Methods and Objectives

IN BROAD OUTLINE

The initial objective of this work was to describe the evolution of the U.S. intellectual and political elite’s vision of Mexico from the end of World War II onward. While this remains a key objective, as the research progressed it became increasingly clear that the underlying causes for the transformation of the elite’s vision itself called for explanation, leading to a second research focus: how ideas have influenced, and continue to influence, the relationship between Mexico and the United States. Once on this path, an evaluation of the United States’ positive and negative impacts on Mexico, and especially on that country’s political system, became inevitable. Looking back over the completed work, one realizes that in many ways it constitutes a reinterpretation of several aspects of Mexico’s contemporary history.

Following certain historical antecedents, the analysis begins with 1946, a year that signaled a new era in global history, in which the United States was to be the dominant force. This nation began creating the institutions and fine-tuning the mechanisms it needed to exert its new-found power, and in the evolution of this grand U.S. strategy Mexico has played a fundamental role.

The features of Mexico’s political system, economy, and international relations were clearly delineated during the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946–1952). His term in office, which reaffirmed Mexico’s corporatist, authoritarian, and centralized presidentialism, produced an eclectic combination of private and social economies regulated by a powerful State. It also gave rise to a peculiarly bidimensional style of international relations, the product of an independent diplomacy combined with close geographic proximity to the United States.
The analysis runs chronologically to early July 1997. It includes President Carlos Salinas de Gortari’s six years in office, the first half of the Ernesto Zedillo administration, and the economic and political crises that have slowed Mexico’s passage through this recent period of (as yet unfinished) transition, which reached an apex in the midterm elections of July 6, 1997. Special attention is given to 1986, the year in which Mexico’s ruling classes decided to dismantle the prevalent economic model. Their efforts were aided by the United States, and this cooperation led to the gradual abandonment of Mexico’s independent diplomacy. One underlying factor in the relationship that held constant, both before and after 1986, was Washington’s unconditional support for the Mexican government elites. The first indication that such support could ever waiver did not appear until May 1997.

Although this book deals with diverse aspects of Mexican reality, the emphasis is on Mexico–United States relations and the Mexican political system, especially the Mexican regime’s capacity to control society through a skillful combination of hegemony and coercion, and the persistent efforts of a number of groups to struggle against the government’s grip.

Little or nothing is known about what weight the “external factor” had during this historical period (and continues to have) in the political system, and its inclusion here is somewhat groundbreaking. With only a few exceptions, the literature on transitions to democracy rarely considers the external factor; to further, the Mexican transition itself is largely ignored.

This research will demonstrate that the characteristics, evolution, and perseverance of Mexican authoritarianism can best be understood if we incorporate what the U.S. elite does, or fails to do. To go one step further, one might assert that the single most important factor underlying the permanence of the Mexican regime—or its slow rate of degradation and decay—has been the backing of the U.S. elite. This is one of the reasons why understanding how Mexico has been perceived through the prism of global visions, and the myths and ideologies of the United States, has now become a project of some urgency.

The methodology used and the interpretation offered here carry a caveat: new approaches are often unsettling, and hopefully the reader will show patience with this approach to an extremely complex and multidimensional problem, guided by a reflection of Lucien Goldmann’s: “there is no general or universal rule for research, save for adaptation to the concrete realities of the studied object” (1969).

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IDEAS AND PERCEPTIONS

How did Americans perceive Mexico between 1946 and 1996? How were these perceptions transformed, and why? How objectively or truthfully did these perceptions portray Mexican reality? How did they affect other aspects of reality? What is the importance of these issues for current-day Mexico? To answer these questions, one must begin at the beginning, with the raw material, the perceptions themselves, and a central thesis: no concept emerges from nowhere; each has a reason for being, an explanation.

Trying to capture in words the meaning of "ideas," "perceptions," or "consciousness" is to venture into inhospitable realms of knowledge, a journey traced and retraced by philosophers, psychologists, and biologists without a hint of conclusive success. Extensive bibliographies cover the topic of ideologies, but here, too, we often find "several meanings, sometimes difficult to distinguish from one another" (Plamenatz 1970: 27). Nor will we find any apparent consensus regarding the importance of ideas for social transformation. Despite these obstacles, how these terms are understood here must be clarified in order to define this volume's theoretical scope and methodology, to create a systematic framework for information, and to establish a continuity of approach throughout the various stages of the research.

Ideas are human beings' mental representations of concrete objects as perceived through the senses, or of abstractions, based on other ideas and expressed as words, the "instruments of thought" (Aldous Huxley, in Humphrey 1993: 117). Ideas can be expressed as words or as visual images (in caricatures, for example), with language or drawing serving as the instruments of thought.

Through ideas (which may rest on rigorously established facts or on unsubstantiated subjective judgments), individuals, groups, and societies gradually develop explanations—both true and false—concerning themselves and their surroundings, which can then serve as guidelines for action. Through our examination of the ideas held by U.S. elites, or of the Mexican regime's control over the ideas that reach Mexican society, we will find that there is an inescapable relationship between what we do and what we think and feel—as considered in the following discussion of four capital concepts: worldview, myth, consciousness, and relationships of domination.

