

Communication and the Mexican Constitution: An Examination of Cultural and Literal Implications

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This paper examines the history of freedom of expression in Mexico from Spanish colonial rule to the present day. This paper includes a three-fold analysis of 1) an examination of the rights granted in the constitutions of 1824, 1836, 1854, 1917, to present day reforms, 2) the cultural reality of free expression in Mexico since the Revolution in 1910 and the subsequent Constitution of 1917, with emphasis on violations and changes over the past two decades, and finally 3) an examination of the structure and practice of the three branches of the Mexican government, particularly the power of the executive branch and a critical review of the judiciary.

A nation's constitution reflects the history of the nation, its social and political structure, and those inherent components that uniquely define that nation's personality. In essence, it is the mirror of any given nation.¹ A constitution is the ultimate form of communication between a government and its people. As Brislin explains, communication and culture are interdependent as one cannot be separated from the other.² So, an analysis of the constitutional meaning of any right would be incomplete without an examination of the constitution's literal and cultural implications.

Since the first constitution of Mexico's independence from Spain in 1824, the freedom of expression has been granted to the citizens of Mexico.³ However, what the constitutions have granted in theory and what culminates in practice can be, at times, drastically different.⁴ In fact, constitutions may expressively define themselves as "democratic" and/or protectors of the "rule of law," but the labels and connotations present with such vocabulary may obscure the existence of situations that permit uncontrolled authority of a political power.⁵ This analysis is an examination of the history of the freedom of expression in Mexico from Spanish colonial rule to the present day. The analysis is three-fold: 1) an examination of the rights granted in the constitutions of 1824, 1836, 1854, 1917, to present day reforms, 2) the cultural reality of free expression in Mexico since the Revolution in 1910 and the subsequent Constitution of 1917, with emphasis on violations and changes over the past two

decades, and finally 3) an examination of the structure and practice of the three branches of the Mexican government, particularly the power of the executive branch and a critical review of the judiciary.

Even after Mexico had declared independence from Spain in 1810, the socioeconomic hierarchy remained an important aspect of society and the liberal project was forced to set aside fundamental change and instead chose to establish a liberal state in form only. Yet, these liberals consistently sought to protect the individual's autonomy and rights through written constitutions and the rule of law.⁶ In the constitution of 1824, the citizens of the newly formed federation were granted a series of individual guarantees that were modeled after the liberal constitutions of both Spain and the United States of America.⁷ The constitution derived from Jose Miguel Ramos Arispe's *acta constitucional*, which he drafted after receiving a suggested "Plan of Federal Government" from Stephen F. Austin.⁸ Specifically, Title 5, section 2 of the obligations of the state under Article 16l states "... to protect its inhabitants of the free use and liberty which they have to write, print, and publish their political ideas, without the necessity of license, revision, or approbation previous to publication, always taking care to observe the general laws on the subject."⁹ Further, the constitution also grants, under Title 3, Article 50, "exclusive rights to authors for their respective works... Third, protect and regulate the political liberty of the press, in order that its exercises may never be suspended, and much less abolished in any of the States and Territories of the Federation."¹⁰ However, in terms of religion, the federation did not grant such liberal freedoms as in Title 1, Article 3 the constitution states, "The religion of the Mexican Nation is and will be perpetually, the Roman Catholic Apostolic. The Nation will protect its wise and just laws, and prohibit the exercise of any other whatever."¹¹

Continuing in the constitution of 1836, the federation maintained the same freedom of expression guaranteed in the previous document, with similar vocabulary. The major difference was present in the wording of the state religion. Article 3, section 1 maintained the obligations of the Mexican included professing his/her commitment to the nation's religion.¹² But, by the time the constitution of 1857 was

written in an attempt to move ahead with civil law codification, this requirement was no longer mandated by the federal government. Article 5 under the rights of man stated that the law could not authorize any enforced irrevocable sacrifice of man in terms of work, education, or religion. Further, Articles 6, 7, 8, and 9 protected the rights of the citizens to manifest ideas without the inquisition of the judiciary and/or administrative branches with the exception of attack of morality, provocation of crime, or disturbance of the peace. These articles also granted the liberty to write and publish without censorship of any entity as long as it complies with the above stated restrictions and the right to petition and peacefully assemble.¹³

