

Mexican Broadcasting: Reassessing the Industry-State Relationship

by Elizabeth Mahan

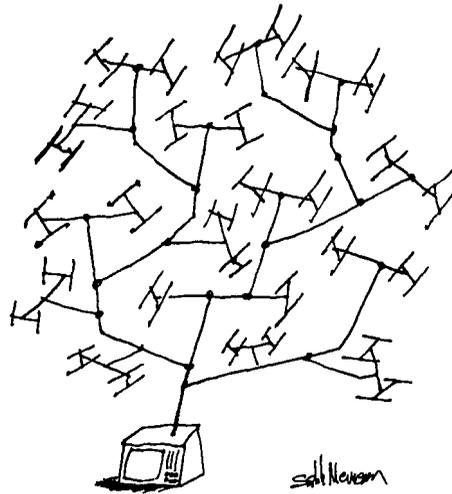
The history of broadcasting and its regulation suggests that, despite legislation favoring state dominance, in practice the private broadcaster Televisa wields considerable influence in competitive and cooperative ventures.

Anglo-American research on Mexican broadcasting has been characterized by two main tendencies. The first is a concern with establishing the structural similarity between the Mexican and U.S. broadcast industries (38); the second is a preoccupation with government controls and censorship (1, 24). Overt structural similarities between the industries are noted, but the industry-state relationships are assumed to be quite different, with the Mexican government exercising a much stricter control over broadcasters than does the U.S. government.¹ This reasoning appears to be based on an implicit hypothesis which suggests that the type of regime, or form of government, predicts the type and extent of government control of the broadcast industry. Given that the political systems of Mexico and the United States differ considerably, it seems reasonable to suppose that the processes for controlling the broadcast industry would differ in ways consistent with each regime. Thus, it is assumed that a representative, pluralist regime such as the United States would control its broadcast media less rigidly than would a so-called authoritarian (one-party or totalitarian) regime such as Mexico.

There are two problems with this approach to understanding broadcast industry–state relations in Mexico. The first concerns the concept of

¹ Interestingly, Mexican researchers often conclude that the state does not assert enough control over the private broadcast industry, presumably because the industry can muster more resources and broadly based support from other private enterprises than the state can or will effectively counter (11, 12, 16, 19).

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the authoritarian regime. While it is possible to delineate the general characteristics of an authoritarian regime, the fact is that few, if any, regimes fit the model exactly. Rather, there is a continuum along which authoritarian regimes range, so that while Mexico meets the formal criteria of the authoritarian model, the Mexican political system is clearly less authoritarian than, say, that of the Soviet Union or Cuba (37). The second problem involves the concept of control. In studies of mass media–state relations, control generally has been equated with efforts to suppress or distort information. This, however, may be an unnecessarily simplistic view, at the very least overlooking the fact that controls can both promote and inhibit the dissemination of information. In any case, regardless of the way in which control is defined, if the hypothesis that the form of government predicts control is valid (and if Mexico has been accurately classified as an authoritarian regime), there should be strong state control over broadcasters in Mexico. This would be reflected not only in explicit legislation but also in the interactions between the private broadcast industry and the government, with the latter effectively controlling the behavior of the former.

The broadcast industry–state relationship is examined here from two perspectives.² First, the organization of the broadcast industry—in

²There have been some changes in the structure of the industry and in the prominence of some government actors since the inauguration of Miguel de la Madrid in December 1982. Notably, Garza Sada, one of the original founders of Televisa, sold his interests to the three other owners of the corporation. Televisa converted one of its channels to a noncommercial cultural station (but shortly thereafter in 1983 raised its advertising rates for time sold on its remaining channels). Perhaps because of the more immediate pressures of the economic crisis, broadcast regulatory issues have not been terribly visible. None of these changes, however, alters the perception of the patterns of power and action discussed here. Indeed, these changes appear to entrench the status quo between the industry and government that has operated for many years.

particular the role of Televisa, which is the major force in the industry from whatever perspective one takes—and its relationship with the government are described in order to delimit the formal authority of the state to control the private industry. Events preceding the formation of Televisa are discussed because they reveal a pattern in the outcomes of industry-state interactions that has been typical since the early years of Mexican broadcasting: the relative autonomy of the industry in the face of state initiatives to control it. Second, the types of interactions that occurred between the broadcast industry and government primarily during the *sexenio* (i.e., political term) of José López Portillo (1976–1982) are analyzed to determine whether or not the type and extent of control implied by formal structural arrangements are borne out in day-to-day practice. Although conclusions drawn from a single case are not sufficient either to confirm or reject the hypothesis of “regime type,” they can suggest additional variables for consideration, while clarifying the position of the Mexican broadcast industry vis-à-vis the state.

