

exacerbated distributive conflict within Mexico's elites and among its social classes and interest groups.¹⁸ In other words, the transition from state-financed development to a liberalized market economy has dramatically reduced the economic resources available to the PRI-government to keep its traditional, broad governing coalition together. Distributive conflict has been manifested in various ways: inner-elite infighting, middle class and popular pressures for democratic reform, the "birth" of civil society through the emergence of new protest movements, and the disturbing rise in illegal narcotics trafficking and related violence. While such conflict continues to lack a single focus, it has intensified steadily since 1982.

Consequently, many of the cornerstones and political rules of the post-revolutionary order have been subjected to considerable stress. A quick look at the changes they have undergone supports the notion of a system under profound transition.

Presidentialism. Presidential authority reached its zenith under Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Decision-making power was concentrated among Salinas and a select group of cabinet-level technocrats. But in the wake of the Colosio assassination, the peso crisis and allegations of corruption against the Salinas family, presidentialism has come into serious disrepute. Entering office without much of a power base of his own and under considerable pressure for political reform, Zedillo has promised to curb presidential prerogatives substantially, including not interfering in candidate selection processes for state governors within the PRI, making Congress and the Supreme Court truly independent, decentralizing many powers to the states, and creating a Federal Auditor's Office to provide congressional oversight of the executive.¹⁹

At the same time, Mexico's changing presidentialism is characterized by two interesting paradoxes. First, Mexico requires a strong presidency to continue successfully its economic and political reforms. Second, while demanding greater democratization, most Mexicans continue to look to and rely on their president to instigate and oversee reforms. Thus, while Mexican presidentialism may be weakening

¹⁸For a similar interpretation of the politics of economic reform, see Robert H. Bates and Anne O. Krueger, "Generalizations Arising from the Country Studies," in **Political and Economic Interactions in Economic Policy Reform: Evidence from Eight Countries**, eds., Robert H. Bates and Anne O. Krueger (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 444-72.

¹⁹A number of the Zedillo government's political reform proposals and pledges can be found in Ernesto Zedillo, "First State of the Nation Report," Mexico City, September 1, 1995; Poder Ejecutivo Federal, **National Development Plan 1995-2000** (Mexico City: Presidencia de la República, 1995); Ernesto Zedillo, "Toma de Posesión de Ernesto Zedillo," Mexico City, December 1, 1995.