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History and the Pendulum: an Application of the Schlesinger Theory of American Politics to Twentieth-century Mexico

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Chapter 1:

An Introduction to Cyclical Theory

In times of change and danger when there is a quicksand of fear under men's reasoning, a sense of continuity with generations gone before can stretch like a lifeline across the scary present.

--John Dos Passos

The historical cycle is a permanent feature of all historical thought; but wherever it occurs, it is incidental to a point of view. The cycle is the historian's field of vision at a given moment...Some system of cycles there must always be for every historical student, as every man's shadow must fall somewhere on his own landscape; but as his shadow moves with every movement he makes, so his cyclical view of history will shift and dissolve, decompose and recompose itself anew, with every advance in the historical knowledge of the individual and the race.

--R.G. Collingwood

Beginning with the Greeks Parmenides, Empodocles and Polybius, continuing through unknown Mayan theologians, to the works of Vico and Hegel, cyclical theories are found throughout the historiographical canon. The tradition of cyclical history has continued into the twentieth century with the works of Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, and José Ortega y Gasset, who have written in sweeping terms that cover the rise and fall of empires and generations over many years.[1] The appeal of such theories is that they divide history into orderly quantities, making it easier to

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[1]See José Ortega y Gasset, Man and Crisis tr. Mildred Adams (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1959), Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West eds. Helmut Warner and Arthur Helps, tr. Charles Francis Atkins (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), and Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History, 12 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1934-61).

understand and teach. Nevertheless, methodological problems inherent in verifying the presence of cyclical patterns call into question the validity of cyclical theories.[2]

Spengler's cyclical history exists on a large scale.

> "Cultures, embodying forms of government, religions, arts and crafts, sciences, peculiar to one culture and that culture alone, rise and fall, and leave nothing behind....they go through the proscribed stages... and then fade away. World-history is the sum of such cultures. Spengler rejected linear progress."[3]

Spengler's early-twentieth-century view was that Western Europe was undergoing just such a decline. The world was in an age of "gigantic conflicts," for "hundreds of thousands, and latterly millions, of men have stood ready to march, and mighty fleets renewed every ten years have filled the harbours." Spengler saw Western Europe as in the process of "a transition from Napoleanism to Caesarism," Caesarism being any government which "is in its inward self a return to thorough formlessness...Real importance centered in the wholly personal power exercised by the Caesar, or by anybody else capable of exercising it in his place. It is the

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[2]For other criticism of Spengler, Toynbee, and Ortega y Gasset, a beginning can be found in Ashley Montagu, Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1956), 385 p.; H. Stuart Hughes, Oswald Spengler, a Critical Estimate (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, Inc., 1952), 176 p; K. Marie Mound, "Ortega's Theory of Generations; a test of relevance" (Thesis(M.A.), University of New Mexico, 1986), 102 leaves.

[3]Spengler, vii.

récidive of a form-filled world into primitivism, into the cosmic history-less."[4]

Toynbee concentrates on a study of civilizations rather than nations, identifying twenty-one of them in the six thousand or so years of history of which we have some knowledge. Each civilization has undergone four stages: genesis, growth, breakdown, and disintegration. The current civilization is the "Latin-Christian" one, which arose from the Hellenic and Roman civilizations. Unlike Spengler, Toynbee does not forecast the imminent disintegration of this civilization.[5]

Civilizations come into being through what Toynbee calls "Challenge and response," that is, for a civilization to arise it must be faced with an obstacle. By overcoming the obstacle, the civilization takes form. As civilizations grow they garner an increasing control over nature, so that "the physical environment loses its importance, and action shifts from outside to within." The breakdown of civilizations Toynbee does not declare necessary, rather it is dependent on whether the civilization can continue to creatively meet the challenges it faces. If it can't, then the civilization breaks down as institutions become stale and lose the creative vitality they originally held. Finally, disintegration occurs when schisms develop between the ruling minority and the ruled majority, the majority feeling cut off

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[4]Ibid., 375, 378-9.
[5]Montagu, 40.

from a share in the civilization, and finally conflict and violence break out.[6]

Ortega y Gasset moved beyond civilizations or cultures to focus on man, or more specifically, the generation. Central to Ortega y Gasset's idea of generational change is his reliance on the importance of ideas, or beliefs, held in common by a generation. "The structure of his life will depend primordially on the beliefs on which he is grounded; and further that the most decisive changes in humanity are changes of belief."[7]

Moving from this point, we see that the idea of generational change in history occurs when a group of men, not necessarily born the same year, but within a zone of years, who share similar beliefs, live their lives and gradually assume positions of power. Ortega y Gasset defines this assumption of power as occurring between the ages of forty-five and sixty. The previous fifteen years, ages thirty to forty-five, is the period of "gestation," when the generation is slowly moving upwards, developing its ideas and beliefs. History is a cycle of the changes in generations assuming power and falling from power.[8]

Due to the extended periods of time covered by these cyclical theories, it is impossible to consider every civilization, every culture, every generation in sufficient

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[6]Ibid., 40-41.
[7]Ortega y Gasset, History as a System: and other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1941), 166.
[8]Ortega y Gasset, 50, 59.

detail to develop the definitive picture of each, so Spengler, Toynbee, and Ortega y Gasset must rely on selective use of historical "facts" to prove their theories. These facts come from the realms of politics, economics, science and the arts.

Spengler's most important proof is in drawing accurate parallels between the Greco-Roman civilization and our Western European civilization, for he is attempting to show that we are in an age of decline similar to that undergone by the late Greco-Roman civilization. Spengler does a poor job of this, however. Key to Spengler's theory is the contention that in the early twentieth century Western Europe was in an age of "Contending States," and in a transition from "Napoleanism to Caesarism."

In support of the notion that we are in an age of contending states, Spengler offers only the tragedy of World War I and what he calls "the century of gigantic permanent armies."[9] Spengler seems content to let us fill in any further evidence necessary. It is easy to draw forth examples of contending states in the twentieth century, but why did Spengler not provide us with more specifics? What, then, of the League of Nations, and the Wilsonian calls for world peace? We may say that Europe struggled over control of the Middle East and Africa, but what of the United States, which absented itself from these struggles?

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[9]Spengler, 375-376.

Spengler fares no better in trying to prove a resurgence of "Caesarism," or personal power overcoming institutional power in our society. "The struggle of, not principles, but men." Spengler talks at great length about the form of Caesarism, but offers almost nothing in the way of examples in the twentieth-century. The greatest struggle of the twentieth century has been the struggle between Communism and Western Democratic Capitalism, not any particular struggle between individuals. Certainly, great individuals have dominated the political scene: Gandhi, Churchill, Roosevelt, Hitler; but one must also view the rise in importance of the League of Nations (in Spengler's time) and the United Nations, the lack of dominant individual leaders in World War I, as evidence that "Caesarism" may not really be so prevalent.[10]

Toynbee concentrates on the "challenge and response" concept to explain the different stages (genesis, growth, breakdown, disintegration) a civilization undergoes. Civilizations arise, according to Toynbee, because each has been challenged by a physical environment and each has overcome that environment. Can we really say that our Western society was faced with a challenge in the form of the "forests and the rains and the frosts of Transalpine Europe which had not confronted the antecedent Hellenic Civilization?" Surely the Hellenic civilization knew how to make clothes to protect the body, and tools to cut things,

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[10]Ibid., 378, 382.

surely the "barbarians" living in Western Europe before it became a civilization knew how to cut down trees and keep themselves warm.

Or consider the genesis of the Mexica civilization in the valley of Mexico. People lived in the valley of Mexico, farming and hunting, long before the Mexica arrived from the north and took control. The Mexica built the Aztec civilization on superior organization centered in the valley of Mexico--after being unable to accomplish a similar feat in the hot and desolate lands to the north. Why did the Mexica not respond to the challenge of *this* environment?[11]

Ortega y Gasset fares no better in proving his theory of generational change. He identifies the first truly "modern" generation as being from approximately 1600 to 1650. In support of this, Ortega y Gasset describes Descartes as "the figure who most clearly represents the character of the period." If this is the generation of Descartes, are we to assume that Descartes' ideas dominated his generation? But what of the many poor people who couldn't read or couldn't afford to sit around and discuss philosophy? Did they believe the ideas of Descartes? Did they even know Descartes existed? Proving that a particular generation is dominated by a particular thought is a difficult task. Working backwards from Descartes, Ortega y Gasset describes the previous generations as being dominated by Hobbes, then previously by Galileo and Kepler--but wait, didn't the church

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[11]Toynbee, vol. I., 332.

accuse Galileo of heresy for believing that the planets revolved around the sun, not the earth? Are we to say that Galileo's thought dominated his generation?[12]

For every fact supporting a cyclical theory, there is another fact contradicting the cyclical theory. Contradicting facts, of course, are not mentioned by Spengler, Toynbee, or Ortega y Gasset. But we have set ourselves an impossible task, for *all* use of evidence is selective. Nevertheless, we are faced with a more subtle, yet equally important problem in proving cyclical theories, when our evidence has no uniformity, but is simply a grab-bag of facts from many different aspects of society. Can we not do something about the uniformity of our evidence, putting us on a more solid basis to prove the existence of cyclical patterns?

Arthur M. Schlesinger and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. narrowed cyclical history to deal with a specific country: the United States. Arthur Schlesinger first set forth his cyclical theory of United States history in 1924, and more recently his son, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., updated it in his 1986 book The Cycles of American History. The Schlesingers' cyclical theory stands alone as *the* cyclical theory of United States history.[13]

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[12]Ortega y Gasset, 62-63.

[13]See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Paths to the Present (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949), and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Cycles of American History (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986).

