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Mexico: Neoliberalism, Popular Grievances, and the Rise of Andrés Manuel López Obrador

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Mexico:
Neoliberalism, Popular Grievances, and the Rise of Andrés Manuel
López Obrador

By
Irving Cortes-Martinez

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of the requirements for
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Abstract:

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Advisors: Robert Samet and Guillermina Seri

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, commonly referred to as AMLO, has become Mexico's first leftist president in over seven decades. He has promised to get rid of Mexico's problems through a peaceful but radical transformation, while placing the needs of the people first. For the past three decades, the nation's political and economic systems have failed to create positive results. Mexico currently faces mass inequality and poverty, corruption and impunity, and insecurity and organized crime. Through his political activism and most importantly, his political narrative, AMLO has become a popular actor and is seen as the president who will implement lasting changes.

This thesis interrogates the significance of the rise of AMLO by examining the conditions leading to his election as the new President of Mexico. The analysis proceeds, on the one hand, by analyzing the terms of AMLO's political discourse, including his call to return to the roots of the Mexican Revolution, as his rejection of the old political system, and his rejection of the neoliberal economic model. On the other hand, the assessment of AMLO's political significance requires revisiting modern Mexican history, from the Porfiriato to the present day, and contrasting them to the way in which they are portrayed in AMLO's narrative. For example, the damaging consequences of neoliberalism on the fabric of the Mexican society and their grievances will be examined as societal conditions for political victory. By looking into Mexican history and contemporary news, this thesis will also analyze the individual and societal conditions that allowed AMLO to win the presidential election.

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Este trabajo se lo dedico a mi Mamá y a mi Papá que al migrar a este país, y debido al gran esfuerzo y sacrificio, poseo las oportunidades que ahora tengo. Por ellos puedo decir que estoy orgulloso de ser

Inmigrante.

I dedicate this work to my Mom and my Dad that when migrating to this country, and due to their great effort and sacrifice, I have the opportunities I now have. Because of them I can say that I am proud to be an

Immigrant.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMLO	Andrés Manuel López Obrador
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SAL	Structural Adjustment Loans
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
PAN	Partido Accion Nacional
MORENA	Movimiento Regeneración Nacional

***Chapter One:
Introduction to Mexico's Current Situation:
Frustration and The Rise of AMLO***

On September 2014, 100 students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College were stopped by the municipal police in Iguala, Guerrero. Local police officers stopped the bus, removed 43 students, then forced them to enter police vehicles. The details of the occurrence continue to be a mystery to this day as Mexicans remain skeptical about government issued reports. An important fact that the Mexican government cannot hide is the complicity of government officials at all levels of Mexico's security forces. The disappearance of the 43 students provoked mass protests all across the country, as people demanded the federal government to act in investigating the details of the crime. Four years have passed since this incident occurred, but the case remains unsolved.

Disappearances, murders, and the government's involvement in the rise of homicide rates and in organized crime is nothing new. Since the War on Drugs began in 2006, more than 200,000 people have been killed and more than 30,000 people have disappeared. In 2017, Mexico's death toll reached an all-time high, with 29,168 recorded murders. The disappearance of the 43 students is just the tip of Mexico's deeper problem of corruption, impunity, organized crime and drug-related violence, wealth inequality, and lack of opportunities for the common Mexican citizen. What is more remarkable is the fact that these embedded issues can be traced back to neoliberal economic policies which, have disproportionately hurt the poor and marginalized communities. Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) won the 2018 presidential election promising a transformation of Mexican society. He promised to end the ongoing violence, corruption, and economic policies that have only benefited the elite at the expense of the poor. The victory of AMLO represents three key aspirations: a return to the roots of the Mexican Revolution, a rejection of the old political system, and a rejection of neoliberalism.

For the first time in seventy-eight years, a left-wing politician will hold power in Mexico with unprecedented political power over both executive and legislative branches. As a populist leader, AMLO has been able to obtain political support by promising a drastic transformation to the current status quo. Two main conditions, both interconnected to one another, led to the victory of AMLO in the 2018 presidential elections. First, neoliberal policies implemented after the 1982 economic crisis have had drastic consequences on the fabric of Mexican society. These consequences include an increase in income inequality, lack of education, government services, honest jobs for those marginalized (the youth, the poor, indigenous communities), augmentation of organized crime and homicides, and overall no improvement in the quality of life. Because of neoliberal reform, the ruling political parties have failed to provide political and social stability within the past three decades. Mexican society has been infested with corruption from all political levels while the government has failed to provide a sense of security in a society devastated by violence related to organized crime.

Citizen grievances regarding corruption and violence, the ruling political party's inability to provide security and basic services, and its involvement in organized crime, have created a legitimacy crisis for the main political parties. As a result, the PRI and the PAN lost legitimacy in the eyes of the Mexican people which, led many to reject the status quo and lent their support to AMLO who seeks to solve these issues. AMLO and his political party MORENA (Movimiento Regeneración Nacional) which, the name refers to the dark skin of disenfranchised Mexicans, sees itself as the alternative to the failures of the status quo and as the representative of the common people and those marginalized by society. In addition to running a campaign on the elimination of violence and corruption, AMLO promised to alleviate poverty, confront the political and economic

elite, decrease income inequality, and an expansion of state resources to those marginalized in rural poor communities, especially farmers.

The second reason why AMLO has had success in gaining popularity amongst the common Mexicans is because of the historical narrative he has created which links together past and present grievances, highlighting the continuities between the PRI/PAN and the Porfiriato. Throughout his political discourse, AMLO portrays the PRI and the PAN, using the term “neoporfirismo”, which allows him to depict his adversaries as a continuation of the Porfirio dictatorship. Using historical facts to compare the two political systems, AMLO makes the argument that Mexican society has returned to the past by allowing government officials to implement political and economic policies that are similar to those implemented during the Porfiriato. In his books *Neoporfirismo: Hoy Como Ayer* and in *A New Hope for Mexico: Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump's Wall*, AMLO argues that economic policies that opened up Mexico to foreign entities while privileging the Mexican elite during the Porfiriato continue till this day in the form of neoliberalism. This is because neoliberalism has also opened up Mexico’s resources to the global market at the expense of the poor and marginalized, and only benefits a small Mexican elite. This discourse is important in understanding why AMLO is popular amongst the common people. Though he does not explicitly say it, he promises a return to the ideals developed after the Mexican Revolution.

AMLO’s depiction of the 3-decade rule of the PRI and the PAN as a continuation of political and economic policies implemented during the Porfirian dictatorship helps Mexicans develop an indistinguishable relation between Porfirio Diaz’s brutal authoritarian regime and current government officials. Because of this, people are able to feel disenfranchised by a political system that has portrayed itself as the political party that “retorna a la época heroica e idealista de la revolución, en el sentido de sobreponer los intereses colectivos a los mezquinos intereses

individuales”¹. As AMLO will argue, the PRI with the PAN, have failed to provide the country with the promises created in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, including those promised under the 1917 Mexican Constitution.

In terms of his political discourse, AMLO argues that during the Porfiriato, access to Mexico’s natural resources was given to foreign corporations who extracted Mexico’s wealth for the few, at the expense of the many. Though the country modernized, only the elite profited while the peasantry continued to live in poverty under the old slave-like colonial hacienda system. In 1910, the peasantry rose up to overthrow the dictatorship, a war that lasted 9 years. By the end of the Mexican Revolution, Mexico had overthrown the 3 decades rule of Porfirio Diaz who had controlled Mexico with an iron fist, modernizing the country at the expense of the peasantry. The aftermath of the revolution left behind the most progressive body of legislation of the time: the 1917 Mexican Constitution. Within its pages, it imprints social and agrarian rights expanded to the populace. Despite creating hopes for the transformation to an egalitarian society, the promises left by this revolution faded with the PRI grasping power and returning Mexico to an authoritarian regime. Under a one-party state system, the PRI held power for 71 years using coercion, clientelism, electoral fraud, power centralization, and co-opting. Optimism for democratization and change arose as the wave of democratization finally reached Mexico in the year 2000, with the victory of Vicente Fox of the PAN. Instead, the PAN prolonged the authoritarian regime, prescribing no change to the political system. For the next 18 years, the regimen of the PAN and the PRI became a continuation of the old Porfirian political system while ruling over a society grieving over the consequences of neoliberal policies implemented during the 1980s.

¹ Translation: “returns to the heroic and idealist era of the revolution, in the sense of placing collective interests ahead of petty individual interests”. Franco, Arturo. El Coup D’etat Perfecto. Animal Politico. Nov, 2012. Web.

AMLO also writes that the re-emergence of the Porfiriato regime under the PRI and the PAN takes its roots under neoliberal policies which have devastated Mexican society. Like Diaz who opened up Mexico's resources to foreign entities, neoliberal policies have had the same effect. Since their implementation in the 1980s, neoliberal policies in Latin America have been dramatically hurtful, primarily to the poor and for human rights. Though countries like Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Venezuela moved away from neoliberalism during the rise of the Pink Tide (1990s-2000s) after the drastic consequences of their enactment, Mexico has continued to legislate neoliberal policies that have led to increased problems in Mexican society. These problems comprise of drug-related violence, femicides, increased organized crime, poverty, wealth inequality, internal and transnational migration, insufficient labor opportunities, amongst other issues, which have led to social unrest in Mexican society.

AMLO was successful in creating a narrative that links together grievances against neoliberalism and the PRI/PAN (PRIAN) to the Porfirian Dictatorship. This was effective in two ways. First, he blamed and delegitimized the PRI and PAN for the neoliberal policies leading to people's grievances. Second, because he establishes the parallel between the PRIAN and Porfirio Diaz, and for the need of a Mexican Revolution-like transformation, AMLO further delegitimizes both parties. The negative connotation that Diaz has in the memories of Mexicans and the motives for overthrowing his dictatorship for a more egalitarian society, are applied to the PRIAN. Therefore, AMLO asserts that in order to create a more equal society as was promised during the Mexican Revolution, a non-violent and democratic transformation is needed. AMLO sees his victory as Mexico's fourth transformation (the three preceding being the Mexican Independence, the Reform under Benito Juarez, and the Mexican Revolution). In conjunction with his slogan,

"Juntos Haremos Historia", together we will make history, AMLO seeks to leave a large footprint in Mexican history by implementing dramatic change.

On September 2017, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) gave a message to the Mexican people in front of the Monumento a la Revolución, a symbol of the legacy of the Mexican Revolution. In his speech, he spoke of moving the country away from corruption and away from the use of old authoritarian schemes by transforming Mexico into a new kind of democracy. AMLO was successful in winning the presidential campaign by pledging the return of the promises made under the 1917 Constitution promulgated in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. According to AMLO,

Tenemos que regresar al origen de la Constitución del 17, si no en la letra, si en el espíritu, es decir, en su esencia, tiene que haber justicia, tiene que haber democracia y tiene que haber libertades y soberanía, eso es lo que resume la Constitución del 17. Pero originalmente esa Constitución recogió los sentimientos del pueblo de México que luchó en la Revolución de 1910, en ese entonces, el pueblo de México se reveló contra la dictadura porfirista, porque Porfirio Díaz se mantuvo 34 años en la Presidencia².

The return to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution is very compelling to those who have been marginalized by government policies and see truths in the narrative given by AMLO. His narrative provides Mexicans an interpretation of Mexican history of marginalization, exploitation, and inequalities that places them in the front of the story.

AMLO's political narrative resonates with the grievances felt by the Mexican population, especially under Enrique Peña Nieto whose presidency has been consumed with corruption

² Translation: "We have to return to the origin of the Constitution of the 17th, if not in the writing, if in the spirit, that is, in its essence, there must be justice, there must be democracy and there must be freedoms and sovereignty, that is what is summarized the 1917 Constitution. But originally that Constitution picked up the feelings of the people of Mexico who fought in the Revolution of 1910, at that time, the people of Mexico rebelled against the Porfirian dictatorship, because Porfirio Diaz remained 34 years in the Presidency".

Ramirez Cuevas, Gabriel, "Volverá Esencia De Constitución del 1917; Justicia, Soberanía, Libertad y Democracia: AMLO". Regeneracion. Fed 2018. Web.

scandals, an all-time high in murder rates, lack of transparency, and lack of trust in the judicial system. All these fractures in society have created a legitimacy crisis for the PRI which significantly had effects in the 2018 elections. AMLO's political party MORENA in alliance with the Partido Trabajador (PT) and the Partido Encuentro Social (PES), won the senate and the house of deputies by a landslide, giving AMLO control over both legislative bodies.

Literature Review

As previously mentioned, AMLO's political discourse on creating a parallel between the Porfirio dictatorship and the current political regime has been successful in gaining him political support. To understand why this discourse is popular and accepted by the public, an overview of what has been written on the literature used by AMLO needs to be analyzed. This literature review will try to summarize some of the work that has been written about the time periods and issues being analyzed.

To begin, AMLO is not the only one making a parallel between the current political regime and that of the Diaz dictatorship. In *Mexico's Revolution Then and Now*, James D. Cockcroft argues that the current political situation of the country echoes that of the Porfiriato. As Cockcroft notes,

In the first decade of the 21st century, situations remarkably similar to those of the first ten years of the previous century have emerged in Mexico. Among the recurrences are: economic crisis; corruption and divisions among the elites; an overwhelming influence of foreign capital; fraudulent elections; labor strikes and international fight for labor and human rights; increase militarization; guerrilla attacks; new political parties and anticapitalistic ideologies; waves of immigration; massacres, torture, and imprisonments of activists; blocked upward mobility, and often downward mobility, for the intermediate classes; and immiserating of the masses accompanied by an incipient loss of fear amongst the populace in the face of a state repression³

³ Cockcroft, James D. *Mexico's Revolution Then and Now*. Monthly Review Press, 2010. Pg. 14

One of the main differences between Diaz and the PRI is that even though the current authoritarian regime does not hold its dominance within a strong leader such as Porfirio Diaz, it does rely on one-party rule under a small elite which holds political power using fraudulent processes, such as electoral fraud, clientelism, corruption, and state oppression. This was especially true of the PRI during the “perfect dictatorship” from 1940-1968. The current Mexican situation entails of economic policies that continue to benefit multinational corporations at the expense of the Mexican people and the environment.

One of the main arguments of Cockcroft’s book is that even though the Mexican Revolution and its ideals were defeated, the war of liberation continues in the hearts of the common Mexican. As a legacy of the Mexican Revolution, there is a continuous fight against oppression and “some peasants, workers, and elements of the intermediate classes kept fighting for the Revolution’s original goals but experienced state repression, co-optation, and clientelism”⁴.

Literature on the Mexican Revolution is vast and analyzes multiple aspects of the complex confrontation. Michael J. Gonzales in his book *The Mexican Revolution 1910-1940*, examines the Porfiriato regime as a precursor to the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican Revolution itself, and its aftermath until the presidency of Lazaro Cárdenas. The literature helps make sense of grievances and events that led to the overthrow of Porfirio Diaz and his political regime. As Gonzales argues, one of the contributors to Diaz’s downfall was his pro-capitalist policy of favoring foreigners and Mexican elites. On the other hand, indigenous communities, peasants, and working-class Mexicans were significantly devastated and thus, came to resent Diaz. Despite creating stability after a long history of turmoil that shook Mexican history since independence, Diaz made Mexico a stable

⁴ Ibid. 54-56

nation under a harsh authoritarian dictatorship. Co-opting was used, dissent was suppressed, and the elites became wealthier.

The economic system implemented modernized Mexico under a capitalist, export-oriented economy. As Mexico opened its markets to the world, the mass extraction and production of primary goods, like silver and henequen, were exported to the global market. In order to sustain this system, myriad Western investments poured into Mexico to develop its transportation and communications infrastructures for the distribution of natural resources to foreign countries. During this period, the United States also gained much control over multiple sectors of the Mexican economy, primarily in northern Mexico where American run mines were prominent. Working conditions for Mexicans were poor and at times resembled slave-like labor.

Grievances from peasants led to demands for radical social change under the leadership of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. On the other hand, Mexican elites like Venustiano Carranza and Alvaro Obregon, desired political reform while keeping the social hierarchy intact. By the time the Mexican Revolution ended, Carranza was victorious, but the demand for social reform did not end. Conflicts in ideology allowed for negotiation in which Carranza and the elite kept power while the writing of the 1917 Constitution protected and promoted social reform.

With the assassination of Carranza in 1920, three generals from Sonora, Álvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles, and Adolfo de la Huerta, ruled Mexico until 1929. Beginning with Obregon, some of the promises made under the 1917 constitutions were made, such as land reform, improvements in education, and progress in women's rights. When Calles came to power additional policies were implemented that constituted of lands distribution, labor laws, and an increase in educational opportunities. The presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas signified a return to the voice of the popular classes, landless peasants and workers. With Cárdenas as president,

progressive policies were able to be implemented, including further agrarian reform, educational reforms and restructuring, nationalist economic policies, and most importantly, the nationalization of Mexico's petroleum. Though Cardenas became an icon for the fight of peasants, the poor and Mexico's sovereignty, Cardenismo was short-lived in Mexico as the successors to Cardenas developed a moderate to right-of-center political regime under the PRI.

Sarah Babb's book *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* narrates the trajectories of Mexico's economic models and policies. By doing this, Babb examines Mexico's transition from Cardenas' nationalist model of development to an economic liberal economy based on neoliberal theory. She does this by looking at economists as a profession, and the institutions promoting various economic models, to analyze their role in implanting economic policies. The Mexican Miracle from the 1940s-1970s created a sense of stability with economic growth under Import Substitution Industrialization, and also created an economic system based on state intervention on the economy. Lazaro Cardenas left behind a legacy of social responsibility to promote economic development. But as Babb argues, economists who once promoted nationalism and ISI for economic growth embraced neoliberalism. Academic Institutions like the Technical Institute of Mexico (ITM) and American education institutions were key in transforming Mexican economist's views on the economy.

Neoliberalism is a term that continues to be used by AMLO in his political speeches. In order to understand neoliberalism as an economic theory and model of development, David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* provides an analysis by looking at the various components and definition of neoliberalism. This is done by looking at its origins, the theory behind economic growth, and examples of implementation. He sees neoliberalism as a "utopian project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism". This

“utopian project” was primarily pushed by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as a means to blame state intervention for a country’s problems and allow the market to solve these issues. Neoliberalism is marketed to be the only reliable alternative to economic growth. Though there are variations in the implementation of neoliberalism, in its pure form, neoliberal theory which argues that the state is not needed, or that the way in which the state functions needs to be restructured. Harvey, on the other hand, argues that state institutions, especially in developed countries have been used to export these ideals, and at times force countries to implement.

This argument is further developed in Rodwan Abouharb and David Cingranelli’s book on *Human Rights and Structural Adjustment*. As both authors argue, the exportation of neoliberal thinking could not have been possible without international organizations promoting this model. The IMF and the World Bank have been criticized for the hurtful consequences on developing countries through its neoliberal prescription within its lending practices. Under Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), loans given to developing countries are attached with conditionalities of economic structural reforms under the philosophy of neoliberalism. Abouharb and Cingranelli use quantitative and qualitative data analysis to understand the consequences of IMF and World Bank imposed SAPs on human rights. According to Abouharb and Cingranelli, the “World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programs usually cause increased hardships for the poor, greater civil conflict, and more repression on human rights, resulting in a lower rate of economic development”⁵. The outcomes resulted from the analysis of 131 countries that implemented some form of SAPs from 1981-2003. Various factors were taken into consideration, including regime type, population size, GDP, time under SAP prescription, frequency of physical integrity rights violations, amongst others.

⁵ Cingranelli, David L, and Abouharb, M. Rodwan. *Human Rights and Structural Adjustment*. Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pg. 4.

The research found a correlation between SAPS and violation of human rights. First, SAPs worsen poverty and wealth inequality because of a decrease in government respect for economic and social rights. These are rights included in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), such as access to education, clean water, healthcare, food, clothing, housing, and overall a decent standard of living. Second, SAPs expand the likelihood of civil conflicts by the population including demonstrations, riots, and rebellions because of an increase in social and economic hardships. Third, there is a higher probability of physical integrity rights violations by governments as a consequence of civil conflict. Governments are more likely to repress or put down those in opposition of government imposed neoliberal policies. Repression can also lead to tortures, murders, disappearances, and political imprisonments. Finally, SAPs infringe on worker's rights. A diminution on the government's role in the economy worsens the protection of workers' rights. In addition, because employers have huge roles in the conditions for labor, this can create greater abuse of worker's rights without labor unions or the government to intervene in their defense. Because of these consequences, the authors suggest for the IMF and World Bank to implement human-rights based strategies for economic development

Neoliberalism as a global phenomenon goes deep into the issues that Mexico faces in modern times. In a very unique format, *Staging Politics in Mexico: The Road to Neoliberalism* analyzes Mexico's path towards neoliberalism through the use of Mexican theater plays to depict the complexities of the implementation of the economic model. As the author, Stuart A. Day notes, "the argument about the relations between theater and politics is as old as theater and ... as politics". The book is helpful in analyzing the contradictions that there is between revolutionary-created national ideals and economic liberalization promoted by the West. In a sense, by the use of juxtaposition between play actors and the protagonization of political and economic elites who

moved the neoliberal project forward, it argues that Mexican politics is an allusion to the problems Mexico faces. In addition to this, it provides an analysis of the use of neoliberalism in Mexican theater. These two books *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* and *Staging Politics in Mexico: The Road to Neoliberalism*, along with short articles will be helpful in trying to puzzle together Mexico's transition from a state-oriented economic model to one that restructures the role of the state within society.

Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism, and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy takes a closer look at the correlation between neoliberalism and organized crime in Mexico. As the book argues, neoliberalism has facilitated two consequences. The first, economic liberalization has created a haven for illicit economies. This becomes true as neoliberal policies weaken public institutions and encourage the creation of new markets with the absence of the state, whether they be legal or not. Second, neoliberalism further integrates Mexico's economy to that of the US and therefore, has enabled the US to become complicit in the drug policies implemented in Mexico. As a consequence of US promoted neoliberal reform, Mexico has become a safe haven for Mexico's organized crime, violence, and civil unrest.

All of the issues being examined by various authors in academia will be analyzed and sewed together to make sense of Mexico's current social and political situation that lead to the rise of AMLO as president of the United Mexican States. The following section will outline the objectives I try to accomplish by writing this thesis, putting together AMLO's political narrative, and linking together historical factors to comprehend why a large percentage of Mexico's population decided to vote in favor of a left-of-center political leader.

Outline of this Thesis

As the introduction to the thesis, the first chapter offered an overview of Mexico's current political and social conditions and the process leading AMLO to win the presidential election. In particular, I identified societal and political conditions behind the development of long-lasting widespread grievances towards the Mexican government. The first are grievances against neoliberalism, and the second is AMLO's political discourse of neoliberalism and criticism on Mexico's political regime. Echoing citizen grievances, López Obrador notes that, in order to create a more equal society as promised during the Mexican Revolution, a non-violent and democratic transformation is needed.

Interrogating the appeal of López Obrador's discourse, chapter two critically revisits the main historical claims, from the Porfirian Dictatorship to the institutionalization of the PRI as an authoritarian political regime. Both in his campaigns and his academic work, AMLO describes the current Mexican political system as "neoporfirismo". The legacy of the Mexican Revolution produced the 1917 Mexican Constitution, the most progressive constitution of its time and serving as models for the 1918 Russian Constitution and 1919 Weimar Constitution. From AMLO's perspective, the creation of an egalitarian society with agrarian and social rights for the populace and defense of Mexican sovereignty from foreign powers never became a reality. Though the administration following the Mexican Revolution did provide some change, such as land distribution and worker's rights, the PRI eventually became authoritarian and failed to sustain a just society. The PRI's neoliberal era additionally created damaging legacies that affect Mexican citizens today. In this view, the ideals of the Mexican Revolution appear to have been betrayed by a return to the spirit of Porfirio Díaz's 19th century authoritarian dictatorship. The chapter addresses two main questions. First, what ideals, promises, and agendas from the post-Mexican revolution

do AMLO seek to bring into the 21st century? Second, what happened to those ideals and agendas in the past, and what should be learned from their history, thinking of the future and of AMLO's success?

Though economists may argue that neoliberalism is just a synonym for capitalism and laissez-faire economics, the speed in which this form of capitalism was implemented is important to analyze. Neoliberalism as a rampant extreme version of capitalism in a continuous globalized world has created unseen effects that have led to a rise in resistance to the neoliberal model. In order to understand the consequences neoliberal economic models have developed, the theory of neoliberalism must be analyzed. The third chapter tackles the persistence of neoliberalism in Mexico and the obstacles that it poses to programs such as the one that led to AMLO's election. First, I examine the conditions of the rise of neoliberal theories and reforms in Mexico, amidst the crisis of the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model. The decisive role of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in sponsoring Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) raises questions regarding SAP impacts on human rights. The second section delves into the Mexican experience with neoliberalism, from economic crises to neoliberalism's impact on human rights, starting with Mexico's 1982 debt crisis and extending until the present. Global implications examined in the previous section will be used to contextualize Mexico's own experience with neoliberalism, the IMF, World Bank, SAPs, and the US, in view of better understanding the conditions Mexicans face in 2018.

Chapter four focuses on the roots of citizen discontent with neoliberalism both in Mexico and in Latin America. The chapter starts with addressing the socioeconomic consequences of neoliberalism to understand current citizen grievances. It is the terms of those grievances, I argue, that best helps us to understand the appeal of AMLO's discourse and his electoral victory. Citizen

discontent with neoliberalism is one of the main factors behind the success of AMLO's campaign. The following section examines the conditions for the persistence of neoliberalism in Mexico, despite citizen discontent, which allowed the country to evade the Pink Tide during the 2000s. Instead of the opportunity for change that many Mexicans saw in the PAN's arrival into power in 2000, change never came. This period (2000-2018) was a continuation of neoliberal policies that further wounded marginalized communities, increased violence and state insecurity. A question this section will try to answer is why the PRI and PAN were able to hold on to power despite mass resentment from the people.

