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Popular Opposition to the PRI:

Navismo and State Repression in San Luis Potosí, 1958-1961

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This thesis examines *Navismo* (1958-1961), an opposition movement to the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) to explore how authoritarianism in Mexico held force at the regional level. Through an analysis of Dr. Salvador Nava's *Dirección Federal de la Seguridad* (DFS) security file, I argue that PRI's response to Navismo reflects the complex measures that the regime took to predict, respond to and subdue conflict. In 1958, Nava launched and successfully won a campaign for Municipal President of the state's capital, exposing the relationship between Gonzalo N. Santos's cacical dominance and the party's predominance. When Nava took office as Municipal President in 1959, the inner workings of the party's patron-client structure to sustain its hegemony were revealed. In 1960, Nava resigned from his post to announce that he would compete as the PRI candidate for Governor, only to be denied the nomination. Nava continued to compete as an independent candidate, but when the party failed

to co-opt Nava into its ranks, it turned to open violence to quell the movement. The study of Navismo demonstrates the contested nature of authoritarian rule in Mexico while underscoring the party's elasticity in responding to the opposition to preserve its hegemony. Navismo expands our knowledge of the relationship between the PRI and popular groups, grassroots organizations and independent political actors while providing insight into the agency of individual actors under authoritarianism.

The thesis of Alyssa Dori Goodstein is approved.

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STATES AND CAPITALS



Map of Mexico

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List of Abbreviations

ACP	Alianza Cívica Potosina
CNOP	Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares
CROC	Confederación Revolucionario de Obreros y Campesinos
CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores de México
DFS	Dirección Federal de la Seguridad
FPEI	Federación de Profesionistas e Intelectuales de San Luis Potosí
FRCP	Frente Reinvidicador de la Ciudadanía Potosina
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialization
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
SCOP	Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Publicas
STPRM	Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana
UCP	Unión Cívica Potosina

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Introduction

Scholars of Mexican Politics have studied the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) for the past half-century, and few subjects are more central to Mexican history than the PRI.¹ Political theorists of the 1950s and 1960s regarded Mexico as a pluralist, representative state, and William P. Tucker saw it as a developing democracy with a representative government structure.² These views enveloped the traditional view of the PRI as a monolithic Leviathan, but failed to systematically examine the party's seemingly uncontested nature. In recent decades, historians and political scientists have begun to re-evaluate the formation and longevity of the Mexican political system, with particular attention to its cooptive and corporatist structure. Nora Hamilton examined the PRI's success based upon its cooptive mechanism, and Larissa Adler-Lomnitz's work has characterized the Mexican political system as one based upon informal rules of conduct that insufficiently followed regulatory statutes, such as democratic elections inscribed in the 1917 constitution.³ These newer studies suggest that the PRI's ability to dominate Mexican politics for seventy-one years was the result of a corporatist and clientelist ruling structure which absorbed conflict before it erupted. However, I wish to argue that the PRI's imposed hegemonic rule has been overestimated in the historiography, and that Navismo demonstrates how

¹ The PRI was formed in 1929 as the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR), which changed its name to *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM) in 1938 and finally, the present day *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) in 1946.

² For a comprehensive review of the postrevolutionary historiography, see Benjamin T Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 5. See also, Frank Ralph Brandenburg and Frank Tannenbaum, *The Making of Modern Mexico* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964). William Pierce Tucker, *The Mexican Government Today* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957). Martin C Needler, *Politics and Society in Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971).

³ Larissa Adler de Lomnitz et al., *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime: Unveiling Mexico's Political Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010). Nora Hamilton, *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

corporatism and clientelism were tactics through which the PRI was able to negotiate and secure its domination but which did not go unchallenged.

The study of Dr. Salvador Nava's opposition movement (1958-1961) to the PRI reveals the limits of the state's corporatist structure, originally created during Plutarco Elias Calles's presidency (1924-1928) and formalized in 1929 with the consolidation of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR).⁴ This model was a vertically oriented political system, in which Mexico's working and rural classes were represented and united within the party. Mexico's three largest labor federations: the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares* (CNOP) and the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC), were integrated into the party's corporatist structure after their initial creation by Lázaro Cárdenas. These organizations were to be the official representatives of Mexico's urban and rural workers, with the objective of developing minimum wage mandates and improving working conditions.

Navismo's success in opposing the regime depended upon its support from organized labor, as they endorsed Dr. Nava and oversaw his campaign operations. The movement's support from the PRI's unionized sectors is best explained as a response to *charrismo*, the party's appointment of ad-hoc union bosses, institutionalized under President Miguel Alemán. *Charros* were to provide greater management and control over unions, while suppressing wages in order to spur economic growth without generating high inflation. Charrismo ultimately resulted in the PRI's alienation of its working class alliances. However, it proved advantageous for the development of opposition movements like Navismo, as workers coalesced around candidates and movements that offered political and social alternatives to the regime. Nava's movement also received support from disenfranchised groups of the right, such as the Sinarquistas and the

⁴ Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 27.

state's non-partisan middle classes, a variegated coalition that was excluded from the PRI's patronage network and united by the same adversary: Gonzalo N. Santos and Santismo.

Navismo also provides insight into the chronology of Mexican social movements that contested the PRI's hegemony. As a social movement, Navismo is a test case of how internal disaffection gained political expression in the form of the opposition, which the PRI tried to prevent with its inclusionary corporatist model. Roderic Camp references the 1968 student movement as a watershed moment, in which the PRI's hegemony is contested and the party's dominance was revealed when it slayed 200 leftist student protestors during the Tlatelolco Massacre.⁵ There are, however, substantial episodes of state repression prior to 1968, which signify that the regime often resorted to violent measures when patronage and cooptation failed to coerce dissenters into the ruling party.

Although Tlatelolco was the largest, public act of open state violence in twentieth-century Mexico, other, visible forms of repression have punctuated Mexican history. Twenty-two years earlier, several dozen Sinarquista protestors in León, Guanajuato sought to challenge the PRI's electoral fraud, only to be slaughtered.⁶ These events demonstrate the limits of civic, political participation when the masses resisted the PRI's offers of patronage to co-opt them into its corporatist, hierarchical political system.⁷ Seven years prior, the federal police and military opened gunfire on unarmed Navistas, incarcerating and transferring them to Lecumberri Prison and *Campo Militar No. 1* in Mexico City where they were tortured before being released.

Navismo serves as one example of an independent, opposition movement to the PRI. The 1950s

⁵ Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico: The Democratic Consolidation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 162.

⁶ Sergio Aguayo, *1968: los archivos de la violencia* (México, D.F.: Grijalbo, 1998), 62.

⁷ Jeffrey W. Rubin, "Decentering the Regime: Culture and Regional Politics in Mexico," *Latin American Research Review* 31, no. 3 (1996): 99. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 28.

were filled with social unrest that challenged the regime, taking the form of student movements, railroad strikes, teacher's strikes and agricultural unrest.⁸

Navismo counters the assumption of Tlatelolco as a watershed moment, but it also underscores that violence and the PRI's form of electoral authoritarianism was not ideologically driven. Renata Keller suggests that social movements that took form during the early years of the global Cold War were not yet connected to the geopolitical or ideological articulations that became present in the 1960s.⁹ Nava, in fact, received support from the Mexican Communist Party, as the movement was a wide-ranging coalition of groups that sought to overthrow Gonzalo N. Santos's informal and arbitrary rule as a *cacique* in 1958, and later, in 1961, contested the PRI's informal practice of the *dedazo*, or handpicking candidates. When comparing Dr. Salvador Nava's *Dirección Federal de la Seguridad* record to that of the 1968 student movement, we can see a substantial difference in the way that the PRI characterized both opposition movements.¹⁰ The 1968 student movement files, better known as "El problema estudiantil," are filled with fear of communist contagion and the spread of a national uprising presumably because of the global context of the year's student movements, while nowhere in Dr. Nava's *expediente* is he labeled as a threat to the state or national security. Instead, Navismo aids us in understanding why the Mexican government would choose to enact unprecedented force against its opponents. The PRI's use of open violence was not ideological, but a last resort, when patronage politics failed to coerce the opposition into joining the party's ranks.

⁸ Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution*, 2015, 34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰ The DFS was created as a spy agency under the Miguel Alemán administration in 1946 and was modeled after the FBI in the United States. For a comprehensive study of the DFS, see also, Tanalís Padilla and Louise E. Walker, "In the Archives: History and Politics," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 19, no. 1 (July 1, 2013): 1–10 and Sergio Aguayo, *La charola: una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México* (México, D.F.: Grijalbo, 2001).

The PRI's form of authoritarianism can be seen as tied to longstanding structures and institutions. It was not connected to the ideological context of the Cold War, or the more visible, right-wing military regimes that swept every Latin American country but Mexico and Cuba in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Instead, the PRI operated as an electoral authoritarian regime, a system in which autocratic leaders allowed independent parties to organize and win seats in the legislature but prevented the opposition from taking control of the government.¹¹ The PRI successfully held power as the world's longest lasting authoritarian regime (1929-2000), holding regularly scheduled elections with the façade of multiparty democracy, despite predetermined election results in favor of the ruling party. The origins of the PRI's form of authoritarianism can be traced back to the creation of the PNR in 1929, and its later reorganization as the PRI in 1946. Electoral authoritarian regimes tend to resort to coercive, rather than violent measures to co-opt the opposition into supporting the regime, relying upon methods like low-intensity coercion, in addition to selective applications of violence to scare dissenters. These acts generally avoid high-profile targets, while rarely attracting the press or international attention. In Mexico, low-level physical harassment was a common tactic employed by the party, unveiled with the police brutality exercised against Navistas from 1958-1961. Localized attacks on pro-democracy activists and supporters through the use of security forces and paramilitary thugs to break up opposition meetings, and the occasional harassment, detention and murder of journalists and activists were also common during the PRI's 71-year rule, all of which are salient features of Dr. Nava's DFS file.

In the paper that follows, I examine Navismo as a case study to explore the PRI's everyday authoritarian processes that underpinned its predominance at the local level and its

¹¹ Joy Langston and Scott Morgenstern, "Campaigning in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Mexico," *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 165.

ability to hold power for seventy-one years. I divide the paper into three parts, providing a critical analysis and close reading of the recently declassified DFS spy records on Dr. Salvador Nava from 1958-1961, coupled with a selection of published interviews and Gonzalo N. Santos's autobiographical *Memorias*. First, I examine Nava's 1958 bid for Municipal President of San Luis Potosí. Nava was a forty-five year old ophthalmologist, part of San Luis Potosí's professional, urban middle class. At this time, his platform sought to democratize state politics by overthrowing Gonzalo N. Santos's fiefdom. I address the emergence of Navismo as an opposition movement that was unified across party and ideological lines, with particular attention to the movement's mobilization of the working and laboring classes following nationwide disputes against charrismo.

In the second part of the thesis, I examine the party's institutional features as a corporatist government that depended on patronage in which William Deane Stanley defines as popular sectors exchanging political freedom for socioeconomic benefits.¹² I address Nava's tenure as Municipal President to demonstrate that the PRI's electoral concession and transfer of power to Nava as an independent politician was a political calculation. Once in office, the regime continued with its charade of formal democracy, but behind the scenes, Nava's efficacy was undermined. The party denied Nava important party benefits, excluding him from government arranged credit and public works funds, to block his emergence as a political leader, a standard strategy in electoral dictatorships. Third, I examine Nava's 1960-1961 gubernatorial campaign and rejection by the PRI as a party candidate. Nava's time in office exposes what Joy Langston notes as the regime's unwritten rules and inherent flexibility, in which she argues that openly

¹² William Deane Stanley, *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 4.

authoritarian statutes would have exposed the party to public debate and risk being challenged.¹³ Nava openly broke the party's informal "rules of the game," to which the regime responded with a long process of negotiation, offering Nava patronage to rescind his campaign and alternative political posts to co-opt him into the party ranks. I thus demonstrate that the regime only resorted to open violence when patronage politics failed to persuade Nava into joining the party's ranks.

Literature Review

Historians have only recently begun to engage with Mexico's twentieth-century regional historiography, and few analyses of Mexico's regional political and electoral processes exist.¹⁴ Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent's foundational text, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, marked the beginning of an approach to postrevolutionary political history that moved beyond examining the state at the federal level, instead addressing its ongoing relationship with grassroots society.¹⁵ Traditionally, the historiography notes Mexico's political stability, rapid economic growth, and the consolidation of a middle class, but does not discuss the broader relationship between the country's vast political, social and economic changes and the emergence of social unrest. In the following review, I present an overview of the two schools of literature on Navismo and a new generation of Mexico's mid twentieth-century political historiography. I divide these into two sections: (1) the literature produced by Sociologists and Political Scientists and (2) the works penned by historians.

Political scientists and sociologists provide a cursory overview of the movement from 1958 to 1961, paying greater attention to its resurgence in 1981 when Nava affiliated himself

¹³ Langston and Morgenstern, "Campaigning in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime," 144.

