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The Resurgent North and Contemporary Mexican Regionalism

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El ensayo consiste de tres partes: El contexto histórico e ideológico de la rivalidad tradicional existente entre el Centro y el Norte de México, las causas y efectos del resurgimiento de tal rivalidad en tiempos recientes, y las políticas y programas instaurados por el Gobierno Central para responder al problema.

Introduction

Although the evolution of Mexico's historical development reflects a broadly conceived secular trend towards increasing integration, regionalistic particularism constantly threatens national unity. Regionalistic consciousness waxes and wanes in the context of changing conditions and circumstances. As part of a larger transition buffeting the Mexican national political system in the 1980s, Northern regionalism has crystallized once again. The area's economy is prospering, and its sociocultural confidence is increasingly vibrant. As the dramatic victory of the opposition's Ernesto Ruffo in the mid-1989 gubernatorial elections in Baja California Norte so vividly illustrate, the nation's North is also in political transition.¹

1. This study defines the North as being composed of the states of Baja California Norte, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora and Tamaulipas. It follows the lead of Howard F. Cline, *The United States and Mexico* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 107. Occasional comparisons are made between the North and the "Center." The Center is composed of the traditional Mexico City-Veracruz power axis and includes the Federal District and the states of Mexico, Puebla and Veracruz. See below for further discussion of the 1989 elections.

This paper describes and analyzes the contemporary resurgence of *Norteño* regionalism. Like Gaul and God, the paper is divided into three parts. The first section sketches the larger context for an understanding of the traditional rivalry between Mexico's Center and North. It offers a brief historical chronicle, explicates ideological influences, and sets out some differing cultural characteristics that supposedly profile the peoples of the North and the Center. The second part of the paper fastens onto the contemporary resurgence of *Norteño* regionalism. It posits several causes giving rise to the challenge of the eighties. They include a series of alienating policies and programs pursued during the regimes of Luis Echeverría (1970–76) and José López Portillo (1976–1982); the decline of *Norteño* representation amongst the governing elites; population growth in the North; evolving U.S. influence; and, most importantly, the ravaging effects of the economic crisis that has worked to vitiate the legitimacy of the Mexico City government. The discussion then evolves to the manifestations of the contemporary division. It documents the economic successes of the region, its social alienation from Mexico City, and its political challenge to the Center. The third part of the paper posits and explains a series of countermeasures designed by Mexico City to alternatively placate, co-opt, and suppress the *Norteños*.

The North and the Center: History and Ideology

It should be noted at the outset that Northern particularism is hardly unique in the Mexican federation. In the South, the Yucatán has long maintained a jealous independence from the centralizing *chilangos*² in Mexico City. The Catholic, conservative Central Western region, led by the *tapatíos* of Guadalajara, also assumes a guarded posture anent the hegemonic designs of the capital city. Other areas of the country reflect less profound regionalistic prejudices, but geographic particularism is a constant in Mexican politics.³

2. "Chilango" and "Guacho" are pejorative terms utilized to define the inhabitants of Mexico City, or the Federal District. "Chilango" is reported to have originated in Veracruz where the Veracruzanos referred to the visitors from Mexico City as "guachinango," or red snappers, because they burned easily in the sun. The term degenerated into chilango. "Guacho" means orphan and refers to poor revolutionary soldiers who came from the South to the North during the revolutionary struggles. See Leyla Cattán, "'Guachofobia' es discriminación," *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson) January 25, 1989, p. A11.

3. For the general analysis, see Paul W. Drake, "Mexican Regionalism Reconsidered," *Journal of Inter-American Affairs*, XII, No. 3, July, 1970, pp. 411–415;

Still, Northern provincialism carries a special significance in Mexico. Though the Norteños are no more localistic than the Yucatecos, they represent a more powerful component of the federation. Moreover, they reside next to the United States. Things in Mexico that smack of association with the gringos are viewed with nervous apprehension.

The history and ideology of Norteño regionalism crystallize the area's particularistic propensities and illustrate the gnawing differences with the Center. The historical record is fraught with separatist tendencies. The ideological construct features the postulation of a unique physical and socio-cultural milieu, supposedly giving birth to a Mexican markedly different in mind and body from the residents of central Mexico.

The historical record clearly demonstrates the long-lived division between Center and North.⁴ During the colonial period, distance combined with retarded transportation and communications to create a series of semiautonomous provincial entities barely coordinated by the viceroy of New Spain headquartered in Mexico City. The situation went from bad to worse after the Wars of Independence. A newly independent Mexico lost the unifying symbol of the Spanish crown while many embraced the chaotic implications of a highly ideologized federalism.

The move to Texas independence implied a variation on the basic theme of Norteño separatism. While Yankee colonists played a major role in the movement, a Mexican scholar correctly notes that independence would have been impossible without the support of the indigenous Mexican population.⁵ The subsequent Mexican-American War cannot be defined in the same way, but it certainly reflected a larger scenario featuring Mexico City's inability to govern the far-flung northern territories.

Through the 19th century, Norteño separatism ran riot. In cahoots with American filibusters, Northern politicians and adventurers conjured frequent plots to establish independent nations in Mexico's

Allen Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1985), Chapter 14, pp. 274-294; Luis Rubio F., "¿Otra Vez, Texas?," mimeographed, March, 1983; and Stuart F. Voss, *On the Periphery of Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Sonora and Sinaloa, 1810-1877* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

4. The historical record is well described in Howard F. Cline, *The United States and Mexico* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1965); Oscar J. Martínez, *Troublesome Border* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988); and Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

5. Rubio, "¿Otra Vez, Texas?," p. 1.

North, sometimes including part of the American Southwest. These initiatives ranged from comical, harebrained schemes to fairly serious, well-planned and moderately successful attempts that established semiautonomous political entities for short periods of time.⁶

With the fall of Maximilian in 1867 Benito Juárez initiated hesitant steps to integrate the nation, and Porfirio Díaz advanced more successfully toward political consolidation beginning in 1876. Díaz's railroad construction program connected the North and Center as lines pushed to Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo and Piedras Negras in Chihuahua, Tamaulipas, and Coahuila. Although the traditional Mexico City-Veracruz coalition dominated much of the Díaz period, he moved to ally the North late in his regime when he chose Sonora's Ramón Corral to be his vice president in 1904.⁷

Díaz gave too little too late. The Revolution of 1910 celebrated the military triumph of the North over the Center. Anticipated by the copper miners' strike at Cananea, Sonora in 1906, revolutionary fever engulfed Mexico's North, producing a series of leaders of varying stripes destined to reign and rule in Mexico City through the mid-1930s. Francisco Madero and Venustiano Carranza came from Coahuila; both Chihuahua and Durango claimed Pancho Villa; and Sonora produced Alvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, and Adolfo de la Huerta.

