

Attitudes Toward Democracy: Mexico in Comparative Perspective.

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Abstract¹

Mexico's gradual democratization had a critical point in 2000, when the presidential election brought about political alternation in that country. If democracy requires a compatible value system that helps such system endure, how democratic are Mexicans today and what implications does this have for democratic consolidation in Mexico? This article examines new survey data to address this old question. Our findings reveal that the prevailing political culture in Mexico expresses comparatively low support for democracy and relatively high support for non-democratic government, on the one hand, and low interpersonal trust, low levels of tolerance, and a strong emphasis on deference, on the other. Education is an important determinant of democratic values, and individual variation is significant on a wide range of attitudes. Changes over time also indicate that Mexicans have reinforced both democratic and non-democratic values in the last few years, which makes it hard to assess whether, overall, Mexico's democratic values are expanding or shrinking.

Mexico's gradual democratization came to a critical point in 2000, when the presidential election brought about political alternation in that country. After remaining in power for 71 years, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was defeated at the polls. Vicente Fox, the National Action Party (PAN) candidate, became the first president from a party other than the PRI in Mexico's modern history. Three years earlier, the PRI had lost its majority in Congress, and the 1990s witnessed how opposition parties defeated the PRI in local and state-level elections, gradually ousting the PRI from office in every level of government. After all these significant transformations, how democratic are Mexicans nowadays and how do they value democracy? This question derives from the early studies on political culture that stated that democracy requires a compatible value system that helps it endure.²

Our task in this article is to assess how Mexicans value democracy and to what extent they hold elements of a democratic political culture. We do this by comparing Mexican democratic values to those of other regions of the world, and also by observing how Mexicans' democratic attitudes have changed in the last few years. We also look at the differences among Mexicans, focusing on education as an important predictor of democratic values.

Academic efforts to measure democratic values and support for democracy in Mexico are not new, but the 1990s brought a new wave of quantitative studies that used increasingly reliable and sophisticated opinion surveys based on national representative samples. These studies, as well as the surveys that provided the empirical evidence, conducted mostly in the late 1980s and during the 1990s, reflected themselves a period of profound political transformation.³ Moreover, Mexico included regularly national representative samples in international surveys that monitor, among other things, citizen support for democracy and the spread of democratic values. Both the World Values Survey, which serves as evidence to this article, and the Latinobarómetro surveys, are good examples.

The literature on support for democracy in Third Wave democracies has recently raised interesting paradoxes.⁴ Let us mention three of them. First, democracy has nowadays a widespread legitimacy in the world, but trust in democratic institutions has declined.⁵ Moreover, political participation has also lost the enthusiasm of the democratic honeymoon in the third wave democracies.⁶

The second paradox is that, although open support for democracy is almost universal today, its measurement is not a precise indicator of how rooted democracy is in society.⁷ A very illustrative indicator is that democracy is highly valued in Islamic societies, but very few Islamic societies have functioning democratic regimes. Given the little difference in democratic principles and ideals between Islamic societies and the West, there is hardly a "clash of civilizations" in those terms.⁸

A third paradox is that today, when survey researchers measure support for democracy, they are measuring support for a socially desirable concept, and measurement validity only reflects overt support.⁹ The fact is that measures of overt support for democracy do not tell us how democratic societies are, or how tolerant. On the contrary, measuring tolerance may tell us how democratic a society is.

Support for democracy may erode, especially when the economic context may raise doubts about the functioning of democratic institutions. References to the Weimar

Republic often illustrate this syndrome.¹⁰ Support for democracy was not enough to allow democracy to endure in a profound economic crisis. Precisely, many third wave democracies have faced the challenge of economic transformation and recovery, and a decade ago some observers identified economic performance as one of the main obstacles to democratic consolidation.¹¹ Moreover, corruption and political scandals might bring disillusionment with democracy in newly democratic societies. In any case, good measurements of a democratic political culture are not limited to support for democratic rule—particularly, today, when survey responses on the issue are strongly subject to social desirability bias. Instead, such measurements should allow us to know something more than overt support for democracy; they should tell us something about tolerance, trust, and rejection of non-democratic forms of governance, for example.

Democracy and Political Culture in Mexico

Mexico's democratization was significantly achieved through electoral reforms and a gradual increase in political competition. The 1988 presidential election witnessed the first major electoral challenge to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI, which was made possible thanks to a party split in 1987. Mexican opposition parties started to win elections earlier, especially at the municipal level. The first state governor from a party other than the PRI, in this case the National Action Party (PAN) was elected in Baja California, in 1989. The 1990s witnessed a more rapid increase in political competition thanks to further electoral reforms and both 1997 and 2000 were critical years in electoral terms. In 1997, the PRI lost its majority in Congress, obtaining only 39 percent of the national vote. The PAN and the PRI obtained 27 and 26 percent of the national vote, respectively. In 2000, the PRI lost the presidency, obtaining 38 percent of the vote, whereas Vicente Fox, a candidate of the Alliance for Change (a coalition of PAN and the Greens) obtained about 43 percent. During the 1990s, the issue of democracy was the main determinant of party support and party competition. Those who favored a democratic transformation were more likely to support the PAN, whereas those who sought to keep the PRI in power expressed more authoritarian attitudes and values.¹²

Recent surveys conducted in Mexico by government institutions have been shown that a great majority of Mexicans support and value democracy. The results have been published with enthusiasm and optimism, speaking in favor of the strength of democratic values in that country. The simple fact that government institutions have polled Mexicans on this matter and publish the results of their study shows an important change in Mexican political culture. Why would political elites do so under authoritarian rule? However, as a society, Mexico is far from having a very strong value system that is compatible with democracy. Comparatively, Mexicans show lower levels of tolerance and trust, and higher deference for authority and support for non-democratic rule than societies in other countries of the world. For example, Mexico's average score on a composite index of support for democracy is well under the average of 48 societies included in the 1995-1997 World Values Survey.¹³ This does not mean that democracy is not likely to endure in Mexico. It means that Mexicans are just starting to know democracy, both its virtues and its problems, and developing a real sense of it.

Our task in this article is to elaborate some answers based on empirical evidence to the following questions: How does Mexican democratic culture compare to the democratic culture in other regions of the world? How have Mexican democratic values evolved in the last years? How different is democratic culture within Mexico? In a more rhetorical, less empirical sense: What implications are there for the consolidation of democracy in Mexico? By democratic culture we mean a set of values and attitudes that are compatible with democratic principles and practices, such as tolerance, interpersonal trust, emphasis on civil liberties and rights, political participation, support for democracy, and rejection of non-democratic forms of government. We are aware that our answers to these questions may not be definitive, but we hope that their empirical basis serves as a portrait of the Mexican political culture at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st Centuries.

