

**The effects of pluralism in the legislative activity:
the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, 1917-2000**

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Abstract

Based on a data collection of 84 years of legislative activity of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, we argue that the increase of the political plurality in the integration of the legislatures, has been a crucial element that influences the amendment and the approval of legislative bills, as well as the way the members of the Lower Chamber participate throughout the process of the presentation of initiatives. A series of institutional reforms like the creation of an official political party, the prohibition of the immediate re-election of legislators, the successive reforms in the formulas to choose popular representatives and the enhancement of electoral competition, produced changes in the integration of the political representation. From all these changes we identify different historical patterns of behavior in Chamber of Deputies during the 20th Century.

Introduction

The empirical study of the Legislative Branch in Mexico is incipient. Mexican and International Scholars do not have access to a primary source of information (or a complete database) on the introduction of bills to analyze the behavior of the deputies and their relation with other actors and powers. The findings and conclusions of this paper are the product of more than eight years of research to compile in a single

database the unique official source of bills introduced in the Chamber of Deputies during the period 1917-2000. Different statistical tools have been used to construct and propose some explanatory guidelines of the work that has been accomplished in a crucial institutional setting like the Chamber of Deputies.¹

The present research seeks to explain how the increase in the plurality in the lower Chamber has modified substantially four different indicators of legislative activity. The first indicator is related to the presentation of initiatives on behalf of all the deputies; The second, looks at the participation that the opposition deputies have had in the presentation of the initiatives signed by all the members of the lower chamber; The third, deals with the effect on the probability of approval of a bill; and the fourth is an indicator that was purposely constructed to measure how the plurality impinges on the probability that the initiatives that are discussed in the floor will be modified or amended by the deputies.

Towards the end of the paper we propose a five fold typology based on the behavior and degree of plurality exhibited by the members in the lower chamber during the period

¹ We wish to thank to Jeffrey Weldon Uitti because without his first interest about Mexican Chamber of Deputies, our experience as political scientist probably would be out of legislative studies. We want to thank to Federico Estévez Estévez for his support during this research, and Juan Molinar Horcasitas for share his academic knowledge for many years since his comparative politics courses at ITAM. Finally we are grateful with Alain de Remes Labrelly for his valuable lecture and comments to this paper. Methodology.- The data of bills were record from the analysis of *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados 1917-2000*. The period 1917-1964, was made as part of research agendas in the ITAM and El Colegio de México, coordinated by Jeffrey Weldon and Juan Molinar. From 1997 to 2000, the data were gathered for the column "Pulso Legislativo" of *Reforma* newspaper, coordinated by Rossana Fuentes Beráin and Jeffrey Weldon. The period 1964-1997 and all the other data presented, were done by the authors with their own resources.

1917-2000. We show that the changes in the behavior of the legislators in the Mexican chambers of deputies are closely related to the transformation in the political party system, the introduction of the rule of non consecutive re-election, and the modification of the formulas to elect the representatives in the lower chamber. Finally, we demonstrate that the Congress in Mexico, from time to time, has had periods of high relevance and independence vis a vis the Executive authority; and that the Mexican *presidencialismo* was not always as dominant as many authors have characterized the system.

Plurality and institutional changes

At the beginning of 20th century, Mexico experienced a social revolution that led to a complete revamping of its economic political, social and legal systems. In 1917 some of the participant factions in the armed conflict wrote a new Constitution, and despite many amendment and reforms throughout the 20th century, the basic principles of this chart continue to be effective until nowadays. Moreover, even with 54 Constitutional reforms that have altered 99 articles of a total 136 that integrate the basic chart, the rules of the legislative process of the Congress remain basically the same.

The reference to the Legislative Branch in the Mexican Constitution goes from article 50 to 78, although other faculties, responsibilities and relations between institutions and powers, can be found in other articles. Despite relatively minor changes at Constitutional level, these amendments have had a far reaching institutional

consequences in the history and functioning of the Congress during the period 1917-2003.

After the promulgation of the 1917 Constitution, twelve years passed until Mexico could see the birth of a “true” party with modern characteristics. Therefore, the years elapsed between 1917-1928 was a very interesting period for the history of the Mexican Congress, which experienced a very high plurality that was blatant from different angles: The way coalitions were formed, the way majorities were manufactured, the absence of parliamentary fractions or groups, the presidential use of extraordinary faculties to legislate, the beginning of the process of pacification of the Mexican revolutionary army leaders that controlled a large portion of the country, and the construction of new institutions after the settlement of internal peace within the country.

This episode of history characterized by the absence of the “official party” (or PRI) has received less attention and research from scholars, although it is one of the most illustrative and enriching periods to exemplify the intense parliamentary and political exchange between the Legislative and the Executive branches. The dynamics that were experienced at this time, are only comparable with the contemporary era of divided government that appeared for the first time in Mexico in 1997 and continues in the present administration. The main difference between these two epochs is that the political violence to gain access to power is not an issue nowadays. It is not until 1929 when National Revolutionary Party was created (PNR). The foundation of this party and its successive transformations led to a country that would be governed by a single

political force for more than seventy years. This it is without any doubt, the first institutional change that impinged directly the legislative activities and procedures.

The second important change has to do with the size of the Lower Chamber. Between 1917 and 1979 the magnitude of the legislature was amended several times. The seven legislatures that operated between 1917 and 1930 had on average 256 deputies. A reduction in the size of the Chamber was applied in the 34 legislature (1930-1932) and until the 45 Legislature (1961-1964) the average of deputies who integrated the lower chamber was 160. The 40th Legislature that initiated in 1964, experienced an increase in the number of deputies as a consequence of a change in the electoral rules. This is the reason why between 1964 and 1979 there was a large average of 220 legislators in the Chamber of Deputies. From 1979 onwards, The integration of the lower chamber was the product of a revamped constitutional framework which introduced a mixed system that combined the principles of plurality and proportional representation for the election of deputies, as well as other constitutional reforms that reinvigorated the role of the Congress. At the time, the Lower Chamber had a fixed size of 400 deputies, which remained unaltered until 1988. Finally, the last constitutional reform which again changed the size of the assembly was implemented in 1988, and its main consequence was to increase to 500 the total number of deputies (300 elected by the principle of plurality and 200 by the principle of proportional representation in a five district magnitude and using the Haare system of largest remainders).

We must underline, that every time that the size of the Lower Chamber was increased, it translated into an increase of the plurality in the legislative arena (Nava and Yáñez, 2003).

A third element that had a negative impact in the level of experience and expertise of the Lower Chamber was the prohibition of immediate re-election for the deputies. The consecutive re-election existed until 1933. However from 1934 onwards the legislature was integrated by non-reelected representatives who, in the absence of the incentives given by the incumbency, lost their electoral connection with the voters. The crucial effect of this prohibition was the strengthening of the PNR which has been developed in length by scholars such as Nacif (2001, 2002). In addition, authors like Carey (2001) -- that do not classify Mexico as a democracy with competitive elections at the time of his study— have argued about the harmful effects produced by the non consecutive re-election or the introduction of term limits. Finally other scholars such as Hernandez (2001) have demonstrated the non-consecutive reelection also altered the participation and work of the deputies in committees by comparing the job done before and after the prohibition of consecutive reelection during the period 1918-1940. In short, there is a large amount of literature that shows that these reforms in combination with other constitutional factors, contributed to the emergence and consolidation of the Mexican *presidencialismo* (Weldon, 1997b).

