1. Introduction

This paper represents an attempt to describe and account for some basic features of the Mexican political system. The analysis is structural rather than historical. That is, we have not tried to narrate how the Mexican system came into being, but have rather attempted to set forth a somewhat abstract formulation, which we believe can account for certain broad tendencies in Mexican politics in the sense that many concrete policies and changes in policies and political events are more or less direct manifestations of the principles our formulation contains. The formulation consists of (1) a description of what we believe is the basic and enduring goal-structure of the Mexican political system, and (2) a set of structural principles which seem to determine, broadly speaking, how the elements in the goal-structure are implemented, and what the relations between different groups in the system will be like. Hence, we believe that some basic tendencies of the Mexican polity can be made meaningful by our formulation. However, we do not attempt to analyze the question why in Mexico there gradually developed a polity having these properties; nor do we try to answer the somewhat more fundamental and general question about what the conditions are for a political system to develop these properties. (We do believe that these questions are important, however; if we knew the answer we would know more about the problem of how to combine basic democracy with rapid economic growth, starting from a state of rather extreme underdevelopment, than we now know.)

We do not claim to have isolated all the major principles which determine the structure of Mexican politics. We also regard our present formulation as a first tentative statement, although we believe it to be essentially correct.

Also our formulation is intended to apply only to modern Mexican national politics. Economically and culturally Mexico is a very heterogeneous society.

1 Our research on Mexico and the work on this paper was facilitated by a grant to Bo Anderson from funds for international studies given to Stanford University by the Ford Foundation. We want to thank Professor Carl Spaeth, Stanford Law School, for his help and interest in this research. For a critical reading of the manuscript we thank Morris Zelditch, Jr.
In many local areas grassroots politics is structured by "traditional factors" like kinship (including ritual kinship or the compadrazgo); and sometimes indigenous or Indian political forms of organization have survived in some modified form. (Sieverts, 1960; Friedrich, 1965.) This is more common in some states of the Mexican Union than in others. Politics in some southern states, Guerrero is often mentioned as a prime example, is very much traditional. In some of the economically more developed states, like Sonora and Baja California, politics seem less traditional. There are a host of important general questions that could be raised about the way that such traditional subsystems operate within the context of the national polity and economy. One could ask, for instance, how the power position of local bosses (caciques) is changed by the welfare and development policies that are carried out by the federal government or the regional commissions, modelled on the TVA (for instance, the Papaloapan Commission, Poleman 1964). Such a study of political subsystems will not be undertaken in this paper, however.

We will attempt to illustrate our model with descriptions of concrete cases drawn from contemporary Mexican politics. The information about these comes from accounts in books and newspapers and also from interviews we have conducted in Mexico at various times during the period 1963–64. These cases are only assumed to be illustrative of the mode of analysis used in this paper.

2. The Goal-structure of the Mexican Polity

An adequate understanding of the structure of a political system presupposes an analysis of its goal-structure. Therefore in this section we shall attempt to characterize the major goals of the Mexican polity and the relations that hold between these goals. The term "goals" refers to aims that are consciously being promoted by those in the polity that make major decisions. There is, in fact, a great deal of consensus in Mexico about what the goals are, and how they relate to one another, although groups and individuals differ a great deal with respect to the weights and priorities to be given to the different goals. The following picture of the goal-structure of Mexican politics has been pieced together from official speeches and statements, newspaper editorials and interviews with politically active persons.

The following major goals are present in the Mexican polity: political stability, economic growth, public welfare and mexicanization. Let us now first characterize what we mean by these terms.

*Political stability* refers to a state where (1) the basic political institutions are seen as legitimate by the bulk of the population, (2) the incumbent decision-makers are granted the right to make binding decisions, even by those who do not always agree with their decisions, (3) the succession of office-holders, proceeds according to rules specified in advance, that are accepted by most people as binding. After the overthrow of the regime of Porfirio Diaz in 1911, Mexico