Finally, the fifth chapter analyses AMLO and his upcoming as a populist-leftists political leader, the current situation in Mexico, the failures of Enrique Peña Nieto and his neoliberal reforms, and the 2018 election. In addition, I will provide concluding remarks wrapping up together AMLO's political discourse to the previous chapters of this work. AMLO became a politician under the leadership of the PRI. He left the political party to join the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), a leftist political party founded by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, son of Lazaro Cárdenas and ideologically similar to AMLO. AMLO ran a presidential campaign in 2006 against Felipe Calderon but lost due to fraud and political manipulation. The same occurred with his 2012 presidential campaign against Enrique Peña Nieto. Though AMLO sought to change the situation in 2006 and 2012, he failed to get enough support, at least in part because of corruption and media manipulation. Even with manipulation of the elections, AMLO had been the leader needed to mobilize the population in the context of neoliberal grievances. This leadership was not enough to create change until 2018. Why was AMLO unable to get the support needed to win the 2006 and 2012 presidential elections? This section of the thesis will explain how the PRIAN was

able to hold on to power despite ongoing grievances, and why 2018 was the year the legitimacy crisis of Mexico's political parties erupted into the victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

The epilogue looks towards the future and speculates whether AMLO's victory and representation of hope will create change in Mexican society. Concerns over AMLO's unprecedented victory and Mexico's political system crisis (the delegitimizing of the main political parties) will be analyzed. AMLO is also a nationalist leader who has concerns in Mexico's role in international relations, especially in the case for economics. But can Mexico afford to be isolationists both in diplomacy and economics in a continuous globalized world? As a Mexican myself, I have high hopes in what AMLO can do for Mexico and for the thousands of marginalized peoples who have been neglected by the state. I hope that AMLO's political power will be used for good and that he can fulfill the promises of an egalitarian, fair, and just societal transformation that the PRI failed to give us after the Mexican Revolution.

Chapter Two
La Revolución Congelada:
From the Ideals of the Mexican Revolution to One Party Rule

Since the beginning of Mexico's national history, violence, instability, and chaos have dominated the political environment. The Mexican people have been promised change and wellbeing; a promise that to this day, we as Mexicans patiently wait for. The first major revolution of the 20th Century, the Mexican Revolution, sought to create socialist change by transforming Mexico's authoritarian regime into a democracy that gave voice to those marginalized by society, especially the peasantry. Though some change occurred, it did not transform Mexico into the egalitarian society the peasantry fought for. Eventually, the PRI became authoritarian and disregarded the needs of the people. AMLO's political discourse conveys the return of a political system that Mexicans fought to overthrow during the Mexican Revolution, now under the PRI. Through his fourth transformation, he seeks to disregard Mexico's corrupt political system and envisions the restoration of egalitarian ideals created in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, policies that failed to be implemented by the contemporary political elite. This chapter will serve as the start to the political discourse that AMLO provides beginning with the Diaz Dictatorship and continuing with the centralization of power under the PRI. The causes behind the failures in the implementation of promises made under the 1917 constitution will be analyzed while uncovering the ideals that AMLO seeks to implement in the 21st century.

The Porfiriato

Mexico's political regime consolidated into a one-party regime under the leadership of Porfirio Diaz. Patron-client relationships became prevalent under this political system; Diaz gave political offices in return for loyalty. This created a system in which instead of carrying out the goals of serving their constituency, politicians' and bureaucrats sought to please their patron and

abuse their positions. In addition to this, the national treasury was being overused to pay for overstuffed bureaucracies that did not effectively distribute public goods. As a consequence, people could not rely on the state to provide basic services like healthcare and education, forcing people to pay bribes for basic services⁶. Under Diaz's iron fist, the prohibition on freedom of speech and assembly made criticisms towards the Diaz dictatorship a dangerous path to take.

Ironically, Mexico had gained its independence from Europe as a way of searching for a new identity, but it continued to look up to Europe. Porfirio Diaz envisioned the modernization of Mexico modeled after European nations. Under his regime, Mexico developed architecture mimicking cities like Paris, with large boulevards and shopping center, though these were accessible to the majority of the population. This modernization project brought forward development in Mexico to benefit the elite at the expense of the poor peasantry^{7 8}. As noted by AMLO, "It could be argued that under the dictatorship of Porfirio there was progress, but we cannot talk about development; that is, there was economic growth, but not social or collective welfare"⁹. In fact, Diaz was able to implement political and economic stability under his slogan "order and progress" through the use of modernization and coercive authoritarian policies in Mexico. This stability allowed Diaz to be able to open up Mexico to the global market, exploit the country's natural resources, and bring foreign investment in his plan for modernizing Mexico.

Pre-Porfirio Mexico was vulnerable to foreign intervention. From 1846-1848 Mexico became involved in the Mexican-American War where it lost one-third of its territory. By the time

⁶ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940* . 1st ed., University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Pg. 12-13.

⁷ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution : Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule Since the Late Nineteenth Century* . Duke University Press, 2013.

⁸ The Storm that Swept Mexico. PBS. May 2011. Film.

⁹ López Obrador, Andrés Manuel. *Neoporfirismo : Hoy Como Ayer* .1a ed., Grijalbo, 2014. Pg. 19

Benito Juarez finally restored stability after the War of Reform, Spain, Britain, and France began pressuring Mexico to pay off its massive foreign debt to Europe. Though Spain and Britain had plans to take over Mexico's customhouses, France had more ambitious goals. France sought to gain a colonial holding on Mexico by invading the country and placing Maximilian of Hapsburg as Emperor. For six years, Maximilian established the Second Mexican Empire with support from conservatives and the Catholic Church. On the other hand, the liberals obtained economic and military assistance from the United States, as the US viewed French annexation of Mexico as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. By the time Diaz had come to power, Mexico's economic growth attracted foreign investment rather than invasion. Foreigners view Mexico's willingness to create stability through harsh authoritarian oppression and its ability to open up its resources to the global market as the model to be followed throughout Latin America¹⁰.

Porfirio Diaz's liberal economic model became a haven for foreign investment. Under a capitalist, export-oriented economy, Mexico advocated for free trade and a decentralized government. The United States took advantage of Mexico's open market to control much of the country's main economic sectors. According to the American newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst, "I really don't see what is to prevent us from owning all of Mexico and running it to suit ourselves"¹¹. Both Theodore Roosevelt and Howard Taft under the Roosevelt Corollary and Dollar Diplomacy became the US' version of economic development in Latin America. Though the US helped in economic development, this process of development was meant for the enrichment of American companies¹². Indeed the US benefited greatly under Porfirio's structural adjustment. Foreign direct investment from the US and Europe continued to pour into many sectors

¹⁰ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*

¹¹ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940* .Pg. 7-8.

¹² *The Storm that Swept Mexico*. PBS. May 2011. Film.

of the Mexican economy. In the north, investment helped restore and create new mines for the extraction of minerals such as copper and silver. Foreign capital also increased production in the agricultural and oil sectors. The Porfiriato expanded the communications and transportation infrastructures of the country by adding from four hundred miles of railroad to nineteen thousand miles, and forty-five thousand miles of cable. A vast number of export-oriented infrastructures, including the building of ports and expansion of routes to the US, were also extended¹³.

The opening of Mexico's economy primarily benefited foreign entities, as laws enabled foreigners to own rights to Mexican land and have control over important economic sectors at the expense of native industries. These laws included the authorization for the construction of US owned railroads, tax breaks, banning of taxes for foreign corporations, and transfer of land from poor peasantry to hacendados and large corporations. Generous legislation that also facilitated foreign investment encouraged millions of dollars to be invested into Mexico's mineral-rich north, and into Veracruz for oil extraction. Because of this, a large portion of the mining industry was owned by American firms. The United States and Britain alone owned 27 of the 31 largest mining industries in northern Mexico. The oil industry was also dominated by foreign entities¹⁴.

Nonetheless, the poor peasantry was the greatest victims of Porfirio's political system. Increased industrialization as a consequence of the mass infrastructure projects, such as railroads and communication cables, did not improve the lives of the common people. Ironically, Diaz's plan of modernization through industrialization and economic growth reinforced and expanded Mexico's feudal-like labor system of labor exploitation of the poor peasants and natives. The confiscation of land from villages into the hands of hacendados and Mexican elites was common during this period, in addition to the use of slave-like working conditions for those whose land has

¹³ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg.7-8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

been confiscated through the use of debt¹⁵. The Ley Lerdo under the presidency of Benito Juarez had begun confiscating land owned by the Catholic Church as a means to privatize land that was used communally by native populations and peasantry. During the Diaz dictatorship, land confiscations increased at an alarming rate¹⁶. The Baldio Laws permitted the selling of lands to surveying companies that by the end of the Porfiriato, they owned one-quarter of Mexico's territory¹⁷. Native Americans were the most harmed by these policies. In many Mexican indigenous cultures, the cultivation of crops like corn was rooted in their cultural traditions, the removal of natives of their land also deprived them of their cultural identity. More than 45,000,000 hectares that belonged to the peasants was transferred to private entities through its sale, providing no safety nets for displaced peasants¹⁸.

These lands became vast agricultural plantations (Rubber, coffee, tobacco, henequen, sugar, cotton). Instead, hacendados removed food crops like corn, which is a food staple in Mexican culture, and replaced them with commodities that could be exported abroad. This also led to a higher price in food for the already dangerously poor peasantry¹⁹. In addition to the poor, the middle class also felt dissatisfaction due to policies that burdened them. This included the implementation of large taxes on small and middle size businesses, no access to tax credit, and the favoring policies towards foreign rather than domestic production²⁰.

In addition to confiscation of land, labor conditions worsened under this time period. Peasants were forced to work in harsh labor conditions with little pay in plantations created for

¹⁵ Otero, Gerardo. *Agrarian Reform in Mexico: Capitalism and the State*. 1989.

¹⁶ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*.

¹⁷ Otero, Gerardo. *Agrarian Reform in Mexico : Capitalism and the State*.

¹⁸ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*.

export-oriented crop production. Resistance often led to death, especially for the native populations. In Yucatan, more than 300,000 Mayans were killed through guerrilla warfare in means to protect their lands. Likewise, over 16,000 native Yaquis from Sonora were removed from their lands and transferred to Yucatan. Under Yucatan's tropical climate, the Yaquis were forced to work in henequen plantations in slave labor conditions. Within a year, the majority of the population died due to diseases in the tropical climate and unbearable working conditions. Increased production of commodities like henequen and sugar increased the demand of slave-like labor. Though Mexicans were recruited to work in the mines and in the oil industry, they received the worst labor and treatments. Foreigners, primarily Europeans were brought to work in the mines in the north and oil production in Veracruz. European foreigners were given much better treatment than dark skin Mexicans, who were given dangerous jobs, very-low wages, and poor services. Social control also significantly grew with the size of the rural police force (los rurales) and the federal army increasing as to protect private investments, both foreign and domestic. The power of state police and militias also grew under the supervision of local caudillos. This security apparatus was used to crack down on the opposition and to break down any strikes by workers, primarily in labor insurgency in the mineral-rich north. The modernization of the country also facilitated the quick use of repression when needed²¹²².

Diaz's modernizing project brought forward mass modernization however, foreign corporations became powerful and independent from government regulations. Economic crisis during the early 20th century developed as a consequence of Mexico's export-oriented economy; European demand for Mexico's products drastically decreased. Labor unions, made up of both the working class and professionals, continued to protest across the country due to foreign companies

²¹ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 22.

²² Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg. 21

discharging thousands of people from work²³. The first of the strikes began in mines in northern Mexico due to inequality in wages between Mexican and American workers. American Rangers intervened and killed 30 workers, creating outrage across Mexico and leading to massive strikes. The government intervened by obstructing the strikes and protest through violent means. As Diaz himself noted “Thank God I can still kill”²⁴. At one point, the Catholic Church, an ally of Diaz, began to advocate for moderate social reform after seeing the continuous demonstrations across the country²⁵. Towards the end of the Porfiriato, life expectancy, infant mortality, and wages had not improved despite mass exports; grievances from all sectors of society echoed throughout the country²⁶. At this time, anti-Diaz movements formed, such as the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), which demanded political reforms including term limits, the abolition of child labor, and demand for government guaranteed 8-hour work day. The PLM began to publish newspapers advocating for these reforms, many which resonated with the working class and professionals. Anti-Diaz ideology spread quickly and demand for reforms and presidential succession became popular²⁷.

Diaz’s 1908 interview with American journalist James Creelman from Pearson’s Magazine became the catalyst for the fall of his dictatorship. During this interview, Diaz expressed his support for political change and noted he would seek not reelection during the 1910 elections. The news reached Mexico and political activity flourished with the expectation of Diaz stepping down from power. In opposition to what Diaz had told James Creelman, he ran as a candidate during the 1910 election with Francisco Madero challenging him. Francisco Madero sought to implement political reforms which he describes in his book, *The Presidential Succession in 1910*. After a

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. Pg. 65.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico’s Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 25.

²⁷ Ibid.

rigged election, Madero was imprisoned and Diaz kept the presidency. This infuriated many who waited for Diaz to step down from power²⁸. After being released from prison, Madero journeyed into the US to plan insurgence against Diaz. The US government, began supporting Madero as the successor to Diaz after losing trust in the Porfirian regime's ability to stabilize the country. Madero supporters included Mexico's liberals, composed of middle-class and upper-class business and landowners disenfranchised by Diaz's pro-American policies²⁹.

The Mexican Revolution

In short summary, the Mexican Revolution began with many sectors of society fighting under a common goal: to overthrow the Porfirian dictatorship. Once Diaz's regime fell, the battle continued over differences in policy implementation. On one hand, Madero and his liberal faction sought to implement political reforms that allowed for political participation while maintaining the liberal economic model. On the other hand, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata with support from the peasants demanded social reforms that would allow for agrarian reform and labor rights.

Within a few months, the Porfirian regime fell effortlessly with Madero and his armed forces, with US support, attacking the federal army from the north. In May 1911, Diaz signed the Treaty of Ciudad Juarez, in which he stepped down from power and placed Francisco Leon de la Barra as interim president. Soon after Madero would grip the presidency. This episode was the beginning of a long conflict between the two factions of the revolution. Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata perceived Madero as a traitor to the people and revolted against his government. Emiliano Zapata declared guerrilla warfare on Madero under the Plan de Ayala, fighting for land redistribution to the campesinos. Under Madero's administration, much of the Porfirian system was left intact including the federal army. Eventually, Madero lost support from both the liberals

²⁸ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*.

²⁹ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*.

and the revolutionary faction. In 1913, with the support of the US Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, Madero was overthrown in a coup d'état by Porfirian general Victoriano Huerta. Huerta would rule as president under a Porfirio-like dictatorship³⁰.

The Huerta dictatorship would not last long. In alliance with Pancho Villa and northern revolutionaries under the name of the Constitutionalist Army, Venustiano Carranza put forward a military offensive that led to Huerta's resignation in July 6, 1914. Carranza would stay in power until his assassination in 1920. Despite Mexico having an enduring president, chaos in Mexico would continue on due to differences in opinion between Carranza and Villa. Even though Villa had helped Carranza oust Huerta, he demanded Carranza "to implement a democratic regime to secure the well-being of the workers [and] to emancipate the peasants economically, making an equitable distribution of lands or whatever else is needed to solve the agrarian problem"³¹. In other words, Villa continued to advocate for agrarian reform and labor rights that Carranza ignored. Not being able to find common ground at the Convention of Aguascalientes, civil war broke out with Villa and Zapata fighting Carranza's forces³²

Carranza under the constitutionalists and the revolutionaries (Villa and Zapata), represented the contrast in Mexican society. Carranza came from an elite family and prioritized political reforms to create a stable government and had no interest in helping the landless peasantry. Instead of dismantling the political structure that Diaz had implemented, Carranza and the constitutionalists pursued advancing their own political ambitions. Villa and Zapata came from a humble background and connected with the common Mexican peasant³³. Despite the charisma of Villa and Zapata, Carranza promised the peasantry higher wages and a political voice. His

³⁰ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*.

³¹ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 63.

³² Ibid.

³³ *The Storm that Swept Mexico*. PBS. May 2011. Film.

nationalistic propaganda against US imperialism also created a sense of national identity against a common enemy³⁴. Towards the end of the confrontation, the Constitutionalists became victorious and were able to hold on to power. The Conventionists' lack of proper communication, collaboration, national vision, and battle tactics cost them the ability to implement their socialist programs³⁵. By the end of the civil war 2 million Mexican men and women had lost their lives³⁶. Though Carranza came out victorious, socialist ideals of Villa and Zapata were engraved in the 1917 Constitution.

The Legacy of the Mexican Revolution: 1917 Constitution

Though the Mexican Revolution would continue until 1920, one of the greatest outcomes of the war was the development of the 1917 Constitution. The revolution had been fought because of an unjust government which neglected the needs of Mexican citizens. The most indignant under the dictatorship were the common campesinos, or peasants, who joined the war to establish a more just society or at least a society where they could live a decent life. The Constitution of 1917 in many ways represented the sacrifices of a bloody war fought by common peasants for a more just society. This constitution would become the most progressive of its time with the inclusion of social rights. This constitution would inspire the Russian Constitution of 1918 and the Weimer Constitution of 1919³⁷.

Despite the ongoing battle, Carranza called for the election of delegates in 1916 to create a new constitution modeled after the Constitution of 1857. Because the poor peasantry was more concerned with surviving than with creating a new constitution, the majority of the delegates

³⁴ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 142-146.

³⁵ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 71-72.

³⁶ *The Storm that Swept Mexico*. PBS. May 2011. Film.

³⁷ Majeed, Akhtar. *Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities in Federal Countries*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.

comprised of middle- and upper-class men. Despite this fact, there was a clear ideological division on the writing of the constitution. Los *Liberales Carrancista* or moderates sided with Carranza in the proposal of implementing political reforms while retaining the principles found within the Constitution of 1857. On the other hand, the *Jacobinos*, or radicals, made up the majority of the delegates and advocated for social rights and justice. Both Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata were fighting for such as agrarian reform. Unlike the moderates, who favored a laissez-faire state, the *Jacobinos* favored state intervention in the process of state socioeconomic development³⁸³⁹.

Of the commonalities between the two groups, both agreed that the power of the Catholic Church had to be limited, though the *Jacobinos* demanded further action to be taken. Article 130 of the constitution was a radical accomplishment against the Catholic Church that allowed the federal government to “intervene in religious affairs, stripped religious organizations of judicial rights, allowed state legislature to set the number of priests within their jurisdiction, prohibited clergy from criticizing the government, declared marriage a civil ceremony, and restricted clergy to native-born Mexicans”⁴⁰.

The 1857 constitution provided the state framework, giving the government the right to seize public lands for the interest of the general good. In application, this clause of the constitution was used by Porfirio Diaz and previous presidents to confiscate Church and Native American land to distribute in exchange for political support. The *Jacobinos* took things further and stipulated that this clause be implemented to distribute the land to landless peasants. Furthermore, the

³⁸ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 162-163.

³⁹ Smith H., Peter. “The Making of the Mexican Constitution” in *The Dimensions of Parliamentary History*, ed. William O. Aydelotte. Princeton University Press. 1977. Pg 193.

⁴⁰ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 164.

Jacobinos sought to reimplement an old Spanish colonial tradition of land ownership to the state. From these principles, Article 27 of the constitution provided multiple purposes⁴¹.

During the Porfiriato, rights to much of Mexico's land and natural resources were sold to foreigners, primarily American and European corporations. Article 27, in theory, expropriated all land and natural resources rights owned by foreigners and gave them back to the pueblo, the people. This article gave the Mexican people the right to Mexico's natural resources both above and below ground while giving the federal government the ability to manage the natural resources for the common good. The second major contribution of this article is the implementation of land reform. Emiliano Zapata had fought tirelessly "so that the people will have lands, forests and water"⁴². Article 27 guarantees the right of landless campesinos to land therefore mandating the state to distribute lands from large haciendados. Many indigenous communities regained their communal lands that were appropriated for private ownership⁴³.

Article 123 of the constitution provides worker's labor rights protected by the state. These rights include "worker's rights to sanitary working conditions, one day of rest per week, a just wage, workmen's compensation, and social welfare for the ill, crippled, and homeless"⁴⁴. Furthermore, the constitution gave worker's an 8-hour work day, the right to unionize and strike as long as non-violence methods were used, banned debt peonage from being used to hold peasants bound, provided for maternal privileges restrict child labor, a reasonable standard of living, and equal pay for equal work for both men and women, amongst other rights. Article 3 provided the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² James J. Kelly, Article 27 and Mexican Land Reform: The Legacy of Zapata's Dream, 25 Colum. Hum. Rts. L. Rev. 541 (1993-1994)Pg. 542.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 165.

basis for the expansion of secular education, which by the time Cardenas became president, created tensions with the Catholic Church⁴⁵

Overall, the Mexican Constitution of 1917 provided social reforms that were radical for its time. The most important legacy left behind was the addition of land rights and distribution for campesinos, a right that thousands of poor Mexicans fought to achieve. Despite all of this, the implementation of these rights provided under the new constitution would be difficult to achieve or were not even put in place. Instead, these social rights promised would stay in writing without being enacted. Mexico's new challenge would be to create a functioning government.

Era of Transition

The constitution had implemented some of the social reforms that Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa fought for, but the battle between Carranza's forces against Villa and Zapata's guerrillas continued. Zapata and Villa felt betrayed by Carranza for not executing promises made through the Constitution of 1917. First, Villa increases his fight against Carranza after the United States acknowledged Carranza as the president of Mexico in the name of stability. Cornered by the United States and Carranza, Villa was defeated. Moreover, feeling threatened by Zapata and his forces, Carranza ordered Zapata's death. His death created unintentional consequences for Carranza; Zapata's forces aligned themselves with Alvaro Obregon to overthrow Carranza. On his way to Veracruz seeking refuge, Carranza was assassinated by Zapatista forces in 1920. During the 1920 election, Alvaro Obregon runs for president and wins the election⁴⁶.

From 1920-1924, Obregon ruled Mexico in the promise of rebuilding a fractured society. His main challenge was to compromise amongst the various factions demanding action. In order to achieve this goal, he "used money, political patronage, and personalism to create alliances with

⁴⁵ Mexico's Constitution of 1917 with Amendments through 2015. The Constitute Project.

⁴⁶ The Storm that Swept Mexico. PBS. May 2011. Film.

important individuals and interests' groups" including caudillos, peasants, foreign companies and governments, and union leaders⁴⁷. One of Obregon's concerns were continuous revolutionary revolts for land. In the state of Chihuahua, peasant pressures led to the expropriation of 5,000,000 acres of land owned by US businessman Arthur J. McQuatters. Land redistributions continued in Chihuahua: 429,317 hectares of land were given to peasants from 1921-1924, though this was met with resistance from hacenderos. Nonetheless, agrarian reform under Obregon had contradicted promises made under the constitution. Obtaining land was made difficult by laws that restricted the number of people who qualified for land. Furthermore, on many occasions, ejidos, or agricultural collectives, were created as state-owned businesses with peasants working the land without actually owning it. Overall land reform through land redistribution became a tool used by Obregon to appease the revolutionaries and gain their political support⁴⁸.

In regard to Mexico's petroleum, Obregon had to compromise with transnational corporations and foreign countries after the constitutional nationalization of Mexico's natural resources. Petroleum was one of Mexico's most important commodities, exporting 157,000,000 barrels of crude oil, or 23.78 percent of the world's total production in 1920. To raise revenue for the government, Obregon enacted taxes on foreign oil companies. Both British and American companies resented this action. Even though the British government eventually came into agreement with the Mexican government, American companies continuously pressured the US government to get involved militarily. Senator Albert B. Fall of New Mexico even encouraged the annexation of northern Mexico. Eventually, Mexico settled an agreement that benefited the US. Under this agreement, Mexico repaid bonded debt, privatized railroads and returned them in pre-revolution conditions, and paid US citizens in Mexico for their losses during the revolution.

⁴⁷ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 184.

⁴⁸ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 188-191.

Furthermore, US oil companies kept their rights to their pre-revolution properties. In exchange, the US did not use military means and continues to recognize Obregon's government⁴⁹.

Obregon's time as president ended with the victory of Plutarco Elias Calles during the 1924 elections. Under his presidency, he favored the use of coercion as a means to consolidate political power and implement state-led economic policies. The Calles administration enlarged its role in the national economy by creating Mexico's first Central Bank, the Banco de Mexico, and increased national projects including highway projects, hydroelectric dams, and irrigation systems to enhance agricultural development. As Obregon had done, Calles used land distribution as a political tool to pacify the campesinos, instead of looking after the diminution of poverty. 3,045,802 hectares were distributed to 301,587 peasants from 1924-1928 and 3,444,982 hectares allocated from 1928-1934. Much of the land was not arable to agricultural production. His political ambition to create a secular Mexican state provoked a backlash from the Catholic Church, leading to the Cristero Rebellion, a bloody rebellion between the Church, its supporters, and the Calles government. One of Calles's long-lasting legacy was the development of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), the predecessor of the PRI. The next three presidents Emilio Portes Gil (1928-1930), Pascual Ortiz Rubio (1930-1932), and Abelardo Rodrigues (1932-1934) would be puppet presidents of Calles under the PNR⁵⁰.

Lazaro Cardenas: The Resurgence of Revolutionary Ideals

The Great Depression in the United States had a significant impact on Mexican politics. This translated to thousands of people being unemployed and lacking basic needs such as food and shelter. Calles and his political party, the PNR, choose Lazaro Cardenas, governor from the state of Michoacán, as the successor to Abelardo Rodrigues in the 1934 elections. Calles believed that

⁴⁹ Ibid. Pg. 195-199.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Pg 203-220.

as a moderate, Cardenas would be able to appease social unrest throughout the country. Lazaro Cardenas under a socialist agenda would place the government as the main actor in Mexico's social, political, and economic affairs in order to make sure the state becomes the protectorate of the rights of the common people.

Lazaro Cardenas was quickly able to break away from Calles' influence by creating key alliances with military and political leaders. This allowed him to implement his political agenda without Calles in the backdrop. From the beginning of his presidency, Lazaro Cardenas portrayed true devotion to aid of Mexico's poor population and make himself a representative of the common citizen. Cardenas regarded "whole regions of Mexico in which men live outside the pale of material and spiritual civilization submerged in the most complete ignorance and poverty"⁵¹. As symbolism for his devotion to the common citizen, he moved away from the luxury and tradition of living in El Castillo de Chapultepec, instead residing in Los Pinos. Furthermore, he created a telegraph system Mexicans could use to project their complaints, in addition to opening the National Palace to everyone. Cardenas would have a long-lasting legacy in Mexican history. Under his presidency, Cardenas instigated a progressive agenda of economic nationalism, agrarian reform, and socialist projects. He sought to implement the promises made under the 1917 Constitution that his past presidents failed to enact⁵².