¹⁴ Enrique Márquez, "Political Anachronisms: The *Navista* Movement and Political Processes in San Luis Potosí, 1958-1985," in *Electoral Patterns and Perspectives in Mexico*, ed. Arturo Alvarado Mendoza (La Jolla, Calif.: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1987), 111.

¹⁵ G. M Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

with the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN). However, these studies disregard Navismo as a response to the PRI's patrimonial, authoritarian political culture. Additionally, Navismo requires the study of local electoral processes, a topic too long ignored by historians of twentieth-century Mexico. Political Scientists like Beatriz Magaloni in her text *Voting for Autocracy* and Joy Langston's studies of electoral processes and party competition have considered the role of elections in sustaining Mexico's electoral authoritarianism. However, these works leave a gap in the scholarship of mid-twentieth century Mexican politics, as they tend to consider the 1980s to the present. The acclaimed work of Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez has examined the relationship between the federal government and local, political strongmen, particularly with his studies of Mexico's governors, but only examines state-level actors to address their utility for the federal government. This study of Navismo draws on the work of Magaloni, Langston, and Hernández to explain the federal government's resistance to the movement, but makes a wider contribution to the scholarship by discussing the PRI's negotiated rule and the local experience of political actors under an authoritarian government.

Historians have failed to provide an explanation for the emergence of Navismo and its larger significance in Mexican politics. Tomás Calvillo interprets the movement as a regional phenomenon, while Sergio Aguayo addresses the federal government's role in its obstruction. Calvillo offers a comprehensive overview of Navismo, arguing it to be the result of San Luis Potosí's emergent middle class, but neglects to situate it within the larger context of the political turbulence that swept Mexico throughout the 1950s. Moreover, his discussion of San Luis Potosí's growing middle class is perfunctory. Although his argument rests on their role in the movement, he does not address the relationship between the transformation of San Luis Potosí's political economy under Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) and the emergence of a new,

urban middle class. Sergio Aguayo's book *1968: Los archivos de la violencia* explores the political decision making leading up to the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre, with one chapter comparing the 1961 slaying of Navista protestors and Tlatelolco. He considers the involvement of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, and Luis Echeverría in the containment of Navismo and Tlatelolco, arguing their participation to indicate that the repression exercised in San Luis Potosí was a precursor to Tlatelolco.¹⁶ Aguayo, however, is insufficient in examining the wider relationship between the PRI's hegemony and state-sponsored violence.

As new research emerges, scholars like Jaime Pensado in his text *Rebel Mexico* and Renata Keller in *Mexico's Cold War* are attempting to contend with the broader relationship between postrevolutionary state formation and Mexico's authoritarian political culture. Pensado's study identifies the emergence and duration of student activism in the aftermath of World War II and after the Cuban Revolution, paying particular attention to its demands in challenging the nation's patrimonial authority.¹⁷ Keller, on the other hand, analyzes the intersecting domestic and international struggles that influenced the escalation of violence during Mexico's Cold War and its later evolution into a "dirty war" under Presidents Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and Luis Echeverría. These studies examine the political frictions of the period, but insufficiently address regional opposition movements like Navismo that took place in this period and context of history. However, the existing historiography fails to address the daily operations and negotiations of Mexico's authoritarian government led by the PRI. And second, it often does not question why authoritarianism was so different in Mexico than the military regimes that swept the Southern Cone during the 1960s and 1970s. The study of Navismo answers these concerns by shedding light on how Dr. Nava's 1958 and 1961 campaigns risked disrupting the

¹⁶ Aguayo, *1968*, 213.

¹⁷ Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 7.

regime's domination at the municipal, state and federal levels of government. It identifies the daily political practices and ongoing negotiations among high and low level officials to contain the movement. Thus, I reposition Navismo within Mexico's political historiography by stressing the significance of local and regional PRI strongholds for the regime's seventy-one year survival.

Caciquismo, Postrevolutionary State Building and the Rise of Santos

The PRI's ability to appear as a democracy on the world stage and sustain party domination rested on a combination of judicial structures and cacical rule. The PRI is best described as an electoral authoritarian regime, governed by autocratic leaders that allowed independent parties to organize and win seats in the legislature, but prevented the opposition from taking control of the government at the federal, state and regional levels.¹⁸ Caciques like Gonzalo N. Santos ensured the regime's political stability in San Luis Potosí by guaranteeing that the opposition to the ruling party remained suppressed. Santos offered benefits in the form of patronage that would coopt dissenters into the regime, while simultaneously overseeing electoral fraud that guaranteed a high voter turnout in favor of the party during local level regional elections.¹⁹ The party always predetermined election results, relying on regularly scheduled elections to gain information about constituents and identify the capabilities and future prospects of local political leaders.²⁰

Caciquismo in Mexico can be attributed to the party's longevity, as caciques were an important feature of the PRI's ability to fashion itself as a democracy. Caciquismo is a distinctive

¹⁸ Langston and Morgenstern, "Campaigning in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime," 165.

¹⁹ Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, "Strongmen and State Weakness," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 109. Martha Singer Sochet, "Partido Dominante y Domesticación de la Oposición," in Luis Medina Peña, *El siglo del sufragio: de la reelección a la alternancia* (México, D.F.: Fondo De Cultura Económica : Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes : Instituto Federal Electoral : Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2010), 139.

²⁰ Langston and Morgenstern, "Campaigning in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime," 167.

form of patrimonial and clientelistic authority. It is arbitrary and personalistic; one in which informal personal power trumps formal rules.²¹ Formal office is not a prerequisite for a cacique to govern, and many of Mexico's caciques never held office.²² Heliodoro Charis in Juchitán de Zaragoza, Oaxaca and 'Don Pablo' in Huáncito, Michoacán never held an official post, nor did the fictional characters of Artemio Cruz or Pedro Páramo.²³ Heliodoro Charis exerted control over Juchitán through a mix of military control, traditional qualities of charisma, local knowledge, friendship, kinship and force.²⁴ Similar to Santos, Charis emerged as a military leader at the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1919 and in 1929, would use his troops to establish a military colony to form the cornerstone of his *cacicazgo*. These soldiers would serve as a band of gunmen during times of electoral conflict. In turn, the federal government supported his arbitrary rule because he had established a pool of gunmen that could be transported throughout the state to subdue electoral conflicts.²⁵ Charis's domination also rested upon populist building projects, such as the creation of the region's first local schools and the construction of a general hospital staffed by doctors from Mexico City. These enterprises helped Charis gain the support of the national government, while educational and medical facilities for Juchitecos cemented his backing from the local population.²⁶ By the 1960s, Charis faced an opposition

²¹ Alan Knight, "Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico," in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico* ed. Alan Knight and W. G Pansters (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005), 14.

²² *Ibid.*, 15.

²³ *Ibid.*; Carlos Fuentes, *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, trans. by Alfred MacAdam (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 2009); Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo*, 1981. Pedro Páramo and La Muerte de Artemio Cruz serve as appreciable critiques of postrevolutionary politics, in which caciquismo is the main axis of both plots.

²⁴ Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements*, 142.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 141–42.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

movement comparable to Navismo, in which elites promoted widespread electoral support and mass mobilizations to critique Juchitán's underdevelopment and political corruption.²⁷

In contrast to Charis, some caciques rotated through political offices – governing both formally and informally, a consequence of the 1917 constitution's ban on reelection.²⁸ Alan Knight explains caciquismo as a “peculiar sociopolitical development since the Revolution,” in which the cacique embodies a form of traditional authority that is largely tied to custom or tradition and whose organized rule depends upon personal loyalty.²⁹ In San Luis Potosí, Gonzalo N. Santos epitomizes a formal cacique who rose to power as an elected leader following the Mexican Revolution. Santos claimed his position as a state senator and later, governor, which would serve as the building blocks for his lasting fiefdom. He exercised his power through his political savvy that relied on coercion and cooptation, his rhetorical ability and immense knowledge of the PRI's national and bureaucratic labyrinth.³⁰ The deep structure of caciquismo was so entrenched that political loyalists often identified themselves as followers of the cacique, rather than members of the party. Although Santos was a representative of the PRI, his constituents saw themselves as Santistas rather than PRIístas, an issue that sparked Nava's movement in 1958, in which residents of San Luis Potosí's attributed the state's political problems to Santos, rather than the federal government.³¹

²⁷ Rubin, “Decentering the Regime,” 105.

²⁸ Knight, “Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico,” 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁰ Wil G. Pansters, “Tropical Passion in the Desert: Gonzalo N. Santos and Local Elections in Northern San Luis Potosí, 1943-1958,” in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 129.

³¹ For a comparable case in Oaxaca, see also, Rubin, “Decentering the Regime,” 104.

In order to understand the rise of caciquismo and postrevolutionary politics, it is necessary to trace the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution and the consolidation of political power in Mexico. In the immediate years that followed the revolution, there were major rebellions against the executive, often in the form of disputes around presidential succession. The most notable case is the last successful military coup in Mexican history, when at the end of his presidency in 1920, Venustiano Carranza was overthrown and assassinated. Although the then president, Álvaro Obregón had recently broken his ties to Carranza, the murder was not a part of Obregón's plan. The constitution had granted wide-ranging authority to the presidents, and Carranza tried to impose a civil over a military candidate, which contributed to his forcible removal from politics.³² Carranza's overthrow speaks to the fragile nature of centralized power after the revolution, as he violated the rules of how presidential power was to be transferred in postrevolutionary Mexico.

During Plutarco Elias Calles's tenure as President (1924-1928), his predecessor, Álvaro Obregón continued to exercise significant power. Calles usually had a loyal majority in the national legislature, and even though Obregón had officially retired from office, he continued to intervene in national politics and representatives in the Chamber of Deputies followed his command instead of Calles's.³³ Obregón soon had the constitution's ban on re-election changed to permit his reelection and was scheduled to begin a new *sexenio* in December of 1928, only to be assassinated by a disaffected catholic in the context of the Cristero War (1926-1929).³⁴ In an effort to ensure political stability and avoid breaking the ban on re-election, Calles formed the

³² Jeffrey Weldon, "Political Sources of *Presidencialismo* in Mexico," in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 246.

³³ *Ibid.*, 231.

³⁴ *Sexenio* refers to the six-year term limit of the Mexican presidency.

PNR to centralize Mexican politics. Calles exercised behind the scenes political control over Mexican politics through the appointment of presidents from 1928-1934, institutionalizing what would later become the PRI's informal rule of the *dedazo* or handpicking party candidates.³⁵

The PNR became Mexico's dominant political organization and the country's primary dispenser of patronage because it controlled the state. The party's registry included the leadership of several revolutionary leaders, including Gonzalo N. Santos, who sought to create a coalition among what Frank Brandenburg terms the "revolutionary family" to avoid intra-party conflict.³⁶ The president would coordinate candidate selection for most major elective posts in Mexico, but unlike parliamentary democracies in which top party leaders also selected candidates, the PRI used electoral fraud at the voting booths, in the vote count, or by majority of power in the congress and senate to guarantee that the party's candidate would win.³⁷ Handpicking candidates became a "rule of the game" established with the PNR and continued until the PRI's fall in 2000, while elections publicly confirmed the party's decision. Handpicking candidates was referred to as the *dedazo* (finger tap) and became an informal, state-enforced institution in which the PRI maintained the fiction that the constitution and the party's statutory rules determined outcomes.³⁸

Caciquismo became an institutionalized feature of Mexican politics under the PNR, in which caciques ascended as political bosses within their communities and retained an affiliation with the ruling party's politics and leaders. The fragmentation of institutions from the Porfiriato

³⁵ Weldon, "Political Sources of *Presidencialismo* in Mexico," 250.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 247; Brandenburg and Tannenbaum, *The Making of Modern Mexico*, 159.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 247; Joy Langston, "The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico," in *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America*, ed. Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 146.

³⁸ Helmke and Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Democracy*, 145.

and in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution provided an opportunity for caciques to construct local institutions that stabilized their regions, as the new party lacked the capacity to manage the nation's complex local, socioeconomic, cultural and political differences until the 1940s.³⁹ Thus, a pact was formed between federal and local powers that rested on two implicit understandings: (1) that the federal government expected caciques to maintain local stability through the control of local institutions and (2) openly demonstrate their support to the president and the regime through success at the polls.⁴⁰ In the early years of the PNR, Calles threatened to expel caciques from the party if they mobilized against him in the legislature.⁴¹ In 1932, Calles proposed a prohibition on re-election for state legislators. Santos objected to the measure and rallied governors throughout the nation to reject the proposal. After eleven months of negotiations in the Chamber of Deputies, Calles warned Santos that if he did not reverse his stance, he risked expulsion from the party and an end to his career as a politician.⁴² The incident reveals the tenuous relationship between caciques and the federal government, as strongmen had to be reminded that they worked as intermediaries for the party and could not arbitrarily exercise power.

The PNR understood caciques to be a valuable source of political intelligence, with relevant knowledge of their local communities. The regime depended on them to guarantee favorable electoral outcomes by brokering the choice of PRI candidates and manipulating elections so the party candidate would win with an overwhelming victory (90-100% of the vote)

³⁹ Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido: la nueva autonomía de los gobernadores* (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, 2008), 25.

