

Koran Central holy book of Islam.

Majlis Legislature of Iran.

Muhammed Main prophet of Islam.

Mossaddeq, Mohammed Prime Minister of Iran; deposed in 1953 by Operation Ajax.

National Front Political party in Iran following World War II, which opposed the monarchy and favored greater Iranian control over natural resources. Outlawed after Operation Ajax.

Operation Ajax U.S.- and UK-backed overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mossaddeq in 1953.

Pahlavi, Reza Khan Monarch of Iran from 1925 to 1941.

Persia Name for Iran before 1935.

quietist View within Shiism that rejects theocracy and the direct role of religion in the state.

Revolutionary Guard Paramilitary force charged with defending the regime from domestic and internal enemies.

SAVAK Secret police of prerevolutionary Iran.

Second Khomeini Front Reformist party that emerged in Iran to contest 2000 Majlis elections.

sharia Religious law of Islam.

shiat Ali "party of Ali," term from which the word Shiism derives.

Shiism Minority sect of Islam that differs over the proper descendants of the Prophet Mohammed.

supreme leader Chief spiritual and political leader of Iran.

theocracy Rule by religion or religious leaders.

ummah "Community," meant to refer to nation or Islamic community everywhere.

velayat-e faqih Rule by Islamic jurists; Islamic Republic's political system that places power in the hands of clerics.

White Revolution Policy of Shah to rapidly modernize and westernize Iran.

WEB LINKS

Iran Daily www.iran-daily.com Web site of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei www.leader.ir

Islamic Republic News Agency www.irna.com/en

Middle East Economic Survey www.mees.com

Middle East Network Information Center, University of Texas, Austin menic.utexas.edu/menice/Countries_and_Regions/Iran

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran www.mfa.gov.ir

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran www.mfa.gov.ir
Web site of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei www.leader.ir

11 MEXICO

Head of state and government:
President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa
(since December 1, 2006)

Capital: Mexico City

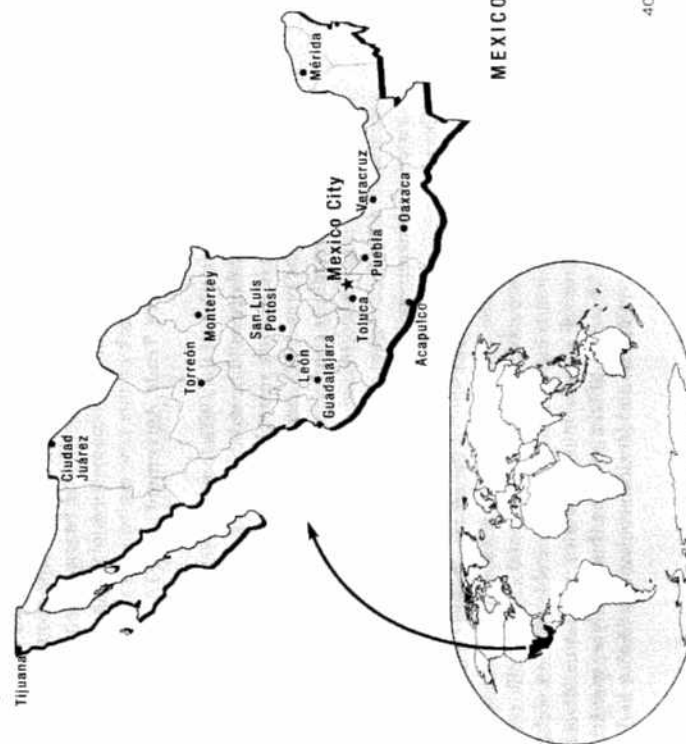
Total land size: 1,972,550 sq km

Population: 109 million

GDP at PPP: 1.34 trillion US\$

GDP per capita at PPP: \$12,500

Human development index ranking: 52



INTRODUCTION

Why Study This Case?

For over eight decades, stability was the feature that differentiated Mexico's political system from that of most of its Latin American neighbors and from its own turbulent pre-1917 history. Unlike the political atmosphere of most other third world countries, Mexico's post-1917 politics were relatively peaceful: power was transferred between leaders after regular elections, and the military was thoroughly subordinate to civilians. This stability resulted from a highly effective and remarkably flexible semi-authoritarian regime dominated by a single party, the **Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)**. That model delivered impressive rates of economic growth but also produced an economy plagued by severe economic inequality and massive poverty.

In July 2000, the PRI's long tenure came to a sudden end, marking the start of a new era in Mexican politics. The decline of the PRI's political hegemony began in the early 1980s, when the Mexican economy narrowly averted bankruptcy. In response to a severe economic crisis, the PRI leadership started to dismantle the prevailing protectionist and statist economic model. Mexico opened up its economy to the world and began a transition to a neoliberal political economy. It quickly became one of Latin America's most open economies. The hallmark of this new era was Mexico's 1994 entry into the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** with the United States and Canada.

The economic crisis of the 1980s (and the PRI's response to it) created new sources of political opposition, and the party's power was seriously threatened for the first time in seventy years. In 1988, the PRI resorted to massive fraud to avoid losing the presidency, and it increased the use of fraud to prevent the opposition from taking control of state legislatures. In January 1994, armed Mayan peasants shocked Mexico when they seized control of a southern Mexican town. In March of that year, the PRI's presidential candidate was assassinated while campaigning for office, the first such political murder since 1928. There were allegations that the murder had been ordered by members of the governing party, and the inability of the government to solve the crime added to a sense of crisis. The emergence of a strong political challenge to the PRI, the presence of an armed guerrilla movement, and a high-profile political murder destroyed the image of Mexico's system as stable and peaceful.

The political turmoil was alarming to Mexicans and Americans alike. Participation in NAFTA only ratified a growing (but highly asymmetrical) interdependence between the U.S. and Mexican economies. Mexico and the United

States share a 2,000-mile border, and Mexican immigration to the United States has long provided a steady stream of labor that is vital to the U.S. economy. In addition, the United States is the chief consumer of Mexico's oil exports, and Mexico is now the United States' second-biggest trading partner, after Canada.

After two decades of political and economic crisis, the July 2000 victory of **Vicente Fox**, the first non-PRI president since 1917, provided new hope for Mexico's future, even as it raised new questions. Fox took power vowing to shake up the Mexican system but soon discovered that the PRI's loss of the presidency did not give him a blank check. The PRI maintained strongholds of political power in a variety of federal and state political institutions. The hotly contested elections of July 2006 revealed that six years after its democratic transition, Mexico was deeply polarized between left and right. The conservative **Felipe Calderón** won a razor-thin victory over a leftist candidate who was critical of free trade, and whose main priority was to address Mexico's endemic poverty. The election was so close that Calderón's opponent, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, demanded a recount, launched a legal challenge to the results, and has refused to concede to his opponent. Our study of Mexico will raise several important questions: Has Mexico had a democratic transition, or is it still best viewed as a semi-authoritarian regime? Has Mexico's embrace of a neoliberal economic model been a success, or has it merely exacerbated inequality and worsened poverty? Can the Mexican state defend itself against challenges to its authority? Is Mexico likely to remain a close and trusted ally of the United States?

Major Geographic and Demographic Features

Mexico's stunningly diverse geography includes tropical rain forests, snow-capped volcanoes, and rich agricultural regions. Historically, the two major mountain ranges that divide Mexico, the eastern and western Sierra Madres, have made transportation and communication difficult. Only 12 percent of Mexico's land is arable, and the most productive agricultural areas are in northern Mexico, close to the U.S. border. There, large and highly mechanized export farms provide much of America's winter produce. The proximity of Mexico's agricultural export to the U.S. market has been a major boost to Mexico's economic growth. Agriculture in southern Mexico is characterized by smaller farms and less efficient production. Mexico is well endowed with minerals and has major oil reserves.

With 109 million people, Mexico has the second-largest population in Latin America (after Brazil). Its population is racially quite diverse; about 60 percent are **mestizos**, people of mixed Spanish and indigenous blood; another 30 percent, living primarily in the central and southern parts of the country, are considered indigenous because they speak an indigenous language. The

largest indigenous groups are the **Maya**, located in Mexico's far south (along the Guatemalan border), and the **Nahuatl**, concentrated in central Mexico. On Mexico's Caribbean coast is a large population of African descent.

Nearly three quarters of Mexico's population lives in an urban setting, a relatively recent change. Mexico City has dwarfed all other Mexican cities; it now has about 18 million residents. Population growth has slowed with economic development, but Mexico's large population still strains the country's resources. As a result, Mexicans still migrate in very large numbers. Many have left the impoverished countryside for the cities, often leaving the poor south for the wealthier north, especially the factory towns along the U.S. border. At the same time, a steady stream of Mexicans has migrated across the border to the United States.

Historical Development of the State

The history of the modern Mexican state can be viewed as a struggle between political order, which has almost always been achieved by authoritarian rulers, and periodic political anarchy.¹

When the Spanish conquistador **Hernán Cortés** arrived in Mexico in 1519, he encountered well-established and highly sophisticated indigenous civilizations. The country had long been home to such peoples as the Maya, Aztecs, and Toltecs, who had relatively prosperous economies, impressive architecture, sophisticated agricultural methods, and powerful militaries. Within three years of their arrival, the Spanish conquerors had defeated the last Aztec leader, **Cuauhtémoc**; destroyed the impressive Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán; and decimated the indigenous population. By the early seventeenth century, the indigenous population had been reduced from about 25 million to under 1 million. The surviving indigenous peoples of Mexico, concentrated in the central and southern parts of the country, became a permanent underclass of slaves and landless peasants.

The Aztec Empire was replaced by the equally hierarchical, authoritarian, and militaristic Spanish Empire, which created a legacy very different from that imparted to the United States by British colonialism. Mexico was the richest of Spain's colonial possessions, and Spain ruled the distant colony with an iron fist, sending a new viceroy to the colony every four years. Colonial viceroys were absolute dictators: armed with the terror of the Spanish Inquisition, they were able to stamp out most political dissent. Lacking any civilian oversight, rampant corruption thrived in the colonial administration.

INDEPENDENCE AND INSTABILITY: THE SEARCH FOR ORDER

The struggle for independence can be viewed as a conflict over control of the state between the aristocracy loyal to Spain and the increasingly powerful and

TIME LINE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Year	Event
1810-21	War of Independence fought against Spain
1846-48	One third of Mexico's territory lost in war with the United States
1910-17	Mexican Revolution
1917	Revolutionary constitution adopted
1929	Official revolutionary party created, later becoming the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)
1934-40	Presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, during which land reform is promoted, the oil industry is nationalized, and the state is given a larger role in the economy
1939	Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) formed as a conservative opposition to the revolution
1968	Student protest movement against the Mexican government violently repressed
1981-82	Economic collapse caused by sudden drop in oil prices and Mexico's inability to pay its foreign debt
1988	Assumption of power by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari after elections widely viewed as fraudulent
1994	North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) put into effect Rebellion of Zapatistas, indigenous peasants in the southern state of Chiapas
	PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio assassinated while campaigning, replaced by Ernesto Zedillo
2000	Election of PAN candidate Vicente Fox, marking the first defeat of the PRI in seventy-one years
2006	Felipe Calderón begins a six-year term as president

wealthy **criollos** (Mexican-born descendants of the Spanish colonists). Though inspired by the French and American Revolutions, the Mexican independence movement was mostly a response to the sudden blow that Napoleon's invading armies delivered to Spain. When Spain adopted a progressive liberal constitution in 1820, conservative Mexican elites accepted independence as the only means by which to preserve order and the status quo. The leading rebels

and political conservatives agreed that an independent Mexico, declared in 1821, would preserve the role of the Catholic Church and implement a constitutional monarchy with a European at the head. **Mexico's War of Independence** lasted eleven years and cost 600,000 lives.