Broadcast industry ownership in Mexico tends to be concentrated in a few economically powerful groups, a concentration that has been characteristic of Mexican broadcasting since the 1930s.

The most influential group is Televisa, which owns both radio and television stations and production facilities (8, 22).³ Televisa came into being in January 1973 through the merger of two private commercial television companies, Telesistema Mexicana (TSM) and Televisión Independiente de México (TIM). This merger united all four privately owned Mexico City channels and more than 70 stations throughout the country under one administration. The creation of Televisa, however, represented a return to a previously prevailing status quo rather than a radical transformation in organizational style, because competition in the television industry had always been quite limited. Indeed, TSM had operated without significant competition from 1955 until 1968, when channel 8, under TIM, and channel 13, owned by Francisco Aguirre, were established in Mexico City.

Ostensibly, the formation of Televisa was a response to criticism of programming being raised in the print press and in speeches by government officials (3, 23, 25, 28, 39, 40). In 1971, President Luis Echeverría called for the passage of a new broadcasting law that would change licensing procedures to give the government greater control over the private industry (12, p. 340). This received considerable attention in the press, but no agenda was set for the legislative commission created to

³ There are no restrictions on media cross-ownership or concentration in Mexico, and the tendency toward increased concentration in the hands of a few economically strong groups is consistent with developments in other sectors of the economy (2, 8).

hold hearings on the new law. Furthermore, the head of the commission left the country on a lengthy diplomatic mission soon after its formation (9, 27). At the very least, these events imply a lack of state support for changing the Federal Broadcasting Law of 1960, which still prevails.

Echeverría's campaign against the quality of programming on private television followed and coincided with other events in the industry, which were less obvious, but more compelling, factors in the consolidation of TSM and TIM and which illustrate the ability of the industry to withstand government pressure. In 1968, then President Diaz Ordaz had attempted to place 49 percent of the shares in private broadcast holdings in state hands. Licensees were given the choice of paying a 25 percent tax on all their revenues or putting 49 percent of their shares in trust in a state bank (11, p. 206). This was eventually negotiated down to the 12.5 percent "fiscal time" agreement.⁴ The fear of the possible state acquisition of private broadcast holdings was raised again in 1972, when SOMEX (a state-owned investment group) bought the financially troubled channel 13.⁵ By 1972, TIM's channel 8 was also losing money. The merger of TIM and TSM was a move to prevent the purchase of channel 8 by SOMEX or another state agency, which could have altered the balance in the television industry enough for the government to threaten TSM.

Echeverría's concern about private television programming did have a basis in fact. From 1968 until the formation of Televisa, TSM faced competition in Mexico City from channels 8 and 13. While neither of these was successful, the battle for audiences and production personnel waged between them and with TSM took a toll on the entire industry. In programming, it resulted in the tendency to resort to sensationalism in an effort to attract large audiences. More damaging to the industry than the struggle for audiences, however, was the effect of competition on the costs of production (6).

Echeverría's campaign had the side effect of distracting attention from these essentially financial problems, which affected the entire television industry. Even Televisa spokesmen joined in the criticism of programming as a way of rationalizing the creation of an entity that virtually monopolized Mexican television. In Televisa's view, the merger of TSM and TIM meant an end to detrimental competition for audiences (and production personnel, although this was not explicitly

⁴ "Fiscal time" refers to the 12.5 percent of the broadcast day on each station that the government is entitled to use free of charge to broadcast programs produced or purchased under the auspices of the General Directorate of Radio, Television, and Cinema. It is actually a tax on broadcasters, or, more accurately, a method by which they can meet their obligation to pay one particular tax. For a more detailed discussion of the fiscal time agreement, see (18).

⁵ The Mexican government tends to invest in private sector industries that are foundering due to lack of private capital. This has occurred, for example, in the film industry (32).

stated) and the creation of the so-called "Mexican formula" for television, said to be more consonant with "Mexican reality" (31): programming on a particular channel was aimed to a particular segment of the audience (as TSM had done in the 1950s), thereby ensuring cooperation and equilibrium between the state broadcasting system (through the operation of its own stations and its use of private commercial time⁶) and the private industry.