⁴⁰ Hernández Rodríguez, "Strongmen and State Weakness," 112.

⁴¹ Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido*, 29.

⁴² *Ibid.*

and humiliate the opposition.⁴³ In San Luis Potosí, Gonzalo N. Santos not only assured the vote for the PRI, but also used fraud for his own political gain, a common feature of local political bossism in Mexico.⁴⁴

Santos's time in the state legislature provided a foundation for him to successfully assemble the building blocks of his chieftdom when he ran a corrupt campaign for governor, which he served from 1943 to 1949.⁴⁵ Prior to his ascent as governor, the state had been ruled by the cacique Saturnino Cedillo until his untimely death in 1939 when he incited an armed rebellion against the Cárdenas government. San Luis Potosí experienced significant political instability after Cedillo's death, when the state remained in the hands of military authorities who governed without an internal consensus.⁴⁶ Santos seized the region's strife as an opportunity to rise politically, casting himself as a "revolutionary friend" of the people.⁴⁷ Santos viewed himself as a politician that unified San Luis Potosí and its people to create a respectable, free and sovereign state that had not been seen since the revolution.⁴⁸

By September of 1943, Santos assumed the role of governor. At Santos's inauguration, politicians from across the nation arrived in San Luis Potosí to demonstrate their homage. In his autobiographical *Memorias*, Santos remarks that President Manuel Ávila Camacho came to show his support at the inauguration. Following the ceremony, Santos, Ávila Camacho and future

⁴³ Knight, "Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico," 31–32.

⁴⁴ Pansters, "Tropical Passion in the Desert," 134.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ María Isabel Monroy and Tomás Calvillo Unna, *Breve historia de San Luis Potosí* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997), 288.

⁴⁷ Pansters, "Tropical Passion in the Desert," 131; Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido*, 27.

⁴⁸ Márquez, "Political Anachronisms," 112.

president Miguel Alemán discussed Alemán's favorable prospects for the Mexican presidency.⁴⁹ The conversation demonstrates the role of the PRI in defining political order in Mexico, as the party was the most important determinant in establishing relationships among the country's political actors and institutions. Governors carried out the PRI's rule at the state level, making certain that the regime won every election from 1929 to 1989.⁵⁰

As governor, Santos handpicked six candidates to serve as congressional deputies throughout the state. These deputies would later become some of Santos's most important political brokers.⁵¹ In *Memorias*, he comments that all six originally declined his offer. To coerce them into accepting the positions, he presented them with a list of alternative deputies: corrupt politicians and convicted felons. Immediately after seeing the document, all six of the men agreed in unison to take office.⁵² Santos relied on these deputies to ensure statewide legislative and electoral victories in both his and the PRI's favor. As deputies, they had the power to revise and approve municipal budgets. Santos relied on the manipulation of the state budget to distribute resources in line with his economic and political priorities, varying from funds for infrastructure and cash for bribes. Moreover, this can be seen as an implicit understanding in which Santos guaranteed immunity and protection to these deputies, as each one would later occupy high administrative or political appointments.⁵³

Immediately after taking office, Santos and his deputies rewrote the state's constitution, civil and penal codes. After only six weeks in power, Santos issued a new state constitution that

⁴⁹ Gonzalo N Santos, *Memorias* (México: Grijalbo, 1986), 775.

⁵⁰ Weldon, "Political Sources of *Presidencialismo* in Mexico," 294.

⁵¹ Pansters, "Tropical Passion in the Desert," 134.

⁵² Santos, *Memorias*, 777.

⁵³ Pansters, "Tropical Passion in the Desert," 134.

enhanced his political control of the state. Articles that previously guaranteed checks and balances, such as Article 90 where municipal elections were overseen by a local congress now fell under the supervision of an appointee of the governor, the state's Attorney General. This move firmly placed San Luis Potosí's legal and political power in the palms of Santos's hands. In the 1943 municipal elections, nearly all Santista candidates were elected and won with a wide margin. Handpicking candidates for municipal elections and saturating the congress with loyalists was the foundation of Santos's lasting fiefdom.⁵⁴

Although Santos's corruption may be seen as decentralized and separate from the PRI, the party relied on him to steal elections and maintain stability in San Luis Potosí. Fraudulent elections became a hallmark of both Santos's and the PRI's predominance. The party purposely inflated their vote margins to project an image of invincibility that discouraged potential challengers, namely those within the party itself. Additional votes guaranteed that the party would have more seats in the legislature, needed to retain the supermajority, which was necessary to modify the constitution and keep majority control of congress.⁵⁵ It was also indispensable for governors to control the local congress because it revised and approved municipal budgets, signifying that if the congress was packed with loyalists, resources would be distributed in line with the governor's economic and political priorities.⁵⁶

To strengthen his position and attract favorable attention, Santos invested in populist building projects, but they often involved kickbacks for loyalists and special interests camouflaged in large budgets. He constructed the state's first Normal School, opened two new

⁵⁴ Ibid., 134–35.

⁵⁵ Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 234.

⁵⁶ Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido*, 42.

markets in the capital, and inaugurated the General Hospital in the city of San Luis Potosí.⁵⁷ Santos actively promoted candidates for office and organized elections that would guarantee their victory.⁵⁸ He also made symbolic appearances alongside elected officials in public, positioning himself as a benefactor for San Luis Potosí's population.⁵⁹ By the 1940s and 1950s, his political control of San Luis Potosí was widely known and palpable. In 1949, term limits forced Santos to retire from office. Despite no longer holding an elected position, he maintained political control by handpicking governors who would appoint deputies to act as mini-caciques within local communities and "guide" elections in favor of the PRI in their districts.⁶⁰ These mini-caciques employed a wide-range of practices to guarantee the ruling party's victory: from moving polling places to tampering with ballots and the use of force.⁶¹ Opposition candidates and their respective parties were permitted to station representatives at the polling booths, but monitoring elections required a degree of manpower and financial resources, of which only the PRI had the capital.⁶²

Although Santos postured himself as a stabilizing force in San Luis Potosí, he faced criticism from the local population. According to David Lomelí, director of the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* (UNS), even after Santos had left office, he had three strategies to ensure his regional control: "encierro, entierro o destierro [jail, bury or exile]."⁶³ Lomelí's comment is one

⁵⁷ Monroy and Calvillo Unna, *Breve historia de San Luis Potosí*, 290.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁶⁰ Knight, "Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico," 31.

⁶¹ Pansters, "Tropical Passion in the Desert," 134.

⁶² Langston and Morgenstern, "Campaigning in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime," 167.

⁶³ The *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* emerged in 1936 with the formation of the *Centro Anti-Comunista* and changed its name to the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* in 1937. The movement had its roots in the ideology of the failure of the

of the few direct references to violence, as the majority of rhetoric in the documents pertaining to Nava's campaign against Santos focuses on the use of patronage politics, coercive threats and electoral manipulation. In that vein, Salomón Rangel, the regional director of the UNS recalls Santos threatening him in 1952 after he published an article crying out against his rule.⁶⁴ After the piece was printed in *El Herald*, Santos warned that if the negative remarks about his leadership were not removed, he would have advertisers withdraw their ads from the paper. Advertising space was an important source of revenue for papers, but the PRI was its largest buyer, enabling the party to indirectly control the official press. Despite the party's regulation of the press, it permitted a degree of flexibility that allowed for some criticism of the regime.⁶⁵ Santos cautioned the UNS that their accusations against his leadership were dangerous. However, when he quickly stated that he would be willing to enter into an agreement with them if they ceased their campaign against him, offering a bribe in the form of a scholarship for two members to study wherever they wanted.⁶⁶ The reliance on coercion, threats of violence, patronage and bribes were instrumental features of cacical domination, but also served as a reflection of how the PRI used caciques to sustain party rule at the regional level.⁶⁷

Social Unrest and the Development of an Opposition

In the 1940s through the 1970s, the Mexican economy experienced unprecedented growth and industrialization when the country adopted the political-economic policy of Import

Mexican Revolution, and understood the Mexican government as representing disorder and rejecting the principles of authority, religion, government and law. See also, Albert L. Michaels, "Fascism and Sinarquismo: Popular Nationalisms Against the Mexican Revolution," *Journal of Church and State* 8, no. 2 (1966): 234–50.

⁶⁴ Tomás Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad* (San Luis Potosí: T. Calvillo, 1986), 27–28.

⁶⁵ Lomnitz et al., *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime*, 25.

⁶⁶ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in the aftermath of World War II. Mexican GDP was reported to have grown 368% between 1940 and 1966, with significant advances in manufacturing, low inflation, and a steady foreign exchange rate, but this economic miracle did not come without costs.⁶⁸ Although this period saw substantial growth as measured in GDP, Mexico relied on foreign investment from the United States to finance its industrializing mission, as the country's own resources were inadequate for the amount of technology and investment required to accomplish such rapid growth. During the 1950s, when the U.S. entered the Korean War, the Mexican economy experienced a decrease in exports of raw materials and agricultural products, as their demand declined.⁶⁹ In 1954, the peso was drastically devalued when the Banco de México's international reserves decreased by US \$43 million and Mexico was plagued with a flight of foreign investment. Although the U.S. economy recuperated by 1954, and Mexico's GDP began to grow, problems ensued because the country had not recouped its loss of foreign investment, and needed to sustain the technological investments necessary to continue its industrializing mission.⁷⁰ In turn, nationwide, popular dissent among Mexico's laboring classes materialized that can be seen to signpost popular opposition movements throughout Mexico, like that of Navismo.

In response to Mexico's inflation and lack of salary increases, working classes began to strike against the low wages and political control imposed upon them by the PRI through *charrismo*, the appointment of corrupt, ad hoc union representatives.⁷¹ The most evident example is when workers of the state-owned *Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México* rejected the party's

⁶⁸ Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 20.

⁶⁹ Aurora Loyo Brambila, "El Marco Socio-Económico de La Crisis Política de 1958-1959 en México," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 37, no. 2 (1975): 550.

⁷⁰ Brambila, "El Marco Socio-Económico de La Crisis Política de 1958-1959 en México," 351.

⁷¹ Singer Sochet, "Partido dominante y domesticación de la oposición," 160.

appointment of charros, while demanding higher salaries and better benefits. In rural regions, *paracaidistas* began to take over lands that had not been expropriated following the revolution; telephone workers called for the removal of the PRI appointed head of the *Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Publicas* (SCOP) and later that year, Othón Salazar led a teachers' strike after drawn out and unsuccessful union negotiations.⁷² These incidents were examples of strident yet localized political conflicts that were not yet described as a threat to the state on a national level. Each of these movements ended with the government-sanctioned use of force and the imprisonment of their leaders.⁷³

Navismo received substantial support from groups that had vocally opposed the PRI during the period. San Luis Potosí's miners, railroad, electrical, telephone and petroleum workers united to endorse Nava. Workers felt that they had been excluded from the "revolutionary family," and Nava represented a political alternative that would accurately represent their grievances.⁷⁴ Speeches at Nava's rallies in 1958 capture the demoralizing treatment of workers, favorably referring to Demetrio Vallejo's railroad strike and *Plan del Sureste* that called for significant wage increases after the PRI-appointed union head implemented a two year contract without a salary raise.⁷⁵ These sectors identified Nava as an ally and would come to endorse him, assisting in important campaign operations in 1958 and 1961. The creation of the *Unión Cívica Potosina* (UCP) was timely, as the union was able to draw upon and gain support from organized

⁷² Philip B. Taylor, "The Mexican Elections of 1958: Affirmation of Authoritarianism?," *The Western Political Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1960): 735.

⁷³ Singer Sochet, "Partido Dominante y Domesticación de la Oposición," 161.

⁷⁴ Taylor, "The Mexican Elections of 1958," 741.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 248, November 27, 1958.

labor in the face of ongoing, nationwide disputes.⁷⁶ Thus, Nava's entrance onto the political stage generated a ripe opportunity for laborers to support an opposition candidate.

Political Angst in San Luis Potosí: Navismo's Emergence and the First Election

Nava's first campaign for Municipal President in 1958 is fundamental to understanding Navismo. Dr. Nava's campaign emerged in response to ongoing political strife in San Luis Potosí that contested Gonzalo N. Santos's informal rule. Santos had not held an elected political post since his term as governor ended in 1949, and residents began to question his role in state politics. By 1952, citizens of San Luis Potosí began to resist Santos, but a political reform movement did not emerge until six years later with the appearance of the Unión Cívica Potosina (UCP). In 1958, while speaking to a campaign audience, the then presidential candidate, Adolfo López Mateos directed a comment against Santos, declaring: "Los cacicazgos subsisten mientras los pueblos les toleran" [The caciques subsist while the people tolerate them].⁷⁷ López Mateos's comment reveals that the relationship between regional caciques such as Santos and the central government was not necessarily harmonious, and that intraparty rivalries were made visible during electoral moments. In the face of forthcoming elections, people accepted the remark as an invitation to politically organize in opposition to the cacique, hoping to establish relationships between the central powers of the Mexican state and local political groups.⁷⁸

In 1958, three statewide independent political organizations: the *Alianza Cívica Potosina* (ACP), *Frente Reinvidicador de la Ciudadanía Potosina* (FRCP) and the *Federación de Profesionistas e Intelectuales de San Luis Potosí* (FPEI) surfaced to overthrow Santos's political

⁷⁶ Márquez, "Political Anachronisms," 113.

