Latin America’s New Turbulence: Mexico’s Stalled Reforms

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After Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) won the presidency in Mexico’s July 2012 election, both domestic and international media began heralding the prospect of “Mexico’s Moment.” Expectations of heightened development and lowered crime ran so high that some observers even started calling Mexico the “Aztec Tiger,” evoking the economic dynamism famously associated with South Korea and Taiwan.

At first, these expectations seemed as if they might be realized. Reforms made early progress, and the economy seemed on its way out of stagnation and into a new day of much-needed growth and development. Peña Nieto’s administration crafted the Pact for Mexico—a formal agreement signed by the PRI and its rivals, the center-right National Action Party (PAN) and the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)—to advance a common reform agenda. The state’s traditional monopoly control of the oil sector was ended, and the way cleared for private competition—a major political feat given Mexicans’ historical opposition to private involvement in this major part of the economy. The first year of Peña Nieto’s presidency saw fiscal, telecommunications, anti-trust, banking, education, and electoral reforms adopted as well. The return to the presidency of the PRI, which had been Mexico’s ruling party for seven decades until voters gave the presidency to the PAN in 2000, seemed to be going smoothly.
The early reform achievements allowed the government to shift attention away from the high levels of violent crime that it inherited from the PAN administration of President Felipe Calderón (2006–12) and toward the anticipated benefits of change. The February 2014 capture in Mazatlán of prominent drug lord Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán epitomized the aura of competence that surrounded the PRI government. In the eyes of many, this appeared to be the most successful start of an administration in at least a generation. *Time* magazine even dedicated an issue to Peña Nieto’s reforms, unabashedly dubbing him Mexico’s savior.

As Peña Nieto’s presidency went on, however, setbacks in the economy and public safety undercut “Mexico’s Moment.” Growth was tepid despite the reforms, and violent crime remained as grave a worry as ever. The government’s record regarding human rights, press freedom, and transparency, meanwhile, was dismal. How did an administration that had managed to overcome decades of inaction regarding structural reforms find itself in this situation? Are these obstacles a bump in the road or do they represent deeper problems for Mexico’s democracy?

**The Return of Business as Usual**

In the fourth year of his six-year term, Peña Nieto is struggling to deliver on the high hopes roused by his early time in office. The prosperity that was to follow reform has proven elusive; actual performance has been meager and the outlook is gloomy. This has been due to the drastic fall in oil prices, the limited scope of several reforms, and the way in which certain reforms have been implemented. The collapse in the price that Mexico can charge for its oil—which remains a major export and a large source of state revenue, even if its relative importance
has slipped—was beyond the government’s control. The oil bust was a classic “external shock” that toppled an edifice of unrealistic expectations. The president and his party now find themselves in an exposed position: They opted to sell reforms to the public with promises of concrete short- and medium-term benefits. That risky strategy has now given way to a credibility crisis as reality has lagged behind aspirations.

**Structural reforms.** The public ownership of mineral resources was written into the Mexican constitution in the early twentieth century, and oil-industry nationalization (first enacted in 1938) was long seen as sacrosanct. Changing that has clearly been Peña Nieto’s most significant achievement. The energy-sector reform traveled under the slogan “No to privatization, yes to energy reform.” The reform maintained state ownership of Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex), which is the largest company in Latin America save for Brazil’s parastatal oil giant Petrobras. Yet Pemex’s monopoly was ended via government auctions of exploration and production contracts to private bidders. In asking for a broad and flexible menu of policy tools to leverage private investment, Peña Nieto vowed tangible benefits including lower electricity and gas prices, quality improvements, half a million additional jobs by 2018 (when the president’s six-year term is to end), and more money for social-welfare programs.

The government had estimated that private bidding on dozens of oil fields would yield tens of billions of dollars in investment per year, but downward-spiking oil prices have sunk such expectations. Only two of fourteen fields were successfully tendered in the first round, with major players such as Chevron and ExxonMobil opting to stay away. This left the government more than US$14 billion short of its first-round goal and intent on changing the rules to draw
more interest during future rounds.¹ Pemex’s underfunding, declining production, and bidders’ apathy have fed a sharp drop in state revenue.