Until 1983, ownership in Televisa was divided among the owners of the previously independent TSM and TIM. Representing TSM were Emilio Azcárraga Milmo (son of one of the founders and major forces in TSM), who is the president of Televisa; Miguel Alemán Velasco (son of the former president of Mexico, Miguel Alemán Valdes), who was an officer in TSM and is executive vice-president of Televisa; and Rómulo O'Farrill, Jr., who was a cofounder of TSM and is president of Televisa's administrative council. The O'Farrill family has interests in other sectors of the Mexican economy, notably publishing and automobiles. TIM was owned by the Garza Sada family, which, until the economic crisis of 1982, controlled a considerable portion of the commercial and industrial activity in Monterrey (2).

It seems reasonable to conclude that Televisa is linked through its owners to powerful political and economic interests in Mexico, although the evidence for this is admittedly circumstantial. Glade (14) points out that, although irrefutable evidence of such linkages is hard to come by, the consensus is that networks of entrepreneurs and politicians do exist and serve the political and economic ends of both groups. With this in mind, it seems fair to say that, as Echeverría learned, Televisa's owners can constitute a formidable force to be reckoned with in any attempt to assert or increase state control over the private broadcast industry.

Although the formal structure of the broadcast industry-state relationship is complex, primary jurisdiction over the industry is exercised by two government ministries.

The full roster of those involved includes nine federal ministries in various capacities, interministerial organizations, and the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. But the two key actors are the Ministry of Communications and Transport (SCT) and the Ministry of the Interior, which exercises its authority through the General Directorate of Radio, Television, and Cinema (RTC). SCT is

⁶ In addition to fiscal time, the government is also entitled to "official time" free of charge. This differs from fiscal time in that it is limited by provisions of the 1960 broadcasting law to 30 minutes a day, plus any time needed for emergency and national security messages.

responsible for licensing and technical aspects of broadcast regulation, while RTC is responsible for regulating the content of broadcasts and for authorizing the production of programming that the government broadcasts over its own and private stations.

The Mexican government also operates its own television system, which, in addition to broadcast facilities, consists of time that the state is entitled to use on private commercial channels. This brings the state television system into the broadcast regulatory process as a separate actor. Formally, the broadcast industry interacts with the state through the National Chamber of the Radio and Television Industry (CIRT). This means that Televisa, despite its dominant position in the broadcast industry, is not a legally identified actor in industry-state regulatory interactions.

The legal designation of participants in formal regulatory interactions creates a hierarchy in which channels of power and communication run vertically from the government down through CIRT to licensees. This does not mean, however, that industry-state interactions occur only through formally designated group representatives and channels. Indeed, personal contacts between and among government officials and business people play a significant role in the formation of Mexican public policy. We have noted that Televisa's owners are likely to have access to the high levels of the Mexican government. Furthermore, the sheer number of bureaucratic agencies with formal regulatory responsibilities raises questions about the extent of bureaucratic coordination and suggests that actual policy formation may not always take place through formal channels.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Mexican government has a great deal of legitimate power to regulate the private broadcast industry. Both the constitution of 1917 and the prevailing 1960 broadcasting law establish a framework within which that power can be exercised. However, whether or not the state regulates private commercial broadcasting as closely and as strongly as its formal power permits remains to be seen.

Discontinuities at RTC and channel 13 appear at least to have the potential to affect the exercise of regulatory authority by the government.

Despite the formal roles of a number of ministries, during the López Portillo *sexenio* RTC was the most powerful and frequent federal participant in broadcast industry-state interactions. This dominant position, established in law, was reinforced by RTC's exercise of regulatory jurisdiction over the private broadcast industry and its control of the state broadcasting system. From its creation in December 1976 until December 1982, RTC was headed by a single individual, Margarita

López Portillo, the sister of the president. The continuity of her leadership, however, belied such continuity elsewhere in the agency. In its first four and a half years of existence, divisions of RTC involved in both the regulation of the private broadcast industry and the operations of state broadcasting, in particular television, experienced a number of changes of high-level personnel. The Divisions of Radio and Television had three and five directors respectively, while the Planning Division had four. The Productora Nacional de Radio y Televisión (PRONART), which was created in 1977 to produce programs for state television as well as those to be supplied for broadcast over private stations during fiscal time, had had four directors by mid-1981 (30).

