

THE U.S. CONNECTION



Mexican Migration to the United States

Mexicans began moving to the United States in substantial numbers late in the nineteenth century, and their ranks grew as many fled the chaotic conditions that had been created by the Revolution of 1910. Most settled in the border states of California and Texas, where they joined preexisting Mexican communities that had been there since the days when the American southwest had been part of Mexico. Even greater numbers of migrants began to arrive during World War II, when the U.S. government allowed Mexican workers, known as *braceros*, to enter the country to help provide much-needed manpower for strategic production efforts. The *bracero* program remained in place after the war, and under it, a predominantly male Mexican workforce provided seasonal labor to U.S. employers, mostly in agriculture. After the *bracero* program came to an end in 1964, Mexicans continued to seek work in the United States, despite the fact that most then had to enter the country illegally. To a large extent, the U.S. government informally tolerated the employment of undocumented migrants until the 1980s, when policy-makers came under pressure to assert control over the border. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allowed migrants who had been in the United States for a long period of time to gain legal residency rights, but it called for tighter controls on immigration in the future.

IRCA and subsequent efforts to deter illegal immigration simply turned a pattern of seasonal migration into a flow of migrants that settled permanently north of the border. Before 1986, most Mexican migrant workers left their families at home and worked in the United States for only a few months at a time before returning to their country with the money they had earned. The money that these migrants send back to Mexico helps to sustain not just their own families but entire regions that have been left behind by the migrants who gained amnesty under IRCA and then sent for their families to join them, creating a more permanent immigrant community. Also, as increased vigilance and new barriers

making the crossing of the border more difficult, more of the migrants who arrived in the United States decided to remain there rather than risk apprehension by traveling back and forth between the two countries. High-profile efforts to patrol the border around urban areas such as San Diego and El Paso led migrants to use more remote crossing points, and although the number of Mexicans who died trying to reach the United States rose as many attempted to travel through the desolate deserts of Arizona, the overall rate of illegal immigration was not affected by the government's crackdown.

In the 1990s and 2000s, growing Mexican communities in the United States spread into areas such as North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, and Iowa, where few Mexicans had lived before. They also became increasingly mobilized politically as they organized to resist anti-immigrant voter initiatives such as Proposition 187 in California in 1994 and Proposition 200 in Arizona in 2004, both of which threatened to cut off social services for undocumented migrants. At the same time, their political importance in Mexico has reached unprecedented heights as officials at all levels of government there recognize the critical importance to the Mexican economy of the \$21.3 billion that the country receives each year in remittances from migrants working in other countries. Mexican governors, mayors, and federal officials now regularly visit representatives of migrant groups in the United States, often seeking their support and funding for projects at home. Moreover, a 1996 law allowing Mexicans to hold dual citizenship makes it possible for many Mexican migrants to have a voice in the governance of both the country of their birth as well as the country where they now reside. In 2005, Mexican legislators finally approved a system under which registered Mexican voters living abroad could participate in federal elections using mail-in ballots, and it is easy to imagine that this huge group could play a decisive role in future electoral contests.

vastly expanded access to basic health care and cash grants to poor families that keep their children in school.

The contrast between the poverty of the developing world and the prosperity of industrialized nations is nowhere on more vivid display than it is along the 2,000-mile-long border between Mexico and the United States. As the number of Mexican migrants seeking opportunities abroad has grown in recent years, their presence in the United States has come to have profound ramifications for the politics of both nations (see The U.S. Connection: Mexican Migration to the United States).

Mexico in the Global Economy

The crisis that began in 1982 altered Mexico's international economic policies. In response to that crisis, the government relaxed restrictions on the ability of foreigners to own property, reduced and eliminated tariffs, and did away with most import licenses. Foreign investment was courted in the hope of increasing the manufacture of goods for export. The government also introduced a series of incentives to encourage the private sector to produce goods for export. In 1986, Mexico joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), a multilateral agreement that sought to promote freer trade among countries and that later became the basis for the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the 1990s and early 2000s, Mexico signed trade pacts with many countries in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere.

The government's effort to pursue a more outward-oriented development strategy culminated in the ratification of NAFTA in 1993, with gradual implementation beginning on January 1, 1994. In 2009, 80.7 percent of the country's exports were sent to the United States, and 48.1 percent of its imports came from that country, making Mexico's northern neighbor its most important trading partner by a wide margin.¹² Access to the U.S. market is essential to Mexico and to domestic and foreign investors. NAFTA signaled a new period in U.S.–Mexican relations by making closer integration of the two economies a certainty.