Mexico's independence was dominated by political conservatives who sought to preserve the economic and social status quo. As a result, independence did nothing to alleviate the poverty of Mexico's indigenous people and its large mestizo population. Indeed, the violence of the War of Independence and the elimination of the minimal protections of the Spanish crown worsened their plight. The power of the large landholders, or *latifundistas*, grew with independence, and the newly independent Mexico grew more economically disparate and politically unstable. Much of the turmoil and political chaos that plagued Mexico over the next half century was caused by a dispute between conservative monarchists and more liberal republicans. With the end of Spanish rule and the strong centralized government of the viceroy, Mexico was dominated by local military strongmen, known as *caciques*. Mexico's weak central state could not impose its authority.

Independent Mexico's first leader, Colonel Agustín de Iturbide, had himself crowned emperor in 1822 but was overthrown by **General Antonio López de Santa Ana**. Mexico's first in a series of *caudillos* (national military strongmen), and executed two years later. Santa Ana dominated the politics of Mexico for the next thirty years; despite his considerable power, however, he was unable to impose his authority over the local *caciques* or to prevent the secession of Texas in 1836. The impotence of a fragmented Mexico became even more apparent in the 1840s, when a rising imperial power, the United States, defeated the country in the **Mexican-American War** (1846–1848), which resulted in Mexico's loss of half its territory (present-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah) to the United States. In the aftermath of the defeat, Mexico's weakened government faced a massive uprising, known as **the War of the Castes**, by the indigenous Mayan population in the south. It took several years of fighting to subdue the rebellion.

Over the next several decades, Mexican liberals, led by a Zapotec Indian, **Benito Juárez**, attempted to centralize, modernize, and secularize Mexico. Juárez, who occupied the presidency on three separate occasions, imposed a fairly progressive constitution in 1857 and is today considered one of Mexico's first proponents of democracy. Juárez was unable to bring stability to Mexico, however. In 1864, Mexican conservatives, backed by French troops, imposed an ill-fated and short-lived monarchy ruled by an Austrian emperor, Maximilian, who was captured and executed in 1867. Juárez regained power, but his reforms alienated Mexican conservatives, and Mexico soon succumbed to a long dictatorship.

THE PORFIRIATO: ECONOMIC LIBERALISM AND POLITICAL AUTHORITARIANISM
From 1876 to 1910, Mexican politics was dominated by **Porfirio Díaz**, a general who had backed the liberal reforms of Juárez and fought to expel the French-imposed monarchy. Díaz assumed power in 1876 and had himself reelected repeatedly until 1910. Díaz ruled Mexico with an iron fist, imposing a brutal authoritarian regime (known as the *porfiriato*), which gave Mexico its first taste of stability since independence. Díaz was also responsible for Mexico's first real economic development and was the first Mexican ruler to impose the power of the state on remote areas.

THE REVOLUTION

The Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) can be viewed as a struggle between two groups attempting to seize control of the state. The first included middle-class Mexicans resisting the dictatorship of Díaz. The second included radical social reformers who sought agrarian reform, among other things.

In the first phase of the revolution, middle-class political reformers, led by the landowner **Francisco Madero**, defeated the Díaz dictatorship. Madero's victory promised democratic reforms and minimal economic change. The second phase of the revolution involved a struggle between these political reformers and advocates of radical socioeconomic change. The most famous revolutionary advocate of the poor was **Emiliano Zapata**, a young mestizo peasant leader. Zapata organized a peasant army in Morelos, south of Mexico City, to push for agrarian reform. In the north of Mexico, **Francisco (Pancho) Villa** had organized an army of peasants and small farmers.

The often contradictory aspects of the Mexican Revolution help explain why it was so protracted and so bloody. Mexico soon descended into political chaos, in which armed bands led by regional *caciques* fought one another over a period of ten years. About 1.5 million Mexicans (about 7 percent of the total population) died in the conflict, and thousands more fled north to the United States. Order was restored only in 1917, under the leadership of a northern governor, **Venustiano Carranza**. He defeated not only his supporters, who wanted a return to a dictatorship, but also Zapata and Villa, the more radical voices of the revolution.

The constitution of 1917 reflected some of the contradictions of the revolution. The document was written not by peasants and workers but by middle-class mestizo professionals who had suffered under the Díaz dictatorship. That some of their values were largely "liberal" explains provisions that call for regular elections as well as harsh measures to weaken the Catholic Church. The constitution sought to prevent the reemergence of a dictatorship by devolving political power to Mexico's states, adopting federalism, and barring presidents and other elected leaders from reelection. Reflecting the power of the emerging mestizo class and the role played by indigenous Mexicans in

unseating the dictatorship, the 1917 constitution provided elaborate protection of indigenous communal lands and called for land reform. It was also a nationalist document, prohibiting foreign ownership of Mexican land and mineral rights.

Although Carranza successfully seized power and fostered the new constitution, he was unable to implement many of the reforms or to stem Mexico's endemic political violence. His government was responsible for the murder of Zapata in 1919, and Carranza himself was assassinated by political opponents in 1920.

Mexico's next two elected presidents, Álvaro Obregón (1920–1924) and Plutarco Elías Calles (1924–1928), finally put an end to the political bloodshed and developed a political system capable of maintaining order. Obregón promoted trade unions but brought them under the control of the state. He also promoted land reform while tolerating the presence of haciendas. He managed to gain the support and recognition of the United States, which had feared the revolution as a socialist experiment. Most significant, he purged the army and weakened the revolutionary generals who had continued to meddle in politics. Calles consolidated state power by imposing the first income tax and investing in education and infrastructure. He vigorously enforced the constitution's limit on the power of the Catholic Church. The church was a major landowner, and its support for the dictatorship of Díaz and the enemies of the revolution made it a prime target for reform. Religious processions were banned, clergy could not appear in public in religious garb, the church could not own any property, and control over education was given to the state.

When Calles left power, he also left Mexico his most enduring legacy: the *Revolucionario Partido Nacional*, later renamed the *Revolucionario Partido Institucional* (PRI). From the outset, the PRI was conceived as a party of power and a party of the state. Its colors (red, white, and green) are the colors of the Mexican flag. Its goal was to encompass all of those who supported the revolution, and its members thus ranged from socialists to liberals. Moreover, it was designed to incorporate and co-opt the most important organizations in Mexican society, starting with the army. The PRI's main purpose was to end political violence by controlling the political system and the process of presidential succession. After decades of instability and violence, the revolution's leaders brought Mexico an unprecedented period of political peace.

STABILITY ACHIEVED: THE PRI IN POWER, 1917–2000

For decades, the PRI provided Mexico with the much-desired political stability that its founders had sought. Under the PRI, Mexico held national elections every six years, and new presidents took power without violence or

military intervention. The PRI regime featured a strong president, directly elected for a single six-year term. Though not stipulated in the 1917 constitution, PRI presidents claimed the power to name their successors by officially designating the PRI candidate for the presidential election. During most of the no official PRI candidate ever lost a presidential election. During most of the PRI's tenure in office, the Mexican president enjoyed the reverence and aloofness of monarchical heads of state while possessing far more power than the typical democratic president. Most important, until 2000, Mexican presidents controlled the vast machinery of the PRI and used the state to dispense patronage. Unlike U.S. presidents, they faced no effective check on their power from the legislature, judiciary, or state governments, all of which were controlled by the PRI.

Under the PRI, regular elections were held for national, state, and local offices, and opposition parties actively contested these elections. During most of this period, there was no formal censorship of the press, and Mexicans were free to voice their opinions and criticize the government. Mexicans were free to live where they wanted, and according to their constitution, they were living in a democratic state.

But under its surface, the Mexican regime had clear authoritarian tendencies. The PRI held an inordinate amount of power. It won every presidential election between 1917 and 2000 and during that time won the vast majority of seats in the legislature and at the state and local level. The PRI dominated major trade unions and peasant organizations. Through its control of the state, the PRI dominated major pieces of the economy, including Mexico's vast oil wealth. The PRI became expert at co-opting possible sources of opposition, including the press and the weak opposition parties. Unlike many authoritarian regimes, the PRI did not often need to revert to harsh measures of repression; when necessary, however, the regime used a variety of tactics to stifle the opposition. Most notorious was the selective use of electoral fraud to preserve its political dominance, a tactic that was employed increasingly in the 1970s and 1980s as its grip on power began to erode.

Since the Mexican Revolution, scholars have struggled to characterize the Mexican regime. It is perhaps most accurate to view Mexico under the PRI as an authoritarian regime dominated by a single political party, but one that afforded far more civil liberties than its authoritarian counterparts elsewhere. Mexico held regular (though not always free and fair) elections, tolerated and even encouraged political parties (although those parties began to win office only in the 1980s), and formally protected basic civil liberties. Compared with most other authoritarian regimes, the PRI kept human rights abuses to a minimum. The PRI maintained its power almost exclusively through co-optation, inclusion, and corruption. Its unparalleled success meant that it did not often

CARLOS SALINAS AND THE POWER OF THE PRI

The history of Carlos Salinas illustrates well the workings of the PRI. Salinas, a Harvard-educated technocrat, rose steadily through the ranks and was appointed by his political patron, President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, to a top cabinet post. De la Madrid then handpicked Salinas for the PRI presidential nomination. In 1988, Salinas won the presidency in elections widely thought to have been stolen from the opposition. Despite a questionable popular mandate, Salinas continued de la Madrid's neoliberal economic reforms and signed the landmark 1994 NAFTA with the United States and Canada.

Mexican presidents traditionally completed their terms and once out of power scrupulously avoided the political limelight and were treated with considerable respect. The tradition was broken with Salinas, however, who found himself vilified after leaving office in 1994. His economic policies were blamed for the economic depression of 1994–1995, and his administration was accused of massive corruption. In March 1995, Salinas's brother Raúl was arrested and later sentenced to prison for the 1994 murder of a PRI deputy leader. Subsequent investigations revealed that the former president's brother had stashed millions of dollars in hidden bank accounts and had not paid taxes on most of that wealth. As a sign of the growing disarray within the PRI, Carlos Salinas then committed a political taboo by publicly attacking the policies of his handpicked successor, President Ernesto Zedillo. At the request of Zedillo, Salinas went into voluntary exile in Ireland. For many Mexicans, the Salinas episode was symbolic of everything that was wrong with PRI rule.

need to resort to brute repression. The Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa thus viewed the PRI regime as the "perfect dictatorship."²

THE SLOW EROSION OF PRI POWER, 1980–2000

By the early 1980s, the vaunted stability of the Mexican regime was called into question by a series of interrelated economic and political challenges to PRI rule. The economic crisis of the 1980s unleashed numerous challenges to the party's political hegemony. The conservative opposition in northern Mexico, long an advocate of free-market economic policies, began to seriously contest local and state elections. The PRI was then forced to revert to ever-increasing and ever-more-overt electoral fraud to deny power to the opposition. The watershed election of July 2000 ended the PRI's seventy-one-year control of the presidency. Vicente Fox, candidate of the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), handily defeated **Francisco Labastida** of the PRI, despite an expensive and elaborate PRI campaign.