Unlike his contemporaries, who distributed land under their patron-client system, Cardenas acknowledged the need to improve the lives of the peasantry through the distribution of land while also seeing this as an opportunity to eliminate Mexico's long-lasting hacienda system. This objective had been a crucial a part of the fight during the Mexican Independence and the Mexican Revolution, but the system endured. By 1923, hacenderos continued to owe 58.2 percent of

⁵¹ Weston, Charles H. "The Political Legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas." *The Americas*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1983. Pg. 365.

⁵² Ibid.

Mexico's territory "which included 50 percent of the rural population clustered in 82 percent of all rural communities"⁵³. In total, Cardenas redistributed about 45,000,000 acres of land, or roughly 9.1 percent of the country's total surface area while all presidents before him in total only distributed 3.9 percent of the total surface area⁵⁴. Instead of dispersing land to individuals, the majority of the land was given for ejidos, or communal lands. This would achieve two goals: increase Mexico's agricultural production while giving indigenous peoples their land back. Many, including the American press, saw Cardenas' policies as communist. An American correspondent noted that "under the legendary communal system, production is increasing and it precisely this system that outside Mexico is spoken as Communism"⁵⁵. Political opponents including hacendados and the Catholic Church made it difficult for Cardenas to fully implement his plan of agrarian reform. Large landowners fought to block any distribution of their land, decreasing the amount of land given to campesinos⁵⁶.

Recipients of Land by Presidential Term, 1920–1940

YEAR TERM ENDS	PRESIDENT	NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS	AVERAGE HECTARES
1920	Carranza	46,398	3.6
1920	De la Huerta	6,330	5.3
1924	Obregón	128,468	8.6
1928	Calles	297,428	10.6
1930	Portes Gil	171,577	10.0
1932	Ortiz Rubio	64,573	14.6
1934	Rodríguez	68,556	11.5
1940	Cárdenas	811,157	22.1

James W. Wilkie, *The Mexican Revolution: Federal Expenditure and Social Change Since 1910* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), table 8-7, 194, (adapted).

Table 1: Recipients of land by Presidential Term
Source: Mexican Revolution 1910-1940

⁵³ Gruening, Ernest. *Mexico and Its Heritage*. The Century Co., 1928. Pg. 43.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Pg 51-52.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Pg 55.

⁵⁶ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 188-191.

Cardenas himself envisioned a “worker’s democracy” in which the working force would have power in influencing policymaking. Following this view, he encouraged the creation of peasant and labor unions. As Cardenas noted in the 1934 presidential campaign,

Here I deem it necessary to repeat that the organization of the workers, like the organization of peasants, is indispensable for the enforcement of the laws of this country... A superior force, which can be no other than organized labor, must of necessity cooperate in order to overcome the resistance that unfortunately opposes economic betterment of our people⁵⁷.

He believed that one of the reasons why the fight for the distribution of land had been difficult to achieve is because of the lack of organization amongst the peasant workers. As Cardenas noted: “such disorganization is the principle reason why the dotation and restitution of lands to the villages has been frequently interrupted to the prejudice of the of the rural proletariat whose needs have not been satisfied” ⁵⁸. This outlook expanded into the labor unions. The unification of the workers, as Cardenas would argue, is required to confront Mexico’s elites who are an impediment to the implementation of social and political reform⁵⁹. This idea of labor organization became a key component of Cardenismo: “in its essence represented consciousness of the role that the masses play in the new society as the motor for progress”⁶⁰.

Part of Cardenas’ political agenda was also the expansion of secular education as a right of the Mexican citizen. The Catholic Church had a monopoly over the educational system since Spanish colonization; a tool used for the Christianization of the indigenous population. The Mexican Revolution challenged the power of the Catholic Church, and when Cardenas took the presidency, this conflict amplified. First, Cardenas transitioned the power and responsibility of

⁵⁷ Weston, Charles H. “The Political Legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas 386.

⁵⁸ Brown, C. Lyle. General Lázaro Cárdenas and Mexican Presidential Politics, 1933-1940. Austin: University of Texas, Classic PHD Thesis, 1964. Pg. 217.

⁵⁹ Weston, Charles H. “The Political Legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas. Pg 386.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

education from the church to the federal government. The teacher would become a social leader and role model for the development of future generations by teaching the socialist ideals of the revolution. Envisioned under this scientific socialist plan was the creation of nationalism in the aftermath of the revolution and to help boost the economy through science and reasoning (Greening 89-103). As mentioned by the Cardenas administration, “the education that shall be imparted shall be socialist in its orientation and tendencies struggling for the disappearance of religious prejudices and dogmas and the creation of true human solidarity on the basis of progressive socialization of the means of economic production”⁶¹.

Ultimately, Cardenas’ greatest accomplishment was the nationalization of Mexico’s petroleum. Because cardenismo had encouraged the unification of workers through labor unions, laborers working for foreign oil companies, such as the British Royal Dutch Shell and American Standard Oil Company, had been demanding for better wages and better working conditions. The state intervened in the confrontation by becoming the mediator between labor unions and petroleum companies. Through a state commission, the board sided with the workers and demanded oil companies to comply with their request; this would also be reinforced through the decision of the Mexican Supreme Court. Foreign oil companies reacted by ignoring Mexico’s demand, forcing Cardenas to act. On March 18, 1938, Cardenas through the radio ordered the expropriation of all oil within Mexican territory in exchange for compensation to foreign companies. This action was celebrated through Mexico as a symbol of national sovereignty and anti-imperialism. Following the nationalization of Mexico’s petroleum, Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) was created as a state-owned enterprise, though foreign government boycotted Mexican

⁶¹ Brown, C. Lyle. General Lázaro Cárdenas and Mexican Presidential Politics, 1933-1940. Pg 94.

oil in retaliation, PEMEX was able to endure, and it continues to be Mexico's largest state-run parastatal⁶².

When the democratically elected premier of Iran Mohammad Mossadegh nationalized the country's oil in 1951, both the British and American governments acted promptly in overthrowing Mossadegh through a coup d'état. Furthermore, when socialist-leaning leaders sprouted during the Cold War in Latin America- Salvador Allende of Chile and Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala-, the US also had no hesitation in overthrowing them from power.

The timing in which Lazaro Cardenas became president was fundamental to his progressive agenda he was able to implement in Mexico. The Mexican Revolution had damaged US-Mexico relations but during the 1930s the United States sought to improve its diplomatic relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. FDR's Good Neighbor Policy sought to achieve this goal. The Good Neighbor Policy included an increase in political and economic cooperation rather than imposition of US policy, Hemispheric partnership, and a policy of non-intervention. In action, the Good Neighbor Policy terminated US occupation of Nicaragua and Haiti while annulling the Platt Amendment in Cuba. When Cardenas nationalized Mexican oil, US oil companies lobbied Washington for US intervention to prevent this from occurring. FDR was hesitant to intervene in Mexico and instead left oil companies to deal with the issue alone. Furthermore, Cardenas' socialism overlapped with FDR's New Deal, which in practice had socialist principles especially when it came to the role of the government in helping alleviate social issues. By the time Mexico's oil was nationalized, there were already increasing concerns over Germany and its allies. Because of this, FDR also realized that deepening ties with Latin America would decrease the likelihood of alignment with the Axis powers.

⁶² Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*.

In summary, Lazaro Cardenas became the only president to commit itself to the promises made to Mexicans under the 1917 constitution. Under his administration, the role of the state in improving Mexico's social, political, and economic matters drastically increased through the centralization of power. Through his admiration, the land was distributed to poor peasants, education became a priority, workers and labor rights were acclaimed, and Mexico's old political elites were challenged including the Catholic Church, the hacendados, and most importantly multinational corporations and foreign governments. He portrayed himself as the representative of the common man and of their needs. The state becomes a key player in intervening on behalf of the workers and the poor against corporate exploitation. Nonetheless, the political system he shaped assisted in the conditions needed for the establishment of Mexico's authoritarian regime. State involvement in the nation's economic affairs would become a predecessor to the years following the departure of Cardenas: Import Substitution Industrialization and the centralization of power under the PRI.

The Perfect Dictatorship

One of the fascinating puzzles about post-revolutionary Mexico is the development of the country's authoritarian political regime. The Mexican Revolution in its core was fought for the implantation of socialist ideologies, and rejection of elitism. Instead, the state favored the needs of the common people. The PRI (PNR 1929-1938, PRM 1938-1946, PRI 1946-present) eventually consolidated power and focused on keeping political power and economic development while abandoning revolutionary ideals and neglecting the campesinos. To an extent, Lazaro Cardenas facilitated the consolidation of power through his political party.

As one of his final acts as president, Lazaro Cardenas reorganized the PNR into the Partido de la Revolucion Mexicana (PRM) in a corporatist model for integrating the major faction in

Mexican society: workers, peasants, the government, and the military. The reorganization of the political party would give these groups further representation in Mexican politics. For peasants and workers it would be through labor unions⁶³. In a sense, having a corporatist system would permit for the working class to defend their interest within the government and thus, no need for a competitive electoral system. Though in theory giving different sectors of society representation may alleviate elitism, this also meant that because the government was the selector on who represents each group, the groups become subordinate to the state. Cardenas intended to create a worker's democracy, but his corporatist system unintentionally facilitated the concentration of power within the federal government. Over time, the PRI was able to suppress or co-opt civil society through the concentration of power by sanctioning groups the state favored⁶⁴. Furthermore, corruption between the leaders of the various interest groups became prominent, aligning themselves with the PRI to get access to power, not necessarily to fulfill the needs of those being represented⁶⁵

Another factor for the departing of socialist policies within the Mexican government was the rise of conservatism and right-wing movements throughout Latin America. Right-wing movements had become dangerous to the government of Lazaro Cardenas, creating an environment of political polarization. During this time period, the Camisas Doradas, a right-wing paramilitary organization sought to overthrow Cardenas in 1936, and an ultraconservative religious organization, the Union Nacional Sinarquista, also became popular at this time. Moreover, the PAN as a right-wing political party emerged in 1939 with the support of Catholic leaders and the business community. Because of the ideological polarization growing throughout

⁶³ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*. Pg 256-257.

⁶⁴ Weston, Charles H. "The Political Legacy of Lázaro Cárdenas."

⁶⁵ Gonzales, Michael J. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1940*.

the country, the 1940 elections created a precedent for the following years. First, Cardenas through the PRM supported the moderate Avila Camacho instead of his socialist ally, Francisco Mugica. By taking this path, Cardenas appeased the political fragmentation of the nation, but it also ended the era of leftism and cardenismo in Mexican politics. Furthermore, his decision to choose his successor to the presidency created a precedent in Mexico's political system. The tradition of succession would be adopted by the PRI to institute Mexico's one-party rule⁶⁶.

The final analysis I provide for understanding the departure of cardenismo and the beginnings of Mexico's authoritarian regime is that, Cardenas had developed the PRM as a legitimate political party which had popular support from the masses. Cardenas and in affiliation the PRM took actions that benefited a large number of people: workers, peasants, and indigenous communities. Because of the legitimacy the PRM had created, the PRM continued to have support in post-Cardenas Mexico. Eventually after being able to control the political system, there was no need to fulfill the needs of the people. The PRI (the PRM changed its name in 1946) now maintained legitimacy on the basis of claiming itself as the only party of the Mexican Revolution, the political party that was able to implement revolutionary ideals, promote social and economic nationalism, and declare itself as a "democracy" with ideals shared amounts the Western nations⁶⁷.

Throughout the 20th century, Mexico followed Latin American's tradition of dictatorial regimes but as Mario Vargas Llosa argues, Mexico's dictatorial system distinguished itself from many of the other dictatorships through the Western Hemisphere. As Llosa remarks, under the PRI, Mexico became a "Perfect Dictatorship": Mexico's subtle use of clientelism, electoral fraud, political repression, through the PRI allowed it to mask its authoritarian tendencies while

⁶⁶ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 134-139.

⁶⁷ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*.

appearing not to be a dictatorship. Mexico's Perfect Dictatorship was able to keep power through various tactics that limited political opposition⁶⁸.

As a legacy of the Mexican Revolution, the constitution notes that every six years, a new president must be elected. This prevents presidents from extending their term, as Porfirio Diaz had done under his dictatorship. The PRI was able to surpass this obstacle while continuing to portray itself as democratic through the use of presidential party succession. The sitting president chooses his successor and the PRI made the successor the chosen candidate for the election. The PRI used various tactics, including electoral fraud and the use of bribes, to make sure its presidential candidate won with a high percentage of the vote. Furthermore, co-opting became another key tactic used by the PRI to decrease political opposition. Intellectuals, even those who criticized the political regime were incorporated into the system through the offering of political positions and other benefits. Criticism towards the dictatorship was allowed to the extent that it did not threaten the destabilization of the created system. Opposition parties were not fully banned but controlled by the PRI to the extent that it financed opposition parties while restricting the power of the parties as to not threaten the PRI's monopoly of power⁶⁹

Mexico's dictatorial system was emulated by other various Latin American dictatorships but failed to achieve the same success. The Mexican political elite was very clever to camouflage authoritarian tactics in the eyes of the international community, tactics that no other Latin American dictatorship was able to copy, thus becoming a Perfect Dictatorship⁷⁰. At the end of the day, the PRI specialized in keeping stability, concentrating and holding on to political power, and

⁶⁸ Vargas Llosa y La Dictadura Perfecta. YouTube.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

focusing on economic prosperity on the expense of implementing a true democracy and the disregard of revolutionary ideals.

Mexico's Economic Miracle lasted from the 1940s to the 1970s and characterized Mexico with increased infrastructural projects, technological advancements, and economic prosperity. By becoming a single-party authoritarian regime, the PRI was able to launch economic development plans without political opposition. The lack of political opposition allowed for the regime to surpass one of the weaknesses that democracies must cope with when it comes to the timing of economic development. Democracies tend to impede fast speed of development because of the inherent bureaucratic nature of democracies.

Ultimately, one of the major contributors to the legitimacy framework of the PRI was its ability to maintain economic growth and keep the middle class happy. Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) overtime increased urbanization and expanded the middle class. In 1940, the middle class made up 16% of the population, this number increased to 26.6% by the 1980s. Because of this, the middle class became the PRI's main political constituent. Many of those belonging in the middle class worked in the public sector. The state gave importance to urban areas by providing the middle class with decent wages, accessibility to credit, cheap domestic servants in addition to subsidized "food, fuel, transportation, and urban development"⁷¹.

By the 1960s the PRI's level of legitimization declined because of its use of repression. The use of revenue from ISI allowed for the PRI to co-opt and create patron-client relations needed to satisfy the population. Once these tactics failed to keep people happy, the government selected the use of repression to struck dissent. Under the administrations of Gustavo Dias Ordaz, Luis Echeveria, and Jose López Portillo, the Mexican government systematic targeted peasant groups,

⁷¹ Shefner, Jon. "Globalization and Democracy In Mexico." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 87. Pg 361.

students, leftists groups, and social movement with military forces. Thousands of people were abducted and tortured in what became known in Mexico as the Dirty War, with the backing of the US government⁷². In 1968, student protests to the rise of authoritarianism in Mexico strained the legitimacy of the PRI. Under state repression, the paramilitary was ordered to kill and arrest descendents who took in part of anti-government protests. This event became known as the Tlatelolco Massacre. Economic turndown during the 1970s also damaged the PRI's image amongst the populace. Luis Echeveria responded by increasing expenditures on public services and social welfare under his plan of *apertura democratica* (democratic opening), but “these strategies were sufficient only so long as economic expansion continued”⁷³⁷⁴. Echeveria promoted himself as an ally of the left by bringing back many of the socialist ideals promised by the revolution while ironically also executing its own “dirty war” against left-wing groups in Mexico⁷⁵. The economic crises of the following two decades would undermine the PRI's perception of economic stimulator and thus a challenge to its monopoly over legitimacy.

In summary, the PRI was able to hold on to power through a combination of corporatism, co-opting, fraud, clientelism, and the projection of economic growth. Economic stimulus through ISI from 1940-1960 legitimized the PRI by claiming economic success to its economic policies, therefore, political dissent against the regime became minimal. As long as the economy flourished, political opposition was small. The largest challenge to the legitimization of the PRI became the failure of ISI and the hardships that developed under the neoliberal model.

⁷² Undeniable Atrocities: Confronting Crimes Against Humanity in Mexico. Open Society Justice Initiative. 2016.

⁷³ Morton, Adam David. “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy.” *Third World Quarterly* 24. Pg 637.

⁷⁴ Shefner, Jon. “Globalization and Democracy In Mexico”. Pg 361.

⁷⁵ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 168-172.

Import Substitution Industrialization

Part of Mexico's success in economic stability was the ISI as the key economic model for state-led economic development. ISI was implemented in many developing countries as a reaction to war-torn Europe in post-World War II. Lazaro Cardenas had developed Mexico's political system with where the state became the main actor in Mexico's social, political, and economic affairs. Under his administration, the state took on the role of intervening on behalf of the peasants and workers through land distribution and implementation of socialist programs and education. The state under this period also began to take a larger role in the economy through the nationalization of the petroleum industry and as a mediator between workers and the business community. Though the PRI would abandon the state's role in intervening on behalf of the peasants and workers, it continued Cardenas' project of economic nationalism.

Through ISI, the Mexican state became the main actor in stimulating economic growth. Beginning in the 1930s, ISI became the prominent economic model throughout Latin America, especially in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. This inward-oriented strategy sought to substitute imported goods by promoting national industrialization for the manufacturing goods and services to be sold for the domestic market. The purpose of ISI was to create economic stimulus by becoming self-sufficient through industrialization and the development of manufacturing-based economies instead of relying on international markets for economic growth. Inward-looking development consisted of a "path to development through developing internal economic capacity, including industrial capacity, while continuing to export primary products"⁷⁶. In other words, Latin American countries continued to export raw materials such as agricultural and mineral products while beginning to industrialize and manufacture domestic goods for the domestic market.

⁷⁶ Vanden, Harry E., and Prevost, Gary. *Politics of Latin America : the Power Game* . Oxford University Press, 2002. Pg 167.

Increasing domestic manufacturing became the primary economic policy for many Latin American countries. Beginning in the 1940s Mexico required that Mexican citizens or Mexican corporations owned at least fifty-one percent of companies in Mexico. This increased domestic manufacturing while creating an incentive for the export of goods in the domestic market. As the years passed multinational corporations were enticed to invest in Latin America particularly in the manufacturing sector. In addition, as industrialization augmented, countries began to focus on the export of goods and services in the international market while governments continued to intervene in order to encourage and protect export-oriented domestic industries⁷⁷.

KEY COMPONENTS OF IMPORT SUBSTITUTION INDUSTRIALIZATION (ISI)

1. Protective Tariffs and/ or exchange controls
2. Special Preference for domestic and foreign firms importing capital goods for new industries
3. Preferential import exchange rates or industrial raw material, fuel, and intermediate goods
4. Cheap loans by government development banks for favored industries
5. The construction by governments of infrastructure specially designed to complement industries
6. Direct participation of the government in certain industries, especially in industries neither domestic nor foreign capital is willing to invest⁷⁸

Encouraged by United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Mexico experienced an economic boom known as the "Mexican Miracle" from the 1940s to the 1990s with the implementation of the ISI economic model. First, the Great Depression created a stimulus to produce domestic goods due to the increasing cost of importing products. World War Two facilitated Mexico's inward-oriented development because of the lack of competition in the post-war. Through this, Mexico was able to create new domestic markets without foreign competition. As new markets began to threaten domestic production, the

⁷⁷ Ibid. 167-168.

⁷⁸ Baer, Werner. "Import Substitution and Industrialization in Latin America: Experiences and Interpretations." *Latin American Research Review* 7, no. 1 (1972): 95-122

government used tariffs on imported goods to favor Mexican industries for domestic consumption⁷⁹. The economic system was successful in transforming the country from an agricultural society to an urban semi-industrial nation. This is in part because the state put an emphasis on the agricultural sector through agricultural technologies that increased yields of production, at least at the beginning. This helped decrease food prices in urban regions which helped increase the number of people working in the manufacturing sector. The Mexican government focused on the development of infrastructure through public goods in order to stimulate the manufacturing sector and strategic enterprises⁸⁰.

Methods that the Mexican government implemented included the establishment of tariffs that protected domestic products, created incentives for domestic production and industrialization, government involvement in economic policy, and state ownership such as the nationalization of Mexican oil: PEMEX⁸¹. The state stimulated growth through the creation of parastatals to create markets that the private sector did not invest in. State-owned enterprises also increased as a result of purchasing private companies to prevent their failure⁸². By 1982, Mexico had 1,155 state-run companies⁸³. From 1940-1970 the Mexican economy grew at a rate of 6.4 percent per year, the longest consecutive growth in the country's history. This growth translates to the improvement of social services which increased literacy rates and decreased mortality rates for both adults and infants⁸⁴. Economic growth led the Mexican government to increase its expenditures on healthcare and education, which helped decrease poverty and increase literacy levels throughout the country.

⁷⁹ La Industrializacion y el Milagro Mexicano. YouTube.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Vanden, Harry E., and Gary Prevost. Politics of Latin America: The Power Game.

⁸² Morton, Adam David. *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico the Political Economy of Uneven Development*. Updated ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. Pg. 117.

⁸³ Chong, Alberto and López-de-Silanes, Florencio. *Privatization in Mexico*. Inter-American Development Bank. Research Dept. 2004.

⁸⁴ Joseph, G. M. (Gilbert Michael), and Buchenau, Jürgen. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution*. Pg 156.

Several issues materialized under the ISI mode. First, contradictory to the increase of social services, inequality augmented; Mexico became the second most unequal country in Latin America from the 1950s to the 1960s. The expansion of industrial jobs and the diminishing negligence of the agricultural sector increased urban migration into urban areas. Lack of family planning led to a population boom that also made the economic system inefficient because of the scarcity of jobs⁸⁵. Furthermore, was the failure to create competitive products of high quality for the international market due to high protectionist policies that limited external competition with Mexican made goods. This lack of competition meant no incentive for quality products. Another problem associated with ISI was the large deficits that countries acquired. This economic model stimulated economic growth at the expense of large expenditures to afford all state-lead activities. Many countries, including Mexico, borrowed money from international financial institutions, to be able to continue on its development project⁸⁶. Overtime ISI as a model of development became fragile to external factors. Amongst these issues, in the global context, ISI created “chronic unemployment, chronic inflation, currency overvaluations, and balance-of-payments problems”⁸⁷. By 1980 a new model of development, neoliberalism, highly promoted by the United States, the World Bank, and the IMF was imposed in Mexico and the developing world as the solution to the exhaustion to the ISI model and its economic failures. Chapter three will analyze Mexico’s transition from state-directed economics to one favoring the limit of it.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ La Industrializacion y el Milagro Mexicano. YouTube.

⁸⁷ Babb, Sarah. *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*. Princeton University Press, 2001. Pg 9.

Conclusion

The 20th century began with the downfall of the Porfirian dictatorship that only benefited a small Mexican elite and foreign entities. Revolutionary ideals through the enactment of the 1917 Constitution promised a more egalitarian society, worker's, agrarian, and social rights, but most importantly the legacy of article 27 which declared Mexico's territory and natural resources as sovereign property of the Mexican people. Under Cardenas, many of these promises were executed with agrarian reform and the nationalization of petroleum as the most important legacies of the Mexican Revolution. Lazaro Cardenas also indicated that the power of the state could be used in favor of the poor, peasants, and workers; the state became the main protector of worker and peasant rights. Unfortunately, by the time Cardenas left office these revolutionary ideals were abandoned for the holding of power and economic development to create political legitimacy. ISI helped Mexico grow economically while providing social services to the masses but, towards the end of the century, the PRI became more authoritarian and placed personal enrichment before the wellbeing of the country. The 1980s arrived and the neoliberal era would begin to create tensions that persist to this day.

This chapter helps us understand AMLO's political discourse that goes back to the Mexican Revolution. First, the revolutionary period helps us understand AMLO's longing to bring back the betrayed revolutionary ideals into the 21st century through his fourth Mexican transformation. This chapter also sought to reconstruct an important period in Mexican history in order to begin analyzing the main juxtapositions AMLO makes between the Porfiriato and the neoliberal era. By doing this, one can begin to understand why AMLO's narrative of oppression and betrayal resonates with thousands of Mexicans who see themselves as the peasants and workers Diaz exploited. The connection he makes between the two periods will be clearer when analyzing the

beginnings of the neoliberal era and the creating of the current grievances. Chapter three will begin by understanding the origins of neoliberalism while critically analyzing the consequences and grievances created by this economic model.

Chapter Three: Neoliberalism, The Washington Consensus, and Mexico

AMLO emphasizes that in order to understand and transform the present, we must be able to have knowledge of our past. We cannot move forward as a nation if we do not know where we come from. In addition, he suggests that if history is not critically revised, the threat of repeating history can become a reality. Under neoliberalism, history did become reality. As AMLO conveys, there are many similarities between the political and economic systems used under Porfirio Diaz and the ones used under the current government. These similarities, these reoccurrences, AMLO refers to as “neoporfirismo”, a return of old authoritarian practices in modern times. In the previous chapter, I focused on the Porfirian dictatorship and on the exploitation of both land and people. Through analytical analysis, I reconstruct a historical narrative of the Porfirian dictatorship to that of the development of the “Perfect Dictatorship” in order to comprehend the inequalities and abuses that people fought against during the Mexican Revolution and how political elites were able to continue on with authoritarian mechanisms through a façade of revolutionarily ideals. Now through this chapter, I argue that authoritarianism became less of a façade and more repugnant under the neoliberal model.