The Schlesingers' cyclical theory posits that national (more specifically, presidential) politics in the United States alternates between eras during which different political philosophies are dominant. "Any scrutiny of American history discloses the alternation of these attitudes. A period of concern for the rights of the few has been followed by one of concern for the wrongs of the many. Emphasis on the welfare of property has given way to emphasis on human welfare....These shifts of mood can be plotted with reasonable precision." Schlesinger developed these shifts in mood into a table, beginning in 1765 and ending in 1947. The period 1765 to 1787 saw an "increase in democracy" with the increasing independence of the colonies and the articles of confederation providing only loose ties between the states; the period from 1787-1801 saw a lessening of democracy with the development of the constitution and the primacy of the federalist forces under Hamilton; this was followed by another increase in democracy from 1801-1816 when the Jeffersonian ideals held sway; in turn this was followed by a conservative, lessening of democracy from 1816-1829, and Jackson brought about another age of liberalism and increasing democracy from 1829-1841, which faded into the conservative epoch of 1841-1861, and so on. Skipping to the twentieth century, Schlesinger had so far seen the liberal period from 1901-1919, with its trust-busting and Wilsonian appeals to world peace, followed by the conservative free-market capitalism of the period from 1919-1931, and of course

the turn back to the liberal side with the rise of Roosevelt and the New Deal from 1931-1947. Schlesinger went on to predict that "The recession from liberalism which began in 1947... was due to end in 1962....On this basis the next conservative epoch will commence around 1978."[14]

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has since extended his father's theory later into the twentieth century. Redefining the two forces as "public purpose" and "private interest," Schlesinger, Jr. asks, "How does the model of a thirty-year alternation between public purpose and private interest fit the political history of the United States in the twentieth century?" Writing in 1986, Schlesinger, Jr. can comment on whether or not his father's predictions were correct. Identifying the 1960s and part of the 1970s as the liberal period his father foresaw, Schlesinger, Jr. also claims that the Reagan era of the 1980s is the conservative epoch his father saw returning in 1978. Schlesinger partly explains this by the fact that Carter was a conservative Democrat. Taking his father's theory one step further, Schlesinger, Jr. predicts that another period of public purpose will occur around 1990.[15]

On several points Schlesinger, Jr. refines his father's theory. The two forces of the cycle are redefined, conservative and liberal, increasing and lessening democracy thrown out as too ambiguous. Schlesinger, Jr. attempts to

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[14]Schlesinger, 81-85.
[15]Schlesinger, Jr., 31-47.

find a cause of the cycle in the public psychology of the American mind, theorizing that we collectively try out two different theories, over time growing tired of one and switching back to the other. He also introduces Ortega y Gasset's idea of the generation, explaining that the era in which a particular generation reaches maturation (15-30) can affect how that generation acts when in power. Just as the present ruling generation, the "Baby Boomers," came of age under Kennedy and Johnson and the liberalism of the 1960s, we can expect them to pursue liberal policies now that they are in power.[16]

Here it must be explained that the Schlesingers do not try and pigeon-hole American political parties as representing only one political philosophy since time immemorial. Rather, each party sees its philosophy change over time, and sometimes the two parties switch positions on issues. Political parties are less important than the political philosophies they represent. Thus we cannot say that the 1980s were dominated by the "Republicans," rather they were dominated by a conservative philosophy, which just happened to be espoused by Republicans.

The elections of 1960, 1964, 1980, 1984, and 1992 show the Schlesingers' theory to be an uncannily accurate description of national politics in the United States and explain the attraction of the Schlesingers' theory to historians of the United States. The Schlesingers, though,

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[16]Ibid., 27-28, 31.

like the cyclical theorists before them, rely on the selective, non-uniform use of evidence to determine the political philosophy of a given era. Political platforms, programs, speeches, and policies are referred to by the Schlesingers in backing up their theory. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has also referred to the "consensus of the historical community," in labeling a particular era as dominated by a particular political philosophy.[17]

Although probably not intentionally, the Schlesingers, in describing their theory as one of "American" history, fall prey to the standard mistake of many U.S. historians who equate "American History" with the history of the United States. What, then, of Canada, Mexico, and Brazil? American History, in its technical sense, is the history of all areas which make up the geographic area known as "the Americas." Acknowledging the Schlesingers' semantic mistake, let us ask, for purposes of scholarly inquiry, if their theory really is one of "American" history, by applying it to another part of America: Mexico.

Is there a cyclical pattern in twentieth-century Mexican national politics?[18] Although this question is important, perhaps as important a question, in the light of the weakness of prior cyclical theories of history, is whether or not we can prove such a theory on a more concrete basis. All use of

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[17]Schlesinger, Arthur Jr., to Brian Carpenter, 14 September 1993. (See Appendix)

[18]The Schlesingers' theory includes the nineteenth century, but for necessary brevity, we will deal only with the twentieth century in Mexico.

facts is selective, but is it possible to develop some kind of uniform standard against which to measure the political philosophy of each Mexican sexenio?[19] Is there not a common element in each presidency, some field of evidence which exists in every presidency, something which can be measured or interpreted as characterizing each presidency as dominated by a political philosophy? Although, as will be shown, this attempt at making history a bit more scientific ultimately fails, the path to failure leads to many insights about the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican system of government, and the future of Mexico.

Cyclical, or pendulum theories of Mexican history are not new, and although widely discussed, little research has been done to validate such theories.[20] The first such discussion of a pendulum effect was by Martin Needler, in his book Politics & Society in Mexico, where he suggests that policy changes occur over two sexenios. Starting with the liberal Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934, the next president, Manuel Avila Camacho, was more centrist, and Camacho's successor, Miguel Alemán, was more conservative. Alemán was in turn

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[19]*Sexenio* refers to the six-year term which every Mexican president since Cárdenas has been limited to. By law, no president may serve more than one term, and after his term is expected to retire from an active role in politics.

[20]The terms "cyclical" and "pendulum" are interchangeable. The pendulum is merely a way of visualizing the cyclical theory and involves a pendulum swinging back and forth between two opposing sides, each of which represents a particular political philosophy.

followed by the centrist Ruíz Cortines and the liberal Adolfo Lopez Mateos.[21]

Subsequent discussions of the cyclical theory have focused on the idea that policy change occurs with each change in presidents. Merilee Grindle has posited: "In general, policy making in Mexico is an intrabureaucratic process which is clearly demarcated by the sexennial change of administrations."[22] E.V.K. Fitzgerald has suggested that expenditure patterns in Mexico follow the pendulum effect.[23] The Business International Corporation, in a report on foreign investment policy in Mexico, suggested that policy changes from left to right occur with each new administration.[24]

Other scholars have supported the cyclical theory, but in a limited form. Linda Hall argued that the Mexican president can change policy only to a certain extent, and must never forget the two fundamental goals of the Mexican state since the Revolution: economic growth and social justice.[25] Daniel Levy and Gabriel Székely, in their book

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[21]Martin C. Needler, Politics & Society in Mexico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 47.

[22]Merilee S. Grindle, "Policy Change in an Authoritarian Regime: Mexico under Echeverría," Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 19, no. 4(Nov. 1977): 523-55.

[23]E.V.K. Fitzgerald, *Patterns of Public Sector Income and Expenditure in Mexico.* Technical Paper Series no. 17. Austin: Office for Public Sector Studies, Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas. 1978.

[24]*Investment Strategies in Mexico: How to Deal with Mexicanization.* (New York: Business International Corporation, 1979).

[25]Linda Hall, "Mexican Presidentialism from Díaz to Echeverría: An Interpretive Study," Social Science Journal 17, no. 1(Jan. 1980): 41-52.

Mexico: Paradoxes of Stability and Change, argued that the pendulum effect is limited by the accepted norms of the political establishment.[26] The most recent study of cyclical patterns in Mexico, by Dale Story, attempts to quantify the pendulum effect by looking at government expenditures. Story finds no statistical evidence to support a cyclical theory across presidential sexenios, although he does find evidence to support the idea of a cyclical effect within sexenios.[27] Some of these cyclical theory studies will be dealt with in greater detail later in my paper.

The cyclical theory has also entered the mainstream press. A survey of Mexico in The Economist in 1978 concluded that a left-right cycle had occurred between sexenios.[28] Business Week, accepting the cyclical theory as valid, in 1981 predicted a leftist candidate would emerge as the next president in 1982, in contrast to the "conservative" López Portillo. This transition was described as part of "what has historically been an alternation between left and right in the PRI."[29]

The cyclical, or pendulum, theory presupposes that policy change (policy being a manifestation of political philosophy) results from changes in politics (represented in

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[26]Daniel Levy and Gabriel Székely, Mexico: Paradoxes of Stability and Change (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983), 111.

[27]Dale Story, "Policy Cycles in Mexican Presidential Politics," Latin American Research Review 20, no. 3(1985): 139-161.

[28]David Gordon, "Mexico: A Survey," The Economist 22 April 1978: 16.

[29]Business Week 14 September 1981: 57. In fact, the PRI's candidate for president in 1982, Miguel de la Madrid, would turn out to be even more conservative than López Portillo.

our case by changes in presidents). Some evidence suggests that policy change is more dependent on specific circumstances. For example, López Portillo pursued conservative policies for five years of his sexenio, but in his final year turned dramatically toward the left, implementing exchange controls and nationalizing the banks in response to the the financial crisis of 1982. Portillo's successor, Miguel de la Madrid, pursued conservative policies in dealing with the 1982 financial crisis, however, reinforcing the idea that policy change is based on changes in presidents.

Studies have provided some foundation for the idea that changes in policy result from changes in politics. Edward Tufte, in his book Political Control of the Economy, developed the theory that in the United States, changes in economic policy are partially determined by presidential elections. Valerie Bunce, in a study of fourteen nations, capitalist and communist, found that new leaders produce significant alterations in budgeting (and therefore in policy, the budget being merely the financial expression of policy).[30]

Methodological problems ultimately prohibit the application of the Schlesingers' theory to Mexico. As a discussion of the Schlesingers' theory in the context of Mexico leads us to doubt the validity of a cyclical theory of

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[30]Valerie Bunce, Do New Leaders Make a Difference? Executive Succession and Public Policy under Capitalism and Socialism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), and Edward R. Tufte, Political Control of the Economy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

twentieth-century Mexican history, the natural opposite, or linear theory of history takes on added validity and may be the more accurate description of Mexican history in the twentieth century. The Mexican Revolution may not alternate between left and right, but move forward over time, each successive presidency building upon--but different from--its predecessors.[31]

This work falls into several areas. First is a discussion of my attempt to develop a more concrete basis for proving the Schlesingers' cyclical theory, as applied to Mexico, and the ultimate failure of this attempt. Second is a discussion of the various aspects of twentieth-century Mexican history which make the Schlesingers' theory inapplicable, and third a discussion of the shortcomings of attempts by other historians at cyclical theories of twentieth-century Mexican history and in the context of this failure the evidence which points toward a linear theory of twentieth-century Mexican history and the Mexican Revolution.

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[31]Although the violent period of the Mexican Revolution occurred from 1910-1920, the Revolution did not end with the end of violence. Every president from Carranza to Salinas has spoken of the Revolution as a continual process. Historians have generally concurred, and most studies of the Revolution are based on the assumption that the Mexican Revolution is an ongoing process. This paper assumes that the Mexican Revolution was a true revolution and does not address the various arguments for and against this theory. For a discussion of interpretations of the Revolution, see Donald Hodges and Ross Gandy, Mexico 1910-1976: Reform or Revolution? (London: Zed Press, 1979).

Chapter 2:

The Methodology Question

In Paths to the Present, Arthur Schlesinger constructs the intellectual foundation of his cyclical theory. Closer inspection, however, reveals a rather shaky foundation. Schlesinger first confronts the problem of providing a causal force for the cycle.[32] Political parties can not be the cause because, "As a result of...internal tussles each party has pursued a zigzag course, often disowning its former dearly held tenets and sometimes even exchanging positions with its rival."[33] The transformation of the Democratic Party during the New Deal from a conservative force opposed to government intervention in the economy to the party of government intervention in many areas of public life is just one example of the changes that have occurred in Amerian political parties. Political parties are tugged and pulled in

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[32]José Ortega y Gasset, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee each provided a vague causal force for their cycles. Ortega y Gasset and Spengler found the causal force to be man. For Ortega y Gasset it was in the rise and fall in power of successive generations and for Spengler it was in the aggregate actions of the citizens of a particular civlization. Toynbee goes a step further and locates the causal force inside man, in two conflicting forces in human nature, which he describes using the terms *yin* and *yang*. In this context, the Schlesingers' causal force is closer to that of Toynbee.

