

**THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPACT OF NATURAL DISASTER:  
THE 1985 EARTHQUAKE AND GRASSROOTS SOCIOPOLITICAL MOBILIZATION  
IN MEXICO**

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Our paper briefly reviews the related social and political fallout from the devastating 1985 earthquake in Mexico City. Over the course of the three years that followed the earthquake (actually two earthquakes, on September 19 and 20, of 7.8 and 7.1 magnitude), social stresses introduced by the disaster evolved a political expression that came to threaten the entire Mexican political system. Because the earthquake significantly altered the basic social and political profile of Mexico, and continues to shape political debate at present, it stands as a prime test case for studying and understanding the wide-ranging impacts of natural disasters in Latin America and the developing world.

The social and political impacts of the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City were both diverse and widespread, ranging from psychological scars to broad social and political "awakening." Mexican leaders and professionals have had to learn to understand the profound changes wrought by the earthquake on both micro and macro levels. Psychologists and