This chapter will focus on the development of the neoliberal state globally but most importantly in Mexican society. As David Harvey notes, “neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a model of discourse”⁸⁸. I first analyze neoliberalism as a global hegemonic economic model and theory through a global perspective. From there, I move forward into describing Mexico’s own experience with neoliberalism. I will focus on the origins of this transformation in Mexican society during the 1982 crisis economic and on the continuation of

⁸⁸Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Pg 3.

neoliberal structural reforms until the era of “democratization” in the year 2000. This does not necessarily mean that neoliberalism ended with the presidency of Vicente Fox. The next chapter will focus on neoliberal persistence through popular resistance. By analyzing the origins of the neoliberal state in Mexico, I seek to bring to light the comparisons AMLO makes of the two different periods he himself analyses through neoporfirismo. The reader will be able to make comparisons and create their own conclusions between the old and new political regimes. But as AMLO may argue, the current political regime may not be as new after all.

The Rise of Neoliberal Theory and the Neoliberal State

Neoliberalism as its title suggests, has its roots in classical liberal economic theory associated with Adam Smith and the “invisible hand”. The ultimate difference between the two economic models is the role of the state. Neoliberalism is not the absence of the state, but a restructuring of it. Liberalism suggests that the state should have no interference in economic affairs, while neoliberalism places the state as the protector of free markets and open competition. David Harvey makes the distinction between the two and of the peculiarity of the Mexican neoliberal case:

What the Mexico case demonstrated, however, was the key difference between liberal and neoliberal practice: under the former lenders take the losses that arise from bad investment decisions, while under the latter the borrowers are forced by the state and international powers to take on board the costs of debt repayment no matter what the consequences for the livelihood and well-being of the local population⁸⁹

Neoliberalism began as a reaction to Keynesian economics and state involvement in the economy during the Great Depression. People like Louis Rougier, Ludwig von Mises, and Friedrich von

⁸⁹ Ibid. Pg 29.

Hayek promoted neoliberalism as the solution to economic failure during the 1930s⁹⁰. Nonetheless, John Mayer Keynes' theory of state intervention in economic matters became the orthodox economic model from the 1930s until about the 1980s. Keynesian economics argues that governments have the ability to solve some of the issues created by irresponsible capitalism. By regulating businesses, the government can limit irresponsible actions. Furthermore, government expenditures, such as infrastructure projects, can stimulate demand and economic growth. Principles of Keynesian economics became incorporated into the ISI model in many developing countries⁹¹.

Though the neoliberal doctrine would not flourish until the 80s, Hayek's book *The Road to Serfdom* became influential as it outlined his main arguments against state involvement in economic planning. Hayek belied that "the danger of tyranny inevitably results from government control of economic decision-making through central planning", such as those implemented by Hitler or Stalin⁹². Hayek belied that freedom within itself is "a policy which deliberately adopts competition, markets and prices as its ordering principles" and therefore "only capitalism makes democracy possible"⁹³⁹⁴. In other words, individual liberties could only be guaranteed through free markets.

In theory, the neoliberal state, as proposed by neoliberal thinkers, should be a restructuring of the state to protect individual and corporate rights and liberties including freedoms of expression, property rights, rights to entrepreneurship, rule of law, and of institutions allowing for competition and free markets to thrive, by using the state's monopoly over the use of violence if

⁹⁰ Birch, Kean, and Mykhnenko, Vlad. *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism: The Collapse of an Economic Order?* Zed Books, 2013. Pg 3.

⁹¹ Political Theory, John Mayer Keynes. Youtube.

⁹² Hayek, Friedrich A. von (Friedrich August). *The Road to Serfdom* . 50th anniversary ed. / with a new introd. by Milton Friedman., University of Chicago Press, 1994.

⁹³ Political Theory, Friedrich Hayek. YouTube

⁹⁴ Birch, Kean, and Mykhnenko, Vlad. *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism*. Pg 3.

need be. The state is no longer the stimulus to economic growth but rather it is private entities who generate wealth; only by doing this will social problems such as poverty be alleviated. Property rights need to be protected because the lack of them serves as a hindrance to economic development in addition to the need for protection against the abuse of natural resources. Furthermore,

Privatization and deregulation combined with competition, it is claimed, eliminates bureaucratic red tape, increases efficiency and productivity, improves quality, and reduces costs both directly to the consumer through cheaper commodities and services and indirectly through reduction of the tax burden⁹⁵.

The neoliberal state should also make sure that all barriers to competition and free markets are removed for domestic and international trade to flourish. Overall, neoliberalism at its core encourages free markets because for every problem there is a market solution⁹⁶. Eventually, these principles began to influence politicians in the US and the UK including Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

By the 1980s stagflation (high unemployment and inflation) created economic crises across the globe and many concluded that Keynesian economics failed to generate the same economic results it produced a decade before. It lost legitimacy as an economic model and therefore an alternative model was needed. Neoliberalism was embraced by the elite in the US and the UK, infiltrating the global economic system. Deliberately, neoliberal thinkers began to penetrate academia in favor of free-market policies through corporate lobbying, research institutions, think tank, and business forums⁹⁷. For example, US universities became the training grounds for the

⁹⁵ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Pg 65.

⁹⁶ Ibid. Pg 64-67.

⁹⁷ Birch, Kean, and Mykhnenko, Vlad. *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism : the Collapse of an Economic Order?*

studies of neoliberal theory, primarily for foreigners who would study in the US and return to their respective countries to become economic advisers⁹⁸.

The first attempt to create a neoliberal state began in Chile after the US-backed overthrow of socialist advocate Salvador Allende. Dictator Augusto Pinochet put Friedman's economic beliefs into action. Chile overnight went through economic shock therapy, denationalizing and privatizing state-owned assets while opening the economy for foreign investment and facilitating free trade. Because Chile was seen as an "economic miracle", International Financial Institutions like the World Bank and the IMF encouraged economic liberalization worldwide.

The IMF, World Bank, and the Washington Consensus

In 1944, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were created under agencies of the United Nations. Even though subsidiaries of the United Nations, these two institutions seem to forget about the principles in the UN Declaration of Human Rights. The World Bank's primary role is to help developing countries with economic development such as the promotion of infrastructure. On the other hand, the IMF has three functions "financing, surveillance, and technical assistance"⁹⁹. This is done primarily through lending and economic aid during the financial crisis. Together these two institutions are known as the International Financial Institutions (IFI). Furthermore, because the United States and other Western countries are major stakeholders in both institutions and have a major say in the decision-making process, the IFIs along the US have been noted as the "Washington Consensus". This refers to the large influence that the US has in the neoliberal policies given to developing countries¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Pg 54.

⁹⁹ Cingranelli, David L, and Abouharb, M. Rodwan. *Human Rights and Structural Adjustment*. Pg. 58.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

The gradual culmination of the Cold War during the 80s allowed countries like the United States and Britain to promote its economic model into the developing world. Throughout the 1980s, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were key actors in the promotion of neoliberal theory as conditions for lending by the IMF and the World Bank. As neoliberal theory notes, unregulated free markets without government intervention allows for better efficiency and greater incentives for economic growth. The diagnosis taken by the IFIs is that state involvement in economic policy was the main problem to economic failure. The solution to this problem was the removal of state intervention in the economy. The IMF and World Bank would first impose neoliberal loan conditions onto Mexico after the 1982 economic crisis¹⁰¹. From 1982-2003, the World Bank negotiated 442 structural agreements while the IMF negotiated 431. Under these SAP, governments were pressured to do the following:

KEY COMPONENTS OF NEOLIBERALISM AND THE WASHINGTON CONSENSUS

1. Austerity measures for fiscal discipline: radically reducing government bureaucracy and spending by cutting back on government jobs and social services
2. Fiscal and monetary reform
3. Tax Cuts
4. Minimize government regulation in economic matters (deregulation).
5. Trade liberalization through the reduction and eventual elimination of all tariff barriers and trade restrictions
6. Opening up the national economy to foreign investment and allowing the free flow of Capital (FDI)
7. Increase exports
8. Privatization of government assets (state-owned corporations, industries, agencies, and utilities) and allow the private sector to take over
9. Eliminating government subsidies on domestic goods and essential consumer goods.
10. Government protection of individual and private property rights.

As one can begin to imagine, these economic prescriptions have had a huge consequence especially on the people who are the most marginalized politically and economically in a society. In a matter of fact, SAPs have led to the violation of human rights. This includes violation of

¹⁰¹ Kefferstan, Sam, "The Perfect Storm: Lasting Impacts of Structural Adjustment Programs and Pressures of Climate Change in Latin America and Ghana, Africa" (2017). Student Showcase. 20. Pg 11.

economic and social rights, violation of physical integrity rights, and violation of worker's rights¹⁰². First, unemployment rose because of budget cuts and privatization. Decreasing of state bureaucracies and institutions means laying off people including public servants, teachers, and doctors. The same occurred in firing workers of state-owned enterprises. Second, access to public services such as education, healthcare, access to clean water, access to adequate housing, transportation, etc., became inaccessible to many people. The government stopped using its treasury to pay for these services. Instead, this encouraged privatized or semi-privatized systems where in fees for services were implemented; these fees made it impossible for the poor to afford once state-provided services. Third, eliminating subsidies on staple goods makes it much difficult for populations already struggling to survive. Eliminating subsidies increases the price of food and other goods which makes them inaccessible to the poor. People's inaccessibility to basic human rights to access to education, clean water, healthcare, food, clothing, housing, and overall a decent standard of living is in violation of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR).

Poverty and income inequality have risen as well. The liberalization of a country's markets tends to favor multinational corporations (MNCs) on the expense of domestic businesses. Even though liberalized markets and free trade are meant to create an equal playing field, MNCs already have the upper hands and thus take over domestic markets that cannot compete in an unequal system. Neoliberal economic policies also benefit the elite of the country. Domestic corporations that can compete in the global market are also given preference to generate wealth at the expense of the rest of the population. Much research notes the correlation between free-market economies and income inequality. In a country that favors free-market capitalism, those who benefit are the native elite and foreign identities at the expense of the nation's population. Increasing the wealth

¹⁰² Cingranelli, David L, and Abouharb, M. Rodwan. *Human Rights and Structural Adjustment*.

gap also includes the lack of government interference in wages and labor rights which favors MNCs in maximizing profits at the expense of workers' rights.

Life under these conditions makes it difficult for marginalized and poor people to live a decent life. The deprivation of basic human rights and needs creates grievances in the population against the government imposed neoliberal policies. Consequences of SAPs generate enough grievances as to create social conflicts, such as to anti-government protests, demonstrations, and riots. The affected groups most often will organize to demand change to government policy. As noted by Cingranelli and Abouharb, "individuals compare their present situation to that If there had not been any cutbacks in government spending and when they had greater security about their employment. When the cutbacks have worsened people's situation, they will feel relatively deprived"¹⁰³. When this occurs, civil conflicts are likely to occur. When grievances lead to a diminishing of government legitimacy, anti-government protests may not only demand for change in policy but may go even further in demanding a change in a government or political regime. As a government sees the threat to its established power, it may seek to repress the opposition through its coercive apparatus.

A higher number of oppositions that a government faces, the more likely that a government will use oppression as a means to stop the demonstrations. Oppression may not only include obstructing demonstration, riots, and protests. As studies have shown, governments are willing to violate physical integrity rights through the use of torture, murder, disappearances, and political imprisonments¹⁰⁴.

There are many more issues with the implementation of SAPs. First, there is an assumption that one economic model will function in any country, discounting whether it is a developed or a

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

developing nation. Unlike Western countries like the US or Britain, developing countries face more challenges and obstacles to development and economic growth. To think that there is one size fits all model is misleading to begin with. Second, the consequences of neoliberal economic theory are counterintuitive if the end goal is economic growth. The trickle-down economics theory, in fact, has not worked and free-markets economies have actually increased wealth inequality in both developing and developed nations. The large gap in income limits those at the bottom to pursue economic opportunities, and thus escape the poverty trap. In a similar note, there is a consensus that an educated and healthy labor force is required for economic development. A reduction in government services and the involvement of the private sector in providing these services, has led to a decrease in per capita education¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Cingranelli and Abouharb argue that “the neoliberal approach is based upon the argument that markets arise spontaneously because of the imperative to exchange goods and services for the purpose of both survival and wealth generation”¹⁰⁶. Many of the times, especially in developing countries where there is a lack of native entrepreneurship, the economy does not grow spontaneously and thus requires government involvement to help with the jump start. When looking at the economic models of developing countries, there is evidence that there is a paradox with the ideology promoted by IFIs. There is a long history of developed Western countries that became wealthy because of government implemented protectionist policies which assisted businesses in competing internationally. Contrary to this, IFIs encourage rapid removal of state intervention for economic development. In some instances, countries like Venezuela and Chile were prescribed with neoliberal “shock therapy”, in where the economic structure of the government was distorted from one day to another.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Pg. 67

“Good governance”, as argued by IFI, would help economies develop because of increased attraction for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in a developing country. But as research has shown, this has been far from the truth. When looking into the economies and regimes of countries in Africa, data shows that there is a negative correlation between good governance and FDI. In other words, countries like Nigeria, Congo, and Angola, which are known for corruption and political instability, receive more FDI than countries like Mali and Zambia who follow the neoliberal prescription. Instead, countries rich in natural resources, despite the political regime, receive more FDI for the extraction of these resources¹⁰⁷. Therefore, the myth that good governance through neoliberal reform will attract foreign investment is false and misleading.

FDI in developing countries is predominantly invested in the production of commodity goods and export infrastructure. This has brought criticisms, as there are many parallels between the colonial economic model and of a capitalism neoliberal economy. Both rely on the exploitation of natural resources and production of commodity goods for the west. This system does not develop economic growth and has made it difficult for developing countries to escape the “commodity trap” as exports of agricultural production at its current rate is economically unviable for the country, and thus diversification is not seen as practical. The myth that developing countries will grow economically is false because the reliance on primary goods cannot create economic development at the level that developing countries do. As has been noted, “trying to coerce African States into basic policy reform does not confront, hence cannot resolve the contradictions of agricultural ‘modernization’ in the face of...historical patterns of commoditization in Africa”¹⁰⁸. This statement can be implemented in the rest of the development world.

¹⁰⁷ Ferguson, James. *Global Shadows : Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* . Duke University Press, 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Bernstein, Henry (1990) Agricultural ‘Modernisation’ and the Era of Structural Adjustment: Observations on Sub-Saharan Africa, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 18:1. Pg. 21.

Mexico's Entrance into the Neoliberal Order

There are various factors which facilitated Mexico's entrance into the neoliberal economic order which will be discussed with more attention: global crises, domestic economic difficulties, domestic actors, foreign promotion, and international events. The 1982 economic crisis in Mexico was the catalyst for the transition between ISI and neoliberalism. During this period, progressive and nationalist policies that were part of the political tradition of administrations following that of Cardenas were placed aside for a pro-capitalist dogma. For the next four decades, neoliberal orthodoxy would become the basis of Mexico's economic model favoring free trade, the free market, and the execution of the neoliberal state. Structural reforms initiated the transformation of the Mexican economic model beginning with the presidency of Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988). His successors, Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), and Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), Vicente Fox (2000-2006), Felipe Calderon (2006-2012), and Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018), would continue on with the neoliberal tradition, leaving behind a disastrous legacy for the majority of the Mexican populace.

1970s Mexico was characterized by economic recession and an increase in foreign debt. First, the ISI model that achieved economic success under the Mexican Miracle (1940s-1970s) failed to stimulate the economy. As the previous chapter illustrated, several problems developed under the ISI model which made it vulnerable to both external and internal forces. Many companies began to close as a consequence. Instead of letting private companies fail, the government took over these enterprises to prevent large unemployment. From the 1970s to the 1980s state-owned enterprises more than doubled. Because of bureaucratic expansion, the government used state resources to keep companies running even though they did not generate revenue. Also mentioned in the previous section, as a tool to diminish political dissent, the state increased expenditures on

more public services and social welfare programs in order to minimize social unrest. The vast expansion of expenditures could have not been possible without loans provided by foreign investment banks. The foreign debt would worsen with the increase of oil prices in the early 1980s^{109 110}.

During the 1970s, new discoveries of oil reserves increased Mexico's dependence on oil; petroleum became the main source of revenue for the government. By 1981, oil made up seventy percent of the country's exports. The high oil prices and projected augmentation on its price created optimism that led to a significant increase of state expenditures and of loans rather than saving or paying off foreign debt. Mexican policy makers relied on global oil predictions such as that given by the World Development Report which predicted a constant increase of 3 percent per year for the next decade¹¹¹. In 1972, Mexico owed \$6.8 billion in loans; by 1982, this number had increased to \$58 billion. Mexico's mono commodity economy made it very vulnerable to external conditions. The dramatic fall of global oil price, augmentation in interest rates, devaluation of the peso, and lack of confidence in the economy created huge complications for the economy. Lack of oil revenue led to an inability of Mexico to pay off its loans. By 1982, Mexico declared bankruptcy and thus commenced the beginning of Latin America's the lost decade. The president at the time, Jose López Portillo, responded by nationalizing Mexico's banks, angering the businesses community¹¹². With no other choice, he also took further action by receiving a \$4 billion loan from the IMF with the agreement of radically cutting state spending¹¹³. A few months after the economic crisis, Miguel de la Madrid assumed the presidency.

¹⁰⁹ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Pg 99.

¹¹⁰ Shefner, Jon, and Stewart, Julie ; "Neoliberalism, Grievances, and Democratization: An Exploration of the Role of Material Hardships in Shaping Mexico's Democratic Transition." 17.2 353–378. Pg. 361.

¹¹¹ Lustig, Nora. *Mexico: the Remaking of an Economy* . 2nd ed., Brookings Institution Press, 1998. Pg 21.

¹¹² Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Pg 99.

¹¹³ Hellman Adler, Judith. "Structural Adjustment in Mexico and The Dog That Didn't Bark". York University. CERLAC Working Paper Series. 1997. Pg. 3.

Miguel de la Madrid, the Harvard Man as the NY Times called him, came from an educational background similar to that of the modern technocrats who received an education in the US and returned to become government employees, many of times taking the role of economic advisors. De la Madrid received a master's in public administration from Harvard University, returned to Mexico, and was assured a job at the Ministry of Finance. Under the administration of Jose López Portillo, he became the Deputy Finance Minister and later Minister of Planning and Budget¹¹⁴. Many of the technocrats in Mexico followed a similar path, infiltrating Mexican politics with US promoted neoliberal principles.

A major factor in understanding the “dismantling of the developmentalist state” is by looking at the actors who promoted free trade and open markets as the solution to economic success. Neoliberal policies were not enacted out of thin air. Economists as political actors, the technocrats, and their rise to power was instrumental in implementing the economic policies promoted by American economic academia at the University of Chicago, Harvard, Yale, and MIT¹¹⁵. Under the administration of Echeveria, scholarships to study in foreign countries increased as a consequence of the oil boom and as a tool of co-opting student leaders who opposed augmented government authoritarianism, especially through the Tlatelolco Massacre. Many of these students would be trained as economics in US academic institutions. By giving out scholarships, technocrats adopted the following:

a more conservative ideology while becoming dependent on the president for their subsequent governmental position, resulting in the crucial rise of *camarillas* that shifted institutional loyalty from a particular ministry or subgroup within the bureaucracy to close political and personal links with the president¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁴ Man in The News; Mexico's Harvard Man. New York Times. 1982.

¹¹⁵ Babb, Sarah. *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*.

¹¹⁶ Morton, Adam David. “Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: ‘Passive Revolution’ in the Global Political Economy.” Pg 639.

As years moved forward, professionals with graduate degrees from American Universities were favored in government careers.

The rise of technocrats in government positions increased during the 1970s and by the time De la Madrid became president, technocrats had infiltrated economic advising positions and high-ranking government roles (Table 2). As the first technocrat to become president, de la Madrid became known as a “friend of the bakers and businessman; a liberal capitalist, not a revolutionary firebrand”¹¹⁷. One of his first acts as president was to introduce the Program of Immediate Economic Reorganization (PIRE) which aimed to introduce shock therapy in order to increase trade surpluses and thus pay off foreign debt¹¹⁸. This plan would eventually fail to stabilize the economy and thus harsher structural reforms would be implemented¹¹⁹.

Presidency (Term)	No. Top Econ. Policy Slots	Undergrad. Econ. Degree N (%)	Undergrad. at Private Mex. School N (%)	Foreign Grad. Training N (%)	Foreign Grad. Training, Econ. N (%)
Avila Camacho (1940–46)	5	0	1 (20)	0	0
Alemán (1946–52)	5	0	0	0	0
Ruiz Cortínez (1952–58)	4	1 (25)	0	0	0
López Mateos (1958–64)	5	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)	1 (20)
Díaz Ordaz (1964–70)	5	1 (20)	0	1 (20)	1 (20)
Echeverría (1970–76)	9	2 (22)	0	4 (44)	2 (22)
López Portillo (1976–82)	12	4 (33)	0	7 (58)	4 (33)
De la Madrid (1982–88)	7	6 (86)	2 (29)	7 (100)	5 (71)
Salinas (1988–94)	5	4 (80)	2 (40)	5 (100)	4 (80)
Zedillo (1994–2000)	8	7 (87.5)	2 (25)	8 (100)	7 (87.5)

Source: Camp (1994) and assorted news media for more recent information.

Note: Total number of slots for each presidential administration equal the number of top policy positions multiplied by the number of individuals who occupy those positions during a given administration. Thus, the data for an individual who occupies two positions at different times during the same administration are counted twice. Top policy positions are defined as the president of the republic, minister of finance, minister of commerce, and central bank director (throughout the entire period), and minister of the presidency (from 1958 to 1976) and minister of budget and planning (from 1976 to 1992).

Table 2: Characteristics of Top Economic Policymaking Slots by Presidential Administrations
Source: Managing Mexico, Sarah Babb, pg. 185.

¹¹⁷ Babb, Sarah. *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*. Pg 176.

¹¹⁸ Nazmi, Nader. *Economic Policy and Stabilization in Latin America*. Routledge, 2016. Pg 97.

¹¹⁹ Lustig, Nora. *Mexico: the Remaking of an Economy*. 2nd ed., Brookings Institution Press, 1998. Pg 39.

Economists appointed as top-level economic policymakers included Jesus Silva Herzog Flores, and Miguel Mancera, both who had received an Ivy league education and pushed for conservative neoliberal reforms¹²⁰. These US-trained economists developed close ties with US and IFI (International Financial Institutions) policymakers, private investors, and the business community, creating a transnational capitalist class that pushed for neo-liberalization both internally and with external pressures. During the 1980s and 1990s, “US-trained economists rose to prominence in every single branch of Mexican economic policymaking, [and] in some ostensibly noneconomic branches” such as education¹²¹.

Even though neoliberal principles were first implemented under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, the transformation of Mexico’s economic development model became the blueprint to the IMF and World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). During this crisis, the IMF for the first time under the directions of Ronald Regan bailed out a country and offered neoliberal conditional loans. The World Bank would also provide for the first time Structural Adjustment Loans (SAL) to a developing country (Mexico) in 1984. In other words, Mexico became the laboratory for the Washington Consensus, which would then be imposed on the rest of Latin American, African, and Asian nations during the 1980s and 1990s.

New York investors had poured large amounts of money in the form of loans into Mexico’s oil sector and government during the late 70s. By the time the 1982 Mexican crisis sprang, there was the potential for a chain reaction, leading to the bankruptcy of New York banks. In order to prevent this from occurring, Reagan’s Secretary of the Treasury James Baker worked with the IMF to bail Mexico out of bankruptcy in return for structural reforms¹²². Unlike previous IFM loan

¹²⁰ Babb, Sarah. *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*. Pg 176-177.

¹²¹ Ibid. Pg 20.

¹²² Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Pg 73

conditions, which only demanded some austerity measures, these SAL also insisted “for the first time, broad neoliberal reforms, such as privatization, reorganizing of the financial system in ways more consistent with foreign interests, the opening of internal markets for foreign capital, lowering tariff barriers, and the construction of a more flexible labor market”¹²³. Mexico with the continuous degradation of the economy, and the 1985 earthquake that destroyed Mexico City was under huge pressure from the IFI’s to take loans with conditionalities. Once again in 1994, Mexico experienced an economic crisis, the “Tequila crisis”, which lead to a second IMF prescribed SAP. In total, Mexico received five IMF conditional loans from 1982-1999¹²⁴.

Though there was increasing pressure from the US, World Bank, and IMF for SAP, one must also consider the degree in which the Mexican elite, including conservative policymakers and de la Madrid, aligned themselves with the Washington Consensus. According to the *Financial Times*, Mexico had become the World Bank’s “darling” because of Mexico’s willingness for structural reforms, at times more than what the banks required. The Mexican economic elite and IFIs worked closely to convert Mexico’s economic system into one favoring free trade, open markets, and government abstention policies. According to Sarah Babb, what drove Mexico into adopting SAP neoliberalism was a combination of coercive and expert isomorphism. Under coercive morphism, “organizations conform to the demands of powerful external actors, sometimes under conditions of resource dependence” while expert isomorphism entails of “the transformation of organizations by powerful actors within the organization- namely, certified experts with their own ideas of how best to run the organization”¹²⁵. In the case of Mexico, both

¹²³ Ibid. Pg 99-100.

¹²⁴ Mexico: History of Lending Arrangements. International Monetary Fund.

¹²⁵ Babb, Sarah. *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism*. Pg 183.

international pressured from the Washington Consensus on to the Mexican government and within the Mexican political elite, facilitated the neoliberal transformation¹²⁶.

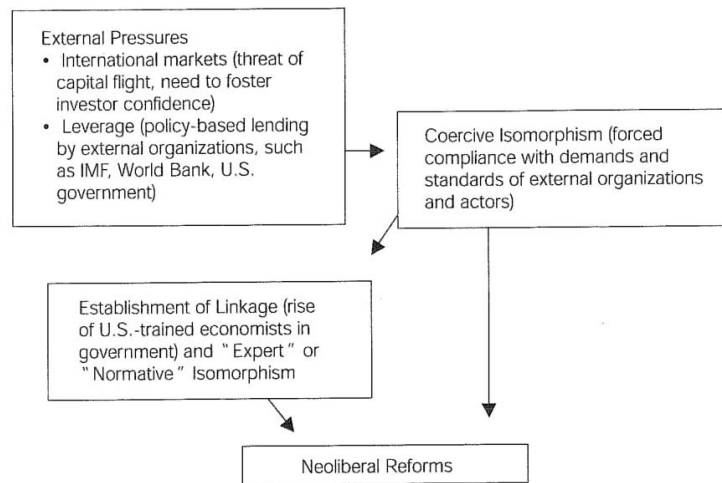


Figure 1 The Role of External Pressures in Mexican Neoliberal Reforms
Source: Managing Mexico, Sarah Babb, pg. 185.