Data description

This article is based on data from the 1995-1997 and 2000-2001 World Values Survey (WVS), the third and fourth waves of the project, respectively. Our analysis of the WVS is mostly descriptive, and, for illustration purposes we decided to compare Mexico with regions of the world, rather than particular countries. The countries included in each region are the following: *Latin America and the Caribbean*: Argentina 1995 and 2000, Brazil 1995, Chile 1995 and 2000, Peru 1995, Puerto Rico 1995, Dominican Republic 1995, Uruguay 1995, and Venezuela 1995 and 2000. *Africa*: Ghana 1995, Nigeria 1995 and 2000, South Africa 1995 and 2000, Uganda 2000, Zimbabwe 2000. *East Asia*: China 1995 and 2000, South Korea 1995 and 2000, Japan 1995 and 2000, and Taiwan 1995. *South Asia*: Bangladesh 2000, Philippines 1995 and 2000, India 1995, Turkey 1995 and 2000, and Vietnam 2000. *Advanced Democracies*: West Germany 1995, Australia 1995, Canada 2000, Spain 1995 and 2000, United States 1995 and 2000, Finland 1995, Israel 2000, Norway 1995, Switzerland 1995, Sweden 1995 and 2000. *Post-Communist Societies*: East Germany 1995, Armenia 1995, Azerbaijan 1995, Belarus 1995, Croatia 1995, Slovenia 1995, Estonia 1995, Georgia 1995, Latvia 1995, Lithuania 1995, Moldavia 1995, Montenegro 1995 and 2000, Poland 1995, Russia 1995, Serbia 1995 and 2000, Tambov 1995, and Ukraine 1995. Mexico was analyzed separately from Latin America. The dataset with these countries has 97,643 respondents.

In this article we also use the National Survey of Political Culture and Citizen Practices (ENCUP 2001), a national representative sample of 4,183 adult Mexicans sponsored by the Interior Ministry of Mexico (SEGOB), and conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Information (INEGI). Fieldwork took place from November 4 to December 7, 2001. Our use of the ENCUP 2001 here is more analytical. We use multinomial logistic regression analysis and show the predicted probabilities from the models. The models based on the ENCUP are rather weak, but the differences by education show that there is a significant variation among Mexicans, as shown somewhere else.¹⁴ Also, by looking at individual differences we recognize the problems of just reporting societal averages, as if each society was homogeneous.¹⁵ We are well aware that this is not the case.

Comparing Mexico's Democratic Culture.

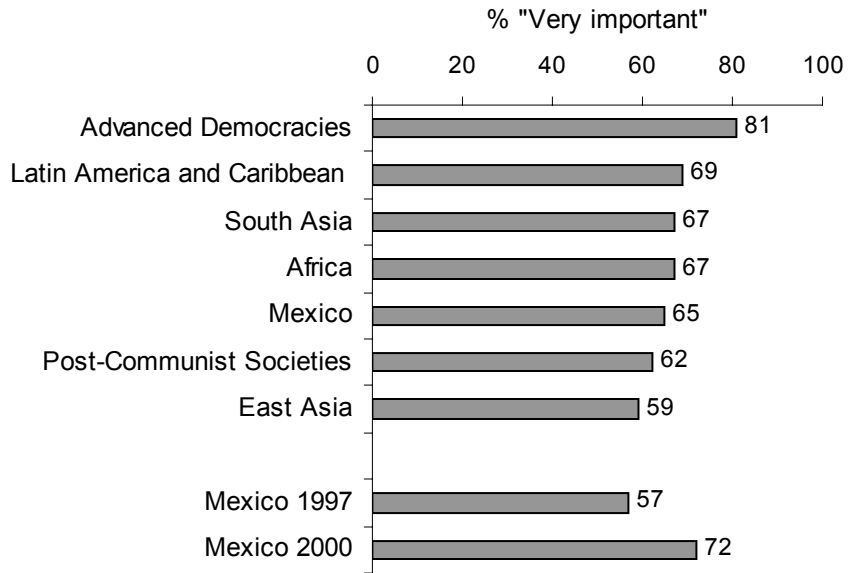
Comparisons always bring conceptual and empirical problems: what aspects should be compared and how valid are the measurements in different national and regional contexts? Trying to respond to the first part of the question, we identify some of the main qualities considered as crucial factors in the flourishing of democracy. Such factors are tolerance, trust, emphasis on civil rights and political participation, and a general sense of subjective well-being.¹⁶ Subjective well-being reflects the level of economic development in society, which, according to several studies, is the basis of democratic development. Rather than focusing on economic development and the sense of well-being, we focus on tolerance and authority as elements of political socialization, on trust and the openness to understand others' preferences, on support for democracy and rejection of non-democratic rule, and on citizen evaluations of democratic performance and respect for human rights.

Tolerance and Obedience

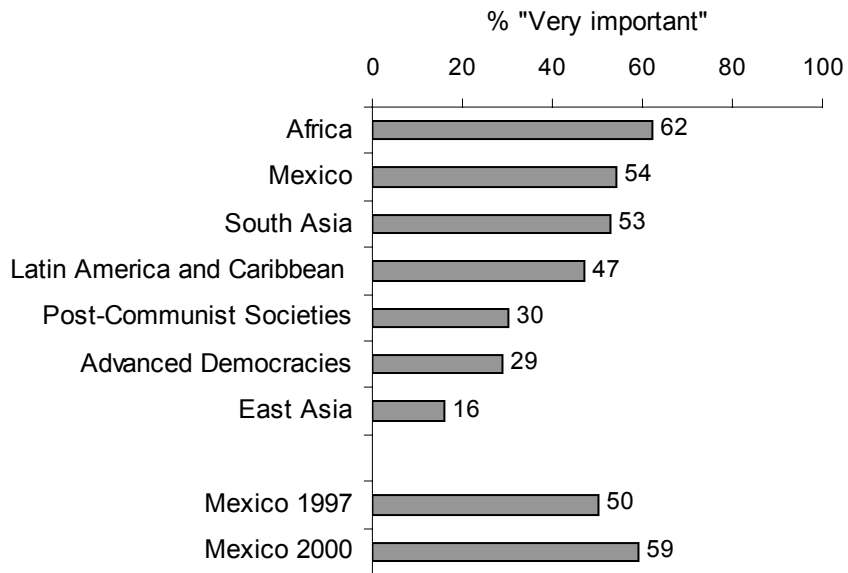
A great deal of the literature on political culture follows the idea that political values are learned during the years of individual formation and socialization.¹⁷ Without being a study of socialization, this article shows some of the priorities that Mexican adults consider important in children's education, and how they compare to other regions of the world. Figures 1a and 1b show the percent of respondents in different regions of the world that say that tolerance and obedience, respectively, are "very important" to encourage in children. This combination of tolerance and obedience responds to the fact that tolerance is a favorable attitude towards democracy, while obedience reflects deference towards authority, not necessarily democratic. It is still common in Mexico to hear that children should be obedient, and that a "good" child is the one who obeys his or her parents without questioning them. The obvious translation into politics is that obedience reflects some subjection to political authority, and little questioning.

Figures 1a y 1b. Tolerance and Obedience

Encouraging tolerance in children



Encouraging obedience in children



According to the third and fourth waves of the World Values Survey, tolerance is considered a very important aspect to teach children in advanced industrial democracies, where an average 81 percent of respondents say so. In contrast, post-Communist societies and East Asian countries express the lower average levels of support for tolerance as a value that should be encouraged to children. Comparatively, Mexico is slightly under the overall regional average: 65 percent of Mexicans consider tolerance important for children, vis-à-vis 67 percent expressed in all countries included in the analysis. On average, Latin American and Caribbean societies appear as more tolerant than Mexicans. Nonetheless, emphasis on tolerance in Mexico increased from 57 to 72 percent from 1997 to 2000. The 1997 survey was taken a few months before the PRI lost its majority in Congress in the mid-term 1997 elections. Perhaps the new political reality after 1997 contributed to the increase of the percent of Mexicans who consider tolerance important. Also, the Federal Elections Institute permanent media campaign of political values has placed emphasis on political tolerance as well.

