

Appendix: Political Transition in Mexico

- **Zapata, Villa, Carranza, Obregon,**
- **PNR → PRM → PRI**
- **3 Sectors of PRI**
- **Mexican presidents on Left and Right**

Mexico in 1910

- Finally recovered from years of social unrest in the previous century
- Under the rule of a “modernizing dictator”, Porfirio Díaz
- Thirty-five years of economic growth and stability
- But problems beneath the surface
- Wealth has become unbelievably concentrated in the hands of a few hundred families
- Impoverishment of half the population
- Encroachment on lands, especially indigenous lands
- Total lack of political competition
- Urban middle classes and small industrial working class that’s excluded from system; pressuring for change
- Díaz agrees to hold fair election
- Wealthy liberal landowner, Francisco Madero, announces his opposition candidacy
- Country is ready for change
- Díaz steals election

The Revolution

- Madero, from exile, calls for armed rebellion
- Triggers massive conflagration that last for years, called the Mexican Revolution
- Díaz: “Madero has unleashed a tiger. Let us see if he can ride him.”
- He can’t; Madero who succeeds in taking power but is then killed in a reactionary military coup
- years of bloodshed; economy drops 25-50%; 1M people dead, including many of the other leaders of Revolution, during a long war of attrition
- Three groups: reactionaries who want to bring back the old regime fight the Constitutionalists, who want to avenge Madero
- Then, radicals and moderates fight
 - Radicals led by Zapata (poor Indians) and Villa (northern dispossessed)
 - “Moderates” led by Venustiano Carranza and others (middle-classes and workers)
 - Finally, moderates fight among themselves
 - By 1917, group of northern generals has beaten other factions
 - Emiliano Zapata killed in 1919
 - Pancho Villa killed in 1923
 - Alvaro Obregón
 - Radical options defeated, but completely turning the clock back impossible
- Two main legacies
 - Progressive Constitution, created in 1917
 - Honored in the breach
 - Social reform has not yet reached much of Mexico
 - Destruction of state authority; warlordism (*caciques*)

In 1928, Obregón is assassinated

- Plutarcho Elías Calles, ruling party (National Revolutionary Party or PNR)
- Committee of surviving revolutionary generals
- Makes deals with the local warlords (*caciques*) in return for their loyalty
- Lázaro Cárdenas becomes president in 1934
- Forces Calles into exile
- Delivers on promises of social reform
 - Public education
 - Sweeping land reform
 - Nationalization of enterprises, especially U.S. oil companies
- Politically, ruling party now has a mass base
 - 1938: Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM)
 - Organized by sectors
 - Massive state bureaucracy
 - Military chieftains brought under control
 - Warlords co-opted
 - One-party political rule established
- Ultimately, party name is changed to PRI
 - Major factions divided into *camarillas*
 - Fight over power
 - Big left-right divide; presidency seems to shift among factions
 - Iron-clad rule: no reelection
 - "Effective suffrage and no reelection" was Madero's slogan
 - Coordinating committee of elites
 - Held together by corruption; everyone gets a cut at the spoils
 - Pluralistic, but not democratic
 - Other parties have place at margin of system
 - Main labor unions and associations controlled by ruling party
 - Press co-opted
 - Caciques at the local level
 - Gonzalo Santos: Some generals established themselves strongly in states or regions and constructed local domains (*cacicazgos*) run with an iron hand. The State did not oppose them but made use of them for its own benefit. "You obey me, I protect you," was the golden rule....A truly perfect example of this process was Gonzalo N. Santos who inherited the *cacicazgo*...in the state of San Luis Potosí. A founding member (card no. 6) of the PNR, professional organizer of victorious electoral campaigns by hook or by crook, soldier, congressman, senator when necessary, Santos had accumulated tens of thousands of hectares under the protection of the Revolution. He had twelve thousand armed men, "his *Huastecos*", under his direct command. At the end of his life, he did an extremely rare thing for a Mexican politician. He produced his own memoirs – cheerful, macabre, and very well written. And so we know – from his own testimony – that his professional killers accompanied him wherever he went. If a priest preached against him, he calmly had him shot. If he liked a piece of land, he would approach the owner and ask him to set a price. If the owner refused or seemed doubtful, Santos would throw up his hands: "Let his widow decide!"

In exchange for impunity within his territory, Santos contributed significant services "to the Revolution." In the elections of 1929, a newspaper in his capital city reported, "When more than 2,000 people had collected, two trucks full of PNR policemen began to fire on the crowd with Thompson machine guns."...On the day of the 1940 elections, he covered himself with glory. In his memoirs, he describes "the bloody elections of 1940" with absolute honesty and sincerity, as if it had been a military campaign.

'We moved against the polling station with our guns out and since there were some shots fired at us we responded with energy, firing away freely. We grabbed all the

ballot boxes full of votes for the opposition candidate and we broke them and we carried away all the papers and records and ballots and so on....

At another polling station, he discussed the procedure with the poll-watchers:

'I said to the poll-watchers, 'when you transcribe the voting list and fill up the box at voting time, don't discriminate against the dead because they're all citizens and they have their right to vote.'

(Krauze, Enrique. *Mexico: Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997. pp. 513-14. ISBN: 0060163259.)

Other great quotes from Santos:

- "I have no need for administrators in my state, only gravediggers"
- "Should I go to hell, I'm used to hot country."