The 2013 fiscal reform—meant to collect an extra 1.4 percent of GDP in taxes—has combined with a state-decreed hike in gasoline prices to cover most of the revenue gap. Yet money for unemployment insurance and old-age pensions—both of which Peña Nieto promised to fund by means of his reforms—is not there. Instead, revenues are stagnant and public indebtedness is growing. For a middle-income country—one with annual GDP per capita of about 17,000 Purchasing Power Parity dollars—Mexico does a poor job of collecting taxes. The Mexican state’s fiscal-intake level is one of the lowest in Latin America, and experts commonly estimate that tax authorities will need to collect at least another 3 to 4 percentage points’ worth of GDP in order to match the world average of fiscal intake for a country with an economy of its size.

The administration’s education reform is built around a new teacher-evaluation mechanism. It is meant to improve Mexico’s school system, which absorbs an unusually large share of public spending yet produces disappointing results. Here too, however, implementation has lagged. Faced with vociferous opposition from a radical teachers’ union called the National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE), the government wavered. On the eve of the June 2015 congressional and local elections, it announced that it would delay the teacher evaluations indefinitely. After the voting, it then reversed this statement in the face of public pressure to carry on with the reforms. The timing of these decisions suggests that political considerations are compromising policy decisions.

The telecommunications reform sought to speed Mexico’s shift from analog to the more modern digital broadcasting by boosting competition through the auction of additional radio and
television frequencies. This part of the economy, the administration pointed out, was marked by highly concentrated ownership and could benefit from the enlivening effects of competition. While updating antiquated telecom infrastructure and diffusing media ownership (by allowing the creation of a third television network, for instance) are important goals, execution has been deficient. Critics have complained that the government’s push to replace old televisions with new high-definition (HD) devices has opened the door to clientelism. Further, the government has yielded to the demands of the two existing television networks to slow the HD changeover, a delay that will badly hurt the new network, whose equipment will be HD exclusively. Spearheaded by a powerful group of legislators with ties to the older networks, a change in the law to postpone the transition passed Congress in December 2015.

Meanwhile, the banking and anti-trust reforms that were supposed to jumpstart the economy have yielded few results. Mediocre growth has plagued Mexico for most of the time since the mid-1990s, and it remains the rule. Peña Nieto’s first three years in office saw average annual GDP growth of 1.9 percent, which is in line with the 2 percent average growth rate of the last two decades. Taking into account population growth, this means that income per capita has remained virtually stagnant. Moreover, the proportion of Mexicans who are poor has grown from 51.6 to 53.2 percent. In other words, more than 2 million people have slipped below the poverty line.²

This performance puts Mexico above Latin American countries whose economies have faced serious challenges amid greater government intervention (Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela), but below more market-friendly countries such as Chile, Colombia, and Peru. Peña Nieto deserves credit for maintaining macroeconomic stability, but he has been unable to pull
Mexico’s economy out of the doldrums despite securing the passage of a record 28 constitutional reforms.

*Public safety.* The consensus that backed the reforms was fleeting, and public attention soon turned to the government’s antidrug campaign and the violent crime linked to it. Official efforts to downplay the violence were bloodily interrupted in late September 2014, when 43 vocational students were abducted and murdered near Iguala, a town about 190 kilometers south of Mexico City. Allegedly, drug-cartel hitmen committed the crime, with the collusion of local police. The students’ “offense” had been staging a protest that angered the local mayor and his wife. Even in a country too long used to reports of rampant criminal bloodletting, the murders came as a shock. People had been clinging to the notion that most homicides were drug-related, and the victims were criminals who “had it coming.” The mass murder by state agents and *narcotraficantes* of dozens of students from a rural teachers’ college—young men with no known links to the drug trade—sent tremors of bitter surprise and outrage throughout Mexican society.

The Peña Nieto administration’s response was slow and clumsy. First implying that the victims must have been criminals and then offering conflicting accounts, Attorney-General Jesús Murillo Karam tried to fend off reporters’ questions at a press conference with the phrase, “Enough, I’m tired.” Against the backdrop of more than twenty-thousand homicides per year, this response became a rallying cry for civil society protests demanding an end to violent crime. The administration has also struggled to deal with other massacres committed by agents of the state. These lethal incidents include a June 2014 mass killing in Mexico State that cost 22 lives
and was covered up to appear as a confrontation between the military and drug traffickers, and two in Michoacán State during the first half of 2015 that killed a combined total of 59 people.