[33]Schlesinger, 79

different directions by the true causal force of the cycle: public opinion.[34]

Schlesinger appears to have made a mistake by first discussing causation of the cyclical pattern rather than first verifying the presence of such a cycle. When he attempts to verify the presence of the cycle, his argument begins to disintegrate. Schlesinger's main problem is his failure to definitively describe the two opposing forces in American public opinion. Instead he throws out several possible ideas without stating which one he believes is correct. "A period of concern for the rights of the few has been followed by one of concern for the wrongs of the many," "Emphasis on the welfare of property has given way to emphasis on human welfare," and, "An era of quietude has been succeeded by one of rapid movement."(?)[35] Even these descriptions of public opinion are too vague and beg the question of how to measure them, let alone which one to measure. How do we measure "quietude," or "emphasis on human welfare?"

Schlesinger charges ahead with his argument and prefaces his discussion of the individual cycles with the proposition "The test is whether the object is to increase or lessen democracy, and the achievement is evidenced not by words but by the resulting legislative and executive accomplishment."[36] Suddenly we are faced with another, different definition of

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[34]Ibid., 80.
[35]Ibid., 81.
[36]Ibid., 81.

the opposing forces in the cycle (the increasing or lessening of democracy), but at least Schlesinger makes it clear he plans to use "legislative and executive accomplishment" to determine the prevailing public opinion (again assuming that such accomplishment is an indirect manifestation of public opinion through the electoral process).

As Schlesinger describes the periods in the cycle, our hopes of a more concrete method are quickly dashed. The first period, which Schlesinger defines as being 1765-1787, is dominated by an "excess of democracy." Unfortunately, the only example Schlesinger can find of "legislative and executive accomplishment" is what he describes as "the colonists' resistance to English imperialism, the setting up of the Republic and the "excess of democracy" under the Articles of Confederation." True, there was no executive power at the time, but surely Schlesinger might have mentioned some of the legislative accomplishments of the state legislatures which would point toward an "excess of democracy." Schlesinger is equally vague in his provision of evidence for the next period of the cycle (1787-1801), which saw a "lessening of democracy". Schlesinger's single piece of evidence is his interpretation of the Constitution as a document which restricted democracy.[37]

More troubling than Schlesinger's flimsy evidence, however, is his dropping of the lessening-vs.-increasing

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[37]Ibid., 81-82. I must here admit to not being an expert on early-American history, nevertheless I find Schlesinger's use of the terms "excess of democracy," and "lessening of democracy" troublingly vague.

democracy description of the opposing forces and its replacement with the terms "conservative" and "liberal" as we proceed forward in United States history. Once in the twentieth century, Schlesinger details the alternation between liberalism and conservatism(not before mentioned as a basis of the cycle), describing the period from 1919 to 1931 as being dominated by rugged individualism and conservatism, without giving a single piece of evidence for the dominance of such a philosophy. The cycle continues with the rise of liberalism in Roosevelt's New Deal, the only example of "liberalism" for the time period from 1931-1947.[38] Granted, the 1920s were dominated by a business-oriented ideology and the 1930s by a more welfare-oriented ideology, but Schlesinger could at least have provided more specific and consistent evidence. Furthermore, Schlesinger does not address the argument that Roosevelt's New Deal may in fact have been a conservative reaction to the depression in comparison to the actions called for by some radical elements of United States society. By referring to so many different classifications, Schlesinger leaves the reader unclear as to what the true nature of the cycle is, if there is one. Schlesinger's attempt to verify the presence of a cyclical pattern falls apart at its most basic level because of a lack of consistent terminology to describe the opposing forces of the cycle. Schlesinger's argument also falls apart in the

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[38]Ibid., 82-83.

face of his use of non-uniform and vague evidence to support the existence of dominant political philosophies.

Our primary interest here, then, must be in the first stage of investigating cyclical theories: verifying their presence. If we cannot verify the presence of the cycle, it is probably a waste of time investigating what causes the cycle. Schlesinger goes ahead and discusses causation, however, assuming that he has proved a cyclical pattern exists. Schlesinger ultimately pins the causation of the cyclical pattern on the changing group psychology of the American people, grandly theorizing that the American collective mind tries out different theories of governing until it tires of one and returns to the other, or the dominant philosophy degenerates into the mere maintenance of power and becomes subject to overwhelming public criticism.[39] No evidence is offered for this remarkably charitable view of American politics which appears to ignore the possibility of governing elites who manipulate public opinion, what Choamsky has called "manufacturing consent." Perhaps it is necessary for the psychology of the elites to change before that of the public can be changed.

But we are interested in verifying the presence of a cycle, not so much causation. Schlesinger apparently is more concerned with discussing the sweeping ramifications his thesis has for American history and making grand pronouncements than dealing with pesky methodological

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[39]Schlesinger, 90-91.

problems. It is easy to sympathize with Schlesinger's goals, but it is necessary still to try and find a more concrete basis for them. We must concern ourselves with the first step, and see if we can not better verify the presence of a cyclical pattern.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has further developed his father's thesis in his book The Cycles of American History. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. goes so far as to pin down a uniform method of describing the opposing forces in American public opnion: "a continuing shift in national involvement, between public purpose and private interest."[40] While this is one step toward a more concrete proof of a cyclical pattern, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. goes no further in explaining how to verify the presence of a cyclical pattern. Primarily concerned with the twentieth century, Schlesinger, Jr. verifies the presence of a cycle on familiarly-thin evidence. The Teddy Roosevelt and Wilson years are put into the "public purpose" category on the basis of the following statement: "Two demanding Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, exhorted the American people to democratize their political and economic institutions at home and then to make the great world safe for democracy."[41] No programs, policies, laws, or wars are mentioned. Following this supposed explosion of public purpose, Schlesinger describes the 1920s as being concerned wih private interest. "The New Era was

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[40]Schlesinger, Jr., 27.
[41]Ibid., 31.

the decade of the free market run riot, with the business of America presidentially defined as business." Schlesinger, Jr. supports this with a quote by president Harding which does not mention business or capitalism.[42] Although he has solved his father's problem of a lack of consistent terminology, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has still not solved the other problem in the Schlesingers' attempt to verify the presence of a cyclical pattern: the failure to define a specific, uniform body of evidence from which to determine the dominant political philosophy of a given period. Instead, we get a grab bag of evidence from many different aspects of American society.

Schlesinger does make one interesting point. He describes the cycle as a result of *tension* between opposing forces, not absolute hostility.[43] Neither wants to eliminate the other, yet each favors its own side. Two ideologies compete for mastery of the public pschology and the public space.[44] Schlesinger, Jr. spends the majority of his argument in questions of when the cycle will next turn to the public-purpose phase, being at the time stuck in the Reagan private-interest phase. Neither of the Schlesingers, then, presents a satisfactory method for verifying the presence of the cycle. The Schlesingers take for granted that the cycle

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[42]Ibid., 32.

[43]Ibid., 26.

[44]By "public space" I mean that arena in which national politics and government policy are debated by the government, media, academia, and general population.

exists, and then throw in a few bits of history to back up their theory.

Let us see whether or not we can create a more "scientific" way of verifying the presence of a cyclical pattern. Two things must be done: we must develop a consistent terminology to define the opposing forces of the cycle and we must decide upon a uniform, limited body of evidence from which to draw conclusions regarding the dominant political philosophy of a given sexenio. Before we leap into grand conclusions about Mexican history, let us see if we can be more certain that such a cyclical pattern exists. In short, I want to believe the Schlesinger thesis, but I want more proof.

Research of any kind in Mexico presents problems because the Mexican government maintains a much stricter control over information than does the United States government. Information about the recent past and present is even harder to come by, as the people involved are usually still alive and do not want to be embarassed, especially by foreign scholars. Mexico's government has always operated in a more secretive fashion than the United States government, so we face a problem in dealing with Mexican history relating to the government--we can rarely be certain we have all the facts.

My idea was to concentrate on one specific, uniform aspect of the Mexican government which would provide an accurate picture of the political philosophy dominating each

presidency, and follow it through every president since the Revolution to verify whether or not a cyclical pattern exists. Finding a uniform body of evidence relating to the Mexican government which can be digested and analyzed in the limited time available presented a major problem.

One obvious possibility came to mind: government spending. Could we not take government spending and look at how each president spent his money, whether it was spent on subsidies to industry or on agricultural loans to campesinos?[45] Here we must develop a terminology for the two opposing forces in our theoretical cycle. I finally decided on the rather vague phrase, "Does a given presidency tend to promote the business sector of Mexican society, or does it tend to promote the welfare of the poorer sectors of Mexican society, rural and urban?"[46]

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[45]"Campesino" refers to the rural Mexican peasant whose primary livelihood is agriculture.

[46]Notice here I do not use the concept of "public opinion," for public opinion, as the Schlesingers conceived of it, is completely out of context in Mexico. The question of whether or not the Mexican government relies upon, or cares about public opinion will be discussed in part II of my essay. It is also helpful to note that very little in the way of polling research has been done in Mexico, especially in regards to attitudes toward government. For now, we will assume that public opinion expresses itself in government policy. I have purposely avoided the terms "liberal" and "conservative" because the concept of what political beliefs make up a "liberal" or a "conservative" in Mexico have changed since the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, a "liberal" held many of the beliefs that a twentieth-century "conservative" holds today. The Mexican Revolution went a great way toward destroying the nineteenth-century polarization of Mexican politics between "liberals" and "conservatives" by discrediting the Positivistic, Humeist, laissez-faire approach to economics and society. See F.S.C. Northrop, The Meeting of East and West (Woodbridge, Conn.: Oxbow Press, 1946), 15-66.

Rural Mexico is much poorer than urban Mexico, and in years past, one could potentially measure spending on an urban vs. rural basis and try to derive some sort of political orientation from such spending. Nevertheless, one must take into account the massive migration in the second half of the twentieth century by the rural poor to the slums surrounding Mexico City and other large cities.[47] Whether such slums, or *barrios* may be considered part of the city or should be viewed as separate entities is an unanswered question. Also unknown is what percentage of funds spent by municipalities reach these *barrios*. In short, the traditional division of wealth and poverty between cities and rural areas no longer exists in the late twentieth century.

Measuring government expenditures faces the problem of a lack of information. Whether or not the budget published by the *Secretaría de Hacienda*, or Treasury department, reflects actual expenditures is open to question. The president himself has enormous power over government expenditures, amongst which is the power to arbitrarily spend unpredicted revenues and transfer funds from one area of the budget to another. Budgeting itself was a chaotic matter in the early years of the Republic, and one scholar has claimed: "real budgetary planning and control were not accomplished until 1949." Prior to then, more than ten percent of the money spent by the government was outside of the official budget.

