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The Costs of Electoral Success: The Partido Acción Nacional in Mexico
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El PAN no se entiende a sí mismo si no tiene toda la oposición. Así como los PRistas piensan que pierden el alma si pierden elecciones, los PANistas piensan que pierden la suya cuando ganan.

CARLOS CASTILLO PERAZA
Personal Interview, México City, October 1996

El reto del PAN es ganar el gobierno sin perder el partido.

FELIPE CALDERÓN HINOJOSA
Campaign Motto used in his campaign for the Presidency of the PAN in 1996.
Introduction

The above statements, made by two main leaders of the National Executive Committee of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), reflect some of the tensions and dilemmas inherent to a party that is experiencing a process of rapid, unprecedented and unexpected electoral growth. During the past 10 years, the PAN has gained access to the government in four states (Baja California, Chihuahua, Guanajuato and Jalisco) and in 261 cities, including important capital cities such as Aguascalientes, Puebla, Morelia, Culiacán, Guadalajara, Mérida, Monterrey, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Oaxaca, Mexicali, Saltillo and Cuernavaca. In 1996, close to 30 million people are living in places controlled by the PAN, a spectacular number when compared to the one million people living under Panista governments in 1987. In addition, the PAN has 119 Federal Deputies, 24 Senators and more than 240 Local Deputies. Faced with an increasingly more competitive political environment and with greater opportunities to gain access to office, the PAN has emerged from its old-time condition akin to a sect (small, ideologically strong and closed, yet politically irrelevant) and has transformed itself into a more open and loosely defined, but electorally more effective and competitive political party. In the process and as a result of its own success in the electoral arena, the party is now confronted with serious dilemmas and tensions.

Firstly, to catch up with a growing electorate, the party has been forced to expand its organization and take up new responsibilities at an extremely rapid pace, a pace which often goes beyond the party's capacity to respond. This process, known in the PAN as redimensionamiento del partido involves re-defining many of the party's statutes and internal regulations, professionalizing many of its activities, incorporating growing numbers of people into the party ranks, building new party structures in places where it still does not have any political presence, coordinating the activities of different party units, and training its militants to take on new responsibilities in the public sector.

Secondly, the growth of “office opportunities” has created serious tensions in the party's process of candidate selection. As the “spoils of government” become more imminent, increasing numbers of politically ambitious people seek to find a place in the party's lists of nominations for office. While political ambition is, as Schlesinger rightly argues, the motive force of party organization in competitive party systems, when it shows its face in an opposition party that traditionally condemned such attitude and that has few institutional mechanisms to regulate the quest for

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power, political ambition also becomes a potential threat to the party's ideological identity and organizational coherence.

This paper analyzes the dilemmas the PAN is beginning to confront as its electoral base grows and its office opportunities expand. The argument is that during the past 10 years, one of the PAN'S greatest sources of electoral strength has been, paradoxically, the party's weak, fragmented, decentralized and porous organizational structure. The lack of a bureaucratically strong political apparatus allowed the party to have a great degree of flexibility which enabled it to accommodate and adapt to changing political conditions. Flexibility allowed the party to mobilize its political sympathizers around electoral periods and to contract and reduce its activities after the elections, to recruit new supporters, select ad-hoc candidates with strong roots to their communities, and design electoral campaigns addressing issues peculiar to each region. However, as the party grows and becomes a party in government, its organizational fragility increasingly becomes a source of weakness. The PAN'S organizational structure results inadequate to respond to the party's growing demands and responsibilities.

First, to gain and above all, retain power, the party needs to expand its organizational structure throughout the country and broaden its electoral base. For that end it needs to build new cadres, professionalize its staff and operate on a more permanent basis, that is, well beyond electoral periods. In addition, to ensure some degree of coherence in the party's "style" of government as well as some unity in its political discourse, the party faces the need to coordinate, discipline, and monitor the activities of its increasing number of public officials. Second, to endure as a viable political alternative in the electoral market, the party needs to find mechanisms to incorporate a growing number of supporters, select more attractive candidates for office, and prevent the loss of its ideological principles in the process. And finally, while the PAN is still very much an "opposition" party, the more it becomes a party in government, the greater will be its need to define a more programmatic political platform going beyond its traditional contentious position.

The challenge of the party as it grows is hence to find a proper balance between ideology and organization; between doctrine and pragmatism; between principles and ambition. More importantly, as the PAN becomes a party in government, it also needs to find a balance between its traditional role as an opposition party and as a new governing party; that is, it needs to organize attractive and effective political campaigns and at the same time, prepare and train its cadres to perform government's functions.

While Panista leaders want to maintain the party's flexibility, they are also aware that growth and access to power requires some process of bureaucratization which might run against the very flexibility the party has been able to maintain over the years. How can the party grow, build a more effective political apparatus and still maintain its flexibility to adapt to changing political conditions and different regional contexts? How can the party overcome its electoral bias and find more permanent
political tasks in between elections? In sum, how can the PAN "win power without losing the party"?

The first part of this paper traces the recent evolution of the PAN in the electoral arena and briefly explains the factors that account for the party's success. The second part analyzes the three main and interrelated dilemmas the party is confronting as a result of its success and argues that the future of the party depends on how it solves each one of these tensions. The third part ends with some concluding remarks about the implications of PAN's electoral growth for the future of democracy in Mexico.

1. Electoral Strength; Party Weakness: The Recent Evolution of the PAN

The expansion of PAN's electorate cannot be understood without reference to the solution of two major conflicts which in the past had torn the party and threatened its very existence: the conflicts over the extent of the party's participation in the electoral arena and over the extent of its collaboration with the government. The first conflict emerged in 1976 in the building up to the PAN's convention for the selection of its presidential candidate. The issue at stake was whether the party should adopt a more aggressive electoral position and seek out more votes or whether the party should maintain its more traditional position giving more importance to its ideological and doctrinal consistency even if that meant remaining electorally ineffective. The conflict was not solved until 1978; in 1976 however the situation came to a deadlock and the PAN did not present a presidential candidate.³

In 1978 the party resolved the conflict in favor of the former position and adopted an 'open doors' policy geared at pulling the party out of its isolation and winning as many votes as possible, regardless of whether or not these votes were won from ideologically driven voters. As we shall see below, this solution paved the way for the incorporation of a new generation of political activists that played a critical role in the PAN and greatly contributed to strengthening the party in the electoral arena.