The Northern origins of the Revolution flowed inexorably from the logic of the historic and geographic situation. Anti-Mexico City attitudes ran deep in the area; they catalyzed at the first sign that the aging Díaz regime had lost its political grip. Moreover, the regime's declining efficacy surfaced first in the distant, outlying areas of Mexico's North. The region was always difficult to control. Finally, the United States sustained the North's challenge by providing a haven for conspiring and fleeing exiles; the United States also served as a source of arms.

The end of the violent phase of the Mexican Revolution and Obregón's accession to power in 1920 signalled the start of more than a half century of nationalizing and integrating trends designed to heal the fissures between Center and North. In some sense, the Center and North became one. The "Northern Dynasty" reigned in Mexico City from 1920 to 1934, and Norteño representation in the central government grew apace. Peter Smith's study of Mexico's political elite makes the point. As Table One illustrates, Norteño

6. Martínez, *Troublesome Border*, pp. 36–48.

7. See Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 70; and Turner, *The Dynamic*. . . , p. 96.

representation in Smith's "Total Elite" and "Upper Elite" categories increased significantly from the previous period to achieve a level dramatically higher than the region's share of Mexico's general population.

In that context, nationalizing policies and programs chipped away at regionalistic proclivities. Infrastructural improvements in transportation and communications increasingly integrated the nation. Large scale irrigation projects carried out in the North combined with several colonization schemes to encourage other Mexicans to move to the North and redefine the Northern population.

Equally important, the power and legitimacy of the Center's new political elites mushroomed as they produced the Mexican economic miracle and political stability, bringing prosperity and prestige to Mexico.⁸ In the process, those successful policies and programs reestablished the primacy of Mexico City. But, as subsequent events evidenced, they did not necessarily erase Norteño particularism and the underlying tensions that continued to inform the relationship between the Norteño and the *capitalinos*, particularly as the North's representation in Mexico City went into relative decline after 1940 (See Table One). The historic prejudices resurfaced in the 1970s and 1980s as the Mexico City elites lost their masterful hold on the nation's economy and polity.

Those Norteño prejudices evolve from and contribute to a fairly elaborate ideology designed to apologize the prideful posture of the region's provincialism. In much the same vein, the prejudices of the Center add to the simmering divisions separating Mexico's contenders for hegemonic dominance.

Norteño ideology is not systematically articulated, but several elements of the position are relatively well-defined. They include strains of geographic and historical determinism contributing to a solid dose of racism. The United States' influence also figures into some nuances of the Norteño ideology. Looking from the perspective of the *capitalinos* and others in the Center, the United States plays an extraordinarily significant role in defining the attitudes and issues at controversy between the two regions of Mexico.

The Norteños see the hostile desert geography of Mexico's North as fashioning their character and values. As Alan Riding has it, they depict themselves as having "tamed nature by turning rocks into cities and desert into fertile land . . .". As they overcame their

8. For the analysis, see Drake, "Mexican Regionalism. . .," p. 401; Martínez, *Troublesome Border*, p. 50; and Mario Ojeda, *Mexico: The Northern Border as a National Concern* (El Paso: Center for Inter-American and Border Studies, U. of Texas, El Paso, 1983), Border Perspectives Series, No. 4, p. 4.

Table One: *Norteño Representation in Mexico's Political Elites, Three Periods*

<i>Region *</i>	<i>% Among Total Elite</i>	<i>% Above or Below Region's Share of General Population</i>	<i>% Among Upper Elite</i>	<i>% Above or Below Region's Share of General Population</i>
Prerevolutionary Cohort, 1900–1911				
Pacific North	5.4	+ 0.1	4.2	– 1.1
North	24.9	+ 5.9	20.8	+ 1.8
Revolutionary Cohort, 1917–1940				
Pacific North	11.4	+ 5.5	15.9	+ 10.0
North	17.7	+ 8.8	28.9	+ 9.9
Postrevolutionary Cohort, 1946–1971				
Pacific North	8.5	+ 0.5	5.2	– 2.8
North	21.4	– 2.5	19.3	– 4.3

Source: Adapted from Peter H. Smith, *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 69.

*Smith's two regions encompass more states than the definition of the "North" utilized here. Smith's "Pacific North" includes Baja California Norte, Baja California Sur; Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora; his "North" includes Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, Zacatas.

harsh environment, they created their own society and lifestyle. Those attitudes took on definite form by the 19th century. Stuart F. Voss's *On the Periphery of Nineteenth-Century Mexico* chronicles an array of "entrepreneurial projects" designed to further "progress" in Sonora and Sinaloa. The sense of regionalistic destiny evolved even more strongly amongst the *regiomontanos* of Nuevo León. They argued that Mexican "progress and modernity were embodied in the industrialists of Monterrey. . . . Under their aegis, the long-awaited emergence of Mexico as a modern nation was possible." Geography also figures into another nuance of the Northern ideology in pointing to the area's distance from the capital. A leading contemporary opposition politico from Sonora captures the

sense of the position in claiming that the North's relative isolation from Mexico City spared it the stultifying control of the central government.⁹

In part extrapolating from the relative isolation of the region, a strain of historical determinism also winds its way into the self-serving ideology of the North. Smacking of the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, this interpretation depicts the North as being peopled by immigrants fleeing the decadence of Mexico's center, contributing to a culture unencumbered by the negative historical baggage of Spanish autocracy. Howard F. Cline articulated the position more than a quarter of a century ago.

The North has little or no historical memory of the Hapsburg colonial period or its knotty problems. Church hierarchy, *encomiendas*, *corregidores*, and other complex features of the colonial matrix of southern Mexico, had no real roots and no cultural meaning for this vast northern section. As a cattle, mining, and missionary frontier, its traditions are of a different order, in kind and in degree.¹⁰

Racism is also alive and well in the North. The Norteños are openly boastful of their white, European heritage and contrast it with the predominance of Indian influence in the nation's South and of mestizo racial strains in the Center.

Returning to the theme of geographical influences, the significance of the United States forms a final element of the several influences contributing to the ideology of Norteño particularism. It is frequently cast in a negative form and usually articulated by the chilango critics of the North. The language of the Norteño exemplifies an obvious manifestation of that influence. More profoundly, the knowledge of and experience with United States participatory democracy may sharpen the political sensitivities of the citizens of Mexico's North. Northern Mexicans know the United States relatively well as documented and undocumented workers, shoppers, tourists and part-time residents.