The alliance between Mexican technocrats and the international neoliberal community would not stop with IMF and World Bank Loans. This close collaboration under the de la Madrid administration led Mexico to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), increasing Mexico's speed of privatization, trade liberalization, and the beginning of Mexico's inclusion into the global economy^{127 128}. The GATT had rapid economic effects: worker's real wages plummeted around 40-50 percent, inflation surpassed 100 percent, and state welfare including subsidies for basic goods and services were dramatically cut. In Mexico City (1985), resources were "so scarce that expenditures in critical urban services plummeted 12 percent on transport, 25 percent on potable water, 18 percent on health services, [and] 25 percent on trash collecting"¹²⁹. During this time period, Mexico became one of the most dangerous cities in all of Latin America¹³⁰.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. Pg 181.

¹²⁸ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Pg 100.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

With de la Madrid as president, the Baker Plan (1985) -replaced by the Brady Plan in 1989- and the Economic Solidarity Pact (1987), sought to negotiate external debt through fiscal discipline, fixed currency exchange rate, accelerate privatization, liberalization of the financial system, in addition to wage and price controls¹³¹. De la Madrid further began the process of privatization by selling off parastatals to help pay the foreign debt, but this led to a high increase in unemployment. By doing this, thousands of workers went on strikes but the government reacted by using the military to stop protests. The process of privatization would proliferate at higher rates under the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari¹³².

Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Ernesto Zedillo, and the Neoliberal Perpetuation

There is a consensus that Carlos Salinas de Gortari became president through fraudulent elections. Moreover, the presidential election of 1988 brought light to the techniques used by the PRI to hold on to power for over 70 years. First, IMF and World Bank enacted structural adjustments had created a division within the PRI. Those who opposed structural adjustment, left the PRI to create the Frente Democrático Nacional (FND), a left-of-center political party and the antecedent of the PRD, objecting neoliberal pro-capitalist policies with Cuauhtémoc Cardenas, son of Lazaro Cardenas, as leader of the political party. Discontent with de la Madrid and the PRI demanded for political change. Structural adjustment programs under the administration of de la Madrid had already begun to create grievances for the lower and middle classes, thus the PRI's legitimacy started to shatter especially with discontent coming from the middle class.

First, one must remember that the state under ISI had provided jobs for a large population primarily for the middle class, the PRI's main political supporter. With austerity programs,

¹³¹ Morton, Adam David. "Structural Change and Neoliberalism in Mexico: 'Passive Revolution' in the Global Political Economy." Pg 640.

¹³² Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Pg 100.

thousands of people went unemployed; thousands of public servants were laid off. Mexican industries which could not compete with imported goods closed down, leaving more than 800,000 workers unemployed¹³³. Between 1982 and 1988, social public expenditures were cut by 35 percent¹³⁴. The reduction of government spending had drastic consequences for those living in urban areas. With the cutback of subsidies, healthcare, transportation, food, housing, and clothing became unreachable to many. The most drastically hurt were the poor and peasant population who lacked the income to buy basic goods and “by 1986, two-thirds of urban households had incomes below the official minimum wage”¹³⁵.

It was primality the middle class which threatened the power of the PRI. Even though more than 6 million farmworkers could only find work for one-third of the year, the lack of proper rural organization, state repression of labor unions, and the need for survival made it difficult for the rural and poor classes to mobilize in large numbers:

The system-wide economic crisis of the 1980s has been called the worst in modern history and its effects are noted to be particularly egregious for the urban and rural poor. Yet despite expectations of widespread rural mobilization, the predominant pattern in the countryside after the onset of the severe economic crisis of 1982 was not community or regional organization and protests (although some such activities did occur) but rather a series of adaptations with rural households to ensure economic survival¹³⁶

With thousands of people discontent with the PRI unable to solve Mexico’s economic problems, the FND grew in popularity as an alternative to the PRI. Early predictions had been in favor of Cardenas and when the day of the elections arrived, early results showed large favoring for Cardenas. That night, the government declared a glitch in the computer system that led the

¹³³ Hellman Adler, Judith. “Structural Adjustment in Mexico and The Dog That Didn’t Bark”. Pg 3.

¹³⁴ Laurell Cristina, Asa. “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society”. *International Journal of Health Services*. 2015, Vol. 45 (2) 246-264. Pg 250.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. Pg 4.

computers to crash. As noted by the PRI president to de la Madrid: "You have to proclaim the triumph of the PRI. It is a tradition that we cannot break without causing great alarm among the citizens"¹³⁷. Salinas de rotary declared himself president without an official count of the votes; three years later the ballots of the election were burned to eliminate any evidence of fraud¹³⁸.

The sextenium of Salinas de Gortari became infamous with privatization and free trade agreements. Under his policies of privatization, Mexico's telephone company, national airlines, railways, steel corporations, banks, insurance companies, radio stations, airports, amongst other parastatals were sold to the private sector¹³⁹¹⁴⁰. Various reasons were given for the privatization of state-owned enterprises. First, Mexican technocrats followed neoliberal theory and prescriptions given by IMF and World Bank analyst. According to their analysis, the selling state-owned enterprises would modernize and improve the efficiency of the provided goods and services. Furthermore, it would decrease the government's burden on unnecessary expenditures on its large bureaucracy and decrease corruption¹⁴¹.

The process of privatization became a source of profit for those with the economic and political power to invest. Mexico's billionaires began to exponentially increase during the 1990s. At the beginning of Salinas de Gortari's presidency, only one family was on Forbes world's richest persons. By the end of his presidency, twenty-four Mexicans were added to the list. At least seventeen of these families became wealthy as a consequence of the privation of state-owned businesses, including the privatization banks, sugar refineries, steel mills, telecommunications,

¹³⁷ Thomson, Ginger. Ex-President in Mexico Casts New Light on Rigged 1988 Election. The New York Times. March 2004.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ronchi, Veronica. The Neoliberal Myth in Latin America: The Case of Mexico and Argentina in the 90's. Università degli Studi di Milano. 2007. Web. Pg 6.

¹⁴⁰ Roy, Emilio Sacristán. Las privatizaciones en México. UNAM.

¹⁴¹ Sánchez Díaz, Armando Javier and Inzunza Mejía, Patricia Carmina. The State Owned Enterprises and Development in Mexico. Economía y Desarrollo. 2015. 154 (Número 1). 168-184.

restaurants, chemical plants, ports, highways, etc. By 1994, Mexico was the 4th largest producer of billionaires in a year compared to in 1988 when Mexico was in 26th place. By 2005, Mexico continued to hold a high spot, in 9th place in the world for its number of billionaires, surpassing countries like Saudi Arabia¹⁴²¹⁴³¹⁴⁴. One of the men who benefited the most from the process of privatization was Carlos Slim. Through the monopoly over telecommunications in Mexico (Telmex) and its expansion into Latin America, he has become one of the richest men in the world. From 2010-2013, Carlos Slim became the richest man in the world, surpassing people like Bill Gates. Till this day, he continues to be Latin America's richest man.

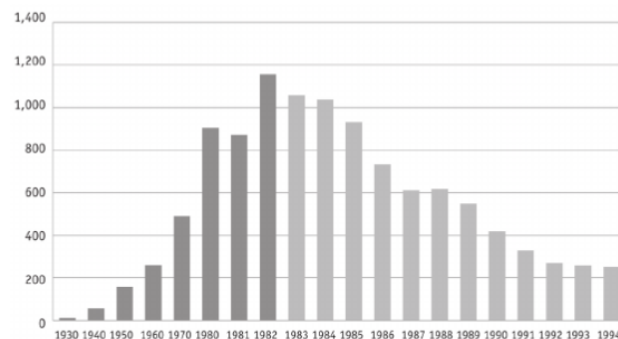


Figure (2): Number of Parastatal Enterprises in Mexico 1930-1994.

Source: Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy; pg.103

In addition to mass privatization, Carlos Salinas de Gortari threatened the legacy of the Mexican revolution by amending Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution. As one may remember, Article 27 of the Mexican constitution gives land and subsoil rights to the government in order to limit foreign control over Mexico's resources. Furthermore, Zapata's long fight for agrarian reform was promised under this article. Salinas de Gortari sought to undermine the legacy of the revolution by amending the constitution in 1991 and to allow land privatization of the ejidos, land that was

¹⁴² Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Pg 103

¹⁴³ López Obrador, Andrés Manuel., and Uhlmann, Natascha. *A New Hope for Mexico : Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump's Wall* . 2018.

¹⁴⁴ Dello Buono, Richard Alan; Lara, José Bell. *Imperialism, Neoliberalism and Social Struggles in Latin America : Imperialism, Neoliberalism and Social Struggles in Latin America*. 2006. Pg 23.

given to peasants and indigenous communities. Many peasants were forced to sell and leave their lands as a consequence of trade liberalization and inability to compete agriculturally with the United States¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶.

Finally, one of the neoliberal legacies most infamous of the Salinas de Gortari administration is the negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In a sense, NAFTA represented the culmination of Salinas de Gortari's neoliberal project which till this day its effects can be felt. First, Mexico sought to increase economic growth, develop its manufacturing sector, and increase employment through free trade and increased Foreign Direct Investments. Unlike the already developed United States and Canada, Mexico had a competitive advantage in both cheap labor and lax environmental laws. Because there was an emphasis on the restructuring of the economic model from import substitution to that of an export-oriented model, this required increased industrialization for more efficient and low-cost of production pressures to compete in the international stage. For Mexico, it has been cheap labor through the use of the maquiladora system that has made Mexico a competitive internationally. Because of this, the number of maquiladoras, especially in border cities, exponentially increased after the signing of NAFTA. Though Mexico believed that NAFTA would create economic growth, it has been known that it has rather been detrimental to the Mexican economy and well-being of the population. From the beginning of its implementation, groups such as the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) opposed NAFTA because of negative consequences for indigenous communities. Chapter four will go in further describing the consequences of SAP and NAFTA for women, agricultural workers, peasants, indigenous communities, the poor, youth, amounts other groups.

¹⁴⁵ Hellman Adler, Judith. "Structural Adjustment in Mexico and The Dog That Didn't Bark". Pg 5.

¹⁴⁶ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Pg 101.

Overall the Sanina's sextenium can be characterized by the privatization of state-owned enterprises, amending land reform and resource rights, privatizing higher education, Mexico becoming a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) otherwise known as the "club of rich countries", and of course the negotiation of NAFTA¹⁴⁷. Lastly, the presidency of Ernesto Zedillo can be characterized as the continuation of the already developed neoliberal state implemented by his predecessors. Under Zedillo, Article three of the constitution was amended to cut further investments in education. The most affected by this were rural students who could not afford to attend school unable to pay for schooling¹⁴⁸. In addition to the neoliberal continuation, he used violent repression to crack down on dissent to structural reforms, including the EZLN. In Acteal, Chiapas, 45 people were killed by a paramilitary squad, while 17 more were killed in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero by paramilitary groups¹⁴⁹.

Conclusion

Neoliberalism in Mexico, and in many developing countries was not only the application of microeconomic policies; it was the restructuring of society between the interaction of the state and its people. The development of Mexico as a neoliberal state had its roots in domestic and international pressures to remake its economic model. As this chapter analyzes, the transnational capitalist class that grew under the administration of de la Madrid was pivotal in the implementation of neoliberal reforms. First, Hayek's theory of economics became the orthodox of its time. Keynesian economics was blamed for the reduction of economic production during the 1970s and 1980s and thus a new model of development was pushed by the United States and Great Britain. Ronald Reagan, Milton Friedman, and Margaret Thatcher embraced Hayek's ideas as an

¹⁴⁷ Laurell Cristina, Asa. "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society". Pg 250.

¹⁴⁸ López Obrador, Andrés Manuel., and Uhlmann, Natascha. *A New Hope for Mexico : Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump's Wall*

¹⁴⁹ Laurell Cristina, Asa. "Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society". Pg 248.

alternative for economic growth and thus through the IFI (IMF and World Bank), SAP became orthodox of lending to developing countries. Lack of lending mechanisms for indebted countries created the condition in which the IFI became the only sources of credits needed to pay off debt. Because of this, many countries were pressured to infuse neoliberal reforms under the instructions of the IFI.

Mexico became the first country where SAP programs were enacted, becoming the model for its implementation in the developing world. But as this chapter reiterates, the introduction of neoliberal reforms was also embraced by the Mexican elite through the penetration of technocrats in high ranking economic position and the presidency. US-trained technocrats who returned to Mexico and penetrated key economic positions throughout the presidency of Portillo created an environment favorable to neoliberal reforms. By the time the economic crisis of 82' became inevitable, Portillo saw Mexico's situation as one of an economic matter, no longer a political one. De la Madrid as a technocrat himself was the first to initiate the neoliberal project with the help of the Washington Consensus. Following administrations continued on this legacy with NAFTA becoming the principal symbol of neoliberal Mexico.

First, one must take into consideration the manner in which crisis was and is manufactured for the justification for neoliberal reforms. Time and time again has shown that indeed in the time of crisis, those in power take opportunity for structural reform. This occurred in Mexico and the developing world due to the economic crisis in the 80s, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, and most recently in Puerto Rico with hurricane Maria¹⁵⁰. The creation of perceived a crisis is no speculation, as Milton Friedman himself, one of the actors most important in the implementation of structural adjustment globally noted that:

¹⁵⁰ Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine : the Rise of Disaster Capitalism* . 1st ed., Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2007.

Only a crisis- actual or perceived- produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable¹⁵¹

Thus, the economic crisis of 1982 can be seen as an opportunity for the corporate and elite class, both Mexican and foreign, to transform the Mexican economy as to benefit their own needs in the expense of a humble population through a perceived crisis. Therefore, as a justification for neoliberal reform was the need for a new economic system that would generate economic growth. Whether the elite believed this to be true, or whether they selfishly knew structural adjustment would solely benefit the elite class is up to interpretation.

One must also analyze the extent to which neoliberalism was successful in creating economic growth. The IMF and the World Bank promoted this model through the promise of economic development. According to neoliberal theorists, a neoliberal state would produce growth because it would reduce corruption, inefficiently, and wasteful spending. Looking at Mexico's GDP average growth by presidency from 1982-2012 (Table 3) and per year GDP (Figure 3), SAP, free trade and liberalization, open markets, austerity, has not produced what Mexico was promised. In fact, Mexico's neoliberal model could never achieve the same economic success the country had under the ISI model. Neoliberals argue that an explanation for this comes to the extent in which neoliberal reforms were actually implemented. But, this chapter argues that Mexico, in fact, went far beyond that the IMF and World Bank expect it from Mexico. Yet despite low economic progress, the IFI utilized Mexico as its neoliberal exemplary. Success in Mexico is far from the truth. Neoliberalism in Mexico created an unequal environment in which a very small elite became multibillionaire and the poor struggled even more to survive. Neoliberal Mexico created an

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Pg. 6.

environment for organized crime, the informal economy, immigration, and overall creativeness for tools for survival for those most hurt by this phenomenon. Chapter four will analyze the short term and long-term consequences of structural reform, and the development of the conditions needed for political change.

President	Period	Rate
Lázaro Cárdenas del Río	1934-1940	4.52
Manuel Ávila Camacho	1940-1946	6.15
Miguel Alemán Valdés	1946-1952	5.78
Adolfo Ruiz Cortines	1952-1958	6.42
Adolfo López Mateos	1958-1964	6.73
Gustavo Díaz Ordaz	1964-1970	6.75
Luis Echeverría Álvarez	1970-1976	6.13
José López Portillo	1976-1982	6.51
Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado	1982-1988	0.18
Carlos Salinas de Gortari	1988-1994	3.91
Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León	1994-2000	3.39
Vicente Fox Quesada	2000-2006	2.32
Felipe Calderón Hinojosa	2006-2012	1.47

Table 3: Average Annual Real GDP Growth by Presidency
Source: Guillen Arturo, Pg. 64

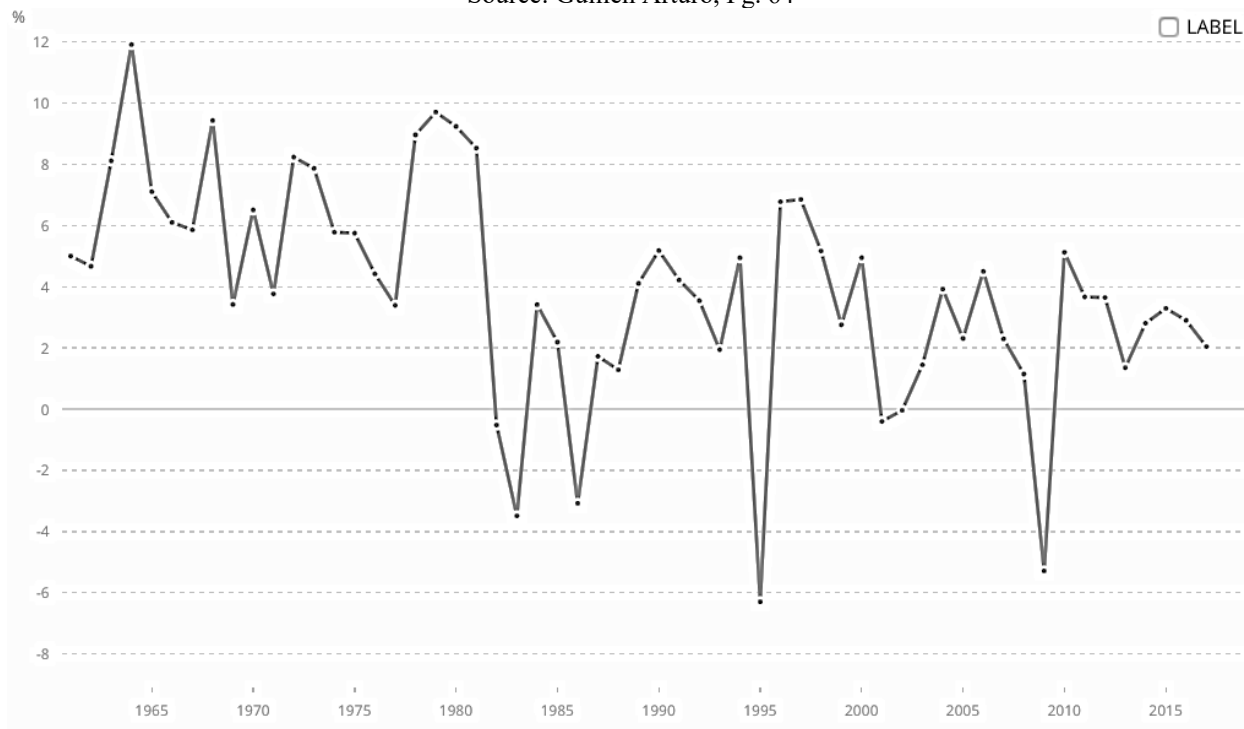


Figure 3. World Bank Mexico GDP Growth (Annual %) 1961-2017
Source: World Bank¹⁵²

¹⁵² Mexico GDP Growth(Annual %) 1961-2017. World Bank.

Chapter Four: The Rise of Resistance and Neoliberal Discontent

Despite arguments in favor of the success of the neoliberal model, Mexico's harmful experience with neoliberalism and structural reforms is similar to that of many other developing countries who have been examined by social scientists. First, structural reforms have short-term hardship due to austerity measures that cut or eliminate employment, subsidies on transportation, food, and social services including education and healthcare. Though some countries may be able to recover from the shock, many are unable to do so, and thus elongates short-term hardships into long-term grievances. In the long-run, poverty and inequality have risen which has been a global trend in the developing world. But in Mexico, issues that may not be so obviously seen as related to structural adjustment have permeated throughout Mexican society. These include organized crime, drug-related violence and homicides, femicides, and immigration. This chapter seeks to first, expose the negative consequences of structural reform, both short-term and long-term and both directly and indirectly, in order to understand discontent within contemporary Mexico. Second, this chapter will analyze the persistence of neoliberalism in Mexico in the context of anti-neoliberal movements throughout Latin America and the Pink Tide. In a sense, this chapter is the most important in understanding the social conditions for the 2018 elections and victory of AMLO. Previous chapters have provided essential historical context for AMLO's political discourse based on historical arguments. Now, this background can be contextualized for the situation that Mexico faced today.

Mexico: An Unequal Society

Mexico has always been an unequal society since the Spanish colonization of the Americas. This inequality takes roots in the caste system based on race and skin color. The Mexican Revolution was fought in essence from the struggle of that inequality and the fight for a more

egalitarian society. As it has already been argued, this inspiration soon diminished and was betrayed by the political elite. Nonetheless, Mexico's developmental model in post-Cardenas Mexico, left room for social welfare. Though welfare may have been part of the PRI's clientelist plan for political support, it did improve the living conditions of many while reducing poverty. Despite its successes, ISI also had its flaws and did not improve standards of living for all, but structural reforms would threaten the livelihood of many, primarily the poor. As has already been noted, economic austerity deprived the poor who relied on government services for basic survival. Reduction of subsidies made it difficult for the poor to purchase basic goods such as food and clothing. Other services such as transportation, healthcare, and education, became too expensive for those who barely had enough money for nourishment. Between 1983-1988, state expenditures on healthcare and education were reduced by 33.1 percent. Research conducted has also shown evidence for increased poverty levels with the implantation of structural reforms.

Neoliberalism and The Strengthening of The Narco-State

There is no doubt that neoliberalism helped create the conditions needed for the strengthening of the Narco-State in Mexico. It is difficult to put an estimate on the number of people who have died due to drug-related violence, primarily because many deaths go unreported or the bodies are yet to be found. Nonetheless, human rights activist estimate that since 2006, around 70,000+ lives have been lost¹⁵³. Of course, that number has surpassed in 2019. 2018 alone was Mexico's deadliest year with over 33,341 homicides recorded, a 15% increase from 2017¹⁵⁴. The War on Drugs fueled the rise of deaths, which began under the admiration of Felipe Calderon, but the rise of organized crime can be linked to consequences of neoliberal structural reforms

¹⁵³ "Why the Violence in Mexico Is Getting Worse.". YouTube. 14 Oct. 2014. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Romo, Vanessa. "Mexico Reports Highest Ever Homicide Rate In 2018, Tops 33,000 Investigations". NPR News. Jan 2019.

imposed on by the technocrats and conservative elites during the 1980s and 1990s. From this point onward, drug organizations became powerful actors in Mexican society and thus strengthening the Mexican Narco-State.

Historically, the connection between drug trafficking and politics intensified after World War Two as a consequence of Mexico's corporatist political system. As mentioned in chapter two, the PRI was able to grasp control of civil society through the creation of corporate groups that represented the needs of the represented population. In doing this, the state controlled the main actors of each group through clientelist measures to keep order and stability without political opposition. Similar to labor or peasant groups, criminal organizations also functioned in a similar matter. Organized crime and politicians created a unique relationship which facilitated drug cartels in the trafficking of drugs within Mexico and into the United States¹⁵⁵.

The period of structural reform in Mexico during the 80s helped organized crime increase in wealth and power. Three main groups were the primary benefactors of neoliberal reforms: the "domestic political and business elite, international investors, and organized crime"¹⁵⁶. The 80s and the 90s were of tremendous shock to the socioeconomic stability of the country. During the lost decade, over 800,000 jobs disappeared, labor unions lost their bargaining power, wages drastically decreased, the price of food and public goods skyrocketed, and social services were cut¹⁵⁷. Free trade agreements like NAFTA, furthered economic grievances amongst the population. Chapter three characterizes the consequences of SAP for economic and social rights, physical integrity rights, worker's rights; this was no different for Mexico. As a consequence of increased

¹⁵⁵ Watt, Peter, and Zepeda, Roberto. *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy*. 2012.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Pg 68.

¹⁵⁷ Boullosa, Carmen, and Wallace, Mike. *A Narco History: How the United States and Mexico Jointly Created the "Mexican Drug War"*. Counterpoint Press. 2016.

economic hardship, it created the conditions necessary to expand Mexico's informal and illegal sectors. Increased unemployment, income inequality, and poverty in Mexican society after the implementation of NAFTA have led to the augmentation of people joining the informal sector, primarily through the informal economy, including drug organizations. After the implementation of NAFTA, those living in poverty rose by a third. A decade after, about half of Mexico's population fell below the poverty line¹⁵⁸. In 2013, it was estimated that around 58% of all jobs in Mexico fall in the informal economy¹⁵⁹. Without opportunities available to them, people in desperate circumstances see it more beneficial to take part of illegal activities than to work a job with unsuitable wages and poor working conditions.

One of the sectors most hurt by NAFTA was Mexico's agricultural sector. In practice, NAFTA created "equal trade [opportunities] between grossly unequal partners" and thus benefiting the US at the expense of the Mexican populace¹⁶⁰. First, as a condition to enter into agreement, Mexico had to amend Article 27 of the constitution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Gortari amended the constitution as to allowing the privatization of ejidos, communal-based land. Furthermore, NAFTA and neoliberal policies eliminated subsidies for agricultural products provided by the Mexican government, price regulations set by marketing boards were removed, and tariffs on imported agricultural goods were eliminated. Because the United States continues to heavily subsidize agricultural products, like corn, American products flooded the Mexican market and drowned out Mexican competition; Mexican farmers cannot compete with cheap American agricultural goods. The price of imported corn dropped by 50 percent and thus

¹⁵⁸ Watt, Peter, and Zepeda, Roberto. *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy*. Pg 124-126.

¹⁵⁹ "58 Percent of Mexicans Work In Informal Economy". Fox Business. Dec 2013.

¹⁶⁰ Boullosa, Carmen, and Wallace, Mike. *A Narco History: How the United States and Mexico Jointly Created the "Mexican Drug War"*.

Mexico became reliant on food imports rather than being food dependent¹⁶¹. Those who had to sell their land out of necessity and those who became unemployed or found it difficult to survive with low wages and had two main options: either migrate or join the informal sector.