⁷⁷ José de Jesús Ramírez Gama, "San Luis Potosí: Una Alternancia Política Conflictiva," in *Elecciones y partidos políticos en México, 2003*, ed. Manuel Larrosa Haro and Pablo Javier Becerra Chávez (México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2005), 145.

⁷⁸ Ramírez Gama, "San Luis Potosí: Una Alternancia Política Conflictiva," 146.; Monroy and Calvillo Unna, *Breve historia de San Luis Potosí*, 301.

stranglehold on San Luis Potosí. Independent political organizations were common throughout Mexico. These coalitions served to organize a political base around specific candidates and to gain a large enough membership to either legally register as an independent party or demonstrate their political capability to the PRI, with the hope of being invited to compete on the party's ticket. The ACP, FRCP and FPEI each sought to gain the support of registered PRI members, and in turn, win the party's nomination in the state's primary elections.⁷⁹ By October 6, 1958, the three groups had each been denied the PRI nomination and convened to discuss a collaborative effort to overthrow Santos by announcing independent candidates for Municipal President throughout the state. Nava was to be the candidate in the state's capital.

The three associations retained their PRI memberships, believing that once they demonstrated their capability to organize and win an election, they could succeed in their goal of attaining a political post within the party. However, the organizations broke an important tenet of the regime's informal rules, as those denied the nomination were expected to openly voice their support for the PRI's chosen candidate, while politicians and groups who publicized their political aspirations stood no chance of receiving the party nomination.⁸⁰ As a result of the PRI's rejection, they unified under the umbrella of the Unión Cívica Potosina (UCP) and introduced Nava as an independent candidate for Municipal President, resulting in an unprecedented gathering of people across party and ideological lines seeking to voice their discontent with Santos.⁸¹

The emergence of popular opposition groups like the UCP can be traced back to the Miguel Alemán administration when electoral processes were designed to limit space for

⁷⁹ Monroy and Calvillo Unna, *Breve historia de San Luis Potosí*, 302. Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 49.

⁸⁰ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 48.

⁸¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 210, October 7, 1958.

political parties and exclude the opposition.⁸² Mexico's judicial system restricted citizen participation within political parties, and a modification of electoral laws in 1951 and 1954 restricted the participation of political parties outside of the PRI. These laws made it onerous for the opposition to dispute the regime's hegemony in both the legislature and at the polling place.⁸³ As a result, independent organizations like the UCP materialized with support from registered PRI members to strengthen their resources.⁸⁴ The manipulation of electoral laws only reinforced the power of the political elite, and elections served as rituals to confirm decisions already determined by the ruling party.⁸⁵

Nava's independent political affiliation and break with the PRI meant that he did not owe obedience to the party, nor Santos, and his campaign exposed Santos's unlawful political influence in the state that was used to secure party interests.⁸⁶ Robert Bezdek notes that in 1958, Santos's liquid assets were calculated at U.S. \$40 million, acquired from his illegal landholdings and monthly "kickbacks" from city budgets. Santos was also estimated to have been responsible for the deaths of roughly 250 individuals who opposed him.⁸⁷ In order to maintain party equilibrium and deter splits, the PRI offered cash rewards and future political posts to party politicians and caciques. Santos publicly displayed his wealth to portray an image of invincibility, and the party provided him with cash rewards diverted from the national treasury and public works projects to foster patronage networks. Although his relationship with the

⁸² Singer Sochet, "Partido Dominante y Domesticación de la Oposición," 138.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido*, 155.

⁸⁶ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 36.

⁸⁷ Robert Bezdek, "Democratic Changes in an Authoritarian System: *Navismo* and Opposition Development in San Luis Potosí," in *Opposition Government in Mexico*, ed. Victoria Elizabeth Rodríguez and Peter M Ward (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 36.

government was tenuous, the party protected him because of his ability to turn out votes in its favor during elections.⁸⁸ Moreover, López Mateos's comment from the campaign trail in 1958 that "the caciques subsist while the people tolerate them" suggests that the PRI's top leaders saw Santos as stealing more than "normal" for a cacique and damaging support for the party by becoming unusually corrupt and violent. Santos's greed typifies a major problem authoritarian regimes face in controlling the predation of local officials, and López Mateos's remark suggests that the PRI saw Santos as a liability that needed to be restrained because his corruption risked the development of an opposition to both him and the regime.

Santos's patronage networks provided him with a significant degree of control over local politics, but Navismo indicates that the party's reliance on patronage and coercion was not resolute. These networks and funds were used to invite critics into the regime, the original aim of the ACP, FRCP and FPEI, as they saw a possibility to work for political change within the PRI.⁸⁹ However, cooptation was also a manner used by the PRI to allow, but successfully control dissent, as patronage reinforced the benefits of belonging to the party by providing loyalists with rewards in the form of cash, jobs and political posts.⁹⁰

Although the PRI's corporatist structure appeared to foster inclusivity, many of the regime's sectors represented by the party would arise as pertinent Nava allies to contest both Santos and the PRI's rule when disputes over charrismo led them to realize that the party was no longer representing their interests. It was through the use of these patronage networks that Santos was able to exercise significant control over union leaders and workers in San Luis Potosí. Santos credited himself with the growth and political loyalty of unions, using political bribery

⁸⁸ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 52; Taylor, "The Mexican Elections of 1958," 729.

⁸⁹ Camp, *Politics in Mexico*, 161.

⁹⁰ Lomnitz et al., *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime*, 14; Camp, *Politics in Mexico*, 161.

and threats to coerce and co-opt union workers and leaders into the regime. Santos had a well-known relationship with Fidel Cortés, the leader of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM) in San Luis Potosí. After learning that José Lomelí, the owner of 11 *panaderías* was a board member of the PAN, Santos called upon him to order a breadstrike.⁹¹ One day after the strike began, Santos invited Lomelí to his office, promising that business operations would return to normal providing he withdrew his PAN membership and seat on the board.⁹² The PRI relied on local level actors, like Santos, to coerce and deter the opposition. Santos may have threatened Lomelí, but he would later emerge as a vocal Nava ally and public enemy of Santos. Similarly, unionized miners, electrical and petroleum workers housed under the umbrella of the CTM would voice their discontent with charrismo and make important contributions to Nava's 1958 and 1961 campaigns.⁹³

Nava continued to gain momentum as a legitimate political leader, winning the endorsement of the state's petroleum, mining, oil and textile laborers. Nava treated these workers in his medical practice, which Tomás Calvillo argues to have led to their backing of Nava. Calvillo's argument pales in comparison to the broader relationship between ongoing, nationwide disputes against charrismo and Santos's control over unionized sectors in San Luis Potosí. These workers were all represented under the CTM, an important political base for both the PRI and Santos. Santos responded with coercion and patronage, but when that failed, violence was deployed at pro-Nava rallies to discourage the support of the opposition. CTM controlled union workers supporting a non-PRI candidate alarmed both Santos and the party. The

⁹¹ The PAN was organized in 1939, but did not gain considerable strength until the 1980s when medium-sized business interests joined ranks with the party. See also, David A. Shirk, "Vicente Fox and the Rise of the PAN," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 2000): 25–32.

⁹² Santos, *Memorias*, 782–83.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 783.

CTM had an implicit agreement with the regime, in which the confederation's unions received substantial gains in collective bargaining in exchange for rallying workers to endorse the party during elections and at the polls.⁹⁴ Nava's receipt of support from these unions suggests the weakness of the party's corporatist structure. Moreover, it indicates that Santos was losing control over organized labor at the state level, on which his efficacy rested. Santos would soon violently intervene at Navista rallies, a tactic to scare dissenters and intended to prevent the rise of further conflict. Santos could not risk appearing incompetent to the party or the public, as the PRI relied upon him to predict and subdue potential conflicts.⁹⁵

Violence around the time of elections was also a tactic the party employed to scare people away from supporting Nava and to discourage the formation of factions around future opposition candidates that might otherwise divide the party.⁹⁶ Three days before the election, the military and the police detained 100 protestors in the city's Plaza de Armas. In the DFS memorandums that follow the event, Nava and the UCP were portrayed as criminals, accused of taking provincial politicians hostage at gunpoint.⁹⁷ That same day, Salomón R. Rangel and Francisco Ramirez Vazquez, prominent UCP leaders and Sinarquistas, were apprehended when the DFS alleged that the men assaulted the city's police headquarters. Soon after, police and federal troops detained an additional 117 members of the UCP in the plaza. Trapped in the turmoil, two secret police officers were reportedly injured. One sustained minor injuries, while the other was pronounced to be in grave condition, and an eight-year old child was killed after

⁹⁴ Luis Abotes and Engracia Loyo, "La construcción del nuevo estado," in *Nueva historia general de México*, ed. Erik Velásquez (México, D.F.: Colegio de México, 2010), 631.

⁹⁵ Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido*, 51.

⁹⁶ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 48.

⁹⁷ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 10-12, December 5, 1958.

being caught in the crossfire.⁹⁸ Although these incidents were strategies to discourage opposition movements, they were utilized only after patronage politics failed to co-opt dissenters into the regime. The violence directed against Nava and the UCP reveals that the PRI's traditional styles of cooptation and intimidation were insufficient to account for the party's hegemony, evident with Nava's widespread support from its corporatist sectors. The PRI only employed violence when all other methods failed, and as the election approached, Nava gained visibility as a viable politician, presenting a significant threat to the party.

By the evening of December 5th, Nava pleaded with a frightened crowd, asking them to refrain from retaliating while he worked to find a legal solution to the ongoing conflict. Despite Nava's request, UCP adherents took to the Plaza and federal troops immediately surrounded the square to prevent the crowd from demonstrating.⁹⁹ Violence from the opposition carried risks, as the Law of Social Dissolution, or Article 145 of the Mexican penal code jailed individuals by labeling them as "communist" agitators, or threats to the state.¹⁰⁰ Although Navismo was not a left-wing movement, it openly received support from the Mexican Communist Party, making its leaders an easy target to arrest under the law.¹⁰¹ By 1959, it was estimated that Mexico already had over 800 political prisoners and the number of those jailed for political reasons continued to grow throughout the 1960s.¹⁰²

Nava's desire to work within the formal and judicial system also implies that he saw a wider opportunity to win the election through legal means once the current presidential

⁹⁸ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 10-12, December 5, 1958.

⁹⁹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 10-12, December 5, 1958.

¹⁰⁰ Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Beginning in 1958, DFS surveillance of Dr. Salvador Nava references support from members of the Mexican Communist Party at Navista rallies during his campaign for Municipal President.

¹⁰² Pensado, *Rebel Mexico*, 41.

administration had settled in office. President Adolfo López Mateos took office on December 1, and had been a visible, public enemy of Santos since 1929, when they were on opposite sides of José Vasconcelos's presidential campaign.¹⁰³ López Mateos rejected the regime's handpicking of candidates since Calles excluded Vasconcelos from the presidency by imposing his chosen candidate, Ortiz Rubio. Moreover, he publicly disavowed caciquismo during his presidential campaign in 1958 when he declared: "the caciques subsist while the people tolerate them."¹⁰⁴ López Mateos's denouncement of caciquismo likely led Nava to expect that he could gain the president's support in ousting Santos and believed that "López Mateos would give them [the UCP] victory."¹⁰⁵ Nava's comment is revealing because it demonstrates his understanding of San Luis Potosí's political situation. It indicates that he saw caciquismo as unrelated to the larger PRI apparatus, without realizing that caciques were informal agents of the party, overseeing and managing the regime's daily operations at the state and community level to ensure party hegemony.

In response to the PRI's ongoing attacks directed against the movement, Navistas called for a statewide General Strike that would last until January of 1959, in which the state's Gas Workers Union maintained an active role, demonstrating that corporatism as a manner to guarantee party cohesion was disintegrating. The president of the union immediately announced the suspension of the sale of gasoline in San Luis Potosí. The union was housed under the CTM and affiliated with the *Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana*

¹⁰³ Wil Pansters, "Citizens with Dignity: Opposition and Government in San Luis Potosí, 1938-93," in *Dismantling the Mexican State?*, ed. Rob Aitken, et al. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 251.

¹⁰⁴ Ramírez Gama, "San Luis Potosí: Una Alternancia Política Conflictiva," 2.

¹⁰⁵ Pansters, "Citizens with Dignity," 251; Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power: a History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*, trans. Hank Heifetz (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 629; AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 241, November 7, 1958.

