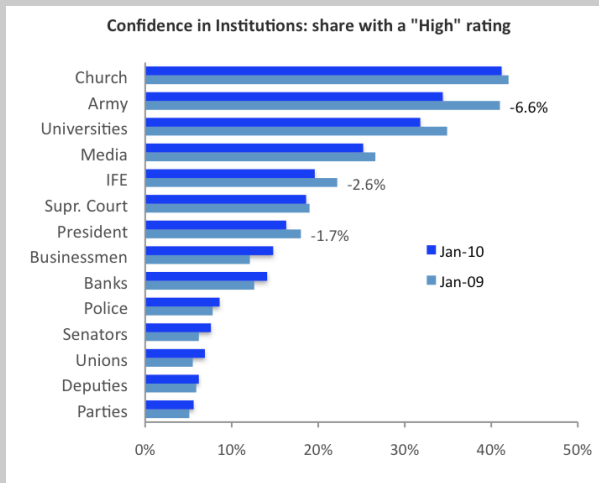


Alan Stoga, President
Daniel Wilson, Managing Director and Editor

Poll

Confidence in Army declines sharply

Mitofsky's nationwide survey of confidence in institutions showed a decrease in confidence in the most admired institutions in Mexico. Those saying they had a "high" degree of confidence in the Army fell 6.6% to 34.4% from 41% in January 2009. In terms of overall ranking (which also takes into account other responses), the Army fell from first place to third. Confidence in the IFE slipped 2.6%. According to Mitofsky, this reflects the belief that the IFE has become more politicized. Confidence in the Presidency also decreased. Political parties remain the least respected institutions in Mexico, with only 5.6% having a high degree of confidence in them. (www.consulta.com.mx)



President backs Gómez Mont in "complex and difficult situation"

President **Felipe Calderón** made his first public statements on Government Secretary **Fernando Gómez Mont's** resignation from the PAN. In a TV interview, and later reinforced with an official press release, the President said, "He is a loyal man, a Government Secretary who fulfills his responsibilities ...and who fully enjoys my confidence.... He is an effective interlocutor with the different political actors, with the opposition, with the PAN itself." Calderón also said in the interview, "Truly, this is a complex and difficult situation for me. I believe that this situation came about through a series of problems and misunderstandings that should not have occurred." ([Excelsior 2/17](#), [Presidencia 2/16](#))

Senate president predicts passage of political reform this session

Senate president **Carlos Navarrete** (PRD) predicted that the Senate will pass a political reform package during March, in order to send it to the Chamber of Deputies for its vote before the session ends on April 30th. Navarrete said that with the PRD-PT-Convergencia proposal (submitted last week) and the PRI proposal (expected this week), along with **President Calderón's proposal** sent down in December there was plenty of material to begin preparing draft legislation. The **PRD political reform proposal** consists of 12 major points, including congressional ratification of cabinet officers and recall elections for the President, governors, and mayors, that are in sharp contrast to the President's reform package. ([Universal 2/20](#), [PRD Senate 2/18](#))

President makes second trip to Juárez ...

President **Calderón** made a second trip to Juárez, to kick start his new four-point security strategy. The President met with citizens and said that "We are here, barely at the beginning of what ought to be a new era for Ciudad Juárez, ... marked by realism, seriousness, and meeting urgent needs." **Abelardo Escobar**, the Secretary for Agrarian Reform, and the President's representative in the coordination efforts, said that a timetable for work would be completed this week. ([Universal 2/18](#), [Universal 2/20](#))

... Calls for new security laws

At Army Day ceremonies, the President made an urgent call for Congress to approve a new National Security Law that will give the Army greater legal protections in the fight against drug traffickers: "We must act with respect for the law and human rights. ... But we can hardly expect to ask the Army to defend society from perverse criminals without giving its soldiers the powers they need and legal certainty regarding the actions they take," he said. Defense Secretary **Gen. Guillermo Galván** said the reforms could not be postponed.

The Government also sent a new anti-kidnapping law to Congress that provides for life imprisonment, restricts prisoner communications with outsiders, and requires that kidnappers be imprisoned outside of their area of operation, among others provisions. ([Reforma 2/18](#), [Universal 2/20](#))

Mexico hosts Rio Group summit; negotiations start on Brazil free trade agreement

The Latin America head of states "Unity Summit" starts today in Cancún, with **President Calderón** as host. The group is expected to announce the decision to go forward with a new regional organization that would include all Latin American and Caribbean countries, but exclude the U.S. and Canada. According to Foreign Minister **Patricia Castellanos**, "The idea to have a forum—for the region and from the region—came from a proposal of President Calderón. We sincerely believe that it will assist in promoting greater integration. ... From outside, it will strengthen the voice of the subcontinent." The scope and legal framework for the new organization will not be decided until June 2011.

The government is also taking advantage of the presence of **President Lula** to announce the start the negotiations of a Mexico-Brazil free trade agreement. Economy Secretary **Gerardo Ruíz** will be in charge of the Mexican negotiating team. ([SRE 2/20](#), [Universal 2/21](#))

Key Dates

2/22-3: Rio Group summit, Cancún
4/30: End of congressional session
5/16: Yucatán elections
7/4: Elections in 13 states

9/1: Presidential *Informe*; start of fall congressional session
9/15: 200th Anniversary of Independence
10/3: Chiapas elections (possible)
11/15: 100th Anniversary of the Revolution