Many unemployed farmers migrated to urban areas or to the United States. Immigration to the U.S. drastically increased years following the enactment of NAFTA (Figure 4). The failures of NAFTA to create decent jobs in Mexico has led to the mass migration of Mexicans towards the United States. Wages fell, unemployment skyrocketed, and working conditions plummeted. By 1996, more than 8 million Mexicans were unemployed and 5 million were working in the informal economy¹⁶². This migratory outcome led to increased border policing and the augmentation of anti-immigration notions within the United States. Thousands of people moved to cities like Mexico City, Tijuana, and Ciudad Juarez to work in industrial works, primarily in border cities to work in the maquiladoras, which will be discussed further in the next section. My father himself migrated to the United States during the 1990s due to lack of employment opportunities.

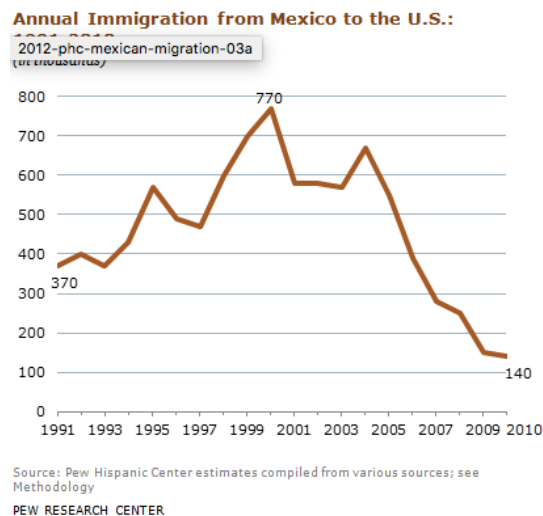


Figure 4: Annual Immigration from Mexico to the U.S.
Source: Pew Research Center

¹⁶¹ Watt, Peter, and Zepeda, Roberto. *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy*. Pg 124.

¹⁶² Ibid. Pg 123.

The second option for those further marginalized was the informal economy. Farmers who did stay in their lands but were unable to sustain agricultural production because of US competition saw the production of poppies and marijuana as a viable alternative. In other words, if farmers wanted to keep their land without having to sell it, they had to produce within the informal economy. Structural reforms failed to create economic growth and opportunities for many and thus people saw drug trafficking as an opportunity to generate wealth despite being illegal.

Another effect of NAFTA has been the further integration of Mexico's economy to that of the United States. As a result, free trade increased the number of Mexican goods transported to the US, and thus facilitating the transportation of drugs. Thousands of duty-free products enter the US through entrance points in the US-Mexico border. In 2006, Mexico exported 85%, \$212 billion worth, of its products to the United States. Related to the transport of Mexican exports is the fact that 90 percent of the cocaine that enters into the US does so through the US-Mexican border, primary through legal entries, unlike the narrative that president Trump has tried to depict¹⁶³.

The neoliberal free-market ideology of capital accumulation prioritized over the wellbeing of a society has also been embraced by organized crime. Organized crime and violence throughout Mexico are in part explained through the importance of wealth accumulation at all cost. Just as the neoliberal state uses their monopoly over the use of violence to protect the system, so do drug organizations who use violence as means to protect their assets. As has been noted, "the only actors allowed are individuals who are guided not by altruism, conscience or compassion, or even enlightened self-interest, but only by their own self-seeking benefit-maximizing proclivities"¹⁶⁴. The development of the neoliberal state through structural reforms and free trade created an open

¹⁶³ Ibid. Pg 120.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. Pg 80.

economic environment in which legality and illegality became blurred, the free market of narcotics flourished, and became one of the most profitable sectors for those in marginalized positions. As a consequence of the neoliberal state, empathy for human suffering or even wellbeing of society is placed aside for the pure purpose of capital accumulation. This is the case for both the capitalist elite who show no compassion for the wellbeing of workers and drug cartels who lack empathy for the large number of casualties for the purpose of power and wealth¹⁶⁵.

Interestingly enough, for the purpose of generating wealth, Mexican drug organizations helped the US government through the CIA in supplying weapons to guerrilla and opposition groups in Central American including Nicaragua and El Salvador. In exchange for supplying weapons, the US allowed Mexican cartels transport drugs into the United States. Drug cartels became increasingly powerful in Mexico by the free flow of drugs into the US and with the compliance of the US government. As best noted by Peter Watt and Roberto Zepeda, “Neoliberal capitalism was backed up by violence and the repression of opposition groups and had become dependent on the assistance of high-powered criminal organizations”¹⁶⁶.

As part of structural reforms including bank privatizations and deregulation, this created a system in which corruption fostered and accountability and transparency diminished. Large sums of illicit money generated from criminal organizations and drug cartels have landed in the international banking system. Money laundering by drug cartels has become prominent and even important for the viability of the world’s economic system. In 2008 when the international economic recession occurred, the United Nations acknowledged that money from drug organizations saved banks from bankruptcy. Money laundered through the banking system was the only liquid investment capital flowing through the system and thus helped prevent a greater

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Pg 80-81.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. Pg 96.

crisis for the banks and for the globalized economic system¹⁶⁷. Narco money has become so important that even banks like HSBC are willing to hide traces of money laundered into their own banking system.

The fracturing of the PRI's corporatist system shifted power relations between the state and criminal organizations. During the corporatist period, the state was able to have some control over drug carters, but now as they became more independent this power relation has flipped. Now drug organizations have become so powerful that they are easily able to manipulate politicians with drug money. Corruption between drug organizations and politicians in Mexico is the core of what political scientists call the Narco-State. Nowadays, drug organizations are powerful actors in the Mexican political arena to be able to influence politics and politicians to their own interest. Paradoxically, in conjunction with the War on Drugs that the Mexican government declared on drug organizations, high-ranking politicians cooperate with criminal organizations to allow their empires to flourish. Even presidents have become accomplices of this system. Most recently through the trial of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman in Brookings, New York, it was revealed that El Chapo had bribed former Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto with over \$10 million. The witnesses present also mentioned bribes given to former president Felipe Calderon¹⁶⁸.

Overall, neoliberal structural reforms and free trade has cultivated an environment that has facilitated the conditions necessary for the growth of the informal sector, organized crime, and drug organizations. By increasing economic hardships amongst the population, the informal sector and migration have become the two main viable options for people most affected by the consequences of neoliberalism. Social exclusion, lack of social solidarity, growing inequality, and extreme wealth polarization have come to be through NAFTA and other free trade and open market

¹⁶⁷ Syal, Rajeev. "Drug money saved banks in global crisis, claims UN advisor". The Guardian. Dec 2009.

¹⁶⁸ Brooks, David. "El Chapo' pagó sobornos a Enrique Peña y Felipe Calderón". La Jornada. Jan 2019.

policies. Drug cartels have thus become the gateway for many young men primarily in rural areas who are attracted to the easy money in regions where no other real alternatives are present. NAFTA has further helped organized crime by facilitating the transport of illegal drugs into the United States through the augmentation of trade exports from Mexico. Mexico now not only exports products made with cheap labor into the US, but now it also exports cheap labor and drugs.

Narco-trafficking has become a huge industry in Mexico, making narcos like El Chapo some of the richest men in the world. Competition between narcos for access to the drug market is in part to blame for the ongoing violence, but one must also take into consideration the role the US plays in Mexico's large number of homicides. The US's involvement in fighting narcotrafficking has fueled the murders throughout the country. Through plans like Operation Merida, the US has given the Mexican government large amounts of money and military aid to fight organized crime. Most of US weapons end up in the hands of drug cartels. When Mexico alongside the US began to target the heads of the Cartels, this created multiple factions that led to increased tensions between drug cartels thus an increase in death tolls. Because of its illegality, tensions between the cartels must also be dealt with illegal means such as the use of violence, as they cannot rely on the government. Cartels fight cartels and cartels fight off government forces. This ongoing cycle and War on Drugs have made Mexico one of the most violent countries in the Western Hemisphere. Neoliberal economic policies implemented by the elite to restore the power of economic elites have developed Mexico into a narco-state and into a violent environment in where lack of opportunities in society forces people to choose between migration and organized crime. This is the Mexico millions of Mexicans live in and the elite have done nothing but to fill their pockets with money.

Homicide rate

- 0.00 - 2.99
- 3.00 - 4.99
- 5.00 - 9.99
- 10.00 - 19.99
- 20.00 - 29.99
- >=30.00
- WHO estimates
- No data available

Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dashed lines represent undetermined boundaries. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Source: UNODC Homicide Statistics (2013).

Cheap Labor, Maquiladoras, and Femicides

90

even femicides. Neoliberalism along with patriarchy and the lack of jurisdiction has enabled the deaths of thousands of women without any repercussions. What is 'great' about globalization is that multinational corporations have a choice in operating where conditions for maximizing profits with the lowest possible cost, where the exploitation of the workers is best suited for their company. In a competitive economic system, countries compete with one another for FDI for economic development. Because in Mexico its competitive advantage is in cheap labor, the government has implemented structural reforms to attract the promised foreign investment.

First, structural reforms have decreased the power of labor unions through the deregulation of the economy and the removal of worker's rights. Under the neoliberal orthodoxy, these economic policies create an environment suited to attracting FDI. This investment will, therefore, help a country increase employment opportunity, increase GDP, and generate wealth for the state. Many of the protections that were guaranteed to workers have been removed in favor of corporations. Furthermore, the corporatist system during the nationalist period was fractured under neoliberalism and thus fragmented the centralization of organized labor unions and their power to bargaining with corporations and the government; the government would no longer act as the mediator between the business class and working class. Because of this, many of the employees working in the maquiladoras are forced into unregulated working conditions for the price of a small wage.

Poor economic conditions, primarily in Mexico's southern states have created an exodus of people leaving their homes to work in the maquiladoras in the northern states of Mexico. Ciudad, Juarez, Tijuana, Nogales, Nuevo Laredo have all become hubs for foreign companies and cheap labor. Maquiladoras have brought large multinational investors into northern Mexico. Electronics, car equipment, and home appliances, are all being produced with Mexico's cheap labor. More than

90 percent of factories in the Mexico-US border are owned by US corporations including “General Motors, General Electric, Zenith, Panasonic, W.R. Grace, Sunbeam-Oster, Carlisle Plastics, Sanyo, and AT&T”¹⁶⁹. Many are paid below the poverty line, keeping those working in the maquiladoras in a poverty trap. According to findings by the Juarez Civil Group, workers are paid between \$4-\$11 dollars a day¹⁷⁰ (LCSUN News). Though employees work in modern manufacturing plants, after work, they return to their homes most likely in shantytowns in the periphery of cities where they lack access to an adequate sewage system, potable water, and electricity. Furthermore, because of little to no regulations, workers of the maquiladoras are exposed to accidents, chemicals, and bad working conditions that could have potential risk for their health¹⁷¹.

There is the case of Rosa Moreno, whose hands had to be amputated after an incident occurred in a factory owned by the South Korean company LG Electronics. Rosa was placed in a machine which assembled flat-screen television. Even though she had reported to the manager that the machine was making a strange noise, the manager disregarded the report and Rosa continued working in the machine. After continuing to assemble televisions, the press suddenly fell in her hands, compressing them. Despite having a ton pressing down on her hands, she did all she could to stay conscious. She has heard multiple stories of workers fainting and the company covering up the incident. As Rosa noted, “the managers [could] just leave her anywhere they wanted; she could wake up in a dark alley or in the desert”¹⁷². The managers were very reluctant to take her to the hospital, knowing that in the hospital it would be mandatory of them to report the injury. Instead,

¹⁶⁹ Mexico's Maquiladoras: Abuses Against Women Workers. Human Rights Watch. 1996.

¹⁷⁰ Figueroa, Lorena. “Maquila Industry Keeps Workers In Poverty, Study Says” Sep 2016.

¹⁷¹ La Botz, Daniel. Manufacturing Poverty: The Maquiladorization of Mexico. *International Journal of Health Services* 24(3):403-8. 1994.

¹⁷² “Misery in the Maquiladoras”. *Harvard International Review*. March 2017.

they insisted that she be taken to the factory clinic. Without any help from the managers of the company, Rosa was taken to the hospital where her hands had to be amputated. The factory offered Rosa \$3,800 in compensation, less than a year's worth of work¹⁷³.

Despite knowing that there were issues with the machine, the managers and the company prioritized profits over the safety of their workers. Many companies go long ways to hide injury data to prevent having to pay more to Mexico's social security system. Workers are intimidated through threats of being fired, knowing that for many the factories are the only source of income. Because of this, there is an extreme underrepresentation of labor injuries. Furthermore, there are many anecdotes in where employees are denied the proper working gear, especially when working in dangerous environments¹⁷⁴.

Neoliberal policies were implemented under the premise that in addition to greater profits and economic growth, free trade agreements and structural reforms would improve working conditions. Free trade was to increase wages by incentivizing industrialization through foreign investments. In practice, the total opposite has occurred. Labor conditions are unregulated, wages have purposefully not improved, and people working in the maquilas are unable to escape the poverty trap. The only individuals who have benefited from free trade and neoliberal reforms have been the Mexican elite and multinational corporations.

Women have increasingly become the main source of labor in border factories. In many of the maquiladoras, they have become the majority. Despite becoming sources of employment for women, the lack of regulations available in the factories has created an unsafe environment primarily for women working in the maquiladoras and maquiladora cities like Juarez. For example, organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have reported on gender-based discrimination from

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

American based corporations in hiring practices. For women workers, it is mandatory they take pregnancy tests, urine exams, and answer sexual behavior question as to hire women least likely to get pregnant. This is because it becomes more cost efficient not having to pay for maternal expenses. Women who are pregnant or likely, according to the maquiladora, to become pregnant are denied employment. Human Rights Watch Women's Right's Project director states that "Sex discrimination is prohibited by Mexican and international human rights law. We are troubled that the U.S. and other corporations openly practice sex discrimination and that the Mexican government allows this discrimination to flourish unchecked"¹⁷⁵.

The other dark side of NAFTA and free trade agreements have been the relationship between the rise of maquiladoras and femicides in border cities like Juarez. A femicide is the killing of women for the bare fact of being born women. First, we must acknowledge that Latin America is a region of the world where patriarchy, machismo, sexism, and gender-based violence continue to be prominent within these societies. The film *Traspatio*, or Backyard, directed by Carlos Carrera provides an important analysis on the relationship between maquiladoras and gender-based violence. In the film, officer Blanc Bravo arrives in Ciudad Juarez to investigate a large number of female homicides. She is unable to get much help from the local police and thus begins to investigate on her own. Though at first, she believes it is a serial killer committing all the murders, she realizes that the death of these women digs deeper into the societal issue of patriarchy and sexism mingled with corporate greed and political corruption¹⁷⁶.

The film brings to light important factors to take into consideration when looking at the result of the rise of maquilas favored by NAFTA, free trade, and neoliberal reforms. In a sense, this is a story depicting the consequences of the development of the neoliberal state in Mexico,

¹⁷⁵ Mexico's Maquiladoras: Abuses Against Women Workers. Human Rights Watch. 1996.

¹⁷⁶ *Traspatio*. Directed by Carlos Carrera. Argos Comunicación. 2009 Film. DVD.

which have been described by this thesis. First, the film depicts the kinds of workers that maquilas attract: young rural women from the poor southern states of Mexico. Many of these women come from indigenous and or poor rural communities who have been directly hurt by NAFTA and government austerity programs. These women are unable to make a living through agricultural work and thus migrate to urban areas in order to find jobs and support their families¹⁷⁷.

The film speaks to the bigger issue of globalization and free trade agreements. In Mexico and throughout Latin America, femicides continue to occur because of corruption and impunity within the legal system that does not provide justice to women victims of gender-based violence. In border cities like Ciudad Juarez, the legal system's inability to give justice is intertwined with the need to attract FDI and multinational corporations. The government is enticed to remove tariffs, to remove barriers for companies, to remove regulations and workers' rights, all in the name of attracting investment. Multinational corporations find locations where conditions for them are best suitable in addition to cities that have "a good reputation". A multinational operating in a city known as the femicide capital of the world will bring negative attention and criticism to the company, thus decreasing the company's reputation and thus its sales. A city like Juarez is enticed to neglect and hide cases of femicides in order to prevent negative attention. As was noted by Peralta, one of the characters of the film, "the good thing about being a transnational [corporation]: when things get ugly, you vacate the premise and ciao! You're off to the other side of the world to find the same cheap labor, the same cheap proletariat"¹⁷⁸

In Ciudad Juarez, women are killed constantly because men know that they can get away with it. The legal system will not look into the cases or if they do, those who are found guilty are given light sentences. Women do not have rights in cities like Juarez because it is not favorable to

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

the government in bringing their cases to light. Reporting cases of femicides would scar multinationals, and thus also taking with them the investment and jobs they promised. The killing of women becomes normalized by a society where sex discriminations is quite prevalent. Between 1985 and 2014, more than 47,178 women have been victims of femicides in Mexico¹⁷⁹. One must also take into consideration the number of women who have been killed or disappeared and whose bodies have not been found. There are instances in where women disappear, but nobody reports the disappearances. Many of the women who migrate by themselves to border cities loose communication with family members. Women are sometimes abducted, raped, and then killed. Some are victims of domestic violence, and others are family members who take advantage of females. Blanca Bravo summarized the occurrence of the femicides in cities like Juarez:

There's domestic violence, a husband kills his wife because she didn't cook dinner, or an uncle who rapes his niece and makes sure she won't talk... Murder a woman in Juarez, throw her into the desert, and you have a license to kill. It'll be buried on a crime sheet because the cops won't investigate. Not thoroughly anyways. No one will be charged with anything that sticks and no judge will ever hand down a sentence¹⁸⁰.

Women themselves are scared to report cases of gender-based violence because there are untrusting of authorities and because there is a long history of officials not taking matters seriously. There are many loopholes in the judicial system that fail to create proper investigations into the cases reported and “some high-level officials of Chihuahua state and Ciudad Juarez have gone so far as to publicly blame the victims themselves for their fate, attributing it to their manner of dress,

¹⁷⁹ “Alternative Report on Violence against Women in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Ninth Periodic Report of Mexico”. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. June 2019.

¹⁸⁰ *Traspatio*. Directed by Carlos Carrera. Argos Comunicación. 2009 Film. DVD.

the place in which they worked, their conduct, the fact that they were walking alone, or parental neglect”¹⁸¹.

Despite being a signatory to the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women, the Mexican government gives priority to multinational corporations by removing any impediment to foreign investment, even if it means not providing justice to victims of gender-based violence. The government prefers to neglect and hide the high number of femicides to preserve the reputation of the city over the well-being of its citizens. In this matter, neoliberalism has developed a very materialistic society where wealth is placed above the well-being of the poor and the marginalized. The objective neoliberalism is to implement a neo-colonial society in which the only ones benefiting are the rich elite, both native and foreign, and the corrupt politicians.

On Health and Healthcare

One of the reforms prescribed by the World Bank was in the healthcare sector. According to the World Bank, these reforms would “introduce market competition for personal medical services, restrict the role of the state in public health actions, regulation, and planning, and to subsidize a package of essential healthcare services”¹⁸². The privatization of Mexico’s pension system began in 1995 with changes made to the IMSS, Mexico’s social security institute. By 1995, the pension system changed from one of pay-as-you-go to one managed by private entities. Because of this, it means that the “management of funds was transferred to large, private financial groups, while the state assumed the cost of transition (i.e, continued to pay the existing pensions and those of the workers who had started to contribute before the reform)¹⁸³. The World Bank also

¹⁸¹ “Alternative Report on Violence against Women in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico”.

¹⁸² Laurell Cristina, Asa. “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society”. Pg 254.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Pg 253.

pushed forward with the idea of privatizing state healthcare with the argument that it would increase productivity and introduce better healthcare services. This attempt failed as left-of-center opposition prevented this from occurring¹⁸⁴.

One of the consequences of neoliberalism and globalization has been the increasing market of fast food within Mexican society. According to the New York Times, “the surge in agricultural investment from the north modernized Mexican farming practices but it also displaced nearly five million people who worked on family farms. Many migrated to cities, adding to the ranks of those who rely on Western, processed food”¹⁸⁵. Traditional nourishments have been substituted for cheaper food options such as junk food. Within recent years, Mexico has become known as one of the most obese nations in the world; at one point it surpassed the United States. Health-related illness include ischemic heart disease and diabetes. Diabetes-related death rates (per 100,000) has increased from 46.3 in 2000 to 77.3 in 2012. Similarly, ischemic heart disease has risen from 43.5 to 67.3 in the same years¹⁸⁶. Obesity and illnesses related to malnutrition began to rise once free trade and free market policies were enacted, primarily through NAFTA. Open markets and currency devaluation fueled American investments in Mexico, including that of fast food chains and high-calorie food products. In 1980, 7% of the population was obese. By 2012, this number rose to 20.3 percent. The World Health Organization reports that in Mexico, diabetes claims the lives of 80,000 people per year. NAFTA was promoted by the elite as Mexico’s opportunity to join the developed world through modernization, but as has been noted, “the only way that Mexico became a ‘first world’ country was in terms of diet”¹⁸⁷. Overall, despite making food more

¹⁸⁴Homedes, Nurla and Ugalde, Antonio. “Twenty-Five Years of Convoluting Health Reforms in Mexico”. PLOS Medicine. Sep 2019. Pg 4.

¹⁸⁵ Jacobs, Andrew and Richtel, Matt. “A Nasty, Nafta-Related Surprise: Mexico’s Soaring Obesity”. The New York Times. Dec. 2017.

¹⁸⁶ Laurell Cristina, Asa. “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society”. Pg 260.

¹⁸⁷ Jacobs, Andrew and Richtel, Matt. “A Nasty, Nafta-Related Surprise: Mexico’s Soaring Obesity”.

accessible to people, NAFTA and structural adjustments have facilitated the availability of foods low in nutrition in a country with an already malnourished population. As a consequence of free trade, “diabetes touches most households, and locals seem more enamored by processed food and soda than the fruits and vegetables that grow all around them”¹⁸⁸. “The ideology of individualism, power, and consumerism has a damaging influence that tends to destroy social values such as solidarity, humanism, and respect for human life. This ideology turns particularly toxic in the absence of the possibility of getting a decent job or access to education” in addition to “ruthless extractivism that devastated nature and people”¹⁸⁹

The Persistence of Neoliberalism

As describes in the previous chapter, neoliberalism and the PRI continued to rule in Mexico during the 80s and 90s, but as the economy of Mexico worsened, the legitimacy of the PRI shrunk as well. The year 2000 became a historical year for Mexico. For the first time in 71 years, the PRI lost the presidential elections, passing on the baton to Vicente Fox and the PAN. At least in Mexico, there seems to be a connection between neoliberal structural reforms and the want for political change. To what extent are neoliberal policies the cause of increase democracy in Latin America, and for this thesis more importantly Mexico? How is neoliberalism related to the end of the PRI’s 71 year-rule and Mexico’s “democratic opening”?

One of the arguments of neoliberal orthodoxy is that neoliberal reforms also increase democratization. Neoliberals state that neoliberalism paves the way for democratization; they argue that democracy and free markets go hand in hand. This, of course, is far from the truth. Research and data show that neoliberalism actually creates more unequal societies and excludes people from political participation. As Noam Chomsky argues, neoliberalism undermines and

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Laurell Cristina, Asa. “Three Decades of Neoliberalism in Mexico: The Destruction of Society”. Pg 261.

destroys the mechanism in which ordinary people can participate in politics. The neoliberal projects create a society where political engagement is weakened. Part of this thesis is to understand the consequences not only helped AMLO win the presidency, but more importantly the reasons why 2018 was important for political participation and political change. By no means do I argue that neoliberalism creates more democratic societies. This is a false statement, but through this thesis, I do seek to understand the correlation between neoliberalism and political change and mobilization. I instead argue that neoliberal grievances, not neoliberalism itself, creates democratizing forces within a fractured society to demand for political change. Neoliberal structural reforms increase material hardships and create economic grievances within the population (increase inequality, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, low wages, etc.). These grievances thus develop resistance and demands for change and democratization.

Under this circumstance, we can begin to analyze the demand for contemporary political demands for change within Mexican society, first in the year 2000. There is the misconception that because neoliberalism persisted for so long, that protests and democratic participation in opposition to neoliberal were minimal. But in fact, since the 1980s there has been political opposition to neoliberal reforms. This opposition has developed through the coalition of indigenous groups, labor unions, NGO's, community organization, and the middle class. This organization developed to "change the politics and economy of Mexico with the aim of increasing citizen participation, working sometimes individually and sometimes in coalitions, operating both inside and outside of conventional political channels"¹⁹⁰. Many of these groups showed solidarity with one another including issues such as indigenous and labor rights but overall the common

¹⁹⁰ Shefter, Jon. "Globalization and Democracy in Mexico". Penn State University Press. Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Vol. 87, No. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 2004). Pg 66.

agenda was the push for democratization. By working together, they weakened the state's ability to neutralize protests and opposition movements as it has done in the past.

The middle class has always played an important role in social mobilizations, and in Mexico that was not the exception. The middle class primarily used NGO's to organize on issues based on democratization and human rights. Out of the middle class who participated, 70 percent were between the age of 21-39. 77 percent had received the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, and others were academics or coming from professional backgrounds. Eventually, the middle class began to use place pressured in the legislative and in the electoral process to accomplish end goals. Organizations began focusing on electoral campaigns. The PRD became an important opposition player during the 1988 presidential election. As has been mentioned, Cuauhtémoc Cardenas received much political support in the 1988 election, and there is evidence showing that he would have won the presidential election if it was not for the "computer malfunction" manufactured by the PRI as a tactic of electoral fraud. Unfortunately, the PRI's unwillingness to give up power to a left-of-center political party is part of the explanation for the loss of Cardenas¹⁹¹.

One of the most infamous outcries against neoliberal reforms in Mexico was that of the Zapatistas in Chiapas. On the day NAFTA was enacted, January 1st 1994, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) protested through a peaceful armed rebellion by seizing small towns in Chiapas. The Mexican government reacted by sending in troops into the region but because of international observation, the government was forced to negotiate with the indigenous communities. The Zapatistas were primarily protesting the continues implementation of neoliberal policies including the privatization of the ejidos and NAFTA itself. The indigenous communities

¹⁹¹ Shefter, Jon. "Globalization and Democracy in Mexico".

in Chiapas knew that pro-market policies would be detrimental not only to indigenous communities themselves, but also to the wellbeing of the environment.

