opposition goal is to make the most
of its committee representation (Proposition 4.2) and it can achieve this goal by increasing its total share of committee assignments. The total number and percent of committee positions held by the opposition should increase in the post-reform legislatures, given their greater numbers and increased power. The opposition should also have greater relative committee representation because of the reduction in the size of the committee system in 1979 (Table 4.2).

**Proposition 5.1a:** The opposition parties are expected to increase their representation across the committee system.

The expectations of partisan differences in total political space within the committee system between parties leads to questions of how members are selected. The appointment process (who appoints committee members and how) can have political consequences for the composition and activity of the committee system. How are committee members chosen and who selects them?²³

The political parties (usually the majority party or parties) control the committee assignment process (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1986).²⁴ Until the 1991 legislature, the Grand Commission made all committee assignments in the Mexican Chamber, allowing the majority leader to directly control the committee assignment process through a secret vote (De la Garza 1972). The opposition parties played almost no role in the committee assignment process because of the long-standing PRI monopoly of the Grand

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²³There are different formal mechanisms for making committee assignments. The Inter-Parliamentary Union states that of 81 countries, 19 use a 'directing authority,' 10 use a special selection committee, and the majority of cases (52) use the legislature as a whole for committee membership assignment. Whatever formal method is used, parties make the real decisions on committee appointments (IPU 1986).

²⁴The majority party or parties generally make the committee appointments. Opposition members can approach the majority to suggest particular committee assignments for their members, yet they generally do
Commission. Also, the formal rules stated that while committees *ought* to include the minorities in the committee system, there was no guarantee of representation for the minority parties (Valencia Escamilla 1994). In the 1991 legislature, the Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commission was created, which allowed the opposition parties formal influence in the committee appointment process for the first time. How did this change in the appointment process affect the partisan distribution within the individual committees?

**Party Distribution for Committee Members and Leaders**

The partisan distribution of committee membership and leadership gets to the heart of the political conflict between parties over the committee membership. If there are few partisan conflicts within the legislature and/or if partisanship does not play an important role in the committee assignment process, then the formula for party distribution on committees would be simple proportional representation (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1986; Mattson and Strom 1995). This method is a non-political means of allocating committee seats among parties because each party receives its “fair” share of committee assignments based upon its political strength in the legislature. That way, each parties’ strength in one legislative arena matches its strength in the other.

In contrast, non-proportionality in committee assignments clearly can have political consequences. For example, when a party receives more committee seats than its chamber size, it becomes politically advantaged within the committee system. Parties that are disproportionately powerful on a committee are better able to control the

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not have a formal role in this process (Baker 1971; De la Garza 1972; Jewell and Miller 1988; Baaklini 1992).
committee activities. Parties who receive fewer committee seats than their chamber size are at a disadvantage in the committee proceedings. If the majority party has a disproportionately small representation, then the opposition parties have an opportunity for greater influence on the committee. Thus, partisan assignments that are not proportional to overall strength can have real political consequences.

For this reason, party leaders are interested in committee assignments because they can control their legislative agenda through the committee system by placing particular kinds and numbers of party members on committees. Majority party leaders may not use strict proportional representation for committee assignments in their quest to dominate the committee system (Damgaard 1994; Hedlund and Hamm 1996; Kanev 1996; Olson and Simon 1996a, 1996b; Olson et al 1996). The overall goal for the majority party is to retain control of as many committees as possible and especially to dominate the most important committees. Yet there are different strategies the majority party may use:

"Some emphasize the consensus-building role committees can play by giving minorities proportional committee representation. In other parliaments, the government controls its committee majority strictly and tries to avoid any amendments or defeats of its bills in committee."
(Mattson and Strom 1995:276).

Mattson and Strom (1995) suggest that majority strategies can be different between cases. Majority strategies can also be different over time. If the size of the majority party decreases, especially beneath the two-thirds threshold\(^{25}\) and political conflict with the opposition increases, the majority party is expected to further shore up

\(^{25}\) The 2/3 threshold of representation for the majority party in the Mexican Chamber is significant because of the procedural decisions and constitutional reform votes that require a 2/3 vote for passage (Camp 1995: Rundquist 1998).
its advantage on the important committees. Party leaders can stack important committees with their more loyal members because key bills will flow through these committees. For balance, the opposition parties might be compensated with representation on the lesser important committees (Baker 1971; Van Der Slik 1977; Jewell and Patterson 1986; Jewell 1986; Jewell and Miller 1988; Hedlund and Hamm 1996; Kanev 1996). For committee representation, the ruling majority is expected to allow for more opposition representation on less powerful committees while maintaining or increasing its control over the more important legislative and administrative committees. In this way, the majority party's control over the committee system is ensured while placating some of the opposition demands.

And, majority strategies can also differ between opposition parties. The goal of the opposition parties is to increase their proportion of seats on committees. They are expected to demand more membership and leadership positions within the committee system. Yet some opposition parties or members may pose more of a threat to the government than others because of their ideology, their actions against the government, or their power within the institution. Opposition parties are not all the same and therefore government reaction to them is not expected to be uniform. The majority party would want to block the more threatening opposition parties from using the committees against its legislative agenda.

In the Mexican Chamber, the least threatening opposition parties in the Chamber are the satellite parties, PARM & PPS, (de la Garza 1972; Gomez 1991; Craig and Cornelius 1995). Before 1988, the small, fragmented left opposition parties were also not a very significant institutional threat to PRI. The largest and most cohesive opposition
Therefore, PRI is expected to use more exclusionary strategies toward PAN and more inclusionary strategies toward the satellite parties and the left opposition parties.

**Proposition 5.2a:** In general, the majority party is expected to be over-represented in the committee system.

5.2b: As the majority party’s size decreases below the 33% threshold, it will further increase its committee representation on the most important committees.

5.2c: PAN is expected to be more disadvantaged in its relative committee membership than the satellite and left opposition parties.

5.2d: The majority party is expected to maintain control over the committee leadership positions.

These expectations target the changes in partisanship on committees. Besides simply having more members on a committee, the resources available to the members are also important for this discussion of political conflict. The previous committee experience and personal expertise of party members can directly affect the committee system membership because they focus on the influence of information resources as an advantage in the political conflict between parties.

**Membership Experience and Expertise**

Information is a vital component of the strategic decision-making within the institution (Krehbiel 1991). Information is therefore an important part of the power asymmetries between actors (Knight 1992; Miller 1992; Jillson and Wilson 1994). “If knowledge is power, then what information is available to the Congress, who manages it within the Congress, and who has access to that information affects power within the Congress and the power of Congress vis-à-vis the President and the ministries,” (Rundquist and Wellborn 1994:395). An independent information source is central for institutional independence and the ability of opposition parties to take an active part in
the legislative process (Campbell and Laporte 1981; Lattimer 1985; Miller 1992; Cronica Legislativa 1992e).

Political conflict within the institution can lead to concern over differing levels of information resources between the parties. Actors seeking advantage in political conflict will use expertise and information to increase their relative power (Knight 1992). Information resources can come from members’ previous legislative experience and personal expertise. Parties can make the best use of their members’ professional abilities and interests to advance partisan interests.

The opposition parties can maximize their information resources by building up a cadre of veteran legislators who are re-elected to the Chamber and then return to their previous committee assignments (Cronica Legislativa 1992d). With more veteran members, opposition parties can have greater levels of specialized experience and skills available for their legislative activities. This is important because of the strong information disadvantage for the legislative opposition parties vis-à-vis the executive and PRI deputies (Gil 1992). Through longer tenure on the same committees, members can build up committee experience with the policy issues. Veteran committee members acquire a deeper understanding of complex policy issues and have an increased professionalism toward the committee work (Agor 1971; Kline 1977; Baerwald 1979; Kashyap 1979; Basehart 1980; Jewell and Miller 1988; Rosenbaum and Reed 1994; Rundquist and Wellborn 1994). Basically, the opposition parties can reduce their information disadvantage by increasing the re-election rates of their members and their return to previous committee assignments in the post-reform legislatures.
**Proposition 5.3a:** The opposition parties are expected to increase their re-election rate to the Chamber in the post-reform legislatures.

**5.3b:** In the post-reform legislatures, the re-elected opposition members are expected to increase their return rate to their previous committee assignments.

Finally, personal expertise can affect committee assignments (Kornberg 1967; Sirvent 1995; Haspel 1996). Personal expertise generally comes from members' educational and occupational background. This factor can become involved in the political conflict over committee assignments. The opposition members can be placed on committees where they have some degree of personal expertise and increase the possibility that they will be active and influential in the committee (Mattson and Strom 1995; Agh 1996; Franks 1996; Kanev 1996). This would be another way that the parties attempt to gain some informational advantage within the committee system. If the opposition parties in the post-reform legislatures are concerned with information as a tool in the political struggle with the government, then they might coordinate personal expertise between members and committee assignments. The personal expertise of members with their committee appointments is a relatively easy means for the minority parties to build the specialized information necessary to influence the committee activities.

**Proposition 5.3c:** Opposition members are expected to increase their coordination between personal expertise and committee assignments in the post-reform legislatures.
From this discussion, the following propositions will be investigated:

Proposition 5.1a: The opposition parties are expected to increase their representation across the committee system.
Proposition 5.2a: In general, the majority party is expected to be over-represented in the committee system.

5.2b: As the majority party’s size decreases below the 33% threshold, it will further increase its committee representation on the most important committees.
5.2c: PAN is expected to be more disadvantaged in its relative committee membership than the satellite and left opposition parties.
5.2d: The majority party is expected to maintain control over the committee leadership positions.
Proposition 5.3a: The opposition parties are expected to increase their re-election rate to the Chamber in the post-reform legislatures.

5.3b: In the post-reform legislatures, the re-elected opposition members are expected to increase their return rate to their previous committee assignments.
5.3c: Opposition members are expected to increase their coordination between personal expertise and committee assignments in the post-reform legislatures.

Data Sources and Findings

To investigate these propositions, there are a few primary sources for the committee membership data. The Chamber daily record, the Diario de los Debates de la Camara de Diputados, provides committee membership information at the beginning of the first yearly session for each legislative term. Various issues of the Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano contain information on the personal background and legislative activities of the deputies. The internet home page (www.cddhc.mex.gob.mx) also provided primary date on the 1994 legislature. From these sources, the data allow for both partisan comparison and a longitudinal analysis of committee membership. In addition, various issues of the Cronica Legislativa and Quorum (the two congressional publications) provide articles by, interviews with, and surveys of deputies on topics related to the committee system.

26 There have been numerous first and second-hand accounts of the opposition parties' concerns with information resources in the Mexican Chamber (Cronica Legislativa 1992d,e,f;1994a,b,c; Sirvent 1995; de
Number of Committee Assignments per Party/Member

The first analysis investigates the total representation of the opposition versus PRI within the committee system. Proposition 5.1a states that the opposition's representation within the committee system should increase in the post-reform legislatures. Table 5.1 provides the number and percent of total committee positions for PRI versus the opposition parties. In addition, the table presents the percent of legislative (not administrative) committees without opposition representation.

Table 5.1
Number and Percent of Committee Assignments per Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Number (and Percent) of Committee Positions Held by PRI versus Opposition</th>
<th>Percent of Committees With No Opposition Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>820 (86%)</td>
<td>139 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1147 (84%)</td>
<td>221 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1812 (92%)</td>
<td>165 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>444 (72%)</td>
<td>169 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>795 (78%)</td>
<td>230 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>939 (76%)</td>
<td>295 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>995 (61%)</td>
<td>629 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1423 (72%)</td>
<td>544 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>641 (62%)</td>
<td>399 (38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano; www.cddhcu.gob.mx

From the first set of columns of Table 5.1, PRI always commanded the largest space within the committee system, as expected from a majority party. However, PRI's representation decreased along with its overall legislative size in the post-reform legislatures. Likewise, the political space (representation) for the opposition increased. In 1979, the opposition controlled almost the same number of committee positions as in 1976, but their percent of committee seats increased from 8% to 28% in 1979. Their average size within the committee system increased from 13% in the pre-reform

Lima and Gil 1995).
legislatures to 25% in the early and 35% in the later post-reform legislatures.27 Thus, the opposition’s political space within the committee system did increase in the post-reform legislatures. In comparison to the opposition parties’ overall percentage of seats in the chamber (26% in the early and 41% in the later post-reform legislatures), their overall committee size was nearly equal in the early post-reform legislatures but 6% under-represented in the later post-reform legislatures. The opposition parties slipped in overall committee strength during the later post-reform legislatures. This finding, while still supporting Proposition 5.1a suggests that PRI was enhancing its hold over the committee system once its overall legislative power came under siege after 1988.

The opposition parties also began to cover a larger percent of the legislative committees with their members. In the second set of columns shows the decline in percent of legislative committees without opposition representation. In the pre-reform legislatures, PAN did not have representation across all of the committees; about 1/3 of the committees did not have a PAN member. After 1979, only two legislatures had legislative committees without a PAN member.28 The smaller opposition parties (satellite and left opposition) have also increased their committee system coverage over time, assisted by their growing legislative delegation size. Thus, the opposition parties not only increased their total representation in the committee system but also covered more of the committee system – increased their depth and breadth of coverage.

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27 The 1994 legislature had a reformed committee system, which reduced the total number of opposition positions by 145 seats, but there was still a 10% increase in the relative percentage of seats for the opposition parties.

28 In the 1979 legislature, it was the Marina committee; in the 1985 legislature it was the Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights committees.
The third analysis compares the average number of committee assignments per member between the majority and opposition parties. This issue of average number of committee assignments has become a point of contention for party leaders, especially the opposition parties. In a set of published interviews with committee leaders, they argue that some deputies had too many assignments and therefore could fulfill his/her responsibilities to any of them (*Cronica Legislativa* 1992e). The committee leaders were concerned about the ability of their committee to become a more significant actor in the legislative process vis-à-vis the majority party and the executive. They wanted members who can spend more ‘quality’ time with the committee activities and therefore bolster the committee’s influence over legislation. In a survey of deputies, members with too many assignments were also suggested as a common problem than inhibited committee work (*Cronica Legislativa* 1992f). Table 5.2 provides the average number of committee assignments for PRI members, opposition party members, and all deputies together.