In 1989 a new conflict divided the party again. This time the issue at stake was the party's position with respect to the new electoral law being discussed in Congress. The President of PAN's Executive Committee, Luis H. Álvarez supported the electoral reform even though it was less ambitious than the party had originally proposed. The advocates of supporting the reform claimed that this negotiating position was necessary in assuring the government's willingness to recognize PAN's victories at the local and state levels. The so-called foristas, on the other side, rejected the reform and condemned PAN's willingness to collaborate and negotiate with the PRI and the

³ For an interesting analysis of this situation see Soledad Loaeza, "El PAN: de la oposición leal a la im paciencia electoral" in Rafael Segovia (ed.), La vida política mexicana en crisis, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 1987.
government. In their opinion, this position eroded the party's ideological and doctrinal identity. The departure of the foristas from the PAN solved the conflict in favor of the conciliatory and negotiating position and paved the way for the expansion of PAN's victories in the electoral arena. Indeed, the electoral success of the PAN after 1989 has no historic precedent.

As Table 1 shows, since 1988, the number of cities and seats in the Chamber of Deputies controlled by the PAN has increased dramatically. Whereas in 1988 the PAN controlled the government in 17 cities, in 1994 it controlled 128, in 1995 218, and in 1996 222. The number of party's seats in Congress also increased from 89 in 1991 to 119 in 1994. In addition, the PAN won the governorship in Baja California in 1989, in Guanajuato in 1991, in Chihuahua in 1992, and in Jalisco, Baja California, and Guanajuato in 1995. In terms of the percentage of the population governed by the PAN, the growth of party has also been dramatic. Until 1983, the PAN controlled only 2 per cent of the total population in the country, and had not been able to overcome this limit. By 1996, in contrast, 30 per cent of the population live in places

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4 Although the conflict between the foristas and the party leaders was formulated in doctrinal terms, in reality it was an internal power struggle for the control of the party. The foristas had been displaced from the leadership positions they controlled during the mid-1970's. In fact, in 1976, when they gained access to the party's directive offices, other PANistas criticized them for their pragmatism and their lack of concern for the party's ideology. See Carlos Arriola, Ensayos sobre el PAN, Mexico, Porrúa, 1994; Víctor Manuel Reynoso, “El PAN: ¿La oposición hará gobierno?”, Revista Mexicana de Sociología, vol. LV, núm. 2, April-June 1993, p. 133; Jean-François Prud'homme, The National Action Party's (PAN). Organizational Life and Strategic Decisions, División de Estudios Políticos CIDE, Documento de Trabajo EP-59, 1996.

5 The supporters of the electoral reform, the so-called alvaristas, claimed that the PRI had accepted 80% of their demands and that voting against the law represented a greater danger to the party. It was better to support the law and attempt to modify some of its statutes later, than to reject it all together and risk losing some of the concessions already accepted by the PRI. These concessions included severe sanctions against electoral delinquents, a provision that granted more authority to the electoral tribunal (Tribunal Electoral), the introduction of a pictured electoral card, and a prohibition for party members to become leaders of the mesas directivas de casilla. According to Lujambio, the PRI also “promised” PANista leaders that if they accepted the reform, the PRI and the government would be more willing to recognize PANista victories. For an interesting analysis of PAN's "gradualist" strategy and a comparison between PAN's and PRD electoral strategies, see Alonso Lujambio, “¿Democratización via federalismo? El Partido Acción Nacional, 1939-1995: la historia de una estrategia dificil”, in Kevin J. Middlebrook (ed.), Mexico's Partido Acción Nacional in Comparative Perspective, San Diego, University of California-Center for US-Mexican Studies, forthcoming.

6 The elections in Guanajuato in 1991 were highly controversial. The PAN alleged the election had been fraudulent and organized a post-electoral mobilization to protest the official electoral results. The conflict was solved after PRI's elected governor resigned and the local Congress appointed a PANista Interim governor, Carlos Medina Plascencia. In 1995, the PAN won the elections for governor.
controlled by the PAN. The vote for the PAN in presidential elections also experienced a rapid growth. While in 1970 the vote for the PAN amounted to 11.9 per cent of the total vote, in 1982 it was 15.6 per cent, in 1988 17 per cent, and in 1994 26.6 per cent (see table 2). Graph 1 illustrates the historic evolution of PANista victories in municipal elections. Of the total number of municipal elections won by the PAN since 1946 (when it won its first election), 83 per cent of the victories were obtained between 1987 and 1996.

The growth of PAN's electorate can be explained in part as a result of the existing discontent with the government and the PRI, particularly after President Salinas left office in 1994 leaving behind a severe economic crisis. As was also the case after the economic crisis in 1982, the PAN has been able to "catch" the vote of many discontented voters. As Loaeza argues, throughout its history, the PAN was able to forge an image of credibility due to its commitment to certain ideological principles and its uninterrupted participation in the electoral arena since 1943. Moreover, the 1977 electoral reform allowed opposition parties to gain more access to the Chamber of Deputies through the introduction of the system of proportional representation.

In addition to the above factors, the PAN's electoral growth in large part is a result of the active support the party received from a significant number of entrepreneurs, particularly small and medium-sized entrepreneurs from the north, who after the nationalization of the banks in 1982 decided to organize in opposition to the government and the PRI. Entrepreneurs infused the PAN with resources as well as with organizational, administrative, and marketing experience they brought from their own businesses. They organized campaigns, collected funds, designed electoral strategies and tactics, and became candidates for office. The "intrusion" of entrepreneurs into the PAN could not have been possible without the party's previous adoption of an "open doors" policy. More importantly, these entrepreneurs could not have played such a critical role within the PAN without the party's existing organizational fragility and weakness, particularly at the state and local levels.