NAFTA also entails risks for Mexico. Domestic producers worry about competition from U.S. firms. Farmers worry that Mexican crops cannot compete effectively with those grown in the United States; for example, peasant producers of corn and beans have been hard hit by the availability of lower-priced U.S.-grown grains.¹³ In addition, many believe that embracing free trade with Canada and the United States indicates a loss of sovereignty. Certainly, Mexico's economic situation is now more vulnerable to the ebb and flow of economic conditions in the U.S. economy. Indeed, after the United States plunged into a deep recession in 2008, Mexico's economy contracted by more than 7 percent, despite the fact that the crisis was not of its own making. Moreover, some in Mexico are also concerned with evidence of "cultural imperialism" as U.S. movies, music, fashions, and lifestyles increasingly influence consumers. Indeed, for Mexico, which has traditionally feared the power of the United States in its domestic affairs, internationalization of political and economic relationships poses particularly difficult problems of adjustment.

On the other hand, the United States, newly aware of the importance of the Mexican economy to its own economic growth and concerned about instability on its southern border, hammered together a \$50 billion economic assistance program composed of U.S., European, and IMF commitments to support its neighbor when economic crisis struck in 1994. The Mexican government imposed a new stabilization package that contained austerity measures, higher interest rates, and limits on wages. Remarkably, by 1998, Mexico had paid off all of its obligations to the United States.

Globalization is also stripping Mexico of some of the secrecy that traditionally surrounded government decision-making, electoral processes, and efforts to deal with political dissent. International attention increasingly focuses on the country, and investors want clear and up-to-date information on what is occurring in the economy. The Internet and e-mail, along with lower international telephone rates, are increasing the flow of information across borders. The government can no longer respond to events such as the peasant rebellion in Chiapas, alleged electoral fraud, or the management of exchange rates without considering how such actions will be perceived in Tokyo, Frankfurt, Ottawa, London, or Washington.

Summary

Mexico's development from the 1930s to the 1980s was marked by extensive government engagement in the economy. During this period, the country industrialized and became primarily urban. At the same time, the living conditions of most Mexicans improved, and standards of health, longevity, and education grew. Yet, along with these achievements, development strategies led to industrial and agricultural sectors that were often inefficient and overly protected by government, inequalities in the distribution of income and opportunities increased, and growth was threatened by a combination of domestic policies and international economic conditions. In the 1980s, the earlier model of development collapsed in crisis, and more market-oriented policies have significantly reduced the role of government in the economy and opened the country up to global economic forces. Yet growth has been slow under the new policies and inequalities have increased. Economic growth, social inequality, and the legacies of an authoritarian past continue to affect the development of the country.

3 SECTION

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY-MAKING

Focus Questions

In what ways does the actual exercise of state power differ from the model outlined in the Constitution? What are the main reasons for these discrepancies?

In what ways do Mexican officeholders exercise power in addition to the powers formally granted to them by law?

To what extent is federalism a reality in Mexico today? How is power divided between administrations at the national, state, and local levels?

Are state institutions like the military and the judiciary truly independent of the executive branch of government? In what ways have these institutions promoted or hindered the growth of democracy in recent years?

Organization of the State

Under the Constitution of 1917, Mexico's political institutions resemble those of the United States. There are three branches of government, and a set of checks and balances limits the power of each. The congress is composed of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. One hundred twenty-eight senators are elected, three from each of the country's thirty-one states; three from the Federal District, which contains the capital, Mexico City; and another thirty-two elected nationally by **proportional representation (PR)**. The 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected from 300 electoral districts—300 by simple majority vote and 200 by proportional representation. State and local governments are also elected. The president, governors, and senators are elected for six years, an important institutional feature of Mexican politics referred to as the *sexenio*. Congressional deputies (representatives in the lower house) and municipal officials are elected for three years.

In practice, the Mexican system is very different from that of the United States. The constitution is a long document that can be easily amended, especially when compared to that of the United States. It lays out the structure of government and guarantees a wide range of human rights, including familiar ones such as freedom of speech and protection under the law, but also economic and social rights such as the right to a job and the right to health care. Economic and social rights are acknowledged but in practice do not reach all of the population. Although there has been some decentralization, the political system is still much more centralized than that of the United States. Congress is now more active as a decision-making arena and as a check on presidential power, but the executive remains central to initiating policy and managing political conflict.