The fourth factor that impinged in the degree of plurality in the Chamber of Deputies, is related to the changes in the formula to elect the representatives that went on

throughout the years. The rule of plurality in single member districts prevailed as the only form to win a seat from 1917 until 1964. Afterwards, Mexico introduced a system to encourage the political activities of opposition parties called “party deputies”. In this system, five seats were allocated to the political parties that reached a minimum threshold of 2.5% of the total national voting. From this thresholds onwards, for every extra half point above the 2.5%, the parties could gain an additional seat, but there was ceiling that would set the limit to 20 deputies. In 1972, the threshold was reduced to 1.5% and the total number of opposition deputies was increased to 25. A major reform came in 1977. In this year, the electoral system was completely revamped with the introduction of 100 seats distributed by the principle of proportional representation in addition to 300 seats allocated by the principle of plurality in single member districts. Finally, in 1986 the number of seats assigned by the proportional representation formula was increased to 200. Each of these constitutional modifications in the electoral arena, had a tremendous impact in the increase of the political plurality within the Congress.

Furthermore, we must emphasize that other factors such as the increase in the civic culture and politicization of the citizens, the enhancement in partisan competition and the incremental autonomy given to the Federal Electoral Institute in the handling of the electoral processes also contributed to a more dynamic and plural Mexican political system. All these changes eventually led to alternation of the political party in the Presidency of the Republic, in the year 2000. The defeat of the PRI in the presidential race of the year 2000 represented for the party the greatest loss after the failure to win the absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies in 1988, and the bare majority in 1997.

The presidential term also suffered several adjustments. On January 22, 1927 the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (Official Newspaper of the Federation) published the first reform to article 83 of the Constitution, that allowed the presidential re-election for one term, although it could not be a consecutive reelection, and the President had to wait at least one term out of power in order to become eligible as a presidential candidate. As it is well-known, this reform had a promoter and an addressee, the former President Alvaro Obregón (1920-1924).

During the period 1917 to 1927 the duration of the mandate for the Executive Authority was four years. However with the reform of January 24, 1928 the presidential term was extended to six years. Finally, on April 29, 1933, the political assassination of Alvaro Obregón triggered the restoration of the prohibition the re-election of the President that was set originally in the Constitution of 1917. The changes in the length of the presidential mandate also altered the duration of the legislatures. In April 1933 the legislative period was raised of from two to three years.

Operationalization of the variables

The central aspect of this paper focuses on the plurality in the Lower Chamber. Therefore, to undertake a statistical analysis of the Plurality we decided to operationalized the concept as a categorical variable, defined according to the percentage of members of the Chamber that belong to opposition parties in each

legislature. This variable has five different categories: Null, Low, Moderate, High and Very High and these categories are based on the rules of internal decision of the Mexican Congress.

There are three basic norms that regulate the decision making process within the floor of the Chamber related to the creation or amendments of laws and decrees:

- Quorum - requires the minimum attendance of half plus one of the members of Chamber to celebrate a valid or legal session.
- Majority – is the rule of approval of laws and decrees and any other aspect that requires a decision making process of the chamber in a valid session (this is one that fulfills the condition of the quorum) and requires the vote of half plus one of the presents.
- Qualified majority – it is used for Constitutional reforms and to override the veto power of the President. A qualified majority requires the vote of two thirds of the members in a valid session.

In reference to those rules of decision, and considering that there will be almost complete attendance of deputies when there is an intense debate around projects of law and decree with high stakes, we established different degrees of plurality according to the percentage of opposition legislators who compose the Chamber.

The Null Plurality, was defined in a scale from 0 to 3% of opposition deputies, and the Low Plurality ranges from 3 to 15%. In these two cases, although we did set arbitrary limits, these were defined after observing the patterns of presence of the opposition in the Chamber. Thus we must recognize that this represents a posteriori and ad-hoc definition of these categories.

Moderate Plurality ranges from the 15 to 33%. In this case the upper limit was set taking into account that if perfect partisan discipline does not exist, the party in the government could have problems with the formation of a qualified majority.

High plurality means that the party in government is incapable by itself to approve constitutional reforms. Thus we defined high plurality in the range from 33 to 50% of opposition deputies. Finally, the category of Very High Plurality is one in which the party in government cannot form a majority with the rank and file of its own party and when the opposition controls 50% or more of the total of seats. In short high plurality can be equated to a situation of a divided government.

Institutionalization of parties system

The political parties are a modern creation, according to Duverger (1990:15), since their advent came in the middle of 19th Century. This author also establishes that their origin and development is closely related to the emergence of democracy "that is , to the extension of the popular suffrage and the parliamentary prerogatives." Duverger

specifies that the process of creation of a political party would require: the emergence of parliamentary groups conformed by legislators who defend common causes and interests, and the establishment of a relation with electoral committees, that provide the assignments required by elections which in turn help to feed the own parliamentary groups within the assemblies.

In Mexico a political party with the characteristics such as those depicted by Duverger did not exist until 1929. However its advent is closely related to the formation of the Revolutionary National Block, within the Chamber of Deputies. In July of 1928 the majority of the deputies of the 32 Legislature (1926-1928) decided to build the Obregonista National Block, in order to fulfill the political program of the elected president Alvaro Obregón. After the assassination of Obregón on July 17, 1928 and once the following legislature began the legislative period in September of this year, the Obregonista Block was dissolved and transformed into the Revolutionary National Block which included almost all the deputies (Garrido, 1995; Lajous, 1985). The Block was a sort of mechanism that fostered the organization and formation of majorities; in the words of Garrido (1995:69): "for the first time since the end of the armed episode of the Revolution , all the deputies who were constantly shouting at each other became united in the Chamber around a political project".

However it was not until the creation in 1929 of the National Revolutionary Party,(the official party of the government), that problems of collective action, such as those analyzed by Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) began to be solved. The full-grown idea of

a political party that could have the characteristics of a stable institution, came from Alvaro Obregón few days before its assassination. As quoted by Dulles (1989:332): "We must take advantage of the six years of my government to create this organization, a political party that must be an expression of our desires and feelings. We must also take advantage of these six years of government to produce new men in our rank and file, that will be capable to take the direction and the responsibility of our movement ". Finally it was under the mandate of Plutarco Elías Calles, (President of Mexico during the period 1924-1928) that the party took form and consolidated.

These events were defined by many Mexican scholars as the beginning of the process of political institutionalization. In fact, in his last speech addressing the state of the union on September 1st, 1928 The President Plutarco Elías Calles said: "... Mexico faces a situation in which the dominant event is the lack of `caudillos', this circumstance must allow to guide the politics of the country in a decisive course of a true institutional life, bypassing, once and for all, the historical condition of `country of one man' to one of a `nation of institutions and laws'".

However, the country would need to spend sixty more years after the promulgation of its Constitution in order to recognize that political parties were organizations of "public interest" entitled to be protected and fostered by the state. In contrast, the official party did not encountered impediments to control the political competition, and it was able to manufacture the majorities required for a unified government during the period comprised from 1934 to 1997. Regarding the Lower Chamber, the PNR and its

successors, the Party of the Mexican Revolution (1937) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (1946), monopolized the political representation until 1964, when the reforms of the party deputies allowed the most significant presence of the opposition in the parliamentary arena.

Influence of the official party

Between 1917 and 1928 there was a very high plurality in the lower chamber. It was a plurality without order, institutions, or political parties. With the creation in March of 1929 of the PNR, the plurality that existed was annulled and the parliamentary activity was modified. Cox and McCubbins (1993) emphasize the importance of the party like an institution that in many cases determines the procedures, and therefore, the results of the legislative work of the Chamber. In their analysis, these authors hint that the majoritarian party, when acting like a cartel, usurps the power that must correspond to the floor, to create the rules that govern the structure and the legislative process.

For the Mexican case, the importance of the advent of the official party was verified empirically using a logistic regression (probit type). From the regression analysis it was possible to derive which actors, and the characteristic of the bill in which the PNR had a more decisive influence (Nava and Yáñez: 1998:223). Among the most important results, we encountered that the creation of the official party was a decisive factor to increase the probability of approval of the bills that were introduced by the Executive.