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2A brilliant analysis of the current state of the debate appears in Humphrey 1993.
WORLDVIEW AND IDEOLOGIES

Worldview is understood here as it was used by Lucien Goldmann: a society or social group’s general interpretation of reality (Goldmann 1969: 103). A worldview takes form and expression in foundational documents (such as constitutions or other writings considered pivotal); in aesthetic, ethical, and philosophical values; and in a pantheon of heroes and mythologies. Its function is to explain reality and, in so doing, to provide guidelines for the organization of the social groups that adopt it and for the direction these groups must go. Some societies hold a more scientific worldview than others, for example.

When we speak of worldviews, we are usually referring to those of nation-states; however, Plamenatz has pointed out that worldviews can also emerge from geographic regions encompassing a number of countries, or from “diminutive sects found only in one small corner of the world” (1970: 15). This is a crucial point, because it will enable us to conceptualize a complex map of ideas that transcends national borders.

As represented in this volume, ideologies are closely related to a global optic, although they occupy a lesser category, because, in providing but a partial notion of reality, they hold a reduced explanatory capacity (Goldmann 1969: 103). From this perspective, a number of ideologies can coexist within any specific collectivity. Relationships will be fluid and harmonious to the extent that the fundamental postulates of a worldview are shared or charged with tension when one ideology seeks to supplant the dominant worldview—as sometimes occurs.

MYTH

One of the most important criteria in evaluating worldviews and ideologies is how faithfully they reflect reality. In order to apply this criterion, analysts often employ the concept of myth, with its two meanings. The first, which is the most prevalent, associates myths with lies or false explanations of reality. Frazer, for example, suggests that myths are “mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature. . . . [B]eing founded on ignorance and misunderstanding, they are always false, for were they true, they would cease to be myths” (in Murray 1960: 309). One might say, then, that the explanatory validity of worldviews and ideologies is determined by the number of falsehoods contained within their myths. An accepted procedure for separating truth from falsehood involves

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3Goldmann is known for his insights into literature and society; see Goldmann 1969, 1976a, 1976b, 1977.
employing the scientific method, which requires that all statements be supported by verifiable facts. In other words, science serves as the critic of mythologies (Levin 1960: 114).

The second meaning associates myths with the aspirations of an individual or a social group. For Henry Murray, a myth is a "collective dream" expressing future goals that make sense of action and life. A great many myths have been founded upon the belief that the installation of a political regime with specific characteristics can solve the problems that ail a particular society, or even the world. This is of fundamental transcendence for social transformation: "collective dreams" form the basis for imagining better futures. They can motivate members of groups to make enormous sacrifices, radically transforming their surroundings (Murray 1960: 316). Although only after installing a given political regime are we able to evaluate the veracity of their asseverations, imagining diverse futures is in itself a fundamental factor for change.

In sum, worldviews and ideologies combine objective, incontrovertible facts with myths, endowed with shifting and diverse combinations of truth and falsehood, of aspirations and frustrations. This volume outlines the U.S. elite's perception of Mexico and examines the truthfulness of its central tenets.

**CONSCIOUSNESS**

Consciousness, both "real" and "potential," is one of the most important concepts in the study of ideas, and its interpretation has provoked extensive, often acrimonious debate (see, especially, Humphrey 1993: chap. 16). For Goldmann, "real consciousness" is a sort of instant snapshot of the beliefs held by a nation, an individual, or a group of individuals, regarding a diverse range of subjects at a specific point in time. According to this definition, huge amounts of information can be reduced to quantifiable (and often believable) indicators by means of public opinion polls, which can ascertain the beliefs of specific groups at a particular moment.

One of the most serious shortcomings of opinion polls is that, although they can discern changes in ideas, they cannot explain how and why such transformations take place. For such an explanation, we must introduce other elements and concepts, such as "potential consciousness," the maximum horizon for a person's or group's capacity for understanding. Evidently a person's or group's real margins of consciousness can be either broadened or reduced. According to Goldmann:

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One disconcerting question is whether there are any limits to what the human mind is able to comprehend.
Every group tends to have an adequate knowledge of reality; but its knowledge can extend only up to a maximum horizon which is compatible with its existence. Beyond this horizon, information can only be received if the group’s structure is transformed; just as in the case of individual obstacles, where information can be received only if the individual’s psychic structure is transformed (1976a: 34).

In other words, some information cannot be received, because “it transcends the group’s maximum potential consciousness.” Consequently, history is sometimes envisioned as a battle between knowledge and ignorance. This book will explore the changing frontiers of consciousness in Mexico and the United States and the obstacles to consciousness that exist in intelligence, in the state of knowledge, and in created interests. When created interests come into play, ignorance is frequently deliberate and pretended.

Bernard Lonergan has referred to the phenomenon that leads individuals to ignore “relevant questions” that could provide them with a “balanced and complete opinion” concerning a certain topic as sco
tosis (1970: 191–93). But how can we know if this inattention is voluntary or involuntary? What role do political and economic interests play? What is the importance of individual, as opposed to group, history?