Notwithstanding the PAN's long political existence as an opposition party, it had an extremely precarious and fragile organizational structure. It operated with volunteers, had no paid professionals, had meager resources, and its cadres were

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7 Alonso Lujambio, "¿Democratización via federalismo?...", op. cit., p. 45. This percentage is calculated by the number of people living in the municipios controlled by the PAN. The percentage will most likely grow after the elections in November 1977.

8 The only exception was in 1976 when the PAN did not present a presidential candidate. See Soledad Loaeza, "El PAN: de la oposición leal a la impaciencia electoral", op. cit., p. 77.

9 For an interesting analysis of the structure of office opportunities in the Chamber of deputies and the impact of the 1977 electoral reform on the expansion in the number of seats controlled by the opposition, see Benito Nacif, Political Careers, Political Ambitions, and Career Goals, División de Estudios Políticos, CIDE, Documento de Trabajo EP-51, 1996.

mainly middle-class professionals without any administrative experience. Furthermore, although the party has had a decentralized organizational structure, it had not been able to establish its presence throughout the country. There were many places where the PAN did not even have an office. In sum, the PAN operated more as a "club of friends". As Luis H. Álvarez said, "we had our statutes and our party secretariats, but these were merely written on paper. We could not put to work any of our decisions".

Entrepreneurs found an enormous room of maneuver inside the party to plan, guide, and manage electoral campaigns. They gave the party the resources (both human and material) it needed to win elections. In virtually all regions where PAN currently holds strong bases of support among the electorate, entrepreneurs played important roles both as candidates for office and campaign organizers during the 1980's, and today they continue to occupy important positions in PANista administrations.

However, although the entrepreneurs clearly helped build the PAN's electoral base, they did not really contribute to strengthening the PAN as a political organization. Since their interest was to defeat the PRI, the entrepreneurs confined their participation to the electoral arena, often creating parallel structures from which they organized the campaigns. But they did not become involved in other party tasks after the elections were over. When the PAN won an election, entrepreneurs moved on to the administration. When it lost, they returned to their own businesses. As a result, the party remained as weak and fragile as it was before. In some cases, this situation became even worse after an electoral victory. Many PANista mayors and governors

11 For an elaboration of this topic see my dissertation, A New Conservative Opposition in Mexico: The Politics of Entrepreneurs in Chihuahua, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Political Science, 1994.

12 The PAN has a territorial organizational structure. The smaller unit of the party is the Comité Directivo Municipal, which are the organs responsible for the affiliation of new members. The next levels are the Comités Directivos Estatales and the Comité Ejecutivo Nacional. The affiliation of members through the Municipal Committees reflects the party's belief that the members should start their political careers at the local level. Moreover, the Comités Municipales and Estatales select their candidates for office and design the party's political platforms. The Comité Ejecutivo Nacional only supervises these political processes. Interview with Juan Estrada, Director General of the Fundación Rafael Preciado Hernández, November 1996, see Table 3.

13 Interview with Luis H. Álvarez, October 1996.

14 Some examples are: Ernesto Ruffo, former governor of Baja California; Francisco Barrio, governor of Chihuahua; Alberto Cárdenas, governor of Jalisco; Vicente Fox, governor of Guanajuato; Manuel Clouthier, PAN's presidential candidate in 1988 and candidate for governor of Sinaloa in 1986; Fernando Canales Clariond, candidate for the governorship of Nuevo León in 1985 and in 1997; Rosendo Villarreal, former mayor of Saltillo and currently Senator from Coahuila; Adalberto Rosas, candidate for governor in Sonora in 1985; Jorge Ocejo, candidate for mayor in Puebla in 1992 and currently a federal deputy. These entrepreneurs had no previous partisan political experience but they had occupied important leadership positions in different business chambers in their own communities. The latter gave these entrepreneurs social prestige and made them politically recognizable in their communities.
incorporated the few existing party's long-time activists into their administrations either as members of the city councils (cabildos) or as bureaucratic officials. As Carlos Castillo Peraza, former President of the PAN admitted, "after we win an election, the party offices are emptied as many of the activists leave the party ranks to go to the administration. Winning elections tends to weaken the party."¹⁵

With a growing electorate and more access to government positions, the weakness of the PAN began to become a matter of concern for PANista leaders. At the national level, Luis H. Álvarez, president of the PAN from 1987 to 1993, adopted new strategies to professionalize and expand the party's organization. Until he became president of the PAN, the party lacked a staff of full time and paid professionals. People worked in the party on a voluntary basis, including its president and general secretary. Moreover, up to 1988, the party had refused to receive public funding; it depended entirely on voluntary contributions from its supporters, militant fees, and fund-raising activities organized by the party such as lottos and dances. Álvarez and the people he appointed in leading party positions recognized the need to pay party officials and demand from them a full-time commitment to the party's activities. Álvarez also decided to accept public funding on the grounds that the rules for distributing government's funds had been made more explicit and clear.¹⁶ These resources were critical not only in allowing the professionalization of some party tasks but also in creating new party offices throughout the country.

The efforts to expand and reinforce the party's organization continued through the administration of Carlos Castillo Peraza, president of the PAN from 1993 to 1996. In order to have more reliable information about the performance of the party in the electoral arena, Castillo Peraza fostered the establishment of computing centers capable of conducting opinion polls as well as gathering and processing electoral results faster than the government. Getting access to this information was considered critical not only for evaluating the PAN's performance but also for defending the party against possible electoral fraud. He also promoted new training projects designed to enhance the party's electoral efficacy and to prepare its cadres for their new government activities. As part of these efforts to train and generate new information, the party created two foundations which were mainly designed to support the activities of the party in Congress.¹⁷ Finally, Castillo Peraza also placed great emphasis in projecting the party into the international arena. He established links with political parties with which PAN shares ideological affinities and traveled around the world

¹⁵ Interview with Carlos Castillo Peraza, October 1996.
¹⁶ Interview with Luis H. Álvarez, October 1996.
¹⁷ These Foundations are Fundación Rafael Preciado Hernández and Fundación Miguel Estrada Iturbide. The former has received financial support from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a foundation linked to the German Christian Democratic Party with which the PAN has an ideological affinity. For a report on the evolution of the PAN in recent years, see Jaime González Graf (coord.), Evaluación del Partido Acción Nacional, Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Políticos, December 1995.
advertizing and promoting the PAN's activities. As he said, "one of the goals of promoting the PAN in the international arena is to gain more credibility at home and be perceived as a political party that is serious about its intention to gain access to power".  