Table 5.2

**Average Number of Committee Assignments per Member**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
<th>All Deputies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>1982</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano;* www.cddhcu.gob.mx

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29 The deputies were: Gilberto Rincon Gallardo (PRD), Sec of Federal District Committee; Israel Gonzalez Arreguin (PRCRN), Pres. of Fisheries Committee; Pablo Emilio Madero Belden (PAN), Pres. of Cooperative Promotion Committee; Amador Rodriguez Lozano (PRI), Pres. of Human Rights Committee;
From the last column of Table 5.2, the average number of committee assignments for all deputies decreased dramatically in the first post-reform legislature, which is easily explained by the committee reform in 1979. The new Ley Organica stated that deputies should have no more than two permanent committee assignments. In the following years, the norm or informal rule was that the members should have no more than three committee assignments (Sirvent 1995). In the post-reform legislatures, all members had an average of around 3 assignments. With the 1992 institutional reform, the average number of committee assignments dropped back to 2 per member in the 1994 legislature.

Table 5.2 also gives the difference between PRI and the opposition parties. In the pre-reform legislatures, the opposition members had an average of 4.6 committee assignments while PRI members had an average of 6.6 assignments. After 1979, the opposition members had an average of 2.2 (early post-reform) then 2.6 (later post-reform) while PRI had an average of 2.5 then 3.6 committee assignments. Therefore, PRI members usually held more average committee assignments than the opposition parties. This difference even increased in the last three post-reform legislatures. In only two legislatures (1973 and 1979) did the opposition equal PRI in the average number of committee assignments. Therefore, when the opposition committee leaders were complaining about members with too many assignments and not taking committee responsibilities seriously, chances are they were talking about majority party members.

In sum, the opposition parties did have a larger political space (in sheer numbers and in relative percent) within the committee system after 1979. They covered more committees while at the same time reduced the average individual burden on their

Adolfo Kunz Bolanos (PARM), Pres. of Artesans Committee; and Hector Ramirez Cuellar (PPS), Sec. of Human Rights Committee.
members. At the same time, however, PRI was careful to preserve its overall dominance within the committee system by maintaining a larger share of the committee positions. These findings support Proposition 5.1a.

**Party Distribution for Committee Members**

To determine whether the parties are over- or under-represented within the committee system, a measure of 'non-proportionality' is used for this analysis. Strict proportionality is used as a base line for comparison because it is the non-political means of allocating committee seats among parties. The measure of non-proportionality is derived from the difference between each party's proportion of committee seats and their proportion of overall Chamber seats. For example, Party X has 32 out of 300 total Chamber seats, or 11% of the seats. On Committee A, Party X has 4 members out of 20, or 20%. Therefore, Party X is over-represented on this committee by 9%. This non-proportionality measure will be used to test Propositions 5.2a-c. From these propositions, the majority party is generally expected to be over-represented in the committee system membership, which will further increase on the more important committees after 1988. PAN is expected to be more disadvantaged in the relative committee membership and leadership than the satellite and left opposition parties.

Table 5.3 presents the measure of partisan non-proportionality expressed as a proportion for all the legislative committees (excluding administrative committees) in each legislative term. The shaded numbers emphasize where a party has a measure of non-proportionality over 5% (either positively or negatively). The average non-

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30 This 5% threshold is chosen to highlight more extreme measures of non-proportionality within the distribution. The range of values for non-proportionality do not normally vary beyond 10%.
proportionality for all legislative committees over the whole time series is presented at the bottom of the table for a static comparison between parties. The parties are grouped together into the following categories: PRI, the satellite parties (PARM & PPS), the right opposition (PAN) and finally the left opposition parties. There is no information on the satellite parties' non-proportionality in 1994 or left opposition before 1979 because they were not represented in the Chamber during those years.

Table 5.3
Party Non-Proportionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Right Opp</th>
<th>Left Opp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.003</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
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<td>1985</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Leg.</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano; www.cddhcu.gob.mx*

From the overall comparison of non-proportionality across the whole time frame, the majority party was usually over-represented by around 4% (.04) in the committee system. This finding generally supports Proposition 5.2a. The satellite and left opposition parties were closer to strict proportionality than PAN, the largest minority party. PAN was generally under-represented by -3%, on average. It was suggested earlier that the majority party was less threatened by the satellite and left parties and from these findings PRI did not overtly disadvantage them in committee assignments. In fact, the satellite parties were slightly over-represented in many of the legislatures.

PAN, as the largest opposition party within the Chamber, could exert more authority within the Chamber and was a greater potential threat to the majority leadership.
(Camp 1995). It was therefore more consistently under-represented in the committee system membership (Proposition 5.2c). While not very large measures of over and under-representation given the high degree of aggregation, these findings are nevertheless in the expected direction.

In 1979, PRI was closest to proportionality in part because of the committee system reforms. There were more opposition members in the early post-reform legislatures who could displace PRI deputies within the smaller committee system. At the same time, the satellite parties were over-represented by 3% in 1979. From that point, PRI gradually increased its representation in the 1982 and 1985 legislatures (1% and 3% over-representation), while still favoring the satellite parties.

After 1988, PRI increased its political stranglehold over the committee system as hypothesized in Proposition 5.2b. PRI’s over-representation was greater than 5% for both the 1988 and 1991 legislatures. For the 1988 legislature, this majority party over-representation was to the detriment of all three groups of opposition parties (more or less evenly). In the 1991 legislature, however, the under-representation fell mostly to PAN, with 8% under-representation. Finally, the 1992 _Lev Organica_ reform (implemented in the 1994 legislature) allowed some liberalization changes in the 1994 committee system, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. With these changes, the committee membership was made more proportional (Cronica Legislativa 1994d).

Propositions 5.2a-c are generally supported by these findings. The majority party was over-represented, on average, throughout the time series, especially after the 1988 election. The satellite parties were used by PRI for more strength in the early post-reform legislatures while the largest opposition party, PAN, was the most disadvantaged. Yet
these highly aggregated values gloss over possible differences between types of committees. Proposition 5.2b suggests that PRI would especially over-represent itself on the important committees. Among the legislative committees, there are more and less important substantive committees. In the Mexican Chamber, there are both economically and politically important committees (de Lima and Gil 1995; Reyes 1995). The important economic/financial committees are the Programming & Budget, Finance & Public Revenue, Financial Oversight, Commerce, Energy, Industry, and Agriculture committees. The important political committees are the Government & Constitution, Foreign Relations, Justice, the Federal District, and the Media committees. The remaining legislative committees are considered more ‘minor’ committees (Reyes 1995).

The administrative committees are also separated into two groups. The more important administrative committees have leadership functions such as Rules, Regulations, and Parliamentary Practices, Administration, and the Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commission. The less important administrative committees are the Congressional Library, Editorial Matters, Information & Questions, and Correction & Style (Reyes 1995). The difference between these two groups is whether they have direct control over the legislative process. For example, the important administrative committees screen bills, determine the legislative calendar and set the procedural rules.

---

31The ‘inner’ (and most important) executive cabinet positions include the Programming and Budget, Finance, Commerce and Industrial Promotion (Story 1986). Thus, they are also key legislative committees. The Energy committee is important because of Mexico’s oil production industry. For the Agriculture committee, this economic sector still accounts for about 25% of the economy and most citizens are directly affected by the agriculture production and food distribution policies (Handelman 1997).

32The first three committees are clearly important. The Federal District committee is very important given the percent of citizens who live in the capital and its political and economic importance for the whole country. Finally, the Media committee is considered important because of the ruling party’s traditional media control for regime maintenance. It is also an important issue in the political conflict between PRI and the opposition (Baer 1990b).
Lesser important administrative committee take care of the legislative housekeeping functions, such as overseeing legislative services and facilities.

From these five groups of committees (important political, important economic, minor legislative, important and minor administrative committees), what are the differences in partisan membership patterns? From Proposition 5.2b, the majority party is expected to target its over-representation on the important committees (legislative and administrative), especially as its control over the legislature becomes more threatened after the 1988 election. Table 5.4 presents PRI's measure of non-proportionality for each committee group. The shaded numbers highlight where PRI was over-represented by more than 5%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Impt Econ</th>
<th>Impt Pol</th>
<th>Minor Leg</th>
<th>Major Admin</th>
<th>Minor Admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>.06%</td>
<td>- .05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>.05%</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>.05%</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Avg</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano; www.csdhu.gov.mx

For the important economic and political committees presented in Table 5.4, PRI was frequently over-represented by more than 5%. During the 1970s, this strong PRI control was higher and more consistent for the economic committees than for the political committees. In particular, PRI greatly over-represented itself across all types of committees in the 1976 legislature. Overall, PRI was not as consistent in its control over the important political committees in the pre-reform legislatures.
In 1979, there was readjustment toward more proportionality on the important legislative committees, which was maintained during the early post-reform legislatures. However, when the opposition parties greatly enhanced their size and power after 1988, PRI reacted by greatly over-representing itself (by close to 10%) on the more economic and political committees. The important committees would be a natural target for the opposition parties and thus were important for the majority to control. After the newest *Ley Organica*, PRI’s representation became much more proportional in the 1994 legislature, but with a continued over-representation (3%) on the important economic committees.

For the minor legislative committees, PRI increased its over-representation beginning with the 1985 legislature. Then, its over-representation was as strong as the important legislative committees during the 1988 and 1991 legislatures. There was little overall difference in the trends (and magnitude) of over-representation by PRI on the important versus minor legislative committees in the post-reform legislatures. In this case, Proposition 5.2b has only mixed support. PRI did increase its over-representation after 1988, but there was not really much difference between the important and the minor legislative committees even though the average for the important economic committees was slightly higher.

Among all committee types, PRI over-represented itself the most on the administrative committees, especially the major administrative committees. In fact, PRI over-representation was consistently over 10%. PRI generally kept its control even over the committees designated as ‘minor’ administrative committees. Only in the 1979 legislature did PRI not dramatically over-represent itself on the administration
committees. As expected, by dominating the administrative committees, PRI could control the legislative institution. While there was little difference between the important and minor committees (legislative or administrative) in PRI’s measure of non-proportionality, there was a difference between the legislative and administrative committees. PRI had a larger and more consistent over-representation on the administrative committees.

The data so far indicate how PRI’s membership was distributed among the different types of committees. This way, it is possible to determine any pattern of PRI over-representation. The data do not provide evidence of whether particular opposition parties were more under-represented on some committee groups versus others. Proposition 5.2c suggests that the majority party would show favoritism toward some opposition parties than others. This finding was supported in the aggregate (Table 5.2), but were there any differences between types of committees?

Among the opposition parties, the satellite parties (PARM & PPS) were generally favored above the independent opposition parties. Table 5.5 presents the satellite party’s measure of non-proportionality across for the different types of committees. The data series ends in 1991, as these parties did not gain representation in the 1994 legislature. The shaded figures highlight where over or under-representation was more than 5%.

### Table 5.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Impt Econ</th>
<th>Impt Pol</th>
<th>Minor Leg</th>
<th>Major Admin</th>
<th>Minor Admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Avg</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano*
The representation of the satellite parties on the important legislative committees slightly increased in the post-reform years, especially for the important economic committees. They also had increased representation on the administrative committees, especially the major administrative committees. So, PRI generally favored the satellite parties with more important committee assignments. This finding is not surprising given the traditionally close relationship with PRI.

Table 5.6 presents the committee non-proportionality for the independent left opposition parties. They were not represented in the Chamber before 1979 and the data for the administrative committees in 1994 were not available.

Table 5.6
Left Opposition Non-Proportionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Impt Econ</th>
<th>Impt Pol</th>
<th>Minor Leg</th>
<th>Major Admin</th>
<th>Minor Admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
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<td>.003</td>
<td>-.002</td>
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<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Avg  | -.003     | -.01     | -.01      | -.02        | -.01        |

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano;* www.cddhuu.gob.mx

Overall, the left opposition parties were close to proportionality on the legislative committees across the whole time series. Overall, their committee representation was the lowest for the administrative committees. In the 1988 and 1991 legislatures (when they increased in strength), there was a trend toward a little more under-representation, especially for the administrative and important economic committees. Yet, in general, the left opposition was not strongly under-represented across time or committee types. PRI did not greatly disadvantage them and they were generally allowed to fill their ‘quota’ of committee assignments.
Finally, Table 5.7 presents the data for the right opposition, PAN. During the early post-reform legislatures, there was a second right opposition party, the PDM. Its measure of non-proportionality is averaged with PAN and provided in parenthesis. The measures of non-proportionality that were under 5% are shaded and the administrative data for 1994 are missing.

### Table 5.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Impt Econ</th>
<th>Impt Pol</th>
<th>Minor Leg</th>
<th>Major Admin</th>
<th>Minor Admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)</td>
<td>0 (-.0)</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)</td>
<td>-.01 (.01)</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>-.04 (.02)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.02 (.01)</td>
<td>-.06 (.03)</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.02 (.02)</td>
<td>-.03 (.03)</td>
<td>-.03 (.02)</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Avg</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano: www.cddhcu.gob.mx*

PAN was more consistently discriminated against than the other opposition parties (Table 5.3). In 1994, PAN’s relative disadvantage was lessened, but was still under-represented by around 3% on the important legislative committees. PAN was the most under-represented (throughout the whole time series) on the administrative committees, especially the more important ones. Among just the legislative committees, PAN was more consistently under-represented on the important economic committees. In general, though, many of these differences between committee groups were not very large.

From Tables 5.3 through 5.7, the partisan distribution favored the ruling majority party especially on the administrative committees and the important economic committees. This finding was expected given the importance of these committees for the
government's legislative control (Proposition 5.2b). The majority party underlined its advantage where it counted the most. These differences should not be over-exaggerated, however, given the amount of PRI over-representation on the other categories of committees. At the same time, PAN was consistently under-represented but the data do not indicate very large differences between committees as well. The findings suggest a trend in the expected direction, but the larger differences occur between legislative and administrative committees.

For the smaller opposition parties the difference in a few percentage points under or over-representation can still have a large affect on their ability to build a critical mass of members on particular committees. Perhaps looking at an average measure of non-proportionality over a group of committees hides some concentrations of opposition members at the individual committee level. Where did the opposition parties decide to concentrate their committee membership? If a small party only has 30 total assignments in the committee system, where they are located might indicate something about that party’s policy emphasis or opposition strategy.

This information about the opposition membership concentration for the legislative committees between 1982 and 1991 is presented in Table 5.8. The committees listed for each party are where they have an unusually high concentration of members. For the smallest parties, these committees indicate where they locate their few membership assignments. For the larger opposition parties, these committees are where they have a substantially larger concentration of members. The first eight parties listed are left opposition parties and the last party listed is PAN. For the boxes without
committees listed, that particular party was not represented in the Chamber during that legislature.