A psychoanalyst’s role is to enhance his patients’ capacity for introspection and perception, so that they can understand and overcome impediments to adequate processes of thought and function. Societies as a whole have no psychoanalyst; perhaps social scientists, intellectuals, or journalists fulfill this function somewhat by formulating the questions that generate and popularize knowledge and ideas, ultimately expanding a society’s consciousness. These individuals—whose function it is to produce ideas—interact permanently with their reference groups and with society.

RELATIONSHIPS OF DOMINATION

The notion of relationships of domination can link the concepts in the preceding sections with political realities. Inequalities permeate both society and the international system, and it is natural that the established order, imperfect thought it may be, will be supported by those who benefit from it. What is less evident is why the established order should also be accepted by those who are dominated, those who derive little or no benefit from it. The answer encompasses two concepts: coercion and hegemony.

When a member of a group violates one of the group’s explicit or implicit rules, those who dominate, who govern, can select coercion
as an option to force this individual to adhere to the norms that sustain the established order. In an oft-quoted phrase, Max Weber wrote that “the State is an association that claims a monopoly upon the legitimate use of violence” (1946: 334, emphasis added). Methods of coercion, as well as their legality or legitimacy, vary through time and space: in Europe, barely two centuries ago the myth of the ruler’s divine right was sufficient justification for the physical elimination of anyone who questioned it; torture was a legitimate procedure, and its application was regulated in legal codes (one of the most terrifying instances is the Austrian Constitutio Criminalis Theresiana of 1769). Torture is still practiced today, although it is legally forbidden and enjoys no legitimacy.

Coercion need not be applied at all times. In general, all that is required is that the members of a given society internalize the possibility of potential punishment (public tortures and executions clearly obey a pedagogical motivation). As pointed out by Michel Foucault, “The role of disciplinary punishment must be to reduce deviations. It must, therefore, be essentially corrective” (1976: 184).

The notion of hegemony has a different logic and intent: dominators incorporate into their conceptualizations the idea that relationships of inequality and domination are natural, inevitable, even desirable. This turns upon a number of factors, which usually appear in combination: ignorance on the part of the dominated, the guarded and subtle nature of the domination, the deep internalization of feelings of inferiority or impotence, the advantages enjoyed by the established order, and, finally, the fact that rebellion is frequently considered to be unrealistic, farfetched, or fraught with risk (O’Donnell 1978: 1158–59).

Hegemony depends on ideas that can legitimate it on the basis of reason or tradition. Once formulated, these ideas must be disseminated, a process in which policies for communication and propaganda are fundamental. In this propagandizing process, the role of the State varies according to the regime. In an authoritarian or totalitarian nation, a great deal of the government’s energy is expended in controlling ideas, especially those that run contrary to its vision. The incarceration, elimination, or demotion of opposition members has frequently been justified by labeling them as heretics, Communists, or capitalists.

In modern democratic countries, the State also seeks to control ideas and use coercion, but its ability to do so is limited because the relationships of domination are operating under different rules. For example, it is society’s aim that the State (the central agent for the implementation of relationships of domination) be an impartial power, regulating social conflicts and relationships as a representative of society’s interests (Bartra 1978: 32–33). In this kind of regime, a so-
cial contract is renewed periodically by the citizenry through elections. Government behavior is monitored by an extremely broad range of academic, media, and citizens’ groups, leading to more legitimate and stable political “structures” (Milliband 1978: 175–76; Poulantzas 1975: 255–56). Consequently, the restraints on the use of coercion are tightened, and relationships of domination become less visible, or more tolerable.

Even a glance at history from this point of view will reveal that State coercion has not disappeared, although the brutality of its application has been limited and even in authoritarian or totalitarian regimes there are constraints on its use. Over the last two centuries, as restrictions on coercion have increased, the importance of hegemony as a form of domination has grown, and increasingly it must be justified with rational arguments. Even in nations like Mexico, hegemony is more important than coercion.

The specific combination of hegemony and coercion differs by country, and it changes across time according to culture, history, geopolitical standing, the solidity of society and/or the State, and so on. The nature of this combination will determine the profile and weight of the instruments used to preserve the relationships of domination: ideological, economic, political, diplomatic, or military (O’Donnell 1978: 1158–73). It is even possible to analyze a society by examining how its ruling classes use and justify coercion and hegemony, and what types of resistance emerge within the society.

IDEAS AND HISTORICAL CHANGE

Coercion and hegemony are justified and applied through ideas, ordered into worldviews and ideologies, whose contents, whether myth or reality, are determined by potential consciousness. During the peak of Nazi power and influence, broad sectors of German society, and many in other countries, were convinced of (or forced to agree with) the validity of the fascist worldview, even though it included many myths whose content was fallacious and unsupported by the scientific method but were premised on the assumption that the future would be better. This and many other instances forcefully demonstrate that the importance of certain ideas depends on the level of power behind them, and not only on their internal coherence. There are also ideas that are supported by the intellectual or moral authority of those who pronounce them.