Critics in the Center are ever mindful of the North's juxtaposition to the United States, and they posit a litany of real and imagined sins as emanating from the relationship. The North, and particularly

9. For the several points and the quotations, see Richard J. Meislin, "Mexico may be down on its luck, but Sonora saunters with success," *Arizona Daily Star*, December 10, 1984, p. A7; Riding, *Distant Neighbors*, p. 283; and Cam Rossie, "Mexico: Border dwellers say U.S. hasn't warped them," *Arizona Daily Star*, February 15, 1987, p. A6; Alex M. Saragoza, *The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), p. 94; and Voss, *On the Periphery*, . . . , p. 89 and 80-105, 121-129.

10. Cline, *The U.S. and Mexico*, p. 111.

the border area, is depicted as corrupting Mexican culture, society, and official ideology. Carlos Monsiváis reflects the views of many in Mexico's Center in describing the frontier region as having been "besieged, infested, devastated and conquered" by the "imperialistic economy" of the United States. The area's culture, he continues, is a "dubious mixture of two national lifestyles (each at its worst), the deification of technology, and a craze for the new."¹¹ For the chilangos in Mexico City, the Norteño culture is little more than a cheap imitation of *gringolandia*.

But the capitalino critique really goes beyond culture to question the Norteño commitment to the Mexican nation. Despite good evidence that denies any problem of "national identity" in the Northern frontier area, chilangos openly charge the Northerners with ambitions to quit the Mexican federation and align with the United States.¹² As the 1980s evolved, the political rhetoric accompanying electoral campaigns in the North frequently featured that theme. The official candidates representing the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) accused the opposing Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) of foisting "foreign models" on Mexico. A PANista delegation's visit to Washington and a meeting with North Carolina's Senator Jesse Helms in 1986 created a national scandal, confirming the worst fears of many in Mexico City.¹³

In sum, the historical record demonstrates ongoing tension between Mexico's Center and North; and opposing ideological beliefs justify and perpetuate the divisions. In the process, the ideologies conjure self-serving regionalistic personal profiles (and caricatures) that tend to nurture mutual mistrust and hostility. The Norteños are fond of depicting themselves as middle class, individualistic, open,

11. Carlos Monsiviáis, "The Culture of the Frontier: The Mexican Side," in Stanley R. Ross, editor, *Views Across the Border* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), pp. 54, 67.

12. For some fascinating evidence of the degree of "national identity" among Northerners, see the results of a survey in Jorge A. Bustamante, *Identidad Nacional en la Frontera Norte de México. Hallazgos Preliminares* (Tijuana: CEFNOMEX, mimeographed, 1983) esp. the "Conclusiones," pp. 70–72.

13. For some representative positions, see Jorge C. Castañeda, "Nuevo Peligro para México: Impulso a la Zona Fronteriza Norte como Entidad Independiente," *Proceso* 9 de agosto de 1986, p. 27; "Descartan que EU tenga ambiciones territoriales," *El Informador* (Guadalajara), 24 de junio de 1987, p. A15; Graciela Guadarrama, S., "Entrepreneurs and Politicos: Businessmen in Electoral Contests in Sonora and Nuevo León, July, 1985," in Arturo Alvarado, *Electoral Patterns and Perspectives in Mexico* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1987), p. 102; and Enrique Maza, "Fui imprudente, pero no traidor, se justifica el panista Corella," *Proceso* 9 de agosto de 1986, pp. 6–9.

honest, hardworking, and business oriented. From Mexico City, they are viewed as being uncivilized, boastful and materialistic. Moreover, the Norteño *pochos* are depicted as being far too gringo-like for their (and Mexico's) own good. Capitalinos see themselves as culturally sophisticated and protectors of the Mexican nationality. Norteños make bad jokes about the chilangos' sexual preferences and disdain them as devious bureaucrats squandering the nation's patrimony.¹⁴

Those regionalistic jealousies are unfortunate even in the best of times, and in the 1980s the simmering tensions between North and Center have evolved into divisive disputes adding even more stress to an already fragile situation as Mexico confronted its most serious economic and political crisis since the Revolution.

Contemporary Resurgence: Causes and Manifestations

The economic crisis beginning in 1982 is clearly the most important proximate cause of the resurgence of Norteño regionalism, but other factors have also made significant contributions. At least as early as the Echeverría regime policies and programs out of Mexico City alienated the Northerners. At about the same time, Northern representation amongst the nation's policy-making elites diminished, while the numbers from the Center increased significantly. Economic development and population growth in the region and increasing United States influence have also played a role in fashioning a new milieu ripe with potential for catalyzing divisions between Center and North.

The leftish bent of Luis Echeverría alienated the Norteños. They depicted his populist posturing as little short of communism. The entire context breathed uncertainty. Guerrilla warfare exploded in Guerrero and a series of kidnappings terrorized the nation. In Monterrey in 1973 malefactors killed Eugenio Garza Sada in a kidnapping attempt. Garza Sada served as the patriarch of one of the most influential Norteño industrial families, and his brethren held Echeverría responsible for his death. For his part, the president disdained the Monterrey regiomontanos as crypto fascists.

Before leaving office in 1976, Echeverría struck against Northern interests again when he expropriated some 90,000 acres of irrigated land in Sonora. That blow prompted increasing cooperation between

14. See Richard L. Nostrand, "A Changing Cultural Region," in Ellwyn R. Stoddard, et. al., editors, *Borderlands Sourcebook* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), p. 13; and Rubio "¿Otra Vez, Texas?," pp. 2-4.

the two major power centers of the North. The industrialists from the Northeast (Monterrey) forged political ties with the commercial agricultural interests from the Northwest (Baja California, Sinaloa and Sonora).¹⁵

Norteño-capitalino relations improved during the initial years of the José López Portillo *sexenio*, but they disintegrated as the Northerners criticized the mismanagement, corruption and theatrical flamboyance of the regime. López Portillo's nationalization of the banking system in 1982 confirmed their worst fears. By that time, the agony of the economic crisis began to set in, fully convincing the Northerners of the incompetence of the national government and emboldening them to increasing repudiation and defiance of Mexico City.