POLITICAL REGIME

Political Institutions

THE CONSTITUTION

On paper, the Mexican regime does not differ markedly from that of the United States, although much more power is granted to Mexico's president. The constitution of 1917 calls for a presidential legislative-executive system; a separation of judicial, legislative, and executive power; and a system of federalism that gives Mexico's states considerable power. The seventy-one-year domination of the political system by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), however, rendered this formidable constitution largely meaningless. Mexican presidents enjoyed near-dictatorial powers with few checks on their authority. Through their domination of the PRI, they not only controlled the judiciary but also handpicked state governors. The Mexican legislature might have served as a check on the PRI, but until July 1997 it was controlled by it. Elections at all levels were largely a charade, serving mainly to validate PRI appointments to elective offices. Even the president was not truly elected, since incumbent presidents ritually designated their successor. Campaigns were more celebrations of PRI's power than genuine political contests.

How, then, did the opposition manage to win local and state elections in the 1980s? And how did the opposition unseat the PRI in the 2000 presidential election? Part of the answer to these questions lies in the growing illegitimacy of the regime during the 1970s, when Mexico's economy began to deteriorate. But the erosion of PRI legitimacy was also the result of widespread outrage in reaction to the PRI's blatant and unabashed disregard for the rule of law in the 1980s and

ESSENTIAL POLITICAL FEATURES

- Legislative-executive system: federal republic
- Legislature: Congreso de la Unión (National Congress)
- Lower house: Cámara Federal de Diputados (Federal Chamber of Deputies)
- Upper house: Cámara de Senadores (Senate)
- Unitary or federal division of power: federal
- Main geographic subunits: estados (states)
- Electoral system for lower house: mixed single-member district and proportional representation
- Chief judicial body: Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación (National Supreme Court of Justice)

presence of the opposition in the legislature. Other reforms passed under the last PRI president, **Ernesto Zedillo**, gave the legislature control over judicial appointments and imposed electoral safeguards that greatly reduced the ability of a government to steal an election.

The Branches of Government

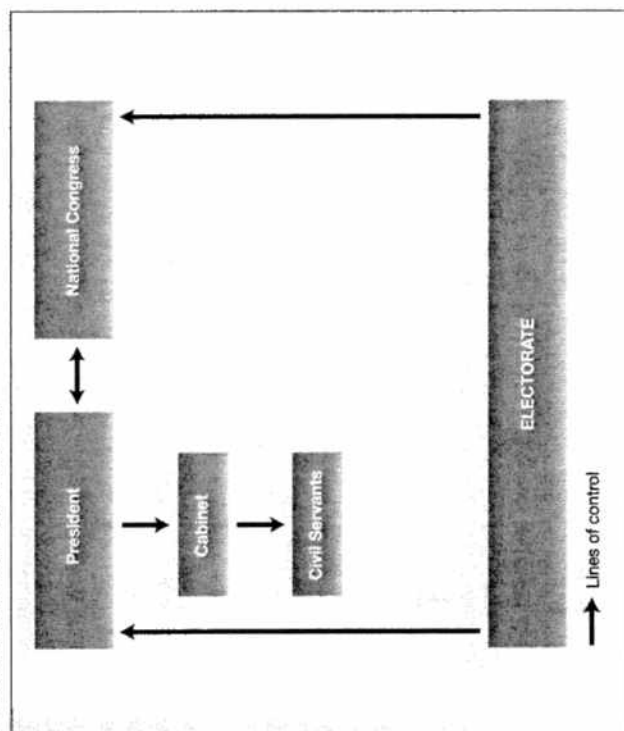
THE PRESIDENCY

Because of their immense power and unchallenged authority, Mexican presidents have often been viewed as elected monarchs. The 1917 constitution created a far more powerful president than that conceived in the U.S. model. The Mexican president can issue executive decrees that have the force of law. He can directly introduce legislation in Congress and can veto legislation initiated by Congress. Until 1994, Mexican presidents had extensive power to appoint and remove judges. As late as 1982, President **José López Portillo** essentially decreed the nationalization of Mexico's banking system.

Mexican presidents serve a single six-year term. They must be at least thirty-five years old and native born and cannot be a member of the clergy or an active member of the military. During the seventy-one-year reign of the PRI, the power of the president was greatly enhanced by the tradition of hand-picking his successor, who was generally chosen from among the cabinet members. Mexican presidents also enjoyed enormous power because the state played a leading role in the economy. Control over key natural resources and infrastructure (for example, oil, electricity, and communications) historically put the key economic lever in the hands of the executive.

Mexican presidents appoint and preside over a large cabinet of ministers, who oversee the various government departments. In recent decades, the **Secretariat of Government**, which controls internal political affairs, and the **Secretariat of the Treasury**, which oversees the economy, have been the highest-profile cabinet posts and have often been stepping-stones to the presidency. The reorganized cabinet of Vicente Fox included nineteen cabinet secretaries, in addition to seven policy coordinators whose job was to ease communication among ministries.³ In the first two years of Fox's administration, his inexperienced cabinet was characterized by chaos and confusion, a radical departure from the PRI era. Since Fox's historic victory in 2000, Mexico's presidents have lacked a majority in Congress. As a result, some of the constitutional checks on presidential power that were long absent in the Mexican system have become more effective. One sign of the waning of presidential power was Fox's inability to obtain his party's nomination for his favored candidate, Interior Minister Santiago Creel, in the 2006 elections.

STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT



THE LEGISLATURE

Mexico has a bicameral legislature, called the **National Congress**, which is composed of a lower house (the **Chamber of Deputies**) and an upper house (the **Senate**).⁴ The 500-member Chamber of Deputies has the power to pass laws (with a two-thirds majority), levy taxes, and verify the outcome of elections. Mexico's upper house is composed of 128 members, with three senators from each state and the **Federal District of Mexico City**, and an additional 32 senators selected from a national list on the basis of proportional representation. The upper house has fewer powers than the lower house, but it does have the power to confirm the president's appointments to the **Supreme Court**, approve treaties, and approve federal intervention in state matters.

Both houses have a committee system that on paper looks much like the U.S. system. In practice, however, Mexican legislators and the legislative committees lack the teeth of their northern counterparts because of one key difference: according to Article 59 of the constitution, Mexican legislators cannot be reelected to consecutive terms. As a result, from 1970 to 1997 only about

17 percent of Mexican deputies entered the lower house with any legislative experience, effectively depriving Mexico of the kind of senior lawmakers who dominate the U.S. system.⁵ Most legislators were members of the PRI and could not afford to cross the leadership because they depended on the party for future political appointments. Even after the PRI's loss of the presidency in 2000, single-term legislators were reluctant to disobey their party leadership if they hoped to be nominated for another post in local or state government. Ironically, the PRI (whose founding principle was no reelection) is now the strongest advocate of ending term limits.

The Mexican legislature is currently in transition. Until 1988, the PRI regularly won over 90 percent of lower house seats and never lost a Senate seat. Between 1970 and 2003, it averaged 66.9 percent of the seats in the lower house, dwarfing the presence of its nearest rival, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN, Vicente Fox's **National Action Party**), which averaged about 17 percent during that period.⁶ In 1997, the two main opposition parties were able to form a coalition and take control of the lower house.

Before 1997, the lower house approved about 97 percent of the legislation submitted by the executive. That percentage dropped precipitously after 1990 and has continued to fall. Moreover, the number of laws originating in the legislature (instead of in the president's office) has increased dramatically. With its internal divisions and a president who did not enjoy complete control over deputies from his own party, the lower house resisted many of Fox's policies. Despite his inaugural pledge to respect Congress, Fox began his term acting very much like the PRI presidents in his relationship with Congress: he designed legislative proposals without any congressional input.⁷ Fox's imperious behavior only emboldened the legislature. Congress blocked some legislation and radically altered other measures. For example, the lower house modified Fox's indigenous-rights bill, which emerged from the legislature so weakened that the Zapatista guerrillas rejected it. Fox's proposed reform of Mexico's tax structure was torpedoed by PRI and PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) opposition, and Congress blocked his effort to negotiate a reduction of tariffs on imported sugar. Mexico's upper house even used its constitutional power to bar Fox from traveling to the United States in April 2002, complaining that the president was not paying enough attention to domestic politics. President Calderón has faced similar legislative opposition but has proved more adept at compromising with the opposition-dominated legislature.

Since Mexican legislators cannot be reelected and the majority of them are unlikely to receive presidential patronage, there is little to incline them to end the executive-legislative gridlock. The stubborn opposition to Fox by PRI and PRD legislators could have been predicted. The lukewarm support for Fox's legislative proposals by members of his own party was more surprising.

In short, Fox attempted to govern like the PRI presidents but without the benefit of the PRI's system of political control.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Mexico's judiciary is structured according to the U.S. model. Like the United States, Mexico has a Supreme Court as well as courts at the local and state levels. The eleven Supreme Court justices are appointed by the president and are confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the Senate. They serve terms of up to fifteen years. The Mexican judiciary has important formal powers, but under the PRI the Supreme Court never overturned any law, and it tended to view its jurisdiction in very limited terms. During the last PRI presidency, dramatic changes were introduced to give the Supreme Court far greater jurisdiction and power.⁸ The Supreme Court can now determine the constitutionality of legislation upon the request of one third of the lower house, but it can strike down a law only if a supermajority of eight out of eleven justices agrees. The reforms have increased the independence of the judiciary by creating a seven-member Federal Judicial Council to oversee the administration of justice.

During the last years of PRI rule and in the early years of the Fox administration, the Supreme Court assumed a much more activist role. For example, it ordered President Zedillo's administration to release records relating to the banking industry, and it struck down Fox's attempt to privatize electricity generation. Despite this progress, Mexico's judicial system is severely hampered by a widespread perception that judges, especially at the local level, are corrupt. Both Fox and Calderón made it a priority to enhance the prestige and power of the beleaguered court system.

The Electoral System

During the last two decades of PRI rule, elections were widely viewed as corrupt. The 1988 presidential election was probably the zenith of PRI electoral fraud: over 30,000 ballot boxes disappeared; in an effort to cover up the thievery, the federal government declared the final ballots a state secret. Only in 1996 did the PRI succumb to pressure and create a truly independent **Federal Electoral Institute**, taking power away from the government-controlled Secretariat of the Interior. It also created the Federal Electoral Tribunal to adjudicate all electoral disputes. Mexico now has a more sophisticated and transparent electoral system featuring a national electoral register and voter identification cards, public funding for electoral campaigns, and strict limits on private contributions. Nevertheless, the bitterly contested presidential elections of 2006 raised new concerns about Mexico's electoral system and generated calls for further reform.