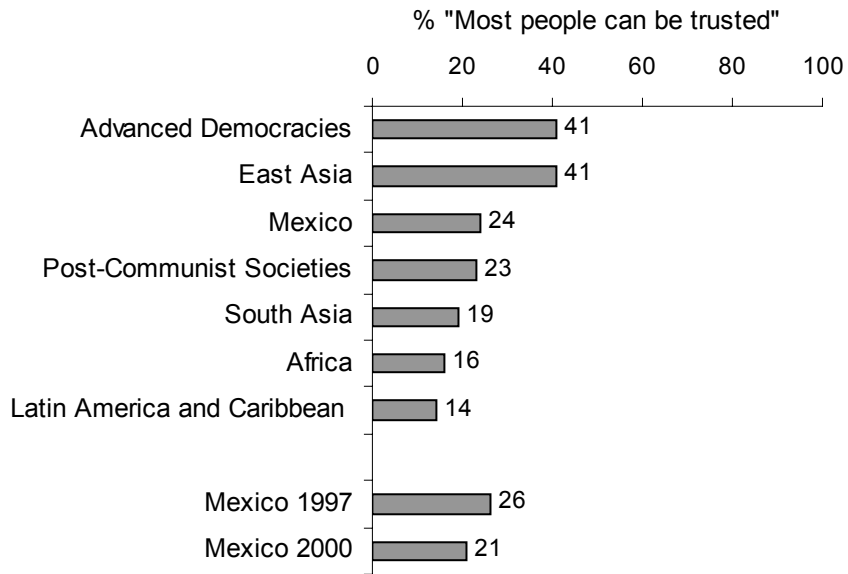
Mexicans are, on average, less interested in encouraging tolerance among children than other countries of different regions of the world, included Latin America. At the same time, they are more interested in promoting obedience. Only African societies consider obedience more important than in Mexico: 64 percent of the African publics surveyed emphasize obedience, vis-à-vis 54 percent of Mexicans. However, emphasis on obedience has increased in Mexico in the last years. In contrast, less than one third (29 percent) of the publics in advanced industrial democracies, and about 16 percent of the East Asian publics emphasize obedience as an attribute that children should learn. In sum, Mexicans are more oriented towards promoting obedience and less towards expanding tolerance, in comparison to other regions of the world. The importance of tolerance increased in the last few years, but so did the importance of obedience.

Trust and Interpersonal Relations

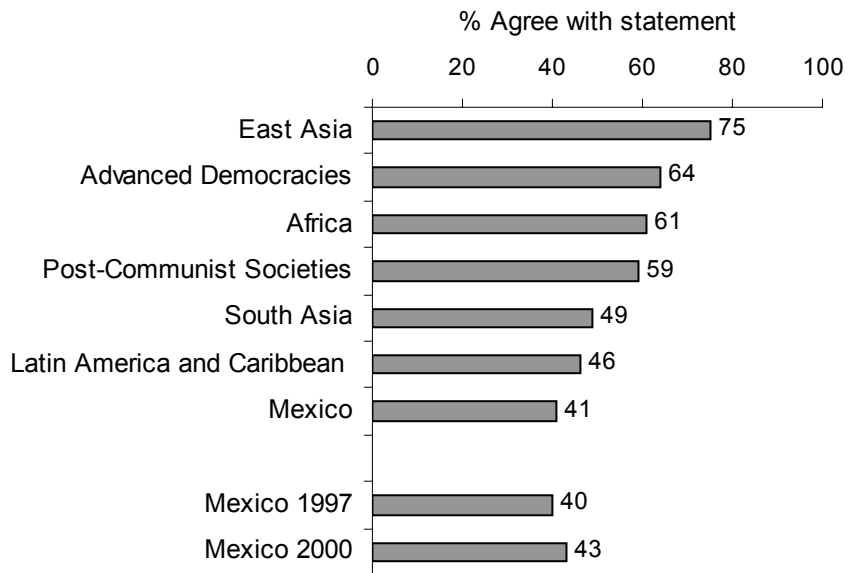
Trust is a fundamental aspect in the functioning of democracy.¹⁸ And the combination of trust and tolerance reflects a will to understand others' preferences and aim at successful social relationships. Figures 2a and 2b show the percent of respondents who express trust in people and who prioritize an understanding of others' preferences before the clear manifestation of one's own preferences.

Figures 2a y 2b. Trust and Interpersonal Relationships

Trust in people



Understanding others' preferences



In comparison to the levels of trust expressed in advanced democracies (41 percent, a similar percent to East Asia's), only 24 percent of Mexicans express trust in most people. The Latin American average level of trust is even lower, 14 percent, even far from the one registered in post-Communist societies, where the average trust is about 23 percent. Still, Mexico's level of trust is relatively low, in comparison to the one expressed in advanced democracies, and it decreased from 26 percent in 1997 to 21 percent in 2000.

Mexicans are, on average, less open to understand others' preferences. Only 41 percent place emphasis on the understanding of others' preferences in order to have successful human relations. This percent is slightly lower than the Latin American average of 46 percent, and significantly lower than the percent expressed in advanced democracies (64 percent) and in East Asia (75 percent). From 1997 to 2000, the percent of respondents who agree with the importance of understanding others' preferences was stable, only moving from 40 to 43 percent.

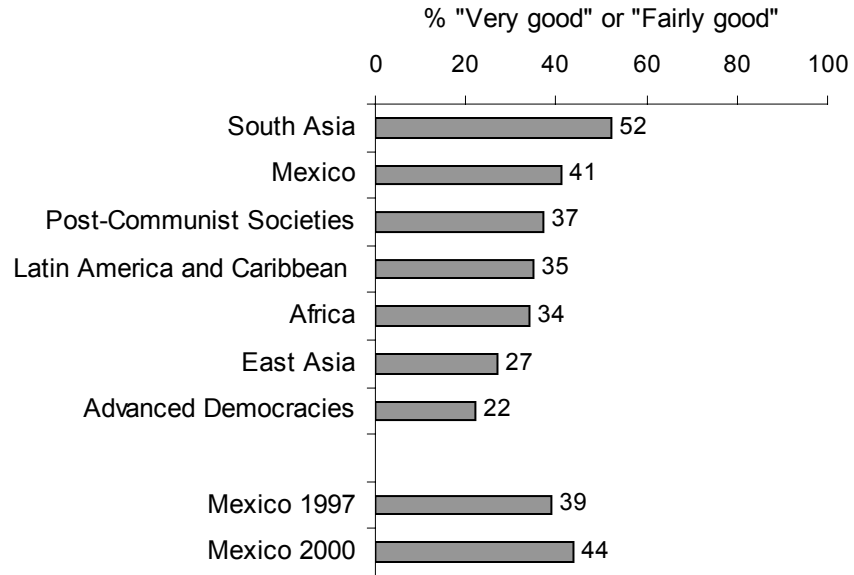
In sum, comparatively, Mexican political culture is characterized by low levels of trust (or high levels of distrust, if preferable), and is closed to other people's ideas and preferences. If these are parts of the social capital that makes democracy work more efficiently, Mexicans lack a great deal of the lubricating factor of democracy: they seem to have a deficit of trust and are relatively closed to coexistence. Nonetheless, trust is not a trait of the majority, even in advanced democracies, where the overall average is about 41 percent.