By the 1960s, moreover, the once powerful role of the Norteños in the Mexico City government had diminished, suggesting that the Northerners may have feared that their interests were in jeopardy. Data presented by Roderic A. Camp and Smith combined with more recent data collected for this study prompt the hypothesis. The definition of the "North" varies somewhat from source to source, but trend is crystal clear. In his analysis, Camp shows that the North enjoyed overrepresentation from 1940 through 1970 amongst "first-time high-level office holders" in Mexico. With the administration of Echeverría (the last covered by Camp), however, the North's representation slipped below its proportion of the national population. As the Smith data presented in Table One illustrate, Norteño representation amongst Mexico's political elite plummeted precipitously after 1946, failing even to maintain its relative share of political power as a proportion of the general population.¹⁶

Data gathered for this study on the regimes of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982–88) and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–) make the same point. The North is underrepresented in Mexico City. The data cover the state of birth of the initial cabinet members and selected other high officials like the directors of Petróleos Mexicanos, the Comisión Federal de Electricidad, the president of the PRI, etc. In the 1980s, the North has counted about 20 percent of the national population, but Norteños held only 15.9 percent of the top posts in the de la Madrid administration (N = 44); and 16.7 percent in the Salinas government (N = 36). Significantly, the proportion of

15. For the discussion, see Riding, *Distant Neighbors*, p. 284.

16. Roderic A. Camp, *Mexico's Leaders: Their Education and Recruitment* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), pp. 54–55; and Smith, *Labyrinths of Power*. . . , pp. 69–71.

officials born in the Federal District (D.F.) has skyrocketed. The first de la Madrid governing team counted fully 52.3 percent from the D.F.; Salinas's numbered 33.3 percent.¹⁷

The 1960s and 1970s also spelled larger contextual changes in the region as economic development proceeded apace and population burgeoned. While the North's political influence may have been slipping, Mexico City continued to shower its largess upon the region, and its economic might multiplied. Both Camp and James W. Wilkie have shown convincingly that, at least to the 1970s, the Northern states enjoyed preferential treatment as they received public investment proportionately higher than their percentage of the general population (although the Federal District consistently outpaced all federal entities by wide margins). In studying the border area, Oscar J. Martínez identifies new policies emanating from Mexico City in the early 1960s as having a "profound [positive] impact on the region's economy."¹⁸ In 1961, the Programa Nacional Fronterizo (PRONAF) started operations. It sparked increased public and private investment in the North. In 1965, the Mexico City government facilitated the initiation of the Border Industrialization Program, destined to transform the economic structure of the North as *maquiladoras* (assembly plants) spread throughout the region.

At the same time the population of the North burgeoned, reflecting the region's economic growth and implying increased political punch when interregional competition between the Center and the North crystallized in the 1980s. Between 1950 and 1984, the population in the nine states making up the Northern Region shot from about 5 million to more than 15 million, an increase of more than 300 percent. By the mid-1980s, the North counted a trifle more than 20 percent of Mexico's total population.¹⁹

The sixties, seventies and eighties also witnessed measurable

17. See "De la Madrid's Complete Cabinet," *Horizontes*, December/January 1983, p. 3; and "Salinas's Governing Team," mimeographed, Mexican Embassy, Washington.

18. See Camp, "A Reexamination of Political Leadership and Allocation of Federal Revenues in Mexico, 1934-1973," *Journal of Developing Areas* X, January, 1976, pp. 193-212; Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditures and Social Change Since 1910* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 1970, p. 247; and Martínez *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez Since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978, pp. 116-117.

19. The population data are from Frank Brandenburg, *The Making of Modern Mexico* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 238-239; and *The Europa Yearbook, 1988. A World Survey* Vol. II (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1988), pp. 1836-1837.

increases in the United States' impact on Mexico—the final environmental factor putatively proposed as influencing the rise of Norteño militancy in the 1980s. The transition from benign neglect of Mexico to active concern can probably be dated from the Kennedy regime, beginning in 1961. President John F. Kennedy sought the resolution of the long-festering Chamizal controversy, implying a positive new departure in U.S. policy. Following in the train of the Chamizal settlement, the United States and Mexico launched a period of diplomatic productivity involving a series of agreements covering matters like border ecology, extradition, Colorado River salinity, Mexican antiquities, prisoner exchanges, trade, et al. In the same spirit, President Jimmy Carter promulgated in 1978 Presidential Review Memorandum 41. The measure reflected a comprehensive review of Mexico's significance to the United States; it redefined Mexico as being near the very top in the U.S. hierarchy of foreign interests; and it launched a number of new policies designed to evolve closer relations with Mexico and increase U.S. influence in the neighboring country.

Perhaps even more importantly, an enormous amount of informal interaction characterized relations between Mexicans and Americans from the 1960s forward. Moreover, the interaction increased significantly from year to year. Table Two documents the comprehensive movement between the two nations and also records the marked increases through the 1970s and early 1980s.

Cause and effect in sociopolitical change is a murky business, at best; it is nearly impossible to prove. The working hypothesis here purports increasing interaction between the two peoples influenced political attitudes in the North, sharpening the Northerners' differences from their brethren in the Center and influencing the resurgence of regionalism in the area. Certainly, that hypothesis captures the essence of conventional wisdom in both Mexico City and the North. The table helps to depict the context of the hypothesis.

Survey data tend to confirm the hypothesis and lend credence to the conventional wisdom. In the first instance, Norteños appear to admire the United States more than their *paisanos* in the Center. In a national survey commissioned by the Banco Nacional de México and conducted in late 1981, between 41 and 60 percent of the respondents in the Northern cities of Monterrey, Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez wanted Mexico to be more like the United States. The admirers of the United States clustered in next lower quintile (21 to 40 percent) in Mexico City and Puebla, the two leading cities of the Center, as defined by this analysis. Another nationwide survey undertaken rather less than a year later shows some attitudinal similari-

Table Two: *Interaction between "Americans" and Mexicans*

<i>Movement from Mexico to the United States</i>			
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
Total crossings into the U.S. at ports of entry on U.S.-Mexico border	144,400,000	177,000,000	22.6
Mexican tourism to the United States	1,100,000	1,900,000	72.7
Legal Mexican migration to the United States	44,000	59,000	34.1
Mexican illegal aliens apprehended in the United States	277,000	1,172,000	323.1
<i>Movement from the United States to Mexico</i>			
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
United States tourism to Mexico	2,250,000	4,749,000	111.1

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Travel Service, *Reports of various years*; Immigration and Naturalization Service, *INS Statistical Yearbook*, various years; *Statistical Abstract of Latin America*, XXVI, 1988, pp. 309, 316.

ties, but also some significant differences. In the midst of the first shocks of the devastating economic crisis (August to November, 1982), Norteños on the border maintained a slightly more positive attitude about life and a considerably less negative posture than the inhabitants of the Federal District. On the border, 10.6 percent of the respondents were "positive or very positive" about life, versus 9.7 percent in the Distrito Federal (D.F.). The "negative or very negative" responses were dramatically more telling: 49.7 percent on the border compared to 63.3 percent in the D.F. Data on the relative "control over the development of life" demonstrate similar differences. More positive attitudes are about the same on the border and in the D.F., but significantly more representatives of the Center perceive "little or no" control over their lives: 2.0 percent versus 7.3 percent. Finally, the generations appear to be more reciprocally supportive on the border than in the Federal District. Forty-one

percent of the adult *fronterizos* have confidence in young people; 31.9 percent of the capitalinos shared that sentiment. The young on the border also have a higher opinion of adults than their counterparts in the D.F.: 29.5 percent expressed "much or significant confidence," but only 21.9 of the young in the D.F. did so.²⁰

Those several influences may have contributed to the resurgence of Norteño particularism, but it is abundantly clear that the tremendous impact of the economic crisis beginning in 1982 served as the catalyst for the portentous interregional divisions of the 1980s. The economic condition of the North in the 1980s counts two major features—both sharpened the alienation of the Norteños. In the first instance, the Northern economy at the outset suffered from the crisis more intensely than the rest of the country. The Northern economy is closely articulated with the U.S. economy. The massive and rapid decline in the dollar value of the peso fell heavily upon the North, sparking alienating anger throughout the region.²¹ Paradoxically, the Northern economy recovered more rapidly than the rest of the country. By 1986, the Northerners were riding a crest of economic expansion calculated by the governor of Sonora to be about 4 percent per year for his state from 1986 through 1988. Overall national growth registered about one-tenth of that rate, about four-tenths of 1 percent per year for those three years.²² That sort of subsequent economic success also led to alienation—by feeding the arrogance of the Norteños in their disdain for the chilangos in Mexico City.