The Executive

The President and the Cabinet

The presidency is the central institution of governance and policy-making in Mexico. Until the 1990s, the incumbent president always selected who would run as the PRI's next presidential candidate, appointed officials to all positions of power in the government and the party, and often named the candidates who almost automatically won elections as governors, senators, deputies, and local officials.¹⁴ Even with a non-PRI incumbent, the president continues to set the broad outlines of policy for the administration and has numerous resources to ensure that those policy preferences are adopted. Until the mid-1970s, Mexican presidents were considered above criticism in national politics and revered as symbols of national progress and well-being. While economic and political events of the 1980s and 1990s diminished presidential prestige and politicians are increasingly willing to stand up to the chief executive in today's multiparty system, the extent of presidential power remains a legacy of the long period of PRI dominance.

Mexican presidents have a set of formal powers that allows them to initiate legislation, lead in foreign policy, create government agencies, make policy by decree or through administrative regulations and procedures, and appoint a wide range of public officials. More important, informal powers allow them to exert considerable control. The president manages a vast patronage machine for filling positions in government and initiates legislation and policies that were, until recently, routinely approved by the congress.

Mexican presidents, though powerful, are not omnipotent. They must, for example, abide by a deeply held constitutional norm, fully adhered to since 1940, by stepping down at the end of their six-year term, and they must adhere to tradition by removing themselves from the political limelight to allow their successors to assume full presidential leadership. All presidents, regardless of party, must demonstrate their loyalty to the myths and symbols of Mexican nationalism, such as the indigenous roots of much of its culture and the agrarian goals of the revolution, and they must make a rhetorical commitment to social justice and sovereignty in international affairs.

In the 1990s, President Zedillo gave up a number of the traditional powers of the presidency. He announced, for example, that he would not select his PRI successor but would leave it up to the party to determine its candidate. This created considerable conflict and tension as the PRI had to take on unaccustomed roles and as politicians sought to fill the void left by the "abandonment" of presidential power. Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón inherited a system in which the president is expected to set the policies and determine the priorities for a very wide range of government activity, yet needs a strong party in congress and experienced people in his administration to enact legislation and implement policies.

Under the PRI, presidents were always male and almost always members of the outgoing president's cabinet. With the victory of the PAN in 2000, this long tradition came to an end. Prior to running for president, Vicente Fox had been in business and had served as the governor of the state of Guanajuato. Calderón, although he had served briefly as Fox's secretary of energy, was not his chosen successor. Fox had hoped to be succeeded by his secretary of the interior, Santiago Creel. In this respect, Calderón's victory in 2006 continued a trend toward greater independence of parties from presidential preferences.

proportional representation (PR)

A system of political representation in which seats are allocated to parties within multimember constituencies, roughly in proportion to the votes each party receives. PR usually encourages the election to parliament of more political parties than single-member-district winner-take-all systems.

sexenio

The six-year term in office of Mexican presidents.

technocrats

Career-minded bureaucrats who administer public policy according to a technical rather than a political rationale.

Mexican presidential candidates since the mid-1970s have had impressive educational credentials and have tended to be trained in economics and management rather than in the traditional field of law. Presidents since López Portillo have had postgraduate training at elite institutions in the United States. By the 1980s, a topic of great debate in political circles was the extent to which a divide between *políticos* (politicians) and *técnicos* (**technocrats**) had emerged within the national political elite.

Once elected, the president moves quickly to name a cabinet. Under the PRI, he usually selected those with whom he had worked over the years as he rose to political prominence. He also used cabinet posts to ensure a broad coalition of support; he might, for example, appoint people with close ties to the labor movement, business interests, or some of the regional strongholds of the party. Only in rare exceptions were cabinet officials not active members of the PRI. When the PAN assumed the presidency in 2000, the selection of cabinet members and close advisers became more difficult. Until then, the PAN had elected officials only to a few state and local governments and to a relatively small number of seats in congress. As a consequence, the range of people with executive experience to whom Fox could turn was limited. He appointed U.S.-trained economists for his economic team and business executives for many other important posts. Few of these appointees had close ties to the PAN, and few had prior experience in government. Fox's powers were curtailed to some degree by a more forceful congress and his administration's lack of experience in governing. Whereas Fox preferred technocrats with limited political experience, Calderón filled his cabinet positions with longtime members of the PAN who have a longer history of political engagement. Over the years, few women have been selected for ministry-level posts. Initially, they only presided over agencies with limited influence over decision-making, like the ministries of tourism and ecology. More recently, however, women have headed the foreign ministry, and in 2011, at a moment when the fight against organized crime was at the top of the Calderón administration's agenda, a woman was named to serve as attorney general.