Voting is compulsory in Mexico, although enforcement of the law is sporadic. In part because of this law and in part because the PRI traditionally used its power to encourage electoral turnout, Mexican elections under the PRI had high turnout, usually between 60 and 70 percent. Since 2000, turnout has been closer to 60 percent.

Mexico's current electoral system for the legislature dates from reforms implemented by PRI president Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado in 1986. Mexico now has a mixed electoral system for the lower house, with 300 single-member districts (SMDs) and 200 proportional representation (PR) seats. Deputies in the lower house serve three-year terms. Mexico's electoral system for the upper house is unique. Senators serve six-year terms, and three are elected from each state and the federal district. The party with the most votes wins two Senate seats, and the party finishing second is automatically awarded the third seat. An additional thirty-two seats are allocated according to PR. Mexican presidents are directly elected every six years in a single round of voting. Elections to the Senate take place at the same time as the presidential elections. Parties must get at least 2 percent of the national vote in order to win seats from the PR lists.

Local Government

Despite being formally federal, Mexico operated very much like a unitary political system under the PRI. Excessive localism and a history of instability and political violence caused by the absence of a weak central authority favored the PRI's centralizing tendencies, despite the federalist constitutional rhetoric. Federal authorities controlled local elections, local budgets, local police forces, and so forth. Until 1997, the mayor of Mexico City was a cabinet member appointed directly by the president.

Mexico currently has thirty-two states and a Federal District of Mexico City, each with its own constitution and unicameral legislature.⁹ States are subdivided into county governments (called *municipios*). State governors, county councils, and county presidents are elected directly, although until recently PRI leaders handpicked them. Until 1988, all governors were from the PRI, although in the 1980s only widespread electoral fraud prevented opposition victories. Indeed, some of the first serious opposition to PRI hegemony came at the local level, especially in Mexico's prosperous north, where unpopular PRI local leaders and state governors were successfully defeated by opposition candidates. The PRI's use of widespread electoral fraud at the local level helped ignite regional opposition to the party's heavy-handed centralist policies. The first opposition governor took power in 1989 in the state of Baja California Norte. In the 1990s, the PRI began to accept opposition victories in numerous local elections, and by the end of that decade opposition parties controlled seven governorships.

LOCAL RESISTANCE TO GLOBALIZATION

Mexico's federal government has enthusiastically embraced foreign investment as a way to provide jobs for Mexico's poor. No region needs jobs more than the poverty-stricken state of Oaxaca, home to many of Mexico's indigenous poor. But in December 2002, the city council of Oaxaca voted to prohibit the construction of a McDonald's restaurant in the city's historic and picturesque *zocalo* (town square). Oaxaca has long prided itself on its reputation as Mexico's culinary capital, and the *zocalo* has been an important venue for protests against federal policy. The city council responded to a grassroots protest movement that collected almost 10,000 signatures, another sign of the reemergence of an autonomous civil society after decades of PRI rule.

Mexican states have important powers, but their sovereignty is far more circumscribed by federal authorities, especially the federal bureaucracy, than is state sovereignty in other federal systems, such as in the United States, Canada, and Germany. The PRI regime limited local autonomy by retaining tight control over public funds, controlling about 85 percent of all revenues collected. Under Fox, this figure was substantially reduced, suggesting that local government will play an enhanced role in Mexico's future.

Although in the 1980s and 1990s state and local politics provided the first opportunities for Mexico's anti-PRI opposition, some local and state offices (especially in rural areas) remained PRI strongholds long after the party lost the presidency in 2000. A good example is the rural west-coast state of Guerrero, where the PRI retained a lock on state government until being ousted by the leftist PRD in the gubernatorial elections of 2005.

POLITICAL CONFLICT AND COMPETITION

The Party System

Under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), opposition parties were mostly tolerated; some were even encouraged to exist to give superficial legitimacy to the PRI-dominated system. The PRI skillfully cultivated and selectively co-opted all the opposition parties, which were, in general, weak and divided until the 1980s. The PRI also periodically altered the election laws to increase the presence of the opposition in the legislature while using electoral fraud to retain control of the presidency and key governorships.

THE PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO INSTITUCIONAL

The PRI was founded in 1929 as a way of ending Mexico's often violent struggle for political power. From the start, the PRI was viewed as a party representing the interests of the Mexican state. During its long rule, the PRI became increasingly indistinguishable from the state, and the immense power of Mexico's presidents resulted from their effective control over both the party and the state.

A key element of the PRI's exercise of power was the use of **patron-client relationships**, in which powerful government officials delivered state services and access to power in exchange for the delivery of political support. The patron-client relationships operated from the top of the hierarchy, dominated by the PRI-controlled presidency, down to the very poorest segments of society. At the elite level, vast informal networks of personal loyalty, known as **camarillas** (political cliques), were far more important than ideology.

The PRI also maintained control over the state through its ability to mobilize and control mass organizations. During the presidency of **Lázaro Cárdenas**, worker and peasant organizations were created and then integrated into the PRI structure. By using the state to channel patronage to PRI mass organizations, independent mass organizations were rendered marginal and impotent. Mexico's business elite duly lavished the PRI with campaign donations. One notorious example was a 1993 dinner, hosted by President Carlos Salinas, at which two dozen of Mexico's top business leaders were asked to give US\$25 million each to the PRI.

The PRI has no clear or consistent ideology other than political opportunism. Over the past century, it sought mainly to control political power, and PRI governments varied greatly with each presidency. For example, redistributive and nationalist economic policies implemented during the Cárdenas presidency (1939–1940) were directly contradicted by subsequent PRI presidents. All PRI leaders claimed to represent the legacy of the Mexican Revolution, but that legacy is ambiguous.

Given that PRI presidents supported very different types of political economic policies, why was there not more open dissent within the PRI? In part, dissent was not strong because the PRI wrote electoral rules that made it virtually impossible for dissenting PRI factions to form new parties and win elections.

Beginning in 1982, the PRI slowly but steadily lost support in presidential, congressional, and local elections. Some of the decline was a direct result of Mexico's rapid urbanization: while rural Mexicans were particularly susceptible to local PRI bosses, urbanites were better educated, wealthier, and more politically independent. The PRI also suffered from a reduction in the state's ability to dispense patronage during tough economic times. The economic austerity policies of the 1990s, a cornerstone of the government's neoliberal policies, undoubtedly cost it a number of votes.

Ironically, the erosion of the PRI's political power in the 1990s was also a partial consequence of its attempt at democratic reform. Seeking to enhance its democratic legitimacy, the government in the 1990s spent over US\$1 billion to implement a high-tech electoral system that greatly reduced electoral fraud.

Even with its historic defeat in the July 2000 presidential elections, the PRI controls more than half of Mexico's governorships. The PRI gained sixteen seats in the July 2003 midterm lower house elections, but its disappointing performance in 2006 continued the steady decline that had begun in the mid-1990s.

Since losing the presidency in 2000, the PRI has been rudderless. As a party designed to serve sitting presidents, it no longer has a clear leader. The official party leadership, the PRI legislative delegation, and PRI governors have all wielded considerable power and have produced what one observer has called "a hydra-headed behemoth."¹⁰ Recent changes in the PRI structure, however, have led to the direct election of a party president.¹¹ Whether the PRI can transform itself from the perennial party of the state to an effective force of political opposition remains to be seen. Its 2006 presidential candidate, Roberto Madrazo, ran a lackluster campaign and was widely perceived as an old-style PRI machine politician.

THE LEFT

After the revolution, the PRI attempted to occupy the political space traditionally occupied by leftist parties, even though it usually pursued economic policies traditionally identified with the right. Because the PRI regime had its leftist phases, especially during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, and because Mexico's foreign policy often supported leftist governments and leftist movements elsewhere in Latin America, there was little real political space to be occupied by leftist parties.

Nevertheless, parties of the left existed in Mexico, though most of them supported the PRI. Although the Communist Party was banned until 1979, the Popular Socialist Party (a moderate socialist party) and a few other leftist parties regularly won a few seats in the legislature. A serious leftist political force emerged only in the 1980s, when a leftist faction within the PRI, led by Michoacán governor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, bolted from the party.¹² Cárdenas, the son of the former president, then led the newly formed PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) in a coalition of four opposition parties in the 1988 elections.

Bolstered by the high-profile leadership of Cárdenas and boosted by the PRI's loss of popularity, the PRD performed extremely well in the 1988 elections. Many observers believe that had there not been significant electoral fraud, the PRD would have won those elections. Despite this auspicious start,

the PRD struggled as a leftist opposition party. It has been plagued by internal infighting and has been unable to capture enough voters outside its strongholds in Mexico City and the south.

The PRD clearly stands to the left of the PRI. During the 1980s and 1990s, it attacked the PRI's neoliberal reforms and neglect of poor Mexicans. It advocated more nationalist and protectionist policies than had traditionally been pursued by the PRI. The PRD candidates at the state and local level have had considerable success, and the PRD has controlled Mexico City's government since 1997, but the party's performance in the 2000 presidential elections was certainly a disappointment. Cárdenas won just over 16 percent of the presidential vote, and the PRD did only slightly better in elections to Congress. The 2000 elections left the PRD as a minor political force whose seats in Congress were not sufficient to build a majority, even if combined with the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).

The PRD's prospects improved considerably after the 2003 legislative elections. With its allies on the left, it saw its support increase moderately, to about one quarter of the electorate, and it gained thirty-six seats, the biggest gain of any party. The PRD defeated the PRI in key gubernatorial elections in Guerrero and Baja California del Sur in February 2005, although the PRD still controlled only five of Mexico's thirty-two states. The PRD mayor of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a charismatic populist, emerged as the front-runner in the 2006 presidential election but saw his lead slip away as the conservative opposition portrayed him as a dangerous radical who would threaten Mexico's prosperity and harm relations with the United States.

THE RIGHT

Mexico's main conservative party, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), was founded in 1939 by defectors from the PRI. It became the only opposition party to develop a strong organizational presence, especially in its strongholds in northern Mexico and the state of Yucatán. The party emerged as a conservative response to the leftist policies of the PRI during the late 1930s and early 1940s. It advocated Christian democratic ideas, opposing the PRI's anti-clericalism and supporting pro-business policies. Since its base of power was state politics, the PAN became an early advocate of state's rights and opposed the centralization of power that was a feature of Mexican politics under the PRI.

Like many conservative parties, the PAN has been divided historically between Catholic conservatives and more progressive technocrats. The more progressive wing has dominated the party since the late 1980s, but the PRI's adoption of neoliberal economic strategies during that decade threatened to steal the PAN's thunder. The PAN continues to be plagued by internal division, and PAN legislators have been much less willing to follow their own leadership than have PRI legislators.

