

Contemporary Mexican Politics

I. Basic Political Institutions

II. Economic & Political Reform (1988-present)

III. The 2006 Recount Controversy

I. Basic Political Institutions

EXECUTIVE

- 6-year presidential terms w/ no re-election
- plurality election
- powers
 - veto (2/3 to override) except no veto on budget
 - exclusive introduction of budget & revenue bills
 - can name & remove all ministers w/o approval
- *PRES power prior to the 1990s was based on president's role with the PRI &, in turn, on the PRI's dominance in the political system*

LEGISLATURE: no immediate reelection

- lower house: *Chamber of Deputies*
 - 3-year terms w/ all elected every 3 years
 - 300 SMDP seats w/ representation by population
 - 200 closed-list PR seats in 5 40-seat regions
- upper house: *Senate*
 - 6-year terms w/ all due for election in 2000
 - 3 seats per state (96 of 128 total)
 - change in 1994 from SMDP vote to majority-minority:
 - 2 seats to plurality party; 1 seat to runner-up
 - 32 national seats elected via closed-list PR
- PRI's dominance ended in CofD minority in 1997

JUDICIARY

- Supreme Court w/ more limited powers than most
 - 11 justices appointed by PRES to 15-year terms
 - 2/3 vote in Senate needed for confirmation
- court did not historically review the constitutionality of laws
 - 1994 constitutional amendment gave 1/3 vote in LEG the power to request review of constitutionality of new laws
- court does not set precedents valid at lower levels except on very narrow issues

II. Economic & Political Reform (1988-present)

■ A. Initial ECONOMIC reforms:

- lower tariffs & entry into NAFTA
- privatization (75% of all SOEs)

■ B. Initial POLITICAL reforms:

- Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) changed to make it more independent from PRI
 - by 1996, IFE president no longer named by executive branch & most members must be approved by 2/3 of congress

■ C. Carlos Salinas (1988-94)

Several successes...

- ECONOMIC
 - Brady plan debt restructuring
 - renewed economic growth
 - lower inflation
- POLITICAL
 - PRD in decline in 1991 & 1994
 - PRI sweep of CofD in 1991
 - PRI's presidential victory in 1994 is not disputed

...and some serious problems in 1994

- EZLN rebellion
- 2 assassinations of PRI leaders
- collapse of the Mexican peso

■ D. Ernesto Zedillo: *The End of the PRI's Dominance (1994-2000)*

- popular discontent
 - → *sparked further by Jan. 1994 EZLN rebellion*
- fragile fiscal and international balance
 - → *peso crisis of 1994-95*
- setback in 1997 mid-term elections
 - PRI < 50% for first time ever in LEG vote (38-39%)
 - *lost majority control of Chamber of Deputies*
 - PRD wins mayoral race in Mexico City
- Zedillo responds with more political reform
 - maintains electoral reforms despite 1997 defeats
 - pushes for an end to the *dedazo*
 - *the PRI holds its first presidential primary*

❖ E. The Vicente Fox Presidency (2000-2006)

- Fox was elected amid hopes that he could lead changes in Mexican politics after 71 years of PRI rule
- He had a long list of policy reforms he wanted to pursue
- He won w/ 43% of the vote but the PAN controlled about 2/5 of the LEG (as did the PRI)
 - PAN had 41% of CofD & 36% of SEN
 - PRI had 42% of CofD & 47% of SEN
- He found it difficult to push major initiatives through the legislature... *AND his party lost seats to the PRI & to the PRD in the July 2003 legislative elections*
- The economy performed poorly between 2001-2003, but then GDP grew at an annual rate of over 4% during '04-'06

❖ **F. The Felipe Calderón Presidency (2006-present)**

- Calderón emerged from a controversial, narrow victory in search of expanding his support
- He used his EXEC powers to try to expand popular support by launching high-profile raids against organized crime
- Faced with the intransigence of the PRD, Calderón needs the support of the PRI in order to govern
 - PAN has 41% of CofD & 41% of SEN
 - PRI had 21% of CofD & 26% of SEN
 - {PRD & its 2 allies hold 29% of CofD & 28% of SEN}
 - He managed to get the PRI to agree to reform the pension system for gov't workers, but couldn't get their support to reform the rest of the retirement system
 - *The PRI won 48% of the lower house in the 2009 elections*
- The U.S. economic downturn in '08-'10 hurt the economy

Presidential Elections

	34	40	46	52	58	64	70	76	82	88	94	2000	2006
PRI	98	94	78	74	90	89	88	99	72	51	50	36	22
PAN	--	--	--	8	9	11	14	no	16	17	27	43	35.9
FDN/PRD	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	30	17	17	35.3

III. The 2006 Recount Controversy

III.A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

◆ **During its lengthy control of the government, the PRI used various tactics to ensure electoral victory**