Table 5.8
Committees with High Opposition Party Concentration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSUM</td>
<td>Defense; Labor; Fed. District; Financial Oversight; Budget</td>
<td>Science &amp; Tech; Financial Oversight; Justice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Defense; Navy; Fed. Dist. Financial Oversight</td>
<td>Defense; Commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Human Asst; Education; Agric Reform; Agriculture; Govt.; Foreign Relations; Fed. District; Justice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMT</td>
<td>Science &amp; Tech; Labor; Agric Reform; Education; Govt.; Foreign Relations; Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ecology; Indian Affairs; Tourism; Media; Agric</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Border; Agric Reform; Education; Health; Govt.; Industry; Energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFCRN</td>
<td></td>
<td>Science &amp; Tech; Highway Pop &amp; Dev; Border; Agric Reform; Defense; Navy; Financial Oversight</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comm &amp; Trans. Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Science &amp; Tech; Ecology; Human Rights; Border; Coop Promote; Agric Reform; Agric; Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>Science &amp; Tech Health Media</td>
<td>Science &amp; Tech. Navy Media</td>
<td>Coop Promote; Sports; Highways; Arts &amp; Crafts; Fed Dist; Justice; Fin. Oversight</td>
<td>Coop Promote; Highway; Arts &amp; Crafts; Education; Justice; Commerce; Agric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biográfico del Gobierno Mexicano

The small left opposition parties in the early post-reform legislatures, covered some of the important legislative committees with at least one member. In particular, they were putting members on the Financial Oversight, Budget, Federal District, Foreign Relations, and Government, and Justice committees. During the 1982 and 1985 legislatures, most of these committees were important economic or political committees. As the economic situation in Mexico turned sour in the 1980s, their constituents were among the hardest hit. A major partisan issue for the left centered on objections to the economic performance and policies of the government (Morris 1995; Camp 1996; Handleman 1997).
Among the important political committees, the small left opposition parties
concentrated more members on the Federal District and the Government committees.
The Federal District has a large contingent of left opposition supporters.\textsuperscript{33} Any inroads of
policy or public relations using that committee platform would help maintain or enhance
their future electoral success in the large political market of the Federal District (Craig
and Cornelius 1995). In the 1988 and 1991 legislatures, only a third of these committees
were important legislative committees. Yet even as ‘minor’ legislative committees, they
still focused on issues of concern to the left parties - Ecology, Indigenous Peoples,
Border, Agriculture, Education, Health, Population and Development, Human Rights,
Public Works, Cooperative Promotion, and Transportation.

Given PAN’s business constituents, most of the committees that had higher
concentrations of their members influenced the economy or commerce in some way.
These committees included Science and Technology, Cooperative Promotion, Federal
Highways, Arts and Crafts Industry, Commerce, and the major financial committees.
There were more economic and politically important committees with high
concentrations of PAN members in the 1988 and 1991 legislatures.

By reducing the level of analysis, patterns of party representation within the
committee system emerge. From the aggregated data, the opposition parties were
generally under-represented, with little difference across committee types. When looking
at the individual committee level, there are committees where opposition parties
concentrated more of their members. On these committees, the opposition might not
have had proportionality to their chamber size, but they had a larger representation
relative to other committees. From Table 5.8, the left and right opposition parties

\textsuperscript{33} The percent of opposition vote in the Federal District in 1988 was 73\% (Craig and Cornelius 1995).
covered committees that addressed issues of more interest to their respective constituents, the left with social and economic development and the right with commerce and economic interests (Cronica Legislativa 1992d; de Lima and Gil 1995).

Another way to investigate partisan strength within the committee system is to examine the partisan distribution of committee leadership posts. How have the partisan changes between the majority party and the opposition affected the committee leadership? Proposition 5.2d states that the majority party is expected to maintain control over the committee leadership positions. In Mexico, each committee has one president and at least one secretary. Table 5.9 presents the total number of leadership positions for committee presidents and secretaries since 1979. The data on committee leadership was not consistently available prior to the 1979 legislature.

Table 5.9
Number of Leadership Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Committee Presidents</th>
<th>Committee Secretaries</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biográfico Del Gobierno Mexicano; www.cddhcu.gob.mx

The first finding from Table 5.9 is that the total number of committee leadership positions increased over time from a total of 54 in the 1979 legislature to 267 in the 1994 legislature. This trend is partly explained by the addition of new committees over time. However, it was largely caused by the introduction of more committee secretary positions in the 1991 and 1994 legislatures. The number of total secretarial positions more than doubled in 1991. The average number of committee secretaries was one per committee
before 1991 but increased to almost 3 in 1991 and 4 in 1994. By the 1994 legislature, the committee leadership structure was almost five times its size in the 1979 legislature, with most of the increase occurring after 1988.

It has been argued that this increase in secretarial positions was a reform to placate the opposition with symbolic leadership positions (Reyes 1995). By increasing the number of committee secretaries, more opposition members could have access to committee leadership positions without holding the more important position of committee president. In that way, some opposition members would have a greater level of responsibility and activity within the committee system without really having more power. How have the parties actually been represented in these positions?

From the descriptive accounts of the pre-reform legislatures, it was very unlikely that opposition members were ever appointed to committee leadership positions before 1979 (De la Garza 1972; Camp 1996). If any opposition members served in leadership positions, it would have been the exception. Table 5.10 provides the data on the relative distribution of committee leadership positions between PRI and the opposition from 1979-1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Leadership Position</th>
<th>PRI %</th>
<th>Opposition %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Pres.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Pres.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec.</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Pres.</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sec.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biográfico Del Gobierno Mexicano;* www.cdhcu.gob.mx

The practice of opposition exclusion from leadership positions was continued during the early post-reform legislatures. Opposition party members did not hold any
committee leadership positions in the 1979, 1982, and 1985 legislatures. In 1988, however, this trend was abruptly altered. The PRI stranglchold over committee leadership was broken. The majority party's percent of committee leadership positions (presidents and secretaries) decreased from 100% in 1985 to 63% in the 1988 legislature. The opposition moved from zero to 37% in one leap, with the number of committee secretaries increasing the most. They even held 33% of the committee presidential seats.

In the 1991 legislature, the opposition's percentage of total committee leadership positions decreased slightly to 32%. Their percentage of committee presidencies decreased the most, from 33% to 19%. Yet in the 1994 legislature, the opposition regained and surpassed its previous committee leadership strength, moving from 32% of leadership posts to 47%. They held 32% of the committee presidencies and eclipsed PRI in the percentage of committee secretaries. Basically, the opposition went from holding no committee leadership posts before 1988 to holding almost half in 1994.

Reyes (1995) argues that the committees with opposition presidents had only relative importance. Have the committees with opposition leadership been relatively meaningless committees? Table 5.11 lists the committees on which the opposition parties have held the presidency. The economically and politically important committees are shaded.
Table 5.11
Committee Presidencies by Opposition Group, 1988-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>Left Opposition</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Border</td>
<td>Commun &amp; Transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>Highway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Jurisdiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative Promotion</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Cooperative Promotion</td>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>Science &amp; Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Crafts Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Public Asst. &amp; Public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Highways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budget Oversight</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled Asst.</td>
<td>Agrarian Reform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population &amp; Dev.</td>
<td>Social Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative Promotion</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science and Tech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diario de los Debates, Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano, www.cfdhu.gob.mx

In the 1988 and 1991 legislatures, the committee presidencies held by PAN were either new or minor committees. The left opposition and the satellite parties held the only opposition presidencies on important committees. In fact, the satellite parties held the presidency of one of the most important committees, the Planning and Budget Committee. In the 1991 legislature, there were no important committees with an opposition member as president. Yet, in 1994, there were four important committees with an opposition president: three for PAN (Budget Oversight, Justice, and Commerce) and one for the left opposition (Energy).

Even if most of the committees with an opposition president were not designated as important committees, they still addressed matters of concern for those parties (just as Table 5.8 indicates for strong membership concentration). For example, PAN consistently held the presidency of the Cooperative Promotion committee. Other
business-related committees included the Border, Federal Highways, Commerce, and Science and Technology. Likewise, the left opposition held the committee presidencies of Public Assistance & Public Works, Social Security, Fisheries, Agrarian Reform, Social Development, Health, and Human Rights.

These findings run counter to Proposition 5.2d, which states that PRI would maintain their control over the committee leadership positions. While PRI did maintain control before 1988, the opposition parties received leadership positions after 1988, when they presented the strongest threat. This finding also runs counter to the trend in committee membership. The opposition had more proportional committee membership in the 1979, 1982 and 1985 legislatures, while PRI monopolized leadership. Then, at the same time that PRI increased its over-representation of committee seats after 1988, it was allowing opposition members to be committee officers, including presidents. Why disadvantage the opposition in committee membership but then give them leadership positions? It has been suggested that if PRI maintained a voting majority within the committee, any opposition committee president would be held in check:

“Obtaining a majority of a commission’s members is much more important than securing the commission’s presidency, analysts pointed out. For example, the Energy Commission’s president during the past three-year congressional term was affiliated with the PRD, but the PRI’s 20 members were known for calling the shots, drowning out opposition from the PAN, PRD, and the PT. The administration’s petrochemical privatization law, approved by the commission, was actually opposed by its PRD President Francisco Curi Perez,” (The News 9/1/97).

It seems that instead of maintaining its monopoly over both the committee members and the committee leadership positions, PRI loosened its control over one or the other. In the early post-reform legislatures, it was the committee membership; in the later
post-reform legislatures, it was the committee leadership positions. With either more membership or leadership, the opposition's demands for greater relative power within the committee system could be moderated yet PRI could still have final control.

**Information and Expertise**

The re-election pattern in the Chamber as a whole sets the tone for any discussion of legislative experience. In Mexico, the restriction against consecutive re-election is a major stumbling block for the development of legislative expertise and is one major reason for the large asymmetry in power between the legislature and the executive (De la Garza 1972; Camp 1995). Proposition 5.3a suggests that there should be an increase in re-election rates for the opposition. From one of the few empirical studies of membership re-election to the Mexican Chamber, Table 5.12 presents the number of times each PRI deputy was ever elected from 1934 to 1994 (Campos Vargas 1996).

**Table 5.12**

**Re-Election Pattern for PRI Deputies, 1934-1994**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Times Elected</th>
<th># of PRI Deputies</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,144</td>
<td>86.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Campos Vargas (1996.28)

Only 484 (13%) of all PRI deputies since 1934 were ever re-elected to the Chamber. Of those, 399 (82%) were re-elected only once. Thus, it is difficult to talk about legislative careers in Mexico. However, there has been a shift over time in the re-election rate of PRI members. Table 5.13 shows the number and percentage of PRI members with previous Chamber experience over time.
Table 5.13
Re-Election Rate, PRI Members 1940-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th># PRI Deputies Returned</th>
<th>% PRI Delegation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940-1943</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-1946</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1949</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-1952</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-1955</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-1958</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-1961</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-1964</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-1967</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967-1970</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1973</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1976</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1979</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1982</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-1985</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1988</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-1991</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1994</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1997</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Campos Vargas (1996:29)

The percent of PRI members with legislative experience increased in the post-reform years. Prior to 1979, the average percentage of re-elected PRI deputies was 12.3% of their legislative delegation. After 1979, that average increased to 19%. The 1985 and 1988 legislatures had the highest percentage of veteran PRI membership, with 21% and 26% re-elected members. The general accumulation of legislative experience is important for increasing the expertise of these members.

Campos Vargas’ study covers a long time frame in her analysis, but she does not include all of the parties. In my analysis, all of the political parties are included. To more adequately investigate the re-election rate of all deputies from the 1970 through the current legislature, it is necessary to include the three legislatures from the previous decade (1961, 1964, and 1967) because most deputies that return to the Chamber do so within 6 to 9 years. In addition, by including these earlier legislatures, there would be an equal number of legislatures before and after 1979, which allows for a better
comparison of re-election rates. Table 5.14 has the percentage of re-elected deputies from 1970 to 1994, using a time series that begins with the 1961 legislature.\textsuperscript{35} The table gives the percentage of re-elected deputies from within the total number of each partisan delegation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>All Opposition</th>
<th>All Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano; www.cddhcu.gob.mx

For all parties, the percentage of re-elected deputies generally increased over time, providing evidence of higher levels of legislative experience within the post-reform legislatures. Comparing the re-election rate between the PRI deputies and opposition deputies before 1979, a much larger percent of opposition members were experienced legislators than with the PRI delegation. After 1979, however, PRI’s delegation had a larger percent of re-elected members than the opposition. While the absolute numbers of re-elected opposition members increased, their percentage of the total opposition delegation was smaller in part because of the increase in size of the opposition

\textsuperscript{34} Of those PRI deputies who were re-elected to the Chamber, 42\% returned after skipping the requisite legislative term. Indeed, 77\% of re-elected PRI deputies returned within a decade of their first legislative term (Campos Vargas 1996).

\textsuperscript{35} The numbers might be artificially low for the first few legislatures because deputies who served in legislatures earlier than 1961 could still be excluded. In addition, the percentage of re-elected PRI members may be slightly different than in Campos Vargas’ data given the shorter time frame used in this
delegation. So, Proposition 5.3a is supported by the raw numbers but not as a percent of the opposition delegation. There were more re-elected opposition members but their relative size within the respective party delegation was dampened by all the new members. These findings are counter to Proposition 5.3a, whereby the opposition parties were expected to increase their percent of re-elected members after 1979. Again, changes in the size of the legislative delegation for opposition parties affect these findings. In addition, the left opposition parties were not present before 1979 and therefore lower this percentage for the first few post-reform legislatures.

To investigate committee-level return rates (Proposition 5.3b), members who served on a particular committee in a previous legislature (from 1970 forward) are coded as having seniority. For comparison across committee types, parties, and time, Table 5.15 is separated into three parts: 5.15a for the pre-reform legislatures; 5.15b for the early post-reform legislatures; and 5.15c for the later post-reform legislatures. The pre-reform data are from the 1976 legislature only because the 1970 committee members could not possibly return until the 1976 legislature. Also, the 1994 legislature is not included in the later post-reform legislatures data.