In a word, the legitimacy of the Center went into sharp decline. Describing businessmen in Nuevo León (Monterrey) and Sonora in the mid-1980s, a Mexican investigator captures the point: "... business leaders now distrust the government not only because of its populist rhetoric, but also because they doubt its capacity to lead." Writing in 1983, Luis Rubio described "a rapid deterioration of the political power of the Center which could be taken advantage of by

20. Enrique Alduncín Abitia, *Los Valores de Los Mexicanos* (México, D.F.: Banco Nacional de México, 1986), p. 90; and Alberto Hernández Medina and Luis Narro Rodríguez, *Coordinadores, Cómo Somos los Mexicanos* (México, D.F.: CREA, 1987), pp. 45, 41, 82, 83.

21. The analysis is in Bustamante, "Duro Golpe Devaluatorio," *Excelsior* (Mexico City), 23 de Noviembre de 1987, Distributed by El Colegio de la Frontera Norte as "El Colef en la Noticia" and Ojeda, *The Northern Border*. . . , pp. 1–2.

22. For the data, see Rodolfo Félix Valdés, *Sonora: Informe de Gobierno* (Hermosillo: Gobierno del Estado de Sonora, 1988), p. 3; Félix Valdés as interviewed on "Arizona Illustrated," KUAT-TV (Tucson), February 6, 1989; and Inter-American Development Bank, *Economic and Social Progress in Latin America. 1989 Report* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 1989), p. 380.

other groups." He continued that "not since the 1930s have conditions existed that make so fragile the political and economic control of the totality of the Mexico territory." Focusing more specifically on the meaning of the economic crisis, Rubio made the essential point.

Because of the economic crisis and the long tradition of cultural independence [of the North], and the great erosion of the real power of the Center (both economic and political) as a result of the crisis, we believe that here [in the North] exists a great political volatility that perhaps will not be able to be contained in the forms that have traditionally worked.²³

The economic vibrance and cultural militancy of the region provide a basis for the "political volatility" feared by Rubio. In the economic sphere, the maquiladora program is leading the way. The program exploded from less than 600 plants and about 127,000 workers in 1982 to more than 1500 plants and almost 500,000 workers by late 1989.²⁴ But the maquiladora industry is only the best known of a more general economic upswing in the North that includes a growing mining industry, an expanding auto parts business, a healthy cattle sector, increasing winter vegetable production, vibrant border transactions in traditional goods and services; and, of course, a booming drug industry that adds its special contribution to the North's economic well-being.

Beyond economic vibrancy, the North's cultural resurgence has taken on a militant tone, feeding upon and perpetuating demeaning stereotypes and damaging the cause of interregional harmony and national integration. "Chilangos Go Home" decorates walls in the North and is often seen on a popular bumper sticker. Other graffiti asks that "God protect us from Chilangos," or more ominously, "Do something for your country; Kill a Chilango." In 1987 in Tijuana, a satirical magazine, *Zeta*, formed a "Committee to eradicate Chilangos." In 1985, a Sonoran newspaperman published *El Cazador de Guachos (The Hunter of Guachos)*. *Guacho* is still another derogatory terms used by Norteños to insult their countrymen from Mexico's Center. The book became a regional best seller, going into its third printing by mid-1988. The death of a nine-year-old boy provided the tragic climax to the spreading fever of anti-Mexico City sentiment. Recently migrated to Hermosillo from Mexico City, the

23. Rubio, "¿Otra Vez, Texas?," pp. 6-8. The quotation above is from Guadarrama S. "Entrepreneurs and Politics. . .," p. 90.

24. Edward J. Williams and John T. Passé-Smith, *Turnover and Recruitment in the Maquiladora Industry: Causes and Solutions* (Las Cruces: New Mexico State University, Center for Border Studies), p. 10.

boy was beaten by classmates "because of his accent and background." The boy died several months later. Cause and effect were certainly difficult to establish, but an aunt publicly attributed his death to "an exaggerated regionalism."²⁵

In addition to the personal tragedy of such events, the political implications are also manifest. A Mexican social scientist captures the crux of the issue. "Regionalism may be a normal phenomenon in any country," he notes, "but when it takes on such ugly and blind characteristics and comes to divide a nation that needs to be united, it becomes a dangerous force."²⁶

Norteño politics in the eighties reflect the region's economic muscle flexing, its cultural arrogance, and its particularistic tendencies. The Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM) acts as a viable opposition in Tamaulipas, and the Cardinista Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD) enjoys measurable support throughout the region, but the PAN serves as the dominant political vehicle of the North's regionalistic resurgence. The PAN has flourished. Most dramatically, the party's Ernesto Ruffo became the first opposition governor in the Federation for more than 60 years—since the foundation of the PRI in 1929. His triumph in Baja California Norte in 1989 signalled the most profound political event in the nation since the tragedy at Tlatelolco in 1968. The PAN is also a powerful political force in Chihuahua, where the number of PANista registered voters burgeoned from 3,000 before 1982 to 22,000 in 1987. Most agree that the PANista candidate won the gubernatorial office in the Chihuahuan elections of 1986, only to be cheated of the office by the government's massive fraud. Many also think that the PAN defeated the PRI for the governor's post in Sonora in 1985, but official fraud again frustrated the opposition of the Norteños. Even with the fraud, the PAN has controlled a swath of important cities across the North during the 1980s, including Agua Prieta, Ciudad Camargo, Ciudad Juárez, Ciudad Obregón, Delicias, Durango, Ensenada, Hermosillo, Monclova, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Piedras Negras, San Luis de Rio Colorado and Tijuana.²⁷

25. Leyla Cattán, "'Guachofobia' es discriminación," and Larry Rohter, "Hermosillo Journal: Mexico City's Scornful (and Scorned)" *New York Times*, August 8, 1988, Information Services on Latin America (ISLA) 663.