Moving forward with the 2000 election, it seems that the PRI knew that its legitimacy was fractured. The PRD under Cuauhtémoc Cardenas and leftist movements continued with political mobilization but unlike the PAN, the PRI repressed the PRD more than any other political party. This is due to the opposition of the PRD in the economic policies being implanted by the PRI. The PRD was the major opposition to neoliberal reforms. It was previously mentioned that Cardenas split from the PRI for that reason. On the other hand, the PAN was made up of the business elite and also favored neoliberal reforms. Unlike the PAN, the “PRD suffered more direct repression, reposting the loss of over 250 militants to repression during the Salinas presidency”¹⁹². Mobilization continued on and the PRI realized that political change was inevitable. It seems to be that the PRI was more comfortable in losing power to the business-friendly PAN than to the economic nationalist and leftist PRD. If the PAN was to win the presidency, one can conclude that the PRI would keep peace in mind knowing the same open market economic policies implanted during the 80s and 90s would be preserved under the PAN. If the PRD had a chance of winning, the PRI would worry of a possible shift in economic agenda, frightening FDI.

The election of Vicente Fox in 2000 is still a mystery in the context of anti-neoliberal sentiments throughout Latin America. In the rest of Latin America, the populace reacted by electing left-of-center government as a response to anti-neoliberalism. In Mexico, the electorate decided to use their political power to elect a right-wing politician who favored the business elite and neoliberal orthodoxy. Inherently enough, people affiliated with the poor economic policies to the PRI, not the neoliberal economic policies. To this day, there lacks to be an understanding of

¹⁹² Shefter, Jon. “Globalization and Democracy in Mexico”. Pg 69.

why Mexicans would elect a president that favors the same economic politics the PRI implemented during the 80s and 90s. There are two possible explanations for this paradox. One possible explanation is that Vicente Fox and the PAN was seen the viable political candidate to challenge the PRI. In this presidential election, the people sought to vote strategically rather than ideologically¹⁹³. Because the electorate prioritized the removal of the PRI from power than to halt the country's neoliberal path, many voted for Vicente Fox. Many called this "el voto útil", the useful vote. People believed Fox would be the candidate to overthrow the PRI because he knew how to speak to the people. Political ideology is not enough if the message is not being successfully broadcasted to the population. Fox's presidential campaign used a new kind of political advertising, mimicking that of the commercialized propaganda used in the United States. Research shows that his political publicity was very successful in depicting a story of the need for a democratic transition. Many fell for this narrative, thus voted for Fox instead of Cardenas¹⁹⁴.

The second explanations for the victory of the PAN and the failure of the PRD in both presidential and congressional elections is because of the association between the PRD's nationalism and the PRI. One must remember that from 1929-1982, the PRI represented itself as the party of the revolution. It had a monopoly over nationalistic political and economic sentiments rooted in Mexico's revolutionary ideals. Beginning in 1982, the PRI rejected the party's economic nationalism in favor of neoliberal orthodoxy. On the other hand, the PRD developed as a repose to neoliberal acceptance, and thus adopted the economic nationalism left behind by the PRI. Unfortunate for the PRD, the legacy of the PRI's "perfect dictatorship" was still in the back of people's minds during the 2000 election. Though the PRD offered real change as an alternative to

¹⁹³ Hellman Adler, Judith. "Opting for Fox: Why—and How—Mexicans Went for the PAN". NACLA. Sep 2007.

¹⁹⁴ Benavente Borjas, Adriana. "La Campaña Presidencial de Vicente Fox y el Modelo Propagandista de Comunicación Política". América Latina Hoy [En línea], 33 (2003): 101-121. Web. 12 mar. 2019.

neoliberal orthodoxy, the people did not visualize the real change but rather saw it as the continuation of the PRI's old political system, and as an extension, its economic nationalism¹⁹⁵.

Under this context, neoliberalism persisted in Mexico during the 21st century surrounded by countries that turned to the left (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Venezuela). Unfortunately for Mexico, the US had a stake in making sure no leftist government came to power and dismantle the neoliberal state that had been established in the 1980s. As Porfirio Diaz's mentioned: "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States". When President Vicente Fox came to power, the United States cheered that democracy had finally arrived in Mexico. In reality, one could argue that they were happier that the neoliberal agenda would not be disrupted. In summary, the persistence of neoliberal governments into the 21st century is partly explained by the voter's prioritization of removing the PRI from power, even if it means voting for a right-wing government. For many, it seems Fox's slogan of "commitment for change" was enough to get people on board with his political victory because "these people had no need to support Fox's right-wing agenda in order to call for a "strategic vote" in his favor"¹⁹⁶

The 2006 presidential elections in Mexico became an opportunity for change in Mexican politics. The Pink Tide was reaching its peak during the mid-2000s with leaders like Lula da Silva, Nestor Kirchner, and Hugo Chavez as leaders of some of the most import countries in Latin America. In 2006, AMLO first ran for president under the PRD. This presidential election was one of the most contested in Mexican electoral history. Early polling revealed that AMLO was far ahead from Felipe Calderon, but as the polls began to close, votes being counted began to place Calderon in front of AMLO. By the time the polls closed the IFE, Mexico's Federal Electorate

¹⁹⁵ Palma, Esperanza. El PRD y las elecciones del 2000. El Cotidiano. 2001.

¹⁹⁶ Hellman Adler, Judith. "Opting for Fox: Why—and How—Mexicans Went for the PAN".

Institute declared Calderon the official winner despite winning by a very small margin (.58% as shown in Figure 7) and reports of irregularities¹⁹⁷.

OFFICIAL RESULTS, MEXICO 2006 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS		
	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Felipe Calderón (PAN)	14,916,927	35.89
Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (PRD-PT-Convergencia)	14,683,096	35.33
Roberto Madrazo (PRI-PVEM)	9,237,000	22.23
Roberto Campa (Nueva Alianza)	397,550	0.96
Patricia Mercado (Alternativa)	1,124,280	2.71
Write-in candidates	298,204	0.72
Valid votes	40,657,057	97.83
Annulled votes	900,373	2.17
TOTAL Votes	41,557,430	100

Source: Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación, Dictamen relativo al cómputo final de la elección de Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, declaración de validez de la elección y de presidente electo.

Figure 7: Official Results of Presidential Elections in Mexico 2006.

Source: IFE

Even though AMLO petitioned for a recount of the votes, the IFE rejected the petition. Later, the electoral authorities agreed to recount 9% of the ballots but did not report the findings to the public. Instead, they released information about the counted ballots without explanation. This information is easily available online¹⁹⁸. Mass Irregularities of the elections included buying of votes, votes being found in dumpsters, and people voting more than once. Furthermore, the IFE in an analysis found that only PAN observers were present in 2,366 voting polls. Critics note that the IFE did not do enough to make sure fair elections¹⁹⁹. When the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) used the released data of recounted ballots, the data showed there was high evidence that Calderon's margin of victory had vanished, placing into question the results²⁰⁰. Millions of people went out to protests in support of AMLO and demanding for a recount and fair

¹⁹⁷ Weisbrot, Mark. "Irregularities Reveal Mexico's Election Far From Fair". The Guardian. July 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Collins, Chuck and Holland, Joshua. "Evidence of Election Fraud Grows in Mexico". Global Policy Forum. Aug 2006.

²⁰⁰ Weisbrot, Mark. "Irregularities Reveal Mexico's Election Far From Fair".

elections. In Mexico City alone, between one and two million people alone went out to protest in the streets²⁰¹²⁰². US and Mexican outlets were quick to declare Calderon president of Mexico in the context of reported irregularities in a very tight presidential race. After important data showing the irregularities was released, no news outlet was interested publishing the reports. It was until The Guardian in 2012 published an opinion feature, in where it was revealed that the data indeed showed signs of fraud²⁰³.

There is a high likelihood that AMLO would have won the presidential elections if it was not for the electoral fraud and irregularities that the Mexican right is known for. In a country with a long history of electoral fraud, it would not be surprising to find out that the PAN and right-wing factions in Mexico threatened to lose power altered the elections as to factor the PAN. But even the PRI presidential candidate Roberto Madrazo came out criticizing the IFE and the PAN. He noted that "If the IFE (the federal electoral body) had taken the decision of making a recount as demanded by [López Obrador's party] ballot by ballot, I knew it could have been a favorable result for López Obrador, but that was not my fight to fight"²⁰⁴. Not long after the presidential election, Felipe Calderon declares the War on Drugs. Critics argue that this was a political tactic to move attention away from the electoral fraud.

Not surprisingly once again, irregularities in the 2012 presidential election questioned the election of Enrique Peña Nieto. The PRI for this election ran on a campaign promising that the PRI had changed for good. With the help of Mexico's television giant Televisa, Peña Nieto ran a campaign promising to create peace and stability after the War on Drugs implemented under the

²⁰¹"Más de Un Millón de Personas Apoyan a López Obrador En La Plaza Del Zócalo En México". El Pais. July 2006.

²⁰² Tuckman, Jo. "Failed Mexican Presidential Candidate Sets Up Protest Camp". The Guardian. Aug 2006.

²⁰³ Weisbrot, Mark. "Irregularities Reveal Mexico's Election Far From Fair".

²⁰⁴ Melimopoulos, Elizabeth. "Mexico President-elect AMLO lost 2006 elections due to 'rigging'". Al Jazeera. Oct 2018.

administration of Felipe Calderon drastically increased violence and homicides throughout Mexico. The film *La Dictadura Perfecta* seeks to criticize Televisa's huge power in influencing political feelings and manipulate information in favor of Peña Nieto. Televisa and Azteca have a monopoly over Mexico's media, which is ultimately watch by almost all Mexicans throughout the country. Having the power to favor a presidential candidate while demonizing its opposition has large consequences for the political popularity of the opposition. Time and time again, Televisa and Azteca have demonized AMLO, claiming that if he is to be elected, he will turn Mexico into another Venezuela. Being so close to the United States, the Mexican media were successful in creating fear of AMLO and left-wing politics in 2012. As has been noted,

Mexico's rightwing media are in a stronger position to boost an effective scare campaign. From Greece to Ireland to Mexico, that is how the elite maintains its grip on power in failing economies – not by offering hope, however tenuous, of a better future, but by spreading the fear that any attempt at a positive alternative will bring Armageddon²⁰⁵

Center right and right-wing political parties dominated Mexican politics since the departure of Lazaro Cárdenas in 1940. As has been analyzed in this section, several factors have contributed to the persistence of center-right and right-wing presidents who favor free trade and neoliberal orthodoxy. In the 2000 election, the electorate voted for Vicente Fox as the best alternative to remove the PRI from power. In 2006, electoral fraud and mass irregularities in the election took the presidential election away from AMLO. Finally, in 2012, media in Mexico played the most influence in demonizing left-wing populism and comparing it to Venezuela. Moreover, Mexico's closeness to the United States has also meant more US support to the political right.

The media has also played a role in the way neoliberalism is seen in Mexico. In fact, media has favored neoliberals in Mexico by promoting free trade and open markets. It acts as propaganda

²⁰⁵ Weisbrot, Mark. "Irregularities Reveal Mexico's Election Far From Fair".

for those in power which also explains why anti-neoliberal protests have not been as prominent in Mexico compared to countries like Argentina or Venezuela²⁰⁶. When looking at LAPOP data, survey data reveals that there continues to be large support for foreign investment in Mexico. From 1995-1970, of those surveyed more than fifty-percent states that that foreign investment has been beneficial for the economic development of the country, as shown in LAPOP Question 1:

²⁰⁶ Hellman Adler, Judith. "Structural Adjustment in Mexico and The Dog That Didn't Bark.

LAPOP Question 1

"Considera Ud. que la inversión extranjera, en general, es beneficiosa o es perjudicial para el desarrollo económico del país?"

	[%484%] México			
	1995	1998	2016	2017
Como es inversión extranjera para desarrollo económico del país				
Beneficiosa	58%	56%	59%	51%
Perjudicial	27%	35%	21%	14%
No contesta	2%	2%	4%	0%
No sabe	14%	7%	16%	34%
(N)	1.204	1.200	1.200	1.200

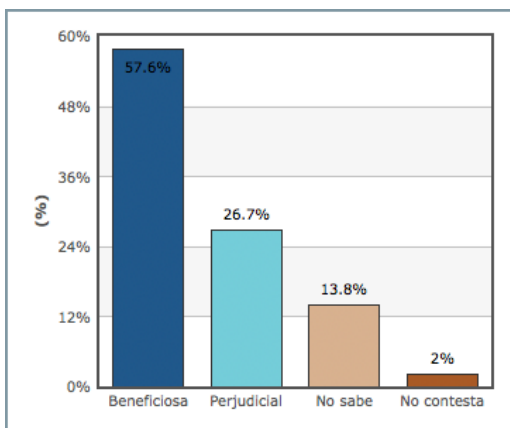


Table 1. 1995

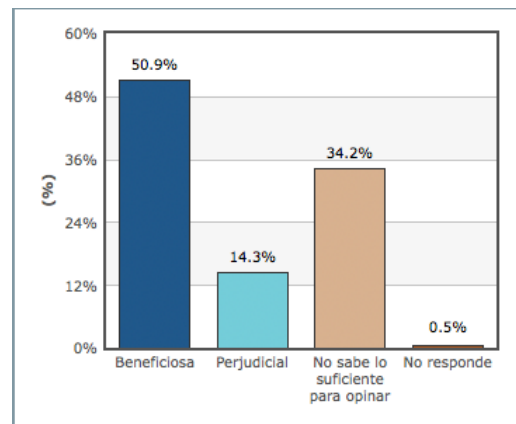


Table 2: 2017

LAPOP Question 2

"¿Está ud. muy de acuerdo, de acuerdo, en desacuerdo o muy en desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones?:

"El Sistema de Mercado es el unico Sistema con el que el pais puede llegar a ser desarrollado"

	[%484%] México							
	2003	2004	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
La economía de mercado es el único sistema con el que (país) puede llegar a ser desarrollado								
Muy de acuerdo	13%	19%	15%	8%	8%	8%	13%	12%
De acuerdo	52%	53%	58%	44%	49%	40%	43%	44%
En desacuerdo	28%	18%	22%	27%	27%	28%	22%	26%
Muy en desacuerdo	5%	5%	2%	7%	5%	6%	7%	6%
No contesta	3%	5%	3%	2%	12%	6%	2%	2%
No sabe	-	-	-	13%	-	12%	14%	10%
(N)	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200

	[%484%] México		
	2013	2016	2017
La economía de mercado es el único sistema con el que (país) puede llegar a ser desarrollado			
Muy de acuerdo	10%	13%	9%
De acuerdo	48%	27%	57%
En desacuerdo	27%	31%	26%
Muy en desacuerdo	8%	20%	3%
No contesta	1%	-	-
No sabe	6%	9%	4%
(N)	1.200	1.200	1.200

When asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree strongly disagree, or don't know, on whether a free market economy is the only economic system in which a country can develop, the most popular answer was "agree" from 2003 to 2017. The only exception was in 2016; for the 2016 survey, the most common response was "disagree". Throughout the data based on 14 years, (2003-2017), only 18-31 percent of respondents noted they disagreed with the statement (LAPOP Question 2). The finding of these two surveys is alarming when looking at the consequences the formation of the neoliberal state (inequality, poverty, migration, organized crime, etc.). But as Judith Adler Hellman argues,

Mexicans have little access to the information they would need to form their own opinion; official propaganda is overwhelming; the few free unions are constantly being crushed; Congress is totally subordinate to the executive. The Mexican government has given NAFTA negotiations the equivalent status of a national security affair, keeping information almost a state secret, preventing any meaningful public debate, maintaining a close vigilance on its opponents, and transmitting only general propaganda messages to the public²⁰⁷

Just like the media was an accomplice in the election of Enrique Peña Nieto, the media has for many years been used by the political elite to deprive the common citizen of obtaining information that could be used to criticize the government for their political agenda. Though issues like femicides and violence is displayed by the news, media outlets are careful in hiding the connection between neoliberal policies and their consequences.

Neoliberal Resistance

Regardless of the large support for free markets and foreign investment in LAPOP surveys, Mexicans have not remained quiet about neoliberal policies and issues related to neoliberalism. We saw many actors in society including the middle class, working class, indigenous communities

²⁰⁷ Hellman Adler, Judith. "Structural Adjustment in Mexico and The Dog That Didn't Bark. Pg 7.

like the Zapatistas, the poor, come together to object to the implantation of the technocrat's neoliberal agenda and of the consequences of they have had in Mexican society. Moving forward to the 21st century, many people especially farmers and the working class rose up through various protests in the 2000s against NAFTA and other neoliberal related grievances. Moving forward, I give my own analysis of more contemporary political protest related to directly and indirectly to neoliberalism.

Citizens use protests, which are articulated in different forms, as a means of mobilization and to express their discontent with the state apparatus's failure to respond to people's demands. To get a sense of people's discontent with neoliberal policies, and to see whether neoliberalism is still relevant in the present, I have gathered information into the amounts of protests occurring in Mexico within a time range and analyze their linkage to neoliberalism. This research is modeled after the Initiative for Policy Dialogue and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York World Protests 2006-2013 research document²⁰⁸. The methodology for this paper duplicates the one used in the World Protests 2006-2013, using Protest Event Analysis (PEA). Using major international and national news sources, with the help of Google, I obtained information on the number of protests that occurred in Mexico since 2010. Below I provide a table demonstrating the number of protests that have occurred in Mexico since 2010. Data provided includes the date the protests occurred, its location, what people are protesting or what they demand, the method of protest, the targets of the protests if there were any repressions (deaths, arrests, etc.), and if protests were related or linked to neoliberalism. With certain events leading to numerous protests including the disappearance of the 43 students in Ayotzinapa and the gasolinazo, only the major protests were recorded because of the large amounts of protests throughout the country.

²⁰⁸ Ortiz, Isabel, Sara L. Burke, Mohamed Berrada, and Hernan Cortes. "World Protests 2006-2013." SSRN Electronic Journal (n.d.): n. pag. Web.

Annex 1: List of Major Protest 2010-2017

Dates	Location	Grievance/Demand	Method of Protest	Opponents	Repression	Related to Neoliberalism ?
3/10/10	Mexico City	Demand resignation of president; Femicides in Juarez	Organized Demonstrations	President of Mexico	N/A	Femicides
3/28/10	Monterrey	Protests over increased violence in the city	Demonstrations/ Rally	Violence/ Cartels	N/A	Drug Cartel Violence
4/23/10	Mexico City	Protests over government's shutdown of power company	Hunger Strike	Government	N/A	No
6/2/10	Mexico City	Demand for increase security; children abduction	Seize of buses and road blockade	Government; kidnappings	Arrests	Cartel Violence
6/11/10	Oaxaca City	Education demands	Seize of university building	University	N/A	No
6/27/10	Mexico City	Corruption; Fraud	Attack on Rally	Elections	N/A	No
10/23/10	Oaxaca City	Assassination of indigenous leader	Marches	Assassins	N/A	Violence
11/22/10	Off Gulf Coast	Climate change, environment degradation	Protests	United Nations, government	N/A	No
12/9/10	Apatzingan	Pro-drug cartel	Marches	Local Authorities	N/A	Cartels
12/17/10	Ciudad Juarez	Violence, judicial injustice	Protest/ blockade of governor's office	Local government	N/A	Violence
12/18/10	Ciudad Juarez	Violence	Demonstrations	Interior department, police	N/A	Violence
12/23/10	Ciudad de Juarez	Femicides	Marches	Government	N/A	Femicides
4/7/11	Nationwide	Drug-related Violence	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
5/5/11	Cuernavaca	Dissatisfaction with government strategy in the war on drugs, lack of freedoms, corruption	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
6/1/11	Nationwide	Drug-related Violence	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
8/19/11	Acapulco	Drug-related Violence	Closure of gas stations	Government	N/A	Violence
8/29/11	Monterrey	Drug-related Violence	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
9/1/11	Acapulco	Drug-related Violence; extortions	Strikes	Government; cartels	N/A	Cartels
9/20/11	Acapulco	School safety	Marches	Government; cartels	N/A	Cartels
4/19/12	Cheran	Judicial injustice	Kidnapping of police officers	Local government	N/A	No
5/11/12	Ixtlahuacan	Drug-related Violence; disappearances	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence

5/18/12	Mexico City	Politics	Marches	PRI	N/A	No
5/23/12	Mexico City	Politics	Marches	PRI	N/A	No
5/23/12	Guadalajara	Drug-related Violence; crime	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
6/10/12	Mexico City	Alleged election fraud, media bias	Marches	PRI	N/A	No
7/7/12	Mexico City	Politics; fraud; corruption	Marches	PRI	N/A	No
7/22/12	Mexico City	Politics; fraud; corruption	Marches	PRI	N/A	No
7/27/12	Mexico City	Politics; fraud; corruption; television bias	Marches	PRI; Televisa	N/A	No
10/4/12	Michoacán	Education	Seize of teaching colleges	Teaching colleges	N/A	No
10/17/12	Michoacán	Demand release of protesters	March and road block	Local government	N/A	No
12/1/12	Mexico City	Politics; elections	Marches	Government	Arrests	No
12/4/12	Mexico City	Presidential Inauguration; demand for release of protesters	Marches	Government	Arrests	No
12/21/12	Ocosingo; Palenque; San Cristobal de las Casas	Pro Zapatistas; indigenous rights; anti-NAFTA	Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
1/16/13	Mexico City	Pollution, environmental degradation	Nudity	Government; pollution	N/A	No
2/15/13	Guerrero State	Educational Reform	Marches; strikes	Government	N/A	Yes
4/22/13	Mexico City	Protesting expulsion of students	Trespassing	UNAM	N/A	No
4/24/13	Chilpancingo	Education Reform	Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
4/28/13	Xalapa	Protests for end to the attacks on the press	Marches	Government	N/A	No
6/13/13	Mexico City	Education Reform	Marches	Government	7 deaths	Yes
8/19/13	Mexico City	Education Reform	Marches	Government	N/A	No
9/9/13	Mexico City	Tax Reform	Marches	Government; PRI	N/A	Yes
10/1/13	Mexico City	Education Reform	Marches; blockade of main road going to airport	Government	N/A	Yes
10/3/13	Mexico City	Education Reform; honoring victims of Tlatelolco Massacre	Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
12/7/13	Arcelia	Police Brutality	Marches	Police	N/A	No
1/1/14	Yauatepec	Kidnappings; drug-related violence	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
1/10/14	Veracruz	Pro-Cartels; vigilante groups	Protests	Vigilante Groups	N/A	Violence
3/2/14	Culiacan	Pro-cartels; release of El Chapo	Marches	Government	N/A	Cartels
3/22/14	Mexico City	Internet Censorship	Protests	Government	N/A	No

5/20/14	Ciudad Victoria	Peace	Marches	N/A	N/A	No
6/6/14	Isla Holbox	Environmental Degradation; habitat loss	Marches	Government	N/A	No
6/10/14	Mexico City	Bann on the use of animals in circus leads to protests	Protests	Government	N/A	No
7/1/14	Mexico City	Car Ban	Protests	Government	N/A	No
8/4/14	Mexico City	Release of Vigilantes	Protests	Government	N/A	Cartels
8/21/14	Cancun	Water rates	Protests	Government	Arrests	No
10/2/14	Acapulco	Protests over disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
10/13/14	Nationwide	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches; blockade of police headquarters	Government; police	N/A	Violence
11/4/14	Tamaulipas	Violence	Marches	Local government	N/A	No
11/5-8/14	Mexico City	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government; police	N/A	Violence
11/10/14	Nationwide	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government; police	N/A	Violence
11/25/14	Mexico City	Selling of German firearms to the Mexican police force	Gathering in front of German embassy	Police	N/A	No
1/2/15	Medellin	Death of Journalists	Protests	Government	N/A	No
1/12/15	Iguala	Disappearances	Parents Storm military base and demand for their children to be found	Police	N/A	Violence
1/30/15	Iguala	Labor Protests	Protests	Government	N/A	No
2/18/15	Tamaulipas	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
2/25/15	Acapulco	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Protests	Government	N/A	Violence
2/26/15	Mexico City	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
3/16/15	Mexico City	Protests against the firing of Carmen Aristegui	Marches	Government	N/A	No
3/18/15	San Quintin	Farmers protesting Low Wages	Protests	Government	N/A	Unknown
3/20/15	Mexico City	Bus drivers protesting targeting of buses and bus drivers by gangs	Protests	Gangs	N/A	No
4/16/15	Mexico City	Selling in the streets	Protests	Government	N/A	No
4/18/15	Mexico City	Humans Rights violations against immigrants	Marches	Government; organized crime; violence	N/A	No
4/24/15	San Quintin	Better Pay for farmers	Protests	Government	N/A	Unknown
5/9/15	Chilapa	Protests over vigilante	Protest	Vigilante	N/A	Cartels

		groups		Groups		
6/1/15	Oaxaca City	Education Reform	Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
6/7/15	Chilpancingo	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
7/29/15	Mexico City	Anti-Uber	Protesters destroyed Uber cars in the airport	Uber	N/A	No
11/1/15	Cancun	Femicides	Protests	Government; cartels	N/A	Violence
12/8/15	Chiapas	Education Reform	Protests	Government	N/A	Yes
1/11/16	Ciudad Juarez	Labor Reform, Worker's Rights, Union rights	Protests	Multinational Corporations; Transpacific Partnership; Maquiladoras	N/A	Yes
1/29/16	Mexico City	Anti Free Trade, protests the TPP,	Protests	Free Trade; TPP	N/A	Yes
2/17/16	Ciudad Juarez	Sexual Harassment, Working conditions,	Strikes, hunger strikes, marches	Maquiladoras; Multinational Corporations	N/A	Yes
3/4/16	Oaxaca City	Education Reform	Marches, demonstrations	Government	N/A	Yes
3/9/16	Guadalajara	Ubers	Blockade of roads, destruction of cars	Uber	N/A	Unknown
3/25/16	Mexico City	Femicides	Performances, marches, demonstrations	Government; violence	N/A	Violence
4/11/16	Michoacán	Violence, military intervention	Riots	Military; government	N/A	Violence
4/15/16	Nationwide	Education Reform	Strikes	Government	N/A	Yes
4/13/16	Mexico City	Indigenous rights, workers rights	Demonstrations	Multinational Corporations; Canadian Mines	N/A	Yes
4/26/16	Nationwide	Women's Rights; femicides	Strikes, riots, demonstrations	Government; violence	N/A	Violence
4/27/16	Mexico City	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Demonstrations	Government	N/A	Violence
5/21/16	Mexico City	Monsanto, GMOs	Demonstrations	Monsanto; Multinational Corporations	N/A	Yes
5/27/16	Mexico City	Education Reform	Mass demonstrations and Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
6/22/16	Mexico City	Public Health; anti-privatization; improved working conditions	Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
06-07/2016	Oaxaca	Education Reform	Strikes, riots, violence	Government	N/A	Yes
8/23/16	Mexico City	Education Reform	Demonstrations	Government	N/A	Yes
8/27/16	Cuernavaca	LGBTQ rights	Demonstrations	Machismo	N/A	No
9/1/16	Mexico City	Anti-Trump; Anti-Peña Nieto	Demonstrations	Trump; Peña Nieto;	N/A	No

				government		
9/12/16	Mexico City	Anti-Gay	Marches	LGBTQ community	N/A	No
9/15/16	Mexico City	Enrique Peña Nieto; corruption	Demonstrations, Marches	Government;	N/A	No
9/27/16	Mexico City	Disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa	Marches	Government	N/A	Violence
10/23/16	Nationwide	Public Health; anti-privatization; improved working conditions	Marches	Government	N/A	Yes
11/12/16	Mexico City	Enrique Peña Nieto; corruption	Demonstrations, Marches	Government;	N/A	No
11/13/16	Veracruz	Death of a Mexican Priest; Violence	Violent Demonstrations	Government	N/A	Violence
12/27/16	Nationwide	Gas Prices; Gasolinazo	Demonstrations; marches	Government	N/A	Yes
12/30/16	Mexico City	Gas Prices; Gasolinazo	Demonstrations; marches	Government	N/A	Yes
1/17	Nationwide	Gas Prices; Gasolinazo	Demonstrations; marches	Government	N/A	Yes
1/27/17	Nationwide	Anti-Trump; Globalism	Boycotts	Government; Globalism; Trump	N/A	Yes
2/1/17	Mexico City	Gas Prices; Gasolinazo	Demonstrations; marches	Government	N/A	Yes
2/7/17	Nationwide	Gas Prices; Gasolinazo	Demonstrations; marches	Government	N/A	Yes
2/12/17	Nationwide	Anti-Trump	Marches	Trump	N/A	No
2/18/17	Ciudad Juarez	Anti-Trump	Demonstrations	Trump	N/A	No
8/15/17	Mexico City	NAFTA	Demonstrations; marches	Free Trade; Government	N/A	No

News Sources:

Associated Press (AP)	Agence France Presse (AFP)
Telesur	BBC
NBC	Fox News
CNN	The New Yorker
The Guardian	USA Today
Towards Freedom	Huffington Post
EL Mundo	El Universal
Mexico Daily News	ABC
Al Jazeera	La Prensa
El Diario de Juarez	

The findings of this research show that the main concerns within Mexican society include violence, food and fuel prices, working conditions, structural reforms, women's rights, and the efficiency of the government. In addition, numerous protests have arisen from several events that have occurred, including the disappearance of forty-three students in Ayotzinapa, energy reform, seen in the rise of gas prices leading to the gasolinazo, educational reform, femicides primarily in Ciudad Juarez, and the ongoing violence throughout the country relating to narco-trafficking.