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[47]See The Politics of the Developing Areas eds. Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 470.

Also questionable are government expenditure reports after 1949, even though more control was maintained over the budgeting process. Senior-level government officials can ignore standard fiscal regulations (such as simple accounting practices) and spend the money budgeted to their department however they please--so long as they achieve the goals of their department, as agreed upon with the President, who is usually a personal friend.[48]

The difference between projected and actual expenditures presents a serious problem. Thanks to James Wilkie's work and the passage of time, we have some records of the difference between projected and actual expenditures up through president López Mateos's sexenio. In 1963 the projected budget was 13,801,440,000 pesos, but the actual budget was some 20,294,906,000 pesos: a difference of some seven million pesos. Every presidency from Cárdenas to Mateos has seen a downward trend between projected and actual budget expenditures in the category of "social" expenditures and an upward trend between projected and actual budget expenditures in the category of "economic" expenditures. That is, the amount actually spent on social expenditures has usually been less than the amount budgeted, and the amount actually spent on economic expenditures has usually been more than the amount budgeted. Since we do not have similar data for sexenios after 1964, it is difficult to know whether or

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[48]Robert E. Scott, "Bduget making in Mexico," Inter-American Economic Affairs 9: 2 (Autumn 1955): 3-20.

not the difference between projected and actual budget expenditures has continued or subsided.[49]

Corruption in government presents another obstacle to using expenditures to measure a cyclical pattern. How much money, on paper spent buying tractors for poor farmers, actually went to the *mordida* or other forms of corruption?[50] Ruíz Cortines was chosen to succeed Miguel Alemán as president in 1952 partly in the hope that he would clean up at least some of the government corruption which had reached epidemic proportions under the laissez-faire attitude of Alemán. Corruption is universally recognized to be a serious problem in Mexico, although concerted efforts to crack down on corruption in government have been made during Salinas's sexenio. Because of its very secretive nature, we are hard-pressed to quantify the effects of corruption on government expenditures, whatever those effects are or may have been.

Government expenditures have risen throughout the twentieth century. From 1928-1955, total government expenditures multiplied nineteen times, from about 300 million pesos to over 5 billion pesos. Expenditures for both subsidizing Mexican businesses and helping poor Mexicans have risen constantly over time, so it is not enough to look only at amounts of expenditure. Taking into account only amounts

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[49]James W. Wilkie, The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change since 1910 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 22, 32.

[50]*Mordida* literally means "little bite," but in the context of corruption refers to the bribes paid government officials for a wide range of services.

of expenditure would give us a distorted picture of the dominant political philosophy, for every president would appear more generous than his predecessor, to both business and social services. A clear picture of expenditure priorities in Mexican governments requires that we look at the relative share of each category of expenditure.[51]

Although there are many obtacles to using expenditures to determine the political philosophy of a given sexenio, nevertheless, let us ask what might happen if we were to ignore all the problems heretofore described and plunge ahead in our attempt to draw a connection between a particular government expenditure and a particular political philosophy. Connecting the two factors raises political questions which may never be answered. Depending on one's political philosophy, tax breaks or subsidies for businesses can be seen as either government coddling business or as a form of social welfare, because, the argument goes, it is businesses that create jobs. Conservatives and liberals will argue endlessly over the merits of higher taxes vs. lower taxes and government control of the economy, so that the issue of what political philosophy government expenditure X represents becomes quite cloudy.

Attempting to verify the presence of a cyclical pattern through expenditures faces many serious problems, so let us look elsewhere for some aspect of government with fewer caveats. Rhetoric or presidential speeches we can easily

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[51]Scott, 3.

disregard because the volume is too great to analyze, and because it is common practice for Mexican presidents to pay rhetorical(at least) homage to the social- and economic-justice goals of the Mexican Revolution, whether or not they intend to accomplish them.

Another possible subject which could be used for verifying the presence of a cyclical pattern is law. I chose to look at law because the Mexican government publishes every single law signed by the president (no law can be such without the president's signature). These records are kept in the *Diario Oficial*, the official publication of the Mexican government, and are available, in part, at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville and at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. My original intention was to go through the *Diario Oficial* (D.O.) and find what kind of laws were passed during each president's sexenio. Theoretically, it would be a simple matter of adding up the number of laws passed which benefit the business sector of the economy and adding up the number of laws which benefit the poor people and then comparing the two. I expected to be able to quantify, much more scientifically, the political philosophy of each presidency, and then look at a series of presidencies to see if a cylical pattern existed. Simply saying Lázaro Cárdenas and Luís Echeverría were oriented towards the poor people(both probably were) did not satisfy me, rather I wanted to be able to quantify this orientation. Naturally, if it emerged that Cárdenas signed more laws

benefitting the business sector, then this would require a major revision of how historians view Cárdenas, since most see him as Mexico's most "liberal," social welfare-oriented president. Similarly, if it became evident that Miguel Alemán or Gustavo Díaz Ordaz signed more laws benefitting the poor than benefitting business, then historians would have to rethink these two presidencies, generally seen as the most "conservative." Rather large goals, but the possibilities are very exciting.

Several trips to the University of Virginia to use their (partial) collection of the D.O. revealed the impossibility of using law to determine the political philosophy of each presidency. The D.O. collection at the University of Virginia consists of an entire wall of very large, very dusty, and very thick bound volumes, each containing one month of the D.O., which is issued daily. Despite bi-monthly indexes, the size of the collection required more time than I had, time that would have to be spent flipping through thousands of yellowed and brittle pages.

Quantity, however, is only the most superficial of obstacles to the use of law in determining political philosophy. Might it not be possible to focus on at least two presidents, one commonly viewed as liberal and one commonly viewed as conservative, using a tabulation of the laws they signed to see if their legally-defined political philosophy matches their historically-defined political philosophy? Although this was early my intention, I

continued to run up against more obstacles. What is a law in Mexico? The spanish word for law is *ley*, but *leyes* are only a small part of what is promulgated in the D.O. *Decretos, oficios, avisos, acordados,* and other forms of law far outnumber*leyes*. Also listed is every land grant to individual peasants and villages.[52] Each of these land disbursements, and each of the decretos, acordados, oficios, avisos, etc. signed by the president of Mexico is officially "law," even though it may not be titled a *ley*. Many leyes are subject to *reglamentos*, or revisions of sections of the law which had been found to be in conflict with other laws, unclear as to inter-pretation, or merely deficient in the eyes of the president. It would be impossible to go through every *decreto, reglamento,* etc. and try to determine what political philosophy it represented, not to mention the many land grants and the question of how to weigh them in determining political philosophy.

Suppose a president gave land to only one-hundred peasants during his sexenio. If each gift of land is an example of a bias toward the welfare of the poor, then what are we to do if the same president passed ten leyes providing for the welfare of business? Are we to say that such a president is oriented toward the welfare of the poor, or are we to say that land grants are "worth less" than actual

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[52]The fact that the president, not some junior or local offical, is responsible for every grant of land is a textbook example of the paternalism present in Mexican society. The president operates as a sort of ultimate *patron*.

leyes? Do one-hundred land grants balance out one ley granting tax breaks to businesses? Can we ever derive such a formula? Yet each land grant has the same legal status as each law promoting business. Similarly, are we to say that some leyes are worth less than others because they are not enforced? Numerous variables exist which might require the weighting of leyes. The possibility arises of trying to weight one kind of law more or less than another, *ad absurdum*.

Entirely left out of this discussion, of course, is the obvious problem of how to tell which political philosophy a law represents, given its abbreviated description in the D.O. For example, the Federal Labor Law of 1931, declared to benefit the labor sector, in fact served to restrict its operations. Labor unions were for the first time given the right to strike, but this right was limited to those strikes deemed legal by the government.[53] One could write many a book on the "real" impact of any individual law, and one could get bogged down in a debate over whether or not a law designed to subsidize business represents one political philosophy or another, whether such a law actually helps the poor people or not, and so on. It is also possible that a given law may not be enforced, a typical problem in Mexico, where it is commonly recognized that many environmental-protection laws go unenforced.

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[53]Joe C. Ashby, "Labor and the Theory of the Mexican Revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas," The Americas 20, no. 2(Oct. 1963): 158-199.

Non-enforcement of laws leads us to inquire into the meaning of constitutions and law in particular in Mexico. Constitutions and law are viewed differently by Mexicans (and Latin Americans in general) than by North Americans. In the United States the Constitution is a "living" document, one that is used as an ultimate test of the legality of many of our laws. Americans believe that the actions of our government should be held accountable to the Constitution.

In Mexico, and in most of Latin America, though, a constitution is something less to be strictly adhered to and more something to be held up as an ideal, a potential goal to which the nation strives to reach, but in reality most of the time falls short. "The constitution (of 1917) legalized not so much the past accomplishments of a popular movement as its *future aspirations*." In light of this attitude, a law can not fail the constitution itself, only the goals (future aspirations) of the constitution, and thus the law is not so much illegal, but merely something to be regretted.[54]

In the case of Mexico, we must also face the fact that the president exercises a great deal of control over the judiciary, and the chances of a judge deciding a case against the wishes of the president are slim. "The judiciary takes its views from the administration." Law is interpreted, then, less in light of the Constitution and more in light of the views of the current president. The Supreme Court of

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[54]Frank Tannenbaum, Mexico: the Struggle for Peace and Bread (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 103.

Mexico has never reversed any important decision by the government. What of the separation of powers written into the constitution of 1917? "The constitutional formula for a division of powers between the legislative, judicial, and executive is merely a formula. It may represent an aspiration for the future, but it has no immediate reality." The law is at the same time a creation of the President's will and a blueprint for future reality.[55]

Thus we face the problem of dealing with laws in Mexico, which although they may be enacted with all the intent of being enforced, if they are not enforced, it is not so bad. Laws may also be passed as a form of collective ego-massaging, with the intent of ignoring or not enforcing them in real life. Mexico can point to its separation of powers or labor laws and say to the gringo, look, we are just as advanced as you are. Mexico has had *on the books* one of the most socially progressive systems of legal protection for workers: the Constitution of 1917, which was, at the time, the most radical, pro-labor constitution in existence, far ahead of the United States or Russia. Provisions for minimum wages, equal pay for equal work, prohibition of child labor, and the right to collective bargaining are all provided for in the constition of 1917.[56] Anyone who has been to Mexico, however, can tell you that child labor is widespread (I was once approached at about 10pm on a weeknight by a small girl,

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[55]Ibid., 84-5.

