

## Peña Nieto’s Cabinet: What Does It Tell Us About Mexican Leadership?

By Roderic Ai Camp

An analysis of cabinet leadership in Mexico has always provided insights into political recruitment trends for the policy-making leadership in general. In the past, the leadership of cabinet agencies has exerted a tremendous influence on formal and informal characteristics of Mexican government officials. One only has to look back at the rise of technocratic leadership in the region generally, and Mexico’s own special version in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1</sup> That component of national political leadership imprinted many distinctive patterns on national politicians, some of which continue to the present. Such an analysis of the present cabinet is particularly significant for three reasons. First, to what extent does the current leadership reflect changes in compositional patterns of the most influential policy-makers which are the result of a democratic electoral process dating from 2000? Second, does the return of the PRI reflect traditional patterns established by the last two presidential administrations, those of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) and Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), or has the present cabinet taken on features which reflect the influences of two previous National Action Party administrations led by Presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón? Third, have significant patterns emerged reflected in these recent appointments, and those of the two previous administrations, which suggest influential characteristics exercising broader influences in the future?

This essay briefly analyzes the backgrounds of the twenty-two cabinet secretaries and important cabinet-level agencies, and the president, and compares them with equivalent leadership, where appropriate, from three prior presidential periods. Those consist of the cabinet members from the pre-democratic era, 1935-1988, from the democratic transition, 1988-2000, and from the democratic era, 2000-2013. This analysis collectively examines 451 individuals out of 2,985 prominent politicians who have held these positions, a number of them multiple times in more than one administration. Only eight individuals who qualify for inclusion are omitted from the analysis for a lack of information.<sup>2</sup>

### Traditional Background Variables

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<sup>1</sup> See my "The Technocrat in Mexico and the Survival of the Political System," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1985), pp. 97-118; and "The Time of the Technocrats and the Deconstruction of the Revolution," in William H. Beezley, ed., *Oxford History of Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 569-597.

<sup>2</sup> Based on data from the Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2009, 2013.

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One of the most important background characteristics of national politicians generally, and Mexican cabinet officials specifically, is their geographic origins. By the second half of the twentieth century, Mexico was quickly becoming an urban country. Today, the national census classifies 70 percent of the municipalities as urban, 10 percent as mixed, and 20 percent as rural. More important than the rapid progression from a rural, agricultural economy to that of an urbanized population, however, is the geographic balance by state or region. If one examines the birthplaces of leading Mexican politicians, the most consistent pattern for all of the twentieth century is the overrepresentation of the Federal District, which includes the nation's capital, Mexico City. Cabinet members are no exception to the general rule; indeed, it is cabinet members' own birthplaces which help to explain the regional distribution of national politicians generally. The explanation for this lies with that fact that most assistant secretary positions in the top federal agencies are appointed by their superiors, the cabinet secretary or director, and a large percentage of those individuals come in contact with their bosses through prior positions in the federal bureaucracy, through educational institutions, and through family and personal ties. Where one is born, lives, attends school, and begins their career reinforces their career patterns and contacts. When all of these experiences occur in the Federal District, then the Federal District is replicated extensively in the backgrounds of other politicians.

Collectively, in the pre-democratic era, nearly a fourth (23 percent) of all politicians came from Mexico City. Many of these figures were born at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or during the first decade of the twentieth century. What is astonishing about this figure is that in the last two administrations of the twentieth century, 44 percent of cabinet secretaries came from the capital. Mexico's shift from a semi-authoritarian and presidentially dominated political model, to that of an electoral democracy, has not altered this significant twentieth century trend. Most of the cabinet members in those two administrations (2000-2012) were born in Mexico City when it accounted for only 8 percent of the total population. When the National Action Party won the election in 2000, given the fact that Vicente Fox largely came from a non-political career and spent much of his political experience in his home state of Guanajuato, it was expected that the prominence of the Federal District in the birthplaces of cabinet secretaries would decline. Instead, combined with Calderón's appointees, cabinet secretaries from the capital increased to nearly half.

One of the most interesting characteristics of Peña Nieto's colleagues is that many of his closest collaborators were attached to the president's political career in the State of Mexico, the country's most populous state. In fact, most of his collaborators during the presidential campaign were also from the state. Indeed, the president never served in the federal bureaucracy or in a national political office; the first such president in modern history. His entire career was spent in the State of Mexico. His reputation as a national politician was built during his career as governor of his home state. Nevertheless, he continued the pattern characterizing the last two PRI administrations of the twentieth century, and that of its PAN successors, increasing Mexico City birthplaces to 55 percent, an increase of 9 percent from that of the last PRI administrations. What is also clear about his collaborators' regional backgrounds is that except for the State of Mexico and Hidalgo (which ranks 18<sup>th</sup> out of 32 entities), no other state boasts more than one native son or daughter, and many of the major and politically influential states, including Jalisco, Puebla, Guanajuato and Chihuahua, are not represented in the cabinet.