The legislative committees are used in this analysis (not the administrative) and they are grouped into the three different categories or types: important economic, important political, and minor legislative committees. The specific committees within each group are listed beneath the tables. In addition, only those committees that appear in more than four legislatures are used in this analysis. To investigate committee return rates, only those committees that existed for at least four legislatures can capture most of analysis. There could be PRI members who served in a much earlier legislature that is not coded for the dataset.
the membership return. Thus, the data series covers the 1976-1991 legislatures and uses only those legislative committees that had been in existence for at least four legislatures.

The tables indicate the number and percent of senior (returned) members for each party within the different committee categories during those legislatures. It is not an average across the committees or legislatures, but instead is the sum for all the category's committees in those legislatures. For example, in Table 5.15b, PRI had 26 (or 4%) veteran committee members within all the important economic committees during the 1979, 1982, and 1985 legislatures. The percent of committee seniority within each category allows for comparison over time, given the different numbers of legislatures, committees, and committee sizes between the three time periods.

### Table 5.15a
Committee Seniority, Pre-Reform Legislature (1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Type</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>Left Opp</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Total Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important Econ</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (.3%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (.3%)</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Pol</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (.6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (.6%)</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Leg</td>
<td>1 (.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (.6%)</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Committees</td>
<td>5 (.4%)</td>
<td>2 (.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (.5%)</td>
<td>1117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 5.15b
Committee Seniority, Early Post-Reform Legislatures (1979-1985)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Type</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>Left Opp</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Total Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important Econ</td>
<td>26 (4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Pol</td>
<td>23 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (.4%)</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Leg</td>
<td>25 (2%)</td>
<td>1 (.1%)</td>
<td>2 (.2%)</td>
<td>5 (.5%)</td>
<td>1107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Committees</td>
<td>74 (3%)</td>
<td>6 (.3%)</td>
<td>3 (.1%)</td>
<td>7 (.3%)</td>
<td>2293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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36 From Campos' data, 97% of those deputies who returned to the Chamber did so within 2 elections - three to four legislatures after their first service (Campos Vargas 1996).
Table 5.15c
Committee Seniority, Later Post-Reform Legislatures (1988, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Type</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>PAN</th>
<th>Left Opp</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Total Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Important Econ</td>
<td>39 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (.7%)</td>
<td>4 (.5%)</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Pol</td>
<td>34 (7%)</td>
<td>7 (1%)</td>
<td>4 (.8%)</td>
<td>6 (1%)</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Leg</td>
<td>44 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (.2%)</td>
<td>1 (.1%)</td>
<td>9 (.7%)</td>
<td>1268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Committees</td>
<td>117 (5%)</td>
<td>14 (.6%)</td>
<td>9 (.4%)</td>
<td>22 (.9%)</td>
<td>2516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The most obvious finding from the data is that there was very little overall member seniority within the committee system. The largest measure of committee seniority was for PRI in the important political committees during the later post-reform legislatures, with only 7% of 507 seats. In fact, PRI members had higher levels of committee seniority on all types of committees with one exception. PRI members’ seniority increased over time, as well. This result is not surprising given the greater percentage of PRI members who were re-elected to the Chamber after 1979. Between committee categories, PRI had the highest percentage of seniority on the important committees. With more veteran members, the majority party domination of these important committees was further enhanced.

Overall, the opposition parties had a very small rate of return to committees, driven in part by their low re-election rate to the Chamber. If the opposition parties did not have very many re-elected deputies, then there were fewer opportunities to build seniority within the committee system. When put into the context of the total size of the committee groups, the few veteran opposition members were drowned out. There were only a few cases where opposition parties had even 1% of committee members as

37 In the 1976 legislature, the satellite parties had more veteran committee members than PRI on the minor legislative committee.
veterans.38 Yet, Proposition 5.3b states that opposition party members are expected to increase their return rate to the committees in the post-reform legislatures. From Tables 5.15a,b,&c, the opposition party members did increase their number and percent of committee veterans. However, this increase is rather small when viewed as a percentage of all committee members.

Between opposition parties, the satellite parties had higher rates of overall committee seniority in all the three time periods (although PAN and the satellite parties were almost equal in the earlier post-reform legislatures). The opposition parties that posed the smallest threat to PRI were appointed to more committee assignments where they had previous experience. The committees with higher levels of satellite party seniority were generally the more minor legislative committees in the 1976 and early post-reform legislatures, but increased in importance during the later post-reform legislatures.

From this data, PRI had more committee seniority, especially on the important committees. While the opposition members’ return rates did increase over time, their numbers of senior committee members was very low. Between opposition parties, the Satellite parties had more committee veterans in the committee system.

When comparing the number of senior committee members to the total number of committee members, their size is extremely small. Another way of investigating the committee return rates between parties is to compare them to the number of possible veteran members. Only the re-elected deputies can possibly return to their previous committee assignments and build committee seniority. While Table 5.15 uses all

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38 PAN with important political committees in the early and late post-reform legislatures and the satellite parties for both politically and economically important committee in the later post-reform legislatures.
committee members as the denominator, Table 5.16 uses only the re-elected members as the dataset for analysis of committee return rates. From among the re-elected deputies, do most return to the same committee? For example, Party A has 20 members who are re-elected to the Chamber and 15 of them returned to their previous committee assignment. Party B has 60 re-elected members but only 15 of them returned to their previous committee assignment. In this example, Party A is making the most of their experienced, re-elected members. Table 5.16 shows the percentage (and number) of re-elected deputies who return to their previous committee assignments.

Table 5.16
Percent of Re-Elected Deputies with Committee Seniority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partisan Groups</th>
<th>% Re-Elected Deputies with Committee Seniority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>68% (189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>43% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Opposition</td>
<td>82% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite Parties</td>
<td>82% (35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biográfico Del Gobierno Mexicano*

There were higher committee return rates among the re-elected members of the smaller opposition parties in the Chamber. The left opposition parties and the satellite parties had 82% of their re-elected deputies return to the same committee post. For the satellite parties, this meant that 35 out of 43 re-elected deputies had the same committee assignments during the 1976-1991 legislatures. As these parties had the smallest legislative delegations and thus fewer human resources, returning to their previous committee assignments was a relatively easy way to increase their committee expertise. The left opposition parties had the smallest number of re-elected members (11), but 82% of them returned to their previous committee assignment. Again, this was a small number, but its percentage of the re-elected deputies was large.
PRI’s re-elected members returned to the same committees at a rate of 68%, or 189 out of 278 re-elected deputies. PRI had the largest number of re-elected deputies who were returning to committee assignments but as a percentage of re-elected deputies, PRI was not making the most of its experienced deputies. PAN had the lowest percentage of re-elected deputies (43%) returning to their previous committee assignments. PAN was the only party that had only a minority of their experienced deputies being utilized for committee service. This finding further supports the earlier ones that PAN was being more disadvantaged within the committee system.

In all, the ruling majority party had higher Chamber re-election rates and higher committee seniority rates. Yet among just the re-elected deputies, the smaller opposition parties (left opposition and satellite) actually utilized their members’ previous committee experience at much higher rates than PRI or PAN.

In the final analysis, Proposition 5.3c states that opposition members are expected to increase their coordination between personal expertise and committee assignments in the post-reform legislatures. Personal expertise is the members’ personal background education, work, or other background experiences. In one study of personal expertise, each deputy is coded a zero or one for having personal expertise on their committee’s jurisdiction (Haspel 1996). “For a person to be considered as having expertise in an area, he or she had either to have a degree in the applicable area (e.g. a degree in economics for work on the economic policy committee); work experience in the area (e.g. a collective farm manager on the agriculture committee), or held a post on the corresponding committee in a previous legislature.” (Haspel 1996:14). In this analysis, separate categories of personal expertise are used; for each committee member, a one is coded for
expertise in each of three areas - education, occupation, and previous committee service. In contrast to Haspel, this measure allows deputies to have degrees of personal expertise with a possible range from zero to three.

The first aspect of personal expertise is the educational experience. For example, educational expertise is coded as one (1) for degrees in law for the members of the Justice committee, engineering on the Public Works committee, medical on the Health committee, and economic on the Budget committee. Occupational experiences can include not only private sector jobs but also former government positions, partisan, and union work experiences. This service provides additional information about the members' work experience that might directly relate to their committee assignment.39

Finally, committee members are given another expertise point for having served on the same committee in a previous legislature (since the 1970 legislature). Even if there are jurisdictional changes, such as the combination or separation of committees over time, the committees could still be traced over time. From the previous findings about committee return rates, there are not many expertise points given for previous committee service. Thus, the highest possible overall expertise score is 3 yet realistically the normal range of high expertise is 2 because of the low return rate of members.

The coding of education and occupational experience is based on the detailed biographical information provided in the *Diccionario Biografico Del Gobierno Mexicano*, which was only available for the 1982-1991 legislatures. Two legislatures

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39 With many PRI members, careers are centered in the party sectors (labor, peasant, and popular), their organizations and unions. For example, a PRI deputy might have been the leader of an agricultural organization, teachers' or oil workers' union associated with PRI. Government service in the bureaucracy generally parallels the committee system jurisdiction, so it is not difficult to code for this type of expertise. For example, a PRI deputy on the Agriculture committee might have served in the Agricultural Ministry. Or, a member might have been involved with the National Human Rights Commission and then be assigned to the Human Rights committee in the Chamber.
(1985 and 1988) are coded to provide an estimate of personal expertise between the early and later post-reform legislatures. Table 5.17 presents the average personal expertise scores for each party group. The data are not separated into committee types and only legislative committees are used. 40

Table 5.17

Average Personal Expertise by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1988</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite Parties</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Opposition</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates; Diccionario Biográfico Del Gobierno Mexicano*

From Table 5.17, PRI members had the highest average personal expertise measure in both legislatures sampled. The order of personal expertise from highest to lowest was PRI, PAN, the satellite parties, and the left opposition parties. In the aggregate, neither PRI nor the opposition parties averaged over 1 on the scale of committee personal expertise.

The opposition parties did not have higher personal expertise measures probably because they were placing more members on the important committees rather than on committees that match their expertise. From Table 5.8, the opposition parties were concentrating more of their members into particular committees - those that were economically or politically important and those that were important to their partisan

40When using the committee type as the unit of analysis, the important economic committees had the highest membership expertise, followed by the important political committees and finally the minor committees. In fact, the important economic committees had 70% more membership expertise than the minor legislative committees. There are a few outliers among the committee groups, however. A few minor committees had high levels of personal expertise: the 1985 Science and Technology committee; the 1988 Communication and Transportation committee; and the Education, Labor, and Agricultural Reform committees in both 1983 and 1988. These last three committees directed match PRI's party sectors and therefore had lots of experienced members because PRI's delegation is heavily represented by sector leaders and activists.
supporters. In many of these cases, the opposition parties were having to use their smaller number of members to cover these particular committees rather than to match each members’ assignments according to personal expertise. While using their members’ personal expertise could be an easy way of using the skills of their committee members, having a voice on the important committees is also an important partisan strategy. The majority party was better able to capitalize on their members’ own personal experiences and expertise in part because they had so many members that personal expertise could be a more important condition.

Also, the opposition members did not have the range of work experience open to the majority party members. The opposition party members do not usually have the opportunity to serve in government positions nor are their party organizations divided into functional groups, like PRI. Therefore, the opposition party members’ work experiences are usually limited to their private occupations and their professional association memberships. By the time most PRI deputies arrive at the Chamber, they have served in several different bureaucratic, party, or union positions, which widen their range of personal expertise. Therefore, given the differences in the nature of their careers, PRI members were more advantaged in personal expertise.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered a number of committee membership and leadership variables. Together they show how the partisan struggle translated into committee

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41 When coding the personal expertise measure, it became clear that many opposition members had lots of expertise on particular committees that they were not assigned. It was clear that the parties were using another strategy.
membership and leadership decisions. Most of the propositions presented in this chapter were given at least some support from the different data analyses.

Proposition 5.1a and 5.1b was supported by the data. The opposition was successful in pushing outward on its political space within the committee system after 1979. At the same time, PRI maintained its overall dominance within the committee system. This continued dominance was at the cost of more average committee assignments for PRI members than for opposition party members.

Most of Propositions 5.2a,b,&c were supported by the data. While PRI was over-represented in the committee system, there was not a very large difference between the important and minor committees for PRI’s member over-representation, the data did suggest some difference in emphasis. The majority party’s strategy of committee assignment was different between opposition parties, by favoring the less threatening opposition with more assignments than PAN. Least supported was Proposition 5.3d, because PRI did not maintain its monopoly over the committee leadership positions after 1988.

From Propositions 5.3a,b,&c, there are also some mixed findings. Proposition 5.3a was not supported by the data because the opposition parties did not experience an increase in their re-election rates to the Chamber. Instead, there was a decisive decrease in the percentage of re-elected opposition members after 1979.

Proposition 5.3b was tested by two different datasets. In the first dataset, the committee return rate was compared to the total number of committee positions. From this data, the opposition members did experience an increase in their return rate to the committees. In the second dataset, the committee return rate was compared to just the
pool of re-elected deputies. In this way, the data could determine how much the different parties were taking advantage of the expertise and experience available from within their own delegations. This dataset did not allow a comparison over time, but it did show that the smallest opposition parties (those who were the least threatening to PRI) were able to best capitalize on their human resources - their experienced, veteran members. PAN was the least able to capitalize on their veteran membership. What was most striking in this data was the very small percentage of committee members with previous experience. Again, this must be expected given the small percentage of members who are ever re-elected to the chamber.

Finally, Proposition 5.3c was not tested using data from pre-reform legislatures, given the lack of available biographical data on those deputies. However, with two sample datasets (1985 and 1988), the personal expertise of committee members was compared between PRI and the different opposition parties. From the data, the opposition parties’ personal expertise measures slightly declined from 1985 to the 1988 legislature. Thus, the hypothesis was not supported by this evidence. PRI held the largest measure of personal expertise on committees, something that was not surprising given the previous findings.

In all, five out of the eight propositions were supported by the evidence presented in this chapter. Together they indicate how the majority party and opposition parties were reacting to each other in the environment of heightened political conflict in the post-reform legislatures, especially after 1988. During the early post-reform legislatures, the majority party did not overly react to the minority parties. In the later post-reform legislatures, however, the majority party moved to underscore its partisan domination and
disadvantage the opposition (especially PAN). For example, PRI protected its shrinking partisan majority by over-representing itself within the committee membership. The majority party also had higher re-election rates, committee veterans, and personal expertise on committees, especially the important ones. Together these different variables show the majority party’s political advantage within the committee system.