(STPRM), one of Mexico's oldest and strongest unions.¹⁰⁶ It generated more employment than any other productive sector of the Mexican economy, and the union's endorsement of Nava and the UCP further substantiates the limits of the PRI's corporatist structure in maintaining party unity.¹⁰⁷ In the Huasteca Potosina, the El Ebano-Pánuco region held one of Mexico's most prolific oil fields, whose main export was fuel oil, and a statewide halt on the sale of gasoline would create both national and regional distress for an industry that already had a national deficit of \$1,536.1 million pesos.¹⁰⁸

The interruption of the sale of gas during the general strike demonstrated that the PRI did not have complete control over its corporatist sectors and the strike would have severe effects on the state and national economy. Corporatist sectors like the Gas Workers union had tried to increase their influence in the country's political life by striking against charrismo earlier that year, but this only prompted additional repression from the government.¹⁰⁹ San Luis Potosí's GDP was derived from agriculture, industry and mining, trades which require large amounts of petroleum. If the PRI failed to resolve the stoppage quickly, disputes, uproar and mass protests would surface. Large-scale strikes would unveil that the party was losing control of its most important popular bases, and diminish voter confidence while losing former union support and votes to Nava. The strike left the regime with few options, as it was in the middle of a presidential succession for which political civility and party unification were particularly

¹⁰⁶ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 10-12, December 5, 1958.

¹⁰⁷ Singer Sochet, "Partido Dominante y Domesticación de la Oposición," 143.

¹⁰⁸ Isidro Morales, "The Consolidation and Expansion of Pemex, 1947-1958," in *The Mexican Petroleum Industry in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jonathan Brown and Alan Knight (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 210.

¹⁰⁹ Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, *Historia mínima del Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, 2016, 98.

important as it needed to appear democratic.¹¹⁰ An open act of violence from the party would easily be noticed by the press and speak to its foundering legitimacy, while simultaneously casting light on the regime's authoritarian governance.¹¹¹

Despite the call for a general strike, elections were held two days later on December 7. The government installed 66 voting booths, with oversight from the Local Electoral Commission.¹¹² The DFS records note the UCP as “not having a voice, nor vote, but the right to respond to and report any violations to the Federal Electorate.”¹¹³ The DFS meticulously crafted documents to avoid acknowledging personal or party involvement in illicit activities; “not having a voice” can be interpreted in two ways. The phrase is a common expression in Mexico, generally meaning that the organization, candidate or party will have a lack of power over the outcome of a decision. In the case of the UCP, it can be understood that the organization had no actual influence on the outcome of the elections, but was formally entitled to report violations to the electoral authorities. It can also be read as an indication that these independent political organizations were not legally recognized because one week prior to the election, the president of the electoral registry declared: “only parties legally established will be able to participate in municipal elections,” retroactively disqualifying Nava's legitimacy.¹¹⁴ A 1954 electoral law required legally registered parties to have a nationwide membership of at least 75,000 at the national level, and regional parties to have a registry of 2,500 in their respective localities. These

¹¹⁰ Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, *Presidencialismo y hombres fuertes en México: la sucesión presidencial de 1958* (México: Colegio de México, 2015), 76.

¹¹¹ Langston, "The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo*," 149.

¹¹² AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 18, December 7, 1958.

¹¹³ Pansters, "Tropical Passion in the Desert," 141; AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 18, December 7, 1958.

¹¹⁴ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 237, November 1, 1958.

laws were tactics to raise the cost of entry to disaffected politicians who did not obtain the ruling party's nomination.¹¹⁵

After the voting began, military General Alberto Zuno Hernández accused Nava of double voting and stuffing ballot boxes.¹¹⁶ In Mexican elections, the military was instrumental in the PRI winning 90-100% of the vote. Military commanders oversaw elections in favor of the PRI and often led gangs of street fighters to intimidate opposition voters and candidates.¹¹⁷ Military officers moved in and out of military and civilian posts, including the DFS, and from 1930 to 1960, were instrumental in developing and securing cacical rule throughout the country.¹¹⁸ Later that day, accusatory reports state that the UCP robbed six ballot boxes, and blame the head of an opposition group for setting fire to Polling Booth Number 6 after it was rumored that the PRI received the majority vote.¹¹⁹ By the end of the day, seven voting boxes had disappeared and the DFS declared that the UCP had robbed the election, which neither Nava nor the UCP had the financial and human resources to undertake.¹²⁰ These disputes speak to the regime's intrinsic vulnerabilities, as opposition parties were generally ignored in the public spotlight and the party's presentation of Nava and the UCP in an unflattering light indicates that it risked losing votes to the opposition.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 49.

¹¹⁶ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 18, December 7, 1958.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Rath, "Camouflaging the State: The Army and the Limits of Hegemony in PRIísta Mexico, 1940-1960," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 93-94.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹⁹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 18, December 7, 1958.

¹²⁰ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 18, December 7, 1958.

¹²¹ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 51.

Immediately after Nava's 1958 election, the PRI declared its victory. A commission was formed in Mexico City to recount the votes, and one week later, on December 14, Nava was declared the winner with 21,000 votes, while the PRI candidate claimed 11,500 votes.¹²² Although it appears that the PRI conceded the election to Nava, it is better explained as a strategic move to ensure party hegemony. The UCP received an umbrella of support from the PAN, UNS, and even the Mexican Communist party. Beatriz Magaloni comments that in cases where there is more than one group opposing the PRI, the party expects that the vote count would be challenged in unison. This would provide an opportunity to co-opt one of the parties into becoming an accomplice of the regime while the other is left to challenge the vote. This becomes transparent one month after the vote recount when the FRCP broke their ties with the UCP to rejoin the PRI when the party announced it would be restructuring its regional apparatus in San Luis Potosí.¹²³

The decision to acknowledge Nava's victory might also be related to two different calculations on the part of the PRI. Foremost, it was less costly to concede Nava's victory than asserting power through violence, which would run the risk of further popular mobilizations that Magaloni hypothesizes could have induced a military intervention to maintain order and oversee new elections, in which the party might lose.¹²⁴ Massive labor unrest throughout the year had already heightened political tensions and the state was still in the midst of a general strike that would not end until Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Secretary of the Interior, declared Nava to be the incoming Municipal President. Internally, the PRI was divided and neither the outgoing president Adolfo Ruiz Cortines nor his successor, Adolfo López Mateos had complete control over the

¹²² AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 18, December 7, 1958.

¹²³ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 150, February 1, 1959.

¹²⁴ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 229.

government.¹²⁵ The country was also in the midst of a presidential succession, a symbolic moment in which the PRI needed to maintain stability and its democratic appearance, further highlighting the important relationship between regional and national elections to maintain the party's façade of multiparty democracy.

Days later, a committee met in Mexico City to discuss a resolution to the state's general strike, in which Díaz Ordaz promised to honor Nava's victory if the strike were lifted.¹²⁶ However, the central government did not arrange for the transfer of power and the UCP threatened to renew the strike if the legislature did not recognize the electoral results.¹²⁷ The PRI's hesitation to acknowledge Nava as the incoming Municipal President indicates that the regime was searching for an opportunity to prevent him from taking office. Nava had broken the implicit rule that PRI candidates and electoral results were not to be challenged, and the party's deliberation indicates that the regime operated with a significant degree of flexibility and negotiation when responding to the opposition.¹²⁸

Despite the party's misgivings, Nava assumed the role of Municipal President, but once in office, the regime may have expected that they could co-opt and undermine him to prevent him from becoming an independent leader beyond the city level. Secondly, it could have been a way for the party to put pressure on Santos and test his capacity to prevent Nava's "threat" from growing. Santos was at times seen as a liability for the PRI, often employing more power than the federal government, and ruling above his selected government.¹²⁹ As someone who provided

¹²⁵ Brambila, "El Marco Socio-Económico de La Crisis Política de 1958-1959 en México," 354.

¹²⁶ Márquez, "Political Anachronisms," 114.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Langston, "The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico," 149.

¹²⁹ Hernández Rodríguez, *El centro dividido*, 27.

benefits to the ruling party, the regime tolerated him and chose to not intervene in his rule.¹³⁰ The vote recount sent a message to Santos, reminding him that as a cacique, he was an agent of the PRI and that he could not exercise power at his discretion. If Santos failed to contain Navismo, he risked being cut out of the revolutionary family to which he belonged.¹³¹

Although Nava won independently of the PRI in the state capital, politicians affiliated with Santos claimed sweeping victories throughout the state, sustaining Santismo's political presence in San Luis Potosí.¹³² Nava's 1958 campaign and election for Municipal President laid bare the PRI's everyday features of authoritarianism, first, with Nava and the UCP's criticism of caciquismo, and second, with the regime's fight to prevent Nava from gaining legitimacy as a viable political actor. Nava was San Luis Potosí's first Municipal President to be elected independently of the PRI. As a political outsider, he owed no favors to Santos or the PRI and challenged the continuity of patronage networks: the bread and butter of PRI politics. While his election in 1958 may seem like a democratic victory in which a cacique was toppled by a civic opposition movement, it was only a temporary pause in both Santos's and the PRI's regional stronghold.

Nava as Municipal President

Nava's time in office marks an important transition in the regime's response to the opposition, as the PRI actively used its patron-client structure to hamper his ability to govern. It also reflects that although the 1958 campaign associated caciquismo with the state's lack of democracy, 1959-1961 demonstrates the PRI's role in preventing democracy from prevailing.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 28.

¹³¹ Ibid., 51 and 88; Márquez, "Political Anachronisms," 114.

¹³² AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 78, December 28, 1958.

Once in office, the PRI blocked Nava from obtaining important public resources that hindered his ability to respond to crises and carry out public works projects. This period suggests that Nava's exclusion from state and federal resources was a strategy used by the party to "punish" him for challenging the regime's informal rule of the *dedazo*, and employed its paternalistic, patron-client structure as an attempt to coerce him into joining the party's ranks.

Immediately after Nava took office, President López Mateos granted Santos the position of the Director of Fishing within the *Secretaría de Industria y Comercio* in Mexico City.¹³³ López Mateos's decision to remove Santos from state politics indicates that Santos had become a political liability, as he failed to contain Navismo, and forced the PRI to directly intervene to prevent its growth. Santos then disappears from the DFS records, only to briefly reappear in 1961 when he endorsed the PRI candidate for Governor, Manuel López Dávila. Santos was previously associated with the control and exclusion of external resources, but these problems continued to exist as the state and federal government restrained Nava from obtaining important state and community funds.

Mexico's *dedazo* worked as a "finger tap" in which the outgoing President would handpick his successor. Once in office, the new head of state selected their immediate cabinet.¹³⁴ This cabinet included the National Executive President of the Committee of the PRI, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of the Hacienda, Secretary of Finance and nominees for state governors and senators.¹³⁵ Once selected, it was understood that all candidates nominated by the party would then win their elections. Losers were expected to publicly display their support for the

¹³³ Roderic A Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 663.

¹³⁴ Langston, "The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico," 146.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

winner and declare their willingness to work for them¹³⁶ This structure of tapping candidates dates back to the creation of the PNR, but was particularly important for the regime's survival over time because internal battles over candidacies left the party vulnerable to ruptures and opposition challenges.¹³⁷ It ensured that members would not leave the party because the opportunities to mobilize and win in elections outside of the PRI did not exist. In reward for a demonstration of their loyalty, politicians would receive recompense that could include cash benefits, political posts and protection.¹³⁸ This structure of political appointment was also used to select lower level candidates, including Municipal Presidents, who were chosen by the party without considering the official vote count, which Nava challenged by contesting a premeditated election.¹³⁹

As a result of breaking the party's rules, the regime obstructed Nava's ability to govern by blocking him from the credit and loans he needed to run the capital. Once in office, Nava sought to equally distribute utilities and improve access where infrastructure had previously been lacking. Nava oversaw the installment of the capital's new drainage and electrical systems, paved streets and improved access to running water.¹⁴⁰ The Colonia Centenario, for example, did not have drainage, sewage systems, running water or streetlights until Nava ordered them to be constructed.¹⁴¹ San Luis Potosí's residents were accustomed to a pork and patronage model of politics under Santos's rule, but Nava's unbiased distribution of utilities exposed the regime's

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 147.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 146–47.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 147 and 221.

¹⁴⁰ Bezdek, "Democratic Changes in an Authoritarian System," 33.

¹⁴¹ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 67.

control over such goods, particularly when he visited neglected neighborhoods to familiarize himself with their problems.¹⁴² Moreover, it was particularly important for Nava to demonstrate that his political interests did not favor the small, dominant classes that were the backbone of Santista politics.

Nava challenged the regime's corporatist distribution of resources by implementing a system of transparency and accountability. Within his first month in office, he terminated Santos's monthly payments of \$8,000 USD from the budget, and to demonstrate fiscal transparency, Nava published the city budget, including income and expenses, in front of his office on a weekly basis.¹⁴³ By doing so, Nava attempted to practice an individualistically structured form of governing, and as a result, exposed that the PRI's distribution of resources and use of city funds was based upon negotiated agreements rather than legally sanctioned, individual rights.¹⁴⁴

As early as March, the state government retaliated by blocking Nava's credit availability for city projects. Thinking that this was the work of state officials, Nava travelled to Mexico City to persuade the President and his office for "moral and economic support to carry out public works improvements urgently needed for the population" and to discuss the state's gigantic water problem.¹⁴⁵ The regime excluded Nava from its resources because Nava attempted to demonstrate that the PRI's services were not necessary and it was possible to govern outside of the party's corporatist apparatus, further highlighting its patron-client structure. Moreover, the governor was the liaison between the state and federal government. Martínez de la Vega viewed

¹⁴² AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 78, December 28, 1958.