[56]The Constitutions of Latin America Gerald E. Fitzgerald, ed. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1968), 186-187.

no more than nine or ten years old, who was selling small packets of gum). Labor unions, while allowed, are coopted by the state, and the chances of anyone succeeding in forming a labor union outside of state control, or succeeding in an unofficial strike are slim.[57]

The unique concept of law in Mexico presents a formidable barrier to using law to determine the dominant political philosophy of a presidency. We are faced with a body of evidence which has an exterior and an interior. The exterior, the layer of rhetoric and intent which surrounds each law, we can easily see, but the interior, the actual impact of the law, whether or not the law is enforced or adhered to, we cannot so easily see. We run the risk of misinterpreting the political philosophy of a presidency by relying on our view of the exterior of Mexican law.

Even if we were to ignore all the problems inherent in studying Mexican law, we would still face the problem of an unrepre-sentative sample. Concentrating on a particular type of law forces us to ignore a great deal of what is "law" in Mexico. How are we to know that a given presidency may not have expressed one political philosophy in *leyes* and a different political philosophy in other forms of Mexican law? The question of what is "law" in Mexico, then, ultimately prevents us from using it as an accurate way of measuring the political philosophy of a given presidency.

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[57]One old man we talked to in a pool hall in Mérida, Mexico, told us that he had lost his job after participating in an illegal strike against the government.

Chapter 3:

Twentieth-century Mexican History and the Cyclical Question

The previous section dealt with some of the methodological problems of verifying the presence of a cyclical pattern in twentieth-century Mexico. The specific areas of expenditure and law do not exist in a vacuum, though, but are part of the larger scheme of events of Mexico's twentieth-century history. Having dealt at the "micro" level with specific areas of study, let us now look at the "macro" level of Mexico's twentieth-century history. At first glance, there are suggestions that a cyclical, or pendulum effect exists. The conservative Venustiano Carranza was followed by the liberal Alvaro Obregón in 1920, who was followed by the conservative Calles. A short interlude follows, and then we see the liberal Cárdenas come to power in the 1930s, followed by several conservatives in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, and then the liberal Luís Echeverría in the 1970s. Echeverría was followed by Portillo, de la Madrid, and Salinas, who practiced varying degrees of conservatism. Salinas's intended successor in the election this year, the late Luís

Donaldo Colosio, spoke of putting more emphasis on social justice and less on free-market capitalism. Although it is too early to characterize the next president, we may be seeing the Mexican government turn back toward the left of the political spectrum. Closer inspection reveals, however, that at the "macro" level of our study we face just as many obstacles to the application of the Schlesingers' cyclical theory to twentieth-century Mexico.

The period before the Revolution, the first eleven years of Mexico's twentieth-century history, present a problem because they form part of the thirty-five year reign of Porfirio Díaz, the unquestioned dictator of Mexico from 1876 through 1911. Díaz's thirty-five years in power is longer than any president since and is just as important in removing his tenure from consideration of the time period of the cycle as is his dictatorial rule. To include Díaz in the cycle would skew the results because Díaz had more time and more power than any subsequent president to put into practice a certain political philosophy. We must take into account the changes in the institution of the presidency which occurred as a result of the Revolution. Although it is possible to argue that the post-Díaz presidency contains many of the same elements as the Díaz presidency, the two are far from similar.[58] Díaz was a true dictator, whereas the Mexican presidency now, although in many ways quite dictatorial, is

[58]For a discussion of this see Linda B. Hall's "Mexican Presidentialism from Díaz to Echeverría."

much more constrained by the necessity of balancing the interests of the various corporate entities in the Mexican state. Díaz balanced corporate entities too, but during his reign these never included peasants or workers or even the middle class and professional sectors. The Mexican president is expected to make at least an effort to comply with the Constitution of 1917, whose provisions Díaz never had to consider. The Mexican president is now constrained by a constitutional provision against successive reelection, limiting his term in office to no more than six years.[59] The no-reelection provision stemmed from Diaz's penchant for reelecting himself through fraudulent elections. No Mexican president will ever approach Diaz's influence on the country.

The defining factor of Mexico's twentieth-century history is the Mexican Revolution. The nationwide war, instability, and governmental chaos of the Revolution make this period too abnormal to include in the time period of the cycle. 1911, the year Díaz's reign ended, to 1934 and the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas was a period of continual upheaval in the government, especially the position of president. Francisco Madero defeated Díaz in the election of 1910, only to find the election declared void by Díaz. Madero fled to the United States, from which he began to plan the rebellion that eventually broke out in Mexico in 1910-1911. Madero returned to rule the country but soon faced a

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[59]See Roderic Ai Camp, Politics in Mexico (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

rebellion led by reactionary, pro-Díaz forces under Victoriano Huerta. Huerta came to power in 1913 but was quickly faced with opposition in the north by Pancho Villa, Venustiano Carranza, and Alvaro Obregón, and in the south by Emiliano Zapata. Fighting between the Federalist forces of the old Díaz government and the various revolutionary armies continued throughout the country until the forces under Carranza and Obregón triumphed and Carranza became president in 1917.[60]

Carranza was president until 1920 when he was forced into exile by Alvaro Obregón, one of his generals. Obregón won the presidential election of 1920, promising more radical policies to bring about a realization of the goals of the Revolution. By 1920 Zapata and Villa had been neutralized as threats to the government and Obregón was the first post-Díaz president to actually control the entire country. When his four-year term was up in 1924, Obregón gave way peacefully for Plutarco Elias Calles to run the country until 1928. Believing Calles to be too conservative, Obregón ran for president again in 1928 and won, but was assassinated before he was able to take office.[61]

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[60]For an exhaustive study of the early years of the Revolution see Alan Knight's two volume The Mexican Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[61]See Linda B. Hall, Alvaro Obregón: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1981). Madero campaigned against Díaz in 1910 on the slogan "sufragio efectivo, no reelección," (effective suffrage, no reelection). Obregón's assassin feared the rise to power of another Díaz-like president who would perpetuate himself in office.

The period from 1928 until 1934 is known as the Maximato, when the country was dominated by Plutarco Calles. Although his official presidential term ended in 1928, Calles managed to wield power through three minor presidents beholden to him for direction. After Adolfo de la Huerta served as interim president until new elections could be held, Emilio Portes Gil, Pascual Ortiz Rubio, and Abelardo L. Rodriguez served short presidential terms at the beck and call of Calles.

Until Cárdenas, Mexico's history was dominated by war, rebellion, assassination, and numerous attempted uprisings (the last in 1938). The varying periods in office of each president until Cárdenas differ too much to fairly compare them(how can president Madero, who was in office for about two years, be compared with Obregón who was in office for four years?). Obregón was the first president since Díaz in 1910 to have complete control over the country, so it is impossible to compare his ability to implement his political philosophy with his predecessor Carranza, who faced insurgent armies in the north and south of the country led by Villa and Zapata. Huerta, faced with Villa, Zapata, and Carrancista forces attacking him, controlled even less of the country than Carranza in 1917, and Calles was faced with the Cristero Rebellion from 1926-1929, when portions of the countryside were not under government control.[62]

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[62]The Cristero Rebellion was a result of the anti-clerical measures in the Constitution of 1917 being rigorously enforced by Calles. These included prohibitions against the wearing of priestly attire in public

Actual military control of the nation is important, but more important for our purposes is the existence of a stable, nation-wide "public space."[63] It is within this "public space" that the Mexican president can press his political agenda, and we can not say that it encompassed the entire nation until the election of Obregón. Villa and Zapata both refused to participate in the public space with the Constitutionalist forces under Carranza and Obregón, choosing instead to continue fighting militarily--outside the public space. Since Villa and Zapata controlled many followers in the country, it is likely these followers also remained outside of the public space. The deaths of Villa and Zapata ended their opposition to the otherwise dominant public space and their followers were left with little choice but to retreat to a public space they saw as too confining and conservative. The Cristero Rebellion(1926-1929) saw another collapse of the public space, as conservative Catholics reacted with violence against the government's persecution of the church.

Cárdenas was the first president to serve a six-year term, and after him every president has served one, six-year term. We cannot begin to discuss a cyclical pattern until 1934, when the presidency and the public space reached a stable point, and it becomes easier to compare each president

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and the removal of the Catholic church from public education. In some areas of Mexico, as a result of government opposition and clerical boycotts, religious services practically ceased to function.

[63]By "public space" I mean that arena in which the various media, academic, and political elites discuss and formulate national policy.

and his accomplishments, for each has had an equal(six-year) opportunity to implement a specific political philosophy.

Neither of the Schlesingers addressed the questions of political and social stability or the ability of the government to implement its political philosophy throughout the nation. Political and social stability and the ability to implement political philosophies nation-wide is a given in the Schlesingers' view of U.S. history. The Schlesingers do not discount the four years of the civil war(1861-4) from their cycle. Obviously, several presidents were assassinated and their time in office cut short, or indicted in the case of Johnson and resigned in the case of Nixon, and although the official term has always been four years, different presidents have served for different periods of time. The Schlesingers are not concerned with specific presidents, however, but rather with broader political movements independent of any one person.

Broad political movements are not a nationally-uniform phenomena, however. Despite the liberalism and civil rights movement of the 1960s, we must remember that this movement was not uniform, rather it faced strong opposition in southern states until the federal government forced compliance in the 1960s and 70s. What too of the present situation of the legality of abortion, which varies from state to state, abortion a constitutionally protected right with no limitations in the state of Washington and restricted in the state of Louisiana. Gay rights ordinances exist in

many large cities, while anti-gay rights ordinances exist in many rural and suburban areas. Clearly, the policies advocated by the federal government or the president are subject to revision in each state, so is it possible to speak of a truly "national," truly "dominant" political philosophy as existing? Throughout the 1980s and the conservatism of Reagan, enclaves of liberalism still existed in urban areas like New York, Washington, DC, Minneapolis/St.Paul, Seattle, Portland, and others. Does the Schlesingers' cyclical theory break down in the face of varying political philosophies dominating different areas of the country?

Our removal from consideration of the first thirty-four years of twentieth-century Mexican history is justified, because as we have seen, the social stability and the ability to implement policies nation-wide, necessary for cycles to occur in political philosophies, assumed by the Schlesingers, may not be evident in the United States and was most definitely not evident in the first thirty-four years of Mexico's twentieth-century history.

Eliminating the first thirty-four years of the twentieth century as too unstable leaves us with a period of about sixty years of relative stability(1934-1994) in which to look for a cyclical pattern. While one can argue that sixty years is not adequate time to demonstrate a cyclical pattern, other problems exist which make it difficult to verify the presence of a cyclical pattern.

Now it would appear that the Mexican government is better able to implement a nation-wide policy than the U.S. government because the PRI elite which controls the federal government maintains greater control over state governments than does the federal government in the U.S. The possibility of a state government in Mexico pursuing policies opposed to the federal government is slim. Nevertheless, differences do exist among the states, as shown by the recent uprising in Chiapas. Chiapas has clearly been dominated by a much more conservative, traditional form of governing, centered on the hacienda and debt peonage system which does not exist in most of the north of Mexico. Conversely, industrial development and rising living standards, long-standing social patterns in the north, can not be said to have reached Chiapas.