The continued domination and consistent increase of Mexico City in the backgrounds of Mexico's leading politicians suggests the importance of existing regional patterns, likely the most common means through which presidents and their closest associates come in contact with other politicians who are viewed at some point as potential cabinet appointees. While one would expect electoral democracy to contribute to a decentralization of political backgrounds, that has not been the actual outcome in Mexico. Our discussion of other characteristics should shed some light on why this is the case.

Another variable which is revealing in understanding leadership patterns generally, and which has been shown to be important among citizen policy views and voting behavior, is politicians' generational background. Three generations have dominated the top leadership in Mexican politics since 1988: the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (see Table 1). Typically, top officials, including presidents, tend to appoint colleagues who are relatively close to their own age. Again, this is due in part to close friendships which begin at a young age during the careers of numerous political figures. One of the typical patterns of recent Mexican presidents is that among their cabinet appointees, they tend to be the same age or one generation older. For example, Salinas was born in 1948 and Zedillo just 3 years later in 1951, but the two dominant generations among their cabinet appointees were equally the 1940s and 1950s. For Fox and Calderón, a different pattern emerges because Fox was uncharacteristically much older (1942) than his two predecessors, and Calderón was unusually young (1961). Consequently, nearly half of their cabinet secretaries were from the 1950s generation. Peña Nieto, on the other hand, is extremely young, having been born 4 years later than Calderón. That fact explains why all three generations are represented roughly in the same proportions. Typically, two presidents will come from a single generation, suggesting the likelihood that the next president may be from the youngest generation represented among future politicians, that of the 1970s. However, given the number of prominent politicians in the cabinet and as state governors, it is more likely that the 1960s, or even the 1950s generation will be represented.

**Table 1 – Generational Representation of Cabinet Secretaries**

Decade of Birth	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s
	(percentages)			
Democratic Transition	31	29	2	-
Democratic	29	48	14	-
Peña Nieto	27	27	36	9

Note: The remainder of the cabinet secretaries in the Democratic Transition and Democratic periods were born in earlier decades.

Source: Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2013.

### **The Role of Careers**

One of the most dramatic changes taking place among leading Mexican politicians can be found in an examination of their career backgrounds. There are three important patterns which have shifted over time, suggesting alterations in the pool of individuals who are likely to enter politics: the impact of electoral politics on the type of skills and therefore the political career of future political figures, the degree to which influential politicians are products of local versus national careers, and the increased emphasis of non-traditional careers in politicians' backgrounds.

Two pools of individuals exist which traditionally have not been well represented at the highest levels in Mexican politics. The more influential of the two pools, despite the limitations on their representation in the cabinet, are women. Typical of women political figures throughout Latin America, women are much better represented in the legislative branch; in fact, they are far ahead of the United States in terms of gender equality in the political work place. Peña Nieto has not altered Mexico's pattern at the highest levels of the executive branch; only three women were appointed to his cabinet. This does not auger well for women in national politics, nor is it responsive to Mexican voters, the majority of whom are women. The three women also are in less prestigious ministries: health and welfare, tourism, and social

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development (which focuses on anti-poverty programs). Female representation in the legislative branch is at the highest level ever: 37 percent of deputies (184 women in the Chamber of Deputies) and 33 percent of senators (42 in the Senate). Two of these women, Dr. Mercedes Juan López and Rosario Robles Berlanga, share extensive careers in public service: Juan López as a health professional and assistant secretary of regulation and health development during the Salinas administration, and Robles as secretary general and interim governor of the Federal District during the Zedillo administration.<sup>3</sup> Although both Fox and Calderón also could only claim to have three women in cabinet posts at any one time, they placed several women in influential political agencies, including foreign affairs and as attorney general. The only way more women can rise to the top of the executive branch is if women hold those positions which allow them to choose top subordinates as assistant secretaries, thereby increasing the likelihood that women subsequently will achieve the top post, and be represented in the most influential agencies.