¹⁴³ Bezdek, "Democratic Changes in an Authoritarian System," 33.

¹⁴⁴ Lomnitz et al., *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime*, 16.

¹⁴⁵ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 150-151, February 12, 1959; AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 178, March 4, 1959.

Nava as “an enemy of the basic principles of the Mexican revolution” and impeded him from procuring credit and important state monies for infrastructure.¹⁴⁶ The regime depended on the direct control over goods to establish social and political relationships within communities; an open market would bring the PRI’s credibility into question, as it would demonstrate to the citizenry that they were free to leave the party, as they no longer depended on it for basic goods and services.¹⁴⁷

The regime’s success was contingent upon its ability to reward politicians with resources to distribute throughout their communities. The party’s political control depended upon this patron-client model, and local-level PRI politicians were excluded from these resources if they did not mobilize support for the PRI.¹⁴⁸ Lower level politicians were seen as intermediaries who had to implement solutions that had previously been agreed upon by the party, and if they fulfilled them with positive outcomes, they would be rewarded with further resources.¹⁴⁹ Thus, we can interpret the regime’s choice to limit Nava’s ability to procure resources in two ways. First, Nava broke the rule of the PRI’s patron-client structure by ignoring the party’s political practices and governing democratically. Second, if the regime granted him needed resources, he might be received favorably by the citizenry for abiding by his campaign promises, while demonstrating that necessary resources and infrastructure could be distributed outside of the party’s patron-client structure, which might further risk the growth of an opposition to the PRI. Moreover, casting Nava as a failure accrues to the PRI’s success, in which the party enhanced its

¹⁴⁶ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 69.

¹⁴⁷ Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez, "Challenging *Caciquismo*. An Analysis of the Leadership of Carlos Hank González" in "Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico," in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico* ed. Alan Knight and W. G Pansters (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005), 254–55.

¹⁴⁸ Lomnitz et al., *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

paternalistic image by reminding individual communities of the importance of electing PRI representatives if they wished to receive resources necessary to cover their social needs.¹⁵⁰

Nava's first months in office were characterized by challenges. Following the vote recount, the FRCP broke its ties with the UCP.¹⁵¹ This would later haunt Nava in 1961 when former ally José Encarnación de la Cruz challenged him for the governorship.¹⁵² Beatriz Magaloni explains this to be a common practice after vote recounts, noting that voters and bases of support that originally endorsed the opposition movement or candidate often defect over ideological differences.¹⁵³ The FRCP articulated concerns with the UCP's inclusion of Sinarquistas, thus, it is possible that the divide was ideological. The FRCP was composed of former revolutionary leaders and state-level politicians that Santos had excluded from power.¹⁵⁴ Sinarquistas, conversely, embraced a form of right-wing nationalism that sought to import Francisco Franco's ideology of *hispanidad* to Mexico and viewed the PRI as having betrayed the ideals of the revolution.¹⁵⁵ However, the split is better understood as an attempt by the PRI to co-opt the FRCP into its ranks. The regime relied upon internal ruptures within opposition groups, and immediately after the 1958 vote recount, the party announced that it would be restructuring the state's regional committee. This can be viewed as an invitation for the opposition to reclaim

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 150-151, February 12, 1959.

¹⁵² Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 63.

¹⁵³ Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy*, 231.

¹⁵⁴ Bezdek, "Democratic Changes in an Authoritarian System," 33.

¹⁵⁵ Michaels, "Fascism and Sinarquismo," 237.

their position within the PRI, as the regime welcomed dissenters back into the party ranks providing they renounced their affiliation with the opposition.¹⁵⁶

One year after taking office, San Luis Potosí's Mercado Hidalgo caught fire. The market had been opened by Santos during his term as governor and was an important political resource for labor support, as most market vendors and their unions belonged to the *Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Populares* (CNOP), another pillar of the PRI organized to represent the middle and lower working classes. Although it appears that the fire was the accidental result of spontaneous combustion from a pottery stand, it represents an important marker in Nava's career, as the PRI used the fire as a catalyst to further divide the population against Nava.¹⁵⁷ Nava's campaign manager in 1958 and 1961, Dr. Luis Fernando Rangel was a delegate of the CNOP, leading the union to quietly voice their support for Nava in 1958.¹⁵⁸ However, the market fire provided a ripe opportunity to create tensions between Nava and the confederation, as the party could not risk losing another important corporate arm to the opposition.¹⁵⁹ The party failed to provide Nava with adequate resources to address the damages that were incurred at \$17 million pesos, and instead provided him with \$10 million pesos.¹⁶⁰ Market vendors objected to the loan and in a union meeting, José Cruz Bioz, President of Propietarios de Fincas de la Zona Norte del Mercado Hidalgo, pronounced that Nava received the full reimbursement, but was planning to run for governor and diverted the funds to his pay for campaign expenses.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Hernández Rodríguez, *Historia mínima del Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, 90.

¹⁵⁷ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 157, March 2, 1960.

¹⁵⁸ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 150-151, February 12, 1959.

¹⁵⁹ Krauze, *Biography of Power*, 645.

¹⁶⁰ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 257, July 16, 1960.

¹⁶¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 257, July 16, 1960.

Although the facts are unclear, we can see that the fire provided an opportunity for further factional disputes to arise.

The market fire is also suggestive of the PRI's larger patron-client structure when the party disbursed an insufficient loan to repair the fire's damages. A patron-client mode of governing was built upon a two-way relationship, in that the client owed the patron loyalty, and as the client, Nava broke his oath to the party by organizing and winning an opposition campaign.¹⁶² Thus, the PRI had no responsibility to Nava and intentionally constrained him with limited finances to "punish" him for competing against the party in an election and winning. The party's restraint over funds also sent a message to prospective opposition groups to let them know that winning an election did not guarantee change. Thus, if opposition groups wished to effectively govern, they would have to do so under the banner of the PRI.¹⁶³ This can also be seen as reinforcing the regime's protection racket because it forced voters to recognize that their communities would not gain important resources without an elected PRI politician. The party knew that Nava planned to compete for governor, making it all the more important to alert voters of the risks they faced from supporting the opposition.

The Campaign for Governor

By Christmas of 1960, Nava delivered his *Segundo Informe de Administración* to announce his retirement from office. Accounts quickly unfurled in the state's press that Nava's resignation meant that he would seek the PRI nomination for governor, which he would make public in January of 1961. As Nava's campaign took form, rumors planted by the PRI surfaced, with accusatory reports in the DFS records alleging him of embezzling \$2 million pesos from the state treasury to purchase medical equipment for his *consultorio*, despite a lack of evidence to

¹⁶² Lomnitz et al., *Symbolism and Ritual in a One-Party Regime*, 15.

¹⁶³ Hernández Rodríguez, *Historia mínima del Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, 92.

verify the claim.¹⁶⁴ Similar reports also state that mistakes from his tenure as Municipal President triggered a significant loss of support.¹⁶⁵ It is unknown what the errors were, but it is probable that they are likely a reference to the factional breaks between the UCP and FRCP after the 1958 vote recount. As a result of this political fracture, the FRCP and the ACP joined forces to nominate Jose Encarnación de la Cruz as an independent candidate for governor.¹⁶⁶

The ACP's choice to endorse Encarnación de la Cruz, rather than Nava, as its candidate, can be interpreted in two ways. First, the FRCP rejoined the PRI two years earlier when the party's regional committee in San Luis Potosí underwent restructuring efforts. Soon after, the ACP joined. It is likely that the two parties still wanted to compete within the PRI, but Nava was no longer a viable candidate, as his insistence upon governing autonomously, without allegiance to the party, broke important party rules that would diminish future support. The ACP likely thought that their success with the UCP in the 1958 election would demonstrate their organizational ability to the PRI and increase their chance to compete within the party.

Second, the PRI relied on factional breaks to weaken the opposition. The party had already handpicked Manuel López Dávila for governor. The party found itself threatened by Nava in 1958, and could not risk Nava winning in 1961. Thus, the PRI did not deny the ACP the idea that they could compete on the party ticket, as they needed several opposition candidates to reduce Nava's support. Moreover, the ACP may have also realized that it was not realistic for them to attain the governorship, but if they wished to compete in future party politics, the PRI might find a place for them within the larger party structure. Regardless of the outcome, the ACP

¹⁶⁴ *Consultorio* is a term used to mean private medical office. AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 65-67, January 18, 1961.

¹⁶⁵ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 65-67, January 18, 1961.

¹⁶⁶ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 65-67, January 18, 1961.

constituted an important base of support for Nava in 1958, and the regime needed to find a way to keep the two separated, whether through ad hoc electoral practices like the restructuring committee or the prospect of patronage.

As the elections drew near, the state saw a reemergence of Santista politics. Although Santos was still working in Mexico City, he began to coordinate meetings for the PRI candidate for Governor, Manuel López Dávila at his ranch in the Huasteca, El Gargaleote.¹⁶⁷ *El Sol de San Luis* and *El Herald* immediately published reports of the meetings, stating that López Dávila was to be the official PRI candidate.¹⁶⁸ Santos's reemergence in state politics indicates that although he and President López Mateos had a strained relationship, the party still relied on the former cacique to serve as a broker and guarantee a successful outcome for the party in the upcoming election. Nava, however, did not attribute Santos's reemergence to be the result of the PRI's reliance on caciques to win elections. Instead, the Navista newspaper *Tribuna* attacked López Dávila, insisting that he was a Santista candidate, proof that Santismo was being revived. The paper urged its readership to send telegrams to Díaz Ordaz and Coronal del Rosal to protest López Dávila's nomination.¹⁶⁹ Although Nava was campaigning against a rival political candidate, it also suggests that his success in 1958 contributed to his belief that another democratic campaign could triumph over the regime's implicit rule of handpicking candidates.

Conversely, the ACP candidate, José Encarnación de la Cruz, openly criticized the PRI's informal rule of the *dedazo*. He circulated propaganda stating: "No more jokes, we reject the

¹⁶⁷ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 197, April 4, 1961.

¹⁶⁸ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 199, April 6, 1961.

¹⁶⁹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 199, April 6, 1961.

dedazo.”¹⁷⁰ His comment indicates that the public was well aware of the regime’s rule of the dedazo, but his attribution of López Dávila’s candidacy to it is significant. The PRI candidate had been living outside of San Luis Potosí, in Chihuahua where he served as a state senator and oversaw the state’s Department of Public Education.¹⁷¹ His candidacy was an example of López Mateos installing a governor that he trusted could maintain stability, despite the party openly violating Article 51 of the Mexican Constitution that required candidates to reside in the election state.¹⁷²

Despite the PRI’s actions, Nava continued to plead with the party, often stating his confidence in López Mateos’s ability to act democratically. In a campaign speech, Nava declared that the PRI’s nomination of López Dávila was an “attempt to discredit and betray the will of the President.”¹⁷³ The comment suggests a shift in Nava’s understanding of party politics. Nava noted that López Dávila candidacy was not the sole work of Santos, but a collaborative effort within the party. However, Nava’s statement does not consider the limits to democracy in Mexico, and the ramifications of choosing not to act within the party’s accepted rules of command that distributed power.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, it also reveals the restrictions top-level officials face within an authoritarian regime, as Nava expected López Mateos’s history as a Vasconcelista would lead the president to govern democratically. Knowing the pressures he would face from the party, the president assembled a cabinet with leaders who could compensate for his

¹⁷⁰ The original quote in Spanish reads: “NO MÁS BURLA, rechazamos la designación de dedo.” AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 126, March 8, 1961.

¹⁷¹ Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-1993*, 402.

¹⁷² AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 68, June 6, 1961; Krauze, *Biography of Power*, 644.

¹⁷³ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 126, March 8, 1961.

¹⁷⁴ Krauze, *Biography of Power*, 648.

limitations and aversion for political maneuvering.¹⁷⁵ López Mateos selected Gustavo Díaz Ordaz as Secretary of the Interior because of his ability to “act without legal quibbles,” seeing him as better suited for the detail, manipulation and severity that was required to run the country’s daily operations.¹⁷⁶ Díaz Ordaz would later be remembered for the repressive tactics employed during his presidency to suppress the 1968 student movement, and was widely known for his anti-communist stance. Díaz Ordaz’s involvement in Navismo, however, signifies that the regime’s application of violence was generally non-ideological, as Navismo had unified political actors across ideological and party lines.

By April 1, the PRI still kept López Dávila’s candidate status in secrecy, with the party’s directive committee in the state commenting that they “looked favorably” upon the candidate.¹⁷⁷ That same day, a group of known Santistas published their endorsements of the candidate and DFS records state: “Santismo is recovering its political position in the state.”¹⁷⁸ Nava responded to the party’s favorability toward López Dávila, avowing that he would reinvigorate his 1958 movement to overthrow Santismo.¹⁷⁹ To combat Nava’s efforts, the PRI circulated information that advised constituents not to provide their signature to a candidate if the said candidate was not a member of the official party.¹⁸⁰

The PRI responded to Nava’s ultimatum to reorganize the 1958 movement by combatting his campaign efforts throughout the state’s countryside. The Municipal President in

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 631.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 193, April 1, 1961.