Citizens worry not only about links between law enforcement and organized crime and official indifference to human rights and due process, but also about the administration’s lack of will or ability to do much about these problems. Peña Nieto promised to move away from Calderón’s highly militarized strategy to fight narcotrafficking, but in truth little has changed. In 2014, the government trumpeted its creation of a paramilitary gendarmerie whose five-thousand troopers would spearhead the fight against organized crime, but then simply folded this unit into the existing Federal Police. Meanwhile, the violence has prompted vigilantism. Communal autodefensas (armed self-defense militias) have sprung up in a number of places. Such groups proclaim it their business to provide public safety; their very existence tells of a society beset by lawlessness on all sides.

Peña Nieto inherited a dire public-safety situation that was never going to be easy to turn around. But his government, now almost four years old, appears not even to have laid the groundwork for change. Since he took office in December 2012, there have been more than 53,000 recorded homicides and more than 6,000 reported kidnappings. The annual homicide rate peaked at 24 per 100,000 residents in 2011, followed by several years of slight declines for which Peña Nieto was quick to take credit. In 2015, however, homicides rose again. More than 17,000 murders were recorded that year—equivalent to 46 murders per day, or one every half-hour. Kidnapping, extortion, and other violent crimes rose as well. The government gives no sign of having a handle on any of this.
Press freedom and human rights. Despite progress in media pluralism and civic engagement, setbacks regarding freedom of the press and human rights have been serious. Mexico today is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. According to the National Human Rights Commission, 88 journalists were killed between 2000 and 2014 and hundreds more were victimized every year by nonfatal attacks.\(^5\) In states such as Tamaulipas and Veracruz, drug-related violence is widespread and so is self-censorship: because of the risks to reporters, the media attention that narcocriminality receives hardly reflects its prevalence.

Although mostly a product of drug-related violence, self-censorship also extends to official misconduct. Journalists who report things that the powerful want to keep quiet may suffer, as did two reporters who found themselves forced to resign after they broke a story about potential conflicts of interest involving the president’s wife and a developer who has received several government contracts. Especially worrisome have been murders of journalists critical of the government, such as the gruesome August 2015 torture killing of photojournalist Rubén Espinosa, who had fled Veracruz State to seek refuge in Mexico City. Contributing to the atmosphere of impunity, authorities have been quick to dismiss such crimes as coincidences that have nothing to do with journalists’ professional activities.

When Peña Nieto took office, his administration emphasized the need to reduce the human-rights abuses that the armed forces had been committing in their fight against organized crime. Since 2012, however, it appears that violations have worsened. In a scathing 2015 report, Human Rights Watch claimed that “torture is widely practiced in Mexico to obtain forced confessions and extract information.”\(^6\) This practice takes place most often at military bases or other illegal-detention sites before prisoners are turned over to prosecutors. The report identifies waterboarding, electric shocks, and sexual torture as common practices. That same year the UN
Special Rapporteur on Torture found torture to be generalized, and stated that the abuses conducted by security forces “seriously threatened the right to life.” The U.S. State Department’s 2013 Human Rights Report also notes that impunity for human-rights abuses remains widespread in both civilian and military jurisdictions.

Since 2007, more than 25,000 people have been reported missing, half of which have disappeared during Peña Nieto’s administration. The authorities investigate only about 1 percent of disappearances; as a practical matter, the still-missing will remain that way, their precise fates never to be known. As a result of this record, in 2015 the U.S. State Department decided that Mexico had failed to take needed steps to protect human rights and withheld 15 percent of U.S. antinarcotics aid (worth US$5 million). This was not a move that U.S. authorities were eager to make; it spoke to the gravity of the violations and the Mexican government’s negligence in addressing them.

**Government accountability.** Although Peña Nieto rode to power touting the virtues of the “new PRI”—a seemingly renovated party that had buried corrupt and undemocratic practices—there is evidence not only that the government has been unable to rein in corruption across the bureaucracy, but that the president’s inner circle might be part of the problem. Rather than improving oversight, the Peña Nieto administration has been involved in a series of high-profile corruption scandals that remain unresolved and have tainted its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. The nadir was El Chapo’s July 2015 escape from a maximum-security prison, his second such feat. The administration had refused to extradite him to the United States, boasting how well kept he would be in a Mexican penitentiary. Instead, his jailbreak exposed general corruption: This high-profile, high-risk inmate had made his flight to freedom by means of a
deep tunnel 1.5 kilometers long that went right to his prison cell, at a spot left uncovered by surveillance cameras. Digging the tunnel had taken heavy machinery that displaced tons of soil and made noise as it penetrated the fortified concrete slab beneath the building.