Mexicans are very proud of the constitution that exists today. In general, this document is characterized as the fundamental law that evolved from the twentieth century's first social revolution and was drafted in response to the social demands of the politically important groups that led the Revolution of 1910. What evolved was the Constitution of 1917.¹⁴ In this constitution, Articles 6, 7, 8, and 9 explicitly state the rights of the nation's citizen in the realm of freedom of expression. Article 6 states, "The expression of ideas shall not be subject to any judicial or administrative investigation, unless it offends good morals, infringes the rights of others, incites to crime or disturbs the public order."¹⁵ Article 7 states,

Freedom of writing and publishing writings on any subject is inviolable. No law or authority may establish censorship, require bonds from authors or printer, or restrict the freedom of printing, which shall be limited only by the respect due to private life, morals, and public peace. Under no circumstances may a printing press be sequestered as the instrument of the offense. The organic laws shall contain whatever provisions may be necessary to prevent the imprisonment of vendors, newsboys, workmen, and other employees of the establishment publishing the work denounced, under pretext of a denunciation of offenses of the press, unless their guilt is previously established.¹⁶

Article 7 grants the right to petition and specific indications in the manner in which this petition should be produced and limits this right to citizens of the Republic dealing with political matters.¹⁷ And Article 8 grants the right to peaceably assemble or associate for any lawful purpose, but restricts armed deliberative meetings. Further, it restricts the dissolution of such meetings, except when participants resort to violence

or use threats to intimidate authority.¹⁸ In the matter of religious practices, Article 24 explicitly states,

Everyone is free to embrace the religion of his choice and to practice all ceremonies, devotions, or observances of his respective faith, either in places of public worship or at home, provided they do not constitute an offense punishable by law. Every religious act of public worship must be performed strictly inside places of public worship, which shall at all times be under governmental supervision.¹⁹

Moreover, under Article 27, the ownership of lands, the second section explains that religious institutions, regardless of creed may not acquire, hold, or administer property. It explains that places of public worship are the property of the Nation, who determines which institutions may continue to be devoted to their present purposes.²⁰ And finally, under Title 7, Article 130, the federal powers are allowed to "exercise the supervision required by law in matters relating to religious worship and outward ecclesiastical forms."²¹ This article was amended on December 30, 1950. Those changes explicitly state that Congress is not able to enact laws establishing or prohibiting any religion, but that state legislatures have the power to determine the maximum number of ministers of denominations necessary for local needs that ministers must be Mexican by birth, that the criticism of fundamental laws of the nation in religious settings in specific or general terms is prohibited by law, as is the formation of any political group with religious affiliation. This action was not to control the church, but to limit the control the church had on the government."²²

Despite the explicit explanation of the individual guarantees listed in the Mexican Constitution, there have been numerous violations and conflicts that have arisen regarding these rights, particularly in terms of freedom of the press. The following analysis is a historical examination of the past century and the struggles between the people, press, and the government. Even though the Constitution of 1917 strictly prohibits monopolies²³, in 1935 the government created a monopoly over newsprint with the creation of Productora y Importadora de Papel S. A. (Pipsa), which was originally developed to alleviate publishers' concerns about the scarce amount and high price of newsprint.²⁴ Since its creation, this entity has been used as a

tool for the government to insure control of the press.²⁵ For example, in 1974 the independent daily newspaper *El Norte* had its newsprint supply cut by 83 percent after then President Luis Echeverria was enraged by the paper's coverage and editorials that were critical of his administration.²⁶ Further, many newspapers have difficulty remaining self-sustaining periodicals and depend on a number of government intervention tactics to maintain their existence, through both government subsidies of newsprint and advertisement. In fact, according to editors and publishers, the government provides 60 to 80 percent of the revenues generated by newspaper and magazines through advertisement purchases. Due to this fact, some administrations have threatened to withhold advertisements to publications that do not see that administration as favorable, which leads to editorial timidity and in some cases, self-censorship.²⁷

Newsprint is not the only mechanism used by some to exert influence over the press. There have been numerous violations that involved threats, intimidation, and even death to silence those who publish unfavorable commentary. In 1956, Manuel Acosta Meza, an editor of the Tijuana newspaper *El Imparcial*, was shot to death at his home. A former state policeman was found guilty of his assassination and sentenced to 13 years in prison, yet only 3 of those years were served before his release was ordered.²⁸ At the very least, there is some comfort in that the murdered of the above mentioned journalist was captured and sentenced. In some cases, it has been the government officials who have resorted to extreme control, or who have not actively pursued those who initiate these horrible crimes, or it is the government officials who are intimidated by the assailants.