Although the party has expanded its organizational activities significantly since 1987, it has not been able to overcome many of its historic weaknesses and to respond to the growing demands and problems it confronts. The PAN still has a shortage of well trained personnel working on a continuous basis, has not been able to expand geographically throughout the country, and continues to have a fragile political apparatus, particularly at the local level. As a result, the party has had problems in finding electorally attractive candidates, in formulating alternative government programs, in reaching out and penetrating new sectors of society, and in many cases, maintaining its own electorate. Where this has been more clearly reflected is in the party's failures to win consecutive elections in some important places and in preserving a political presence between elections.

II. The Dilemmas of Growth

In contrast to the past, when the PAN's main problems were associated with the party's ineffectiveness in the electoral arena, today the party confronts problems associated with its electoral success. That is, it has begun to encounter difficulties in distributing the "spoils" of victory and in redefining its role as a governing party. When Felipe Calderón talked about "not losing the party" he referred precisely to these problems. In the quest for power positions, partisan ideology tends to evaporate as new and increasing numbers of people strive to become candidates for office. Moreover, the growing concern for winning office positions tends to diminish the attention given to the party itself. As Calderón said, "a successful political party... has to recognize itself as a party, rather than dilute itself when it gains power". And in this regard, Calderón alluded to both the party's proclivity to shrink dramatically after electoral periods, and to its difficulties in designing a blueprint for action after it wins.

18 Interview with Carlos Castillo Peraza, October 1996.
19 By 1996, PAN has municipal committees in 1,400 municipios. There are 2,200 municipios in the country.
20 From 1946 to 1996 (in October), the PAN has won 495 municipal elections. Out of these 495 elections, the PAN has controlled the government in 346 different municipios. In 260 municipios, it has controlled the government only once; in 87 municipios it has won more than once. And only in 55 cases it has won in consecutive elections. The most notable case where the PAN lost significantly was in Chihuahua. In 1992 the PAN had won the most important municipal governments in the state, but in 1995 it lost most of them, maintaining only Ciudad Juárez and Ojinaga. Carlos Varela and Rafael Vergara, Municipalios ganados por el PAN hasta noviembre de 1996. This information was given to me by the Fundación Rafael Preciado Hernández.
The challenge for the PAN in its quest for power is to build a stronger political apparatus, one which is well organized, cohesive and extended throughout the country, yet without losing its identity. For that end, the party needs to solve three interrelated dilemmas which I analyze in the following pages.

a) The struggle over candidate selection: Traditionalists vs. Newcomers

In his seminal study on political parties, Joseph A. Schlesinger offers an original and penetrating perspective on parties which allows one to analyze the behavior of different political actors who participate in a political party, as well as to understand the inner dynamic a party experiences in the process of organizing an electoral campaign. Taking Downs' well known definition, he argues that a "political party is a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in duly constituted elections." This rational choice definition directs us to an understanding of politics as a "goal oriented action" and political actors as "individuals who act rationally in the ways they seek to pursue goals."22

If parties are teams, that implies different individuals working together and cooperating to achieve some goal. In this case, the goal is winning office and the team includes office seekers, i.e. candidates, and benefit seekers, that is, people who work with the office seeker hoping to get some benefit from the winning of office. Benefits can be collective, that is, the benefits derived from the adherence to some ideological principles or endorsement of certain public policies which the candidate promises to introduce; or they can be private benefits, that is, getting a position in the administration, a contract, a favor or other type of promotion. While the first type of benefits give the party its ideological and programmatic coherence, they are not enough for preserving its organizational cohesion. As Schlesinger argues, there are political "purists" who derive purposive benefits from their participation. "While not denying that these incentives do attract many activists... such incentives, unreinforced by private benefits, have little staying power... The party must also produce, as a side product, private goods and provide private benefits."23 This analytical perspective recognizes that the motive force underlying the behavior of both office seekers and benefit seekers alike is political ambition, and that the rules and institutions of democratic regimes must therefore stimulate and direct this political drive.24

Although the dynamic set off inside a political party by the confluence of these goals seems reasonable and ordinary in well established and competitive party systems, it can be explosive when it appears in a political party that only recently became electorally competitive, that has a fragile organizational structure, that has

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22 Joseph A. Schlesinger, op.cit., p. 5.
23 Ibidem.
24 Ibidem, p. 18.
painstakingly protected its ideological principles, and that confronts a flow of new activists and supporters.

In the past, when the expectations of winning office were low, few people were attracted to become candidates of the PAN. As Carlos Castillo Peraza said, “one had to beg family members to accept candidacies and to rely on one’s families for help during the campaigns. Had I won an election during the early 1980’s, I would have had to form my government with members of my family.” With an expanding electorate and growing office opportunities, this situation has completely changed. Candidacies are now highly prized and a flow of people have started to join the party hoping either to become candidates for office or to work closely with a candidate with the expectation of the accompanying benefits.

As these newcomers arrive, long-time party activists are feeling threatened and displaced. They resent people who approach the party only when it begins to win elections. As Ernesto Ruffo, himself a newcomer, says, these “self-perceived party martyrs who throughout the years suffered electoral defeats, do not want to lose control of the party.”