Support for Authoritarian Rule

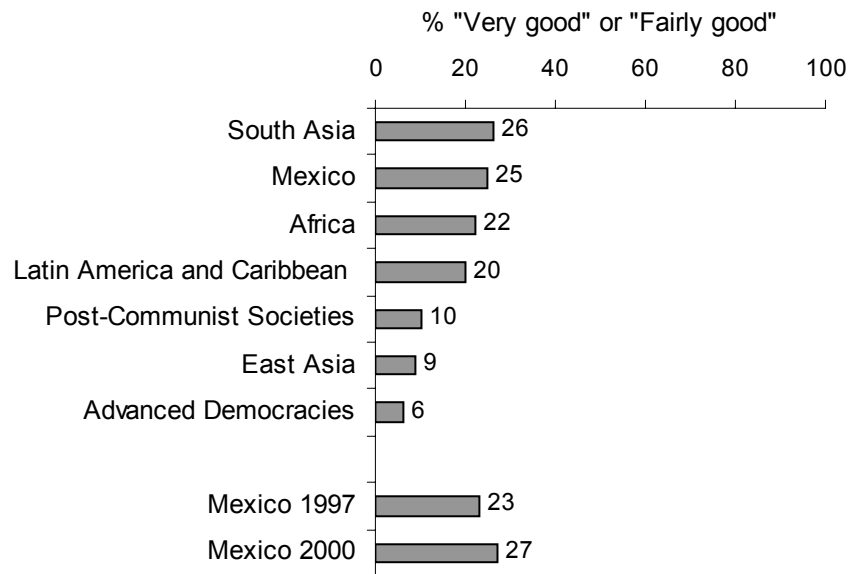
The consolidation of new democracies requires that there are no real possibilities of an authoritarian regression, and that there is mass rejection to such possibilities. In Mexico, unlike other regions of the world, there is a significant support for authoritarian forms of government, and even for military rule, which most living Mexicans have not experienced in their lifetime. Figures 3a and 3b show the percent of respondents who say that having a strong leader who does not have to bother with Congress/Parliament and elections is good or very good, and the percent of respondents who consider having the military rule as good or very good.

Figures 3a y 3b. Support for Non-Democratic Government

Having a strong leader



Having the army rule



In Mexico, 41 percent of respondents support having a strong leader who does not bother with Congress and elections. This percentage is only outweighed by the one registered in South Asia, composed with countries such as India, Bangladesh, Turkey, Vietnam and the Philippines. In that region, 52 percent of respondents say that this autocratic form of government is good. In contrast, 22 percent of the publics surveyed in advanced democracies support the idea of a strong leader. This is the lowest regional percent, but it is still a significant proportion: about a fifth of those who live in stable industrial democracies is willing, at least in word, to accept a strong leader who does not bother with Congress and elections. The Latin American average of support for a strong leader is about 35 percent, similar to that of Africa (34 percent) and the post-Communist world (37 percent). Support for a strong leader grew in Mexico in the last few years: from 39 percent in 1997, right before the first plural Congress came about, to 44 percent in 2000, right before Vicente Fox defeated the PRI candidate, Francisco Labastida, in the presidential election.

Most living Mexicans have not experienced a military rule. In fact, the last president who had a military background after the Mexican Revolution, Manuel Ávila Camacho, ended his term in 1940, but his government cannot be characterized as a military rule. Despite this lack of military governments, today one out of four Mexicans thinks that having the military rule is good. In South Asian societies, 26 percent of respondents support military rule, as well as 22 percent of the African publics. About 20 percent of Latin Americans say that military rule is something good, and only 6 percent of the publics in advanced democracies share that view. In sum, support for military government in Mexico is relatively higher than in other countries and regions, and it has increased in the last few years: from 23 percent in 1997 to 27 percent in 2000.

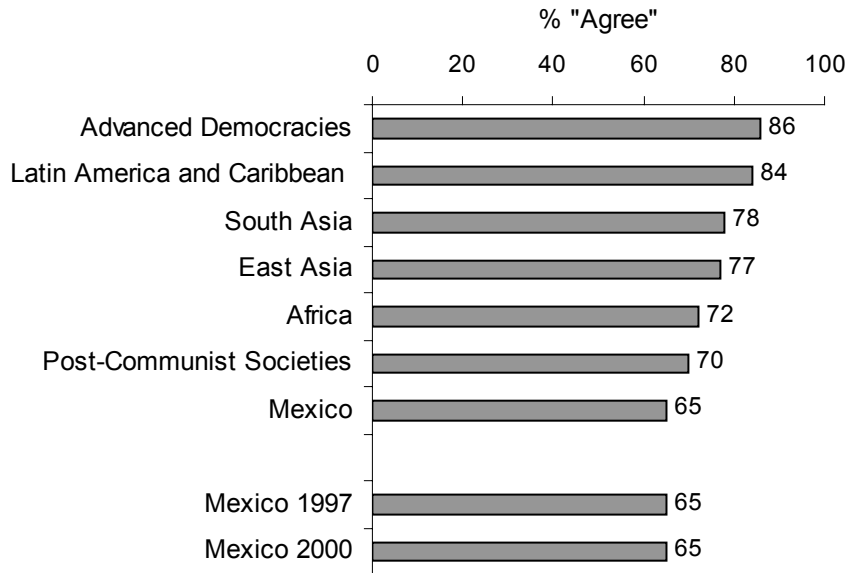
Support for Democratic Governance

Today, overt support for democracy is high in most countries of the world, which means that having a simple majority or two-thirds of the public supporting democracy may be rather seen as a low score. Most Mexicans believe that democracy is the best system, but the percent that say this is comparatively lower than the averages observed in most regions of the world. Moreover, overt support for democracy has not increased in Mexico in the last few years.

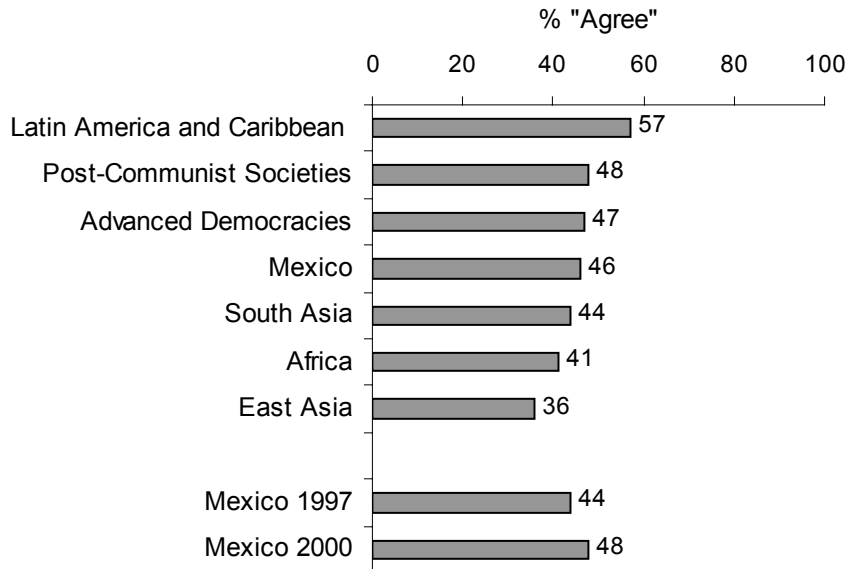
Figures 4a and 4b show the percent of respondents who agree that democracy is the best system, and the percent of respondents who agree that democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling. About 86 percent of the publics in advanced democracies are convinced that democracy is the best system. Latin Americans (Mexico not included) are close to that level, with 84 percent; South Asia has an average of 78 percent, and East Asia 77 percent; African publics have an average of 72 percent and post-Communist societies 70 percent. Below any of these averages of democratic conviction is Mexico, with about 65 percent. The same proportion was observed in 1997 and in 2000. This means that only two thirds of Mexicans believe democracy is the best system, and that proportion has not changed in the last few years. One third of Mexicans are not convinced (or lack the information to say) that democracy is the best system.