At the same time, there was some signs of liberalization within the post-reform legislatures. The opposition members held committee leadership positions for the first time after 1988. The opposition parties were also able to reduce their membership disadvantage in the 1994 legislature. Finally, the left opposition parties had more of their re-elected members returning to their previous committee service, thereby increasing the expertise of their committee delegations.

These changes in committee membership composition over time demonstrate how political changes have affected the nature of the committee system. From Chapters 3, 4 and 5, there have been a number of important institutional and political changes in the Chamber since the political context shifted in Mexico. From these structural, procedural, and membership changes, how was the activity and output of the Chamber affected? In the next chapter, some measures of activity level on the Chamber floor and committee system are investigated. Have the opposition parties been able to capitalize on these new opportunities for activity and influence?
Chapter 6

Legislative Activity

So far in this research project, the connection between political and institutional change has been investigated in conjunction with the Chamber floor and committee system rules, structure, and membership. The findings thus far indicate how the opposition parties pushed against the restrictiveness of the institution and in what ways the majority party reacted. Through this series of actions and reactions, the legislative institution experienced changes, especially in the later post-reform legislatures. The ruling majority party found it increasingly difficult to prevent some of the liberalization changes pushed by the opposition parties. In this chapter, I examine the significance of these institutional and political changes on the level of legislative activity, such as the floor sessions, legislation, and committee system activities. How did the increased partisan conflict in the post-reform legislatures affect the floor and committee system activities?

From the political conflict model, these legislative activities are expected to increase in the post-reform legislatures. As the opposition parties become larger and more active in the post-reform legislatures, they would have an increased ability and willingness to engage in legislative activities. In turn, if a sizable percentage of opposition members increased the level and intensity of their legislative activities, then the overall legislative activities in the Chamber would also increase. The opposition’s activities would reverberate through the institution as they use different strategies to
decrease their disadvantage against the government and to mobilize public opinion for their future electoral support (Racz 1989; Judge 1992; Liao 1994).

In addition, the opposition parties’ increased activities would reverberate strongly through the legislature because of the institutional changes discussed in earlier chapters. The successful institutional changes championed by the opposition parties would have lifted restrictions on their own legislative activities and influence. For example, the opposition parties had been trying to change the restrictive rules against their floor participation. During the later post-reform legislatures, some of these rules on floor participation were changed and thus opened up new opportunities for the opposition activities. Liberalization changes in the institution would increase the ability of the opposition parties to affect the legislative activities and output.

Chamber Floor Activity

The partisan context has an influence on floor activity levels (Baumgartner 1987; Racz 1989; Damgaard 1992; Olson and Norton 1996; Rommetvedt 1996). In general, legislatures in authoritarian, one-party dominant systems score lower on floor activity measures than the legislatures in more competitive systems (Blondel 1973). The ruling party restricts active participation on the floor so it can better control the policy process. An inactive legislative floor is a consequence of a weak legislature and/or the lack of true political competition. Therefore, change from a one-party dominant system to a more competitive one increases the level of legislative activity (O’Brien 1990b; Baaklini 1992).

The political conflict model focuses on what happens when the political context changes as conflict rises and the opposition grows larger. The strengthened opposition is
expected to increase its own partisan activities on the floor, both in an effort to challenge the government agenda and to draw public attention to their concerns. With their floor activities, the opposition members can gain important public exposure for their party. The floor meetings are open to the public and can attract media attention; what happens on the floor happens in public (Von Sauer 1974; Mezey 1993). The opposition can use different strategies to oppose the government on the floor, including extended speeches, debate, and critical questions to the government as well as the introduction of partisan legislation and amendments. In turn, the partisan activity of the opposition is expected to affect the overall levels of floor activity (Weinbaum 1975; Chi-Hung 1976; DiPalma 1976; Hamm, Harmel, and Thompson 1983; Opello 1986; Racz 1989; Baaklini 1992).

**Proposition 6.1:** Chamber floor activity increases as the size of opposition increases.

There are several different ways that this broad, general expectation can be conceptualized. First, the average number and duration of floor meetings per yearly legislative session indicate the amount of time the legislature is in session, which can really affect how the majority party controls the minority opposition and the role of the legislature in the political system (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1976, 1986). If the legislature meets for only a very short period of time during the year, then the opportunities for floor activity by the opposition are limited (Blondel 1973; O'Brien 1990b). When the opposition members increase in size and power, they would be expected to demand more and longer floor meetings (*Cronica Legislativa* 1993b).

Second, from the political conflict model, the opposition parties are expected to increase the activity of their own legislative agenda, including the introduction of more
bills. The opposition parties would try to influence the Chamber activities by turning attention toward their own policy concerns. Thus, there would be more opposition-sponsored bills introduced into the Chamber after the increase in opposition representation.

Third, the rate of successful passage for the executive’s bills captures how often the legislature is a check against the executive’s policy agenda. In the literature, there are mixed findings for the changes in power of the majority party and the executive’s success rate. On one hand, the shrinking size of the government party is expected to increase the opposition’s ability to counter the executive’s policy on the Chamber floor, causing a decreasing floor success rate for the government party’s bills (Rommetvedt 1996). By contrast, Clemons (1987) states that with the declining power of the governing Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, there was an increasing success rate for government legislation on the floor because compromises with the opposition had already been reached before the bill was sent to the legislature.

From the political conflict model, the increasing power of the opposition can affect different measures of opposition activity and institutional reform. However, unless the opposition parties become a majority, they do not control enough votes to ultimately push their bills through the Chamber or stop most of the executive’s bills. While the government is interested in drawing the opposition into the legislature, the majority party still wants to maintain its ultimate control over the policy process within the Chamber and prevent the opposition from inflicting any serious damage on the executive’s ability to govern. Thus, the executive’s bill success rate would be an important factor for the
majority party to keep constant. The executive's bills are still not expected to experience much decline in success rate until the government party loses its majority representation.

Together, these expectations are:

**Proposition 6.1a:** The number of floor meetings per year increases with the increase in opposition representation.

**6.1b:** The average length of floor meetings increases with the increase in opposition representation.

**6.1c:** The number of bills introduced into the Chamber increases with the increase in opposition representation, due largely to more opposition party-sponsored bills.

**6.1d:** The executive's success rate for bill approval in the Chamber is not expected to decrease until after the opposition representation reaches a majority in the legislature.

In sum, the Chamber's floor activity is expected to increase after the increase in opposition representation because of their heightened activities. The opposition parties are expected to increase their own floor activities and thus affect the overall Chamber activity. However, the opposition parties are not expected to significantly affect the success rate of the executive's bills.

**Committee System Activity**

As with the Chamber floor activities, the committee system is also expected to increase in activity level after the increase in political conflict and opposition representation (Jewell and Miller 1988; Racz 1989; O'Brien 1990b; Baaklini 1992; Olson and Norton 1996; Olson et al 1996; Simon and Olson 1996). From the political conflict model, the committee system activity is expected to increase because of the increase in opposition representation. The committee system is an important legislative arena for political conflict because members and leaders of different parties are able to interact on policy-specific issues; committees can become the arenas where parties negotiate with
one another. Thus, the opposition members are expected to take a more active role in committee in order to challenge the majority party agenda. The motivations for increased committee system activity by the opposition parties are the same as for the floor activities. If the opposition members can affect the committee activities, then they can affect the legislative process.

**Proposition 6.2:** Committee activities increase with the increase in opposition representation.

As with the floor activity, there are several ways to conceptualize committee system activity, including frequency of committee meetings, participation within committees, committee workload, committee time spent studying legislation, and committee influence over bills (Rosenthal 1974; Kim 1975; Baerwald 1979; Walkland 1979; Hamm and Moncrief 1982; Ray 1986; Racz 1987; Jewell and Miller 1988; Olson and Norton 1996). For example, there would be partisan differences in the rate and timing that bills are discharged from committee. The majority party can try to prevent action or public attention on the opposition’s legislative agenda by having opposition bills stalled or killed in the committee system. At the same time, the opposition parties would be pushing to increase the rate of discharge of their bills from committee and prevent them from being buried in committee. Thus, the time bills spend in committee and the rate of discharge from the committee back to the Chamber floor can be compared for variation in the way that different parties’ bills are treated.

As the opposition representation increases, the majority party is expected to be especially careful of the discharge rates of opposition party bills from committee. If the opposition bills are “stuck” in committee or at least to take a longer time in committee.
then their partisan agenda is effectively shut down by the majority party. Thus, even though the committee system activities are expected to increase, the majority party is still expected to at least hold the line on minority bills within the committee system (similar to the executive bill success on the floor).

Proposition 6.2a: The majority party bills are expected to have a higher discharge rates from the committee system than opposition bills, even after the increase in opposition representation.

6.2b: The majority party bills are expected to spend less time in the committee system, even after the increase in opposition representation.

Therefore, both the Chamber floor and the committee system activities are in general expected to increase after the increase in opposition representation. Particular attention is focused on the activities of the opposition parties and their affect upon the general levels of Chamber activity. Now I turn to the Mexican Chamber and investigate how the floor and committee system activities were affected by the increase in opposition representation in the post-reform legislatures.

Data Sources and Findings

The data for floor and committee activities are coded from the daily record, the Diario de los Debates. Some of the legislative data are also provided by Laura Valencia Escamilla (1994) and Luisa Bejar Algazi (1995). In the later post-reform legislatures, the Information and Documentation Services (SIID) began to provide legislative activity data in more aggregated form. For example, summary information for the 1991 legislative bills are provided in the SIID packet, Proceso Legislativo: Iniciativas Presentadas en la LV Legislatura al Congreso de la Unión: 1991-1994. Finally, the Cronica Legislativa is
a Chamber magazine that includes articles about important legislation, information about Chamber activities, and interviews with or articles written by deputies. This important source became available in 1992.

Some types of data analysis for the Chamber floor are not possible because the information is not recorded or is not public. For example, several measures of committee activity are not recorded for most of this time series and most the committee proceedings are kept secret. The following analysis of the floor and committee system activity is based upon the available information. In addition, information for the 1994-1997 legislative activities was not available for the current analysis.

**Floor Activity in the Mexican Chamber**

In general, the floor activity levels of the Mexican Chamber are expected to be lower in the pre-reform legislatures than in the post-reform legislatures because of increased opposition representation and activity. There is evidence of the low levels of floor activity in the pre-reform legislatures. As discussed in chapter 2, participation on the floor of the Mexican Chamber during the pre-reform legislatures was tightly constrained by the majority party leader. One deputy stated that “only on rare occasions did deputies speak without the majority leader’s approval, and those who did suffered for it. The deputy who did so was put ‘on ice’ for over a year,” (De la Garza 1972:164). Even majority party deputies were constrained in their ability to participate on the floor in order to prevent the appearance of party division.

The only ‘true’ opposition party in the pre-reform legislatures, PAN, tried to use the Chamber floor to increase its level of national exposure and political communication
with the Mexican people through the public debate (von Sauer, 1974). "The PAN deputies are certain their proposals will be ignored, but they know there is a testimonial of their views [through their statements on the floor] and they hope the press will report this," (de la Garza 1972:121). Also, when government secretaries appeared in the Chamber, PAN deputies complained that the strict floor rules (written and unwritten) prevented genuine questioning of the government representatives. Thus, the opposition parties valued floor participation, but were generally unable to utilize that legislative arena in the pre-reform legislature.

The amount of bill activity also reflected the deputies' power asymmetry with the executive and relative inactivity on the Chamber floor in the pre-reform legislatures. While the deputies could initiate, amend, and defeat bills, they seldom did. In a sample of legislation from 1940-1970, not one executive bill was defeated, even though the Chamber "filed" or tabled several of them. Deputy-initiated bills actually declined from the 1940s to 1970, which was attributed to the increased PRI hegemonic control (De la Garza 1972). The executive was the active lawmaker and dominated this stage of policymaking. Basically, the Mexican legislature was not the important arena for policymaking. Its members were tightly constrained by the hegemonic majority party, which controlled such a predominant number of seats that the government could push through its bills without any problems (de la Garza 1972; Portes 1977; Camp 1995).

After the increase in opposition representation in the post-reform legislatures, the opposition parties were very concerned with any restrictions or constraints on their use of the floor for partisan activities. There were many attempts by the opposition parties in the early post-reform legislatures to reform the procedural rules concerning their activity
on the floor. From Chapter 3, several opposition reform attempts were intended to increase their floor participation. When the opposition members increased in size and power, they demanded more and longer floor meetings (Cronica Legislativa 1993b). Indeed, there were several failed opposition reform attempts in the early post-reform legislatures that addressed the number of days and hours for the floor meetings (Chapter 3). These were failed reform attempts because the legislative calendar was still monopolized by the ruling majority party. The opposition could not easily force PRI to convene additional floor meetings, especially during the earlier post-reform legislatures. To substantially increase the number of floor meetings per year would require a formal institutional reform in the legislative schedule.

Opposition members argued that all parties should be allowed to participate in the floor debate without limitations. The floor rules made it difficult for opposition party members to challenge PRI. The opposition parties were trying to increase their ability to use the floor as a public platform against the government. For example, the opposition parties wanted to increase their opportunities to address and challenge government officials who came before the Chamber floor to present or defend the government’s policies. Opposition members also tried to change the rules for political protest by legislators. They wanted to prevent PRI from blocking their protest activities during the legislative session. The opposition was at a disadvantage because they could not easily use some of their more obstructive strategies against the majority. The opposition also pushed for changes in the floor session schedules and targeted the biased actions of the floor leadership (president, vice-presidents, and secretaries). The opposition was trying to reduce the political bias in the manner that the Chamber leadership conducted the
Chamber business on the floor. The opposition wanted all bills to pass through the same legislative process, independent of their partisan source. The opposition was searching for ways to prevent their bills from being treated unfairly by PRI.

Thus, the floor activity was an important issue of contention between the majority and opposition parties in the post-reform legislatures. How successful were the opposition parties in increasing their floor activities and thus increasing the Chamber's activities? The measures of Chamber floor activities investigated in this research include the number/length of floor meetings per yearly legislative session and the number of bills introduced into the Chamber. From Propositions 6.1a-c, the number of floor meetings per year, their length, and the number of bills introduced are all expected to increase after the increase in opposition representation in the post-reform legislatures.