This leads to a complex issue: the relationship between ideas and economic structure, politics, culture, military power, or the determinants of social change (see, especially, Gramsci 1975: 64–66). Of particular interest is the importance of ideas for a regime’s permanence
or transformation. Nicos Poulantzas summarized a key criterion: although "economic factors" are determinant in the long run, this "does not mean that [they] always hold the dominant role in the structure" (1975: 14). Ideas, therefore, have a certain autonomy and can even become the determinant factor.

Every regime seeks to maintain its hold on power through the use of violence or hegemony. Yet history has demonstrated time and again that transformation is inevitable. Social change may be controlled or postponed, but never eliminated. Dissatisfied groups or individuals will appear, disagreeing either totally or partially with the established order, with the dominant ideas. Peaceful or violent attempts to "correct" the problem will soon follow, potentially effecting change at one or several levels of society or in the regime as a whole.

To be successful, the dissatisfied person or group must offer an alternative ideology; and for this ideology to be transformed into a worldview, it must have sufficient intellectual capacity to develop a proposal for the future that could win wide acceptance. During this gestation period, the myth as "collective dream" is fundamentally important, as it extends the promise of a more attractive future for those who are dominated or dissatisfied, in exchange for certain sacrifices on their part. In his Reflections on Violence, Georges Sorel put forward the concept of "total strike" as a method for achieving socialism. He suggested that the "total strike" is a "myth within which socialism is compressed" (1961: 127). Years later, Mohandas Gandhi postulated satyagraha (passive resistance, civil disobedience) as the weapon with which the weak can, through an act of internal conversion, modify unfair laws and improve their situation (1993: 318). These are but two perspectives, two different methods, in the perennial struggle to transform relationships of domination.

Another event of enormous transcendence among the revolutions and social transformations taking place in recent centuries was the French Revolution. It obliterated the institutions of the ancien régime and revolutionized social relationships and the nature of thought by establishing equality as the criterion for all social relations and rationality as the ingredient of all legitimacy. As Hegel summarized in his Encyclopädie, "in this reasoning and reflexive era, no one will get far if he cannot adduce a founded reason for everything, no matter how wrong or mistaken it may be" (1817).

**The Use of Concepts**

Inter-American relations, the understanding that exists between Mexico and the United States, and the Mexican political system can all be explained within the theoretical framework outlined above. For
example, the nature of inter-American relations is irrevocably stamped by the might of the United States, which uses diverse combinations of coercion and hegemony to maintain an order that is in line with its best interests. In the summer of 1953, for example, Washington concluded that the Guatemalan regime of Jacobo Arbenz was headed toward Communism and that it must be overthrown. Following a sophisticated campaign of destabilization and isolation, U.S. forces invaded Guatemala in 1954 and forced Arbenz to resign the presidency. There was no public outcry in the United States; the overwhelming majority of those who had an interest in Guatemalan affairs accepted and supported the U.S. government’s actions.

Three decades later, President Ronald Reagan’s National Security Council admitted in an internal document that its Central America policy—which pursued the overthrow of Nicaragua’s Sandinistas and the containment and destruction of insurgents in El Salvador—posed “serious problems for public opinion and Congress,” creating difficulties for the “maintenance of its orientation” (New York Times, April 7, 1984). Society’s consciousness had broadened, and limits had been imposed upon its government’s will.

U.S. public opinion regarding Mexico has undergone similar transformations. A 1960 internal White House memorandum quotes President Dwight Eisenhower as stating, “If communists were to come to power in Mexico, we would very probably go to war” (WH 1960). Almost thirty years later, in 1989, ex-CIA director William Colby commented in an interview that “were the new Mexican left, or Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, to come to power, this would not pose a threat to the security of the United States” (author interview). Evidently a greater flexibility of opinion now prevails among members of the U.S. elite.

The viewpoints espoused by the hundreds of U.S. citizens writing about Mexico in tens of thousands of pages also underwent a similar transformation. Between 1946 and 1986, eleven New York Times correspondents wrote 1,328 articles, each of which expresses a moment of individual history but also demonstrates the influence exerted on these correspondents by their editors in New York, by officials of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, by members of the Mexican government, and by Mexican society. These influences also acted on academics and functionaries, guiding their decisions about topics, emphasis, theoretical framework, methodology, and sources.

The opinions of U.S. elites regarding the best methods for exerting dominance over Latin America underwent extensive transformations. In general terms, the space for the use of coercion shrunk, while that for persuasion or hegemony expanded. But how and why did these modifications take place? To provide an answer, we could focus on personal histories, detecting crucial points in education or work ex-
perience; we could even examine mystical revelations. However, the most fruitful approach may well be to focus on the collective consciousness, which frames the development of individual consciousness.