Figures 4a y 4b. Support for Democracy

Democracy is the best system



Democracies are indecisive and have too much quibbling



Mexicans just started to live in a democracy and most of them just began to see their political system as such. According to a series of national polls conducted by *Reforma* newspaper in Mexico, fewer than half of Mexicans thought of their country as a democracy before the presidential elections of 2000. However, more than six out of ten Mexicans were convinced that Mexico was a democracy right after the presidential election.¹⁹

Newly democratic experiences have brought different dynamics of politics to Mexicans' eyes. After the 1997 mid-term elections, a plural Congress changed the balance of power in Mexico by changing the Executive-Legislative relations. Mexicans could watch on TV or read in newspapers that democracy is an arrangement where disorder and lack of deference could be part of Mexico's institutional life without risking political stability. After the 2000 presidential election, Vicente Fox changed the style of the Mexican Presidency in many ways, but perhaps the most significant change was not one of style, but of substance. The Mexican presidency has become more open and less effective. Both, public policy and legislation have found it more difficult to make their way from a presidential initiative or good will to an actual government action or legislation. The Indigenous Law in 2001, the Tax Reform in 2002, and the cancellation of a new airport construction outside Mexico City in 2002 show how unable the new Mexican president has been to achieve his original goals.

Admitting that democracy may be slow and inefficient is not a signal of anti-democratic attitudes. Democracy implies that political outcomes are uncertain within institutional certainty.²⁰ Figure 4b shows that most societies are divided along the idea that democracy is indecisive and has too much quibbling. About 57 percent of the Latin American societies shares that view. In Mexico, that percentage is about 46 percent, similar to that of advanced democracies (47 percent) and post-Communist societies (48 percent).

Believing that a democracy is indecisive and troublesome is not an indicator of anti-democratic views. On the contrary, what is democracy if not an institutional arrangement that opens the possibility for different and generally opposing views and interests to be expressed, advanced, and negotiated? Tolerance of homogeneity is a contradiction in terms. Tolerance has to do with diversity and coexistence. Tolerance is tested precisely when political conflicts can be processed through institutions with no need of violence. In Mexico, the belief that democracy is indecisive and has too much quibbling increased from 44 to 48 percent from 1997 to 2000. Rather than being an increase in anti-democratic attitudes, this may be seen as a greater acknowledgement of some of democracy's features. Unfortunately, this particular question has so much ambivalence that a stronger conclusion cannot be reached.

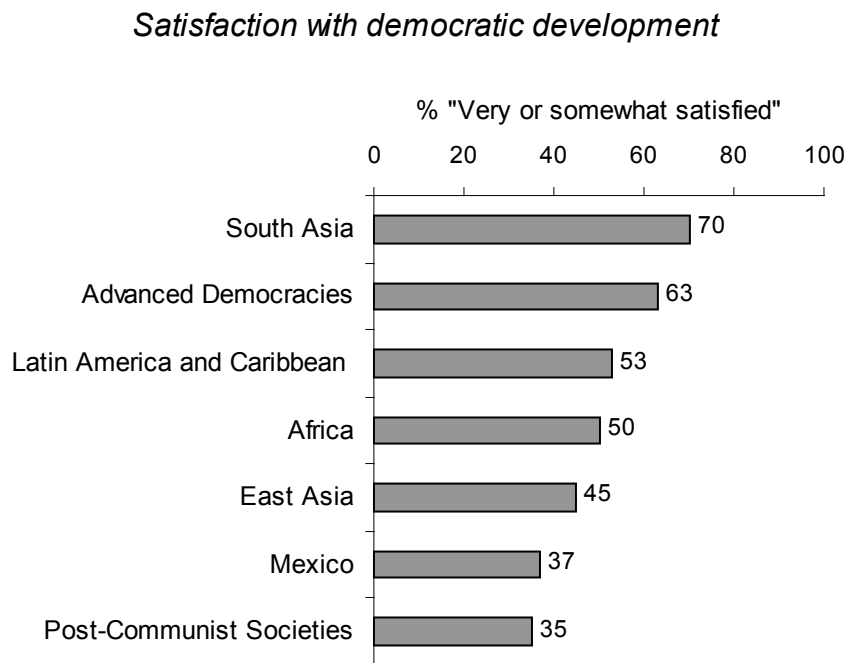
Satisfaction with Democracy and Respect for Human Rights

Satisfaction with democracy and perceptions of how such system guarantees respect for human rights are important pillars in the way society value democratic governance. Many of the new democracies had to build democratic institutions and develop mechanism that changed the very fundamental relations between government and

citizenry. Some new democracies opened their past in search of violations of basic human rights. What are the current perceptions of the way democracy is developing and the way human rights are respected?

Figure 5a shows the percent of respondents who said they are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the development of democracy. Comparatively speaking, the level of satisfaction is about 70 percent in South Asia, 63 percent in advanced democracies, 53 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 50 percent in Africa. In East Asia, which includes China, the percent of satisfaction with the development of democracy is about 45 percent. In Mexico, only 37 percent say they are satisfied with the way democracy has developed in the country. This level is just above the percent expressed in post-Communist societies. It is clear that, before political alternation in 2000, Mexican society was not very satisfied with the development of democracy in their country.²¹

Figures 5a y 5b. Satisfaction with Democratic Development and Human Rights



Respect for human rights

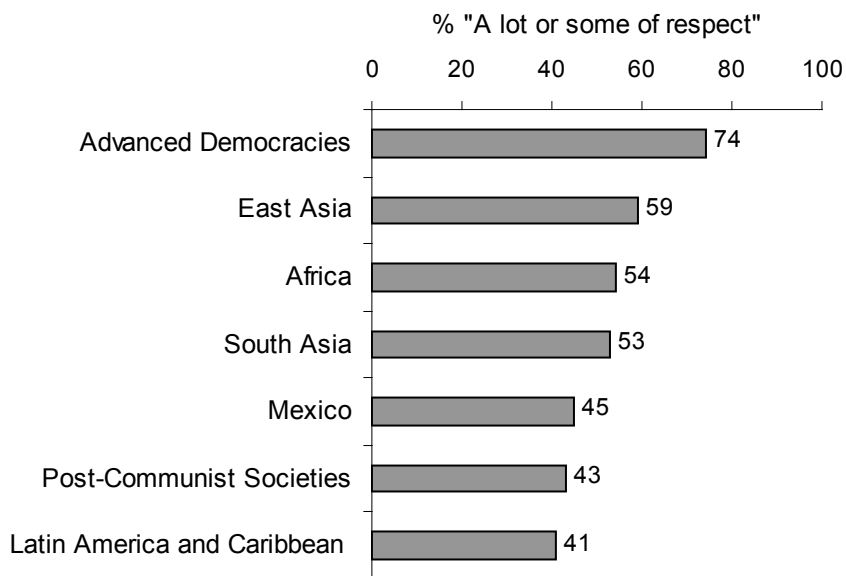


Figure 5b shows the percent of respondents that consider that there is a great deal or some respect for human rights in their country. About 74 percent of the publics in advanced democracies think that there is respect for human rights in their countries. The average percent in East Asia is about 59 percent; in Mexico it is 45 percent, in the post-Communist world 43 percent, and in Latin America 41 percent. Although there have been important episodes of violations to human rights in Mexico (the student massacre in 1968, and the “Dirty War” in the early 1970s, just to mention two of the most important ones), perceptions of respect for human rights among the Mexican public are very similar to those in Latin America and post-Communist societies. One should expect that an indicator of how the public perceives respect for human rights not only reflects the authoritarian past, but also the way newly democratic governments have dealt with the issue. The more respect for human rights, the higher the quality of democracy.