Closer to home, Peña Nieto has been damaged by the decisions of First Lady Angélica Rivera and Finance Minister Luis Videgaray to buy costly real estate using preferential loans from Grupo Higa—a contractor with an estimated $2.8 billion in government business. The same firm was also involved in a conflict-of-interest flap that resulted in the government canceling the contract for Higa and a Chinese partner to build a high-speed rail line between Mexico City and the city of Queretaro to its northwest. Other scandals have surfaced as government officials have been caught hiding foreign and domestic properties by registering them under relatives’ names, have used government helicopters for private purposes, and have lavished gifts as large as sports cars on relatives.11

Not surprisingly given all this, the president’s anticorruption speeches ring hollow to many Mexican ears. He ordered an inquiry into the dubious real-estate deals, but named a cabinet member, Virgilio Andrade Martínez, to head it. In his final report, not a single conflict of interest was identified. The posting of individuals charged with corruption or electoral malfeasance to embassies, consulates, and even the attorney-general’s staff has further undermined the president’s claim to be promoting accountability.

“I Know You Won’t Applaud”

When Peña Nieto announced his anticorruption campaign at a carefully choreographed February 2015 press conference, the subdued atmosphere in the room was unsurprising in light
of the corruption scandals. Perhaps more remarkable was the president’s visible discontent and his muttered reaction, captured by the microphone as he left the podium: “Ya sé que no aplauden” (I know you won’t applaud). For a government that had grown used to applause during the overexuberant “Mexico’s Moment” days, the silence in the auditorium came as a blunt reminder that even the best marketing campaign cannot make up for a basic failure to deliver.

Indeed, Mexicans’ attitudes reflect a general disenchantment with the status quo. According to the 2015 Latinobarometer survey, only 48 percent of Mexican respondents agreed with the statement that democracy is preferable to other forms of government. This is 8 points below the regional average of 56 percent and suggests that more than half of Mexican respondents are at best indifferent toward democracy. Additionally, when it comes to feeling represented by legislators, only 17 percent of Mexicans do, 6 points lower than the regional average.

Also worrisome are negative perceptions of Mexico’s electoral integrity and government transparency. When asked if the electoral process was trustworthy, only 26 percent of respondents saw Mexican elections as clean. Again, this was a regional low, 21 points short of the Latin American mean. Similarly, only 26 percent of Mexican respondents rated their federal government as somewhat or very transparent; the regional average is 36 percent.

Public perceptions are also grim when it comes to the handling of the country’s main problems. A slight majority of respondents said that they thought their own neighborhood to be unsafe; 65 percent said that their municipality was unsafe; 77 percent felt this way about their state; and a whopping 94 percent considered the country as a whole to be unsafe.12 Regarding the economy, only 13 percent of Mexican respondents are satisfied with their country’s economic
performance, compared to the regional average of 25 percent. Only one in ten respondents considered the economic situation to be good or very good, compared to the regional average of 20 percent. And whereas 37 percent of Latin Americans believed that the economic situation would improve, only 26 percent of Mexican respondents shared this view.

Confidence in the country’s future, while far from robust to begin with, dropped even lower. In 2013, a bit more than a quarter (27 percent) of respondents felt confident that Mexico was moving in the right direction. Two years later, that share had dipped to less than a fifth (18 percent). The 2015 Latin American mean was 32 percent.

Mexicans’ views of the quality of their country’s democracy were the region’s lowest. On average, 37 percent of Latin American respondents said that they felt somewhat or very satisfied with the quality of democracy in their own country, views shared by only 19 percent of Mexicans. In Uruguay, that figure is 70 percent (the region’s highest), but even in countries suffering serious governability or public-safety crises, the democratic-quality self-rating was sunnier than Mexico’s. Honduras had the world’s highest murder rate (at 104 per 100,000 residents, it dwarfed Mexico’s), yet 34 percent of Hondurans surveyed were at least somewhat satisfied with the quality of Honduran democracy. The figure in Venezuela, despite its civil strife and dire shortages of even the most basic consumer goods, was 30 percent. Guatemala, another country troubled by rampant crime, a sluggish economy, and deep social divisions, still led Mexico with 27 percent satisfaction. So did Brazil, where the president faced impeachment amid a giant corruption scandal that was punching a hole in an already worrisome economic outlook. Still, 21 percent of Brazilians managed to pronounce themselves at least somewhat satisfied with their democracy, exceeding their Mexican counterparts by two points.
The Erosion of Mexican Democracy

The government’s strategy of crafting an image of competence based on rhetoric while sweeping the country’s problems under the rug paid off in the short term. In the 2015 midterm voting, the PRI and its coalition partners, the Mexican Green Ecologist Party (PVEM) and the New Alliance Party (PANAL), were able to maintain majority control of the Chamber of Deputies, the 500-seat lower house of Congress.