Table 6.1 presents the floor meeting data for the Chamber. The first column gives the number of floor meetings in each yearly legislative session. In 1989, the number of legislative sessions per year increased from one (September to December) to two (November-December and April-July) because of a formal change in the session schedule (Cronica Legislativa 1993b). Thereafter, the number of floor meetings is given for each of the two sessions during the yearly cycle. The second column of Table 6.1 presents the average length (in minutes) of the regular floor meetings per year. The pre-reform legislative sessions are shaded for easier comparison and the average measure for each legislative term is given.
Table 6.1
Floor Meeting Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leg. Session</th>
<th># of Meetings</th>
<th>Avg. Duration, in Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>avg: 42</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>avg: 45</td>
<td>190 avg: 194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>avg: 51</td>
<td>208 avg: 225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>avg: 45</td>
<td>334 avg: 303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>avg: 44</td>
<td>338 avg: 355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>avg: 45</td>
<td>434 avg: 450</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>23, 29</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>avg: 44</td>
<td>408 avg: 451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
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<td>478</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>27, 39</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>avg: 58</td>
<td>350 avg: 433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Diario de los Debates*

From Table 6.1, the average number of floor meetings per year was 46 in the pre-reform legislative sessions. In the early post-reform legislatures (1979, 1982, 1985), the average number of floor meetings was 45 per yearly session. There was basically no change in the number of floor meetings with the 1979 reform. In the later post-reform years, the average number of floor meetings increased to 52, with the 1991 legislature having the highest average of almost 60 floor meetings per year. With the constitutional reform of Articles 65 and 66, the total amount of time that the Chamber is active per year increased from 4 to 5 months per year. Naturally, the number of floor meetings increased because of the additional month in the legislative session. This finding supports the hypothesis in Proposition 6.1a that the number of floor meetings per year is expected to increase after the increase in opposition representation. Opposition party members
pushed for these longer yearly sessions, stating that longer sessions allowed more time for their floor activities (*Cronica Legislativa* 1993b).

The average duration or length of these floor meetings (in minutes) is presented in the second column of Table 6.1. Before 1979, the floor meetings averaged around 191 minutes, or 3 hours and 18 minutes. The average duration of floor meetings increased to 399 minutes or just over 6 and a half hours after 1979. The pattern of change for this measure differs from the change in the number of floor meetings. It immediately increased in 1979 from 225 average minutes per meeting in 1976 to 303 average minutes in the 1979 legislature. The duration of floor meetings continued to grow over time, with a slight decrease in the 1991 legislature.

As expected from Proposition 6.1b, the floor meetings became longer after the increase in opposition representation. Unlike the difficulty of changing the legislative cycle through a constitutional reform to increase the number of meetings, the duration of the floor meetings could be more easily changed by the opposition parties increasing the amount and time of their own floor participation. Was this increase in floor meeting length due to the partisan activities of the opposition? Several descriptive statements suggest that the opposition parties in Mexico increased their participation in floor debate in the post-reform legislatures.

"The expanded presence of opposition after 1979 renewed the legislature's political importance and created a new forum for opposition party activity... Expanded representation in the Chamber of Deputies permitted opposition parties to play a more active role in congressional activities. Opposition party deputies introduced new ideas and altered the character of debate in the Chamber," (Middlebrook 1985:26).

"Representatives of the opposition parties participate in the debate and criticize the government position where it seems appropriate; ...during

One deputy from the PMT stated that in the early post-reform legislatures, his party was small (only 6 seats) but they made the most of their floor participation. "While we may represent less than 2 percent of the total number of deputies, we enjoy first place in attendance, way over the PRI. We are the third most important party on the basis of statements made before the entire Chamber. In other words, with only six deputies, we participation almost at the same level as the PRI," (Gil 1992:260).

For the 1991-1993 legislature, the *Cronica Legislativa* magazine reported summary statistics for the Chamber activities. This information includes the number of times that each party’s members addressed the floor of the Chamber. While this data does not allow for a longitudinal comparison, it does give an empirical sense of the amount of participation in a more current legislature (*Cronica Legislativa* 1994c).

During the three years of the 1991-1993 legislature, all deputies participated 6,175 times on the Chamber floor. PRI members participated 1,830 times (30% of the total) and the opposition party members participated 4,345 times (or 70% of the total participation). From this measure of participation, the opposition parties dominated the floor sessions with the amount of time they spent at the podium.

That aggregate measure of floor participation can also be divided by the party delegation size to gain an average amount of participation per person within each party. This measure allows for a comparison of each party’s floor activity in relation to its size. As stated above by the PMT deputy, smaller parties may be participating at much higher rates than larger parties, in their attempt to increase their floor presence and significance.
PRI members participated an average of 6 times each during the 1991 legislature. By contrast, opposition party members participated an average of 24 times each on the floor. The total participation for the opposition of 4,345 times is even more impressive given their smaller numbers. From both the observations, statements, and data for the 1991 legislature, the floor participation of the opposition increased over the pre-reform level. Therefore, the increase in floor meeting length was probably due to the opposition's increased participation.

Proposition 6.1c provides another aspect of the partisan nature of the increased activity and time spent in the floor meetings. The average duration of floor meetings would certainly increase if there were more bills to be discussed and voted upon on the floor. And, if most of this increase was of opposition bills (Proposition 6.1c), then the increase in floor meeting time would again be a consequence of the opposition parties' actions.

Table 6.2 presents total number and percent of bills introduced into the Chamber by either the executive or deputies (not senators or the state legislatures) for the 1970 to the 1991 legislatures. The executive is considered the major actor in the legislative process and therefore the first analysis of bill introduction compares the executive's sponsorship of bills versus the Chamber. The last column provides the total number of bills introduced by the executive or deputies during each legislative term.
Table 6.2  
Number and Percent of Bills Introduced in the Chamber

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Deputies</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>-158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>-128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>-291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>-129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates*, Valencia Escamilla (1994); Bejar Algazi (1995); SIID (1994); Arredondo (1982)

From the last column of Table 6.2, the total number of bills increased in the post-reform legislatures. The average number of bills was 127 per legislature before 1979 and 290 bills per legislature after 1979. This increase was largely due to the rapid rise of bills introduced during the early post-reform legislatures. There was a break in this trend, however, in 1988. There was a decrease in the total number of bills introduced from 423 bills in the 1985 legislature to 240 bills in the 1988 legislature. In the 1991 legislature, there was an increase of only 21 total bills. So, the number of bills increased rapidly in the early post-reform legislature, then tapered off in the later post-reform legislatures.

More important, the percentage of executive-sponsored bills actually declined in the post-reform legislature, from an average of 76% to 40% of total bills before and after 1979. Of course, the percentage of deputy-sponsored bills experienced an increase from 24% to 60% of total bills before and after 1979. This finding provides solid evidence that the deputies became more active in introducing bills into the legislative process in the post-reform legislatures. Even when the overall number of bills decreased in 1988, there was still a greater percentage of bills introduced by the deputies rather than the executive.
- 71% of the total legislation in 1988. The percentage of bills introduced by deputies was higher than the president’s percentage in every post-reform legislature except for 1991, when the president had a slight majority (51%).

A key aspect of Proposition 6.1c is not just what happens to the aggregate number of bills, but rather in the partisan nature of any changes in legislative activity. Proposition 6.1c states that any increase in legislation is expected to be largely attributed to the opposition parties. To fully test Proposition 6.1c, it is necessary to further divide the data on deputy-sponsored bills into its partisan components. Table 6.3 presents the number and percent of deputy-sponsored bills by PRI and opposition members. In this way, the findings will allow a more direct test of the opposition’s responsibility for the changes in total legislation introduced in the Chamber.

**Table 6.3**

**Bill Introduction, Legislative PRI versus Opposition Parties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>PRI</th>
<th>OPPosition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates*, Valencia Escamilla (1994); Bejar Algazi (1995); SIID (1994); Arredondo (1982)

From Table 6.3, PRI deputies presented a majority (51%) of the deputy-sponsored bills in only the 1976 legislature. In all the other legislatures, PRI deputies introduced a minority of bills. In fact, the percent of PRI bills decreased in the post-reform years from

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42 The 1985 legislature had the highest number of bills introduced into the Chamber, with 423 bills. This legislative outlier will be examined in more detail later in the chapter.
43% before 1979 to 24% after 1979, reaching a low in 1988 of only 10% of deputy-sponsored bills.

In contrast, whether they are ultimately successful or not, the opposition can draw some attention to their concerns by introducing legislation from their partisan agenda (Von Sauer 1974). From Table 6.3, the opposition parties introduced the majority of deputy-sponsored bills with the exception of the 1976 legislature. In the post-reform legislatures, the opposition parties increased their level of legislative activity and were even more active than the PRI deputies. For example, in the 1985 legislature, there was the largest number of opposition bills introduced, which corresponds to the legislature with the longest average floor meetings. The opposition parties introduced more bills than the executive in the 1979, 1985, and 1988 legislatures.

If the opposition parties introduced a great many more bills in the post-reform legislature, were they any more successful in passing their legislation? Table 6.4 presents the number and percent of opposition bills that were approved by the Chamber.

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43 Between the opposition groups, the PAN had the largest percentage of deputy-sponsored bills introduced in 7 out of the 10 legislatures in this time series. In the 1976 legislature, the satellite parties had a higher percent of bills; in the 1982 and 1991 legislatures, the left opposition parties introduced more bills. In general, the opposition parties had this overall ranking of activity in the post-reform years: PAN with 35%, left opposition with 25% and the satellite parties with 19% of deputy-sponsored bills.

44 President de la Madrid (1982-1988) had introduced many significant economic and political reforms with his 'National Renovation' program because of the spiraling economic and political crisis, which led the opposition parties in the 1985 legislature to react with their own legislation. Many of their objections centered on the inconsistencies between the ideals of economic adjustment policies and the reality of the programs that were implemented. In addition, the opposition parties were pushing the government to address problems of particular concern to their constituents (Valencia Escamilla 1994).
Table 6.4
Approval Rates for Opposition Bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th># Approved</th>
<th>% Opposition Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *Diario de los Debates*: Valencia Escamilla (1994); Béjar Algazi (1995); SIID (1994); Arredondo (1982)

Table 6.4 shows that only a small percentage of opposition bills have ever been successfully passed in the Chamber. In the three pre-reform legislatures, the average percentage of opposition bills passed was 8%. In the post-reform legislatures, the average increased slightly to 11% of opposition bills that were approved. Thus, when the opposition parties increased their representation in the post-reform legislatures, their success in passing legislation did not greatly increase. Until the opposition parties has a majority of seats in the Chamber, their ability to pass legislation is not expected to really improve dramatically.

By contrast, the executive’s success rate for the post-reform legislatures was extremely high during the post-reform legislatures: 97% for the 1982 legislature; 98% for the 1985 legislature; 96% for the 1988 legislature; and 97% for the 1991 legislature (Valencia Escamilla 1994; SIID 1994). Thus, the increase in opposition representation and political conflict within the legislature did not decrease the executive’s ability to pass his legislation in the Chamber. This evidence supports Proposition 6.1d; the executive remained in ultimate control over his legislative agenda in the post-reform legislatures when the opposition representation increased. This finding is not surprising given the
continued majority of PRI within the Chamber and the strict party discipline in floor votes.

From the evidence presented thus far, there were a number of important changes in the post-reform Chamber. The percent of bills introduced by deputies greatly increased after 1979 and most of this increase was due to more opposition legislation. The opposition parties used this avenue of legislative participation in their conflict with the government. However, the opposition parties had a very small increase in the number of bills successfully passed on the floor, from 8% to 11% in the post-reform legislatures. In contrast, the executive had almost 100% of his bills successfully passed by the Chamber in the post-reform legislatures. Therefore, while the opposition activities increased, they were unable to really affect the president’s own legislative agenda either by voting down his bills or pushing through their own.

Another way that the Chamber deputies could influence the legislative process and perhaps the executive’s agenda is through the committee system. In the next section, several measures of committee system activity are examined.

**Committee Activity in the Mexican Chamber**

The committee system in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies from 1940 to 1979 had stagnated under a stable, hegemonic political setting where the PRI party leadership had direct control over the legislative institution and agenda. “If the same cohesive party maintains a dominant position in national politics persistently over time then the committees may become exceptionally weak. A possible explanation of this is that governing parties (e.g. in India and Japan) which have no expectation of becoming
opposition parties are less sensitive to the 'rights' of committee minorities than parties which expect to become minorities themselves from time to time,” (Shaw 1979:396). In general, committee work was perceived as meaningless except for allowing the opposition to harmlessly blow off steam because the final policy decisions had already been made by the majority party leadership.

As stated in Chapter 2, the majority party tightly controlled the committee system in the pre-reform Mexican Chamber and the opposition members were generally not allowed much voice or influence. The PRI leadership effectively controlled its own members and the opposition within the committee system. In particular, the executive held tight control over the committee system. In the words of a former opposition deputy:

"The interjection of the executive office is permanent because it writes the bill, sends it to the legislature, supervises the legislators [in committee] who report on it, and, in some cases, may even write the report itself. When no one is available to do the appropriate job, the reports may come from the cabinet offices themselves. In other words, when a bill goes to a committee that does not have a priista [PRI member] with sufficient ability to write a proper report, a fully written report will be issued,” (Gil 1992:232).

De la Garza (1972) finds evidence that only a small minority of bills were ever amended in committee. With data from five selected legislative terms, an average of only 7% of all bills were amended in committee. The opposition deputies argued that even those few committee amendments were only stylistic changes.

For this study of the committee system activity in the post-reform legislatures, many types of committee-specific activity data are not available. However, there is a set of data that captures certain aspects of the committee system activity. For each bill, the daily record provides the dates of bill introduction, the committee or committees that it
was assigned, and the dates of first and second reading. From this data, there are several measures concerning the committee system activity that can be collected, including the partisan differences in bills which make it out of committee, their average time in committee, and which committees are busy with legislative workload. For this analysis, the 1976-1979 and the 1991-1994 legislatures are taken as samples for comparison of the pre- and post-reform years.

Propositions 6.2a and 6.2b state that majority party bills are expected to have higher discharge rates from and spend less time in the committee system than opposition bills, even after the increase in opposition representation. The Chamber rules stated that committees had only 5 days to send the committee report back to the floor. The committees usually took much longer than the prescribed 5 days and there were no discharge procedures to force bills out of committee, which became an issue of contention for the opposition parties (Chapter 3). The opposition parties failed to create a mechanism to prevent PRI from burying or killing their bills in committee. This way, the majority party would ensure that the opposition’s legislative agenda could be blocked in the committee system. Even with an increase in other types of committee activities, the majority party could still use the committee system to obstruct the opposition bills.