The data shown in Figures 5a and 5b suggest that Mexicans were comparatively little satisfied with democratic development before the political alternation (something that changed after the presidential elections²²), and share the lower positions in perceptions of respect for human rights.

With this descriptive account of democratic attitudes we conclude the first part of the article, which addressed the questions of how democratic Mexican political culture is, comparatively speaking, and how it has evolved in the last few years. The next part addresses a third question: how different are Mexicans among themselves, in terms of their democratic political culture? Before we move onto the second part, let us summarize our findings so far.

1. In comparison to the regional averages in the world, Mexicans encourage tolerance relatively less and obedience relatively more than most societies. In the last few years, emphasis on tolerance has increased in Mexico, but so has emphasis on obedience.
2. Mexicans are characterized by showing little interpersonal trust, and trust has in fact declined in the last few years. They are also relatively less open to understand others' preferences in their human relations, an attitude that may hinder social and political coexistence in a heterogeneous society.
3. Mexicans show larger levels of acceptance to non-democratic forms of governance, such as autocracy and military rule, than in most regions of the world. Such acceptance has increased in the last few years.
4. Mexicans are comparatively less convinced that democracy is the best system. However, they are, as most societies, divided in the way they perceive democracy. Perceptions that such system is indecisive and that it has too much quibbling are not indicators of anti-democratic attitudes, but an acknowledgment of those characteristics.
5. Mexicans were little satisfied with the development of democracy until the 2000 elections. Fewer than half also considered that human rights are respected in that country. Both indicators show how perceptions about the quality of democracy in Mexico were at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st Centuries.

Internal diversity: Findings from the National Survey of Political Culture

Which Mexicans are more likely to hold democratic values and attitudes? In this section we analyze the individual differences in support for democracy and tolerance shown by Mexicans. The analysis is based on multinomial logistic regression, and we show the predicted probabilities of holding one attitude or another with respect to democracy by levels of education, since this variable has proved to be an important predictor of democratic attitudes.

According to the National Survey of Political Culture, conducted for the Interior Ministry (ENCUP 2001), 62 percent of respondents consider that a democratic system is preferable to any other form of government. This figure is consistent with the 65 percent of respondents to the Mexican 2000 World Values Survey that think democracy is the best system. In contrast, 9 percent of Mexicans polled by the ENCUP 2001 think that, under some circumstances, an authoritarian government is better than a democratic one.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the majority of Mexicans think democracy is the best system, but such majority—62 to 65 percent, depending on the survey—represents a relatively low percent in comparison to other regions of the world. Moreover, this majority is reduced to a plurality when respondents face some particular questions. What is preferable, living under economic pressure without sacrificing civil liberties, or sacrificing civil liberties if that means not having economic pressures? About 47 percent of Mexicans rather live under economic pressures without sacrificing civil liberties, whereas 32 percent think that civil liberties should be sacrificed in exchange for economic security. The distribution of responses to this question reveals that about a third of Mexicans is willing, at least in word, to support suppression of civil liberties

under economic pressures. Moreover, in term of political tolerance, 52 percent of Mexicans disagree that television shows people with ideas politically different to one's own, and about 35 percent agree.

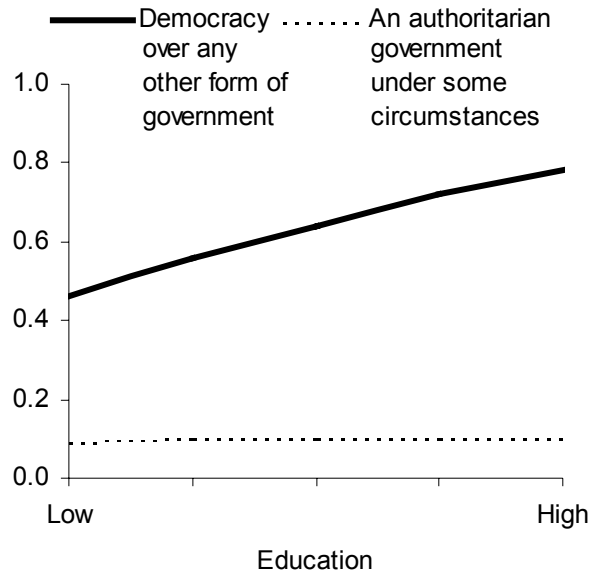
Who is more likely to hold democratic attitudes? Who is more tolerant? Who is more likely to accept non-democratic forms of governance? Education and socio-economic status are important predictors of pro-democratic attitudes in society, cross-nationally speaking.²³ In order to show the impact of education and income, among other variables, we ran a multinomial logistic regression model with different attitudes as dependent variables. The values taken by the dependent variables represented a pro-democratic position, a pro-authoritarian position, and an indifferent position. We used 6 different dependent variables with this coding. The model used gender, education, income, and region as independent variables; additionally, we included economic retrospective evaluations, assuming that the most disaffected Mexicans would be more likely to reject democratic rule. The model is not an exhaustive one and has a relatively poor goodness of fit. The ENCUP survey did not offer any other independent variables (such as partisan orientations or left right self-placement) that we think might improve the model. The only option we had was to include other attitudinal questions as independent variables, but this would have led us to a problem of endogeneity, so we decided not to include them.²⁴ Let us now turn to the results.

Democracy and Political Effectiveness

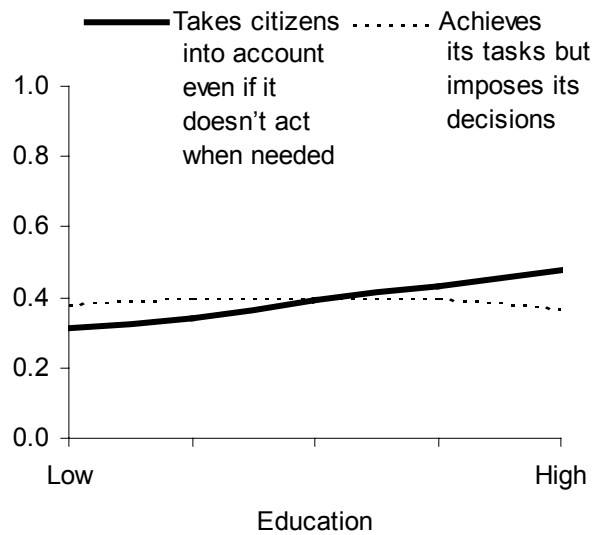
Figures 6a and 6b show the predicted probabilities derived from the multinomial regression model by education using dependent variables that represent support for democracy and attitudes toward political effectiveness. As stated earlier, education has a positive and significant impact on pro-democratic attitudes: the higher the respondent's education level, the more likely he or she will hold favorable attitudes toward democracy.

Figures 6a y 6b. Democracy and Political Efectiveness.

Do you prefer...?



Do you rather have a government that...?