One of the dramatic changes which has taken place in Mexican politics in the last twelve years is the increased involvement of prominent businessmen in politics, both at the local and state as well as at the national level.<sup>4</sup> Vicente Fox is responsible for transferring a pattern to the federal executive branch which began among mayors in the late 1990s, and began characterizing governors into the first decade of the twentieth century. For example, by 2000, 16 percent of governors either owned significant businesses or held senior executive positions in various enterprises, a three-fold increase in business backgrounds from the pre-democratic era.<sup>5</sup> In just ten years that figure increased to one-fifth of all governors. Since former governors have dominated the presidential candidacies of the three major parties in the last three elections (Fox, Labastida and Cárdenas in 2000; Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Roberto Madrazo in 2006; and López Obrador and Peña Nieto in 2012), they have increased the prestige and influence of this position as an upward ladder to major executive branch positions. Moreover, PAN recruited politicians regionally and nationally who were from the business community, encouraging them to run for office. In fact, an examination of all governors from the crucial period of democratic transition from 1997 through 2004, demonstrates that a whopping 56 percent of PAN governors pursued business careers, and more than four out of ten had been leaders of influential business organizations. Among all governors elected during that period, regardless of party affiliation, one in three came from a business background, not a political one.<sup>6</sup> Fox, who essentially spent his entire career in the private sector until the last decade before he ran for president, used his contacts and friendships as the CEO of Coca Cola of Mexico to recruit other prominent business figures directly into his administration. For the first time since the Miguel Alemán administration (1946-1952), a president appointed a prominent businessman, Ernesto Martens Rebolledo, the former director general of Vitro, a major international corporation located in Monterrey, to his cabinet. Forty percent of his cabinet members had owned their own businesses or held top management positions. Fox also introduced the importance of figures with lengthy experience in international agencies,

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<sup>3</sup> Robles was appointed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the first elected governor of the Federal District in 1997, and replaced him in 1999 when he ran for president on the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) ticket for the third and last time. Claudia Ruiz Massieu, who represents the youngest generation in the cabinet, began her public career in 2009, has twice served in the Chamber of Deputies, but has only held a minor post in the federal bureaucracy.

<sup>4</sup> See the work of Yemile Mizrahi, "Rebels without a Cause? The Politics of Entrepreneurs in Chihuahua," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26(1) (February 1994): 137-58.

<sup>5</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *The Metamorphosis of Leadership in a Democratic Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 260.

<sup>6</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, "Political Recruitment, Governance, and Leadership in Mexico: How Democracy Made a Difference," in Peter M. Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern, eds., *Pathways to Power, Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), Table 12-2, 309.

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including the World Bank, to his cabinet.<sup>7</sup> Calderón continued both of these patterns among his cabinet choices, but they did not reach the levels found in the first PAN administration.

Not surprisingly, Peña Nieto's cabinet choices are not well-represented from either of these two backgrounds. Only one individual, Juan José Guerra Abud, his secretary of the environment and national resources, can claim any extensive experience as director general or CEO of major companies, as well as experience leading a national business interest group, the National Association of Buses, Trucks and Tractor Trailers.<sup>8</sup> The president's director general of Pemex, Emilio Lozoya Austin, spent most of his brief career at the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank before founding his own investment company in 2010. A comparison to Peña Nieto's PRI and PAN predecessors demonstrates a significant reversal in the presence of businessmen in his cabinet. During the PRI controlled democratic transition, they accounted for 13 percent of the cabinet appointees, while increasing significantly to over a fifth in the two subsequent PAN administrations. Peña Nieto's sole appointee with comparable business experience, by contrast, amounts to less than 5 percent of his cabinet. Even though seven of his cabinet members are governors, they represent traditional, professional politicians, rather than those governors from both the PRI and PAN since the 1990s that crossed over, temporarily, from business to public careers. As we will demonstrate, Peña Nieto's choices represent a significant return to the pre-democratic dominance of career politicians and federal government bureaucrats. Nearly two thirds of his appointees have served in multiple positions in federal agencies.

The democratic transition and the democratic period also mark a significant change in the importance of electoral careers, as well as careers which have their origin at the local and state level. The most pronounced example of this change is the growing influence of governors. Governors have become significant in the Mexican political transition for two reasons. First, as the electoral system became more competitive, the pool from which likely governors were drawn, both in terms of different career experiences and affiliations with what had been opposition parties, expanded rapidly. Each of the three political parties represented different biases in those career experiences. Ambitious politicians are using the governorship as a potential stepping stone to national public office, specifically as presidential candidates and cabinet members.

The data in Table 2 suggest several important patterns. In three of the four patterns, Peña Nieto's choices have accentuated the importance of specific career experiences, all of which suggest important political changes introduced by competitive electoral politics. It is clear from the table that the importance of local, elective office increased between the democratic transition era compared to the post 2000 era. The two most influential elected positions at the local level are that of mayor and serving in the state legislature. Between 1988-2000, and 2000-2012, the percentage of cabinet officials having served in these two posts has more than doubled. While Peña Nieto has essentially maintained the same level of cabinet appointees who were mayors, he has increased the representation of state legislators to nearly a fifth among his collaborators' backgrounds. But what is even more dramatic about the figures in Table 2 is the change in the representation of former governors in the cabinet, which has generally followed a downward trend from the pre-democratic era through the two PAN administrations to only one in ten. Under Peña Nieto that figure increased to a third of his cabinet having served as governors.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see the distinguished career of Luis Ernesto Derbez, who held multiple positions in the World Bank from 1983 to 1999, before he was appointed as Fox's first secretary of the economy, and then of foreign relations, two of the most important cabinet positions.