Edward Carr has pointed out that every historian—and, in fact, every social analyst—is a part of history: “The point in the procession at which he finds himself determines his angle of vision over the past.” In other words, “before he begins to write history, [the historian] is a product of history.” Our perceptions depend on our point of view or on that of the group or groups to which we belong. An academically rigorous social chronicler must be conscious of the role he plays, both as judge of and participant in the studied society. In this way, one can achieve a certain intellectual distance, affording a more objective appreciation of society. As Carr suggested, “Before you study the history, study the historian. . . . Before you study the historian, study his historical and social environment. The historian, being an individual, is also a product of history and society” (1963: 43–48). And, according to Goldmann,

Every manifestation of ideas is the work of its individual author and expresses his thought and way of feeling, but these ways of thinking and feeling are not independent entities with respect to the actions and behavior of other men. They exist and may be understood only in terms of their inter-subjective relations which give them their whole tenor and richness (1969: 128).

Forms of behavior—or written texts—can be expressions of a “collective consciousness to the extent that the structures” they express are not unique to their authors, but rather are shared by the “various members who form the social group” (Goldmann 1969: 129). Sociolinguistics also employs the notion that individuals are representatives—consciously or unconsciously—of the social group in which they are immersed; they are “collective speakers” (locuteurs collectifs) (see Marcellesi and Gardin 1974).

Because a collective consciousness, derived from a shared ideology or worldview, does in fact exist, different individuals who wrote about Mexico (many of whom never met) frequently expressed similar ideas in different media. This is not to say that individuals serve as megaphones, repeating the ideas of the groups from which they emerge. This would nullify the potential of the human mind and consciousness by implying that humans must repeat the same ideas again and again throughout eternity, not unlike the scratched record of a bygone technology.

The relationship between a person and his social group is dynamic and charged with tension; every collectivity seeks, in greater or lesser
measure, to homogenize its members' thought processes. Nonetheless, individuals invariably appear who are willing to think differently, who are willing to imagine alternative futures, to take risks, and to transcend the confines established by the collectivity, in order to return as bearers of new perceptions of reality. A certain risk is always present; such individuals may on occasion formulate aberrations or confusions that can mislead others.

Every era has produced adventurers of thought and action, the sort of exceptional individual who, Hegel believed, "can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what his will is, and accomplish it" (1942: 295). In general, contributions are more modest and transformations more gradual. This examination of the U.S. elite's vision of Mexico spans an era rich in individuals who transcended the views of the majority and who, even under unfavorable circumstances, modified the perceptions of their groups and their countries as part of a consistent, though uneven, process. We should not forget that the reverse has more often been the case. Research by Foucault and others has amply demonstrated that the social group always seeks to sap and/or confine individual imagination, imposing controls and marginalizing anyone who thinks differently.

This is why we must differentiate between "individual time" and the "historical time" of groups, classes, or nations (Goldmann 1976b: 112). In the culture of the United States, for example, the individual generally plays the primary role, and it is not unusual for students of American journalism to focus on "individual time." Thus Walter Lippmann envisions the product that reaches the reader as the result of an entire series of individual decisions as to "what items shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, and what emphasis each shall have" (1957: 354).

The value of "individual time" is undeniable. Nevertheless, a study with such a focus would require several lifetimes merely to outline the intellectual biographies of the academics, journalists, and functionaries whose words appear in this volume, though many of their individual histories are fascinating. The volume focuses instead on "group time"; therefore, the emphasis is on points of agreement and the individual contributions that have amplified consciousness. This work will also establish the validity of U.S. perceptions, the weight of various interests, the functional mechanisms of relationships of domination, and the effect of ideas upon other aspects of reality (in particular, the authoritarianism of the Mexican political system).

Because the interpretations and conclusions presented are mediated through the author's own ideas, myths, and interests, they may be questioned. The scientific method, which was used to gather, organize, and process the collected information, is also a mechanism
that can detect and correct the limitations of one's individual consciousness.

HUNTING FOR IDEAS IN THE UNITED STATES

The complexity and heterogeneity of U.S. society soon dashed any early hopes to conduct a systematic study of the multiple ways in which Mexico and "what is Mexican" have been understood by diverse social groups in the United States. It would also have been impossible to cover every shade of perception in every group and specific region (California, for example, calls for special treatment). Therefore, all references from the worlds of literature, art, cinema, or television have been set aside, to concentrate instead on the perceptions held by public officials, academics, businessmen, and journalists with a specific interest in U.S. foreign policy (the so-called establishment).

This elite includes individuals at the peak of political, military, and economic power, easily able to realize their will, though others may be opposed, or to take important decisions that affect nations such as Mexico. Institutions that enjoy this power include the U.S. Congress, the Department of State, the armed forces and intelligence services, and the Departments of Justice and of the Treasury, as well as multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This group also includes large transnational corporations and the private banking sector. These entities, clustered around Washington and New York, have a shared group consciousness, and they function and interact according to fairly elaborate formal and informal rules (Mills 1956).

Closely linked to this elite are the communications media and universities which, along with their other roles, must generate and reproduce ideas, information, and knowledge. These are not mere appendages to a larger structure; they are autonomous institutions in an intense, though nonantagonistic, relationship. As argued below, the journalist, the congressman, the CIA analyst, and the academic share the same set of values, although they may interpret and fight for them in different ways.