However, It is necessary to provide a more accurate contextual reference for the variables used in the model in order to facilitate the interpretation of the statistical results. In the model we decided to take into account the main characteristics of the bills that were introduced in the Chamber of Deputies, as well as the stages of the legislative. The Chamber of Deputies receives different types of law and decree projects. A bill introduced in the lower chamber can deal with trivial issues such as an individual request for a permission to receive an award, an acquiescence to work for an international organization or a request for a pension. Nonetheless it can also be related to crucial issues such as a decree project for the budget or a constitutional reform.

Therefore we decided to make a division for two groups of bills: the private bills and the public ones. The former are those that provide an individual benefit, (and concern a strictly personal matter). The latter are those that have a component of public, social or communitarian influence and they are related with issues that need to be addressed at different levels of government (local, regional or federal). We decided to call the whole universe of Bills general initiatives or bills. However for the purpose of this study we only used the records of public bills. In addition we decided not to considered the process when the Senate returns a bill (that has been previously approved by the chamber of Deputies) with observations or amendments. We also dismissed the observations and vetoes made by the Executive authority and the particular votes. The latter refer to the opinions that a minority of deputies presents as an alternative to the bill report that was approved by the majority of the member of a committee.

Furthermore, from the whole universe of public bills, we focused on who was the initiator of a bill. The Mexican Constitution specifies that only three actors are authorized for the introduction of a project of law or decree: the National Congress, The President, and the legislatures of the federal states. The text of article 71 of the Constitution has never been reformed and indicates: "the right to initiate laws or decrees belongs to: I. To the President of the Republic; II To the deputies and senators to the Congress of the Union; and III. To the legislatures of the States. The initiatives presented by the President of the Republic or the State legislatures, will go to committees. Those that are presented by the national deputies or senators, will be subject to the procedures indicated in the Regulation of Deliberation".

Additionally, the constitutional reference that entitles the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District Federal (one of the 32 federal entities of Mexico and also the capital of the country) to introduce bills only related to the subjects of its concern, is in the interjection ñ) of fraction V of the first base of article 122. The Federal District is not considered properly a state because it host the Federal Powers. However the reform of August 22, 1996, allowed the local assembly of Mexico City to introduce bills only on the specific issues concerning its local administration.

Finally, since it is a common parliamentary practice, we decided to include legislative committees as initiators.

In this research we also evaluated the influence and scope that a project of law may have. In other words, we analyzed if a proposal had encompassing consequences for the whole Federation, a region composed by several polities in different states, a specific locality or state, or were aimed at a particular person.

Additionally we also considered if the initiative of law was related to financial subjects, this is, taxes, public expenditures, debt or economic policy. Finally we also evaluated the importance of the date in which the initiative was presented. This is because the operation of the plenary sessions of the Congress in Mexico, is divided in legislative years, and those year are in turn divided in ordinary periods of sessions.² Thus to facilitate the operationalization of this variable in the logistic regression, the periods were divided in weeks, obtaining the equivalence of 16 complete weeks and one additional week of ten days.

² Between 1917 and 1989 there was one ordinary period of sessions from september to december per year. In 1986 two periods were established per year.

Table 1
Approval of bills
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-1946
 Logistic regression (probit)
 Standard error in parenthesis

Independent variables	Dependent variable Approval
Constant	-0.593** (0.076)
Official party exists	0.783** (0.042)
INTRODUCED BY	
Executive	0.667** (0.061)
Committee	1.281** (0.078)
Deputy	0.055 (0.062)
SCOPE OF THE BILL	
Federal	-0.275** (0.052)
Regional	-0.449** (0.106)
Local	-0.101* (0.061)
OTHERS	
Financial subject	-0.380** (0.044)
Week of introduction	0.044** (0.004)
P(χ^2) =	0.000
N =	5079
Percentage of error	17.8
* = p < .10 ** = p < .05	

The results show that the presidential bills that were introduced before the formation of the PNR, had a high probability of being approved. However once the party was established this probability increased. In the same way, the initiatives introduced by deputies which belonged to a committee were approved with greater probability.

Before the formation of the PNR there was a smaller probability for a federal initiative to be approved; once the party was put in place the probability increases. Additionally, after the creation of the official party, if an initiative was introduced at the end of the ordinary period of sessions, it had a greater chance of being approved.

The values of the probabilities extracted from the results of the logistic regression, seem to support the following statements:

- A bill introduced by the Executive during the last week of activities of the Chamber of Deputies, at a time when the official party did not exist, had a probability of approval of 0.71. Once the party was created, the probability increased to 0.91;
- The probability that a bill introduced by deputy during the last week of the period of session could be approved, once the official party was created was 0.75. In contrast, a bill introduced by the Executive under the same conditions as those aforementioned was 0.91.

Table 2
Probabilities of bills approval
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-1946
 Probit Model (Table 1)

Week	Introduced by				
	Party	Executive		Deputies	
		Non PNR	PNR	Non PNR	PNR
8	0.560	0.825	0.303	0.605	
17	0.708	0.908	0.452	0.746	

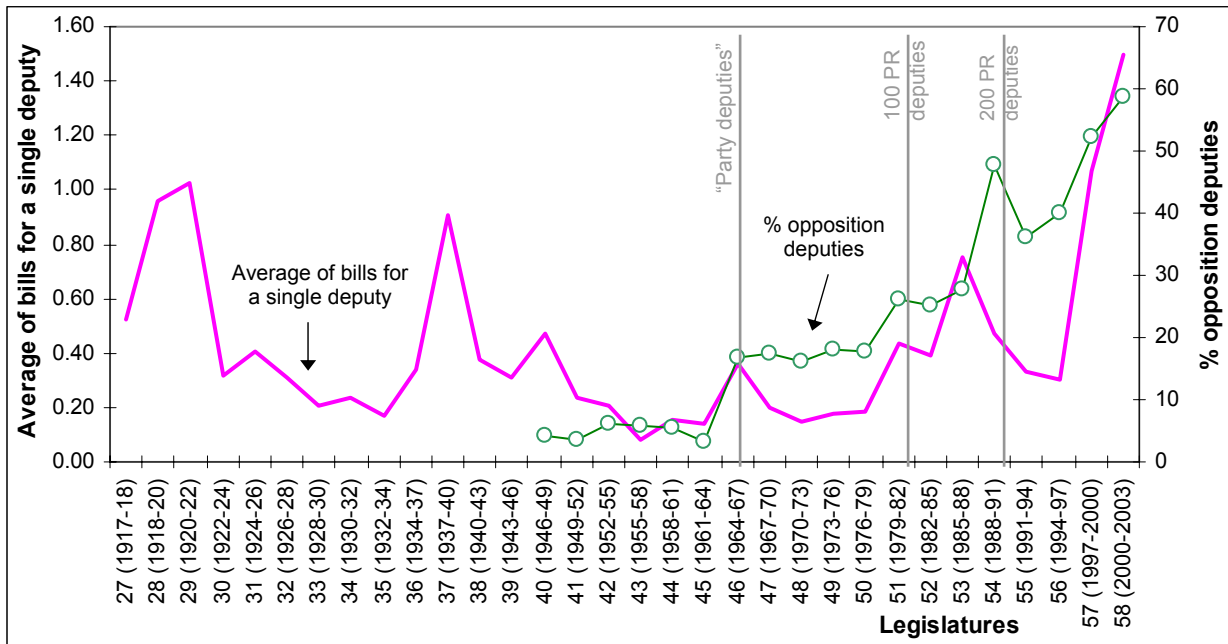
Proposals of deputies

According to fraction II of article 71 of the Mexican Political Constitution, the deputies are authorized to initiate laws or decrees in the Congress of the Union. In the last 86 years, this is between April 2, 1917 and March 15, 2003, the deputies have exerted this faculty in 4,230 times, corresponding to the 46,4% of all the bills that have been introduced in the Lower Chamber. In the same period, 8,525 deputies have been elected and have exerted their functions like popular representatives. Therefore, the number of bills presented by single legislators in the lower chamber between 1917 and 2003 is on average 0.5. It is important to clarify that there is an alternative form to compute the average of bills introduced by the legislators if we add the initiatives coming from the deputies and the bills that were presented by the group of deputies in the committees and we divide the whole sum between the total of deputies. Nevertheless, we decided to only compute those initiatives signed by single deputies and left aside the bills that were signed by the members of committees since the projects belonging to committees could not be unpacked to distinguish the opposition and official party legislators.