These changes in personnel at lower, but still significant, levels of authority at RTC contrast with the continuity of leadership in the broadcast industry in general and at Televisa in particular. Although CIRT members elect new officers yearly, the activities and procedures of that organization change very little. Similarly, the ranking members of the administrative council of Televisa did not change between 1973 and 1982. Beyond that, if one considers that the formation of Televisa in essence only gave a new name to an existing monopoly, leadership in the private broadcast industry has been stable and concentrated for almost thirty years, and longer if one considers the dominant position of the Azcárraga family from the 1930s onward.

Changes in leadership were also rife at the Corporación Mexicana de Televisión (CMT), the licensee of the government's commercial television station, channel 13. Between 1976 and July 1981, channel 13 had seven directors; the seventh, appointed in late July 1981, served only two months before being replaced (7). Such a turnover was perhaps related to discontent on the part of the state over the failure of channel 13 to achieve commercial success. (Unable or unwilling to challenge Televisa, channel 13 had amassed a 278 million peso debt—approximately \$11,200,000 at 1981 exchange rates—by October 1981 [35].) However, the turnover was usually attributed to discontent on the part of the directors of CMT with the authority exercised by López Portillo over the day-to-day operations of the channel (17). While it is hard to find direct evidence of just what she did in directing channel 13, the fact that she wielded the ultimate power was publicly acknowledged (36).

Although frequent changes in leadership at channel 13 do not have direct regulatory ramifications in the private broadcast industry, the fact that CMT constitutes one part of the state broadcasting system, aspects of which are part of the regulatory apparatus, means that instability at channel 13 will likely be felt elsewhere in that apparatus. Indeed, such instability was apparent at RTC, although it is not clear how this was related to the problems at channel 13. What is clear, however, is that the primary state actor in the regulatory process was fraught with organiza-

tional difficulties that made it less likely that interactions with private broadcasters resulted from clearly delineated policy positions or that they occurred only through explicitly designated channels.

Three types of interaction exist between private commercial broadcasters and the government—those that are public, those that occur over explicit regulatory matters, and those between Televisa and the government as cooperative and competitive broadcasters.

Public interactions. CIRT serves as the primary forum for public interactions between private broadcasters and representatives of the government. It holds weekly luncheon meetings that are usually attended by one or more high-ranking government officials. Similarly, the yearly National Broadcasting Week brings broadcasters, representatives of the organized entrepreneurial sector, and government officials (often including the president of Mexico) together and into the public eye. Government officials address social as opposed to working sessions of the meeting. Their remarks acknowledge the contributions made by the broadcast industry to the achievement of national goals and urge broadcasters to continue to provide high-quality service to the Mexican people (4). All these interactions are shown and heard over the broadcast media and reported in the print press.

Such essentially social contacts occur at other times as well, occasionally while the government (sometimes the same officials who address CIRT meetings) is criticizing the broadcast media (10, 26).⁷ Laudatory remarks by public officials serve to enhance the image of private broadcasting by drawing attention to the fact that, despite occasionally strong rhetorical criticism, there is actually a fair amount of cooperation between the industry and the government. These occasions also permit the government to comment publicly on the quality of private broadcasting, reminding licensees that their primary function is to promote the achievement of national social goals.

Interactions over regulatory and policy issues. The interactions just described involved representatives of the broadcast industry as a whole. Rarely has one of the owners of Televisa been prominent in these essentially public relations events. This appears also to have been the case when the industry and government agencies have interacted over regulatory issues with industry-wide impact. At such times, CIRT has played its role as the formal channel between the industry and the state.

⁷ This conclusion is based on a survey of newspaper coverage of CIRT and broadcast industry affairs from 1972 through mid-1983, carried out at the Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Políticos.

For example, when the *reglamento* to the 1960 broadcasting law was issued in 1973, the director of the office within the Ministry of the Interior responsible for enforcing the new legislation met with officers of CIRT to explain its impact (33). (A *reglamento* is a legal instrument specifying how a law will be put into effect.) Similarly, when government agencies want to organize industry cooperation with their efforts to disseminate information about government programs, they work through CIRT officials (5).

Miguel Alemán, Televisa's official spokesman, occasionally represents the organization in public meetings that are part of the regulatory process. For example, during public hearings over the drafting of a *reglamento* to implement the right to information guaranteed by Article 6 of the Constitution, Alemán argued against the proposed legislation. For the most part, however, contacts between Televisa and the state over issues that affect the television conglomerate occur directly and privately between the owners and government officials.