26. The quotation is from Rohter, *ibid.*

27. For varying commentary and analysis on the Baja elections, see Francisco Betancourt and Humberto Castro, "Elogian que PRI admita derrota" *El Norte* (Monterrey), 6 de Julio, 1989, p. B1; Elías Chávez, "Apabullados por el triunfo de Ruffo. . .," *Proceso* 10 de Julio, 1989, pp. 6–10; and George W. Grayson, "The 1989 Baja California Elections: Post Election Report," Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, 1989.

Comparing voting data from 1979 and 1985 lends further credence to PANista support as a sign of growing Norteño discontent with Mexico City. In the nine Northern states, the PAN averaged an increase of 9.25 percent in its electoral support from 1979 to 1985. In the remaining twenty-three federal entities, the PAN gained on the average of only 3.4 percent. The rise of the Cárdenista PRD complicated the Northern electoral picture a trifle in 1988, but the North continued to be relatively strong in its opposition to the official PRI. Cárdenas won in Baja California Norte. Nine other states supported the PRI less than the nine Northern state, but fully fifteen states offered the PRI more support than the Northern group. That is, the North ranked clearly above the mean in its opposition to the PRI in the 1988 elections.²⁸

A mid-1980s study of "Political Attitudes among Border Youth" captured other extrapolations of the North's political alienation and opposition to Mexico City.²⁹ Based upon two surveys conducted in 1982 and 1984, the findings demonstrated the PAN's strength among border youth, partly explained by shifts to the PANista banner during the volatile 1980s. In Ciudad Juárez, the most populous of the border cities, the 1984 survey reported 40.5 percent of the city's youth declaring a preference for the PAN; only 20.8 percent declared for the PRI. A numerous 36.7 percent of the respondents indicated no preference. The data also reflected a measurable shift to the PAN from 1982 to 1984, suggesting the impact of the economic crisis. In the border region as a whole, support for the PAN increased by fully 5.7 percent in the two years after 1982, reaching a figure of 23 percent.

In sum, the 1980s crystallized another resurgence of Norteño regionalistic particularism. The sentiment simmered during the Echeverría and López Portillo sexenios from 1970 through 1982. Influenced by political change, economic growth, population increases and perhaps, by increasing interaction with the United States, Norteño aggressiveness exploded with the spark of economic crisis beginning in 1982. In the process, the Northerners' latent hostility burst forth in cultural damnation of Mexico City. It also signalled a significant political challenge through the steady growth

28. For the data, see Stephen P. Mumme, "Internal and External Constraints Upon the Partido de Acción Nacional," Unpublished paper, Fort Collins, Colorado, Colorado State University, 1988, p. 24 and Table 4; and "Mexico: Presidential Election Results by States," *Mexico and Central America Regional Report*, August 18, 1988, p. 4.

29. Alberto Hernández in Alvarado, *Electoral Patterns and Perspectives*. . . . The data and quotations here are from pp. 211–216, 223.

of the PAN and through the electoral strength of the populist left's PRD in selected areas of the North. Not surprisingly, Mexico City responded with a combination of conventional strategies mixed with some innovative postures, policies and programs.

Mexico City's Response

Northern regionalism is deeply embedded in Mexican political history, and the central government is well-practiced in the ways and means of dealing with the proud and recalcitrant Norteños. Recent governments have employed long-lived policies and programs and initiated several innovative departures calculated to respond to the North's resurgent militancy.

Mexico's highly centralized political system nurtures Mexico City's hegemony. The national government controls more than 80 percent of all revenues; the state and municipios are nearly totally dependent upon federal funding. The federal security apparatus is run from the capital and frequently ignores state and local authorities. Military zone commanders are periodically rotated to discourage their being captured by local allegiances. The president selects state governors and many mayors and offers instructions on all major decisions. The official party is controlled by the president and his minions in Mexico City. The degree of central authority waxes and wanes a trifle in response to the vicissitudes of time and place and the strength of the incumbent president, but a profoundly entrenched tradition of centralism informs the relationships between capital and provinces in Mexico.³⁰

By way of buttressing those broadly conceived institutionalized relationships, Mexico City has always reflected a certain sensitivity to the peculiar circumstances of the North and formulated policies and programs to nurture and/or control the region. As noted previously in the historical discussion of this study, Porfirio Díaz and his successors built railroads to physically incorporate the area; Alvaro Obregón sent colonists to the Northwest to integrate the region; a number of presidents variously established, revised, revoked, and reestablished the free zone privileges of the North in an ongoing attempt to integrate the area and/or placate its inhabitants; Mexico City nurtured the Bracero Program that made special contributions to the North's economy; it later initiated the PRONAF and facilitated

30. Drake, "Mexican Regionalism Reconsidered," p. 404; and John J. Bailey, *Governing Mexico: The Statecraft of Crisis Management* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1988, pp. 83–86.

the maquiladora program to repair the damage wrought by the cessation of the Bracero Program. In sum, the North has always preoccupied Mexico City's decision makers, and the region has benefitted from a variety of policies and programs over the years in response to its special characteristics and peculiar problems.

Across the board, Mexico City's attentive attitude has continued into the 1980s. Utilizing a combination of carrots and sticks, the central government has fashioned a plethora of strategies to grapple with the disenchantment and alienation of the Norteños. The programs range from the cultural through the political and from soothing solicitation to crude intimidation.

In the cultural area, a nationalistic counteroffensive got under way during the 1980s focusing upon the retention of cultural values and customs, and linguistic purity. The federal Chamber of Deputies organized an official Legislative Committee for the Defense of the Language and set out to explore measures to combat the intrusion of English. In the same vein the Mexico City Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) initiated a special program to celebrate and preserve Mexican culture and customs. Both programs targeted the North as the area most in need of attention. The language purists damned "the frontier zones and tourist centers" for corrupting the mother tongue. For its part, the SEP's program defined four areas of "need." The four areas included Mexico City and seven of the nine Northern states discussed here—Baja California Norte, Baja California Sur, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Sonora and Tamaulipas.³¹

In an even more positive vein, both President Salinas and his predecessor, Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982–88), initiated and championed a series of policies and programs either specifically benefitting the North or fitting well the political and ideological preferences of Norteños. De la Madrid in 1986 declared the maquiladora program to be a "priority sector" of the Mexican economy, and Salinas has continued strong official support for the maquiladoras. All but a handful of the program's 1500 assembly plants are located in the Northern states. De la Madrid and Salinas have also breathed new life into the border governors' conferences featuring cooperation by border state chief executives on both sides of the