¹⁷⁸ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 197, April 4, 1961.

¹⁷⁹ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 119, March 1, 1961.

¹⁸⁰ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 120-121, March 1, 1961.

Tamanzuchale threatened to jail Navista sympathizers, while the PRI's regional committee in San Luis Potosí distributed a pamphlet titled *El Aguijón* that directly attacked Nava's legitimacy.¹⁸¹ Despite the regime's repeated attempts to subdue Navismo, campesinos belonging to the *Confederación Revolucionario de Obreros y Campesinos* (CROC) directed telegrams to Díaz Ordaz and López Mateos, urging them to select Nava as the PRI candidate for governor in the party's upcoming primary elections.¹⁸² Formal electoral procedure stipulates that party nominations are to be decided upon by the PRI's three sectors: peasant, labor and popular; Nava's decision to garner campesino support suggests that he is appealing to the party through every available constitutional mean.¹⁸³ However, Nava's insistence on following legal procedure can also be interpreted as a direct attack on the regime because he exercised an alternative way of doing politics, separate from the PRI's informal, institutionalized procedures. Once a PRI candidate was decided upon by the party, it was expected that those also seeking the party nomination would openly support the candidate and voice their willingness to work for them because not doing so could derail the nomination process.¹⁸⁴

As the elections approached, the DFS focused their efforts on monitoring Nava and López Dávila. The party accused Nava of distributing propaganda that labeled López Dávila as a child batterer and a communist, but nowhere did Navista propaganda do so. Instead, Nava's attacks were directed at Santismo and the party's imposition of candidates. Picket signs carried

¹⁸¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 120-121, March 1, 1961.

¹⁸² AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 151-152, March 15, 1961.

¹⁸³ Langston, "The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico," 146.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

by Navistas read: “Get Santismo out of the state!” and “Effective Suffrage, Not Imposition.”¹⁸⁵

The signs express that Nava was beginning to realize that López Dávila was not the result of Santismo, but the PRI’s rule of handpicking candidates, a larger symptom of authoritarianism in Mexico. Nava may not have fully comprehended the risk he took by openly criticizing López Dávila’s candidacy. By doing so, it signaled to the party that he was not willing to abide by its most important tenet of openly supporting the nominated candidate and could not be trusted in higher-level positions within the party.

As Nava intensified his effort to win the governorship, the regime’s actions to deter him mushroomed. In April, Nava met with Alfonso Corona del Rosal, President of the National Executive Committee of the PRI to discuss his candidacy. Although Nava hoped to convince the party of his viability, Corona del Rosal openly rejected the idea, stating: “Doctor, you will not be candidate of the PRI for Governor of the State.” Nava replied: “General, you must be mistaken because the state has still not had the party convention,” implying that party candidates were always officially announced at this moment.¹⁸⁶ Corona del Rosal countered Nava, stating that he would need “something besides the vote of the people,” alluding to the party’s informal rule of handpicking candidates. Corona del Rosal then commented: “Look doctor, wait a minute, in time you will have a post. But for right now, I offer you the right to be Deputy of the 1st District [of San Luis Potosí] and the money that you will spend on the campaign.”¹⁸⁷

The conversation between Nava and Corona del Rosal indicates that the PRI knew Nava posed a threat to party unity. Nava risked triggering a mobilization that could be easily

¹⁸⁵ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 184-185, March 28, 1961; AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 193, April 1, 1961.

¹⁸⁶ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 71.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

radicalized. José Encarnación de la Cruz, a former Nava ally, had also launched a similar campaign when the PRI rejected his candidacy, and the regime likely feared what other forces Navismo might unearth, in addition the possibility that the movement could easily induce a mobilization, both out of the control of Nava and the PRI. If the party acted in a visibly repressive manner, it would attract unfavorable attention. Thus, Corona del Rosal attempted to co-opt Nava, thinking he would be satisfied with an alternative political post. The PRI could not risk conceding the governorship to Nava, as it was the governor's responsibility to maintain party stability at the local level and Nava's attempt to govern democratically would disrupt the PRI's system of informality. As a result, the regime offered Nava a greater degree of patronage than in 1958 when it realized Nava's potential as a candidate. According to Roderic Camp, cooptation was a common practice until the 1990s, and people tended to accept the PRI's offers for financial reasons, as well as to work within, rather than outside the system.¹⁸⁸ However, Nava was not looking to profit, as he was a financially stable member of San Luis Potosí's middle class, but rather, sought to campaign democratically within an authoritarian system. The party's offer of an alternative post and money offended him greatly, to which he responded: "General, I am not looking for work. I have been called to participate as a candidate for governor because the people of San Luis Potosí have confidence; with regard to the money you are offering me, I find it offensive..."¹⁸⁹ Nava's rejection of the PRI's patronage suggests the agency he had as a political actor, outside of the ruling party, in that he could not be coopted into the party because he was not interested in cash benefits. However, when the regime's patronage networks failed to contain Navismo, they responded with force.

¹⁸⁸ Camp, *Politics in Mexico*, 161.

¹⁸⁹ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 73.

Corona del Rosal's attempt to co-opt Nava meant that the party considered Nava to be a genuine threat that could incite further rebellion and it was imperative to integrate him into the party.¹⁹⁰ However, when cooptation failed the PRI falsely broadcasted that Nava accepted Corona del Rosal's offer and registered as a PRI candidate for first deputy. Nava responded to his constituents, stating: "This is not a game of chess. I have not registered as a candidate for Deputy, and besides that, I would not accept it...but only what my friends and supporters agree on."¹⁹¹ Nava's campaign rested on taking legal measures to combat the PRI, and his remark that "this is not a game of chess" indicates that he would not yield to the party's offers of cooptation to gain a political position. Moreover, the circulation of false information in the press operated by the regime was a tactic to disorient his supporters. Nava portrayed himself as a trustworthy, reputable figure, but the press accounts rendered him deceitful.

Nava's dismissal of Corona del Rosal's offer indicates that he was committed to winning an election by way of the formal tenets, inscribed in Mexico's constitution, and refused to play by the party's informal rules. When the party's attempt to slander him in the press foundered, it meant that the regime was running out of options. As a result, the regime resorted to selective acts of violence to frighten Nava and his constituents.¹⁹² Following the meeting with Corona del Rosal, the regime stopped its offerings of patronage to Nava and turned to open violence, brutally murdering Jesus Acosta, Nava's campaign director of the Huasteca. Navistas and the local press proclaimed the assassination to be the work of PRI Deputy, Cupertino Vargas and

¹⁹⁰ Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion Under Dictatorships," *Economics & Politics* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 13.

¹⁹¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 184-185, March 28, 1961; AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Foja 193, April 1, 1961.

¹⁹² Todd A. Eisenstadt, "Mexico's Postelectoral *Concertaciones*: The Rise and Demise of a Substitutive Informal Institution," in *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America*, ed. Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 232.

López Dávila's hired *pistoleros*.¹⁹³ The murder was a communicative message to alert Navistas and other opposition actors to the danger they faced. Pistoleros served as the personal bodyguards and hired assassins of politicians, used to maximize the regime's access to public office within the state when all other methods failed.¹⁹⁴ The PRI's involvement in Acosta's murder is evident, as the Municipal President of Tamazunchale, Major Antonio Saldaña Azua, who months earlier sought to jail Navista workers, was accused of harboring Vargas and the pistoleros. Navistas responded with protests totaling over 7,000 people that involved blocking the highway in Tamazunchale's neighboring town of Matlapa, where the murderers were allegedly hiding.¹⁹⁵

Immediately after the assassination, Carlos Hank González and Enrique Olivares Santana met with Nava to suggest he pull out from the race.¹⁹⁶ Hank González was managing López Dávila's campaign and widely known for his influence in PRIista politics.¹⁹⁷ He interrogated Nava, asking: "Do you not understand the consequences of all of this? And what will happen to you. Do you know?" Nava replied that he was aware of what might happen, but he would not change his stance.¹⁹⁸ The conversation corroborated the party's involvement with the murder,

¹⁹³ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 30-31, May 23, 1961.

¹⁹⁴ Pablo Picatto, "Pistoleros, *Ley Fuga* and Uncertainty in Public Debates about Murder in Twentieth-Century Mexico," in *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*, ed. Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 329.

¹⁹⁵ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 30-31, May 23, 1961.

¹⁹⁶ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 76.

¹⁹⁷ Hernández Rodríguez, "Challenging Caciquismo," 271; Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 78.

¹⁹⁸ Calvillo Unna, *El navismo, o, Los motivos de la dignidad*, 78.

however, it also served as a final warning to Nava and the last time that he would speak with any PRI representative.¹⁹⁹

News coverage of Acosta's murder sharply denounced the PRI's investigation and response to the slaying. In response, Governor Francisco Martínez de la Vega promised to honor the popular vote in the upcoming elections, while news coverage in *Potosí* observed: "the political agitation in the state has taken a bloody form because López Dávila and his people know that they are protected and can commit these abuses of power. When the doors of justice are closed, they open the doors of vengeance."²⁰⁰ Both Martínez de la Vega's commitment to honor the popular vote and the paper's commentary further points to the regime's willingness to negotiate and make concessions to avoid further conflict. Following the governor's announcement, Navistas organized rallies across the state.²⁰¹ Constituents were encouraged to send letters to López Mateos, Díaz Ordaz, and Martínez de la Vega, petitioning the government to intervene and charge the assassins for their crime.²⁰² Investigations of the murder were delayed, and justice was never seen for Acosta.²⁰³ The government's response to Acosta's execution suggests that impunity was the result of hidden interests within the PRI, particularly when we consider that a Deputy was at the receiving end of the suspicion.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 30-31, May 23, 1961.

²⁰¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 30-31, May 23, 1961.

²⁰² AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 1, Fojas 30-31, May 23, 1961.

²⁰³ Daniel Cazés, *Creación de alternativas en México* (México: UNAM, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades, 1999), 309.

²⁰⁴ Picatto, "Pistoleros, *Ley Fuga* and Uncertainty in Public Debates about Murder," 329.

In the subsequent weeks after Acosta's assassination, two superficial incidents of arson targeted three Navista allies.²⁰⁵ Navistas charged López Dávila's staff with setting fire to two churches, the UNS and PAN headquarters in the state's capital.²⁰⁶ Nava had built important relationships with the PAN, UNS and the clergy, all of whom actively championed his leadership. Thus, the fires can be interpreted as an intimidation tactic from the PRI directed at Nava. Graffiti outside each site read: "Castro sí! Yanquis no," leading the UNS to suspect the fires to be the work of communist students.²⁰⁷ The PRI found utility in using "communist agitation" as an excuse for increased repression, as the Law of Social Dissolution justified the imprisonment of perceived threats to the social order. However, it is likely that the attacks came from the party, disguised as the work of the political Left, to avoid appearing openly violent.

Nava's campaign efforts accelerated after Acosta's death. Navistas engaged in mass demonstrations throughout the state, crying out against Acosta's injustice. The PRI continued intimidating Navistas, and one month before the election, electricity was cut off at a pro-Nava rally.²⁰⁸ The PRI would repeat this act three months later at the Plaza de Armas when it opened fire on unarmed Navistas. This tactic would also reappear seven years later, when the PRI murdered two hundred unarmed student protestors during the Tlatelolco Massacre. As a result, Nava began to ask the Federal Government for protection and to station the military at the polling booth during the forthcoming elections.²⁰⁹ Now that López Mateos was in office, Nava

²⁰⁵ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 217-222, May 26, 1961.

²⁰⁶ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 217-222, May 26, 1961.

²⁰⁷ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 217-222, May 26, 1961.

²⁰⁸ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 80-81, June 11, 1961.

²⁰⁹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 80-81, June 11, 1961; AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 100, June 28, 1961.

believed that the military would oversee justice, only to find that, once again, the armed forces would take part in carrying out the PRI's electoral fraud at the polling booths.

The 1961 Governor Election and its Aftermath

The elections for San Luis Potosí's new governor took place on July 2, 1961. After the voting began, the party accused Navistas of defrauding the elections, stealing voting urns, and provoking disorder to seize information about election results. The regime prematurely closed election booths while voters still waited in line to cast their votes. Four ballot boxes disappeared, which Nava's campaign staff attributed to the PRI.²¹⁰ Despite Nava's request that the military be stationed to oversee elections, rumors surfaced that Díaz Ordaz denied this wish.²¹¹ As a result, Governor Martínez de la Vega's promise to Nava that the popular vote would be respected was only a farce. Although non-PRI candidates were legally permitted to station representatives at the polls, Nava lacked the financial resources to do so, resulting in an uneven distribution of authority in which the PRI policed their own elections.²¹²

On July 9, the PRI announced that López Dávila was to be the state's new governor, having won with 129,638 votes and Nava as the loser, with 45,355 votes.²¹³ In response, Navistas gathered in front of their campaign headquarters to contest the fraud, only to be confronted by the military.²¹⁴ Regional campaign director David Lozano pronounced that "the fight was not lost," and pleaded for Navistas to remain united. He asserted that Nava would soon

²¹⁰ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 105-106, July 3, 1961.