This is not surprising, given the political connections and economic power of Televisa's owners. Nor is it unusual that this should be the case when the regulatory issue at hand does not affect other segments of the broadcast industry. For example, the agreement granting the Televisa subsidiary, Cablevisión, permission to transmit programs resulted from negotiations between Televisa and SCT, sidestepping CIRT (21). Televisa has also participated on its own behalf in negotiations that do have industry-wide impact but that affect Televisa more than other broadcasters because of the scope of its operations. Thus, although CIRT played a role in the talks that led to the adoption of an industry-wide contract law in 1975, Televisa officials, as employers of the largest contingent of workers in the broadcast industry, were also involved, representing their own interest (15).

Industry-state interactions as broadcasters. Private broadcasters and RTC interact over the scheduling of programs to be broadcast during fiscal and official time, but this is not their only contact as broadcasters. The private industry—Televisa actually—has cooperated with various state agencies in the production of programs and in the establishment and use of equipment and telecommunications infrastructure. Furthermore, broadcasters—again, primarily Televisa—occasionally compete with the government for rights to broadcast programs and for audiences.

Since 1975, Televisa has cooperated with the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in the production of university-level educational programs that are broadcast nationally over Televisa channels. Under this arrangement, technical and academic assistance is provided by UNAM, while Televisa manages the actual production and broadcast of as many as 27 programs (31).

Televisa has also cooperated with a number of government ministries, most notably the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), in the production of soap operas, or *telenovelas*. The objective of this cooperation, which is primarily at the story-planning stages, is to bring the social values conveyed in *telenovelas* into line with those that the government wants to promote.⁸ Televisa spokesmen acknowledge that this cooperation is more formal than substantive in that it really involves only the planning of themes and not the details of production or broadcast. Thus, incorporating the government's desired social themes into *telenovelas* is not allowed to interfere with the realization of Televisa's own goals of providing entertainment that will attract the largest possible audiences (and thus enhance the value of the commercial time sold). Nor is the incorporation of social themes that the government would like to see developed permitted to alter the structure of *telenovelas* so as to diminish the number of spots that can be sold for commercials during each broadcast (31).

Nonetheless, cooperation at the planning stages serves as one facet of the government's content-monitoring apparatus. Story ideas, which may or may not have been worked out with SEP or another agency, are submitted to RTC for approval before any segments are produced (31). These are either approved or disapproved, in which case they are sometimes changed and resubmitted. Once approval is obtained, production proceeds. The amount of control that this gives RTC is more apparent than real, however, for producers will sometimes change story ideas during the production phase so as to realize Televisa's overriding goal of attracting viewers.

While these ventures cannot be considered coproductions in the strict sense, the public relations value for both the government and Televisa is indisputable. Educational programs produced in consultation with UNAM are not considered state-supplied programming (and therefore do not lessen the private broadcaster's obligation to make fiscal and official time available to the government), but their production by the private industry takes some of the pressure off the government to produce more cultural and educational programs. At the same time, the presence of such programs during the broadcast day enables Televisa to refute critics who complain that only mindless entertainment programs are broadcast on private commercial channels. Similarly, involving an agency like SEP in the planning of entertainment programs allows Televisa to respond to critics who hold that their programs undermine the achievement of national social goals. This cooperation, like CIRT luncheon meetings, builds an image of industry-state unity in securing

⁸ Productions that have resulted from this cooperation are noted in (13, 31).

the benefits that broadcasting can bring to the nation. This notwithstanding, it also reveals a lack of support for the state broadcasting system: the government tends to rely on the private industry to produce and broadcast programs that PRONART was created to produce and that state-owned channels are intended to disseminate.

Televisa and the government have also cooperated in the installation and use of broadcasting and telecommunications equipment. This occurred during the North-South summit meeting in Cancún in October 1981, when equipment purchased and installed for the most part by the government was used by both Mexican and foreign journalists covering the meetings (20). Although this did not represent a special cooperative arrangement with Televisa, it is noteworthy that the government bought and installed equipment that enabled Cancún to receive live television for the first time and that would be used by Televisa not only in its coverage of the meeting but also in the provision of television services to the area after the meeting.