In the 1990s, the PAN won the governorship of seven states. As the PRI fought harder to deny the PAN electoral victories, it unwittingly gave the PAN an issue that garnered support among Mexicans of all classes: the need to end corruption and guarantee free elections. PAN leaders now preside over one third of all Mexicans. Nonetheless, the PAN suffers from its geographic concentration of the vote (mostly in northern Mexico) and its relative weakness among rural voters, who continue to overwhelmingly support the PRI.

Vicente Fox was not a prototypical PAN leader and did not share much of the social conservatism that is typical of many PAN leaders. His roots were in local government, having served as governor of his home state after a stint in Congress. His charisma and his personal support network allowed him to overcome much opposition within his own party and helped expand the PAN's appeal to new voters. In the 2000 presidential campaign, Fox created his own campaign organization. That organization did not depend on the official PAN hierarchy, which was dominated by Fox's political rivals.¹³ Once in office, Fox formed a cabinet that included no members of the PAN's traditionalist wing, and his closest advisers were non-PAN members. He had stormy relations with the more conservative "traditionalist" wing of the PAN, which dominates the legislature and the party hierarchy.

Fox's record in office has been viewed as a mixed bag, but on the whole his administration had trouble meeting the very high expectations that accompanied his historic victory in 2000. His administration delivered on some concrete reform promises.¹⁴ Fox passed a transparency law to facilitate public oversight of government, and he restructured and purged Mexico's powerful and corruption-riddled Federal Judicial Police. He passed legislation to allow some 10 million Mexicans living abroad (many in the United States) to vote in elections. Some progress was made on health care and pension reform, and the Fox administration has been praised for containing inflation. These successes, however, were outweighed by numerous policy failures, due in large part to Fox's inability to work with the opposition-dominated legislature, as well as with the opposition within his own party. Fox failed to end the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, was unable to pass a badly needed tax increase to raise revenue for social spending and other public investment, and had a disappointing record on rooting out government corruption. After the PAN's drubbing in the 2003 legislative elections, when the governing party lost one quarter of its seats in the lower house, Fox's status as a lame-duck president was exacerbated, and his government was accused of losing focus.

Mexico's President Felipe Calderón has been involved in conservative politics his entire adult life. His father was a founder of the PAN, and Calderón became leader of its youth wing in his twenties. Calderón held a variety of elected political positions and twice served as a Federal Deputy. He served as party president in the 1990s when the PAN first began to mount a serious

challenge to the PRI. Vicente Fox appointed him Secretary of Energy, an important cabinet post in oil-rich Mexico. In a 2005 internal party election, Calderón defeated President Fox's choice for the 2006 PAN presidential nomination. He narrowly defeated the leftist Manuel López Obrador in the bitterly contested 2006 presidential election. Since taking office, Calderón has generally proven to be a social conservative and a supporter of free-market policies. His campaign to defeat Mexico's drug cartels has delivered mixed results. The resulting violence has tarnished Calderón's previously high approval ratings in opinion polls.

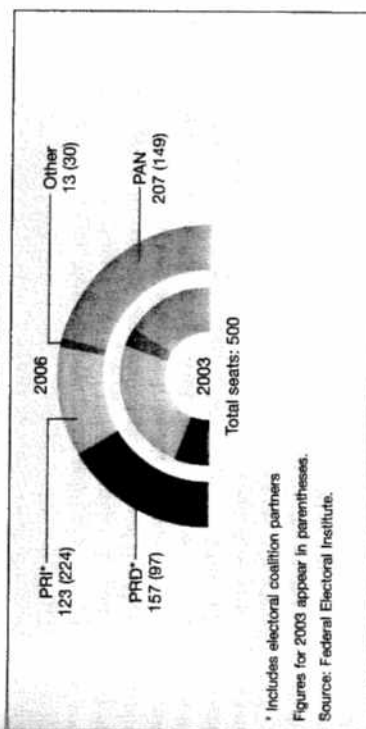
Since the upsets of the 2000 election, the Mexican party system has been in flux. Recent data suggest that only about one quarter of Mexican voters have a strong identification with any party. Beginning in the 1990s, there was a significant partisan "dealignment," in which many voters abandoned the PRI. Not all of those voters have realigned themselves with other parties, however, and a large segment of the Mexican electorate remains "fluid."¹⁵

This fluidity can be witnessed in the legislative elections since 2000. The 2000 presidential elections were a clear victory for Vicente Fox, but the PRI emerged from the legislative elections as the dominant political force, though it suffered setbacks in its percentage of votes and in the number of seats it won in the lower house. The big loser in those elections was the leftist PRD, which was relegated to third place. The 2003 election dealt a severe blow to the governing PAN and signaled a comeback for the left: the PRD and its allies picked up thirty-six seats in the lower house. The PRI continued to suffer a loss of votes but was able to exploit the electoral system to win sixteen additional seats. The 2006 elections confirmed the steady rise of the PAN and PRD at the expense of the waning PRI. Like his predecessor, President Calderón has had to govern without a majority in the lower house.

Mexico has had a highly competitive electoral system since 2000. The current system has three major parties but operates as a two-party system in most of the country.¹⁶ In Mexico's north and west, the PAN and PRI fight for votes, while in southern Mexico the PRD and PRI are chief rivals. Only in Mexico City and the surrounding areas do all three parties really compete on an equal footing. The PRI remains the only party with support in all regions, while the PRD and the PAN have more regionally concentrated bases of support.

A variety of smaller parties compete for, and regularly win, seats in the Mexican legislature. The most important of these is the Mexican Green Party (PVEM), an environment-oriented party that has little in common with its European counterparts. The PVEM was allied with the leftist PRD in the 1997 elections, then backed the conservative PAN in 2000. In 2003 and 2006, it ran in an alliance with the PRI.

SEATS IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, 2003 AND 2006



Elections

During most of the PRI's long reign, elections were more national celebrations of PRI power than competitive electoral campaigns. Every six years, the country was decked out in the PRI's colors, patronage was dispensed on a massive scale, and the PRI nominees (in effect, the presumed winners) toured their constituencies and made speeches.

The 2000 presidential campaign broke with the tradition. The opposition candidates (Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, of the PRD, and Vicente Fox, of the PAN) had announced their intention to run for the presidency several years before the election, and both candidates were widely assumed to have a lock on their parties' nominations. The PRI candidate, traditionally named quite late in the six-year presidential term, was determined for the first time by a PRI primary vote. As a result, several PRI candidates began campaigning for the nomination early in Zedillo's presidential term, with Francisco Labastida winning the party primary in a hotly contested race.

The 2000 campaign was also the first to be governed by new electoral finance rules, which not only sharply limited private contributions but also provided candidates with public financing. Access to the media by all political parties was far more equitable than ever before. While PRI candidates still enjoyed an advantage, the playing field was more level than it had been in past elections. The first truly fair and competitive election was also the first national campaign in which U.S.-style mudslinging was widespread. The PRI portrayed Fox as a U.S. lackey, while Fox questioned Labastida's "macho" credentials. Some of the most negative campaigning took place between the two PRI contestants for the nomination. The 2000 campaign was also the first

truly modern campaign in Mexican history. Television took on a pivotal role, culminating in two televised presidential debates, which the charismatic and engaging Fox won handily over the more wooden Labastida and Cárdenas.

In the 2000 campaign, Mexico's three major political parties presented voters with a fairly wide range of choices. The PRI, under the campaign slogan "Power will serve the people," represented the legacy of the Mexican Revolution and nationalism. The PAN shared the PRI's enthusiasm for neoliberal reforms but offered itself as the party of democratization, as captured by its campaign slogan "Yai" ("enough already"). Only the leftist PRD criticized neoliberal economic policies and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The midterm elections of 2003 were viewed by the government and the opposition as a referendum on the record of the PAN. Fox and his supporters hoped that the PAN would get a majority in the legislature so that it could implement its reform agenda without having to deal with a "do-nothing" lower house. The opposition sought a popular mandate for its strategy of opposing reforms that were seen as damaging to Mexico's economy and society. The results were not encouraging for the PAN, but gains made by the PRI and, especially, the PRD seemed to portend an especially competitive presidential election in 2006.

The 2006 presidential campaign was Mexico's first "normal" presidential contest. In 2000, the main issue had been democratization and the defeat of the PRI's semi-authoritarian regime. In 2006, Mexicans faced their first real choice between parties of the right and left. The early front-runner, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (of the leftist PRD) ran a campaign aimed at improving the plight of Mexico's poor. His main opponent, the PAN's Felipe Calderón, advocated a pro-business set of policies aimed at increasing employment. Calderón chipped away at López Obrador's initial lead by questioning his commitment to democracy and by portraying him as a dangerous leftist who would threaten Mexico's economic stability. The campaign was characterized by an unprecedented level of impassioned and negative attack advertisements, ending the relatively benign political discourse that characterized the political campaigns of the PRI era. The outcome of the 2006 election revealed a polarized and divided electorate; Calderón and López Obrador each won just over 35 percent of the vote, and Calderón won by a mere one half of a percentage point.

Civil Society

Under the PRI, Mexican groups and associations were often incorporated into the state in a system known as corporatism. The paternalistic PRI would then mediate among different groups while making sure that no one group chal-

DEMOCRATIZATION, IMPUNITY, AND THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GUERRERO

From 1929 to 2005, the PRI held power in the state of Guerrero, where international human rights organizations had long complained that the PRI government, the police, and the judiciary, in collusion with powerful landowners (caciques), were conspiring to repress all types of civic groups. A good example was the repression of a variety of environmental groups that sought to stop powerful logging companies from clear-cutting the forests of the Sierra Madre. Felipe Arreaga, an environmental activist who had been particularly successful in his opposition to powerful logging interests, had led a group of farmers who successfully blockaded logging trucks. Local landowners threatened Arreaga and his followers and accused them of being leftist guerrillas. Arreaga was jailed in November 2004 on what human rights groups claim were trumped-up charges of murdering the son of a wealthy landowner who opposed the activists. Arreaga's defenders claim he was jailed as a vendetta for having stopped lucrative logging projects favored by powerful landowners. After the defeat of the PRI state government by the leftist Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) in early 2005, Arreaga was acquitted of all charges and released. The PRD has long claimed that hundreds of Guerrero activists were harassed and killed during the decades of PRI rule. Human rights activists are hopeful that the new PRD state government will signal a democratization of Guerrero politics and break the nexus linking powerful landowners, the judiciary, the police, and the state government.

lenged government power. The PRI was formally divided into three sectors (labor, peasants, and the "popular" middle class), each dominated by PRI-controlled mass organizations. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the Mexican state could control all autonomous groups in society. To cite one example, the private-sector Confederation of Employers of the Mexican Republic (COPARMEX) became an important voice of opposition to the PRI, instead of supporting the governing party.

BUSINESS

Although the PRI successfully co-opted Mexico's private sector for decades, it can be argued that business groups later emerged as the most powerful source of opposition to PRI rule. Under the PRI, most private-sector interests were channeled into a variety of semi-official organizations, including the National Chamber of Industries and the National Chamber of Commerce. Until 1996, private-sector membership in these organizations was mandatory. Even though the PRI never gave business organizations formal representation within the governing party, business interests wielded power through more informal organizations and channels. The secretive Business Coordinating

Council (CCE), which represents some of Mexico's wealthiest capitalists, had close ties to the Fox government.