The president has the authority to fill numerous other high-level positions, which allows him to provide policy direction and keep tabs on what is occurring throughout the government. The range of appointments that a chief executive can make means that the beginning of each administration is characterized by extensive turnover of positions, and as a result, progress on the president's policy agenda can be slow during his first year in office as newly appointed officials learn the ropes and assemble their staff. The president's power to make appointments allows him to build a team of like-minded officials in government and ensure their loyalty. This system traditionally served the interests of presidents and the PRI well; under the PAN, given the limited number of its partisans who have experience at the national level, the system has not guaranteed the president as much power over the workings of the executive branch.

The Bureaucracy

Mexico's executive branch is large and powerful. Almost 1.5 million people work in the federal bureaucracy, most of them in Mexico City. An additional 1 million work in state-owned industries and semiautonomous agencies of the government. State and local governments employ over 1.5 million people.

Officials at lower levels in the bureaucracy are unionized and protected by legislation that gives them job security and a range of benefits. At middle and upper levels, most officials are called "confidence employees"; they serve as long as their bosses have confidence in them. These officials have been personally appointed by

their superiors at the outset of an administration. Their modest salaries are compensated for by the significant power that they can have over public affairs. For aspiring young professionals, a career in government is often attractive because of the challenge of dealing with important problems on a daily basis. Some employees also benefit from opportunities to take bribes or use other means to promote their personal interests.

The Parastatal Sector

The **parastatal** sector—composed of semiautonomous or autonomous government agencies, many of which produce goods and services—was extremely large and powerful in Mexico prior to the 1990s. As part of its post-1940 development strategy, the government engaged in numerous activities that in other countries are carried out by the private sector. Thus, until the Salinas administration, the country's largest steel mill was state-owned, as were the largest fertilizer producer, sugar mills, and airlines. In addition, the national electricity board still produces energy, which it supplies to industries at subsidized prices. The state-owned petroleum company, PEMEX, grew to enormous proportions in the 1970s and 1980s under the impact of the oil boom. NAFIN, a state investment corporation, provides a considerable amount of investment capital for the country. At one point, a state marketing board called CONASUPO was responsible for the importation and purchase of the country's basic food supplies, and in the 1970s, it played a major role in distributing food, credit, and farm implements in rural areas.

This large parastatal sector was significantly trimmed by the economic policy reforms that began in the 1980s. In 1970, there were 391 parastatal organizations in Mexico. By 1982, their number had grown to 1,155, in part because of the expansion of government activities under presidents Echeverría and López Portillo and in part because of the nationalization of private banks in 1982. Shortly afterward, concerted efforts were made to privatize many of these industries, including the telephone company, the national airlines, and the nationalized banks. By 1994, only 215 state-owned industries remained, and efforts continued to sell or liquidate many of them. However, some core components of the parastatal sector will likely remain in government hands for the foreseeable future because an influential bloc of nationalist political actors insists on the symbolic importance of public ownership of key industries.

Other State Institutions

The Military

Mexico is one of only a few countries in the developing world, particularly in Latin America, to have successfully marginalized the military from centers of political power. Although former military leaders dominated Mexican politics during the decades immediately after the Revolution of 1910, Calles, Cárdenas, and subsequent presidents laid the groundwork for civilian rule by introducing the practice of rotating regional military commands so that generals could not build up geographic bases of power. In addition, post-revolutionary leaders made an implicit bargain with the military leaders by providing them with opportunities to engage in business so that they did not look to political office as a way of gaining economic power. After 1946, the military no longer had institutional representation within the PRI and became

parastatal

A government-owned corporation or agency. Parastatal institutions generally engage in or seek to promote and organize commercial activity in a particular sector. Because of their connection to the state, these enterprises can also serve as instruments of official policy, as sources of patronage opportunities, or as important generators of government revenue.



EPAP/SASHENKA GUTIERREZ/Landov

The principle of civilian authority over the Mexican armed forces has been established for decades, but today both the army and navy are playing a large role in the fight against organized crime. Here, President Felipe Calderón appears in a parade alongside military leaders.