We must also consider the *dedazgo*, the process whereby the incumbent president chooses his successor.[64] The man chosen by the president to succeed him is usually from within the president's cabinet. Although the cabinet consists of some twenty-one positions, in recent years the presidential successor has come from a few select positions, usually those related to budgeting or economic planning .[65] Last November, President Carlos Salinas chose Luis Donaldo Colosio, the Secretary of Social Development, to succeed him as president. If he had not been assassinated, Colosio would have been, for

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[64]*Dedazgo* literally means "the tap," referring to a tap on the shoulder.
[65]These include the Secretariat of Programming and Budgeting and the Secretary of the Treasury. Ai Camp, 134-35.

all intents and purposes, the next president of Mexico.[66] Candidates for president must, according to tradition, campaign hard for many months, travelling around the country, but their election is guaranteed because they are the candidate of the ruling party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, or the PRI.

Despite the apparent ability of presidents to control the political philosophy of the succeeding sexenio, changes in policy from one president to another have occurred. Relying on conventional wisdom for a moment, Cárdenas chose as his successor in 1940 Manuel Avila Camacho, the first post-Díaz president to publicly acknowledge his Catholicism and the first in a string of three conservative presidents concerned primarily with industrializing Mexico. Cárdenas, on the other hand, was opposed to the Catholic church and actually pushed for Socialism to be taught in the public schools. Cárdenas also was one of the most liberal presidents ever, handing out enormous amounts of land to peasants and nationalizing foreign-owned oil companies in 1938. The clearly conservative Gustavo Díaz Ordaz chose as his successor Luís Echeverría, who turned out to be Mexico's most liberal president since Cárdenas. President from 1970-1976, Echeverría pursued an extremely liberal foreign policy and pro-labor, pro-peasant domestic policies--policies which

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[66]Tim Golden, "Mexican President Backs a Successor," The New York Times 29 November 1993, 1. This race, and the possibility that Colosio's election might not be a sure thing will be discussed in the final section of my paper.

would have been anathema to his predecessor, who is best known for the 1968 massacre of students protesting in Mexico City. How is it that Cárdenas and Díaz Ordaz could pick such successors? The changes in policy from one president to the next demonstrate that the dedazgo involves something more than a mere extension of the incumbent's political philosophy.

To answer this question we must delve into the process whereby the incumbent president picks his successor. Although little is known about this process, it is commonly thought that the president confers with the members of the ruling elite in an attempt to find a candidate suitable to them all. These members of the ruling elite usually are the leaders of the major constituencies of the PRI (labor, peasants, and "popular" sectors).[67] The candidates for president come from within the incumbent government, usually the more important cabinet positions. The candidates are all friends and associates of the president, but also part of his *camarilla*, and thus dependent on the president for their rise to high government office.[68]

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[67]The PRI consists of several sectors, each of which is responsible for supporting the party's candidates in return for government favors. The popular sector includes government employees and various youth, gender, and civic organizations.

[68]The *camarilla* is a hierarchical group of politicians, based on the patron-client relationship between the man at the top of the pyramid-shaped organization and those below him. The ultimate *camarilla* in Mexico is that with the president at the top, but each of the subordinate members of this camarilla have their own sub-*camarilla*. The *camarilla* is the primary method of advancement in Mexican politics.

We must also remember that the president is constrained by the shadow of the Revolution. He can not pick a successor who will not, at least rhetorically, support the twin goals of the Mexican Revolution: social justice and economic development. With this in mind, and having consulted with the leaders of the PRI, he makes his decision. Where does the possibility for change come in, then? It must lie in the president's discussion with the PRI leaders to find an acceptable candidate.

The possibility exists that this discussion amongst the elites is quite open to public opinion. Each of the sector representatives from the PRI knows the general opinion of his constituents and is able to relay this opinion to the president.[69] Should the opinion of all three major sectors of the PRI be in favor of a particular political philosophy, say, more concern for the poor, then the president must take this into consideration in choosing his successor. Mexico's political elite is more concerned with maintaining stability(i.e. the continued dominance of the PRI) than with forcing any particular ideology on the country. It may well be that in 1969 Ordaz and the Mexican elite thought that the country needed to be moved toward the left somewhat to restore the stability of the country. Ordaz picked a successor based on the necessity of maintaining political stability, then, not on maintaining his conservative political philosophy. The unknown factor in this discussion

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[69]A perfect example of corporatism in Latin America.

is just how much the Mexican elite takes into account public opinion. Obviously it is constrained by public opinion, but it is certainly not controlled by it.

Thus the question of the public space in Mexico arises again. Although it is much smaller in size than in the United States, and fewer people participate in it, there can be no doubt that a public space exists in Mexico. In Mexico's case the media has very little role, and the intellectuals play an important, but secondary part to the leaders within the government and the PRI. What we do not know is the role that the population, in the form of public opinion, plays in the public space in Mexico. In the United States, although politicians attempt to manipulate public opinion, nevertheless they are still driven by polls. In Mexico the political elites also try to manipulate public opinion, but how much they actually care about public opinion is unknown. With this unanswered question hanging over us, we can not know how political philosophies are developed within the Mexican public space. A clearly defined and compre-hensible public space is necessary for a cyclical theory, for it helps us determine which political philosophy is dominant and why. We are unable to do this in Mexico, other than say that the political elite controls to a great extent what the dominant philosophy is.

Changes in policy, then, come from the top down and represent a consensus among the ruling elites that new policies are needed to justify their continued rule and to

satisfy the populace. In a sense, then, the elites are responsive to public opinion, for in the case of Echeverría, his predecessor was widely viewed as stepping far out of line by the 1968 massacre of several hundred protesting students. The recent uprising in Chiapas has highlighted the growing gap in Mexico between the rich and poor. In response to overwhelming public sympathy for the insurgents, Colosio talked of the need for more emphasis on social development and economic justice. "We have to pay attention to poor regions, to social programs and to democracy."[70]

Another problem we face in finding a cyclical pattern in Mexico's twentieth century is the dominance of the PRI. Since its formation in 1929, the PRI has never lost a presidential election and until recently usually won with over seventy percent of the vote. Since the PRI controls the election machinery, it has been able and willing to use fraud to remain in power. Many people believe that the PRI lost the 1988 election, which it claimed to have won with 50.3% of the vote, its smallest margin of victory yet.[71] The PRI controls most of the state and local governments also, although in recent years it has been willing to admit defeat,

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[70]Paul B. Carroll and Craig Torres, "As Elections Approach, the Uprising in Mexico is Shaking up Politics," Wall Street Journal 7 February 1994, 1.

[71]The PRI received about 90% of the vote in the presidential election of 1976, and 70% of the vote in the presidential election of 1982. Salinas's win in 1988 seems to reveal a downward trend in the vote the PRI has claimed to have receive. Just how much lower it is willing to go remains to be seen. See "Mexico: A Survey," The Economist 5 September 1987, 16.

especially in the north, where the opposition *Partido Acción Nacional,* or PAN is popular.[72]

Mexicans face a limited choice in their elected officials, then, and many scholars argue that Mexico is more of an oligarchy than a democracy. The very nature of the PRI, however, is that it attempts to encompass everybody, thus encompassing every ideology. The PRI contains liberals and conservatives, radicals and reactionaries, capitalists and socialists. Any change that occurs in policy must occur as a result of changes within the hierarchy of the PRI. Changes in policy may represent not so much changes in political philosophy but changes within the PRI power structure, signifying who is powerful and who is not.

It is equally possible that the PRI elite is not defined by any particular political philosophy or policy, but rather is defined by its ability to switch from one policy(philosophy) to another as the public mood demands. In this scenario the PRI acts as an agent of public opinion, expressing the political philosophy of the people. This would explain how a liberal president can choose a conservative president as his successor and vice versa.

Either scenario presents us with obstacles to any cyclical pattern, for can we really say that the dominant

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[72]The first major opposition-party victory the PRI has allowed occurred in 1989 when the PRI allowed the PAN to win the governorship of Baja California. Before this, the PAN had been limited to several municipalities and deputies in the north. Marjorie Miller and Patrick McDonnell, "Baja: Pluralism Test Ground for Mexico Politics," Los Angeles Times 4 October 1989, 1.

political philosophy changes when the same political party has ruled Mexico for the past sixty years? In the north of Mexico where the PRI faces opposition from the conservative PAN and regularly steals elections from the PAN, can we really say that the PRI represents public opinion? The very likely possibility that the liberal candidate, Cuauhtemac Cárdenas, may have won the 1988 presidential election calls into question the PRI's claim to represent national public opinion. Vote fraud practiced by the PRI since its inception in 1929 may well have masked a great deal of dissent for many years. We must also take into account the large number of Mexicans who do not bother to vote because they believe their vote is wasted because the PRI will always win. The question of how much fraud has been practiced by the PRI is unanswered, yet vitally important, for it would give us a much better idea of how much popular support the PRI actually has. One-party rule for the past sixty years is a major impediment to any sort of cyclical pattern.

Our discussion of the PRI begs the question of how to describe the two opposing forces in the theoretical cycle. The Schlesingers and most others have been content to rely on the terms "liberal" and "conservative"(in their twentieth-century interpretation). "Leftish" and "rightish" have also been used. Unfortunately, these labels may not suffice for Mexico. Although the PRI contains both liberals and conservatives, there has always existed a certain amount of common ground between the two groups, blurring any

distinction. The specific issues of nationalism, protectionism, and a certain wary attitude toward the U.S. have been championed by presidents as diverse in philosophy as Echeverría and Alemán. I would argue that the labels "liberal" and "conservative" do not fit the Mexican political system, because both are found within the PRI, both share certain ideas, and thus it is harder to draw a distinction between the two.

The opposing forces of the cycle, if they do exist, are also camouflaged by the PRI. Based on the idea of national unity rather than political struggle, the PRI's power rests in part on its ability to solve debates in a way that satisfies all sides and results in political stability. The emergence of internal political struggle into the public eye would tarnish the PRI's image as a united coalition of forces representing all Mexicans. Unlike the United States, where the opposing forces struggle with each other in public and in the public space, the struggle for dominance in Mexico is concealed, and we usually see only the result of the struggle, in the form of policy.

Even if we allow ourselves to fall back on the Schlesingers' method of proof, we find that historical consensus is equally inadequate in verifying the presence of a cyclical pattern. A cursory glance at the so-called "historical consensus" of historians of Mexico in the twentieth century reveals little to support the cyclical theory.