Generally, most Mexicans prefer democracy to authoritarianism, but such preference varies significantly by education. The most educated Mexicans have a probability closed to 80 percent to prefer democracy, whereas the least educated are slightly over 40 percent likely to prefer democracy. Nonetheless, preferences for authoritarianism are not clearly related to education: the highly educated are as likely to prefer authoritarian governance under some circumstances as the least educated. This means that the lower the respondent's education, the more likely he or she would not have a position towards either democracy or authoritarianism.

It has been demonstrated that Mexicans, as other Latin Americans, hold different concepts of democracy, and that education and the level of political sophistication make a difference on how democracy is perceived. The lower the level of education, the more likely it is that democracy is conceptualized in terms of elements that are not exclusively defining of democratic rule, such as fighting crime or maintaining order.²⁵ Variables that represent levels of information and media consumption are even stronger predictors of the conceptualization of democracy than typically cultural variables, such as trust.²⁶ Political sophistication is positively related to support for democratic governance in Mexico.

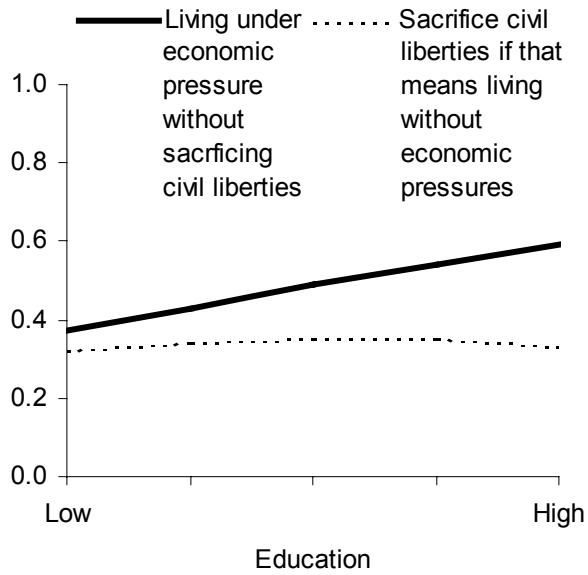
However, education is a weaker determinant of the following attitude: what is better, a government that consults and takes citizen preferences into account even if it does not act when needed; or a government that acts effectively even if it imposes its decisions. Mexicans are clearly divided on this issue: a little fewer than half supports the first position, and about the same proportion supports the second position. Figure 6b shows that, as education increases, preferences for a government that consults citizens slightly increases. The differences are not very significant, however. Even the most educated Mexicans are less than 50 percent likely to prefer a government that consults citizens to a government that imposes its decisions. The fact that the former option implies an ineffective government and the latter an effective one is causing this ambivalence. Citizens like to see government results.

Democracy and economic performance

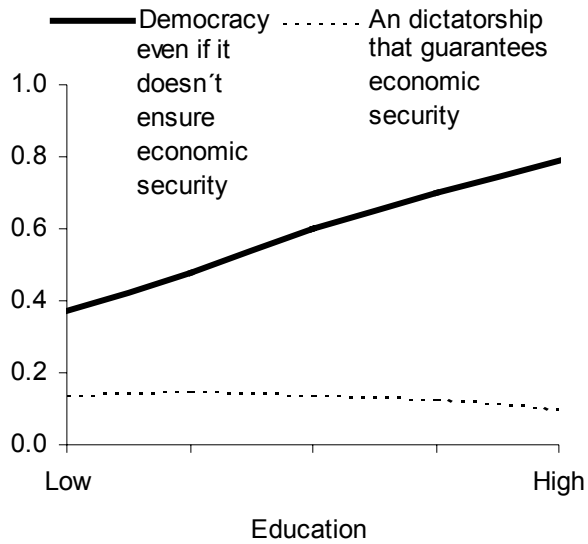
The syndrome of the Weimar Republic represents the abandonment of democratic ideals and principles because of economic depression. How vulnerable are Mexican democratic values to economic adversities? Figure 7a shows that there are more Mexicans willing to live under economic pressure but without sacrificing civil liberties, than Mexicans who think the other way around. Moreover, as education increases, the desire to keep civil liberties even in economically adverse times also increases.

Figures 7a y 7b. Democracy and Economic Performance

What do you prefer...?



What do you prefer...?



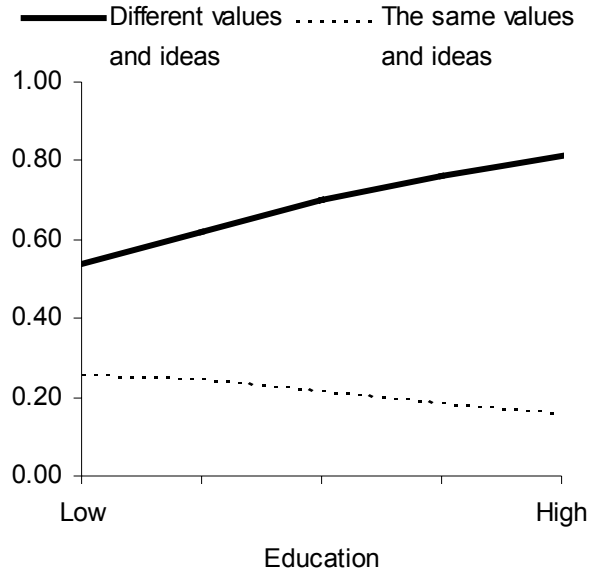
What about democracy vis-à-vis economic security? Figure 7b shows that more Mexicans prefer democracy even if it does not ensure economic advancement to a dictatorship that guarantees economic security. Again, the higher the level of education, the higher the preference for democratic rule. It is very noticeable, however, that one in ten Mexicans prefer a dictatorship that guarantees economic security. The question is very hypothetical, since dictatorship does not necessarily “guarantees” economic security. Perhaps the “Asian Tigers” approach something similar to this situation, in which economic growth was significant under authoritarian rule. The current economic crisis in Argentina will show how rooted democratic values and attitudes are in that country.

Diversity and Tolerance

Figure 8a shows that most Mexicans prefer that people have different ideas and values, but a considerable proportion prefer that people hold the same ideas and values. Support for diversity increases as education increases. Paradoxically, tolerance is not as widely shared as the taste for diversity, as shown in Figure 8b. Although the majority of Mexicans prefers that people have different values and ideas, only a minority agrees that television shows people with different and opposing ideas to one’s own. Even the most highly educated Mexicans seem clearly divided on this issue.

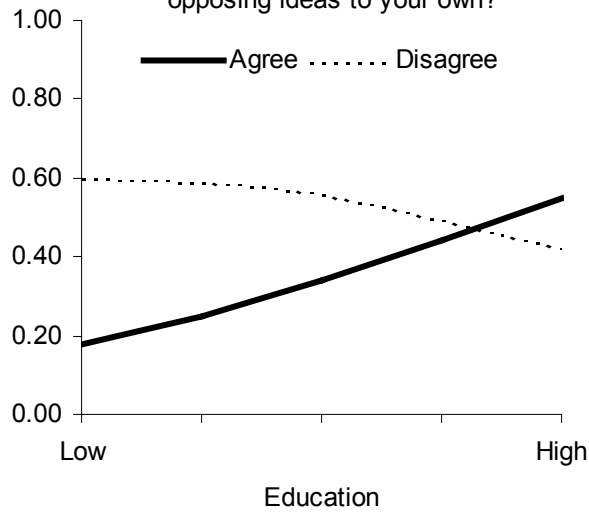
Figures 8a y 8b. Diversity and Tolerance

Is it better that people have...?