<sup>8</sup> [www.presidencia.gob.mx](http://www.presidencia.gob.mx), 2013; [www.redpolitico.mx](http://www.redpolitico.mx), 2013.

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**Table 2 Political Careers in the Backgrounds of Mexican Cabinet Members**

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	Governors	Deputies or Senators (percentages)	State Legislator	Mayor
Pre-democratic	20	--	7	3
Democratic Transition	14	52	6	5
Democratic	10	50	14	11
Peña Nieto	32	68	18	9

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Source: Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2013

Two-thirds and two fifths of governors since 2000 were senators or deputies. Because one of the most common political experiences at the national level among all governors is having served in the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate, the number of cabinet members in 2013 with such a background has also increased significantly, accounting for seven out of ten of his appointees. In short, the majority of the current cabinet has not only held elective office, but has participated in the policy process in the legislative branch at the federal or state level. What is unique about the president's career compared to his counterparts in the cabinet is that he has never held a national political post in any branch of the government, something true of all of his collaborators. Peña Nieto is the only president since 1920 to have served in the presidency without any appointive or elective experience in the federal government.

Another significant leadership trend which can be linked to the growth and importance of the electoral process is the increased partisan militancy among national leaders, reflected in the positions they have held in their respective parties. During the pre-democratic period, all but one individual out of those who reached a cabinet post and were party militants were attached to the PRI. Only one in three cabinet members could be described as an active party member, having held positions at the local, state or national level. In fact, when all important national politicians prior to 1988 are considered using the same criteria, fewer than half were active PRI members.<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, with the advent of intense electoral competition, and the requirement that all parties compete for the electorate's support, political skills emphasized by parties, including directing successful campaigns at all levels, local through national, became essential to the careers of an increasing percentage of politicians. It would be expected that such party experiences would be far less common among cabinet secretaries than among all other politicians, and they declined during the 1980s and 1990s when technocrats reached their apex in Mexican cabinets. Nevertheless they increased significantly during the two PAN administrations, equal to the proportions characterizing the pre-democratic era.

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**Table 3 Party Militancy among Presidential Cabinet Members**

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	Party Militants (percentages)	PRI Posts
Pre-Democratic (PRI)	31%	24%
Democratic Transition (PRI)*	18%	9%
Democratic (PAN and PRI)	28%	22%
Peña Nieto**	77 %	64%

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<sup>9</sup> Camp, *The Metamorphosis of Leadership*, Table 3.8, 66.

Note: \*One member from PAN; \*\*One member from PRD, one from the Green Party.  
 Source: Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2013.

However, it is Peña Nieto’s appointments which dramatically demonstrate the rise of political party experiences among top officials in the executive branch, the case for three quarters of his collaborators. Illustrative of this shift is the fact that nearly all of these individuals have held important party offices, including membership on the National Executive Committee of the PRI and as regional party presidents. Of the militant party members, Peña Nieto’s experience is atypical in that he was an active participant in three PRI gubernatorial campaigns, and as the head of the PRI delegation to the state legislature, rather than in charge of a party post. The general trend, however, is increased party militancy among all three parties’ representatives in the executive branch. For example, one fifth of PAN’s cabinet officers from 2000-2012 were National Executive Committee secretaries and 29 percent held other party posts. Half of all cabinet members in those two administrations held party posts, the highest level among cabinet officers before 2012. This can be explained by the fact that the most influential and prominent members of PAN eked out their political careers in opposition to the incumbent PRI in the executive branch by competing for elective offices in the legislative branch or as governors or mayors in their home states. Their success, in acquiring the nomination and winning the election, typically required active participation in the party at both the state and national level.

**The Education Variable**

We know that previous examinations of recruitment trends among national political leadership have demonstrated throughout the twentieth century that cabinet-level secretaries and assistant secretaries’ career characteristics and credentials are prescient predictors of future leadership patterns. The reason is that such individuals are often in charge of the gate-keeping functions of political leadership.<sup>10</sup> We also know from prior examinations of Mexican leadership that political mentors tend to replicate their own characteristics among their disciples. There is no single area in the credentials of leading executive branch politicians where this phenomenon is most clearly illustrated than that of higher education.<sup>11</sup> The level, location, and type of education received by future cabinet secretaries influences their values, their skills, their recruitment, and even their initial mentors.