The relationship between the business sector and the PRI was complex and often contradictory. In general, the policies of the PRI favored the private sector, especially big business. At the same time, business leaders bitterly opposed attempts by some PRI presidents to enact the social agenda of the Mexican Revolution. In the 1970s, Presidents Luis Echeverría Álvarez and José López Portillo sought to expand the role of the state in the economy, and their policies damaged business-government relations. Although those policies were short-lived, they served to garner opposition to the PRI among northern business interests. The prospect of a PRD victory in 2006 clearly alarmed much of the business sector.

LABOR

The PRI actively supported the unionization of Mexican workers, but the unions were thoroughly integrated into the corporatist system. They received massive subsidies from the state, which made them politically pliant. They enjoyed privileged treatment under the PRI, in part because they were never able to incorporate much of the workforce (about 16 percent, at their peak) and because one third of their members were government employees. The labor movement in Mexico was highly centralized. The dominant labor organization, the **Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM)**, was created by the PRI and became one of the main pillars of the governing party. The CTM was dominated for over fifty years, until his death in 1997, by Fidel Velázquez Sánchez, a PRI die-hard.

Unions independent of the PRI are a relatively new phenomenon. In 1997, Mexico's independent unions formed the National Union of Workers (UNT) to compete with the CTM. Since the mid-1990s, a series of laws and court decisions have weakened the grip of the formerly official unions. The neoliberal economic policies pursued by the PRI over the past two decades and the PRI's recent loss of national power have created new dilemmas for the CTM. Its membership has clearly suffered from the economic reforms, and its leadership no longer benefits from government patronage. On the one hand, democratic reforms promoted by the PAN are likely to give labor unions more autonomy and a greater ability to contest government policy. On the other hand, the PAN is even more committed to neoliberal economic reform than is the PRI.

THE MEDIA

The PRI maintained a political lock on the media by co-optation more than by coercion. Rather than imposing censorship, the government courted the favor of Mexico's media by purchasing advertisements in pro-PRI media out-

lets, giving supportive media voices cheap access to infrastructure, and bribing reporters outright. Mexico's largest media conglomerate, **Televisa**, was extremely close to the PRI. By the early 1990s, the PRI had loosened its control of the media somewhat. The government stopped bribing reporters, and the wave of privatizations created a more competitive media environment, allowing for criticism of the PRI.

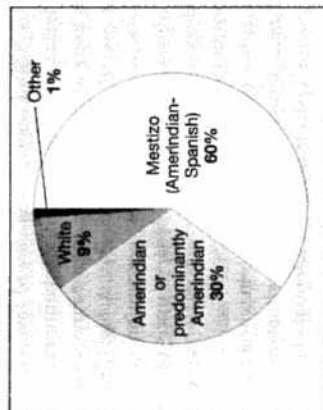
SOCIETY

Ethnic and National Identity

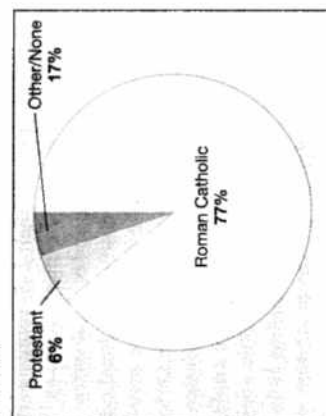
Alan Riding has described Mexico as a nation proud of its Indian past but ashamed of its Indian present.¹⁷ Under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Mexico glorified and embraced its indigenous ancestry and inculcated pride in the *mestizaje*, or blending of cultures produced by the conquest. Indigenous peoples who have not assimilated into *mestizo* Mexico have been politically marginalized and have been victims of Mexico's worst poverty, whereas Mexico's wealthy elite have tended to be lighter skinned and of European origin.

The PRI's success in perpetuating the myth of *mestizaje* may help explain how it avoided the kind of ethnically based violence that has plagued Guatemala, its neighbor to the south, as well as other Latin American nations. But that myth was violently shattered on January 1, 1994, when a rebel army made up mostly of Mayan Indians, the **Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN)**, occupied several towns in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas.¹⁸

ETHNIC GROUPS



RELIGION



Many viewed the EZLN as solely an indigenous group seeking greater autonomy for Mexico's long-neglected Indian population. It soon became clear, however, that the EZLN included among its demands the democratization of the Mexican political system and an end to the neoliberal reforms that had ravaged the indigenous poor. Chief among the EZLN's concerns was the abrogation of Article 27 of the constitution of 1917, which had mandated land reform. On a more general level, the EZLN was reacting to the devastation caused by neoliberal trade policies that had exposed the inefficient peasant farmers to competition from cheaper foreign imports. The call for democratization was partly a response to the political lock that the PRI maintained on some of Mexico's poorest and most heavily indigenous regions.

The Zapatista uprising was surprisingly popular within Mexico and, together with the economic crisis, helped erode PRI political dominance and accelerate electoral reforms. In 1996, the Zedillo government signed the **San Andres Peace Accords** with the EZLN, promising protection of indigenous languages and granting indigenous communities political autonomy. These provisions were never implemented, however, and Vicente Fox, who claimed he could resolve the Chiapas conflict "in fifteen minutes," was unable to make peace with the Zapatistas. Fox's proposed constitutional amendment aimed at addressing some Zapatista demands was watered down by Congress, and the Zapatistas rejected the outcome. As of this writing, the standoff between the government and the Zapatistas continues with the EZLN controlling some remote communities.

Ideology and Political Culture

Perhaps the most important aspect of Mexican political culture is a profound distrust of the state and the government. Opinion research demonstrates that Mexicans have a far more negative view of their political system and state than do their U.S. counterparts. In 2000, Congress was viewed favorably by only 20 percent of Mexicans.¹⁹ Mexicans' high level of disenchantment with their state and political system has been exacerbated by the government's poor response to many national crises over the past two decades. A high-profile split within the PRI, the massive electoral fraud of 1989, corruption charges against former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the Chiapas uprising, and the murder of the PRI's designated presidential candidate were all factors that helped to erode popular confidence in the Mexican system.

These scandals and decades of authoritarian rule may explain why a majority of Mexicans express little or no interest in politics, notwithstanding a temporary surge of interest around the historic 2000 presidential elections. Mexican men express far more interest in politics than do women, and inter-

est in politics increases with levels of education and income. Mexicans on the left of the political system (supporters of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática, or PRD) generally express much higher levels of interest in politics than do Mexicans in the center and on the right.

A serious problem confronting Mexico's attempt to construct a stable democracy is the very low level of political efficacy (the belief that one can make a difference), as expressed in opinion polls. Whereas about one third of U.S. respondents claim to have no ability to influence political outcomes, over half of Mexicans express this view. One positive sign is that the 2000 PRI electoral defeat appears to have restored Mexicans' faith in the fairness of elections, and recent data show that levels of electoral efficacy have risen dramatically.

Unlike Communist regimes, which actively promote political mobilization, Mexico under the PRI was an authoritarian regime that sought to contain and limit popular participation in politics. Mexico's political culture continues to show the effects of decades of authoritarian rule: the country has very low levels of participation in politics, party membership, and political activism. Although there is some evidence of a steady increase in popular political activity since the 1980s, declining voter turnout has continued to be a concern. Turnout for the 2003 elections was only 41.7, percent down from 63.7 percent in 2000. The declines may be explained by the weakening of the PRI electoral machine, the return to "normal" politics after the excitement surrounding the 2003 elections, and the fact that midterm elections usually draw fewer voters.

During the authoritarian regime of the PRI, the majority of Mexicans professed sympathy for no political party. The erosion of PRI hegemony and the increasing competitiveness of elections have led far more Mexicans to identify with a political party. By 2000, the PRI and the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) each enjoyed the support of about one third of the electorate, and the PRD was supported by about 10 percent. Opinion data show quite clearly that the Mexican electorate is anchored on the center right. The leftist PRD suffers from the fact that only about 20 percent of Mexicans identify themselves as being on the left. Although more Mexicans define themselves as being on the left or right than do U.S. respondents, Mexicans have been steadily gravitating toward the center.

The erosion of PRI political hegemony has also been accompanied by a dramatic shift in the social-class basis of Mexico's parties. Wealthy and middle-class Mexicans abandoned the PRI in droves between 1989 and 2000. By 2000, the PRI depended mostly on the support of lower-class Mexicans, though the PAN had nearly the same amount of support among poor voters. Indeed, one of the remarkable changes between 1989 and 2000 was the PAN's ability to garner support from all classes.

Opinion research reveals that most Mexicans favor democracy over authoritarianism. When compared with U.S. respondents, however, Mexicans are far more likely to define democracy in terms of equality than in terms of freedom. The inability of democracy to remedy Mexico's staggering inequality or halt the violence of Mexico's drug wars could potentially undermine Mexican support for democracy.

POLITICAL ECONOMY

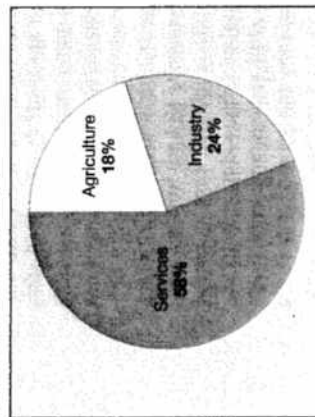
The leaders of the Mexican Revolution had a complex and often contradictory set of goals. Some of the revolutionaries were middle-class landowners who sought greater political democracy, others sought major socioeconomic (especially land) reform, and others were mostly interested in restoring political order while eliminating the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz.

Between 1917 and 1980, leaders of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) agreed on some main features of the Mexican economy. First, Mexico's industrialization would be encouraged through import-substitution policies, which employed high tariffs to protect Mexican industries and agriculture. Government policies provided Mexican entrepreneurs with subsidized credit and energy and very low taxes. The PRI's ability to control labor and therefore labor costs also benefited Mexico's entrepreneurs. Second, Mexico was to have a capitalist economy, but the Mexican state played an important role in key sectors of the economy, though far less than in socialist economies.

Despite this general consensus, economic policies of the PRI presidents between 1917 and 2000 fluctuated a great deal. The nationalists, usually associated with the left wing of the PRI, placed more emphasis on redistribution of income, plenty of state social spending, and a strong state presence in the economy. Their economic policies tended to be strongly nationalistic, and they sought greater economic independence from the United States.

President Lázaro Cárdenas, who served from 1934 to 1940, was the most important advocate of economic nationalism. Cárdenas was a mestizo revolutionary general who became governor of the state of Michoacán. He used the PRI to organize and mobilize Mexico's workers and peasants, and he was the first president to implement the land reform called for in the constitution of 1917. Cárdenas gave 180,000

LABOR FORCE BY OCCUPATION



peasant communities grants of land, called *ejidos*, providing land to some 750,000 landless Mexicans. He integrated peasants and workers into state-controlled unions, and he strengthened the Mexican state by nationalizing the foreign-dominated oil industry and creating a state oil monopoly (**Pemex**). More than any other Mexican president, Cárdenas embodied the socialist aspects of the Mexican Revolution. At the same time, his policies won the PRI the enduring political loyalty of Mexico's workers and peasants. Future Mexican presidents never addressed the socioeconomic aspirations of the Mexican constitution as much as Cárdenas did, but the presidencies of Adolfo López Mateos (1958–1964), Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–1976), and José López Portillo (1976–1982) followed policies that mirrored the views of the PRI nationalist left.