(Krauze, Enrique. *Mexico: Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997. pp. 644-45. ISBN: 0060163259.)

This system lasts pretty well until the late 1960s

- Legitimacy of Cardenas reforms
- Symbols of Mexican Revolution
- Nationalism
- Political stability after a long period of upheaval
- Economy growing
- Lots of foreign investment
- Good prices for Mexican exports
- Macro-economic management is insulated
- Corruption relatively contained

But it's increasingly undone after 1970

- No constraints on corruption
- Unless the president is mindful it will expand
- State grows; opportunities for corruption expand
- Economic policy runs into problems related to ISI
- Uncompetitive industries
- Macroeconomic policy becomes object of political fighting
- 1973: President Echeverria fires his Finance Minister
- Central Bank loses independence
- Factions of PRI now have incentive to manipulate the economy more
- Increased infighting within PRI
- Finally, public opposition grows
- System set up to manage peasant population
- Now, population is mostly urban
 - 1950: 25% live in cities of over 20,000
 - 1980: 43%
- Education
 - 1950: 57% know how to read and write
 - 1980: 84%
- Communication
 - 1950: 0% of households have television; 10% have radio
 - 1980: 25% television; most have radio
- Service sector
 - 1950: service sector 20% of labor force
 - 1980: 35%
- this population is much harder to control
 - educated, literate, well-informed, urban middle-class that's not part of PRI political machine

- disaffected with slow growth, corruption, and continuing inequalities
- begin to mount protests

Big turning point for the regime comes in 1968

- Student protesters in Mexico City
- Repression by government, 100s killed
- Many activists go to organize left-wing groups
- Some become guerrillas
- Reporters become more independent

Another big turning point comes with economic crisis of 1982

- Mexican government been borrowing
- Basically defaults on its international debt
- Nationalizes the banks, which ticks off private sector
- Austerity measures, which ticks off population
- Growth of National Action Party (PAN), representing middle-classes
- businesses not linked to government
- Catholics
- Provincial cities who dislike centralization of authority

Meanwhile, economic crisis is worsening

- Split in 1986-87
- Left wing of PRI defects under Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (son of Lázaro Cárdenas)
- Runs in elections of 1988
- PRI chooses Carlos Salinas; not seen initially as very charismatic and linked to private sector
- Lots of economic discontent
- PAN has good candidate
- Cardenas is good candidate
- Massive electoral fraud
- Not clear who actually won, but possible that Cárdenas did
- Regime discredited

Mexico was begins to slide into crisis

- Corruption high
- Old ISI model broken
- Economy is not growing fast
- Oil and borrowing have deferred the problem
- 1982, declaration of bankruptcy and debt crisis
- Opposition party in North is growing (PAN)
- PRI's legitimacy declining
- 1985 earthquake

Unfortunate president during most of this period is Miguel de la Madrid, 1982-88

- Mexicans have a six year term

Miguel de la Madrid's (1982-88) envelopes

- Greeted with great fanfare; everyone happy to have a change
- Two years go by: Make an important announcement (moral renovation)
- Reshuffle the Cabinet (fires some of the more corrupt people)
- Make three new envelopes
- Picks a technocratic type, Carlos Salinas as successor

1988 elections

- Economic crisis
- Looks like it will be heavily contested for first time
- But left-wing of the PRI not happy with this; defects
 - Leader is Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of Lázaro Cárdenas
- Conservative opposition also growing
- As votes are coming in....
- "El sistema se cayó"
- Ballots later burned
- No one believes the results

Salinas' situation.

- Country is in crisis, his election is dubious
- What should he do?

Goal

- "Turn a Latin American country into a North American country"
- Rejuvenate system, not hand over power to opposition groups
- Fall far short of democracy

Very popular in the beginning

- Economy stops its fall
- Reform underway
- Promise is that Mexico will soon "join the First World"

Doesn't happen this way

- 1994 Chiapas uprising (*subcomandante* Marcos; tell story about airport in Chiapas)
- Assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio
- PRI wins the elections in 1994, but not by a huge margin
- Assassination of JFRM
- Peso devaluation
- Arrest of Raúl Salinas
- Scandals
- "Bordering on chaos"

1996 reforms (following on 1994)

- IFE
- Federal funding for elections
- Monitoring of media

1997 elections follow

- Legislative elections
- PRI loses control of Cámara
- CCS wins Mexico City

Now on the eve of 2000 elections

- Three main candidates....
- Very close election

Shocking political events

- 1982 bankruptcy
- 1985 earthquake
- 1988 elections
- Salinas reforms, 1989-1991

- 1993, NAFTA signed
- January 1994 Chiapas uprising
- March 1994 assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio
- August 1994 elections
- September 1994 assassination of J. F. Ruiz-Massieu
- December 1994, Zedillo takes office
- December 1994 peso devaluation
- January 1995 arrest of Raul Salinas for murder
- Scandals involving Salinas family
- 1996 reforms
- 1997 elections

Salinas Reforms, 1989-1994

- End of land reform and *ejido* system
- Education reform and change in textbooks
- Rapprochement with the Church
- Privatization of state-owned enterprises
- Tariff reduction and NAFTA
- Internal reform of the PRI and erosion of corporatist "sectors"
- Electoral reforms (national voter registry, IFE, access to media, etc.)