In 1968, during a student protest for free speech, the Mexican military gunned down several student protestors. More recently Manuel Buendia Tellezgiron, a reporter who uncovered and published reports of corruption within the country's oil monopoly Pemex, was shot to death outside his Mexico City office in 1984. During the same week, Javier Juarez, editor of the weekly *Primera Plana*, was shot to death by unknown assailants and the body of a Hidalgo journalist was found, he had been strangled to death.²⁹ In the same month, Enrique Tellaeche, a journalist for *El*

Heraldo, was severely beaten when attempting to cover a union meeting and Lino Ortiz, a radio journalist claimed he received a death threat from police officials because of news stories he had been broadcasting.³⁰ In 1986, Ernesto Flores Torrijos, publisher of *El Popular*, and Norma Moreno, his assignments editor were killed outside the paper offices. Each of these journalists was working on corruption pieces linking organized crime to alleged political corruption. Two days following the deaths, a police investigator was killed and another injured when they stopped two men for questioning.³¹ In 1988, Hector Felix Miranda, co-editor of the anti-government weekly *Zeta*, was killed as he drove to work.³² Two security men employed by Jorge Hank Rhon, a member of one of Mexico's leading political families, were convicted of the murder.³³ In fact, between the years of 1980 and 1990, over 40 journalists were killed and numerous others were either assaulted or threatened as a result of the content of their publications.³⁴

Although the government does not control the newspapers directly, they do so indirectly through the limitations in the amount of newsprint available and at what price and through advertisement dollars.³⁵ There have been some attempts to limit governmental control of news entities.³⁶ In 1990 President Salinas made an attempt to end "any attempt at limiting or intimidating the free development of the communications media, and those who exercise their constitutional right of freedom of expression."³⁷ Yet when President Salinas attempted to stop government subsidies to newspapers, the publishers were adamantly opposed for fear of an economic collapse. Instead, the administration decided to allow the import of newsprint by other companies, with a 15-cent tax to be levied on all imports. Also, the administration did away with the requirement of licensing of newsprint sellers, formerly the licenses could only be obtained through petitioning of the government and Pipsa.³⁸ These were not the only changes made by the Salinas Administration. To end allegations of government payoffs to journalists, the administration implemented a new mechanism of control by allowing the Comptroller General to review the press and public relations budgets of all government agencies and the Executive office declared it would no longer pay for expenses of journalists when traveling abroad with the

President. Also, the state-owned daily newspaper, *El Nacional* and two television stations were privatized³⁹ as well as some radio stations.⁴⁰

Some of these regulations may have been purely cosmetic, as the majority populaces of the people are supporters of the dominant political forces, whether through years of exposure to regulation thus imposing self-regulation or through loyalty tactics by higher officials. For example, in 1994, one day following *La Reforma*'s report that over half of the citizens would not believe the State of the Union address given by then President Salinas, the vendors' union decided to boycott *La Reforma* by refusing to sell the publication.⁴¹ Furthermore, the limits of free expression in the culture are not simply limited to newsprint and periodical journalists. There is evidence to support the act that the government has exerted control over books, movies, telenovelas (soap operas), plays, and television.

In 1982, the Secretary of Education ordered all 3000 copies of a book with some biographical information about Mexico's former First Ladies seized and quarantined into a government warehouse.⁴² Also, prior to Salinas' election, the government censors stepped in to ensure that theaters in Mexico City did not perform the scheduled plays that were critical of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), and the political party who virtually controlled all government offices in Mexico until the mid-1990s. In fact, the government officials were censoring soap operas, presenting news coverage of the elections that ignored any opposition candidates, and censoring other dramatic offerings that could have been detrimental to the image of the PRI.⁴³ In 1984, a new law was presented that gave the government the right to control personnel and labor hours related to satellite technology.⁴⁴ Even when discussing NAFTA with the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, little restraint was undertaken by the producers of Televisa, a major media conglomerate. In 1993, five Mexicans, all who were critical of the North American Free Trade Agreement, were discussing concerns with the committee when they lost video and audio connection prior to the agreed upon hour and a half session was complete. When a spokesman for the station questioned about the "technical difficulty" had "nothing to say on the matter."⁴⁵ There are other examples of such silencing. In 1991 the president of the

Mexican Academy of Human Rights, Sergio Aguayo Quezada was cut off *mid-sentence* when his interview during a 15 minute program was unplugged four minutes and forty seconds into the discussion about the "fight for democracy" and desire to ensure "free and clean elections."