The ruling coalition benefited from infighting to its left and right. The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the main left-of-center party since 1989, suffered a major schism. A number of prominent members—including founder Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas—walked away in disagreement with the decision to sign the Pact for Mexico. Particularly crippling was the choice made by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the PRD’s former leader and two-time presidential candidate, to form a new party called the Movement for National Renovation (MORENA). Although MORENA won an important victory by taking control of Mexico City’s legislature away from the PRD, the split undermined the left’s agenda and diluted both parties’ national influence. The PRD and MORENA finished a distant third and fourth, respectively, in the 2015 congressional elections. The PRD plummeted from 104 to 55 deputies, while MORENA elected 35 candidates to the Chamber.

Although spared a major rupture, the right-of-center PAN has been plagued by internal struggles over its direction as a party since losing the presidency in 2012. In part because of the specter posed by former president Felipe Calderón’s legacy of skyrocketing violence and in part because of the party’s shared responsibility for the recent reforms, the PAN was unable to improve its electoral standing. It suffered a modest loss, going from 114 to 108 seats.
While the balance of power was little changed by the election—in part because electoral rules were designed to give the plurality winner a bonus of proportional-representation (PR) seats as a “governability bump”—there are signs of public discontent with the three parties that have anchored the party system for the past quarter-century. Beyond the steady decline in the president’s approval, which dropped from 61 percent after his inauguration in 2012 to a low of 34 percent around the 2015 midterms—the lowest level for a president in the last two decades—there are other signs of disenchantment with the main political players.

The PRI, the PAN, and the PRD have seen their collective vote share drop. From 2012 to 2015, the PRI went from 38 to 32 percent, the PAN dropped from 25 to 23 percent, and the PRD fell from 19 to 12 percent—with MORENA picking up 9 percent.

Ironically, one of the main beneficiaries of this discontent was the PVEM, whose Chamber delegation shot up from 18 to 47 members. A pseudo-environmentalist group founded by Jorge González Torres and run more like a family business than a political organization, the PVEM violated election laws to win votes, and later paid moderate fines imposed by the National Electoral Institute. The PVEM’s irregularities included repeated vote-buying as well as the broadcasting of close to a quarter-million television and radio ads outside the campaigning window set by law. Since parties receive public money based on how well they did in the most recent election, the PVEM has found it profitable to disregard electoral laws—it pays its fines with the state funds that its votes win for it. The collateral damage done by this example of “gaming the system” is real: The National Electoral Institute’s hard-earned reputation as an effective election-oversight body has suffered amid its light punishments for the PVEM’s misbehavior. The Federal Electoral Tribunal’s further reducing these fines has given rise to speculation that the electoral authorities might be protecting the party.13
Discontent with major parties also surfaced in the form of independent candidacies. Wearing a cowboy hat and boots and talking tough against corruption, former PRI member Jaime “El Bronco” Rodríguez was elected governor of the industrialized northern state of Nuevo León in 2015. New electoral rules adopted two years earlier had eased his path to office. Other independents won the mayoralty of Morelia (the capital of Michoacán), a seat in the federal Chamber of Deputies, and some local legislative seats. As a further sign of disillusionment, 5 percent of voters cast a blank ballot on election day.

While on the surface the election changed little, the results point to the erosion of Mexico’s once relatively stable party system. The left is now formally divided between those who favor working with the government to shape policy and those who reject any form of collaboration. On their own, neither the cooperators of the PRD nor the rejectionists of MORENA can win the presidency, and the mistrust between the two sides will make it harder to form an electoral coalition going into 2018. The proliferation of smaller and midsized parties, meanwhile, will make governability more difficult in Mexico’s presidential system. Although the opposition parties have advanced a proposal to adopt a runoff system to provide the president with greater legitimacy and a stronger mandate, the PRI and its legislative allies have blocked this reform. More importantly, the results suggest that voters are looking for alternatives to their traditional options.