Another central actor is society, which influences and interacts with the elite in a number of ways. Because U.S. society has to a great extent turned inwards, participation in the development of foreign policy usually has been restricted to small groups. The half-century that I examine, however, included a fundamental break with this rule. The convulsions of the 1960s—especially those related to the Vietnam War—gave rise to relatively broad social groups determined to intervene in a range of foreign policy affairs. This phenomenon, which has
not yet run itself out, now holds a wide range of implications for Mexico in the 1990s.

In order to retrieve the ideas of the "establishment" elite, the research included a review of official documents, reports of academic research, and journal articles, as well as hundreds of formal and informal interviews. One early finding was that the U.S. community of "Mexicanists" has a far more sophisticated and informed vision than that found in popular culture; even prejudices are expressed with greater subtlety. This community's members are in permanent communication through formal and informal relations; their interpretations frequently merge, diverge, and merge again within the framework of a shared worldview.

The research also included comparing Mexican and U.S. writings and the interpretation of certain key events by the Mexican press. The latter provided important insights into the mechanisms that the Mexican regime employed to control ideas. The full range of the Mexican research has not been incorporated, however, because the objectives in writing this book called for a heavier emphasis on the U.S. literature.

Also examined were both public and restricted-access official documents. Those that were once confidential or secret carry a special advantage: they are sometimes very explicit about the attitudes within the U.S. or Mexican bureaucracies, and about the strategies and policies these bureaucracies have developed to protect their interests. This research draws on extremely rich material from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, the armed forces, the CIA, and the U.S. Federal Reserve. Although hundreds of documents were consulted, there is no way to tell how representative this sample really is; it is impossible to know how many similar documents remain classified.

Other valuable public documents were the memoirs of former U.S. presidents and high-ranking functionaries, as well as the reports on the human rights situation in Mexico and the world that the Department of State has presented to Congress on a yearly basis since 1976. Another relevant source was a collection of articles on Mexico—published in twenty-seven American military publications between 1949 and 1988— that reveals the U.S. military's view of Mexico.

Books and articles by academics were of special interest, because the U.S. elite places a great deal of importance on knowledge and because the basic social function of academics is to generate knowledge. Their writings trace the development of U.S. knowledge concerning Mexico. In total, the present volume refers to the work of over one

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These were selected based on the Air University Library Index to Military Periodicals (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama), which covers seventy-nine publications.
hundred academics writing about Mexico after World War II. It also
covers the left flank of the U.S. academic spectrum and incorporates
everything regarding Mexico that appeared in the magazine *NACLA Report on the Americas*, which began publication in 1967.

Only the most important works have been considered, and the
various authors' trajectories through time were not traced. During the
1950s, for example, Robert Scott expressed great confidence in the
Mexican political system, but by 1980 he had been forced to modify
his views significantly (see Scott 1971, 1980). If one were to explain
the motives for his individual trajectory, this work would edge into
the biographical. And, as noted above, that is not the intention—for
several important reasons.

The third important source was the articles on Mexico that ap­
peared in U.S. daily newspapers. Because of the dailies' publication
schedule, they can serve as a barometer for the transformation of U.S.
perceptions and agendas into instant snapshots. Nearly 7,000 articles
were examined; because of the importance of these materials, their
representativeness and the methods and techniques employed in their
analysis are outlined in the following sections.

One additional consideration lends confidence to the assumption
that this work has captured the essence of the U.S. elite's view of
Mexico: American political culture is more open than its Mexican
counterpart (it is easier to gain access to information, for example).
These journalistic and academic sources, official documents, and in­
terviews provide a clear vision of the U.S. elite's way of thinking.
They also serve as the basis for a coherent explanation of contempo­
rary Mexico.

**SOCIETY AND THE PRESS IN THE UNITED STATES**

The press is a reflection of the society in which it operates. In order to
fully understand the nature of newspapers, we must understand the
societies within which they exist. Diversity, one of the most distinctive
features of the U.S. press, is a clear reflection of this society's hetero­
geneity: 1,611 newspapers, including daily and evening editions,
published in 1990, for a combined average daily circulation of
62,327,962 copies. None can be considered truly national; they all re­
fect the cities, regions, and/or social groups toward which they are
aimed. This wide variety poses problems for any definitive affirma­
tions regarding the representativeness of the U.S. press.

Yet despite this heterogeneity, U.S. newspapers share three char­
acteristics (exceptions do exist but are of little significance). First, they

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*For a panoramic overview of the academic bibliography produced through 1989, see Camp 1990a.*
are private enterprises oriented toward profit through extensive circulation and the sale of advertising space. Second, they are guided by a "social responsibility" code, in which the media represent the public interest; their responsibility, therefore, is to inform and educate their readership with objectivity, to act as watchdogs over government action (assuming they are politically and economically independent), and to play a part in the identification of issues that should appear on an agenda of national debate (see Sigal 1973; Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm 1963; Carey 1974; Harrison 1974; Monteforte 1976; Jensen 1962). And third, and most important, they express the diverse values, beliefs, and mythologies of U.S. ideologies and worldviews.