Aguayo had said nothing about the government or party candidate, but was silenced nonetheless.⁴⁶ Another example is the cancellation of Veronica Ortiz's five year old weekly talk show. Ortiz undertook two very critical shows on internal debt and NAFTA and was canceled within days. Ortiz is quick to point out that "you can't prove it is political censorship because it's not done directly."⁴⁷ Also in 1994, after President Zedillo took office, Televisa and another media conglomerate, TV Azteca, cancelled their lurid real-life cop shows shortly after the President voiced official objections. And as recently at 1999, the Mexican Cinema Institute, a government agency that subsidizes cinema produced in Mexico, tried to sabotage the release of "Herod's Law," a film critical of the government as a whole.⁴⁸ The government attempted to block its release at a French-sponsored film festival in Acapulco and the Mexican Cinema Institute hastily screened an out-of-focus version in two separate Mexico City movie theaters with broken-down projectors. After those attempts were unsuccessful because of mass public outcry, the institute tried to sell the government's ownership in the film, but only if the director agreed to wait until after the upcoming presidential elections.⁴⁹

Despite these violations, there have been major reforms other than the attempts by former President Salinas to ensure a more objective freedom of expression. Most notable is the Declaration of Chapultepec, In 1994, the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) sponsored a Hemisphere Conference on Freedom of Speech in Mexico City, chaired by former secretary general of the United Nations Javier Perez de Cuellar.⁵⁰ This declaration proclaimed, "A society of free individual cannot remain free without free speech and the freedom of the press."⁵¹ The agreement on the final declaration involved over 70 delegates of editors, publishers, reporters, politicians, lawyers, and scholars who drafted four declarations and engaged in heated discussions before nearly all agreed upon the final document.⁵² The final

decree declared 10 principles of free speech that covered freedom of speech as an inalienable right of the people, open access to information, protection of journalists' sources, non-discrimination and non-favoritism of journalists due to the content of his/her publishing, protection for journalists and pursuit/punishment of assailants, censorship and circulation restrictions, tariff and license requirements for news-gathering/publishing equipment, voluntary membership of any unionized affiliate, truth and accuracy of reporting, and criticism of the government being a right of the people/journalists. The declaration ended with this statement, "The struggle for freedom of expression and of the press is not a one-day task; it is an ongoing commitment. It is fundamental to the survival of democracy and civilization in our hemisphere."⁵³

Prior to this conference, President Salinas began his historical reformations of the Pipsa and the subsequent privatization of El Nacional and two of the government's run television station.⁵⁴ Following the lead of his predecessor, President Ernesto Zedillo enacted numerous reforms, some to be discussed later, that will potentially have a direct impact on freedom of expression issues. Realizing that people were losing patience with the antiquated political system, Zedillo and the opposition led Mexico through a series of reforms that set up an independent institute to supervise elections (previous elections had been shrouded with inconsistencies that led many to believe the PRI was "fixing" elections).⁵⁵ Moreover, the Zedillo reforms granted equal access to all political parties in terms of election advertisement, equal monies for elections for the PRI and its top two competitors, not to mention the independent board to ensure the elections would be the true representation of the voice of the people.⁵⁶

There are several potential explanations that could be employed to analyze the inconsistencies between the rights granted in the Mexican constitutions and what culminates in practice. It is important to consider several factors in this analysis including the dominant PRI regime that lasted 71 years, the unique structure of the constitution and its ever evolving amendments by the executive branch, and the limited separation of powers between each branch of government, which has not

allowed a truly constitutional Supreme Court and led to lack of trust for the judiciary and at times, the government as a whole. First, it is important to realize the magnitude of power the PRI has had over every aspect of government in Mexico. Until very recently, the PRI monopolized and effectively controlled virtually every aspect of the Mexican government. It is best explained when one considers that the President of the Republic, each member of his cabinet, all the Senators in the legislative branch, an extreme majority of all the members of the House of Deputies in the legislative branch, all ambassadors and/or consuls in foreign service, all the governors in each of the 31 States, and every mayor in each city/municipality, were all official registered members of the PRI.⁵⁷ With such an overwhelming majority, the President is then able to pass virtually every initiative of his administration without much opposition.