The liberals—including Miguel Alemán Valdés (1946–1952), Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964–1970), Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado (1982–1988), and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994)—favored economic growth over redistribution. They tended to favor freer trade, increased foreign investment in the Mexican economy, and better relations with the United States. President Díaz Ordaz strongly favored economic growth over distribution, and his policies favored big business and agricultural exporters. De la Madrid and Salinas undertook a major change in Mexico's political economic policies by liberalizing its statist economy, abandoning long-entrenched social commitments (like land reform), and entering the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada in 1994. Since 2000, PAN presidents Fox and Calderón have continued these liberal economic policies.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ECONOMY

In terms of its aggregate wealth, Mexico is a relatively prosperous developing country and, compared with other developing countries, fairly industrialized. It is currently the world's eighth-largest exporter. Industry accounts for about one quarter of its GDP, and agriculture now accounts for only 8 percent. The country is also rich in natural resources, especially oil, which is its chief economic asset. Since the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, Mexican oil has been controlled by the state monopoly, Pemex.

From the 1940s to about 1980, the Mexican economy grew spectacularly, in what has often been called the **Mexican miracle**. Bolstered by the peace and stability of the PRI regime, and benefiting from a steady increase in U.S. investment, Mexico became more industrialized, urban, and educated. Its economy also became more heavily dependent on the United States. By 1962, the United States accounted for 85 percent of all foreign investment in Mexico. Mexico sent two thirds of its exports to the United States, and the same percentage of its imports came from the United States. The U.S.-Mexican eco-

nomic relationship, however, was (and remains) asymmetrical: the U.S. economy is far more vital to Mexico than is Mexico's to the United States.

ECONOMIC CRISES OF THE 1970s AND 1980s

In the 1970s, Mexican presidents used the country's vast oil wealth to support massive government spending in an attempt to alleviate chronic inequality and poverty. The spending fueled inflation and began to erode the value of the peso, Mexico's currency. Mexico incurred vast debts from foreign lenders, who viewed the oil-rich country as a trustworthy borrower. By the 1980s, oil accounted for over two thirds of the value of Mexico's exports. A major drop in world oil prices in 1981 exposed the shaky foundation of Mexico's economy, and Mexico came close to defaulting on its international debt in August 1982.

The response by Presidents de la Madrid and Salinas was to abandon the decades-old mercantilist model of protectionism and state interventionism and embrace neoliberal economics, thus beginning a reversal of the country's political economy. By terminating the constitution's promise of land reform and opening up Mexico to a flood of cheap agricultural imports, the government in effect devastated many of Mexico's poorest peasants. The country's steady economic recovery in the late 1980s and early 1990s was upset in 1994 and 1995 by its most severe economic depression since the 1930s. In December 1994, the value of the Mexican peso collapsed, and the Mexican economy was saved only by the International Monetary Fund's largest bailout ever. Between 1994 and 1996, real wages dropped 27 percent, and an estimated 75 percent of Mexicans fell below the official poverty line.²⁰ Mexico had embraced free trade and globalization as a response to the economic crisis of the early 1980s, but its response had made it even more vulnerable to economic instability.

NAFTA AND GLOBALIZATION

The North American Free Trade Agreement has drastically reduced (and will soon eliminate) most tariffs on agricultural goods traded among Mexico, Canada, and the United States. As a result, Mexico has been flooded by U.S. products (such as corn and pork) that cost one fifth as much to produce as similar Mexican products. NAFTA has doubled the amount of food that Mexico imports from the United States, thereby lowering Mexican food prices but creating a massive crisis for millions of Mexico's farmers. About one fifth of Mexicans work in agriculture, and the vast majority are poor subsistence farmers who will be hurt the most by NAFTA competition. As a result, Mexico will lose millions of jobs in agriculture. NAFTA has also exacerbated the gap between the wealthy north and the impoverished south.²¹

In many other ways, however, NAFTA benefits Mexico. Manufacturing exports to the United States have skyrocketed, growing at an average rate of

75 percent annually since NAFTA went into effect.²² Greater access to U.S. markets has been a boon to Mexico's fruit and vegetable producers, who now supply much of the U.S. winter market, although exports of agricultural goods have grown very modestly compared with those of manufactured goods. Cheaper imports have benefited a wide variety of Mexican producers and consumers.

Mexico's embrace of NAFTA has clearly created a more diversified economy. In the 1980s, oil made up about two thirds of the country's exports. Mexico now exports a wider variety of goods, but it is extremely dependent on the U.S. market, to which it sends 82 percent of all its exports.

Mexico's entry into NAFTA has attracted more direct U.S. investment in Mexico. Much of the investment has gravitated toward **maquiladoras**, factories that import materials or parts to make goods that are then exported. These factories, concentrated along the Mexican-U.S. border, account for about half of all of Mexico's exports, and they now generate more foreign exchange for Mexico than does any other sector, including oil.²³ The maquiladoras have added half a million jobs to Mexico's north, but some critics argue that the operations add relatively little to the Mexican economy, since most materials and technology are imported. Average maquiladora wages are above Mexico's minimum wage but far below the average wage in the manufacturing sector. The concentration of maquiladoras in Mexico's wealthier north has exacerbated the country's severe north-south income gap.

Whether NAFTA has created more winners than losers is a hot topic of debate within Mexico.²⁴ One result of the new pressures created by NAFTA has been the increased flow of Mexicans to the United States in search of employment. What is clear, however, is that NAFTA has dislocated millions of Mexicans and will create new political and economic challenges for future Mexican administrations.

ECONOMIC POLICIES AND ISSUES

Despite the Mexican Revolution's commitment to greater equality and the efforts of some reformist presidents to help the poor, Mexico was and is a country of massive inequality. The Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes has called Mexico a country "where 25 people earn the same as 25 million."²⁵ The pre-1980s mercantilist policies were unable to address the persistence of massive poverty in Mexico, and the more recent shift to neoliberal policies has only increased the gap between rich and poor. In 2000, the poorest 40 percent of the population earned about 12 percent of Mexico's income while the wealthiest 10 percent earned about 40 percent, and the gap has widened since 1984.²⁶ *Forbes* magazine listed twenty-four Mexicans in its 1994 annual report on the "swelling roster of global billionaires." Only the United States, Germany, and Japan had more billionaires at the time. A year earlier, there were thirteen

Mexicans on this list, and in 1987, when the magazine first began compiling its list, there was only one.²⁷ These huge inequalities in income are mirrored by a variety of social indicators. For example, in 1998 infant mortality was four times higher among the poorest 20 percent of Mexicans than among the richest 20 percent, and the poorest 10 percent of Mexicans averaged only 2.1 years of education, whereas the richest 10 percent average over 12 years of education.²⁸

The Mexican government has estimated that about one fourth of Mexicans lack enough money for food and clothing. One third of all workers earn less than the minimum wage (about US\$4 per day). Poverty in Mexico is most pronounced in rural areas, still home to some 23 million people. Despite the legacy of land reform, most rural Mexicans cannot support themselves on their tiny plots of land, and many are forced to seek work as migrant laborers. Millions have migrated to already overcrowded urban areas, seeking employment and a better life, and millions more have emigrated to the United States for the same reasons.

Mexico's wealth is also geographically unequal. Northern Mexico is far wealthier than the central and southern regions. While the north is characterized by large-scale export agriculture (benefiting from proximity to the U.S. market), land use is much more fragmented in the south. Southern Mexico has a far poorer infrastructure, lower levels of education, and more poverty.

Another indicator of the degree of inequality in Mexico is the tremendous size and importance of the **informal sector**. A conservative estimate is that over 9 million Mexicans (perhaps as much as one third of the total workforce) are employed in the underground economy as informal vendors of goods and services. Mexican cities are full of *ambulantes* (street vendors), which local governments have fought unsuccessfully to regulate. These workers pay no taxes on their earnings but enjoy few protections and benefits.

Efforts to redress these inequalities through increased social spending have been hampered by Mexico's inability to collect taxes, especially when compared with wealthier industrialized countries. Attempts to raise taxes meet with widespread skepticism in part because Mexico's traditionally corrupt state is simply not trusted.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND THE WORLD

Mexico's foreign relations have always been heavily molded by its complex relationship with the United States. In the political turmoil of the nineteenth century, Mexico lost half its territory to an expanding United States. Indeed, Mexico's humiliation at the hands of the United States has been a major theme in the Mexican psyche. Even Porfirio Díaz, whose dictatorship promoted

closer ties to the United States, is reported to have lamented, "Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States." One goal of the Mexican Revolution (and the aim of much of its official rhetoric) was to restore the sovereignty and power of Mexico on the global stage. The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) leadership clearly sought a system that would restore stability to the Mexican system and prevent future attacks on Mexican sovereignty. In the early years of the revolution, foreign economic interests were sharply curtailed, and foreign oil companies were nationalized. Mexico under the PRI began to assert itself as an independent and autonomous state, gradually gaining the status of a regional power within Latin America.

During and after World War II, Mexico became a closer ally of the United States while still asserting an independent voice in its foreign policy. From the 1960s through the 1980s, Mexico opposed U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, fostered a close relationship with Fidel Castro's Cuba (a U.S. arch-enemy), and supported revolutionary movements in the regions that often opposed the United States.

Many Mexicans were proud that their country could act so independently of the United States in the arena of foreign policy. The economic catastrophe of the 1980s and Mexico's decision to abandon revolutionary economic policies and liberalize its economy made clear the limits to Mexican independence in its foreign affairs. In exchange for massive economic aid in the 1980s, Mexico was pressured to curtail its opposition to U.S. foreign policy in Latin America.

After the election of Vicente Fox in 2000, Mexico moved closer to the United States on most foreign policy issues.²⁹ Fox sought to work closely with President George W. Bush in the hope of gaining new agreements on immigration and trade. Since the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Mexico's increased economic dependence on the United States has clearly limited its international assertiveness. That did not stop the Fox administration from opposing the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, a stance that led to a cooling of U.S.-Mexican relations. Immediately after taking office in 2009, the U.S. administration of Barack Obama took steps to improve relations with Mexico and collaborate to stem growing drug violence.

Mexico today is clearly at a crossroads. With the consolidation of democracy and a more prosperous economy based on exports to the United States, Mexicans can feel proud of their accomplishments. At the same time, now that Mexico has vanquished authoritarian rule, it must deal with a number of historical problems. It must find a way to reestablish the legitimacy of the state (by reducing corruption), restore public order (by reducing crime and improving the judiciary), and perhaps most important, address the growing inequality between the winners and the losers in its political economic transition.