31. Dennis J. Bixler-Márquez, "A Cultural Education Policy for Mexican Schools Along the U.S. Border," *The Borderlands Journal*, VII, No. 2, Spring, 1984, pp. 149–158; "Consideran peligrosa la invasión del inglés," *El Informador* 24 de julio de 1987, p. A3; Santiago González, "Es alarmante en México la invasión de los anglicismos," *El Informador* 29 de julio de 1987, p. A14; Mario Alberto Reyes, "Diputados, SEP, Inco y SCT impugnaron el desplazamiento del español por el inglés," *Uno Más Uno* (Mexico City) 24 de julio de 1987, p. 2.

international line. They have additionally lent significant moral and financial support to Tijuana's Colegio de la Frontera Norte, now on a par with Mexico City institutions as one of the premier research facilities in the country.³²

In a general way, de la Madrid and/or Salinas have also initiated a number of profoundly important new policy departures that reflect the preferences and prejudices of the North. The policies, if not their origin in Mexico City, have been enthusiastically received in the Northern region. They include a panoply of measures that the Norteños have advocated for years—freer trade through joining the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and bargaining with the United States; privatization of the economy by selling off or closing down parastate industries; reducing or cutting off subsidies on everything from tortillas to fertilizers; reintroducing competition amongst the governmentally owned banks; generally reducing the role of government and increasing the influence of the private sector in the economy; affecting a rapprochement with the Catholic church; promulgating a more liberal decree for private foreign investment; and toning down Mexico City's traditional left-leaning and Yankee-baiting diplomacy. To reiterate, every one of those measures is well received in the North.

Evolving to a more specific political focus, the Salinas and de la Madrid regimes have put forth a complex response to the challenge from the North. On the one extreme, the array of responses features pandering to the pride of the Norteños. On the other end of the spectrum, the Mexico City government has exercised force and perpetrated fraud in manipulating elections in the North.

The heavy-handed characteristics of Mexico City's strategy for meeting Norteño political particularism is best exemplified by the perpetuation of electoral fraud in Coahuila, Sonora and Chihuahua during the de la Madrid administration. At the outset, the new president appeared ready to let honesty prevail, but the PRIista hardliners were obviously stung by the significant victories wrought by the PAN in the elections of 1983. Thereafter, the posture of the Center's decision-makers took a nasty turn. In late 1984, purported fraud in the Coahuila elections provoked violent confrontations in Piedras Negras on the Rio Grande. In the summer of 1985, elections in Sonora set the scene for more fraud and additional violence. To the amazement of the most objective observers, the PRI claimed an

32. Bustamante, "Colaboración Descentralizada," *Excelsior*, 2 de noviembre de 1987, *El Colef en la Noticia*; and Cam Rossie "Border governors begin conference in Mexico," *Arizona Daily star*, p. C2.

overwhelming victory in the gubernatorial race and a clean sweep of the contests at the *municipio* level. The obvious fraud outraged the PANistas (and others), catalyzing violence in the border cities of Agua Prieta and San Luis, Sonora. At the same time, similar fraud in the mayoral elections in Monterrey, Nuevo León sparked additional violence.³³

The *cause célèbre* exploded in Chihuahua in 1986. The PRI perpetrated massive fraud, claiming victory by a wide margin in the contest for governor and alleging to have triumphed in all but one of the state's municipios. The blatant electoral robbery triggered widespread protests in Chihuahua and damnation beyond. Breaking with its cautious demeanor, the Catholic church condemned the Mexico City government. Even more importantly, a group of Mexico's leading intellectuals, led by Octavio Paz, held that the nation's integrity demanded new elections.

The nearly universal damnation of Mexico City's conduct in the Chihuahuan elections combined with other political developments to mark a turning point in Mexican politics. The rise of the Corriente Democrática within the PRI and the subsequent formation of the Cardenista PRD contributed to a new departure in the nation's policy. More specifically within the context of this discussion, they also ushered in a new tone and a differing substance to Mexico City's response to the resurgence of Norteño regionalism.

The position of the Salinas government vis-à-vis the North is more accommodating, less confrontational. The Salinas strategy appeared to possess two elements. In the first place, the president made conscious efforts to publicly recognize the importance of the North and to lessen its alienation. In a rather different vein, the Salinas administration continued the initiatives of the former government in mending and modernizing the PRI, better to govern the North and to respond to the political challenges of the PAN.

Salinas has been solicitous of Norteño sensitivities. Although he was actually born in the Federal District, Salinas plays up his Norteño roots. Both of his parents hail from Nuevo León. His father serves as federal senator from the state. Salinas spent his childhood vacations in the ancestral home of Agualeguas, only twenty-five

33. For description and analysis of the several elections, see Alberto Aziz Nassif, "Electoral Practices and Democracy in Chihuahua, 1985," pp. 181–206; and Rodolfo González Valderrama, "Fifteen Days that Shook the United States—Uselessly," pp. 265–284. Both are in Alvarado, *Electoral Patterns and Perspectives*. . . ; and Williams, "The Implications of the Border for Mexican Policy and Mexican-United States Relations," in Roderic A. Camp, *Mexico's Political Stability: The Next Five Years* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 211–234.

miles south of the Rio Grande. Those are fairly strong ties to the North; certainly the strongest claim to Norteño roots that any Mexican president has been able to make since the short-lived reign of Sonora's Abelardo Rodríguez (1932–34).³⁴

Moreover, several Northerners hold key positions in the Salinas administration, balancing the fact that overall Norteño representation is rather below its share of the total population. They include Ernesto Cedillo Ponce de León, the minister of Budget and Planning from Baja California Norte; Luis Donald Colosio, the president of the PRI from Sonora; and Fernando Hiriart, the minister of Energy and Mines from Chihuahua.

It is also significant that Salinas delivered the most important political speech during his campaign in the Northern City of Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora. The speech set out his emphasis on more open politics and less fraud. "Deliberately, I came to the north of the country to make a pact with democracy. Here in the north I want to affirm that I respect electoral democracy," he said in 1987. He promised "free and clean elections" and repudiated the old formula of the *carro completo*, or clean sweep, for the PRI. The content of the presentation brimmed with significance, of course, but so did the symbolic import of delivering it in the North.³⁵

The government of Salinas has fulfilled the pledge imperfectly, but the North has been treated better than other regions. Alchemy and fraud apparently marred elections in Tabasco in early 1989. More clearly, the government perpetrated widespread fraud in Michoacán in mid-1989. But the PAN triumphed in Baja California Norte during the same elections.

At the same time, moves to repair the PRI are proceeding apace. The de la Madrid administration had begun to overhaul the PRI in the North and Salinas's government followed the lead. De la Madrid counselled with local elites in the selection of candidates for party and public office. Mexico City lent more financial, logistical and organizational support to campaigns in the North. De la Madrid also dispatched some of Mexico City's finest to assume office in the North—Governors Rodolfo Félix Valdés and Francisco Labastida of Sonora and Sinaloa, respectively, provide splendid examples.