Source: <http://media3.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/gallery/100914/GAL-10Sep14-5722/media/PHO-10Sep14-251759.jpg>

clearly subordinate to civilian control. No military officer has held the presidency since that time.

This does not mean that the military has operated outside politics. It has been called in from time to time to deal with domestic unrest: in rural areas in the 1960s, in Mexico City and other cities to repress student protest movements in 1968, in Chiapas beginning in late 1994, and to manage the Mexico City police in 1997. The military was also called in to deal with the aftermath of the earthquake in Mexico City in 1985, but its inadequate response to the emergency did little to improve its reputation. When the PAN government made it possible for citizens to gain greater access to government information, it was discovered that the military had been involved in political repression, torture, and killing in the 1970s and 1980s. The scandal created by such revelations further lowered its reputation, though polls show that Mexicans continue to have more confidence in and admiration for the armed forces than for many other institutions, including the police forces, which are widely regarded as corrupt and ineffective.

In recent years, the military has been heavily involved in efforts to combat drug trafficking, and rumors have at times arisen about deals struck between military officials and drug barons. The military continues to be used to fight drug cartels and organized crime. Within weeks of taking office, Calderón had deployed thousands of military troops to Michoacán and Baja California to combat criminal organizations engaged in the drug trade. When the president dressed in military fatigues to address the troops in Michoacán in late January 2007, it was a dramatic manifestation of the increased role the military would play under his administration in the fight against crime. In some regions particularly hard-hit

by drug-related violence, the military has taken over many policing functions. Though the army is seen as less corrupt than many of the local police forces they have replaced, concerns about their ongoing presence on the streets of Mexican cities have arisen, particularly as allegations of civil and human rights violations by soldiers have emerged in some areas.

Whenever the military is called in to resolve domestic conflicts, some Mexicans become concerned that the institution is becoming politicized and may come to play a larger role in political decision-making. Thus far, such fears have not been realized, and many believe that as long as civilian administrations are able to maintain the country's tradition of stability, the military will not intervene directly in politics. The fact that the country successfully observed the transfer of power from the PRI to the PAN also has increased a sense that the military will remain subordinate to civilian control.

The Judiciary

Unlike Anglo-American legal systems, Mexico's law derives from the Roman and Napoleonic tradition and is highly formalized. Because Mexican law tends to be very explicit and because there are no punitive damages allowed in court cases, there are fewer lawsuits than in the United States. One important exception to this is the *amparo* (protection), whereby individual citizens may ask for a writ of protection, claiming that their constitutional rights have been violated by specific government actions or laws.

There are both federal and state courts in Mexico. The federal system is composed of the Supreme Court, which decides the most important cases; circuit courts, which take cases on appeal; and district courts, where cases enter the system. As in the United States, Supreme Court justices are nominated by the president and approved by the Senate. Since most of the important laws in Mexico are federal, state courts have played a subordinate role. This is changing, however. As Mexican states become more independent from the federal government, state law has been experiencing tremendous growth. In addition, there are many important specialized federal courts, such as labor courts, military courts, and electoral courts.

Like other government institutions in Mexico, the judiciary was for many decades politically, though not constitutionally, subordinate to the executive. The courts occasionally slowed the actions of government by issuing *amparos*; however, in almost every case in which the power of government or the president was at stake, the courts ruled on the side of the government. The Zedillo administration tried to change this by emphasizing the rule of law over that of powerful individuals. Increasing interest in human rights issues by citizens' groups and the media added pressure to the courts to play a stronger role in protecting basic freedoms. Zedillo's refusal to interfere with the courts' judgments also strengthened the judiciary. This trajectory continued under Fox and Calderón.

Although the judicial system remains the weakest branch of government, reforms continue to be proposed. In 2008, in response to concern for the rights of defendants who fall victim to police and prosecutorial misconduct, constitutional amendments called for the introduction of public trials with oral testimony and the presumption of innocence. When fully implemented, the reforms will represent one of the most significant changes to the judiciary in modern Mexican history. The northern state of Chihuahua has been the first to adopt the new system, but the new procedures have been controversial there, and progress elsewhere in the country has been slow.

