

confrontational ways of coping with crisis. As long as adequate formal and informal mechanisms for adjusting continue to exist, then a radical path to change is unlikely to occur. Two key ingredients would have to be present. First, Mexicans en masse would have to make the conceptual leap of identifying what have until now been perceived as individual or household problems as collective problems requiring collective responses. This, however, goes against the Mexicans' age-old sense of survival. Second, it would need strong, charismatic and unifying revolutionary leadership, which seems to be in relatively short supply in Mexico.

There are, however, both evolutionary and devolutionary tendencies in the course presently taken by political change. On the positive side, important political reforms have been or are in the process of being realized. President Zedillo has promised that authentic electoral reforms will be in place in time for the 1997 mid-term elections. It is encouraging that, even before assuming office, Zedillo began to search for a better relationship with the opposition parties. In January 1995, a National Political Accord (APN) was signed between the government and opposition parties, committing them to cooperate toward democratic reform. While electoral incidents in the states of Tabasco and Yucatán temporarily soured inter-party working relations, it now appears as if they are once again cooperating with the goal of greater transparency and fairness in the mid-term elections of 1997 in mind. For the first time, it is likely that Mexico will have an independent federal electoral institute,²⁴ and greater enforcement of the electoral code. President Zedillo has also made reinforcing the rule of law among his top priorities.

Nonetheless, there are also disturbing signs on the horizon. Fiscal restraint has led to institutional decay, particularly among Mexico's law enforcement agencies. Authorities may have become more susceptible to narcotics-related corruption as witnessed by the recent allegations against Mario Ruiz Massieu and Raúl Salinas de Gortari, and drug-related violence is increasing.²⁵ Mexico's narco-penetration undoubtedly contributes to violent outcomes in the country's already heated distributive conflicts.

²⁴There is some debate whether an independent electoral authority is at all essential for Mexico. After all, a number of democracies, such as the Scandinavian countries of Norway and Sweden, possess electoral apparatuses that fall under government supervision. However, the author contends that, given Mexico's electoral history, an autonomous electoral institute is the only form that Mexican citizens will accept as legitimate and truly democratic.

²⁵See Silvana Paternostro, "Mexico as a Narco-democracy," *World Policy Journal* 12, 1 (Spring 1995): 41-7.