Table 6.5 presents the number and percent of bills discharged from committee during the three years of the 1976 and 1991 legislative terms. While the bills that were not discharged might have eventually made it out of committee in a subsequent legislature, this comparison uses only those bills that entered and exited the committee stage at some point during the three years of the 1976 and 1991 legislatures. This
measure allows for comparison between parties who were more or less successful in maneuvering their bills through the committee stage of the legislative process.

Table 6.5
Committee Discharge Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill Sponsor</th>
<th>Number and Percent of Bills Discharged from Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>82  85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>6  32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>1  9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Opp</td>
<td>2  29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Opp</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Bills</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The "other" category is comprised of those bills sponsored by more than one party.

From Table 6.5, 75% of all bills were discharged out of the committee stage during the 1976 legislative term. This measure decreased slightly to 61% in the 1991 legislature. Thus, 25% to 39% of bills were stalled out in the committee system in both legislatures. Given the secrecy concerning the committee meetings and proceedings, it is not possible to determine what was happening (or not) to these bills and why. One possible clue might come from the partisan differences in bills that were not discharged from the committee.

The executive’s bills had by far the most success in being discharged from committee in both the 1976 and 1991 legislatures. In fact, the executive’s bills experienced an increase in discharge rate, from 85% of his bills in the 1976 legislature to 97% during the 1991 legislature. The committee system did not put major obstacles in the way of the executive’s legislation.

The PRI deputies and the satellite parties, while having a much lower discharge rate than the executive, had an increase in their discharge rate in 1991. The PRI discharge rate had a slight increase from 32% to 35% and the satellite parties’ rate
increased from 9% to 24%. The less threatening legislative parties to the government were therefore able to have higher committee discharge rates than the left and right opposition.

From the evidence presented thus far, Proposition 6.2a is supported. There was a substantial difference between the executive-sponsored bills and the opposition bills in their discharge rate from the committee system. Again, it is not possible to determine what happened in committee to these bills, but there was a partisan difference in whether they even came out of committee. The committee system was more of a difficult obstacle for the bills introduced by the right and left opposition parties. PRI could still use its committee system majority to prevent opposition legislation from reaching the Chamber floor.

PAN experienced a decrease in the percent of its bills that were discharged from the committee system, from 29% in 1976 to 14% in the 1991 legislature. The left opposition parties were not present during the 1976 legislature, but 92% of their bills were stalled out in committee during the 1991 legislature. The left opposition parties had the lowest discharge rate among all the partisan groups.

Finally, the "other" category includes those bills presented by different parties working together. This category of bill sponsorship had the highest committee discharge rate among the deputies (second to the executive bills in 1991). While they were few in number (6), these bills automatically a better chance of widespread support in the committee system because they had multiparty sponsorship.45

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45 For example, all but two of the 'other' bills were electoral system/procedural changes. In addition, one bill was for criminal justice reforms in the Federal District and another was for human assistance that would reduce regional disequilibrium, raise quality of urban and rural life, and environmental conservation.
The data presented so far indicate what percentage of bills made it out of committee within the three years of the 1976 and 1991 legislatures. Proposition 6.2b states that even after the increase in opposition representation, the majority party bills are expected to spend less time in the committee system. Table 6.6 provides data on how long these bills actually spent in the committee system. This measure is coded from the dates given for the introduction of a bill and for its first reading on the floor after it comes out of the committee stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>11 (N=82)</td>
<td>20 (N=128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>69 (N=6)</td>
<td>52 (N=13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satellite</td>
<td>11 (N=1)</td>
<td>73 (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Opp</td>
<td>47 (N=2)</td>
<td>235 (N=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Opp</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8 (N=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13 (N=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All bills</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Diario de los Debates: SIIID (1994)*

Note: The "other" category is comprised of those bills sponsored by more than one group of parties - all deputies, or Left and Right opposition together, etc.

From Table 6.6, the average time bills spent in committee increased from 17 days in the 1976 legislature to 29 days in the 1991 legislature. While we cannot be certain of what the committee was doing during this time, the increase in time in the committee stage suggests that committees were more active in the post-reform legislature. It should also be noted that most bills did meet the rule for only 5 days in committee.

The executive’s bills spent the least amount of time (11 days) in committee within the 1976 legislature. This measure increased to 20 days in the 1991 legislature. The PRI deputies’ bills actually decreased in average time spent in committee from 69 to 52 days. The satellite parties’ one bill that was discharged in 1976 took 11 days in committee. For the 1991 legislature, the satellite parties’ 4 bills took an average of 73 days. So, the
executive’s and the satellite parties’ bills slowed down but the PRI deputies’ bills speeded up in the committee system.

PAN’s bills spent an average of 47 days in the committee system during the 1976 legislature. This average increased to 235 days in committee for the 1991 legislature. The 1991 average was computed using only the 4 bills that exited the committee system during that legislative term. These four bills spent 1 day, 7 days, 6 days, and 928 days respectively in the committee system. The last bill definitely skews the average time for PAN’s bills. If that bill is excluded, PAN’s bills actually decreased in committee time from 47 days in the 1976 legislature to around 5 days in the 1991 legislature. Nevertheless, most of PAN’s bills did not make it out of the committee system.

The left opposition parties were not present during the 1976 legislature. Yet in the 1991 legislature, the left opposition had the fewest bills actually discharged from the committee system (6% or 3 bills). Those bills discharged made it through the committee system rather quickly. They had the lowest average time spent in committee system, with only 8 days.

The average turnover time for opposition bills uses a very small number of bills that actually made it out of committee. As most bills were buried or killed in committee, this average is not very representative of the opposition’s legislative success. By contrast, the bills introduced by the “Other” category had a very quick process through the committee system during the 1991 legislature, even faster than the executive’s bills. By themselves, the different partisan groups had a very difficult time pushing their bills through the committee system. However, working together to introduce legislation
allowed for greater success in committee discharge rate and time through the committee system (see footnote 45).

Finally, the legislative data also provide information concerning the relative committee workload between the 1976 and the 1991 committee system. Only 21 committees were assigned bills in the 1976 legislature. This finding means that only 51% of all the committees (21 out of 41) in the 1976 committee system had any legislative workload. Therefore, the committee system was not being fully utilized for legislative business in the 1976 legislature. In the 1991 legislature, 86% (32 of 37) of committees had at least one bill assigned to them, suggesting an increase in the spread of workload within the committee system in the post-reform Chamber. More committees were active and more involved in processing legislation in the post-reform legislature.

At the same time, PRI was still able to control the more important bills in the committee system by funneling them through a few committees with high PRI over-representation. In the 1976 legislature, 40% of all the bills were sent to the two important financial committees - the Finance and the Budget Committees. The PRI members held 91% of the seats on the Finance committee and all 100% of the seats on the Budget Committee. Thus, a very large percent of the bills were sent to committees that were heavily dominated by the majority party. In 1991, the Finance, Budget, and Govt/Constitution committees handled around 41% of the bills. The PRI deputies were also heavily over-represented (over 10%) on these three committees. For both legislatures, around 40% of the committee workload was processed by a few important committees with heavy over-representation of the majority party.
Therefore, in the post-reform legislature, the executive and PRI bills increased in discharge rates, with the executive bills moving slower and the PRI bills moving faster through the committee stage. Fewer opposition bills actually made it out of the committee system in the post-reform legislature. The opposition parties had a much more difficult time in pushing their legislation through the committee process. The majority party was able to easily stall the opposition’s bills in the committee system, especially because of their over-representation within the committee system in general and key important committees in particular. Finally, more committees were involved in processing legislation in the 1991 legislature.

There have been several deputy surveys concerning the committee system activities in the later post-reform legislatures. The various statements suggest that while the committee system activity has greatly increased because of the increased plurality in the Chamber membership, there are still numerous problem areas that need to be addressed in order to have a more fully powerful and influential committee system. One recent study argues that there is a direct influence of the power of the opposition parties, committee leaders’ personal power and style, and the committee’s jurisdiction on the enhanced activity and influence of the committees (Cronica Legislativa 1992d). Common opposition complaints included insufficient time and specialist support staff/resources for the committees and that that the committees were not autonomous enough from the majority/executive control in order to adequately investigate and make many real modifications to bills. They thought that these restraints (among others) impeded serious work and study of legislation. Many deputies also complained that the
committee meetings were not regular/frequent enough nor was attendance very high.\textsuperscript{46} When asked if the committee activities/work should be improved, 78% of the respondents answered in the affirmative\textit{(Cronica Legislativa 1992e,f)}. While the committee system had made some progress in activity, it still had a long path towards full liberalization.

\textbf{Conclusion}

From the data presented in this chapter, the Chamber became more active in the post-reform legislatures. There were more and longer floor meetings where more bills were introduced by deputys than the executive (except for the 1991 legislature). In fact, the opposition parties accounted for a solid majority of these deputy-sponsored bills, outnumbering even the executive in three of the five post-reform legislatures. However, the opposition parties had a very small increase in the average successful passage of their bills on the floor. While they were introducing most of the bills in many legislatures, the opposition’s bills were being killed or tabled in the committee system. In contrast, the executive had almost 100\% of his bills successfully passed by the Chamber in the post-reform legislatures. Therefore, while the opposition activities increased, they were unable to really affect the president’s own legislative agenda by voting down his bills or push their own bills through the legislative process.

For the committee system in the 1991 legislature, there were generally more bills stalled out in the committee stage than in the 1976 legislature. While more of the executive’s bills were discharged from the committee system (97\%) in the 1991

\textsuperscript{46} Israel Gonzalez Arreguin (PFCRN), President of the Fisheries Committee, stated that if a member of his committee missed more than 5 meetings, they were kicked off the committee \textit{(Cronica Legislativa 1992e)}.\n
legislature, they took longer in committee than in 1976. The very few opposition bills that actually made it out of the committee system went through the system relatively quickly (if the one PAN outlier of 928 days is set aside). Finally, almost all the committees had legislative workload in 1991, but the bulk of the committee workload was still concentrated among a few important committees with high PRI over-representation.

From the political conflict model, the increasing power of the opposition can affect different measures of opposition activity and institutional reform in the post-reform legislature. The measures of floor and committee activity data presented in this chapter are evidence of higher activity levels for the strengthened opposition parties in the post-reform Chamber. However, because the opposition parties were still a minority, PRI deputies ultimately controlled the legislative process. While the opposition parties could make institutional changes and increase their own legislative activities, it was not enough to make their own legislative output very successful or make the executive’s legislative output less successful. Only a final push in partisan power of the opposition in the Chamber over 50% of the seats would create the partisan conditions for a significant change in the legislative output of the Chamber in Mexico.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

In the latest collection of work on comparative legislatures in Latin America, the internal dynamics of legislative politics and institutional organization are not the primary focus (Close 1995). Instead, it is the role of the legislative institution as an actor in the dynamics of regime change and democratic consolidation; legislatures offer a valuable perspective on the changing political system as a whole. First, legislative composition indicates whether some interests are under or over-represented, thus commenting on the quality of the new democracy. Second, legislative power vis-à-vis the executive demonstrates how well those in power are held accountable or how well that power is balanced within the system. Finally, the legislature is an arena to gauge political conflict or cooperation in the new democracy because this is where most of the direct partisan interaction takes place. As a consequence of democratic transition and consolidation, legislatures have become more significant actors in many of the Latin American countries. Legislatures (or special constitutional assemblies) are the arena for creating the new rules and institutions during the transition to a new democratic regime; they become the arenas for political bargaining over the rules.

The study of internal legislative institutional change is also important for the transition and consolidation of democracy. At its core, regime transition is about how shifts in power among political actors leads to a change in rules and structure. Thus, the next step in the study of Latin American legislatures is to connect the external dynamics of political change to the internal dynamics of legislative politics and institutional
change. In this way, the legislative process is a mirror of the more macro-level changes in political power among groups and their fight over creating new rules for the system.

This research project has been a first step toward linking political change to legislative institutional change. In this research, I have used a theoretical approach that connects the actors' shifts in power to the institutional changes in rules and structures. The political conflict model starts from the assumption that institutions are the target of political conflict because they advantage some groups of actors over others (Knight 1992). This model explores how changes in political power create the conditions for institutional change. Specifically, when a previously disadvantaged group's power begins to rise, their basic goal is to reduce their institutional disadvantage. Institutional change becomes the product of the opposition struggles to change the institution and the ruling group's struggles to prevent those changes.

In a legislative setting, if the previously small, minority opposition party or parties experience an important growth in size and power, then the probability of institutional change increases. They would then have the ability and incentive to attempt changes in those aspects of the institution that restrict their legislative and political agenda. In turn, the majority party is expected to resist liberalization of the institution. The majority party is trying to maintain the basic status quo of their power in the institution. So, the legislative institution becomes caught in the strategic interaction of these different groups of actors.

In particular, an increase in opposition power over a threshold that prevents a 'supermajority' by the majority party is an important division for the study of legislative institutions. Without a 'supermajority', the majority party can no longer easily pass
constitutional amendments, override presidential vetoes, or make procedural changes.

With its newfound need to have cooperation and support from at least some aspects of the opposition, the majority party is less able to resist all liberalization attempts by the opposition. At some level, the majority must placate some opposition demands in exchange for legislative support. At the same time, the weakening majority party's most basic goal is to diffuse a potentially dangerous situation while at the same time remaining in effective control of the legislature. The majority party would allow some moderate institutional changes that would not seriously threaten its ultimate control over the legislative process.

This explanation of legislative changes focuses on how the institution is affected by the back and forth struggle between the ruling majority and the opposition. This type of explanation provides an important aspect to our understanding of institutional change, in addition to the specialization and efficiency explanations. Organization scholars have generally emphasized that legislatures change because their members are concerned about the efficiency/effectiveness of the organization. As with most types of organizations, legislative organizations must specialize in order to reduce pressures (internal or external) for enhanced performance. The political conflict model focuses directly on the external political changes and how they affect the legislative institution through the interaction between political actors in their quest for better distributional outcomes from the institution. Political change is used as the primary independent variable; it is the change in legislative party strength that puts pressure on the organization.
I have used this general theoretical framework to investigate legislative change in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. In general, institutional changes over the time series investigated in this research have been a direct response of the increasing strength of the opposition within the Chamber. At each of the critical junctures in opposition representation – 1979, 1988, and now 1997 - the increasing political conflict between the opposition and the governing majority had an important influence on the Chamber institution.