Table 3-1: Historical Consensus of the Political Philosophy of Mexican Presidents Since 1917

1917-1920	Venustiano Carranza	Conservative
1920	Adolfo de la Huerta	A
1920-1924	Alvaro Obregón	Liberal
1924-1928	Plutarco Elias Calles	Conservative
1928	Adolfo de la Huerta	B
1929-1930	Emilio Portes Gil	Liberal[C]
1930-1932	Pascual Ortiz Rubio	Conservative
1932-1934	Abelardo L. Rodríguez	?
1934-1940	Lázaro Cárdenas	Liberal
1940-1946	Manuel Avila Camacho	Conservative
1946-1952	Miguel Alemán	Conservative
1952-1958	Adolfo Ruíz Cortines	Conservative
1958-1964	Adolfo López Mateos	Half/half[D]
1964-1970	Gustavo Díaz Ordaz	Conservative
1970-1976	Luís Echeverría	Liberal
1976-1982	López Portillo	Half/half[E]
1982-1988	Miguel de la Madrid	Conservative
1988-1994	Carlos Salinas de Gortari	Conservative
1994-2000	?[F]	?[G][73]

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[73]"Conservative" and "Liberal" were chosen, for reasons of simplicity, to describe the two political philosophies. Conservative here is defined as being primarily interested in the economic development of Mexico and promoting business. Liberal here is defined as being primarily interested in the social welfare of the poor majority of Mexicans.

[A] Adolfo de la Huerta served only a few months as interim president until new elections could be held, elections which Obregón won.

Table 3-1 includes the presidents before Cárdenas for reference, although it is not possible to include them in our cyclical analysis, due to their variance in time in power, which might increase or lessen the impact a given president had on Mexican politics. Starting with Cárdenas, then, it is

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B de la Huerta served as interim president after the assassination of Obregón and until new elections could be held.

C The presidencies of Portes Gil, Ortiz Rubio, and Rodríguez are particularly hard to characterize since each operated in the shadow of Calles, leaving unanswered the question of just how much control they had over policy. Portes Gil served only two years in office because he had been hand-picked by Calles. When Calles thought he became too radical, he removed Portes Gil from office. Similarly, Ortiz Rubio was removed from office by Calles, when it became clear that he had no support. Rodriguez is difficult to characterize as so little has been written about his sexenio, and it is unclear whether or not he was truly independent of Calles. The U.S. ambassador to Mexico at the time, Josephus Daniels, thought so. "By 1934 it became apparent that Rodríguez was, in fact as well as in name, President of Mexico." For a discussion of the period from 1928-1934, see Peter Calvert, "The Institutionalisation of the Mexican Revolution," Journal of Inter-American Studies vol. 11, no.4 (October 1969): 503-517.

D Very little research has been done on Mateos's sexenio, but preliminary sketches tend to put him in the middle, compared with the extreme conservatism of his two predecessors, Alemán and Cortines.

E Unlike Mateos, there is a wealth of research on Portillo's sexenio. Portillo, like Mateos, is seen by most historians as being in the middle of the political spectrum. He steered the country away from the increasing government intervention of his predecessor, Echeverría, but his *Sistemo Alimentos Nacional* (SAM) program to improve nutrition among the poor and the 1982 nationalization of the banks push him to the left of the political spectrum.

F At the time this paper was in its final draft, Salinas had not picked a successor to Luis Donaldo Colosio, who was assassinated on 24 March 1994 while campaigning in Tijuana. Whoever the replacement is, he is likely to win election, despite the uprising in Chiapas and the slaying of Colosio.

G Although it is likely that the next president will follow the same conservative, free-market-oriented policies of his predecessor Salinas, it is possible he may see the recent uprising in Chiapas as necessitating a swing to the left in Mexican politics.

clear that the conservatives have dominated Mexican politics since 1934, with only two presidents actively oriented toward helping the poor people of Mexico.

Out of the sixty years since Cárdenas, thirty-six have been dominated by the pro-economic development philosophy, twelve by a mixture of economic development and social justice, and twelve by social justice. Clearly, the conservative, pro-economic development philosophy has dominated Mexico since 1934. If we add presidents Carranza through Rodriguez, we arrive at a total of eighty-seven years, forty-nine of them dominated by pro-economic development conservatives, sixteen dominated by social justice liberals, and twelve dominated by a mixture of the two philosophies.

No cyclical pattern is evident either. Concerns of social justice dominated Obregón's term in office and some fourteen years later dominated the sexenio of Lázaro Cárdenas, but it was another forty years or so before social justice returned to primacy in the presidency of Luís Echeverría. Conservatism, starting in 1917, saw a brief break from 1920-1924, resumed for the next ten years, took a six-year hiatus during the Cárdenas era, then returned for thirty more years, took another six-year break under Echeverría, and has since then dominated official government policy. It may be possible that forty years after Echeverría, in the year 2010 or so, Mexico may see a turn back toward the primacy of social justice. This would begin

to indicate a forty-year cycle in liberal governments but would also be extreme guesswork. By that time, the PRI may no longer exist and Mexico's electoral system may be much more democratic. Should this happen, we might well be faced with drastic systemic change in Mexico which would force us to restart the cycle.

A major problem with relying on the historical consensus, however, is the disparity in scholarly research on the various presidents. Certain presidents appear to be more attractive to historians. For example, Cárdenas, Echeverría, and Portillo are popular subjects of study, whereas very few studies have focused on Aleman, Cortines, and Mateos. The historical consensus may be more accurate in describing the politics of those presidents it knows best, but it may also be less accurate in describing the politics of those presidents it knows less well.

A similar problem is that several presidencies tend to be viewed through the prism of one particular action. Cárdenas is usually seen in the light of his nationalization of the foreign-owned oil companies in 1938, an act which proved wildly popular with Mexicans, if not with the foreign owners. The nationalization of the oil companies is one of the most often cited examples of Cárdenas's liberal policies. It is also one of the few things taught about Cárdenas in undergraduate classes on Mexican history. Díaz Ordaz's presidency is usually seen through the 1968 massacre of protesting students in Mexico City. Portillo is usually

examined by scholars in the context of the bank nationalization of 1982. Scholarly studies of these and other presidencies tend to focus on specific subjects, to the detriment of a more balanced view of these presidencies. Inevitably, these acts come to define a president and take on a significance greater than is deserved. What if Cárdenas increased state subsidies to businesses or crushed unofficial labor unions? What if Díaz Ordaz passed all sorts of laws to benefit the poor people--would we still see him as the conservative arch-villain he is generally portrayed as? Have students of Mexican history allowed certain acts to define presidencies, resulting in a biased and perhaps inaccurate historical consensus?

Although it is possible to find examples throughout the past sixty years which disprove the cyclical theory, I will mention only one more here. During the sexenio of Miguel de la Madrid, Mexico's treasury and economic planning departments operated under special agreements with the International Monetary Fund. These agreements were designed to lower Mexico's debt and improve the country's financial situation. Dictated by the IMF to a great extent, the conservative, free-market orientation of these reforms resulted in a great deal of suffering by the poor majority of Mexicans. Subsidies were slashed resulting in rises in prices of staples, while at the same time wages were not

allowed to rise.[74] How are we to deal with the IMF agreements, which made the de la Madrid sexenio more oriented toward the business sector, yet were never signed into law by the president?

Whereas the first section dealt with the problems of verification of the cyclical pattern in specific actions of the government (policy), this section has addressed the problems inherent in understanding the decision-making process behind government policy, or the problems inherent in trying to discover a cyclical pattern at this broader level of political philosophy. Specifically, the questions of the role of public opinion in elite decision-making and of the functioning of the public space in Mexico prevent us from verifying the presence of a cyclical pattern. And yet, even if we were to assume the existence of a cyclical pattern, it would be difficult to know whether the true causal force of the cycle is changes in public opinion or changes in elite opinion. Despite the many micro- and macro-level obstacles to verifying the presence of a cyclical pattern in Mexico, the attraction of the cyclical theory has been such that several historians have gone ahead and done so. The next section will examine these works in the light of the issues we have so far discussed.

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[74]For a discussion of Mexico's 1982 financial crisis see Timothy Heyman, "Chronicle of a Financial Crisis," Caribbean Review vol. 12, no.1 (Winter 1983): 9-11, 35-39.

Chapter 4:
Beyond the Cyclical Theory of Mexican History

Although the cyclical theory is often referred to in studies of twentieth-century Mexico, there have been few studies done to actually verify the presence of a cyclical pattern in Mexican politics. Most references to the cyclical theory are backed up with little or no evidence. A perfect example of this misplaced acceptance of the cyclical theory is found in a survey of Mexico in the Economist. The author claims to have found that presidents alternated between "leftish presidents" and "rightish presidents" in the years 1953-1976. "Leftish" and "rightish" are based on annual growth rates of public vs. private investment. The author's claim that Mateos was a "leftish president" is questionable, and is based solely on a small chart showing a greater increase in public investment (12.1%) over private investment (5.3%) during Mateos's sexenio.[75] These figures are misleading, however, for when we look at a breakdown of public investment during the Mateos presidency, Mateos appears much less "leftish." During Mateos's six years in

[75]David Gordon, 16.

office, the average percentage of public sector investment spent on social welfare was 22.4%. The average public sector investment spent on communications and transportation was 29.9% and the average amount spent on industry was 34.6%. The Economist survey also describes Echeverría as "leftish," but again we see that Echeverría spent only 25% of public investment on social welfare and 35.5% of public investment on industry.[76]

Martin C. Needler, writing in 1971, first discussed the cyclical (in Needler's case he called it a "pendulum") theory as a possible explanation of twentieth-century Mexican history. Needler's argument is that the continuing survival of the Mexican system and one-party rule relies on changes in policy from one president to another, so as to meet the different needs of different social groups. Needler suggested that the changes in policy occured over two sexenios. For example, beginning with Cárdenas, his successor Camacho moved toward the right, and this rightward tilt was furthered by Camacho's successor Alemán. Camacho was the "moderate" president, followed by Alemán, the "right-wing" president. The pendulum then began to swing back toward the left, Alemán followed by the more centrist Ruíz Cortines, followed by the leftist López Mateos.[77]

As far as historical consensus goes, Needler's cyclical theory faces several problems. According to the theory,

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[76]Grindle, 524.
[77]Needler, 47.

Mateos is the leftist president at the outer edge of the pendulum's swing to the the left. Historical consensus, however, puts Mateos more in the middle. Similarly, Díaz would have to be the centrist president as the pendulum swings back toward the middle, and Echeverría the far right candidate as the pendulum swings toward the right. Historical consensus says the opposite, however, Díaz being the far-right president and Echeverría the far-left president.

Needler makes other more important mistakes. He begins his cyclical theory with Rubio and Rodriguez, each of which was president for different amounts of time and was under the thumb of Calles(something Needler does not mention). We have already seen that it is impossible to include these two presidents in any cyclical theory. Rubio is written off as conservative because "he tried to bring the agrarian reform program to a halt." Rodriguez is described as a moderate transitional figure and Cárdenas as "too far to the left in his agrarian and labor policies."[78] Here we see a similar mistake as the Schlesingers, the reliance on scattered, vague pieces of evidence, the lack of a uniform body of information from which to draw conclusions regarding dominant political philo-sophies.