²¹¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 105-106, July 3, 1961.

²¹² Langston and Morgenstern, "Campaigning in an Electoral Authoritarian Regime," 171.

²¹³ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 127, July 9, 1961.

²¹⁴ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 134, July 3, 1961.

demonstrate “the force of the Partido Navista” by announcing a statewide general strike.²¹⁵ At five o’clock that afternoon, Governor Martínez de la Vega called upon the federal forces to intervene. General Alberto Zuno Hernández met with Nava, promising that he would inform his superiors of the military’s failure to supervise the elections.²¹⁶ In the days that followed, state and federal forces patrolled the streets with instructions to detain any agitators.²¹⁷ In response, Nava asked his supporters to remain passive, stating the military intervention and fraud to be a civil rights issue the law could defend.²¹⁸ Nava’s remark reveals that he understood the PRI’s capacity as an authoritarian regime and was trying to use legal means to avoid bloodshed. However, it also suggests that Nava may have believed that by “playing by the rules,” the president and regime would somehow start following them as well. The regime’s endurance relied upon its informal practices, and Nava’s strategy of following the rules inscribed in Mexico’s constitution is what made him such a threat to the party’s hegemony.

The state government quickly intervened in the ongoing conflict, as the risk of Nava’s movement risked gaining momentum and attracting national attention by means of challenging a state-level election. State authorities promised to resolve the state’s political unrest, assuring that Díaz Ordaz need not be involved, as the issue in question was not the responsibility of the Secretary of the Interior.²¹⁹ Federal troops proceeded to police the capital and Nava officially called for a general strike, likely assuming that the government would respond with a transfer of

²¹⁵ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 105-106, July 3, 1961.

²¹⁶ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 107, July 3, 1961.

²¹⁷ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 124, July 7, 1961.

²¹⁸ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 153, July 18, 1961.

²¹⁹ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 158, July 19, 1961.

power like they did in 1958.²²⁰ However, it is important to note that the political conditions in 1958 and 1961 were substantially different. 1958 was a period of presidential succession and the regime needed to appear democratic, but more importantly, strong, unchallenged and in charge of the nation. By 1961, the risk of Navismo gaining momentum and national attention by disputing a state election was too high. Nava could quickly become a “bad example” to others and spark even greater challenges, or perhaps, challengers. Although elections were a façade, they were necessary to prevent the regime from changing which would result in its collapse. Moreover, it is important to realize that the López Mateos administration had taken full form, and the Secretary of the Interior, Díaz Ordaz was regularly calling upon the army to provoke incidents. The army and local police forces instigated outbreaks of violence that could then be used to jail dissenters under Article 145 of the penal code, which Calvillo, Aguayo, and Martínez Assad all claim to have undergirded the PRI’s shooting of unarmed Navistas months later at the Plaza de Armas.²²¹

By mid-July, the general strike had intensified. Nava supporters totaled over 40,000 people and it is likely that thousands participated in the general strike.²²² Women refused to send their children to school until the violence was resolved, and Navistas boycotted city transportation, local businesses and even promoted the idea of a hunger strike.²²³ By July 25, federal troops and *granaderos* attacked Navista headquarters with tear gas.²²⁴ Five people were hospitalized for gas inhalation, three victims were in a coma, and fourteen were reportedly

²²⁰ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 160, July 21, 1961.

²²¹ Krauze, *Biography of Power*, 634.

²²² AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 127, July 9, 1961.

²²³ AGN, DFS, “Salvador Nava Martínez,” Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 160, July 21, 1961.

²²⁴ *Granaderos* is a term used to mean “riot police.”

injured.²²⁵ Following the attacks, federal troops transported seventeen Navistas, including Nava's campaign managers Dr. Luis Fernando Rangel and David Lozano, to the state's military zone.²²⁶

Later that day, 22,000 people gathered in San Luis Potosí's stadium "El Plan de San Luís." Nava addressed the crowd in a speech, encouraging his supporters to keep fighting for their civil rights. He commented that he met with the state's military officials to outline the goals of the movement, and asked Navistas to remain unified, as their efforts were needed to release those imprisoned.²²⁷ Nava affirmed:

If those detained are not released by legal means, I will call again and you will have to respond...I will speak to them in person, but if the moment arrives and they jail me, my spirit will be with you. Keep in mind that there are groups who want to see us dead and these elements stand outside of the pacifist ideology. Act in good faith...I ask the young people present not to forget this movement, and for the elderly, for no motive should you abandon it, as what you have to give will benefit future generations.²²⁸

The speech marks a significant turning point for Nava, as he is now openly noting the PRI's arbitrary rule. This is striking when he states "that there are groups who want to see us dead," implying that by breaking the rule of the dedazo, the party saw Nava as questioning its dominance, which put party hegemony at risk.²²⁹ The regime had tried to coerce Nava into joining the party, but as Nava increased in popularity and refused the PRI's offer of patronage, it was forced to choose open violence to suppress the movement's growth.

The summer progressed with DFS reports monitoring the movement. Navistas were alleged to have been "provoking agitation" throughout the state and general Zuno Hernández

²²⁵ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 170, July 25, 1961.

²²⁶ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 170, July 25, 1961.

²²⁷ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 183-184, July 25, 1961.

²²⁸ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 183-184, July 25, 1961.

²²⁹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Fojas 183-184, July 25, 1961.

prohibited all public demonstrations, personally warning Nava that he would be held personally responsible for any disobedience.²³⁰ On September 15, the movement would come to a standstill when police and military forces opened gunfire in the capital's Plaza de Armas. Residents eagerly waited for Governor Francisco Martínez de la Vega to commemorate Mexico's independence with "El Grito," but the governor was unable to deliver his speech, as protestors were shouting Nava's name. The electricity throughout the city was soon shut off, and shots were fired into the unarmed crowd.²³¹ *El Heraldo de San Luis Potosí* reported that three people were killed, and twelve injuries were sustained, with an unknown number of people remaining in critical condition.²³²

Conclusion

The traditional view of the PRI as a "monolithic Leviathan" limits our understanding of the party's hegemony. Navismo exemplifies that the PRI's rule was far more complex, contested and negotiated than portrayed in the existing literature. By tracing the movement from 1958-1961, I argue Navismo to have moved through three stages: 1958 exposed the relationship between regional cacical domination and party predominance, while Nava as Municipal President unveils the inner workings of the party's patron-client structure as a tool to sustain its hegemony. The PRI's rejection of Nava as a candidate for Governor laid bare the party's unwritten rules and processes of negotiation to coopt dissenters into the party's ranks. However, when the regime failed to co-opt Nava, it turned to open violence to quell the movement.

²³⁰ Krauze, *Biography of Power*, 647; AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 256, August 22, 1961.

²³¹ AGN, DFS, "Salvador Nava Martínez," Caja 33, Leg. 2, Foja 295, September 16, 1961.

²³² Carlos R Martínez Assad and Rogelio Carvajal Dávila, *Los sentimientos de la región: del viejo centralismo a la nueva pluralidad* (México: Océano, 2001), 197.

In 1958, Nava's campaign denounced Gonzalo N. Santos's informal and arbitrary rule. Nava attributed San Luis Potosí's political problems to the cacique, and believed that López Mateos would provide an opportunity for fair and free elections in the state. Although Nava may have been overly confident in the formal rules inscribed in the constitution, his campaign for Municipal President reveals the unbalanced, but reciprocal nature of Mexican politics. Nava successfully challenged the election within the Padrón Electoral and the PRI consented to have him to take office. Navismo highlights the contested nature of authoritarian rule, and the party's elasticity in responding to the opposition to preserve its hegemony. Although scholars have referenced the regime's flexibility, the study of Navismo expands our comprehension of the relationship between the federal government and popular groups, grassroots organizations and independent political actors at the local level.

In 1959, Nava took seat as Municipal President, underscoring the limits of the PRI's patronage structure. Once in office, the party's patron-client structure undermined Nava's efficacy, obstructing him from obtaining important state and city funds. This served to enforce the PRI's protection racket because it forced voters to recognize that their communities would not obtain necessary resources without an elected PRI politician. Nearly a year into office, a catastrophic fire consumed the capital's Mercado Hidalgo. The PRI was well aware of Nava's intent to compete for governor, thus, rumors were quickly planted that led CNOP affiliated market workers to accuse Nava of diverting state and federal monies from the market's rebuilding project to his campaign for governor.

Nava's wish for a democratic opening in San Luis Potosí expanded when he resigned from his post as Municipal President in December of 1960 to compete in the state's upcoming gubernatorial race. Nava had broken the party's most important "rule" of the *dedazo* in 1958 by

contesting a fraudulent election and winning the Municipal Presidency with the popular vote. In 1961, the regime sought to prevent Nava from reaching the gubernatorial elections. The party employed various tactics of patronage, most notably by offering Nava an alternative political post. When cooptation failed, the regime increased its application of violence toward Nava and the movement, eventually culminating in the 1961 shooting of unarmed Navista protestors in the Plaza de Armas.

On September 15, 1961, the movement came to a screeching halt when unarmed Navistas were shot in the city's Plaza de Armas. Nava and fifty UCP members were arrested on charges of "social dissolution" and "inciting rebellion," specific laws that the 1968 student movement would ask the government to repeal seven years later. Immediately after the carnage, Nava and his fellows were tortured in Lecumberrí Prison and Campo Militar No. 1 for one month before being released on bail. In 1963, Nava was rearrested, detained and tortured.

The study of Navismo from 1958-1961 demonstrates how the PRI functioned as an authoritarian regime, but more importantly, that the party's corporatist structure is what *forced* the regime to fail, as patronage could not placate the opposition and the regime was compelled to enact open violence to abort Navismo. The party "tolerated" Nava as Municipal President, but when he was unable to be coopted and posed a legitimate threat, the regime resorted to repression. In essence, Nava's movement underscores the limits to the PRI's reliance upon its corporatist structure and patronage networks, and that when facing real competition, its rule often rested on the sheer use of force.

In some final remarks, which may serve as food for thought, I believe that the framework of studying PRI politics at the regional level can be a useful way for historians to explore political history. Navismo demonstrates that the PRI did not go unchallenged, and that the

regime's hegemony rested upon careful negotiation, calculation and political maneuvering. Navismo shows us that the PRI was foundering earlier than often perceived, and its corporatist system of governance did not guarantee the party immunity from disputes and defections. The regime's ultimate choice to respond to Navismo with force indicates that the regime had exhausted its continuity of patronage networks: the bread and butter of PRI politics. The regime spent three years bargaining with Nava, and only resorted to open violence when patronage, threats and warnings failed to subdue Nava's efforts to win an election by democratic means.

This thesis is the first comprehensive study of Navismo using DFS records to place it within the wider context of the PRI's authoritarian rule. The DFS records reveal the complex measures in which the party took to predict, respond to and subdue conflict. The documents are suggestive of the considerable amount of manpower and time the PRI invested in monitoring Nava and his movement, indicating the threat that Navismo posed to the regime. Furthermore, studies of the DFS tend to ignore that the agency's activity prior to Gustavo Díaz Ordaz's "anti-communist paranoia" in the 1960s.²³³ The utilization of DFS archives to study Navismo from 1958-1961 indicates that the agency was active long before Mexico's "dirty war" in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The party relied upon the agency to alert it of its weaknesses, potential splits, defections and opposition movements, which the PRI would then use as information to offer patronage and bargain with its perceived threats. However, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of these records, as the goal of the DFS was to collect raw data, but it was never analyzed, making it important for the historian to interpret these documents with great care.²³⁴ Agents were recruited upon political loyalty, rather than technical or professional ability, suggesting that these sources must be understood as heavily biased by the ruling party itself.

²³³ Padilla and Walker, "In the Archives," 2; See also, Aguayo, *La charola*.

²³⁴ Padilla and Walker, "In the Archives," 3.

Important information is also deleted from the documents: names and complete paragraphs are sometimes redacted and pages are often missing. For example, there are no known documents that discuss the September 15, 1961 shooting of unarmed Navistas *before* it occurred, information that would aid the historian in tracing where orders came from and who took part in the political decision making process. The same pattern is evident in the “El problema estudiantil” file prior to the Tlatelolco Massacre on October 2, 1968.

Navismo is also considerably understudied and presents future opportunities for new research. Sergio Aguayo and Tomas Calvillo’s studies of Navismo rely upon regional newspapers, a vital source for the historian interested in the observation of politics through print culture. Memoirs of select Navista leaders exist, and a more thorough study of Santos’s interpretation of the movement utilizing *Memorias* is in order. A close inspection of Gonzalo N. Santos’s DFS file and San Luis Potosí’s state and city archives on the movement has yet to be seen, and in 2017, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Nava’s death, his personal archive was gifted to the University of San Luis Potosí. In short, an array of sources exist that historians have yet to uncover that will certainly provide insight into the wider question of the PRI’s rule at the local level, but also, the agency in which individual actors had within an authoritarian government.

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