In the pre-reform legislatures from the 1930s to the late 1970s, this legislative institution was completely dominated (both formally and informally) by the ruling majority party. This political context of the legislative setting was fully consolidated and was very typical of legislatures in authoritarian settings. The opposition parties were very small and effectively isolated within this institution. The formal committee and floor leadership positions were weak because of the strength of the majority party leader, who controlled this legislature for the executive.

Then, an initial shift in political power between the opposition and the government began the process of liberalization in the Chamber. The initial point of political change for the Chamber was the 1979 legislative election. Political and economic stress had been building within the Mexican political system. To release or reduce this growing pressure for democratic change, electoral reforms were used to increase the opposition representation within the Chamber and thus placate the opposition who was calling for more drastic changes in the political system. Representation in the Chamber was used as a mechanism to lessen political tensions and therefore prevent more fundamental changes in the political system. At the same time, PRI could prevent
the opposition from really affecting the decision-making process because the legislative
arena was still a subordinate actor vis-à-vis the executive.

In anticipation of the political conflict being funneled into the Chamber and
disrupting the traditional patterns of PRI’s hegemonic control, the majority party pushed
through a major internal rules and structural reform just before the 1979 election. That
way they could change the institution before the entrance of large numbers of opposition
members. These new rules further restricted the political space and the opportunities for
opposition influence in the post-reform Chamber. For example, the powers of the Grand
Commission were formalized to continue PRI’s stranglehold over the institution through
their monopoly of this leadership group. The majority party concentrated more power
within the Grand Commission and prepared to use this group as a tool to maintain their
power. The total size of the committee system decreased because there were fewer and
smaller committees and the subcommittees were eliminated. Many eliminated
committees had specific interest by the opposition parties. Basically, the majority party
could see that its future monopoly control of the Chamber was threatened so it wrote its
control into the formal Chamber rules. These pre-emptive actions support the
expectation that the majority party would ‘tighten’ the institutional rules in order to
prevent as much opposition obstruction as possible in the post-reform legislatures.

*Early Post-Reform Legislatures (1979, 1982, 1985)*

The electoral reform of 1977 had the intended consequence of increasing the
opposition representation. In the early post-reform legislatures, the average opposition
representation was 26% of the Chamber seats. In conjunction with the economic, social,
and political crises during the 1980s, the political conflict between the opposition parties and the majority party also began to grow.

The opposition parties tried to become active and influential in the Chamber but were generally held in check by the majority party. There were many examples of unsuccessful reform attempts by the opposition to liberalize the procedural and structural rules. For example, the opposition tried to remove the constraints against their participation on the floor and committee system. Yet only one of thirty-eight rule reform attempts by the opposition was successful. They were simply unable to force many changes in the legislative institution during the early post-reform legislatures. The majority party flatly denied the formal institutional changes attempted by the opposition. While the opposition did indeed have the increased ability and incentives to challenge the institutional rules and structure, they did not have enough power (33% threshold) to make their reforms successful.

While the opposition parties could not force formal institutional changes in the Chamber during these legislative terms, they could create other changes in the legislative practice. For example, the opposition parties (especially the larger ones) were able to cover most of the committees with at least one member. The partisan distribution of committee membership was made somewhat more proportional to partisan strength but the majority party maintained its strong majority on all the committees and monopolized the committee leadership positions.

There was also evidence that the opposition parties increased their participation on the Chamber floor. The opposition parties greatly increased their introduction of legislation, a change that caused an increase in the total number of bills in the Chamber
and actually made the executive-sponsored bills a minority of the total legislation. With their larger number of bills and participation in the floor debate, the average length of floor meetings increased in comparison to the pre-reform legislatures.

The evidence suggests that the increase in opposition power over the pre-reform levels changed the nature of conflict and competition within the legislature. The opposition parties became more active participants in the legislature and were pushing against their institutional constraints, as expected from the political conflict model. However, almost all of their reform attempts were unsuccessful given the majority party’s continued large control over the membership. This situation was to change in the 1988 election.


Beginning with the watershed 1988 election, the majority party lost its ‘supermajority’ in the Chamber. In Mexico, this threshold is 2/3 of the legislature. In the three later post-reform legislatures, the average opposition representation was 41% of the Chamber seats. With their increased power and heightened threat to PRI control, opposition cooperation became an important goal for the majority party. It is common knowledge in Mexican politics during this era that a cooperative arrangement was created between the Salinas administration and PAN, the conservative opposition party given Salinas’ neoliberal economic reforms. As a result of this changed political context inside (and outside) the Chamber, the opposition parties would be expected to become more successful in making some changes to the legislative institution.
For example, there was a change in the legislative session schedule, increasing the number of floor meetings and the length of the yearly legislative sessions. The opposition parties pushed for this change because they wanted a longer legislative session to increase the legislative role in the political system. There was a new, plural leadership committee, the Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commission, which replaced the Grand Commission. This leadership committee was an important change because the opposition parties now had a voice during the important decisions made concerning the Chamber activities.

There was another major change in the Ley Organica, this time in a direction that was more advantageous for the opposition parties (in contrast to the 1979 reform). The leadership positions on the floor and committee system were made more plural. Therefore, the opposition parties were ensured of more representation in the hierarchy of the Chamber institution. More new committees were added to the committee structure during the later post-reform legislature, most of which addressed economic, social, and political development issues important to the opposition parties.

At the same time, PRI over-representation in the committee membership greatly increased in the later post-reform legislatures. While giving up some of the committee leadership positions (usually secretaries), the majority party maintained their control over the committees with their large membership over-representation, especially on the important committees. In addition, PRI members had higher re-election and committee return rates as well as higher levels of personal expertise on their committee assignments. These different factors favored PRI continued dominance within the committee system because of the informational advantages that they provide.
Finally, the opposition parties had the highest percent of bills in the 1988 legislature (70%) and the executive-sponsored bills held a bare majority (51%) in the 1991 legislature. However, while the opposition parties were introducing the most bills, their bills were still stalling out in the committee stage. The committee system during the later post-reform legislature was processing the executive’s bills more slowly, but did not become a significant obstacle to his initiatives. The executive had almost 100% of his bills successfully passed by the Chamber in the post-reform legislatures. For the opposition parties, very few bills actually made it out of the committee system.

With this empirical evidence, the majority party was allowing the opposition to have some symbolic advances within the Chamber while ultimately maintaining their control. There were some reforms that gave the opposition a few more opportunities to be active including the floor and committee leadership positions and the new Internal Rules and Political Coordination Commission. The Chamber had become more plural in some formal respects in order to respond to the opposition’s growing power. At the same time, PRI ensured that it maintained a very strong over-majority on the important committees (to which a bulk of the committee workload was concentrated) and that it prevented the opposition bills from seeing the light of day after they disappeared in committee.

These findings support the political conflict model that the increased power of the minority opposition past the 33% threshold would result in more moderate success for their reform attempts. And, the majority party would hold the ultimate control over the legislative institution. The Chamber had a different political environment during these later post-reform legislatures and this political change had an important influence on the
institution. Finally, with the 1997 legislative election, the Chamber experienced another
critical juncture in political representation as the opposition parties together held a
majority of the seats. Obviously this final raise in opposition power would be the most
significant for their fight to control the legislative institution.

Current Legislature

In July 1997, the opposition became a majority in the Chamber for the first time
in since the 1930s. The final election outcome was PRI with 239 seats and the four
opposition parties with 261 seats: PRI 125 seats, PAN 121 seats, Green 8 seats, and the
Workers’ Party 7 seats. In the wake of this election, the legislative institution has
become the center of political conflict in Mexico. The opposition parties worked together
to capture the institutional leadership. In fact, the floor and committee system structure,
membership, and leadership should become the center of political conflict in Mexico.

The new congressional leader of the PRD, Munoz Ledo, stated that the opposition
must “flex its political might” and institute basic reforms that will profoundly alter the
Chamber’s structure” (The News 8/27/97). The opposition parties formed an informal
pact and agreed that “the PRI will merely be one more party on the Chamber’s Internal
Rules and Agreements Committee; that the head of that committee and other key posts in
the Chamber’s internal operation and external representation can be opposition party
members; that their selection will be made with a consensus of all parties and based on
‘professional and technical ability’, rather than responding to the interests of the PRI,”
(Reforma 8/12/97).47 They wanted to make the legislature independent from the

47 Quite ironically, PRI legislators said that the opposition agreement was “undemocratic, exclusive, and
with an air of vengeance” (El Universal 8/12/97).
executive, dissolve the Grand Commission, and in general free the Chamber institution from PRI hegemony. For example, the presidency of the Internal Rules and Political Coordination will rotate every six months and will no longer have a strong PRI majority.

The committee membership became the target of partisan conflict, which almost brought the Chamber process to a halt. The opposition parties joined forces to secure the premium committee appointments. With this effort, the opposition parties would put behind them decades of receiving the lesser important assignments and being left out of the decision making process. These negotiations lasted the entire month of September because the parties were deadlocked over 7 key committees: Budget, Government, Financial Oversight, Education, Agriculture, Media, and Administration. In the end, the opposition controlled all of these except Administration. The current committee system has been characterized by long and fierce debates and has been an independent force in the legislative process. Committee presidents are also no longer pressured by the PRI leadership to toe the party line. “The basic point is that the committee structure will be a determining factor in Congressional action over the next three years and, as a result, an influential if not determining role in the Presidential elections of 2000” (El Universal 9/30/97).

The Chamber floor has also been affected by this intense political conflict. For example, the membership attendance policies are taken more seriously. Any deputy not present for roll call at 11am is considered absent and has their pay docked and their names printed in the government registry. Attendance is also taken after the 15 minute breaks. The opposition parties have agreed to rotate the floor presidency every year instead of every month, with an opposition party member for the first year. The floor
president was not a powerful position in the previous legislatures, but is now the most influential and important leader. Porfirio Munoz Ledo (PRD) was elected as the Chamber's first opposition leader. With Munoz Ledo at the helm, the Chamber has finally evolved into an active institution within the political system.

This newfound importance could be seen in the changes in the presidential Informe, the annual State of the Union address. The opposition parties changed the practice of the Informe by having the President stay after his speech in order to hear the Chamber President's response. Munoz Ledo said to President Zedillo that "every one of us is equal to you...And all of us together amount to more than you," (Dillon 1997). The Chamber President had signaled to the President that the former era of legislative weakness vis-a-vis the executive had ended.

These changes left PRI members frustrated and angry. Nunez, the PRI delegation leader, stated that "members of the opposition are within their rights when they express their interest, but this does not imply that they can stop respecting standard practices." (The News 8/15/97). These comments reflect the traditional thoughts of the ruling party, where the opposition may have more voice, but not make any fundamental changes in the way institutions work in Mexico. The opposition responded that "the PRI should understand that now it only represents 39% of the national vote. It needs to stop acting as if it has a majority," (The News 8/15/97).

The newly powerful opposition members also planned to confront the executive's policy agenda. After years of watching Presidential initiatives whiz by, the opposition

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48 Early in the negotiations over the format of the presidential Informe, one PRI member argued that the President would not remain during the opposition rebuttal. He stated that "Once President delivers his address, the President is going to leave the building. In this, there will be no negotiation." He warned of ungovernability: "The PRI will not dance to the music the Opposition plays," (The News 8/15/1997).
parties can work together to amend or block the executive’s legislative agenda. Chamber President Munoz Ledo (PRD) outlined a full legislative agenda whereby the Chamber members planned to be active participants in the legislative process. He stated that “the Congress will seek to reform the judiciary, overhaul the tax laws, strengthen state and municipal governments, establish public rights to referendum and plebiscite, investigate corruption, and if necessary put Government officials suspected of crimes on political trial. He said the Congress would also review Government economic policy, with an eye to increasing salaries, improving delivery of education and other services, restructuring the unpayable mortgage debts held by millions of poor Mexicans, and promoting small businesses,” (Dillon 1997). The opposition parties’ bills are expected to increase in discharge rate from the committee system and increase in successful passage.

Concomitantly, the executive’s bills should decrease in success rate during the 1997-2000 legislature.

As these findings demonstrate, the current legislature is the culmination of over two decades of political and institutional change. The opposition parties had finally raised the bar of representation over the 50% threshold and toppled PRI’s long-held majority of seats in the Chamber. The Chamber’s institutional rules and organization immediately became the center of national and international attention as the opposition parties coordinated their actions to complete the transition of the Chamber institution from a rubber stamp into an important institutional actor in the Mexican political system. This research project has outlined how the Chamber of Deputies evolved from a rubber stamp for the President into a raucous legislature where PRI is fighting for its political life.
From the insight provided by this research, the current political conflict over the Chamber organization is not a unique or isolated phenomenon in Mexico, but is the product of long-term changes outlined in this research. Political changes in legislative competition in the Chamber have been increasing since 1979 and have had important influences upon the legislative institution. The current legislative struggle was embedded in this context. The current legislature is not an institution suddenly awakened from a deep sleep but rather has been undergoing gradual transformation. While the analysis of an institution experiencing gradual transformation generally attracts less attention, its consequences can be just as significant as in cases of more dramatic transition.

*Future Research*

The next step in this project involves a cross-national extension of this work begun on the Mexican legislature to include the other Latin American countries. My basic research interest is on how the legislative institution is affected by the increase in partisan competitiveness and conflict within a political system. The most dramatic example of political change is the transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy, with the increase in partisan competitiveness within the political system. The Latin American legislatures are an important set of cases whose political significance has grown tremendously over the last decade because of democratic transitions. However, they have been relative unexplored by legislative scholars. My research project is an important step toward addressing this gap in the field of comparative legislatures.

Latin America is a natural laboratory for this research because of the variety of political and institutional changes that have taken place. The Costa Rican, Venezuelan,
Argentinean, Chilean, Brazilian, and Nicaraguan legislatures are a few examples of countries that will be added to the data set because of their rich variety of political contexts. They provide degrees of variation on the important political and institutional factors for this research project. For example, in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, there has been a regime change from an authoritarian, military regime to a democracy. In each of these cases, however, the new legislatures have different kinds of institutional challenges based upon the new party systems. In Costa Rica and Venezuela, there has been more of a stable, long-term democracy since the 1950s as a comparison.

The natural extension of this research is not simply the addition of one or two cases but rather to focus on a set of measures of institutional change (say, all of the committee system variables) and investigating them with the complete set of Latin American legislatures. In that way, the linkage between political change and legislative institutional change can be more systematically tested and gaps in the study of all the Latin American cases will be addressed.
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