Needler's use of the pendulum metaphor to describe the cyclical pattern is also inaccurate and calls for a different metaphor. The pendulum metaphor implies complete negation of

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[78]Ibid., 48.

each opposite. As the pendulum swings to the right, the rightist president reverses all the actions of his predecessor and ideological opposite, the liberal president, and vice versa. Clearly, this is not the case in Mexico. Camacho and Alemán did not reverse Cárdenas's nationalization of the foreign oil companies. Even president Salinas has not discussed the sale of Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX), the government-owned oil company. An forward-moving spiral metaphor would be more accurate, implying not negation of opposites but rather a building upon past efforts with each turn of the cycle.[79] The spiral would be confined on either side by the PRI, which would allow only so much emphasis on a particular policy before forcing policy back in the opposite direction.

Linda Hall suggests that rather than a "pendulum" theory of twentieth-century Mexico, every president must satisfy both goals of the Mexican Revolution: social justice and economic deveopment. "I contend that all Mexican presidents must be concerned with both, and that if either is ignored, it will greatly undermine their effective governing power." In this light there can not be drastic changes in policy from one president to the next. One example of this might be president Salinas's so-called "Solidarity" program which has raised money from the sale of state-owned businesses and spent billions of pesos on roads, power, water, and schools

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[79]The spiral metaphor is used by the Schlesingers. The spiral metaphor also implies a more linear direction in history, depending on the width of the spiral.

for poor communities. This would be an attempt to balance the many laws passed favoring foreign investment, economic development and free trade. Hall's theory would appear to rule out the possibility of any cyclical pattern.[80]

The only recent attempt to verify the presence of a cyclical pattern in twentieth-century Mexico is an article in the Latin American Research Review by Dale Story(1985). Although Story at first demonstrates the Schlesingers' and Needler's mistake of characterizing presidents based on random examples, he goes on to look at government expenditures in an effort to discover whether or not a cyclical pattern exists in expenditure priorities between sexenios.

> This budgetary expansion confirms the impact that changing presidential leadership has on spending policies, but it does not substantiate the hypothesized pendulum effect...Nor does differentiating according to budgetary categories produce a consistent left-right distinction among sexenios.[81]

Story's charts are somewhat difficult to interpret, but if we turn to James Wilkie's The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change since 1910 we find much clearer charts which support Story's conclusion. Presidents Cárdenas through Mateos each spent more of the federal budget on economic expenditures than on social expenditures, although

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[80]Hall, 49.
[81]Story, 151.

the exact difference has varied. From Cárdenas through Mateos, federal budget expenditures in the "economic" and "social" categories have both increased over time. Conservative presidents like Alemán and Cortines actually spent more money than Cárdenas on social expenditures, although this is a function of overall increases in the size of the federal budget.[82] Given our previous discussion of the shortcomings of using expenditures to quantify policy orientation in Mexico, the work of Story and Wilkie allows us to conclude only that at an "official" or "public" level at least, the cyclical theory has little basis in fact.

The failure of the cyclical theory to hold up in a careful analysis of twentieth-century Mexico pushes us toward its opposite: a linear theory of twentieth-century Mexican history. Although the failure itself of the cyclical theory would appear to leave us with no option other than a linear theory, other evidence points towards the validity of a linear theory of twentieth-century Mexican history.

The most superficial of this evidence are Wilkie's charts, showing a constant increase in federal expenditures over time. The actual (as opposed to projected) federal expenditure in 1934 was 1.1 billion pesos. By 1963 it had grown to 20.3 billion pesos. Also, from 1935 to 1963, actual expenditures in both the economic and social categories tripled.[83]

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[82]Wilkie, 32, 37.
[83]Ibid., 22-23, 36. Figures have been rounded up.

This year's presidential election will play an important role in determining the policies the government will pursue for the next six years. A vital question is whether or not, or to what extent, the PRI will have to resort to vote fraud to win the election. Having "won" the election in 1988 with just 50.7% of the vote, partially through fraud, questions have been raised about the extent to which the PRI may be willing to tolerate increased political opposition. The liberalization of Mexico's economy that has occurred in the last ten years has marked a historic transformation of the Mexican economy. Many scholars wonder if the government will proceed with political liberalization, although this may not be necessary because when president Salinas picked his successor last November, polls showed the PRI candidate winning the election by a large margin.

Nevertheless, the election of 1988 marked a significant break with the past, signalling that perhaps the PRI elite was willing to move toward a more open, more democratic political system in Mexico. The size of the PRI vote itself was a dramatic change from the past, when PRI majorities were well over seventy percent, sometimes as high as ninety percent. The very existence of two serious contenders, the PAN and the Frente Democrático Nacional(FDN), a collection of leftist groups, signalled another break from the past, when opposition parties were not allowed to seriously challenge the PRI. In the 1988 election, opposition parties combined to win 49.8 percent of the vote. In the senate, the

opposition won four seats, and in the house of deputies the PAN won 101 seats and the FDN 139 seats, out of a total of 500 seats, while the PRI retained a bare majority of 260 seats. Another sign of the PRI's willingness to change is that it allowed the elections to become a referendum on its legitimacy, pushing into question and into the arena of public debate something it had long taken for granted.[84]

Despite the apparent weakness of the PRI in the 1988 elections, Salinas has done a great deal to restore its legitimacy. The conservative, free-market program of the PAN has been almost completely coopted by the PRI, and the PAN is all but irrelevant in this year's election. Salinas's reforms have proven to be popular, and when he announced his successor last November, polls showed the PRI winning by a large margin. It appeared that the newly reinvigorated PRI would coast to an easy victory in this year's election.

Recent events in Chiapas, however, may have changed the PRI's preconceived notions about this year's election. The PRI candidate for president, the late Luis Donaldo Colosio, while alive talked not only of putting more importance on extending the benefits of economic growth to all Mexicans, but also said he would open up the process of choosing gubernatorial condidates for state elections. Previous practice has been to appoint high PRI officials from Mexico City as gubernatorial candidates. Colosio talked of the need

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[84]Leopoldo Gómez and Joseph L. Klesner, "Mexico's 1988 Elections: The beginning of a New Era of Mexican Politics?" LASA Forum vol. 19, no.3(Fall 1988): 1-8.

to appoint more local officials as gubernatorial candidates. Negotiations with the rebels resulted in a pact promising foreign observers in the next election, an independent audit of voter rolls by May 11, more representation for Indians, and increased attention to Indian's land claims. In the government's response to the Chiapas uprising, we may be witnessing an example of how the PRI ruling elite reshapes its policies to remain in power and keep the political system stable. If the PRI feels that the stability of the Mexican system is threatened by events in Chiapas, and the recent rhetoric coming from the government suggests just that, then a turn toward the left (at least in rhetoric) may be necessary.[85]

Echeverría's presidency, then, may be viewed as an attempt by the PRI to maintain legitimacy in the face of the 1968 massacre and the unpopularity of president Ordaz. Similarly, the Camacho presidency may be viewed as an attempt by the PRI to maintain legitimacy with the business and foreign sectors after the extreme liberalism of Cárdenas. Viewing the presidential succession as a means of maintaining the legitimacy of the PRI and the existing system, then any switch in the dominant political philosophy is a function of the PRI's attempt to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the Mexican people--not a function of some cycle in public

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[85]Diane Solis and Paul B. Carroll, "Mexico's Politics Remain on Edge As Camacho Weighs Candidacy," Wall Street Journal 9 March 1994: 10. Carroll and Torres, "As Elections Approach, the Uprising in Mexico is Shaking up Politics," Wall Street Journal 1.

opinion. The question of the functioning of the public space in Mexico, raised earlier, would not be so important then, if the political philosophy of the the presidency is determined in advance by the PRI elite.

And yet, even if there is a turn towards the left, the next sexenio will not resemble the two previous leftist presidencies of Cárdenas and Echeverría. Colosio claimed to "have rejected emphatically populism," and believed in "trade as a very important instrument in elevating the living conditions of people."[86] Cárdenas's presidency was based to a great extent on massive land reform in the form of land grants to peasants. Salinas has all but ended the land reform program, however, and it is unlikely that the next president will revert to a Cárdenas-like land reform program. Echeverría spent a great deal ~~to~~ of time and money buying companies and getting the federal government involved in the production of various goods which could more easily be subsidized. Salinas has overseen the sale of some of the most symbolically important businesses owned by the government, including the state airline, the state telephone system, and the Cananea mining company. The Cananea mining company holds particular importance because the beginnning of the union movement in Mexico began with a strike at Cananea in 1906.

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[86]Dianne Solis, "Mexico Faces Slow Growth of Economy," Wall Street Journal 22 February 1994: A14. The reference to "populism" refers specifically to the Echeverría sexenio.

The next president is unlikely to reverse this trend and reassert a strong government role in the production process.[87]

Here again, in the question of Colosio's policies, we see the linear theory of twentieth-century Mexican history. The next president may orient his presidency towards the poor, but it will be done in a way not yet tried. Looking at Salinas's policies, we see a similar linear progression. Like Alemán and Ordaz before him, Salinas has been oriented toward fostering economic growth in Mexico. Nevertheless, Salinas has done so using different policies than his predecessors. Whereas Alemán and Ordaz practiced import-subsitution and other forms of protectionism, Salinas has opened Mexico's economy to the United States and forced Mexican businesses to compete in the global economy. Subsidies to businesses, price controls, and regulations on foreign participation in the Mexican economy have all been slashed. Salinas has put an end to the economic policies of every twentieth century president before him--liberal and conservative.

Another sacred cow of the revolution that Salinas has changed has been the issue of land reform. Ever since Cárdenas handed out land in massive amounts to peasants, every president, whatever his policies, has continued to distribute at least some land during his presidency. Salinas

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[87]Adolfo Gilly, "The Mexican Regime in its Dilemma," Journal of International Affairs vol.43, no.2 (Winter 1990): 273-290.

has dropped even the pretension of land reform, however, and all but shut down the land reform bureaucracy.

Post-Díaz Mexico has always had a somewhat distant relationship with the United States, seeking friendship and accomadation but wary of being dominated by U.S. culture and the U.S. economy. Mexico has traditionally sought to limit the United States's influence on Mexico's economy, whether it was Cárdenas's nationalization of the U.S.-owned oil companies or the limitation of foreign ownership of a Mexican company to 49%. Salinas has changed all this, too, repealing the 49% law, signing a free-trade agreement with the United States, and actively encouraging U.S. investments in Mexico. In fact, Salinas staked the success of his presidency on getting a free-trade agreement with the U.S.

Salinas's reversal of these long-standing policies suggests not only a linear progression in twentieth-century Mexico, but also an abandonment by the Mexican elite of some of the most sacred goals of the Revolution. We may be witnessing the end of Mexico's "revolutionary" process, to which every president since Cárdenas has paid rhetorical (at least) homage. Salinas has helped create a "post-revolutionary" Mexico, a Mexico in which the linear progression of history continues.

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