Between 1920 and 1922, the Lower Chamber experienced a very high degree of plurality, and on average each deputy presented one initiative. This ratio did not reappear until the 57 Legislature (1997-2000); and from then onwards, it has been increasing at a fast pace since in the present legislature (2000-2003) the average of bills for a single deputy reached 1.5. The common denominator of all these legislatures was

a great dispersion of the political forces that affected the composition of the Chamber. In contrast, the three legislative periods that showed the smallest ratio in the introduction of bills came between 1955 and 1964, all with a low plurality. These legislatures showed on average between 0.08 to 0.16 bills per deputy, which meant that that each deputy presented 0.10 of initiative over the whole period.

Graph 1
Average of bills introduced by deputies (1917-2003)



As it is shown in Graph 1, there is a direct relation between the presence of the opposition parties in the lower chamber and the introduction of proposals of law: when plurality increases, the ratio of initiatives per deputy also grows. The Graph also demonstrates that there is a direct relation between the changes in the electoral formula that alters the composition of the Chamber and the increase in the presence of opposition deputies.

Dynamism of the opposition parties in the Lower Chamber

In 1939 the National Action Party (PAN) was created and through the years it began to occupy an important place in the political arena. In 1946 this party was able to obtain its first seats in Congress. This date constitutes a political watershed for the history of Congress, since from then onwards it is possible to identify more clearly each deputy by his partisan label. The Congress ceased to be an overwhelming monopoly that only represented one political force and this is the main reason why we concentrated our effort to analyze the introduction of bills from opposition and official deputies from 1964 to 2003.

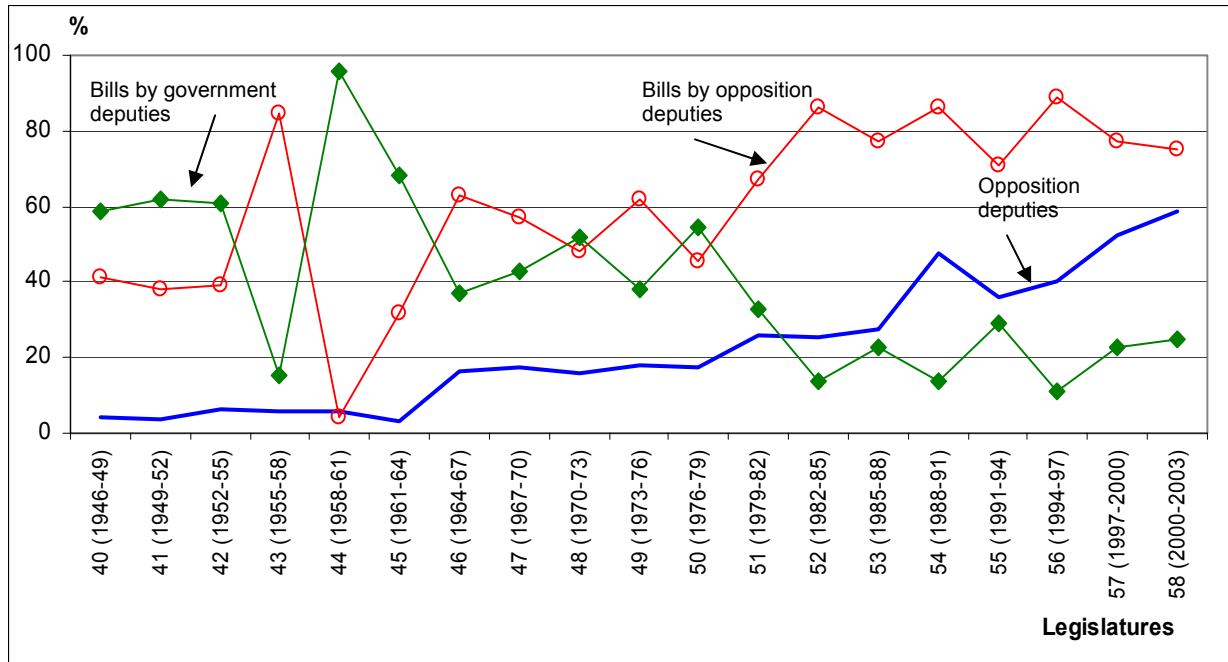
The legislative activity of opposition deputies has been characterized by a vast introduction of proposals of laws and decrees. In the last 57 years, the legislatures have presented a total of 2,914 bills, of which only 27% were done by legislators of the party in the government. Between 1946 and 2003, on average three out of ten deputies were from the opposition and depending on the legislature the distribution varied from 3% to 59%. Deputies from the opposition have presented on average 1.2 projects, which contrast sharply with an average of 0.2 from the legislators that belong to the party in the government.

There are three legislatures that have had the greatest percentage of plurality in their integration, each one corresponding to three different presidential terms: 54 (1988-1991) which corresponds to the Carlos Salinas de Gortari (PRI) first years of government. In

this legislature 48% of the deputies belonged to an opposition party; the 57 (1997-2000), corresponding to second half of the six years term of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León (PRI), with 52% of opposition legislators; and finally the actual 58 Legislature (2000-2003), corresponding to first half of the term of the incumbent President Vicente Fox Quesada (PAN), with 59% of opposition deputies.

The initiatives presented by the opposition showed a dramatic reduction between 1958 and 1961 because there was an electoral conflict. The elected legislators from the PAN decided that they would not fill their seats as a sign of political protest against the tampering of electoral results made by the government. Those opposition deputies who decided to participate in the legislature dismissing the party indication to vacate their posts were banned from their political organization. The non show up of opposition deputies in this legislature explains why the opposition deputies only presented an initiative to reform the penal code, that had no resolution. This also elucidate the puzzle showed by Graph 2, in which the proportion of initiatives of the legislators belonging to the party in the government increased notoriously (were 24 presented projects, as opposed to solely 2 of the immediate previous legislature).

Graph 2
Opposition deputies activity (1946-2003)



If we could draw a line that reflects the trend concerning the relation of the initiatives presented by deputies of the party in the government, it would have a negative slope. In spite of two abnormal legislatures, the 44 (1958-1961) and the 45 (1961-1964), the tendency of the legislative efforts, shown by the presentation of projects, is decreasing in relation to the amount of proposals that come from the opposition.

We could argue that the legislators of the party in the government, devote all their efforts to the subjects that the Executive authority introduces for approval of the Congress. These legislators and presidential bills have the same legislative goals; this kind of

deputies do not have incentives to introduce their own legislative projects, because they have good coordination with Executive Branch.

Without any doubt, the window of political opportunity for the opposition is the legislative branch. For decades, the opposition did not get public posts of relevance which could be used as a “window dressing” to validate its political proposals, or implement its ideas of public policy. The compelling evidence that supports this argument, can be seen in Graph 2. In twelve of nineteen legislatures reviewed, the opposition presented more bills than the party in the government, with at least twenty-three percentage points of difference. In the last 57 years, the opposition has produced 50% more proposals than the ones presented by the party in the government.