Subnational Government

As with many other aspects of the Mexican political system, regional and local government in Mexico is quite different from what is described in the constitution. Under Mexico's federal system, each state has its own constitution, executive, unicameral legislature, and judiciary. Municipalities (equivalent to U.S. counties) are governed by popularly elected mayors and councils. But most state and municipal governments are poor. Most of the funds they command are transferred to them from the central government, and they have little legal or administrative capacity to raise their own revenue. States and localities also suffer greatly from the lack of well-trained and well-paid public officials. As at the national level, many jobs are distributed as political patronage, but even officials who are motivated to be responsive to local needs are generally ill equipped to do so. Since the early 1990s, the government has made several serious efforts to decentralize and devolve more power to state and local governments. At times, governors and mayors have resisted such initiatives because they meant that regional and local governments would have to manage much more complex activities and be the focus of demands from public sector workers and their unions. Local governments were also worried that they would be unable to acquire the budgetary resources necessary to carry out their new responsibilities.

Until 1988, all governors were from the PRI. Finally, in 1989, a non-PRI governor assumed power in Baja California, an important first. By 2011, eleven states and the Federal District were governed by parties other than the PRI. Also, municipalities have increasingly been the focus of authentic party competition. As opposition parties came to control these levels of government, they were challenged to improve services such as police protection, garbage collection, sanitation, and education. PRI-dominated governments have also tried to improve their performance because they are now more threatened by the possibility of losing elections.

The Policy-Making Process

The Mexican system is very dependent on the quality of its leadership and on presidential understanding of how economic and social policies can affect the development of the country. As indicated throughout this chapter, the president's single six-year term of office, the *sexenio*, is an extremely important fact of political life in Mexico. New presidents can introduce extensive change in positions within the government. They are able to bring in "their" people, who build teams of "their" people within ministries, agencies, and party networks. This generally provides the president with a group of high- and middle-level officials who share the same general orientation toward public policy and are motivated to carry out his goals. When the PRI was the dominant party, these officials believed that in following presidential leadership, they enhanced their chances for upward political mobility. In such a context, even under a single party, it was likely that changes in public policies could be introduced every six years, creating innovation or discontinuity, or both.

Together with the bureaucracy, the president is the focal point of policy formulation and political management. Until 1997, the legislature always had a PRI majority and acted as a rubber stamp for presidentially sponsored legislation. Since then, the congress has proven to be a more active policy-maker, blocking and forcing the negotiation of legislation, and even introducing its own bills. The president's skills in negotiating, managing the opposition, using the media to acquire public support, and maneuvering within the bureaucracy can be important in ensuring that his program is fully endorsed.

Significant limits on presidential power occur when policy is being implemented. At times, policies are not implemented because public officials at the lower levels disagree with them or make deals with affected interests in order to benefit personally. This is the case, for example, with taxes that remain uncollected because individuals or corporations bribe officials to overlook them. In other cases, lower-level officials may lack the capacity or skills to implement some policies, such as those directed toward improving education or rural development services. For various reasons, Mexican presidents cannot always deliver on their intentions. Traditionally, Mexican citizens have blamed lower-level officials for such slippage, but exempting the president from responsibility for what does or does not occur during his watch has become much less common since the 1970s.

Summary

On paper, Mexico's government resembles that of the United States, with three branches of government, checks and balances among them, and federalism defining the relationship between national, state, and local governments. In practice, however, the country developed a political system that concentrated most power in the hands of the president and the executive branch and managed political conflict through a dominant party. Much of the power of the president and the PRI was based on their capacity to use patronage to respond to political conflicts. This system is undergoing rapid change, as the legislature and court systems develop more independent roles, state and local governments acquire more independence, and the PRI no longer dominates the party system. Mexico, like the United States and Canada, is a federal republic with important power-sharing arrangements between the national and subnational levels of government. However, until the 1990s, state and local governments had few resources and a limited sphere of action when compared with the national level. Under the PRI, the executive branch held almost all power, while the legislative and judiciary branches followed the executive's lead and were considered rubber-stamp bodies. During the years of PRI hegemony, the government was civilian, authoritarian, and corporatist. Currently, Mexico has multiparty competitive elections, and power is less concentrated in the executive branch and the national government. Since the mid-1980s, great efforts have been made to reinvigorate the nation's laws and institutions and to make the country more democratic.

REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

4 SECTION

How do citizen interests get represented in Mexican politics, given the high degree of centralization, presidentialism, and, until recently, PRI domination? Is it possible for ordinary citizens to make demands on government and influence public policy? In fact, Mexico has had a relatively peaceful history since the revolution, in part because the political system offers some channels for representation and participation. Throughout this long history, the political system has emphasized compromise among contending elites, behind-the-scenes conflict resolution, and distribution of political rewards to those willing to play by the formal and informal rules of the game.