For example, studies of journalism in the United States frequently focus on individual actors. Newspaper owners such as Robert McCormick of the Chicago Tribune or William Randolph Hearst, owner of the chain that bears his name, were famed for their total control over editorial policy, turning their editorial pages into a "megaphone or conduit for the transmission of their prejudices." They also manipulated the media to defend their own business interests, as the Hearst-based film character "Citizen Kane" so aptly portrayed. In stark contrast, the Ochs-Sulzbergers—current owners of the New York Times—are scrupulously careful not to influence the paper's editorial line.7

For practical reasons, a single newspaper was chosen as the focus of study; a comparative study covering a broad historical period was simply not feasible in the time available. The newspaper selected had to be as representative as possible of the U.S. elite's worldview. Those considered included the Los Angeles Times, the Boston Globe, the Dallas Morning News, the Miami Herald, the New York Times, USA Today, and the Wall Street Journal, looking at their circulation, influence, quality (as gauged by specialists in journalism and the press), the consistency of their international coverage, the existence of indexes facilitating the location of articles about Mexican affairs, and their deployment of Mexican correspondents.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ultimately the New York Times (henceforth NYT, or Times) was singled out as one of the newspapers that best represented the ideas on Mexico that circulated among the U.S. elite. An important reason underlying this choice was the paper's distribution. In 1991, the Times ran

7These cases are discussed, respectively, in Hulteng 1973: 33, and DOS 1925. See also Sigal 1973. Hulteng has demonstrated that, regardless of intent, the opinions of newspaper owners do influence editorial content through, for example, their reporters' and columnists' self-censorship.
1,209,225 copies of its daily edition and 1,762,015 copies on Sundays. Although these numbers may seem small against the backdrop of a total newspaper circulation of some 62 million copies daily in a nation of 249 million inhabitants, only two papers performed better: USA Today and the Wall Street Journal (the former is a relatively new publication, and the latter does not appear on weekends).

An even more important factor was the Times's decision to adopt the norms of U.S. society. Its owners envision the Times as a "cathedral" of liberalism, pursuing the same aims as the nation as a whole: "the preservation of the democratic system and the established order." History has shown time and again that the United States and the Times are "equally committed to capitalism and democracy" and that what has been "bad for the nation" has often been "just as bad for the Times" (Talese 1969: 93). Based on these principles, the Times, and other communications media, aim to inform their readers in an objective and professional manner, perform a vigilant and ceaseless appraisal of society's leaders and businesses, and generate profits for their shareholders.

Published material is ruled by the same criteria for the generation of knowledge as those that apply in universities and government research centers. That is, at least in theory, in the United States producing a published work involves the objective handling of facts and the incorporation of diverse opinions. To guarantee their independence, the Times and other media expressly forbid gifts or subsidies from the organizations on which they report. According to a document outlining the paper's policy regarding conflict of interest, "the integrity of The Times requires that its staff avoid employment or any other undertaking, obligation, or relationship that creates or appears to create a conflict of interest . . . or otherwise compromises The Times's independence and prestige." Those who write for or work in the newspaper's financial section are barred from both direct and indirect participation in the buying or selling of stocks and shares (NYT 1986a: 2, 5). These strict principles, and the unquestioned rigor with which the Times seeks to apply its professional criteria, have generated solid respect for a newspaper whose intellectual sophistication is well matched to the lifestyle of one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world.

The respect that the Times has garnered is widely reflected in the specialized literature. Irving Kristol wrote that there has never been a paper "so dedicated to the public interest, so uncompromisingly committed to what it conceives to be the highest journalistic standard" (1967: 37). Another reason for the Times's influence, according to John Ottinger and Patrick Mainess, is that "editors from Coast to Coast check the Times front page as a reference point, if not as a guide for their own news judgments" (1972: 1006).
The *Times* is also widely read in other countries. Ottinger and Mainess consider that there is no "head of government anywhere who is not a *Times* reader" (1972: 999). Although this affirmation seems exaggerated—many heads of government are unable to read in English, and some are hard-pressed to read at all—the *Times* clearly does enjoy an extensive global readership, largely as a result of the United States' great influence. That is, a newspaper's international presence depends on its quality and on the power of the nation in which it is published. When the United States displaced Great Britain as the leading world power, the *New York Times* acquired the preeminence that once accrued to the London *Times*.

Another aspect that made this newspaper particularly attractive was its internationalism (a typically New York characteristic). Although society in the United States is notoriously ignorant regarding the rest of the world, it does include a sophisticated elite that is specialized in foreign affairs. The foreign affairs establishment nourishes and feeds upon the *Times*; specialists like Bernard Cohen consider it the leading exponent of a "small and specialized foreign affairs press in the United States"; he adds that it "is read by virtually everyone in the government who has an interest or a responsibility in foreign affairs" (1963: 134, 231).