Table 3 shows in detail the average of the bills presented by a deputy , which is obtained by dividing the number of projects of law and decree between the total deputies of the legislature. The average of the legislature is used as a reference to situate the average corresponding to the deputies of opposition and those of the party in the government. The last two columns indicate the proportion of initiatives of law presented by these two groups of deputies. The importance of this measurement is to highlight the “average effort” made by the deputies in the elaboration of concrete proposals, that need to be submitted to the assembly for revision, opinion and possible voting.

Table 3
Bills introduced by opposition and government deputies (1946-2003)

Legislature (years)	Plurality	Average of bills for a single deputy		Percentage share	
		Opposition	Government	Opposition	Government
40 (1946-49)	Low [3-15%]	7.00	0.29	41.2%	58.8%
41 (1949-52)	Low [3-15%]	2.60	0.15	38.2%	61.8%
42 (1952-55)	Low [3-15%]	1.86	0.13	39.4%	60.6%
43 (1955-58)	Low [3-15%]	1.83	0.01	84.6%	15.4%
44 (1958-61) ^a	Low [3-15%]	0.11	0.16	4.0%	96.0%
45 (1961-64)	Low [3-15%]	1.33	0.10	32.0%	68.0%
46 (1964-67)	Moderate [15-33%]	1.37	0.16	63.2%	36.8%
47 (1967-70)	Moderate [15-33%]	0.67	0.10	57.1%	42.9%
48 (1970-73)	Moderate [15-33%]	0.44	0.09	48.4%	51.6%
49 (1973-76)	Moderate [15-33%]	0.62	0.08	61.9%	38.1%
50 (1976-79)	Moderate [15-33%]	0.48	0.12	45.5%	54.5%
51 (1979-82)	Moderate [15-33%]	1.12	0.19	67.1%	32.9%
52 (1982-85)	Moderate [15-33%]	1.33	0.07	86.5%	13.5%
53 (1985-88)	Moderate [15-33%]	2.09	0.24	77.3%	22.7%
54 (1988-91)	High [33-50%]	0.85	0.12	86.4%	13.6%
55 (1991-94)	High [33-50%]	0.66	0.15	70.7%	29.3%
56 (1994-97)	High [33-50%]	0.67	0.06	88.7%	11.3%
57 (1997-2000)	Very High (>50%)	1.59	0.51	77.4%	22.6%
58 (2000-2003) ^b	Very High (>50%)	1.96	0.92	75.3%	24.7%
TOTAL		1.24	0.19	73.2%	26.8%

^a Remember that PAN elected deputies decided not to occupy their legislative posts, and those who did it were banned by their party. This explains why the numbers of the opposition are so small.

^b The report of the 58 Legislature, corresponds to data collected between September 1st, 2000 and March 15, 2003.

Whereas in the period 1946 to 2003 there was a total of 1,715 deputies of opposition, the deputies of the party in the government reached the total number of 4,033. Of ten initiatives that were introduced in four legislatures (43th, 52th, 54th, 56th), eight came from opposition parties.

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that regardless of the party that is in power, their legislators tend to present less bills, whereas the opposition deputies tend to be more productive in the introduction of new legislation. Table 3 is very clear on this phenomenon. The average of the opposition in the 40th Legislature (1946-1949), was the highest in our period of analysis, with seven initiatives per legislator. In addition it is necessary to recall that this was the first legislature in which the deputies of the newly enfranchised National Action Party reached a seat.

The last six years, corresponding to the 57th and 58th Legislatures (from 1997 to 2003), can be easily compared to the period of the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (from 1917 to 1928). The activity displayed the deputies is very intense, and it is closely related to factors such as a consolidated party system and an upsurge in the political plurality. While observing the last numbers of the third and fourth columns, we see that the average of initiatives experienced a significant increase, and the phenomenon is valid for opposition deputies as well as legislators of the party in the government.

The PRI was born like the official party and recently has had the terrible difficulty of learning how to become an opposition force. The 57th Legislature became a watershed

for this party since it was the first time that it lost the absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, President Ernesto Zedillo in one of his speeches clearly stated that the President would take a healthy distance from his party. Considering these three factors, it is understandable why the deputies from the PRI decided to become more pro-active in the introduction of bills. Between 1997 and 2000 this political force increased seven fold the number of bills introduced in the legislature compared to the previous legislature. However, we can only speculate on the behavior of this party if it was capable of winning the 2006 presidential race. Nonetheless we can predict that the increasing diversity and fractionalization of the groups within the PRI is irreversible.

On the contrary, the PAN has had to learn the difficulties of being government and a non-opposition party since this political force was well trained to perform in the contestative arena for the last sixty years. However one encouraging news is that the legislative efforts made by the deputies of the new party in power have been 80% greater than those exhibited by the PRI in the 57th Legislature. In both cases, it is very interesting to observe in detail how the relation between the President and the popular representatives of his party in the Chamber of Deputies is evolving towards a greater degree of indiscipline. The authoritarian *presidencialismo* by which the Mexican political system was characterized for decades is evolving, and the incumbency of one party or another in the executive branch does not seem to alter the new activism displayed by the deputies in the lower chamber.

Experience and revision of proposals

In the preceding paragraphs we demonstrated that the creation of the official party in 1929 was a watershed for the legislative activity in the Chamber of Deputies; we also described the direct relation between the presence of the opposition and the presentation average of initiatives; and finally we showed that there was a greater dynamism from the deputies of opposition in contrast with the ones that belong to the party in the government. This section will evaluate statistically the relation between the approval of bills and the degree of plurality, and the link between Legislative experience and authorship of the proposals. The relation of these three last categories will also be assessed taking into account amendments which are agreed in committees and approved initiatives. The critical variable that we want to highlight in all the cases is the plurality.

Although many Mexican scholars have assessed the importance of plurality in the Chamber of Deputies, like a decisive factor that influences legislative outcomes, they tend to concentrate their research on the period that goes from 1964 onwards, when plurality grew from Low to Moderate. Thus, they leave aside the post revolutionary episode that, in academic and historical terms, is extremely illustrative and can be compared (in terms of process and practice) with the contemporary period of divided government which Mexico has been experiencing since 1997. Moreover, this scholarly work is still quite incomplete since the empirical evidence that it offers only deals with the bills introduced from 1988 to 1994 (Guerrero, 2001).

An official source that allows to identify the partisan affiliation of the deputies during the period 1917-1928 is unavailable. However there is a consensus among the authors who have studied the period (McGregor, 1997; Smuggling 1995; Meyer, 1977, 2002), that the political representation obeyed to mandates of the local caciques who were controlling the regional power in the country rather than to political parties formally constituted. Therefore, we decided to operationalize the plurality in these years as Very High, even though we must recognize that we do not have a precise numerical value that we were able to construct for the later periods of analysis.