Another instance of technical cooperation with related, but farther reaching, implications is the ongoing establishment of a satellite system to replace the overburdened and aging microwave system. Under an arrangement signed with SCT, Televisa agreed to build 44 of 80 earth stations at a cost of \$9 million (U.S.); the government will build the remaining 36 stations at a cost of \$3.5 million (34). All the stations, even those built by Televisa, will belong to the state and will form a telecommunications system that will make it possible to provide telephone and television service to all parts of the country. In return for building the earth stations, Televisa received the right to use the system to broadcast its programming.

This arrangement benefits the Mexican government financially, as well as speeding up the construction and implementation of the new system. Overall, however, Televisa probably benefits more than the government in this venture, because, with television going into new areas, the value of the commercial time it sells will be increased. Indeed, revenues from this alone were expected to offset construction costs (34). Since the government will pay for maintenance of the satellite system, these savings, added to the expected increases in advertising revenues and the fact that Televisa will broadcast, at least initially, without competition, result in a significant financial advantage for Televisa.

The first television services to use this new telecommunications system were private commercial ones. Although plans exist to use it to broadcast channel 13, the agreement between SCT and Televisa acknowledged Televisa's initial exclusive use in return for its cooperation in building the system. Similar advantages for Televisa have been negotiated when channel 13 has extended its services. A case in point involved the installation of a channel 13 repeater in Ciudad Victoria,

capital of the northeastern state of Tamaulipas: the agreement signed by the director-general of channel 13 and Televisa limited the transmission of signals over channel 13 to those times when a Televisa channel was also broadcasting (29). Channel 13 programming, however, has never successfully competed with Televisa's and it is unlikely to do so in Ciudad Victoria.

This situation might be viewed as an example of the more or less general competition between two commercial broadcasters, however much the balance seems to be tipped in Televisa's favor. Competition for exclusive broadcast rights has also occurred, however, and reinforces the image of Televisa as the dominant contender in interactions with the government. For example, in September 1980, channel 13 signed a contract to broadcast the 1981 World Cup soccer games. The Organización de Televisión Iberoamericana (OTI), of which both Televisa and channel 13 are members, attempted to disallow the contract and grant exclusive rights to Televisa. The basis for this attempt was an agreement regarding broadcast rights and the World Cup games adopted by OTI at a meeting that channel 13 did not attend and that, moreover, was held after the contract to broadcast the games had been signed. Despite the fact that channel 13 had already paid approximately 66 percent of the 1,200,000 Swiss franc deal, OTI, acting through its president Guillermo Canedo (who also happened to be a Televisa vice-president), began attempts to annul the contract (29). By October 1981, the issue of broadcast rights had been resolved with Televisa and channel 13 sharing the rights (35), another case of compromise in which the government yielded a potential advantage to Televisa.

This analysis has shown that, although the legal underpinnings of the broadcast industry-state relationship in Mexico create a structure that is clearly weighted toward state dominance, the state does not take full advantage of this situation.

The 1960 broadcasting law formally establishes state authority to control the structure and operation of the broadcast industry and, in many respects, the content of programs. Formal state regulatory actors far outnumber recognized industry representatives. The government is entitled to use air time on private stations free of charge. It also possesses the formal and legitimate power to nationalize industries when such action can be said to serve the national interest (however defined), so that, in effect, a sword of Damocles hangs over controversial private enterprises like broadcasting.

The analysis of interactions between the broadcast industry and the government, however, reveals that the government does not exercise all

the power available to it. Some of the interactions reviewed were more or less social, serving the public relations purposes of both the government and the broadcast industry. Others occurred over substantive regulatory issues with industry-wide impact. Still others—and these are perhaps the most significant—have brought the government and Televisa together to grapple with issues that affect them in their roles as competitive and cooperative broadcasters.

A number of conclusions emerge from this analysis. First, the regulatory arena is actually less crowded, but not necessarily less complex, than a description of its formal structure suggests. Although nine government ministries formally have jurisdiction over some aspect of broadcasting, analysis of industry-state interactions reveals that only two, RTC and SCT, appear to be active on a consistent basis.

Second, while the active participation of the government in broadcast regulation is simpler than the formal structure of the system would indicate, the participation of the broadcast industry is more complicated. This is due to the fact that the broadcast industry is dominated by Televisa, whose interests coincide with those of other broadcasters to some extent but are unique in a number of ways. CIRT plays its formally authorized role as the representative of the industry and the channel for industry-state communication under certain circumstances, but Televisa emerges as a separate actor whose interactions with the state do not necessarily involve CIRT or directly affect all broadcasters.