**Table 4 Undergraduate Training of Mexican Cabinet Secretaries**

	Private School	Public School (percentages)	Foreign
All Cabinet Secretaries	9	67	3
Democratic Transition	21	76	3
Democratic	35	58	4
Pena Nieto	41	59	5

Note: Some rows do not total 100% because figures only refer to those individuals who graduated from college.  
 Source: Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *Political Recruitment Across Two Centuries, Mexico, 1884-1992* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexico’s Mandarins, Crafting a Power Elite for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

The most important conclusion that can be reached from the type of educational institution attended by cabinet secretaries is that the longer term trend, which took off during the late 1980s and 1990s, is that top executive branch officials increasingly are products of private schools. Two out of five cabinet members are products of these institutions, which typically have been dominated by a small number of prestigious schools, generally located in the capital. Those institutions are the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM), the Ibero-American University, and the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Studies (ITESM). Peña Nieto's colleagues have replicated this pattern. Ten individuals, including the president, were undergraduates from private schools. Three are alumni of ITAM, two are from Ibero-American University (Jesuit),<sup>12</sup> and one from ITESM. The remaining three are distributed among Anahuac University (Legion of Christ), Pan American University (Opus Dei), and MIT (U.S.). The fact that all three presidents since 2000 attended private undergraduate programs, two of which were Catholic institutions – Fox Ibero-American University, Calderón, the Free School of Law, and Peña Nieto, Pan-American University – reflects the changing socio-economic backgrounds of presidents, the presence of PAN in the presidency, and the increasing prestige of private universities, especially in the discipline of economics in the minds of future politicians and their families. No other presidents since 1934 have graduated from private, undergraduate institutions. It is rare for a top Mexican political figure to have completed their undergraduate education in the United States or elsewhere, but that is the experience of the new director general of the Mexican Social Security Institute, José Antonio González Anaya, who earned a BA both in economics and mechanical engineering at MIT, and went on to receive an MA and Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University.

**Table 5 Graduate Studies among Cabinet Secretaries**

	United States	Europe/Latin America (percentages)	Mexico
Democratic Transition	24	22	15
Democratic	20	12	13
Peña Nieto	32	9	27

Source: Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2013.

During the two PAN administrations, the increasing pattern of cabinet secretaries obtaining graduate degrees abroad declined from that of the Salinas and Zedillo administrations, both of which accentuated this trend in their appointments. The figures achieved from 1988-2000 can also be attributed to the apex reached by technocrats under both administrations. Peña Nieto's appointments clearly indicate a significant increase in graduate studies generally, but especially in the United States and Mexico. One in three cabinet secretaries has a graduate degree from an American university, and nearly the same percentage from a Mexican institution. These figures mark a 60 percent increase in American degrees and more than 100 percent from Mexico from the two PAN administrations. Cabinet members with post-graduate degrees in the United States are strongly represented in the field of economics, which was the case in the democratic and democratic transition eras. Two individuals' Ph.D.s are in economics, from Yale University and MIT, and a third achieved studies toward a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. Two additional figures received MAs in economics from USC and Harvard University. Peña Nieto himself completed an MBA from ITESM, after finishing his law degree from the Pan American University.

<sup>12</sup> Pedro Joaquín Coldwell, the new minister of energy, was the first governor in Mexico (Quintana Roo, 1981-87), and at the time the youngest in history, to graduate from the Ibero-American University.



An analysis of the two most influential undergraduate disciplines among cabinet figures suggest that Peña Nieto not only once again has accentuated the importance of graduate education, and such education in the United States, but also has revived the importance of economically trained politicians at the highest levels, equal to the technocratic domination of the 1990s. However, interestingly, law degrees, which declined since 1988, increased significantly among the new cabinet. An important explanation for this dramatic increase is not only the change from a PAN to a PRI administration, but can be explained by Peña Nieto’s appointment of a number of figures who are older and whose careers reflect that of the more “traditional” PRI politician, often former governors, who attended public institutions in their home state.

**Table 6 Undergraduate Economics and Law Degrees among Cabinet Members**

	Types of Degrees	
	Economics/Business Administration	Law
1950s and 1960s Generations	21	28
Democratic Transition	35	30
Democratic	30	24
Peña Nieto	36	41

Note: Refers only to graduates in these two fields, which have dominated higher education degrees among Mexican politicians generally and cabinet secretaries specifically.

Source: Mexican Political Biographies Project, 2013.

For example, Jesús Murillo Karam (1948), the attorney general, is a graduate of the University of Hidalgo, in Pachuca, and Emilio Chuayffet Chemor (1951), the secretary of public education who was governor of the State of Mexico, graduated from the national school of law of UNAM in 1974. Among prominent national politicians generally, and especially national female politicians, it is much more common to encounter individuals who have graduated in newer and more diverse disciplines, ranging from communications to the sciences to computer science.