CURRENT ISSUES

CRIME AND CORRUPTION: THE COLOMBIANIZATION OF MEXICO?

The Mexican Revolution successfully strengthened state power and autonomy and ended endemic violence in Mexico. Yet the long domination of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), its dependence on patron-client relations, its co-optation, and its electoral fraud all fostered a culture of corruption and lawlessness that now increasingly threatens the state and its capacity, autonomy, and legitimacy. The ability of the state to impose its authority has eroded because of the explosion of crime since the 1980s. In Mexico City, reported crimes doubled from 1993 to 1997, and an estimated 90 percent of all crime in the city goes unreported. Kidnappings have become alarmingly common; they rose almost 40 percent between 2005 and 2007. Well over six thousand Mexicans were killed in 2008 in violence associated with the war between the Mexican drug cartels themselves, and between the cartels and the Mexican state.³⁰ Statistics like these have led some to wonder whether Mexico could become a "failed state."³¹

The spectacular increase in crime has a variety of causes. To some extent, it coincides with the economic crisis that began in the 1980s and was exacerbated by the 1994–1995 economic depression. The governments of the 1980s and 1990s pursued painful neoliberal economic reforms while weakening the welfare state established by the PRI. The rise in crime rates may also be related to the steady decline in the PRI's hegemony and the decentralization and democratization of the political system. In the case of most postauthoritarian democracies, crime tends to flourish when the power of an authoritarian state is weakened and a painful economic transition is under way. The increase of drug trafficking has also been accompanied by a dramatic increase in violent crime.

What is perhaps most alarming from the perspective of the legitimacy of the state is that Mexico's various police forces (local, state, and federal) contribute directly to the problem. Mexican police are generally poorly trained and poorly paid, making them susceptible to corruption. Even worse, the police have been known to be involved in a wave of kidnapping and extortion crimes that have shocked the country. A survey in the 1990s showed that between 1981 and 1990, the proportion of Mexicans who thought it acceptable to accept a bribe or buy stolen goods rose from 32 percent to 55 percent.³²

Over the past two decades, Mexico has seen an alarming rise in drug trafficking, driven by the growing market for illegal drugs north of the border and facilitated by a Mexican legal system that is both weak and corrupt.³³ Mexico has experienced a dramatic growth of drug-related gang violence and a steady stream of corruption scandals involving drug money. Shortly after

his inauguration, President Calderón called on the army to combat the drug cartels, and in 2009 Calderón sent troops to replace corrupt local police forces in some cities along the United States border. The military response only emboldened the drug cartels, who initiated a campaign of assassination aimed at the police and anti-drug authorities. A series of discoveries in 2008 that implicated Federal anti-drug officials in the drug trade further damaged the government's image. The United States has been alarmed by the growing drug traffic across the U.S.-Mexican border: it is estimated that about 70 percent of all marijuana and cocaine entering the United States arrives through Mexico. U.S. attempts to undertake anti-narcotics operations in Mexico have been attacked as abridging Mexico's sovereignty, and U.S. criticism of Mexico's lackluster anti-narcotics efforts has often raised tensions between the two neighbors. Mexican officials counter that drug cartels take advantage of lax U.S. gun control laws to purchase most of their weapons north of the border. In 2009 the Obama administration acknowledged that Mexico's drug wars are a shared problem and vowed to work with Mexico to address the threat.

MIGRATION

There is a long history of Mexicans emigrating across the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border.³⁴ Mexicans have long argued that the United States depends on Mexican immigrants and that their right to work in the United States should

IN COMPARISON	
THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN REMITTANCES TO THE MEXICAN ECONOMY	
Do you receive money from relatives living abroad? Percent answering yes:	
Country	Percent
Nigeria	38
Mexico	23
Russia	7
India	6
South Africa	5
Brazil	2
China	1

Sources: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2007.

be guaranteed through bilateral agreements. But many Americans have focused on the negative effects of Mexican emigration to the United States. Why has there been such a steady flow of Mexicans into the United States? Most of them come because of the higher standard of living in the United States, although the first wave of immigrants were also fleeing the violence of the Mexican Revolution. During the severe labor shortages of World War II, the United States established the **Bracero Program**, which allowed over 4 million Mexicans to work temporarily in the United States between 1942 and 1964. Today, there are almost 11 million Mexicans living in the United States (about 10 percent of Mexico's total population and 4 percent of the U.S. population). According to some estimates, the amount of foreign remittances sent to Mexico by Mexicans living outside the country has grown to almost US\$20 billion annually, making it the largest single source of foreign exchange (even larger than revenue earned from oil exports).³⁵

From 1965 to 1986, an estimated 5.7 million Mexicans emigrated to the United States, of whom 81 percent were undocumented.³⁶ The United States operated a "de facto guest-worker program," whereby border enforcement was tough enough to prevent a flood of immigration but not so strict as to prevent a steady flow of cheap and undocumented labor.³⁷ The costs of illegal immigration were raised just enough that only about one in three undocumented Mexicans could be caught and returned. Most emigrants who tried to enter the United States succeeded, although not on the first try. The U.S. attempt to enforce border control was largely symbolic, but it never threatened the availability of cheap labor. The dramatic growth of undocumented Mexican immigrants, especially after the economic crisis in Mexico during the early 1980s, became a political crisis in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s. The result was the 1986 U.S. **Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)**, which imposed sanctions on employers of illegal aliens and toughened the enforcement of immigration laws. At the same time, it provided an amnesty for longtime undocumented workers and legalized about 2.3 million Mexican immigrants.³⁸ In the late 1990s, however, illegal immigration continued to skyrocket. In 2006, the U.S. administration of George W. Bush proposed tougher border controls as well as measures aimed at giving legal status to more Mexicans living in the United States.

NOTES

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- Bracero Program** A World War II program that allowed millions of Mexicans to work temporarily in the United States.
- caciques** Local military strongmen, who generally controlled local politics in Mexico in nineteenth-century Mexico.
- Calderón, Felipe** Mexico's current president, elected in 2006.
- camarillas** Vast informal networks of personal loyalty that operate as powerful political cliques.
- Cárdenas, Lázaro** Mexican President from 1934 to 1940 who implemented a radical program of land reform and nationalized Mexican oil companies.
- Carranza, Venustiano** The Mexican Revolutionary leader who eventually restored political order, ended the Revolution's violence, and defeated the more radical challenges of Zapata and Villa.
- caudillos** National military strongmen, who dominated Mexican politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- Chamber of Deputies** The lower house of Mexico's legislature.
- Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM)** Mexico's dominant trade union confederation that was a main pillar of the PRI's authoritarian regime.
- Congress** The name of Mexico's bicameral legislature.

- constitution of 1917** The document established by the Mexican Revolution that continues to regulate Mexico's political regime.
- Cortés, Hernán** The Spanish conqueror of Mexico.
- criollos** Mexican-born descendants of Spaniards during the period of Spanish colonial rule.
- Cuauhtémoc** The Aztec military leader defeated by the Spanish conquerors.
- Díaz, Porfirio** A Mexican dictator who ruled from 1876 to 1910 and was deposed by the Mexican Revolution.
- Federal District of Mexico City** Similar to the U.S. District of Columbia, this powerful Mexican district encompasses Mexico's capital city and contains most of its population.
- Federal Electoral Institute** An independent agency that regulates elections in Mexico, created in 1996 to end decades of electoral fraud.
- Fox, Vicente** Mexico's president since 2000, and the first non-PRI president in over seven decades.
- Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)** 1986 U.S. immigration legislation that toughened American immigration laws while granting amnesty to many longtime undocumented workers.
- Informal sector** A sector of the economy that is not regulated or taxed by the state.
- Juárez, Benito** A nineteenth-century Mexican president who is today considered an early proponent of a modern, secular, and democratic Mexico.
- Labastida, Francisco** The first-ever PRI candidate to lose a presidential election, he was defeated in 2000 by Vicente Fox of the PAN.
- latifundistas** Owners of *latifundia* (huge tracts of land).
- Madero, Francisco** An initial leader of the Mexican Revolution and a landowner who sought moderate democratic reform.
- maquiladoras** Factories that import goods or parts to manufacture goods that are then exported.
- Maya** Mexico's largest indigenous group, concentrated in the south of the country.
- mestizos** Mexicans of mixed European and indigenous blood, who make up the vast majority of Mexico's population.
- Mexican-American War (1846-1848)** The conflict between Mexico and the United States in which the United States gained one third of Mexican territory.
- Mexican miracle** The spectacular economic growth in Mexico from the 1940s to about 1980.
- Mexican Revolution** The bloody conflict in Mexico between 1910 and 1917 that established the long-lived PRI regime.
- Mexico's War of Independence** A bloody eleven-year conflict that resulted in Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821.

municipios County-level governments in Mexican states.

Nahuatl Mexico's second-largest indigenous group, concentrated in central Mexico.

National Action Party (PAN) A conservative Catholic Mexican political party that until 2000 was the main opposition to the PRI.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) A free trade agreement linking Mexico with the United States and Canada.

Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) The political party that emerged from the Mexican Revolution to preside over an authoritarian regime that lasted until 2000.

patron-client relationships A system in which powerful government officials deliver state services and access to power in exchange for the delivery of political support.

Pemex Mexico's powerful state-owned oil monopoly.

Portillo, José López Mexican president from 1976 to 1982 who increased the role of the state in the economy and nationalized Mexico's banking system in an attempt to avert a national economic crisis.

Santa Ana, General Antonio López Mexico's first great *Caudillo*, who dominated its politics for three decades in the mid-nineteenth century.

San Andrés Peace Accords A 1996 accord that promised to end the Zapatista rebel uprising but was never implemented by the PRI government.

Secretariat of Government A top cabinet post that controls internal political affairs and a post that was often a stepping-stone to the presidency under the PRI.

Secretariat of the Treasury Mexico's most powerful economic cabinet minister.

Senate The upper house of Mexico's legislature.

Supreme Court Mexico's highest court.

Televisa Mexico's largest media conglomerate, which for decades enjoyed a close relationship with the PRI.

Villa, Francisco (Pancho) A northern Mexican peasant leader of the Revolution who, together with Emiliano Zapata, advocated a more radical socio-economic agenda.

the War of the Castes A massive nineteenth-century uprising of Mexico's indigenous population against the Mexican state.

Zapata, Emiliano The southern Mexican peasant leader of the Revolution most associated with radical land reform.

Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) A largely Mayan rebel group that staged an uprising in 1994, demanding political reform and greater rights for Mexico's indigenous people.

Zedillo, Ernesto Mexico's president from 1994 to 2000. He implemented political reforms that paved the way for fair elections in 2000.

WEB LINKS

La Jornada www.jornada.unam.mx A Mexican daily newspaper
 Latin American Network Information Center: Mexico
www.lanic.utexas.edu/la/mexico An encyclopedic collection of links maintained by the University of Texas, Austin
 Mexican government offices and agencies
www.mexonline.com/mexagency.htm
Reforma www.reforma.com A Mexican daily newspaper
El Universal english.eluniversal.com A Mexican daily newspaper
 Zapatista Army of National Liberation www.ezln.org.mx