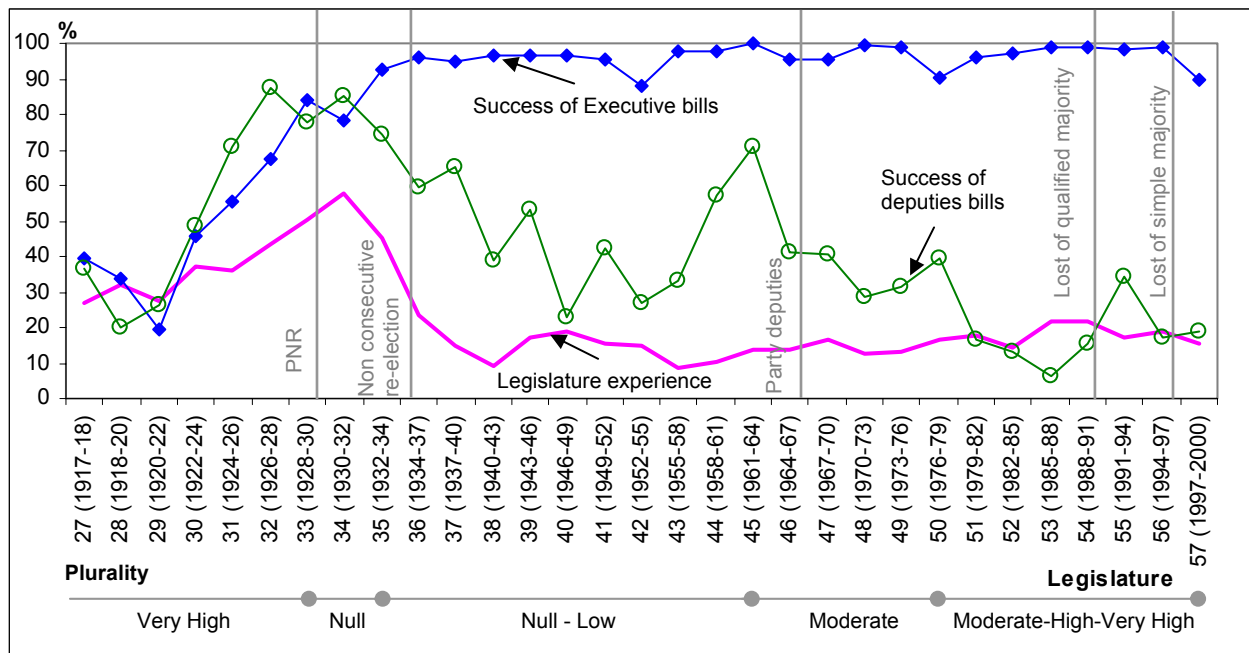
The variable of Legislature Experience that we used in this study, is operationalized as the percentage of deputies who had been in exercise in any previous legislatures. The data is computed for each one of the 31 legislatures during the period of analysis. This measurement has also been used by authors like Polsby (1968), and there are also alternative measures like those suggested by Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) which use the average of experience by party or the one suggested by Schickler (2001) which measures the percentage of inexperienced deputies in the legislature.

Graph 3 indicates that when the principle of consecutive re-election was in place, the proportion of deputies with legislative experience reached its pinnacle and this percentage was never recovered. Between 1917 and 1934, four out of ten deputies had parliamentary experience. Later, from 1934 to 2000, the Legislature Experience

lowered to the 15.7% and the 34th Legislature (1930-1932) had the greater proportion of deputies with experience: six out of ten.

The relation between the prohibition of consecutive re-election of deputies and the increase in the success of the proposals of the Executive is very significant. Between 1917 and 1934 the average approval of presidential initiatives was of 57%; in contrast during the period 1934 and 2000 (once re-election was prohibited) the success of presidential initiatives reached 96.2%. This phenomenon was also accompanied by the diminution of the rate of approval of the initiatives initiated by the legislators which dropped from 58.6% to 35.1% during the same periods.

Graph 3
Approval of bills and legislature experience (1917-2000)



The smallest rate of bill approvals that the Executive authority in Mexico has ever experienced from 1917 to the present, was in the 29th Legislature (1920-1922) with only

19.3%. This episode clearly indicates that, at the time, there was an overt confrontation between the legislative and executive authorities. In this Legislature, 83 bills were introduced, but 67 were left with no resolution. This situation is even more dramatic if we consider that from the 67 “frozen initiatives”, 54 were related to financial subjects. With the creation of the official party (PNR), the rate of approval for the presidential proposals was remarkable: it grew from 67% to 84%. From then onwards, the Chamber of Deputies approved at least nine out of ten presidential proposals in 21 of the 25 legislatures.

In the period from 1917 to 1929 when a Very High plurality was the norm in the lower chamber there was a vast legislative experience and the success in the approval of the deputies’ bills was even greater than the presidential one: 59% as opposed to 57% for the Executive authority. The great changes came later, first with the creation of the official party and later with the prohibition of the consecutive re-election; both elements impinged dramatically the political plurality of the Chamber. The rate of success in the approval of the proposals of the deputies would never reach again the 87.4% of the 32th Legislature (1926-1928), a phenomenon which happened just before the creation of the PNR. In the 32th legislature characterized by a high activism of the deputies 71 bills out of 83 were accepted, 50 of them related to financial issues. The historical nadir in the rate of approval from the proposals originated in the lower chamber came in the 53th Legislature (1985-1988), with only a 6.5% rate of success.

At the end of Graph 3 we can observe that in the 57th Legislature (1997-2000) when the plurality of the Chamber was again re-ignited, the presidential success in the introduction of bills fell from 99% to 90%. In this legislative period five proposals remained without resolution. One of them was even retired by the President since the Chief of the Executive sensed that the authorization for a leave on absence to go to the US in a official trip in 1999 was going to be rejected by Congress. The other four frozen initiatives were: penal reforms to the Statutory law of the Bank of Mexico, penal reforms on sanctions to public servants, Federal Law of Firearms and Explosives and currency emission.

Success of approval and plurality

At this stage of the paper we have used descriptive statistics to support our arguments related to: 1) the benefit the Executive authority had in the introduction of bills since the creation of the PNR 2) how the prohibition of consecutive re-election affected the introduction of bills originated in the legislature, 3) how the Low plurality impinged in the productivity of the legislature and 4) how the limited experience of deputies affected the legislative work. We now present the results of a logistic regression (logit type) which use the variables described in the preceding sections; the dependent variable in all the models is all the bills that were introduced between 1917 and 2000.

Table 4 shows the results of the first regression. The independent variables are the relation that exists in the probability of approval of a bill, depending on his author; the

experience that the legislature has when a bill is introduced, and the degree of plurality in the lower Chamber. In the regression the dependent variable is labeled as “approval” and is considered opposed to any other result: a rejection or the fact that an initiative is left without resolution. The four initial results are all statistically significant:

- The greater legislative experience of the deputies translates into a lesser probability of approval of a project. This implies that when the Chamber of Deputies is formed by a greater percentage of deputies with experience, it diminishes the probability that an initiative is approved;
- The lower the plurality is, the greater the probability of approval. The Mexican history demonstrates that in order to have a greater control of the legislative activity, the political plurality was reduced. In other words, the predominance (almost monopoly by a long period of time) of the official party (PNR-PRM-PRI) had the main objective of diminishing the degree of plurality;
- The initiatives of the Executive have a greater probability of being approved;
- The projects of the deputies have minor probability of being approved.

The sign of the coefficients of the initiators of a bill is opposite: in the case of the Executive the sign is positive, whereas the one of the deputies is negative. This demonstrates that in the process of approval of an initiative, the author of the proposal is important. In the hypothetical case where the coefficients did show of the same sign, it

would mean that the author of the proposal does not matter and that both branches have the same prerogatives (as it is stated in the Constitution).

Table 4
Approval of bills
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-2000
 Logistic regression (logit)
 Standard error in parenthesis

Independent variables	Dependent variable Approval
Constant	1.1482** (.1288)
Legislature experience	-.0051* (.0030)
PLURALITY	
Low	-.1710 (.1186)
Moderate	-.8716** (.0938)
High	-.9452** (.1074)
Very High	-1.4196** (.0832)
INTRODUCED BY	
Executive	1.5656** (.0911)
Deputy	-1.1199** (.0862)
$\chi^2 =$	3317.682**
N =	8107
Correct prediction =	78.52%
* = p < .05 ** = p < .01	

With the objective to illustrate the previous arguments, Table 5 shows an example of how the results of the regression analysis could be interpreted. We took six legislatures which experienced different degree of plurality and related this phenomenon with the probability of success of bills introduced by the Executive against those presented by

the deputies. Between 1926 and 1928 when the plurality was Very High, the probability that an initiative introduced by a deputy could be approved is 0.17, as opposed to 0.75 of one of the Executive. During this period, the official party did not exist and the operation of the Chamber of Deputies was immersed in an historical context of little institutionalization. It is the period of reconstruction, of creation of political, social and economic institutions.