Finally, another component of the educational backgrounds shared by cabinet members, and responsible for influencing the careers of numerous political figures, including members of the new cabinet, is their contact with their professors. For example, Francisco J. Rojas Gutiérrez Rojas, a graduate of the public accounting program at UNAM in 1996, worked for Roberto Casas Alatríste, who not only directed one of the most prestigious accounting firms in Mexico, but was a long-time professor in the UNAM accounting program, a founding member of Mexico’s Certified Public Accounting organization, and represented the government before the auditing committee to the IMF, having numerous contacts in public life, including the controller’s office in the Department of the Federal District, where Gutiérrez initiated his public career. The newest cabinet secretaries, like many of their mentors, have taught at their alma maters or other leading institutions. Peña Nieto’s appointee to direct Pemex, the government oil industry, was a student of Pedro Aspe, a longtime economics professor at ITAM who helped design the curriculum and ultimately became treasury secretary under Carlos Salinas. Emilio Lozoya Austin has credited Aspe with helping him and many other students to study abroad, often at Ivy League institutions including Aspe’s own Ph.D. alma mater, MIT.<sup>13</sup> Another former adviser to Peña Nieto, and a key figure in his campaign, Luis Videgaray Caso, became an adviser to Aspe as secretary of the treasury while he still was an undergraduate student, from 1992-1994, when Aspe was out of the classroom. He too went to MIT, earning a Ph.D. in economics from 1994-1998. Both men met each other while the latter was working for Aspe’s consulting firm, Protego, from 1998-2005.

<sup>13</sup> [www.reporteindigno.com](http://www.reporteindigno.com), 2013.

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The rise of Peña Nieto's candidacy in the media, long before the election, prompted much speculation about the personal linkages between the likely PRI candidate and notable politicians from the past. After he won the election and appointed his presidential transition team, further speculation abounded about his future cabinet appointees and their relationships with the candidate and other political figures, as a means of identifying the potential impact of established politicians on future leadership trends as well as on policy preferences. A fifth of Peña Nieto's choices are known to have influential family political ties compared to nearly three out of ten of all cabinet members in the democratic era—this represents a decline from the past when nearly half of all cabinet secretaries were known to be related to nuclear family members in the democratic transition.

No president in recent memory can claim the extensive personal, political linkages attributed to Peña Nieto himself. The President is correctly identified with the Atlacomulco group, three generations of politicians who are products of this State of Mexico community extending back to the 1940s. Peña Nieto, a native of Atlacomulco, is related to five prominent governors of his home state, beginning with Alfredo del Mazo Vélez, whose great grandfather, grandfather, and father were mayors of this town. Del Mazo Vélez was a nephew of Isidro Fabela, interim governor from 1942-45, and judge of the International Court of Justice, The Hague. A close friend of Adolfo López Mateos, president of Mexico from 1958-64, he served in his cabinet as secretary of hydraulic resources, after serving as governor from 1945-51, and becoming an early dark-horse candidate for the PRI presidential nomination. Del Mazo Vélez's son, Alfredo del Mazo González, governed the State of Mexico from 1981-1986, and joined de la Madrid's cabinet as secretary of energy, becoming one of the leading contenders for the PRI nomination in 1988. Del Mazo González is Peña Nieto's uncle.<sup>14</sup> Peña Nieto is also related to Salvador Sánchez Colín (another Atlacomulco native) through his mother, who followed Del Mazo Vélez as governor from 1951-57. Finally, the president is also related to Arturo Montiel Rojas, whose father also was mayor of Atlacomulco, and who as governor of the State of Mexico from 1999-2005, played a decisive role in the president's, and some of his current cabinet members', political careers. He too was an early candidate for the PRI presidential nomination in 2005, but that candidacy was derailed by accusations of fraud during his administration.<sup>15</sup>

Peña Nieto personally is the most dramatic example among his cabinet members of someone who was related to his political mentor. He was the member of a group of young politicians who were known popularly in political circles as the "Golden Boys," which included his later confidant and campaign coordinator, Luis Videgaray. The president served in Montiel's gubernatorial campaign in 1999 as an assistant secretary of finances. As governor, Montiel appointed Peña Nieto as assistant secretary of government, the most important political agency at the state level, and in 2000, as secretary of administration.

Several cabinet members are also products of distinguished political families, but in most cases, they are not direct disciples of their relatives in their political careers. Emilio Lozoya Austin falls into this category, in what is a multi-generational family political tree, but was mentored, as suggested previously, by Pedro Aspe. His grandfather, General Jesús Lozoya Solís, was interim governor of Chihuahua in the 1950s, and more importantly, was a personal physician to the Salinas family.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he was in business with a fellow graduate of the Medical Military College, the father of Manuel Camacho Solís, a prominent figure in the Salinas cabinet. His father, Emilio Lozoya Thalmann, who attended Harvard

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<sup>14</sup> Del Mazo's cousin, Enrique Peña del Mazo, is the President's father, and also served in del Mazo's administration in México.