President Salinas pursued a similar strategy. During the 1988

34. For the bio-data, see Rohter, "Pacemaker in Mexico," *New York Times*, October 5, 1987, ISLA 1750; and Robert Graham, "Concentration of Energy," *Financial Times*, December 10, 1987, ISLA 2914.

35. Keith Rosenbloom, "Sonora welcomes Salinas with pre-presidential pomp," *Arizona Daily Star*, October 24, 1987, p. A1.

campaign, Salinas conducted a series of conferences in the North's border cities. Salinas went to the border to learn of its problems, but also to teach the local PRIistas the lessons of his "modern politics." After assuming the presidency, Salinas intensified his reformistic politics in the North. In Ciudad Juárez, the nation's fourth largest city and a PANista stronghold, the local official party conducted in 1989 a modified primary to choose the PRI's mayoral candidate. Mexico City poured impressive financial and human resources into the campaign in a successful effort to defeat the PANistas on their home turf. In Baja California Norte, attempts to revitalize the PRI obviously failed but an effort ensued when Salinas forced the resignation of the PRIista incumbent governor in January, 1989. Governor Xicontencatl Leyva had spent far too much time feathering his own nest and fell into political disgrace when Cárdenas carried the state in the 1988 presidential elections.³⁶

In still another political move reflecting Mexico City's focus on the North, Salinas in early 1989 purged the PRIista mayor of Hermosillo. In the context of the affair, a warrant was issued from Mexico City for the arrest of Carlos Robles Loustraunau, the PRIista mayor, who disappeared and was presumed to be in hiding. He was accused of robbery and falsification of documents. A PANista militant played up the significance of the warrant in noting that "it could be a case of truly historic importance. It is the first time in postrevolutionary Mexico that people have actually been indicted for fraudulent electoral practices." Along with the purge of Leyva and the PANista victory in Baja California Norte and other measures, the unseating of Robles implied a clear political message. It signalled Salinas's commitment to push his "modern politics," at least in the North. In a larger sense, the political strategy formed part of a complex of measures emanating from Mexico City to respond to the political alienation of the Norteños.³⁷

In sum, Mexico City has launched a variety of policies and programs in the 1980s to respond to the inquietudes of the Norteños and burgeoning political alienation in the Northern region of the

36. Jerry Kammer, "PRI takes campaign to border," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), February 20, 1988, p. C3; and "Political Roundup," *Mexico Journal* (Mexico City), April 24, 1989, p. 9.

37. On the Robles Loustraunau affair, see Miguel Escobar Véldez, *La Carta Escobar*, Guaymas, Sonora, 10 de mayo de 1989; Myrna Lorena Gálvez, "Designara alcalde a Edmundo Astiazarán," *El Imparcial* (Hermosillo) 27 de abril de 1989, p. A1; and Rosenbloom, "Mexico seeks to arrest ex-mayor of Hermosillo," *Arizona Daily Star*, April 28, 1989, p. A12. The PANista's charge is quoted in Graciela Sevilla, "A landmark case throws the book at 'alchemists'," *Mexico Journal*, May 8, 1989, p. 10.

country. Cultural and educational programs have encouraged the preservation of the Spanish language and traditional Mexican customs. The entire panorama of Mexico City's economic program has been well received in the North, as it dovetails with Norteño prejudices and preferences for a more open economy characterized by a larger role for the private sector. In the political arena, the Center's response to the challenge of the opposition in the North has evolved from an experiment with open and honest elections in the early part of the de la Madrid sexenio, to blatant electoral fraud and attendant violence later in de la Madrid's term, to a policy of more open and honest elections combined with Mexico City's commitment to improve the quality of PRIista militancy during the first part of Salinas's sexenio.

Conclusion

Cyclical and evolutionary analyses explain the resurgence of Northern regionalism in Mexico in the 1980s. They are not alternative explanations, but rather two parts of a larger dialectical process. The cyclical part of the explanation is relatively straightforward; the evolutionary element a trifle complex.

The cyclical hypothesis propounds that regionalism is always a latent political force in Mexico (or any other nation), and that it waxes and wanes according to the perceptions of the power relationships between the central government and the provinces.³⁸ When Mexico City loses efficacy and legitimacy, the several regions assume a more autonomous position. Mexican history reflects three such periods—from the outbreak of the Wars of Independence in 1810 through the rise of Porfirio Díaz beginning in 1876; from the outbreak of the Revolution in 1910 through the consolidation of the central government's authority wrought by the Sonoran Dynasty (paradoxically) beginning in 1920; and the present challenge evolving after 1970 to reach maturity with the onset of the economic crisis in 1982.

It should not be implied that all three periods of resurgent regionalism involved the same measure of challenge to Mexico City. Indeed, it is clear that both the authority of the Mexican state and the allegiance of the Mexican people have increased over time. Still, within the context of time and place, all three periods reflected serious challenges to the primacy of Mexico City and to the integration of the nation.

38. Riding, *Distant Neighbors*, p. 274; and Rubio "¿Otra Vez, Texas?," pp. 1–2.

In the cyclical interpretation, the present period of Norteño particularistic resurgence hues to the larger flow of Mexican history; it plays on deeply entrenched tensions between the capital and the provinces. That hypothesis serves well, but it is incomplete; it does not specifically recognize that each challenge becomes less profound as both Center and North progressively adjust their postures to reconcile their differences. That ongoing interplay of Center and North forms the dialectical process that resolves the divisions and integrates the nation.

In the present situation, the Salinas administration seems to be reasserting the political hegemony of the capital in the Mexican federation by arrogating to itself (and the Center) values and policies traditionally associated with the North. During the 1987 campaign, Salinas traveled to the North to celebrate Norteño virtues and to declare them the virtues of Mexico. As noted earlier in the study, Presidents de la Madrid and Salinas have gained the approbation of the North and reduced regionalistic tendencies by putting forth a variety of policies and programs that reflect the preferences and prejudices of the Norteños.

In his perceptive analysis of the resurgence of Northern regionalism written shortly after the onset of the 1982 economic crisis, Luis Rubio had it that "the Norteños win the military wars and, at times, the economic wars; but the political wars are won by the Center."³⁹ By way of explicating that provocative proposition, this analysis posits that the Center wins the political wars as a result of the dialectic process in which the North's military and economic triumphs become part of a new synthesis propagated by the Center as "Mexican" values, processes and institutional arrangements. In a fairly obvious way, the fact of Norteño leadership reflected that process from the outbreak of the Revolution in 1910 through the ascension of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1936. The evolution of events at present is both more subtle and more complex, but the significance is essentially the same.

39. Rubio, "¿Otra Vez, Texas?," p. 2.