With a growing access to power and a shortage of trained professionals, the party finds the support of these newcomers expedient. Many of these newcomers are better prepared than the long-time activists and are thus often better qualified to run as candidates. However, many of these newcomers also have little interest in the party’s ideological and doctrinal positions and join the PAN only because they perceive an opportunity in the quest for power.

The bulging of “office-seekers” has created enormous tensions in the party’s process of candidate selection. On the one hand, the party has had to find mechanisms to conciliate the interests of long time activists who feel they deserve a party nomination—regardless of whether or not they are qualified for the job—with those of the newcomers who are motivated by political ambition and expect to receive some benefit in return for participating in party affairs. On the other hand, to preserve its ideological identity, the party is trying to devise new techniques to distinguish naked ambition from ideologically legitimated ambition, and to create incentives to reward the latter. To meet this challenge, some party leaders consider it necessary to reform the party’s rules for candidate selection.

The party’s existing regulations and procedures for selecting candidates for office were formulated long before the party became competitive in the electoral arena and are proving to be extremely loose in the new political environment. Indeed, while the requirements for new members to join the PAN are strict, the process for seeking a party nomination is simple. To become a pre-candidate for mayor, it is

26 Interview with Carlos Castillo Peraza, October 1996.
27 Interview with Ernesto Ruffo, June 1996.
28 The affiliation to the PAN is voluntary and on an individual basis, the party does not affiliate groups. To affiliate to the PAN one has to be sponsored by an active member and take a course on party doctrine. The Comités Directivos Municipales, that is, the party’s lower organizational
necessary to collect 10 signatures from active members. Candidates for the senate and governorships only need 40 signatures. Although these pre-candidates have to compete in a party convention for the nomination, the party has few filters to ensure the selection of the best trained, ideologically committed, and electorally attractive candidates. The party's conventions are opened for all party activists; no restrictions exist to become a delegate to the party's conventions. As a result of this laxity, the party often selects inadequate and ill-trained candidates for office who then either lose elections or are not prepared to perform their jobs in the administrative or legislative arenas. Furthermore, as a way to reward old-time activists, the party often incorporates these people as members of the mayor's planilla, or includes them in the lists of candidates for deputies through the system of proportional representation.

A frequent consequence of this situation is the coming to power of inexperienced new public officials and a lack of coordination between mayors and their city councils, and between governors and the party's local deputies. This is particularly evident when mayors and governors turn out to be newcomers to the party. As Adalberto Núñez, the PANista mayor of San Nicolás de los Garza says, “the members of the city council are long-time party activists. They have the support of the party and act as mini-mayors; they feel they have the authority to act on their own. Far from helping me, they disturb me”.

According to Ernesto Ruffo, to solve these problems, the party needs to devise new procedures to determine “who can become and who cannot become a candidate... Our party conventions are proving inadequate to select better candidates. We need something similar to an ‘elders council’ to determine who deserves to be

units, are responsible for approving the admission of new members. Usually, the admission of new members takes a period of six months. These requirements were designed to filter party loyalists from mere opportunists, and to foster a partisan career rooted at the local level. See PAN's statutes, Art. 8 and 12. For an analysis of these statutes see, Jaime González Graf (coord.), Evaluación del Partido Acción Nacional, Instituto Mexicano de Estudios Políticos, 1995. I return to this point below.

See the party's rules (Reglamentos), Chapter VI. The party can also ask non-militants to run as party candidates. Chapter VI, Art. 48. This was the procedure the party followed when entrepreneurs ran as party candidates during the 1980's.

The rules for choosing delegates to the party's conventions were drafted when the party was small. Today these rules are also proving inadequate to adjust to a party with a larger number of members. At the national level, the selection of delegates for the party's national conventions has had to go through more filters. The state directive committees have to select their delegates from a list compiled by the party's municipal committees. But at the municipal and state levels, all active members can participate in the conventions. Interview with Juan Estrada, October 1996.

The mayor (presidente municipal) is elected together with his or her own planilla, that is, the members of the city council. Recent reforms have allowed the participation of opposition parties in the city councils through a system of proportional representation. However, the city council is not elected through a separate election.

Interview with Adalberto Núñez, November 1996. This opinion was expressed in many interviews I held with both party and public officials.
nominated, and thus reward those who really work for the party." Other members of the PAN do not share this opinion and believe that what the party needs to do is convince old-time activists that do not meet the requirements for office that they have to “give way to those who are better qualified and trained for becoming candidates”.

Although different opinions co-exist inside the PAN about their processes for selecting candidates, at the national level the office of organizational affairs is already proposing to reform the party's statutes and regulations. These reforms include increasing the requirements for becoming a candidate. While this reform still needs to be passed at the party's national convention, it is clear that PAN's increasing success in the electoral arena is forcing the party to confront its need to adjust its procedures. The challenge for the party is thus to design new institutional incentives to channel political ambition towards the fulfillment of the party's ideological and programmatic positions.

b) Strategies of Social Mobilization: Clients vs. Citizens

Before 1989, when the PAN did not win elections routinely, the party invested most of its resources in organizing attractive electoral campaigns. It exploited the existing discontent with the PRI and the government to mobilize wide sectors of the population and portrayed itself as the alternative against corruption, inefficiency, and authoritarianism. But without access to power, the PAN did not have enough incentives to formulate more positive programs or to plan further activities beyond the electoral period, other than preparing the next electoral strategy. With a growing access to government positions, the PAN has now been forced to overcome its traditional electoral bias and to define strategies to maintain itself in power. But here is where the party confronts serious problems. As a self-conceived “party of citizens” based on individual and voluntary affiliation, the PAN has rejected the idea of building a mass-based party organization which exchanges patronage and individual favors for political support. Without an alternative to clientelism as a form of social mobilization, the party apparatus tends to contract after it wins elections.