<sup>15</sup> *Diario de Yucatán*, June 20, 1999; *El Universal*, February 11, 2005; [www.cambioenlinea.com](http://www.cambioenlinea.com), June 30, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> *Excelsior*, November 16, 1996.

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University with Salinas, served as secretary of energy at the end of the Salinas administration.<sup>17</sup> Claudia Ruiz Massieu Salinas is also of a distinguished political family, since she is the niece of president Salinas, whose sister is her mother.<sup>18</sup> A fellow cabinet member, with an equally interesting family political tree, is José Antonio Meade Kuribreña. His father, Dionisio Alfredo Meade García de León, pursued a distinguished career in public service, finishing it as the assistant secretary of legislative liaison in government at the end of the Fox administration. His wife, Lucia Kuri Breña Orvaños, is the niece of Daniel Kuri Breña Gordoa, a co-founder of PAN, and a member of the National Executive Committee from 1939 to 1949. Moreover, he served as the first rector of ITAM in 1946 and was a student leader in the historic movement supporting José Vasconcelos' 1929 opposition candidacy for the presidency.<sup>19</sup> President Miguel de la Madrid was responsible for the prominent rise of Francisco José Rojas Gutiérrez, who directs the Federal Electric Commission, having served under the late president in 1977-79, as assistant secretary of the treasury, and again when he became secretary of programming and budgeting. After he became the PRI presidential candidate in 1981, he coordinated his finances during the campaign, and became the first controller general of Mexico in 1983, followed by director general of Pemex in 1987.<sup>20</sup>

Those Mexican politicians who at some point influenced the upward trajectory of current cabinet members, who can be linked most frequently to their careers, are Pedro Aspe, who was important directly or indirectly to Videgaray, Meade, and Lozoya. Another treasury secretary (2006-2009), Agustín Carstens, the current governor of the Bank of Mexico, helped the career of José A. González Anaya, who served as coordinator of his advisers as assistant secretary of the treasury in 2002,<sup>21</sup> as well as that of José Antonio Meade.<sup>22</sup> The other prominent figure from the same period as Aspe, Alfredo del Mazo González, is a close personal friend of Pedro Joaquín Coldwell.<sup>23</sup> Emilio Chuayffet Chemor, the new secretary of public education, joined del Mazo González's gubernatorial administration as his secretary of education, 1983-86. He is viewed by some as a disciple of Jesús Reyes Heróles, a leading law professor who presided over the PRI and served as secretary of public education and of government.<sup>24</sup> Del Mazo also enhanced the early career of another collaborator in his gubernatorial administration, Gerardo Ruiz Esparza, who served as the assistant secretary and secretary of government, 1981-86.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusions

The most dramatic change in the characteristics of the present cabinet, including President Peña Nieto personally, attributable to democratic change, is the continuation of a significant increase in electoral offices, legislative and executive, and party militancy and offices, in the backgrounds of top decision-makers in the federal government. This pattern was accentuated during the previous two PAN

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<sup>17</sup>The grandfather attended the Military Medical School with Eduardo de Gortari, President Salinas' uncle, and Ignacio López Portillo, President José López Portillo's cousin.

<sup>18</sup>There is no evidence that the former president directly influenced her career, especially since she held her first position in 2003, nine years after he left the presidency. [www.redpolitico.mx](http://www.redpolitico.mx), 2013.

<sup>19</sup>Rafael Pérez Franco, *Quiénes son el PAN* (Mexico: Imprenta Unión, 1979), 197-98. He also is the grandson of the distinguished sculptor and artist, José Kuri Breña.

<sup>20</sup>Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935-2009* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 830-31.

<sup>21</sup>[www.entornopolitico.com](http://www.entornopolitico.com), 2013; [www.imagendelgolfo.com.mx](http://www.imagendelgolfo.com.mx), January 27, 2011. González Anaya's step mother is the sister of Ana Paula Gerard Rivero, Salinas' wife.

<sup>22</sup>Javier Beristáin, the rector of ITAM, recommended him to Carstens. [www.poder360.com](http://www.poder360.com), 2013.

<sup>23</sup>David López, the President's spokesperson, also served in Alfredo del Mazo's administration in México.

<sup>24</sup>Although several prominent politicians contributed directly to his public career, his original patron was Carlos Hank González, who dominated the state of México politics before Del Mazo González became governor, and taught school in Atlacomulco.