This configuration of power does not bode well for civil liberties, government accountability, and the quality of democracy more generally. Although elections have remained generally free and fair, old practices die hard: The Peña Nieto administration and the PRI-led coalition in Congress have seemed more like the old PRI that ruled in authoritarian fashion for seven decades and less like the vaunted “new PRI” that they were said to represent—the contrite,
renovated party that had shed its undemocratic practices after receiving a two-term timeout from the voters. In particular, the PRI coalition’s ability to hang on to its congressional majority in spite of voter disenchantment is likely to bolster the government’s complacency regarding the decay of press freedom, human rights, and government accountability.

The Road Ahead

Even though the PRI now “boasts” the least popular president that Mexico has seen in two decades, the government’s legislative majority is unlikely to press for change. Nonetheless, Peña Nieto and his party would be well advised to heed the signs of public disenchantment and correct course. Turning a blind eye to major problems is not acceptable. In particular, the failure to deliver on economic performance and the reduction of violence will only exacerbate the inequality, poverty, and institutional weakness that so ail Mexico.

Less than three years remain in Peña Nieto’s term, and the structural reforms approved early in his mandate could still bear fruit despite the government’s short-term disappointments. If implemented correctly, the reforms are likely to bring results in the medium to long run. Yet the near-term forecast is far from rosy. With oil production dwindling and prices unlikely to rebound to anything like their 2013 level anytime soon, remittances now exceed oil exports as a source of foreign income. The fiscal implications are grim: In 2015, the government had to cut spending by 0.7 percent of GDP, and will have to slash it by another 1.5 percent of GDP in 2016 in addition to decreasing Pemex’s budget by another 0.4 percent of GDP. With public investment as a share of GDP at its lowest point since the 1930s, this will mean scarcer and lower-quality public services, including much-needed infrastructure to promote growth.
In December 2015, the U.S. Federal Reserve decreed its first interest-rate hike in nearly a decade. This put Mexico in an awkward position: Its central bank has followed suit in order to avoid capital flight, but there will be a slowing effect on the economy, and higher rates will make it harder for consumers to service their debts. Foreign direct investment fell by almost half between 2013 and 2014, and although the final 2015 figures will show improvement, Mexico is no longer one of the top ten recipients. Like many currencies of emerging-market countries, the Mexican peso has depreciated by more than a third since 2012. A cheaper peso could fuel economic dynamism by boosting exports, but it will pinch, too, as many Mexicans see their buying power shrivel. Every way ahead for the economy will bring its own costs and complications. It is thus not clear that improved macroeconomic performance will translate smoothly into higher satisfaction with democratic institutions.

Beyond the economy, should the government’s dismal record on public safety, human rights, press freedom, and accountability go unrectified, Mexicans will continue to withhold their applause. High levels of violent crime have already undermined democratic quality. Rather than continuing with a militarized strategy and unifying all police forces into a single chain of command within each state—a measure that Peña Nieto has advanced without heeding what it would do to federalism and concerns over the elimination of overlapping police jurisdictions as a check against corruption—the government needs to invest in rebuilding local police forces and strengthening the judicial system.

Other proposals for reinvigorating Mexico’s democracy include suggestions to eliminate PR legislative seats in the federal Congress and adopt a presidential runoff. Although these reforms might contribute to generating governing majorities, the country will continue on its
current trajectory unless the government shows a real commitment to fighting corruption, respecting human rights, and strengthening democratic institutions.

The gap between expectations and results has contributed to the emergence of real signs of public disenchantment with the established parties. Although the incorporation of citizen-candidates without a party affiliation can help to accommodate a wider range of views, established parties with roots in society are crucial to democratic life. Unless Mexicans start seeing benefits from Peña Nieto’s presidency during the second half of his term, both the stability of Mexico’s party system and the quality of Mexico’s democracy will continue to erode.

NOTES


5 “La CNDH señala impunidad en agresiones a periodistas,” El Informador, 20 April 2014.

7 UN General Assembly, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,” December 2014. The rapporteur is the Argentine attorney Juan E. Méndez.


9 *Aristegui Noticias*, “12,500 personas desaparecidas durante el sexenio de Peña Nieto: Amnistía,” 29 August 2015.


13 Ariadna Ortega, “EL PVEM ya rebasó los límites y el INE debe quitarle el registro, exigen partidos y expertos,” *Sin Embargo*, 18 March 2015.