As Edward Gibson argues, governing parties in competitive party systems face two fundamental tasks: they need to win elections and they also need to intro-

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33 Interview with Ernesto Ruffo, June 1996.
34 Interview with Luis H. Álvarez, September 1996.
35 One of these requirements is to take a course for those who want to become candidates. Interview with Raúl Ramírez, PAN's Director of Organization, November 1996.
36 For an interesting analysis of the origins of mass-based political parties, see Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1994. As I mentioned above, the party also tends to contract because many of its activists go into the administration.
duce effective public policies. That is, parties need to demonstrate competence in office and they also need to design strategies to survive in the electoral arena. To achieve these ends, political parties must bring together a policy coalition and an electoral coalition. The former is important for allowing the party to define its priorities and implement its policies; the latter is critical for mobilizing and keeping its ties with the electorate.

Although these tasks are interrelated and reinforcing, once in office, the PAN has tended to give higher priority to the policy arena than to keeping and broadening its ties with the electorate. In part, this stems from the conviction of many PANista leaders that the electorate will increasingly judge the party for its government's performance. But the problem is that many PANista public officials, influenced by their entrepreneurial origin, understand government performance in administrative more than in political terms. That is, they believe that to secure a favorable vote for the party, they need to make the government more efficient and design more effective public policies. However, good government performance is not just a function of public policy; it includes maintaining contact with citizens on a more permanent basis. A good administrative performance may become electorally irrelevant if the government is perceived as being detached from society, and if the party fails to engage in community work as a way to maintain its political presence with the electorate.

The greater priority given to administrative rather than political tasks also stems from the party's rejection of clientelism and patronage as forms of social mobilization. These activities are associated with the PRI and are considered illegal and illegimate. However, as Martin Shefter shows, although a political party can win an election by mobilizing the electorate in opposition to the existing regime, it usually needs to rely on the construction of a mass based political organization to maintain itself in power. In short, once in office, parties need to reward their electorate with material incentives and private benefits to ensure their political survival. As the PAN has painfully come to realize after losing consecutive elections, winning an election once does not guarantee further victories in the future.

In this respect, it is interesting to examine how PAN perceives itself as a party in government. According to Juan Antonio García Villa, General Secretary of the PAN, the party "rejects the idea of becoming an agent which provides goods and...

40 Shefter, op.cit.
41 The most dramatic example was in Chihuahua, where the PAN lost the most important cities in 1995. This state was considered one of PAN's most important electoral strongholds. In Puebla, Guanajuato, Baja California Sur, Sinaloa, and Coahuila, the PAN has also failed to win consecutive municipal elections.
services to the community. What the PAN does in between elections is to formulate policies, train its militants, and extend its organization throughout the country. A similar opinion was expressed by Carlos Castillo Peraza: “The party is not caritas. It is a group of citizens that get together to discuss public issues.” Even more revealing is the opinion of two PANista deputies in Chihuahua who considered that “the task of deputies is to become agents of laws rather than agents of services.”

In a country controlled by one political party for more than 60 years, without a democratic tradition of autonomous citizen participation, with severe shortages of public goods and services, and with inadequate formal mechanisms to allocate these services to the communities, this political perspective confronts serious limitations. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that not all forms of ‘pork-barrel’ politics are necessarily illegal and illegitimate. As Fox argues, this depends on whether or not the right to associational autonomy is violated. That is, material benefits might be distributed to different social groups in a democratic way when these benefits are not conditioned on the surrendering of social organizations’ right to express their interests autonomously.

In contrast to the party’s perspective, some PANista officials have begun to realize that the party needs to develop stronger electoral coalitions to maintain itself in power. As Ernesto Ruffo said, “the PAN believes we are all citizens. The reality is that society still lacks political consciousness and organization. I agree that it is better to teach people to fish, but I became convinced that while they learn, it is also necessary to give them fish.” Following this conviction, Ruffo implemented a program, Manos a la obra, which engaged party operators in community work throughout the state. This program yielded its fruits in 1995, when the PAN won for the second straight time the election for governor. Governor Francisco Barrio, on the other hand, introduced a similar program after the electoral results of 1995, which were extremely unfavorable to the PAN. Confronted with this more pragmatic reality, PAN’s General Secretary recognized that “it is true that where the PAN was able to locate its people in critical areas, it won the elections. In Chihuahua this was not done in time and this is why we lost.”

---

42 Interview with Juan Antonio García Villa, October 1996.
43 Interview with Carlos Castillo Peraza, October 1996.
44 Eduardo Fernández Armendáriz. Primer Congreso Local de Oposición en México, Chihuahua, Comité Directivo Estatal del Partido Acción Nacional de Chihuahua, 1996. It is important to note that in 1995, the PAN lost its majority in the local Congress and most of the municipalities it had won in 1992.
46 Interview with Ernesto Ruffo, June 1996.
47 The program is called “Jalemos parejo” and was designed following the pattern used in Baja California. In fact, Ruffo sent his people to Chihuahua to help the governor design a similar program. Interview with Ernesto Ruffo, June 1996.
48 Interview with Juan Antonio García Villa, October 1996.
As a result of its experience in government, the PAN is increasingly having to face the need to reward its followers and maintain its links with its electorate beyond the electoral period. However, for that end, the party needs to forge closer links with its own administrations, a subject that leads us to the next dilemma.

c) Party-Government Relations: Opposition vs. Governing Party

In his classic study of political parties, Angelo Panebianco argues that as parties become institutionalized, growing numbers of party activists develop an interest for the preservation of the organization as an end in itself, beyond the party's ideological commitments.\(^49\) PAN's long history as an opposition party and its ability to survive in a hostile political environment, seem to confirm Panebianco's theory. Indeed, as Prud'homme shows, the PAN was successful in consolidating a set of internal rules and procedures which induced party activists to become engaged in party affairs, and allowed the party to find mechanisms to solve its internal conflicts successfully.\(^50\) However, as I argued above, this set of procedures suited a small, organizationally weak, and politically irrelevant party. But once the party started to gain access to power at increasingly rapid rates, its well institutionalized internal procedures became insufficient to allow the party to adapt to its new political environment.