<sup>25</sup>[www.redpolitico.mx](http://www.redpolitico.mx), 2013; [www.losangelpress.org](http://www.losangelpress.org), 2013.

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administrations, resulting from the importance of electoral politics, and the fact that the entire careers of leading PAN politicians, with the exception of a handful of individuals, was concentrated in elective office, beginning with the state legislature and the national Chamber of Deputies, followed by their capturing mayoralty posts and governorships, beginning in the late 1980s and increasing rapidly through the 1990s. To win those offices, as suggested previously, they needed to be active party militants, and to be involved in local and national party organizations.

As I have argued elsewhere, PRI militants were not immune to these changes. In other words, there is no question that the altered political context emanating from a fair electoral process produced intensive electoral competition at the local, state, and federal level. That result, in turn, reinforced the importance of political parties, and the politicians who shared in those party and elective experiences. The president himself highlights such a change. His first political experience occurred when he was a teenager, as a propagandist in his uncle's 1981 campaign for governor of the State of Mexico.<sup>26</sup> In 1990, he served as a secretary to the Citizen's Movement at the regional level for the National Federation of Popular Organizations, the most influential sector affiliate of the PRI. Three years later he worked for Emilio Chuayffet, his secretary of public education, in his gubernatorial campaign. He even taught as an instructor at a PRI Electoral Training Center. In short, before he became private secretary to Juan José Guerra Abud in Chuayffet's administration from 1993-1998, his first appointive public office, his entire political experience occurred in the electoral political arena.<sup>27</sup> What is striking about the current cabinet, however, is that the increase in these electoral offices (Table 2) and in party militancy (Table 3) in cabinet members' backgrounds in the two prior administrations compared to the current administration is so significant: 220 percent among those who were governors, 36 percent for deputies, and 29 percent for state legislators, as well as 175 percent increase in party militancy and a 191 percent increase in political party posts. The degree of these changes overall have not occurred previously. Thus, these figures reinforce the notion that governors will continue to play a decisive role in the formation of the top level executive branch leadership given that many of these career trajectories in electoral and party posts are typical of the backgrounds of Mexican governors.

There exists another important insight from the composition of the Peña Nieto cabinet, consisting of a major change in the career experiences of his economic cabinet, a decisively new technocratic hybrid. A more detailed analysis of the two key officials, his secretary of the treasury and secretary of the economy, clearly demarcates a departure from past government economic leadership. As suggested earlier, Luis Videgaray, as a protégé of Pedro Aspe, represents a well established continuity in macroeconomic philosophy between the Salinas-Zedillo eras through the Fox and Calderón period. Of the eight treasury secretaries who preceded him from 1988 to 2012, not one has ever held an elective political office. Videgaray, however, not only served in the Chamber of Deputies from 2009-2011, but was the president of the PRI in the State of Mexico, a national political adviser to the PRI, and played a key role in Peña Nieto's presidential campaign.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, if we combine the leadership of the treasury secretariat with the eight previous secretaries of economy, only one of those fifteen cabinet figures held elective office.<sup>29</sup> Ildelfonso Guajardo Villarreal, the current economy secretary, boasts extensive elective and party experiences as a deputy to the state legislature and coordinator of the PRI delegation, as a two-time federal deputy in the last decade, as the coordinator of international relations for the National Executive Committee of PRI, and as an assistant secretary general of the party. He served as the official liaison to

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<sup>26</sup> *Proceso*, March 30, 2012; *El Universal*, February 11, 2005; [www.mexico.org.mx](http://www.mexico.org.mx), 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Juan José Guerra Abud is his secretary of environment and natural resources. His appointment by Peña Nieto replicates a pattern among many previous presidents to bring an early political mentor into their administration.

<sup>28</sup> He was also involved in student politics during his undergraduate days at ITAM, including as leader of the student council, and had already joined the PRI Revolutionary Youth Front at 19.

<sup>29</sup> The exception was Fernando Canales Clariond, Fox's second appointee as economy secretary, a major figure in the Monterrey business community, but as a PAN leader served in congress and as governor of Nuevo León.

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the business community in the president's campaign team. His elective and campaign experience are extensive. These changes reflect two influential patterns. First, that Mexico's economic leadership in this presidency does not emanate solely from the federal bureaucracy, as in the past. Second, that the new economic leadership can claim to have developed proven political skills which go well beyond those skills necessary to succeed inside a large, bureaucratic structure, to broader political abilities which may be helpful in their relationships with the legislative branch, relying on negotiation and compromise. These two appointments establish a benchmark for these two economic positions. It remains to be seen whether or not the combination of their economic training and political experiences will be valued throughout Peña Nieto's administration and beyond. That may well depend on their policy successes in the future.