Tolerance

Do you agree o disagree that television shows people expressing different and opposing ideas to your own?



In sum, the data shown in this second part indicate that Mexicans prefer democracy to authoritarianism, but are divided on the issue of effectiveness, suggesting that a government that imposes its decisions would be sometimes better than one who consults citizens but does not act when needed. There is a significant proportion of Mexicans who would be willing to sacrifice civil liberties if that means not living under economic pressures. Finally, most Mexicans prefer cultural diversity to homogeneity, but tolerance in practice is much more limited than such preference for diversity would suggest. As noted earlier, tolerance of the homogeneous is a contradiction of terms. There is no ground for tolerance without diversity.

Conclusion

The presidential election of July 2, 2000 confirmed the completion of Mexico's transition to democracy. The question addressed here is how supportive Mexican political culture is of democracy. About two thirds of Mexicans believe that democracy is the best system, but this is a comparatively small proportion if we take regional averages from other countries of the world. A good assessment of democratic values should not be limited to measuring overt support for democracy, because democracy has become a concept affected by social desirability bias. Even non-democratic societies may express relatively high levels of support for democratic principles. Good measurements of democratic values should also include the elements that effectively contribute to make democratic coexistence possible.

Focusing on Mexico in comparative perspective, in this article we asked three central questions. How different are democratic attitudes in Mexico with those hold in other societies? How have Mexican democratic attitudes changed in the last few years? How different are Mexicans amongst themselves in terms of their democratic attitudes? Data from the World Values Survey (WVS 1995, 2000) and the National Survey of Political Culture (ENCUP 2001) serve as the empirical evidence to provide some answers.

These data show that most Mexicans are convinced that democracy is the best system, but such majority is, on average, a smaller proportion than it is in most regions of the world. Mexico's newly democratic experience is developing different views of democracy and elements of judgment about it in that country. Mexicans received democracy enthusiastically, according to opinion polls. Alternation in 2000 changed many of the citizen disenchantment with the previous regime and increased trust in political institutions.²⁷ Nonetheless, Mexican democracy and political culture are in a process of development, redefinition, and consolidation.

From a comparative perspective, tolerance and interpersonal trust in Mexico are more limited than in other regions of the world. Moreover, a significant proportion of Mexicans would be willing to sacrifice civil liberties in exchange for economic security. The proportion that thinks well of an autocratic government or a kind of military rule that has not even been witnessed by most living Mexicans is larger than in many other countries. Also, most Mexicans doubt that in their country there is a widespread respect

for human rights. Such doubts obviously reduce favorable perceptions about the quality of democracy in Mexico.

Individual differences in Mexican value systems are significantly explained by education. Less educated Mexicans are less likely to support non-democratic forms of governance or to be indifferent to democracy. More educated Mexicans are, other things being equal, more likely to hold democratic values and support democracy. Nonetheless, authoritarian and intolerant attitudes are observed among highly educated and non-educated alike.

Asking whether Mexican political culture is compatible with democracy is an old question. Almond and Verba addressed it in the late 1950s, when they wrote *The Civic Culture*. Mexican political reality then was different from today's. However, these authors' statement that Mexicans were aspirational may have another connotation now. Mexicans may aspire not just to live under democracy, as it was the case for long time, but to live in a better, high-quality democracy. As they learn about it, we should expect changes in democratic values and attitudes in the next years.

¹ An earlier manuscript in Spanish was presented at the Conference for the Analysis of National Surveys of Political Culture and Citizen Practices, organized by the Federal Elections Institute (IFE), Interior Ministry (SEGOB), Ministry of Public Education (SEP), the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM), and the Center of Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), in Mexico City, August 14-16, 2002.

² See Seymour M. Lipset, "Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review* 53:69-105, 1959. And Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

³ See Ronald Inglehart, Miguel Basañez and Neil Nevitte, *Convergencia en Norteamérica: Comercio, Política y Cultura* (México City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1994); Jorge I. Domínguez and James A. MacCann, *Democratizing Mexico: Public Opinion and Electoral Choices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Roderic A. Camp (comp.), *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).

⁴ By "third wave democracies" we mean those societies that experienced a change of regime since 1974, adopting a democratic one. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁵ Larry Diamond y Richard Gunther (comps.), *Political Parties and Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

⁶ Ronald Inglehart and Gabriela Catterberg, "Transitions to Democracy: The Post-Honey Moon Decline in Political Participation", paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Association, Boston, August 29-September 1, 2002.

⁷ Ronald Inglehart. "How Solid is Mass Support for Democracy and How Can We Measure it?" Unpublished manuscript.

⁸ Pippa Norris y Ronald Inglehart, *Islam and the West: Testing de Clash of Civilization Thesis*. Research Working Paper, RWP02-015, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2002.

⁹ Ronald Inglehart. "How Solid is Mass Support for Democracy and How Can We Measure it?" Op. cit.

¹⁰ See Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹¹ Adam Przeworski. *Democracy and de Market: Political an Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹² See Alejandro Moreno, "Party Competition and the Issue of Democracy: Ideological Space in Mexican Elections," in Mónica Serrano (ed.), *Governing Mexico: Political Parties and Elections*. Macmillan-ILAS Series, Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, 1998. And Also Alejandro Moreno, "Ideología y voto: Dimensiones de competencia política en México en los noventa." *Política y Gobierno*, vol. VI, no. 1, pp. 45-81. 1999.

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- ¹³ Alejandro Moreno, "Democracy and Mass Belief Systems in Latin America," in Roderic A. Camp (ed.), *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).
- ¹⁴ Moreno, *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁵ See Alan Knight, "Polls, Political Culture, and Democracy: A Heretical Historical Look", en Roderic A. Camp (ed.), *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).
- ¹⁶ Ronald Inglehart. "How Solid is Mass Support for Democracy?..." Op. cit.
- ¹⁷ Some works on political socialization in Mexico are: Rafael Segovia, *La politización del niño mexicano*, (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1975); and Alejandro Moreno, "Identificación partidista y socialización en México," in Enrique Alduncin (ed.), *Los valores de los mexicanos, Tomo IV: Estabilidad y Cambio* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Sociales, Banamex, in press).
- ¹⁸ See Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995); and Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*, op. cit.
- ¹⁹ Alejandro Moreno, "La sociedad mexicana y el cambio", in *Este País*, No. 136, April 2002.
- ²⁰ Adam Przeworski. *Democracy and the Market*. Op. cit.
- ²¹ The fourth wave of the WVS in Mexico was conducted in February 2000, four and a half months before the presidential elections.
- ²² An index of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Mexico based on national representative samples shows that, on a weighted scale from 0 to 100, where 100 means very satisfied and 0 not at all satisfied, the average score obtained in October 1999 was 39. By August 2000, one month after the presidential election, it increased to 60, and remained in that same number in November 2000. By November 2001, the average score was 50. See Alejandro Moreno, "La sociedad mexicana y el cambio", op. cit.
- ²³ Alejandro Moreno, "Democracy and Mass Belief Systems in Latin America," op. cit.
- ²⁴ The database provided by the Interior Ministry has a weight variable that corrects the sample biases. Since the weight increases the apparent sample size significantly and resulted in very significant coefficients for every variable, we opted for not using the weights.
- ²⁵ Alejandro Moreno, "Democracy and Mass Belief Systems in Latin America," op. cit.
- ²⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁷ Alejandro Moreno, "La sociedad mexicana y el cambio", op. cit.