If the party wants to continue to grow and overcome its organizational fragility, it needs first to enlarge its political apparatus to be able to handle the new and increasingly more complex tasks and responsibilities it needs to fulfill. Second, the party needs to formulate political programs with more constructive and programmatic proposals, beyond a mere oppositional attitude against the PRI and the government. Finally, the party needs to find a balance between the preservation of the organization and the attention to government's performance. Indeed, one of the most important challenges facing the party is to change from an "opposition party" to a "governing party", without diluting itself in power, as Felipe Calderón said during his campaign for the presidency of the party's National Executive Committee.

But here is where the party has had problems. In part, as I argued in the previous section, the PAN has not been able to design an alternative model of social mobilization allowing the party to create stronger electoral coalitions. Consequently, the party has tended to shrink dramatically after electoral periods. But more importantly, the PAN has failed to define itself as a party in government. Carlos Castillo Peraza expressed this well when he said, "the party does not know what to do when it wins; it does not know how to become a governing party. Just as the PRI believes it


\(^{50}\) According to Prud'homme, the constraints in the electoral arena, "led the best elements of the party to define their political career within the organization more than outside of it". Jean-François Prud'homme, *The National Action Party's PAN*. *Organizational Life and Strategic Decisions*, División de Estudios Políticos, CID, Documento de Trabajo EP-59, 1996.
loses its soul if it loses some elections, the PAN also believes it loses its soul if it wins.\textsuperscript{51}

The long tradition of the PAN as an opposition party, framed the organization in the "opposition". Its members became used to criticizing and combating the government; they identified themselves as opposition politicians and believed their responsibility was to organize effective electoral campaigns. But as a party in government, PANistas have found defining their responsibilities after they win an election more problematic. This is due in great part to the existing culture of distrust for politicians and the government in general. The result is that "PANistas often-times do not support their own governments".\textsuperscript{52} Indeed, PANista public officials are the first to complain that the party does not support them. Governor Barrio, for example said that "during the first three years in office, the PAN in Chihuahua behaved more as an opposition party".\textsuperscript{53} Former governor Ruffo referred to the same problem when he said that PANistas know how to "push", but they do not know how to "pull".\textsuperscript{54} This political attitude among PANista activists has fostered a great distance between the party and their own administrations. However, more than revealing the efforts of an autonomous organization which strives to distinguish itself from the PRI and resists subordination to the government, this attitude reveals the difficulties this political organization is experiencing in overcoming its traditional weakness and fragility. The party is still small,\textsuperscript{55} has few resources, and lacks a team of well trained professional politicians who can remain politically active in-between elections. This is particularly evident at the local and state levels.

One of the prerequisites for building a more solid and efficient political apparatus is to professionalize the party, expand its cadres, and enlarge its militants. That is, the party needs to create a bureaucratic apparatus. But this is perceived with some skepticism by leaders of the PAN. They fear that an organization of "professional politicians" runs the risk of becoming a "bureaucracy of mediocres" who live off the party, develop their own vested interests, and are then difficult to remove.\textsuperscript{56} That is, PAN's leaders fear losing the party's flexibility which has been so important for expanding its electoral presence. Finding a balance between bureaucratization and flexibility, between professionalism and voluntary work, becomes of utmost importance in the transformation of the PAN as a governing party.

\textsuperscript{51} Interview with Carlos Castillo Peraza, October 1996.
\textsuperscript{52} Interview with Juan Estrada, October 1996.
\textsuperscript{53} Interview with Francisco Barrio, September 1996.
\textsuperscript{54} Interview with Ernesto Ruffo, June 1996.
\textsuperscript{55} In 1988 PAN had 49,300 militants throughout the country. Although in 1995 PAN had 145,500 militants, it is still a small number. The party's organizational secretary is currently proposing to change the party statutes to relax the requirements for affiliating to the party. Interview with Raúl Ramírez, November 1996.
\textsuperscript{56} Interview with Carlos Castillo Peraza, October 1996.
III. The PAN in Mexico's Political Context

If one analyzes the evolution of political parties in a historical comparative perspective, one is led to conclude that the experience of the PAN since its foundation in 1939 resembles that of other opposition parties which evolved from being a small, ideologically tight, but politically ineffective organization to a more opened, pragmatic, larger, and politically relevant party. Panebianco's classic study of the evolution of political parties and the ways they adapt to changing environments reveals that the dilemmas currently confronting the PAN are inherent to a political party that is becoming increasingly more competitive in the electoral arena. As he argues, when an opposition party experiences a strong electoral growth, "those 'messianic hopes' nurtured by collective incentives while the party was in the opposition, without any hope of becoming a party in government, are bluntly frustrated when confronted to the day-to-day administrative demands: the temperature inside the party increases, the conflicts and the contrasts between different political alternatives intensify, and in few words, the party's identity comes under threat." 57

To survive and adapt to an increasingly more complex and uncertain political environment, the PAN, as other political parties, needs to find an internal balance between different and competing forces at work: the distribution of collective and selective incentives; the conflict between ideological coherence and pragmatism; between formulating a unitary political discourse and integrating regional and local diversities; and between its responsibilities as an opposition party and a party in government.

During the election of the party's national president in 1996, these internal dilemmas became clear. The party's two candidates, Ernesto Ruffo and Felipe Calderón embodied the conflicts between the newcomers and the old-time activists, between the pragmatic and administrative profile of the public official and the ideological and political profile of the party activist, and between regionally based politicians and politicians tied to the center.