Not only did the PRI have ultimate control of virtually every branch of government, but also the methodology of the constitution combined with PRI dominance has given the executive branch excessive power. The structure of the Mexican constitution gives the Federal Executive the responsibility to submit to Congress about 95% of all bills, including any constitutional amendments. Compared to our 26 amendments since 1789, the Mexican Constitution has undergone 350 amendments since early 1917. The U.S. Constitution has textual permanency and has remained virtually unaltered over the past two centuries, yet the meaning of its provisions has changed drastically via judicial interpretation. Conversely, the Mexican Constitution allows textual amendments to the provisions of the fundamental law every year so the new text can reflect the changing society, rather than allowing judicial interpretation to change the meaning of those provisions.⁵⁸ In essence, the Mexican Constitution has become "a sort of political newsletter that sends out periodic political messages to the masses."⁵⁹

To better understand this process, it is beneficial to explain the manner in which this process is undertaken. At the beginning of every presidency, the Federal Executive publishes a "National Development Plan" which is in essence the political platform or agenda of that administration to change parts of public policy to ensure the creation of that administration's legacy, some including constitutional

amendments. This practice is well recognized in Mexico that is allowed within Article 135 of the Constitution. This amendment explains that the Constitution may be amended and reformed, and in order for this happen, the reforms must be approved by the two-thirds majority of the Congress of the Union and these must then be approved by a two-thirds majority of the legislatures of the States. With the political dominance of the PRI, these amendment votes have been more or less ceremonial, as little opposition is ever voiced.⁶⁰ On top of the power of the Executive, the ever-changing structure of the judiciary and the power of the PRI over selection of the judiciary have left little recourse for the people in terms of unconstitutional laws, unconstitutional application of laws, and sheer violations of constitutional rights. First, one must understand the one-party dominance and how it has affected both the implications of judicial rule and the reputation of this branch of government. For instance, in Mexico circuit and district court judges serve six-year terms that coincide with the Presidential term. Further, judicial appointments have previously been based on standard to ensure political loyalty, which perpetuates the dependence of the judiciary on the other branches of government and does not allow for a clear separation of powers.⁶¹ This has led the judiciary to be the least prestigious of the governmental organs because of the influence which some individual exercise over the appointees and the manner of appointment. As a result, the right to be "free of any unconstitutional actions taken by the government cannot be vindicated by a deeply politicized and corrupt judiciary."⁶²

One would expect under a system of good governance that the judiciary would be fair and impartial. In order for this to be accomplished, the system would need to be, at the very least, apolitical. Conversely, courts used by political regimes to enhance partisan ends cannot be legitimate or systems of good governance. Further, there must be an accountability of the judiciary to ensure the impartial nature of decision-making. When these mechanisms are not present, a dependent and corrupt judiciary is created that lacks the confidence of the people to establish a state of true democracy.⁶³

Furthermore, established systems of governance that permit such practices create a culture full of apathy for the rule of law. Through the judicial perspective, this damages the legitimacy and respect of the judiciary, but culturally creates an environment of uncertainty and at times, a culture of apathy, endangering the value of the Constitution that allows such systems to exist and the rights of the people granted by such an institution of government. It creates a precarious reliance on roles and relations rather than rules and regulations, thus increasing the subjectivity in terms of application of laws.⁶⁴

Furthering the subjectivity in lawmaking and particularly those issues dealing with constitutional rights is the Amparo mechanism. Originating in 19th century Mexico and officially adopted in 1936, the Amparo mechanism, or protection suit, allows a plaintiff to challenge the constitutionality of actions by a government authority or provisions of any given law. It is used as a procedural device that allows individuals to protect their constitutional and human rights in all types of court cases on both the federal and state levels. Essentially, there are two types of Amparos, direct and indirect. The direct Amparo can overturn or modify a given ruling of a trial judge and the indirect Amparo protects against official actions that violate constitutional rights. The indirect Amparos are brought directly to the Supreme Court when the dispute is a constitutional conflict between the Federation and the municipalities. The problem with this mechanism lies in the limitations of this mechanism to set legal precedent. When an Amparo suit is ruled upon, its only effect is for the party filing the complaint, essentially creating an exemption for that party, but allowing the unconstitutional law to stand.⁶⁵

Not only does this allow unconstitutional acts to continue, until every individual has filed suit, but it also damages the value of the judiciary as a whole. Michael Taylor argues that this suit lowers the "constitutional consciousness" of a large portion of the judiciary by never allowing a majority of magistrates to ever hear or rule upon constitutional issues, not only damaging the constitutional understanding of the judiciary, but the nation as a whole. However, given the corruption and

dependency of the judiciary on state and federal levels, allowing lower court rulings could further damage the defense of individual's rights.⁶⁶