- Widespread spending in the months prior to elections
- Use of public funds & major donors to pay for campaign expenses
- Direct & indirect control of mass media
- Use of open-ballot voting in rural areas
- Use of the carrousel where secret ballots were maintained
- When needed, control of electoral oversight was used to manipulate vote-counting to favor PRI candidates
- **KEY EXAMPLES:**
 - Use of “mechanical failure” speech to provide more time to massage the outcome in the pivotal 1988 election – hurting the FDN/PRD
 - Use of fraud to ensure the triumph of PRI candidate Roberto Madrazo over PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the 1994 governor’s race in Tabasco
 - *These 2 men would become 2 of the 3 major candidates in the 2006 presidential race*

◆ **Changes in the 1990s improved the electoral process**

- The PRI lost its control of the official oversight agency (IFE)
- A new 7-member Electoral Tribunal was named in 1996 to a non-renewable 10-year term w/ the agreement of the 3 major parties
- Photo ID cards & better periodic revision of registration lists decreased the possibilities for “ghost voters”
- The two major opposition parties, PAN & PRD, expanded their networks of electoral observers to cover most of the country
- The non-partisan Civic Alliance developed a network of electoral observers
- The number of international observers also increased
- **KEY EXAMPLES**
 - *The PRI lost control of the legislature & lost in Mexico City to the PRD from 1997 forward*
 - *Vicente Fox won the presidency in 2000*
 - *The magnitude of formal & informal complaints about the electoral process declined from 1996-2005*

❖ **Some events in this decade reopened old wounds & suspicions**

- In 2003, the at-large (non-partisan) members of the IFE were named by an accord of PAN & PRI senators that alienated the PRD (even though it was legal)
- In April 2005, with AMLO leading in opinion polls, he was charged w/ contempt of court b/c the municipal government of Mexico City was building an airport access road at odds with a judicial ruling
 - If the proceedings continued (even w/o a guilty verdict), AMLO would've been disqualified as a 2006 candidate
 - AMLO organized a massive rally to mobilize support
 - Fox fired his attorney general & charges were subsequently dropped
- AMLO bridled at a wave of 2006 campaign ads associating him with Hugo Chávez & labeling AMLO as dangerous for Mexico
 - The IFE eventually ordered that several such ads be pulled (and ordered Vicente Fox not to make indirect references to AMLO)

III.B. The 2006 Elections

❖ **PRESIDENCY**

- ❖ AMLO lost by 0.5% of over 40 million votes
- ❖ FLC did better in the (wealthier) north & among upper-income Mexicans; AMLO did better in the (poorer) south & among working-class Mexicans
 - ❖ Felipe Calderón was judged by many to have outperformed AMLO on television
- ❖ Roberto Madrazo's campaign never got above 25% in pre-election opinion polls & received 22% on election day

❖ **LEGISLATURE**

- ❖ The PAN & the PRD had their best elections ever:
 - ❖ The PRD nearly doubled its representation – gaining a 1/3 of the CofD & 28% of the Senate
 - ❖ The PAN finished first w/ roughly 2/5 in each chamber
- ❖ The PRI (after rebounding in 2003) had its worst election ever:
 - ❖ 24% of the CofD and 30.5% of the Senate

III.C. The 2006 Controversy

- ❖ AMLO & the PRD claim that ballot-box stuffing, ballot nullification, & forged vote totals gave the PAN a victory
 - ❖ They also charged Fox w/ assisting the PAN
- ❖ They asked for a nationwide recount &/or the nullification of the results (which would lead to a new election)
- ❖ AMLO called for sit-ins in key zones of Mexico City
 - ❖ The large crowds diminished somewhat over time
- ❖ In August 2006, the Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF) validated the legislative election results
 - ❖ which were not contested by the PRD (neither formally nor in the media)
- ❖ In August 2006, the TEPJF ordered a partial recount in which 9% of all precincts were fully recounted
 - ❖ The process reduced FLC's lead by 4,183 votes down to just under 233,000 votes nationwide
- ❖ When Fox went to deliver his final State of the Union Address on 9/1/06, PRD legislators physically took over the podium & forced him to deliver the address from the presidential residence
- ❖ At a rally on 9/3/06, AMLO said that he would call for a "National Democratic Convention" on Sept. 16th (Mexico's Independence Day)
 - ❖ He spoke then & elsewhere of forming a parallel government or of creating a national coordination of resistance
- ❖ On 9/5/06, the TEPJF rejects the PRD's requests for a full recount &/or for a nullification of the election
 - ❖ Felipe Calderón is officially declared the winner
 - ❖ AMLO subsequently formed a parallel government

Q: Should all of the ballots have been recounted? Why or why not?