Table 5
Probabilities of bills approval
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-2000
 Logit Model (Table 4)

Legislature	Plurality	Legislature experience	Probability of approval	
			Executive bill	Deputy bill
32 (1926-1928)	Very High (>50%)	43.2	0.75	0.17
34 (1930-1932)	Null (0-3%)	57.5	0.92	0.43
40 (1946-1949)	Low [3-15%]	18.9	0.93	0.48
47 (1967-1970)	Moderate [15-33%]	16.8	0.85	0.28
54 (1988-1991)	High [33-50%]	22	0.84	0.26
57 (1997-2000)	Very High (>50%)	15.6	0.77	0.19

If we take the 1997-2000 period which also experienced a Very High plurality, the probabilities of approval of the bills originated in the lower chamber (as opposed to the presidential projects) are identical to those obtained during the period 1926-1928: 0.19 as opposed to 0.77. The effects of the plurality are the same in both periods of time. However, there several institutional differences among the periods which need to be emphasized. In the post revolutionary stage, there was a high degree of legislative

experience among the deputies, but the party system was rather loose. Meanwhile in the contemporary era, although legislative experience from the deputies is relatively low there is a consolidated party system. In both cases, the rules with which have operated in the interchange between powers in terms of creation of laws, are the same ones.

In contrast, the greater probability of approval of a bill of the Executive occurs when the plurality is Null or Low. While the plurality grows, the presidential success for the approval of its bills diminishes. As an example, we can argue that the probability of success with Null or Low plurality for a presidential initiative is 0.92-0.93. However, this probability diminishes to 0.84-0.85 when plurality is Moderate or High and ends with a probability of 0.77 of success when the plurality is Very High.

In the case of the initiatives originated in the lower chamber, the probability of success also increases when there is a minor plurality, but the variation in this indicator is smaller than the one experienced by the bills introduced by the Executive. When there is Very High plurality, the probability of success for the deputies' bills ranges from 0.17 to 0.19. When there is a moderate plurality this indicators increase from 0.26 to 0.28 and when there is Low or Null plurality, the rate of success raises even more to attain 0.43-0.48.

Amendments of bills and plurality

A critical factor which is inherent to the legislative process is the possibility that legislators may modify the projects which have been submitted to committees for deliberation and evaluation. There are two basic moments in which a deputy can

amend a proposal: in committees when the report of the bill is elaborated, and in the floor when the proposal is discussed. In both cases, the legislators have the opportunity to clarify, and give a parliamentary twist to constitutional reforms, ordinary laws or decrees.

From 1917 to 2000, three out of ten considered or discussed initiatives have been reformed. They are the three legislatures, all characterized with a high degree of plurality, that have made amendments to more than half of the considered initiatives,: the 29th Legislature (1920-1922) with 51.6%, the 55th Legislature (1991-1994) with 52.8% and the 57th Legislature (1997-2000) with 56.4%. The 57th legislature is the one that historically has made a greater percentage of modifications to the projects already approved in committees.

The results of the logistic regression related to the probability that a bill will be amended, show:

- As legislative experience of the deputies increases, there is a lower probability that a bill already approved in committees will be reformed in the floor;
- When there is great plurality there is also a greater probability of amendment;
- The initiatives of deputies, as well as those of the Executive have a similar probability to be amended.

These results suggest that amendments in the floor are more related to problem of legal phrasing or technique, than to where the bill originates. Unlike the logistic regression of approval showed in Table 4, where the author of the initiative did influenced the probability of success, amendments are made independently of the initiator. Nevertheless, when the deputies have more legislative experience, the probability of amendments is smaller. Thus we can hypothesize that the legislative expertise has more decisive influence in the political decision of approving or rejecting a bill, and tend to disregard the technical decision which concentrates on amendment of a project.

Table 6
Amendment of bills
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-2000
 Logistic regression (logit)
 Standard error in parenthesis

Independent variable	Dependent variable Amendment
Constant	-2.4585** (.1768)
Legislature experience	-.0107** (.0039)
PLURALITY	
Low	.4667** (.1241)
Moderate	1.5571** (.1091)
High	2.0943** (.1275)
Very High	1.4135** (.1120)
INTRODUCED BY	
Executive	.7347** (.1320)
Deputy	.6423** (.1392)
$\chi^2 =$	536.430**
N =	5172
Correct prediction =	73.72%
* = p < .05 ** = p < .01	

The probability of modifying bills is high when the plurality grows. In the case of the projects which were originated in the lower chamber, between 1930 and 1932 when the plurality was Null, the probability of amendment scored 0.08. From 1988 to 1991 when the plurality was High, it raised 0.51; This is five more times than in the preceding period. Regarding the bills which came from the Executive authority, the probabilities in those periods increased from 0.09 to 0.53.

For the case of the periods with Very High plurality (1926 to 1928 and 1997 to 2000) the probability of amendment oscillated between 0.30 and 0.38. Again, the plurality in the integration of the Chamber is the common factor of comparison between the activity displayed in the post revolutionary period and the recent years.

Table 7
Probabilities of amendment of bills
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-2000
 Logit Model (Table 6)

Legislature	Plurality	Legislature experience	Amendment probability	
			Executive bill	Deputy bill
32 (1926-1928)	Very High (>50%)	43.2	0.32	0.30
34 (1930-1932)	Null (0-3%)	57.5	0.09	0.08
40 (1946-1949)	Low [3-15%]	18.9	0.19	0.17
47 (1967-1970)	Moderate [15-33%]	16.8	0.41	0.39
54 (1988-1991)	High [33-50%]	22.0	0.53	0.51
57 (1997-2000)	Very High (>50%)	15.6	0.38	0.36

A proposal of periodization

Kenneth Johnson (1977:33), while making an analysis of the strength of the Executive authority in Mexico, argued that the President "has ample powers on all the levels of the government, and even though the national Congress has the prerogative of veto, it has not been exerted since the end of 1920's". This statement, along with others made by experts in the Mexican political system, has become true legend since it synthesizes the passive role of the Legislative Power throughout 20th Century. Although, we must emphasize that the argument neglects the period between 1917 and 1946 when there was an extremely intense legislative interchange between the Chamber of Deputies and Executive branch. In contrast to the evidence presented in Johnson's work, this paper hints that political plurality in the legislative arena has existed, that the deputies were, from time to time very active, and that the Mexican *presidencialismo* did experience a period of failure which occurred before the creation of the official party.

Taking into account the legislative activity displayed by the lower chamber from 1917 to 2000, the following section will be devoted to draw a proposal of periodization of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. We use the concepts proposed by Lieberman (2001) in his historical institutional analysis. The central goal is to consider the impact of institutional change in a particular result or a set of results. The historical element comes from the fact that once an institution is established, it tends to endure through time. The author recognizes that the definition of institutions has two meanings. The first is equated to organizations and second is generally used for norms or rules of behavior.

In addition, Lieberman indicates that the moments of institutional change, as well as the moments of institutional creation, are extremely important.

The same author suggests four periodization strategies which can be followed in the study of an institution through time. The first strategy focuses in the origin of the institution; the second in the changes that the institution suffers through time; The third is related to the analysis of exogenous shocks, and the last one relies on the study of the opposite causes that may have produced an institutional change.