Mechanisms like the Arnparo mechanism have led to extreme backlog in the Supreme Court, and as a result, multiple changes in the structure of the court have taken place, which only furthers the discrediting of the entity. The composition of the Mexican Supreme Court has evolved since its original implementation by the Constitution of 1824. Originally, the Constitution of 1824 called for eleven justices and remained through all of the following constitutions yet was restructured in 1928, 1934, 1940, 1951, 1968, and as recently as 1987. In most cases, these were structural and procedural changes in an attempt to alleviate the extreme backlog of court cases and attempts to make this court a truly constitutional court. Throughout each constitution and the subsequent amendments, the justices were allotted lifetime appointments, yet three times the magistrates of the Supreme Court have been removed and the President has re-appointed justices of his choice and the president has been able to change the number of justices multiple times, not allowing for any consistency in the highest entity of the judiciary. During the Zedillo administration, the court underwent unprecedented change and currently reflects the following composition and jurisdiction. Zedillo implemented numerous reforms that affect the term (now 15 year terms), the manner in which justices are chosen, and the duties of the court, and changed the number of justices back to eleven (from its previous number of 26 who were broken into 5 different salas, or chambers, that each had a specific issue jurisdiction). Dealing with unconstitutional actions and will hopefully deal specifically with free speech issue, the most notable change is in the jurisdiction of the court called "Acciones de Inconstitucionalidad" or unconstitutional actions.⁶⁷ This provision allows the court to rule on legislation passed by any municipality, state, or federal entity that is in conflict with the fundamental law present in the Constitution. It states that within 30 days of the publishing of any law if the Attorney General or one-third of the representatives of either congressional entity questions the constitutionality of the law, the statute will be ruled upon and then removed if eight of the eleven justices find it unconstitutional.

This would then apply across the board, rather than simply to those who filed the complaint.⁶⁸ However, given the time restrictions, who is to call [or this type of unconstitutional act, and the number of justices who are to rule on these issues before a statute can be removed, the act has been criticized as purely cosmetic and some find the new mechanism inoperative. This new structure mayor may not have precedent to change laws like "descato" laws, which make it illegal to criticize certain political entities within specific contexts.⁶⁹ Obviously Mexico's judicial system has undergone precedented change and restructuring which will hopefully grant the citizens a manner of recourse for protecting their individual guarantees, including the freedom of expression. These actions pave the way for citizens of Mexico to demand that the theoretical implications developed with the Constitution to be enacted in practice as well.⁷⁰ However, Mexico will need to more than judiciary restructuring and jurisdiction to establish a more objective view of specific rights, including a multi-party system of government. Nevertheless, since the Declaration of Chapultepec and with the administrations of both Salinas and Zedillo, the country has already seen some historical change.⁷¹ For instance, with the Salinas administration paving the way for a more free press, Zedillo was able to implement change. Of these changes the most notable being the equal access of the top three parties in the political system and a body to ensure clean, fair election, allowing for the true reflection of the will of the people as was exposed via publication of public opinion of public policies.⁷²

In the election of 2000, the first minority-party presidential candidate, Vicente Fox of the Partido Accion National (PAN). This was the first change of power via political party affiliation in 71 years.⁷³ Already, the country has seen change through the actions of the President. President Fox has launched proposals to strengthen the legislative and judiciary branches of the government at the expense of the presidency.⁷⁴ However, any such changes promise to be daunting tasks to undertake as the PRT is still the dominant force in Mexican politics.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the change is evident. For example, in 2001 President Fox welcomed members of the EZLN, a radical Zapatista rebel group who in 1994 took instrumented a small uprising in the southern state of Chiapas in the name of Indian rights,⁷⁶ to "the arena of discussion of

ideas.⁷⁷ After that announcement, Congress voted to allow the Zapatista rebels to speak before lawmakers and passed a measure requiring at least one-seventh of the Congress to be present.⁷⁸ Even the Inter American Press Association's chairman of the Committee on Freedom of the Press and Information stated that "great progress" had been made in terms of free expression in Mexico.⁷⁹ For instance, the book with biographical information and photos of Mexico's First Ladies that was seized in 1982 was published in 1999 without incident and it contained much more detailed information regarding these women than the original version.⁸⁰ Hopefully, with the previously stated reforms that have taken place in Mexico in the past two decades, we will continue to see the positive, objective evolution of freedom of expression.

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