Third, in their operative and competitive interactions, both the government and Televisa benefit, but Televisa appears to gain more. Cooperation in the planning of educational programs and *telenovelas*, for example, enhances the images of both participants but ultimately serves to entrench Televisa's hold on audiences, since the shows that result from this cooperation are broadcast over private commercial television, not the state system. In the final analysis, the public relations value derived by the government from advising Televisa on program themes and the financial benefits it derives from not having to invest in the production of programs on its own must be measured against the opportunities it loses to develop its own broadcast services.

Finally, Televisa appears to be the strongest actor in the industry-state relationship despite a legal framework that grants the state great legitimate power to control the broadcast industry. The economic and political connections of Televisa's owners no doubt contribute to its strength, but to rely solely on that explanation would be to overlook unconnected weaknesses on the state side. It is important to remember that, by the time the 1960 broadcasting law was passed, the private commercial broadcast industry had been operating with a great deal of cohesion for almost forty years. Diaz Orta and Echeverría's attempts in the late 1960s and early 1970s to assert state control over the industry

founded in part because of this cohesive opposition. In addition, there is some evidence of administrative problems at state agencies that deal with broadcasting. One can speculate that, even in the absence of opposition, state agencies lacking in administrative capacity would have difficulty imposing their will on private industry.

The cohesion of the industry and its political and economic ties, therefore, create power, but not necessarily enough power to dictate to the government. The power of the Mexican government to nationalize industries that seem to be securely in private hands (the bank nationalizations of 1982 are an excellent case in point) effectively ensures that an industry will not do this blatantly. Thus, while the cohesiveness of the broadcast industry and the continuity of its leadership contrast strikingly with an apparent disorganization in the state regulatory apparatus, its independence is at best relative. However, given the continuing economic crisis—and recognizing that private broadcasting effectively supplies a national service that the government cannot or will not provide on a similar scale—it is unlikely that the Mexican government will put more resources into either its own broadcasting system or efforts to restructure the private industry. For the foreseeable future, then, Mexican broadcasting will probably operate as it has, with the state representing vast formal power which is respected by an industry that operates essentially at will.

This analysis of Mexican broadcasting goes beyond the studies alluded to earlier, which have tended to derive from a presumed causal relationship between the structural characteristics of the state and the extent and effects of its control of media. It shows that the Mexican government actually exercises less control than its formal authority allows.

What can this analysis suggest to us for studies of media-state relations in other countries?

The Mexican case underlines the fact that understanding state controls on a media system requires examining the nature and dynamics of the industry-state relationship, not just the formal structure of state power. To do this, one must look at formal legal and structural arrangements and then beyond them to when, how, and with what results the broadcast industry and the government interact. This will reveal that, while legal arrangements create a framework within which the industry and government interact, factors on both sides of the industry-state equation—like economic resources and stability, administrative capacity, and the nature of the service provided to the public—become more telling indicators of the likely extent and effectiveness of state control than regime type, particularly when an ideal type like the “authoritarian

regime” is used to characterize a real regime. The type of regime, while important, is only one of the variables to be considered in examining state behavior vis-à-vis the broadcast industry.⁹

The type of analysis presented here yields a wealth of descriptive data essential for understanding the dynamics of a broadcasting system in its own right *and* for the development of conceptual models for comparative studies. At one level, this study of Mexican broadcasting can be viewed as an attempt to work with an analytical framework that might also be applied in studies of other systems. Focusing on a structure and interaction allows the researcher to gather information based on constructs that have equivalent, if not identical, meaning when applied cross-nationally and thereby to account for variation between broadcasting systems which is and is not related to the political and economic characteristics of a particular regime. Such studies would permit the refinement of existing hypotheses of media-state relations and bring us closer to a systematic understanding of how governments and media systems affect each other.

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⁹ Pierce (24) discovered this in his analyses of media-state relations in Latin America, notably in the cases of Brazil under the military government and in John S. Nichols’s study of Cuba, which is included in the Pierce volume. In the first case, a “regime type” hypothesis would have predicted more direct censorship and less journalist resistance than was found. In the case of Cuba, Nichols finds more channels for discussion and dissent than the regime type hypothesis would suggest.

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