In this study, the base of the periodization for the Mexican Chamber of Deputies follows the second strategy suggested by Lieberman: the changes than an institution suffers through time. However, this study cannot overlook the importance of the advent of the National Revolutionary Party in 1929 which despite the change in his name and structure along several decades, this institution continues to be the oldest political party of the country.

The periodization of the activity of the Chamber is based on the following variables: duration of the legislature, existence of the official party, immediate re-election of legislators, electoral rules which affect the possibility of reaching a seat and/or rules that alter the composition of the Lower Chamber, and the degrees of plurality. These cuts in time are accompanied by the average values of the legislative activity.

Using the method described in the preceding paragraph we established five different periods or stages. The first goes from 1917 to 1928. It is the period of Very High plurality with no consolidated party, a high legislative experience due to the possibility of immediate re-election, a high amount of proposals from the deputies, a low presidential success, a medium success in the approval of the proposals introduced by the deputies and a high rate of bill amendments. Three out of ten deputies had previous legislative experience, they modified three out of ten considered or discussed bills, five out of ten projects were initiated by the lower chamber and four out of ten presidential bills were approved. This period is one of non institutionalized pluralism.

The second stage goes from 1928 to 1934; it is the period that followed immediately after the creation of the official party. Thus, the principle of immediate re-election was in place, there was a high rate of legislative experience, the plurality was Null, approximately eight out of ten bills introduced by Executive were approved, and eight out of ten initiatives were presented by the deputies. This is a stage of null plurality and the beginnings of institutionalization.

The third period goes from 1934 to 1964. At this stage, the duration of legislatures is increased from two to three years, it is a moment of Null and Low plurality, and the golden age of unified governments which characterized the Mexican *Presidencialismo*. The prohibition of the consecutive re-election of the deputies was enacted, the legislative experience reached only 15%, and the presidential success in the

introduction of bills was on average 96% against 47% for the deputies. It is the stage of an institutionalized low plurality and the pinnacle of the strong *presidencialismo*.

The fourth period goes from 1964 to 1979. This is the stage in which the plurality begins to recover a little, after 36 years of lethargy. The factor that explain this phenomenon is the change in the electoral system (known as the system of party deputies) which allowed the opposition parties to reach seats in the lower chamber. The effects of this increased plurality can only be observed in the proportion of amendments (32%), since the presidential success practically continued with the same rate, whereas the success of deputies in the introduction of bills continued descending. It is the stage of an institutionalized moderate plurality.

Finally, the fifth period goes from 1979 to 2000. This is a period where the electoral system was changed once again, to establish a two tier system of plurality and proportional representation in order to access to the lower chamber. The second tier was composed by 100 deputies (and later 200) elected by a PR formula in a four (later five) electoral districts. At this stage the experience of the deputies only raises in four percentage points, there are almost five amendments out of ten considered bills, and although the success of the presidential proposals did fall in the 57th Legislature (1997-2000) - as can be observed in Graph 3-, the relation between the Legislative Power and the Executive authority was not a confrontational one, like in the first stage where there was no official party or party system that could induce discipline. The presidential average of bill approvals has been of 97%, a remarkable score considering that Mexico

experienced between 1997-2000 a context of divided government. It is the period of recovery of the plurality with divided government.

Table 8
Periodization of legislative activity in the
Chamber of Deputies, 1917-2000

Characteristics	Periods				
	1917-1928	1928-1934	1934-1964	1964-1979	1979-2000
Legislature term (years) (A)	2	2	3	3	3
Included legislatures (B)	6	3	10	5	7
Total years (A x B)	12	6	30	15	21
Legislature size	232-271	153-280	143-178	208-237	400-500
Consecutive re-election	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Legislature experience (%)	33.8	51.1	14.7	14.6	18.1
Electoral system	RM	RM	RM	RM & PR*	RM & PR
Official party exists	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Plurality	Very High	Null	Null-Low	Moderate	Moderate-High-Very High
Bills by deputy average	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.6
Amendment (%)	31.0	20.5	18.0	31.8	46.2
Executive success (%)	43.5	84.9	95.9	95.8	96.8
Deputies success (%)	48.3	79.1	47.0	36.1	17.5

*This period had "party deputies".

To summarize this sections we will try to answers very simple but illustrative questions:

- Did the Legislative Branch in Mexico has, at anytime, occupied a preponderant role as key political actor?

Yes it did, when plurality was Very High, during the periods 1917-1928 and 1997-2003.

- Does the legislative experience of the deputies impinges on the process of law creation?

Yes it does, the greater the legislative experience, the smaller the probability of approval of initiatives, and this implies a greater scrutiny on the consequences of the constitutional and legal reforms.

- Did the creation of an official party and the establishment of a party system had some incidence in the Congress?

Yes it did, the creation of the official party was the decisive factor to disappear the plurality in the Chamber and the arrival of opposition deputies contributed to establish the foundations of a consolidated the party system.

- Can we label the post revolutionary period as one of divided government? Is this experience comparable to the situation of divided government that Mexico is having today ?

Yes, the post-revolutionary era (1917-1928) can be described as one of divided government. However it was a divided government in a period of absence of institutions.

- Is the increase in plurality the best way to fortify the Congress?

A stronger Congress means more analysis of bills. As the plurality of the legislators increases, the deputies introduce more initiatives and the productivity of Chambers also augments. However, an increase in plurality also means that bills will have more difficulties of being approved, and this in turn implies a greater effort of analysis deliberation and negotiation.

Conclusion

The period of study of this research almost includes one hundred years of activity in the Chamber of Deputies. In the beginnings of the contemporary history of Mexico, the country experienced a whirlpool of institutional creation, a very high political plurality, a complete revamping of its legal basis, and a re-invention of the state apparatus and operation of the government.

We have showed that with the creation of the official party, the plurality of the Chamber was nullified; and once the fierce discipline of the official party was established, the Chamber of Deputies became a smaller counterbalance for the proposals of the Executive. Additionally, it was possible to prove that the opposition deputies are more outspoken and combative than those of the party in the government. This phenomenon disregards party labels, since it continues to valid nowadays despite a partisan change in the Presidency.

The fact that during the period 1979-2000, 68% of the initiatives dealt with issues which require a constitutional reform, indicates the urgent necessity to revamp the constitutional basis of the country. This is partly the result of an increasing plurality.

Mexico needs to improve its rules of coexistence to adjust to a more contestative political system by fostering a comprehensive legal and constitutional reform. This in turn, could trigger a more enriching and dynamic relation between the Executive

authority and the Congress.³ Moreover this reform should be aimed at filling the loopholes and gaps that still exist in the basic chart in order to bolster certainty for all the branches of government. There are two paths of reforms suggested by many scholars. One looks at the possibility to diminish the political plurality by changing the electoral laws, reducing the seats of proportional representation, and canceling the possibility of entrance for new parties. The second path looks at reforms which could facilitate the negotiation and decision-making processes between political forces, as well as the implementation of incentives that could foster a greater interchange and cooperation between powers.

After all the experiences of social conflict (student movement of 1968, guerrilla of 70's, public manifestations and armed conflict in Chiapas of 1994) that Mexico has experienced in recent times, it would be a serious mistake to choose a path aimed at diminishing the plurality in the Legislative Power. We must not lose of sight that there is a great benefit in having institutionalized channels that funnel the diversity of voices and political positions.

Trying to look forward, the path that needs to be chosen is the one the will help to negotiate new rules of relation between political actors and powers. This is where the analysis of history in its social, constitutional, political and parliamentary sphere, can help to understand the consequences that any proposal of law or decree can have in a

³ It is the case of the budget bill, Constitution does not resolve what to do in case that the Chamber of Deputies does not approve the budget at december, 31st.

country and it also helps to predict their repercussions. What remains after all are the institutions that are designed and approved, not the political actors who head them.

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