Even its critics acknowledge this fact. Vitalii Petrusenko—an old-fashioned Soviet academic whose prestige was built upon denunciations of Yankee imperialism—pointed out that the *Times* is "the best news source (especially foreign news) in the US" (1976: 56). In sum, the *Times* is a "prestige newspaper,"* the opinion source on foreign affairs for a nation's government elite. Thus this research follows Claire Sellitiz's advice: "select the paper that is commonly quoted as the origin with the greatest authority or prestige in the nation concerned—for example, the *New York Times* in the United States" (Sellitiz, Wrightsman, and Cook 1976: 394).

The *Times*, as the paper that prints "all the news that's fit to print," sees itself as a first draft of history. Its emphasis on facts, numbers, and declarations proved invaluable for this reinterpretation of Mexican history over the last five decades. After a detailed analysis of how the *Times* has treated Mexico and a comparison with the writings and analyses produced by both Mexican and U.S. academics, this author was able to confirm that praise of the *Times* is well deserved and that the *Times* is highly representative of the elite in the United States. Nonetheless, some shortcomings were also apparent: conservative thinking is not well represented in the *Times*, and there are certain aspects regarding Mexico that are insufficiently treated or totally ig-

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*For a detailed discussion of the notion of "prestige newspapers," see De Sola Pool 1952.*
nored. It is revealing that these shortcomings are mirrored in the writing of academics and functionaries, allowing us to detect a broader process of evolving consciousness. The following chapters will delve into the reasons for these transformations and limitations.

**CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE TIMES**

Once the *Times* had been selected as the paper that best represents the U.S. elite, the next step was to decide which (and how many) Mexico-related articles to include in the study and what criteria to employ to guide the analysis of the paper's various sections (editorials, current events, news, etc.). The choice was made for complete coverage: every article on Mexico published between January 1, 1946, and December 31, 1986—a total of 6,903 articles, opinion pieces, informative notes, and editorials, dealing with politics, society, finance, and so on—located through the annual NYT Index. Based on a review of thirty-one categories of articles, the sample is believed to be representative of the total universe.

This information, recovered from microfilms, was subjected to content analysis, a procedure identified by Philip Stone as a "research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within a text" (1966: 5). In other words, content analysis is a way of dissecting texts to reveal the ideas, intentions, and styles of their writers. Through content analysis, we can establish the relationship between different texts or evaluate the effect of a text on the "attitudes or acts of readers" (Berelson 1952: 5). This technique is extremely useful in detecting the frequency with which key issues (the variables) appear or fail to appear. With well-chosen variables, content analysis can provide an insight into the thought processes of a group or society.

The present study utilized 215 variables for the analysis of the 6,903 items on Mexico, including visible characteristics (page, size, section, etc.); the nature of the information source (functionaries, diplomats, the opposition); and the most revealing aspects of the economy, the political system, foreign policy, and the nature of Mexico and Mexicans. Each article was coded for the number of topics it examined and whether the ideas put forth were positive, negative, or informative (neutral). (The coder's objectivity was guaranteed through a technique described in appendix B, which also lists the variables used and provides a more technical discussion.) The information processing resulted in a rich and versatile data bank, allowing for a broad range of comparisons and conclusions regarding the evolution of ideas in the United States. (Appendix A presents this information in a series of figures.)
It became apparent early on that content analysis provides an excellent empirical basis for the study of the U.S. elite’s perceptions of Mexico. For example, it clearly reveals the distribution of Times sources. The 6,903 articles examined included the opinions of 10,524 individuals or institutions, of which 59 percent were public officials, 12 percent businessmen, 7 percent other newspapers, and only 4.5 percent members of the opposition (figure 8), confirming that between 1946 and 1986 the Times, and especially the daily edition, primarily quoted members of the elite.

Interestingly, a large percentage of these opinions came from Mexicans. However, even though Mexican opinions figure in this analysis of U.S. viewpoints, this does not alter the goal of the research, as it was U.S. nationals who decided whom to quote and which ideas to feature.

The most frequently quoted Mexicans were functionaries and businessmen, demonstrating a rarely documented but not uncommon proposition: that there are remarkable similarities between the thinking of elites in Mexico and in the United States, the result of an understanding that frames and conditions the bilateral relationship, Mexico’s political system, and Mexican nationalism. Obviously, an exclusively journalistic and numerical view of reality has limitations, which have been compensated in part through the use of official documents, academic research, and interviews.

To summarize, this analysis covers multiple dimensions and is sustained by a wide range of information, ordered through an original methodology. Certainly not every question raised by the phenomenon of consciousness, by the evolution of U.S. perceptions of Mexico, by the bilateral relationship, or by the nature of the Mexican political system has been resolved. However, the abundance of material presented here can cast light in certain dark corners and can do much to help us reinterpret the last fifty years of Mexican history, including Mexico’s relationship with the United States.

*Although this kind of analysis has gained popularity in recent decades, most content analyses seem to cover relatively brief time periods or are based on representative samples. None covers as extensive a period nor as broad a universe as that described here.*