While Ruffo had the support of the "personalities" inside the PAN, that is, the four governors, Calderón found a greater support among the party's rank and file. He was perceived as someone with historic links to the party and thus more faithful to the party's traditional identity. However, Calderón acknowledged that the future of the party depends on the ability of its new president to find a synthesis between the old and the new, between theory and organization, and between ideological precision and electoral efficacy. "These are like the two hemispheres of the brain. They do not work alone." 58

57 Angelo Panebianco, op. cit., p. 101. The translation is mine.
58 Patricio Ballados and Humberto Musacchio, "Entrevista a Felipe Calderón", Voz y Voto, núm. 37, March 1996, p. 8. Calderón is the son of one of the founders of the party who wrote a book about the PAN's history.
Aside from finding internal equilibriums which are necessary for the party's survival as an organization, the PAN also confronts the need to define its political strategy for the near future. Since the party decided to participate in electoral contests and to mobilize increasing numbers of people, the PAN adopted a 'federalist' strategy. That is, PANista leaders perceived that they had greater chances to win elections at the local and state levels and thus invested most of their political and economic resources at these levels. This strategy also recognized that the transition to democracy in Mexico was going to be gradual and incremental because they did not have the political strength to push for an all-encompassing political and electoral reform. However, with growing electoral success, this strategy may also come under increased pressure. That is, PANistas can adopt a more combative political stance and direct their attention increasingly towards the national level, especially considering the proximity of the 1997 elections.

While forecasting electoral tendencies is beyond this paper, it is possible to argue that with the current electoral legislation, the PAN (or any other opposition party, for that matter), will have a hard time winning a majority in the Chamber of Deputies or the governor's election in the D.F. What PANista leaders perceive as a desirable and more realistic possibility is to win enough votes to prevent the PRI from winning an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies. In that case, the PRI will be forced to negotiate with the opposition to approve legislation. However, PANistas also fear this situation might lead to a deadlock between the Chamber of Deputies and the Executive.

The PRI's traditional control of Congress since 1929 virtually eliminated one of the major risks of presidentialist regimes, namely a confrontation between the executive and the legislative branches of government. Mexican legislation lacks institutional mechanisms to solve a possible crisis between these two branches of government. Where this is most evident and potentially dangerous is with regards to the approval of the budget. In the context of a severe economic crisis and a politically


60 Interview with Luis H. Álvarez, October 1996. This contrasts with the more radical and combative strategy adopted by the PRD, despite the party's lack of electoral strength.

61 In 1997 the Chamber of Deputies will be renewed and the governor of the Federal District will be elected for the first time in Mexico's post-revolutionary history.

62 The law allows the party with a majority of votes to have an over-representation margin in the Chamber of Deputies. To win a majority, the opposition needs to win a great number of votes.

63 Interview with Juan Antonio García Villa, October 1996.

64 The budget can only be approved or rejected, there are no provisions for approving only parts of the budget or allowing the previous year budget to come into effect while the differences between Congress and the executive are resolved. Moreover, the President can only veto bills that need to pass through both chambers of Congress; he does not have the right to veto resolutions that only pass through one chamber. Since the budget is only approved by the Chamber of Deputies, the
uncertain situation, a crisis of governability may give the executive the best excuse to call for an emergency situation and like Fujimori, dissolve the Congress.

Beyond these speculations, what is clear is that the PAN is emerging as the strongest opposition force in Mexico. To survive in this new political environment, the party needs to overcome its internal dilemmas and face the responsibilities entailed in becoming a new governing party.

**Table 1**

PAN's Governing Positions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Governors</th>
<th>Senators</th>
<th>Federal Deputies</th>
<th>Municipal Presidents</th>
<th>Population Governed by PAN</th>
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<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td>218</td>
<td>24.7 Mill</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1996&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td>222</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 Mill</td>
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*Sources: El Cotidiano, núm. 65, México, UAM-Azcapotzalco, 1994; Carlo Varela and Rafael Vergara, *Municipios ganados por el PAN hasta noviembre de 1996*, México, Fundación Rafael Preciado A.C.*

<sup>a</sup> Baja California  
<sup>b</sup> Guanajuato (interim)  
<sup>c</sup> Chihuahua  
<sup>d</sup> Baja California, Jalisco, Guanajuato.

* Until October 1996. Does not include the November elections in the state of Mexico, Hidalgo and Coahuila.

President cannot veto an amended budget which he dislikes. For an interesting analysis of the powers of the president in Mexico see “The Political Sources of Presidentialism in Mexico”, in Scott Mainwaring and Mathew Shugart, *Presidentialism in Latin America*, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.
Table 2
Presidential Elections
(Percentage % total vote)

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<td>PAN</td>
<td>93.55</td>
<td>98.19</td>
<td>93.89</td>
<td>77.90</td>
<td>74.31</td>
<td>90.43</td>
<td>87.77</td>
<td>85.09</td>
<td>87.84</td>
<td>68.43</td>
<td>50.36</td>
<td>50.13</td>
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<td>PRI</td>
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<td>17.07</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>19.33</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>6.25</td>
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<td>19.33</td>
<td>19.33</td>
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<td>3.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>PST-FCRN</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.76</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Others 6.45% 1.81% 6.11% 22.1% 17.87% 0.15% 1.16% 2.17% 12.16% 15.95% 32.57% 6.11%

Table 3
Partido Acción Nacional
Organizational Structure

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ORDER COMMISSION  NATIONAL COUNCIL  OVERSEEING COMMISSION

PERMANENT COMMISSION  FINANCE COMMISSION  ARBITRATION COMMISSION  CONCILIATION COMMISSION  SPECIAL COMMISSIONS

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

NATIONAL PRESIDENT  GENERAL SECRETARY

STUDIES SECRETARY  ELECTORAL ACTION SECRETARY  CITIZEN'S ACTION SECRETARY  ORGANIZATION SECRETARY  TRAINING SECRETARY  ECONOMIC PROMOTION SECRETARY

ORDER COMMISSION  STATE ASSEMBLY  OVERSEEING COMMISSION  STATE COUNCIL  STATE DIRECTIVE COMMITTEE  MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY  MUNICIPAL DIRECTIVE COMMITTEE  SECTORAL COMMITTEES

Graph 1
PAN's Municipal Victories
1947 - 1996 *

Sources: Carlo Varela and Rafael Vergara, Municipios ganados por el PAN hasta noviembre de 1996, Fundación Rafael Preciado A.C.
* Until October. Does not include the November elections in the state of Mexico, Hidalgo and Coahuila.
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