Looking at the direct and indirect implication of neoliberal policies recently put into place by the Peña Nieto administration and protests relating to structural reforms instigated in 2013 has been a large reason for the unpopularity and discontent. The unpopularity of these policies that have been embedded in society is largely from the education and energy sectors, which seek to increase competition and augment foreign direct investment²⁰⁹. Protests began in 2013 when president Enrique Peña Nieto introduced his plan of structural reform in education and energy.

The education reform enacted by the Mexican government decreases the power of teacher unions and gives more power to the state on how to implement education policies. The government argues that exams will be given to teachers to evaluate a teacher's qualifications by an independent commission and that the test was implemented in order to make sure students are receiving a quality education. But as teachers have stated, they are not in opposition of teacher evaluations, but the standardization of the evaluations which lacks to take into consideration the diversity in state resources especially to undernourished regions of the country. Many teachers, primarily those from poor rural regions, have begun to protest about the education reform because the schools they teach at do not have the resources needed to supply students with quality education²¹⁰. They argue

²⁰⁹ "Mexico: The Oaxaca Teachers' Long Revolt Against Neoliberalism." *Toward Freedom*. N.p., 22 Sept. 2016. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

²¹⁰ Mexican Teachers Set Strike On First Day of School Over Neoliberal Education Reform". YouTube.

the goal is not to provide the teachers with better resources for better education, but rather a tactic by the government to fire teachers and give way to privatization; the education reform is a precedent step for plans to privatize Mexico's education system. The education reform also has provisions that allow for foreign direct investment into Mexico's education system²¹¹. Because the World Bank and the OECD have pushed educational reform policies, which are linked to the Washington Consensus, teachers and allies believe these reforms will lead to the privatization of the education system^{212,213}. According to John M. Ackerman,

“This reform is not about education, it is not about improving textbooks, extending class hours or renovating schools facilities, it is about firing and punishing teachers who do not fit the neoliberal standards of the law. It tries to get rid of the revolutionary tradition that has persisted in education since the early 1920s,”²¹⁴

Most of the protests, primarily through marches, occur in southern states like Oaxaca where poverty levels are higher than in other parts of the country. Though the teachers ask for their demands to be met through negotiations, the government has been reluctant to do so.

Furthermore, teachers, especially from more impoverished and indigenous communities, argue that the education reforms seek to undermine the role that teachers play in those communities. Since the Mexican Revolution, there has been a strong tradition of teachers in rural communities teaching students moral values, social and political activism, and leadership skills. These rural schools are known as “normales”, and have a long history of creating political activists but at the same time being undermined by the Mexican government. The 43 students kidnapped and disappeared in conjunction of local authorities and organized crime, were students in a

²¹¹ "Mexico: The Oaxaca Teachers' Long Revolt Against Neoliberalism."

²¹² Arroyo, Luis. "Neoliberal Teaching Reform Irrelevant to Mexico Needs: Analyst." *TeleSUR*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

²¹³ "Mexico: The Oaxaca Teachers' Long Revolt Against Neoliberalism."

²¹⁴ Arroyo, Luis. "Neoliberal Teaching Reform Irrelevant to Mexico Needs: Analyst."

“normal” school studying to be teachers²¹⁵. By removing rural teachers, it is an attack against indigenous communities and against their long history of social activism in opposition of government oppression and authoritarianism²¹⁶. Teachers, indigenous communities, and even the Zapatistas were in solidarity with one another protesting this subtle neoliberal reform that would disproportionately hurt poor and indigenous regions of the country.

AMLO has been one of the most critical politicians against Peña Nieto’s educational reform. He also sees that this neoliberal reform seeks to privatize the education system and decrease the amount spend in education by the government. As he has noted, “The main problem isn’t the quality of education, but the problem of access”²¹⁷. For him, it is ironic that the neoliberal theory presumes that there should be no state interference in economics, or even in providing social services like education, but when large banks go bankrupt, the government is the first one to bail them out.

The energy reform has also been a means of discontent amongst Mexican people. Amongst the 2013 structural reforms, plans for the privatization of the 70-year state-owned oil company, PEMEX, was announced. A large portion of PEMEX will be open to foreign company investment. As part of the energy reform, Mexico’s energy distributing system, the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), will also be open to foreign investment. The neoliberal policies favoring foreign interest over national sovereignty has been named *entreguismo*, “hand over-ism”, by many critics.²¹⁸ As in January 2017, gasoline prices in Mexico rose by twenty percent, which is related to the privatization of PEMEX. With Mexicans spending more of their income on gasoline than

²¹⁵ “Student Life Goes On At Mexico's Ayotzinapa Normal School”. Al Jazeera. YouTube.

²¹⁶ “Mexican Teachers Set Strike On First Day of School Over Neoliberal Education Reform”. YouTube.

²¹⁷ López Obrador, Andrés Manuel., and Uhlmann, Natascha. *A New Hope for Mexico : Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump's* . Pg 179.

²¹⁸ "Energy Privatized: The Ultimate Neoliberal Triumph." *NACLA*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

people in fifty-nine other countries, people rose up and began protesting the rise in oil prices across the country.²¹⁹ This movement became known as el gasolinazo. Mexicans are not only worried about having to pay more money for gasoline, but fear that the increase in the price of gas will also have an effect on the price of consumer goods, such as food. This is because businesses would have to accommodate the price of goods due to the increased costs of transportation.²²⁰ The gasolinazo, as it came to be known as, gained popularity throughout the country. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, played a huge role in making the gasolinazo a large movement. Hashtags like #gasolinazo were propagated all over social media since its beginning in January of 2017 and continue to be an event of conversation.



Source: "MAPA. Protestas Contra El Gasolinazo En El País." El Universal. N.p., 1 Mar. 2017. Web. 07 Mar. 2017.

²¹⁹ Cattán, Nacha. "'Gasolinazo' Infuriates Mexico and Taints Flagship Energy Reform." *Bloomberg.com*. Bloomberg, 29 Dec. 2016. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

²²⁰ Schatzberg, Simon. "Gasolinazo Protests Flare as Petrol Price Surges 20%." *Mexico | Al Jazeera*. Al Jazeera, 06 Jan. 2017. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

While neoliberal structural reforms in Mexico have led to much discontent, a large portion of the protest in my research dealt with femicides, violence, disappearances, and narco-trafficking. As mentioned before, neoliberal policies in Mexico are linked to mass violence related to drug trafficking. While looking through the content of the news sources, a very large percentage of the news published deals with drug-related violence. In addition, the majority of the protests in the chart above are related to people protesting the mass amounts of violence that have flooded the country. It is no doubt that people's discontent with the government comes from the continuation of drug-related violence, indirectly interconnected to neoliberalism, and neoliberal policies implemented by Enrique Peña Nieto through his structural reform. As mentioned by poet Javier Sicilia, the government,

Has treated this country as if it were its private property, and has corrupted the moral skeleton of the nation, and the moral skeleton of political life. Now we're living with the consequences: governments at the beck and call of organized crime or of that other kind of crime, which is money and transnational corporations [...]. It is simply the same old story of the corruption of the ruling class that has never understood what democracy means, what government means.²²¹

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the development of Mexico into a neoliberal state has had severe long-lasting consequences within Mexican society. NAFTA and free trade agreements have facilitated the development of the Narco-State and thus the increase in power of drug cartels. Many of the poor and those marginalized by these policies have seen organized crime as one of the only viable options left for living a decent life. Lack of opportunities thus has either forced people to migrate or to find jobs in organized crime. NAFTA can also be blamed for the worsening of labor conditions especially in the Maquiladoras in where women make a large portion of the labor force.

²²¹ "2006-2016: Mexico in Movement." *MAGIS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Mar. 2017.

Because there are incentivized to hide records that would agitate multinational, the legal system in maquila cities like Juarez lack to enforce gender-based violence and has created an environment in where men can physically abuse of women and even kill them knowing that there won't be any repercussions. Furthermore, free trade agreements have facilitated the rise of health-related illnesses due to the importations of America's fast food culture.

Thus, I have argued that as a consequence of the implementation of neoliberal policies, anti-neoliberal grievances have derived. These grievances have been the catalyst for political mobilization with political change as the ultimate goal. Though the political change may not occur, nonetheless grievances against neoliberalism either creates a need to mobilize and protest against such policies or as it will be further discussed in the next chapter, can be used by politicians to rally people in support of change. Regardless, neoliberal grievances energize the need for political change. 2000 was an important year in mobilizing for a democratic transition. Indeed, opposition to the PRI and its failure to achieve economic growth lead to people to vote for Vicente Fox. Though Mexico hoped that with Fox in power, the country's situation would improve. In fact, things remained the same and when enough people wanted political change in the 2006 election, electoral fraud and irregularities in the election declared Felipe Calderon president. During the 2012 election, the collaboration between the PRI and Mexico's largest media outlets created fear amongst the populace of a Hugo Chavez being elected in Mexico. Enrique Peña Nieto was declared president of Mexico, and neoliberal policies continued to be enacted during his presidency.

Neoliberalism has persisted for 35 years since it began in 1983. Despite persistence, several groups have protested neoliberal reforms and free trade agreements through these 35 years. More current demonstrations (2010-2017) show that there continues to be an aversion to issues indirectly linked to neoliberalism (femicides, homicides and organized crime) and neoliberal reforms

implemented under the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto (education reforms, semi-privatization of PEMEX and the rise of oil prices). Under this context of increased neoliberal grievances within Mexican society, the next chapter will analyze the 2018 presidential election, AMLO's political discourse, and his ability to mobilize for political change through the developed grievances against the PRI and to an extension the PRI.

Chapter 5: Neoliberal Grievances, AMLO, and the 2018 Mexican Elections

After five months of being elected as Mexico's 58th president, AMLO gave his inauguration speech on December 1st inside the Congress of the Union addressing the nation by promising, "I will not let you down". During this historic moment in Mexican history, AMLO stood up in front of Mexico's politicians, world, leaders, and the Mexican people to declare the fourth transformation: "Today is not the start of a new government, it's the start of a change in political regime... which will be profound and radical. Because it will end corruption and impunity which will allow for the rebirth of Mexico". With Enrique Peña Nieto awkwardly sitting by his side, AMLO spoke out against three decades of the neoliberal state which as he declared, is the root cause Mexico's of problems. He spoke out against the failure of the neoliberal model and corrupt politicians who have taken advantage of their political positions for personal gains. AMLO's inauguration speech embodies his political aspirations: a rejection of the old political system, a rejection of neoliberalism, to an extent a return to the roots and ideals of the Mexican Revolution.

Throughout the past chapters, I have summarized the outcomes of the Mexican Revolution, which sought to create a more inclusive society through protections and attention given to marginalized communities including workers, peasants, and indigenous communities. Over time, those ideals were betrayed by the small political elite and eventually instead of protecting the needs of the people, began to protect the interest of the small ruling class. Neoliberalism was, in fact, the tool that facilitated this process. It disproportionately hurt the poor, marginalized even more communities, and developed detrimental consequences which have transformed Mexico into one of the most corrupt and most violent countries in the Western Hemisphere and in the world. One can now begin to comprehend why AMLO's political discourse has become so popular in all

sectors of society. This chapter will bring together all previous chapters to make sense of AMLO's political discourse in an environment in where the social, political, and economic conditions developed by the neoliberal state were favorable to AMLO's victory.

Who is Andrés Manuel López Obrador?

After running for president three times, Andrés Manuel López Obrador became Mexico's first leftist-populist president since Lazaro Cardenas. Though his political ideology has changed over time to cater to the reality of politics, he continues to be a politician who knows how to relate with the common person. As an outsider, his history of political activism has helped him see politics from the perspective of ordinary Mexicans and thus was successful in appealing to their needs. Bigotry and xenophobia have become dangerous characterizations of populist trends in Europe, the US, and Latin America. What is peculiar to AMLO and Mexico is that populism did not mean t bigotry and xenophobia, it meant uniting people together against authoritarian and corrupt modes of government that have infested Mexico. AMLO promises to create radical transformation for a more egalitarian society.

AMLO was born to a middle-class family in the Mexican state of Tabasco. The state-owned enterprise PEMEX, allowed Tabasco to become an important region for the oil industry. AMLO's father himself worked for PEMEX and thus was able to provide AMLO with a decent standard of living. He became involved in politics and political activism during his 20s, first by becoming a representative of the National Indigenous Institute. Under this position, AMLO worked closely and lived with indigenous communities in Tabasco. This experience transformed AMLO's views on poverty and inequality as he lived with some of the poorest communities in Mexico²²².

²²² "The Rise of Mexico's Andrés Manuel López Obrador". Now This News. Nov 2018. Video.

His political activism would later take him to join the PRI. During this period, the PRI had a monopoly over political activism and politics in general. If one wanted to become involved in politics or run for office, the PRI was the only viable option. During his years in the PRI, he became representative of Tabasco, and negotiating between PEMEX and workers to demand for better working conditions and higher salaries. The 1980s was a fracturing period for the PRI. The rise of the technocrats in the presidency and high-ranking offices, and neoliberal reforms favoring open markets instead of state-led economic action, disillusioned many who were seeing the PRI's political ideology shifting away from its nationalistic origins. AMLO became one of the politicians, who in 1993 left the PRI to create a center-left political party. He joined Cuauhtémoc Cardenas in the creation of the National Democratic Front, later becoming the PRD. AMLO ran for governor of Tabasco two times, in 1988 and in 1994. In both elections, he lost, but this was no impediment to his political ambitions²²³.

Despite the failure in the elections, he continued on with political activism in the late 90s demanding democratic change and environmental protection. His activism during the 90s boosted his public profile and in the year 2000, he ran for mayor of Mexico City and won. While in office, AMLO began to provide stipends for senior citizens, increase low-cost housing for low-income citizens, decreased the cost of transportation through subsidies, and built new school throughout Mexico City, including the city's first state university, La Universidad Autonoma de la Ciudad de Mexico. His public policies were popular amongst citizens of Mexico City. He was able to keep up an annual rating of 70% during his 5 years in office²²⁴.

His political agenda and advances he put forward in Mexico City gained him high popular support in the 2006 election. He ran a campaign promoting cutting the salaries of government

²²³ Ibid

²²⁴ Ibid

officials and increase the corporate tax to increase revenues for social programs²²⁵. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the 2006 presidential elections were contested because of electoral fraud and irregularities in the polls. There is evidence, including that from the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), showing that there is statistical significance of electoral fraud in the 2006 elections. Both in 2006 and 2012, media portrayals of AMLO as a second Hugo Chavez, and large opposition from the business community damaged his possibility of winning the presidency. Nonetheless, again after the failure to be elected in 2006 and 2012, AMLO continued rallying people across the country. He traveled to every state and most municipalities, both urban and rural areas, for political support. Many have noted that AMLO “spoke with the same energy under a tree in front of 10 people as he did in the full Zocalo”²²⁶.

The Birth of MORENA

After the defeat of AMLO in 2012, ideological differences within the leadership of the PRD generated divisions. In 2014, Cuauhtémoc Cardenas, founder of the PRD, resigned from the party due to “profound differences regarding our views on how to face the internal crisis affecting the party”²²⁷. First, the reputation of the PRD was damaged after the incident of the 43 students going missing in the city of Iguala. At the time, the mayor of the city belonged to the PRD. Because of the accomplice between the local government and police forces in the disappearance, the governor of the state of Guerrero, also part of the PRD, was forced to resign²²⁸. Second, the leadership of the PRD to increase its political presence aligned itself with the PRI and the PAN under the Pact for Mexico. With an alliance between the three major political parties, the pact now

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ Melimopoulos, Elizabeth. “Mexico President-elect AMLO lost 2006 elections due to 'rigging'”.

²²⁷ “Mexican Leftist Leader Resigns over Party Credibility”. Tele Sur. Nov 2014.

²²⁸ Ibid

controlled over 90 percent of the seats in Congress and pushed forward with the neoliberal structural reforms, both in energy and education, promoted by Peña Nieto²²⁹

Cardenas and AMLO, felt that the PRD was increasingly moving to the right with the support of Peña Nieto's structural reforms. From being a political movement within the PRD, MORENA became an official political party in 2014 founded by AMLO himself. According to the country's electoral law, in order to become an official political party, it must have at least 220,000 supporters across the country. To maintain its registration, it must win at least 3% of the votes. Now there are currently ten political parties, six conservatives, and six leaning left²³⁰. MORENA considers itself a nationalist left-wing political party in addition to being a social movement, which seeks political, economic, social, and cultural change within Mexican society while defending human rights, liberty, justice, and dignity for all²³¹. In MORENA's Declaration of Principles, it argues that its fight to change the political regime of injustice, oligarchy, corruption, and authoritarianism that has governed Mexico. For too long the neoliberal state has deprived people of opportunities including decent employment and education, in favor of the elite. Below is MORENA's Declaration of Principles, which aims to describe the platform of its political party:

MORENA's Declaration of Principles

1. A change in moral and ethical consciousness based on solidarity and respect to difference and diversity.
2. For the elimination of corruption at all levels of society: public, private, and social, and for a transparent and democratic government.
3. For the use of democracy for the service of the public, not for authoritarianism and private benefits.
4. For preserving national sovereignty, respect to the constitution, and the end of the privatization of Mexico's natural resources. Mexico must work closely with countries in the Global South, promote decolonization, and non-intervention.

²²⁹ Schatzberg, Simon. "The Rinse of Morena". Jacobin. July 2016.

²³⁰ La Botz, Daniel. "Manufacturing Poverty: The Maquiladorization of Mexico".

²³¹ Vela, Laura. "Que Es Morena y Cuando Se Fundo?" Dinero en Imagen. July 2018.

5. For the recognition of Mexico as a pluricultural nation, respect of indigenous communities, and protection of our biodiversity.
6. For the democratization of Mexico's media and means of communication, including universal access to the internet.
7. For a new economic model which rejects neoliberalism, protects our natural resources, and implements a system of development for the wellbeing of the population as a whole. The state should be responsible for Mexico's economic development, and protection and wellbeing of its people
8. For the implementation of policies in favor of social rights and against inequality which is promised by the constitution including decent wages, right to an education, to a job, rights for children, means of cultural and intellectual engagement, and rights for marginalized groups and communities
9. For the respect of human rights and against violence for Mexicans, immigrants, and refugees, and against all forms of discrimination.
10. For the fight of Mexico's food sovereignty, protection of the fields, sustainable agriculture, agricultural workers, and against the exploitation of the nation's natural resources²³².

The party's first victories were tried in the Mexico City legislature and winning the plurality.

Moving forward to the 2015 mid-term elections, this was the first election in which the political party participated in a national election. Morena received 8.39% of the national vote, winning 35 seats and putting it behind the PRI, PAN, and PRD²³³. In the 2016 state governor election, it seemed the PRI and the PRD were entering a state of crisis. First, the PRI lost the governorships of 5 states, including three states the PRI had never lost before: Tamaulipas, Veracruz, and Chihuahua²³⁴. In addition to this, where the PRI did win, the party did not win by much more than 50%, and the PAN did favorably well in the election²³⁵. Because of the departure of MORENA from the PRD, in order to continue existing, it has formed a pact with the PAN, eventually supporting PAN candidates. Though this favored the PAN, it was detrimental for the electoral win of the PRD. This unusual coalition continued on into the 2018 presidential election²³⁶.

²³² "Declaración de Principios de Morena". Morena.

²³³ Instituto Nacional Electoral. Votos Nacionales de Elecciones del 2015.

²³⁴ Schatzberg, Simon. "The Rinse of Morena". Jacobin.

²³⁵ Agren, David, Mexico Elections: Ruling Party Headed For Stinging Defeat In State Elections. The Guardian. June 2006.

²³⁶ Schatzberg, Simon. "The Rinse of Morena". Jacobin

Pathway to The Election

The context in which the 2018 elections were held is important when trying to understand the victory of AMLO. Poverty and inequality, organized crime and violence, and corruption have become rampant under the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto. He campaigned in 2012 promising new change, even though many of his changes had already been proposed by the center-left including AMLO. Amongst what he promised includes a country in the path of becoming a first world country, returning peace and stability in a country devastated by the War on Drugs, and decreasing wealth inequality. Some of these issues, according to him, could only be solved through economic growth. But despite his promises, nothing has changed in Mexican society. Poverty and inequality continue to rise, more and more people continue to die because of violence related to organized crime and insecurity, and corruption still runs in every level of government.

Peña Nieto made a statement to the Mexican people noting that "In today's Mexico, we can no longer accept the situation of poverty and hunger that much of our population is living through"²³⁷. In 2013, he implemented the National Crusade Against Hunger campaign. Though it seeks to create better food distribution methods, many critics argue that the program does not encourage healthy habits and it does not tackle the main cause of hunger and poverty in Mexico: neoliberal reforms. Unfortunately, with the entrance of Mexico into the global economy, it lost its food dependency. Before the implementation of NAFTA, Mexico only imported about \$1.8 billion in food. Now it imports \$24 billion, which "amounts to approximately 80% of Mexico's rice, 95% of its soybeans, 40% of its corn, 33% of its beans, and 56% of its wheat coming from imports, a significant increase from the previous decade"²³⁸. Beginning the 1980s, real wages have decreased by 50% and have continued to drop ever since. According to NACLA, "Thus far it seems [that the National

²³⁷ Rueda, Manuel. "Peña Nieto Makes Big Promises to Mexico". ABC News. Dec 2012.

²³⁸ Ochoa, Enrique. "The Crusade Against Hunger and the Persistence of Poverty". NACLA. Apr 2014.

Crusade Against Hunger campaign] to be a more aggressive version of traditional neoliberal social programs that seek to co-opt critics while avoiding deeper structural changes and continuing to exclude workers and campesinos from the discussion”²³⁹.

Currently about half of the population lives in poverty. In 2014, about 55.3 million people lived below Mexico’s poverty line. This includes 45.5 percent of the population and two million more since Peña Nieto became president in 2012. As seen in Figure 8, poverty concentrates in Mexico’s southern state of Michoacán, Guerrero, Puebla, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Campeche, which are regions of the country most populated by indigenous communities. Indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities are the most marginalized and ignored by the government. It’s no surprise that the majority of people who immigrate are from these states, which tend to lack more opportunities including employment and a decent education, compared to other regions of the country. According to CONEVAL, an institution in Mexico which measures poverty “the percentage of those with income below the line of well-being, in other words those who don’t make enough money to buy the basic food basket, has increased from 51.6 percent to 53.2 percent,”²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Ibid

²⁴⁰ “Poverty in Mexico Has Increased Since Peña Nieto Took Office”. Telesur. July 2015.

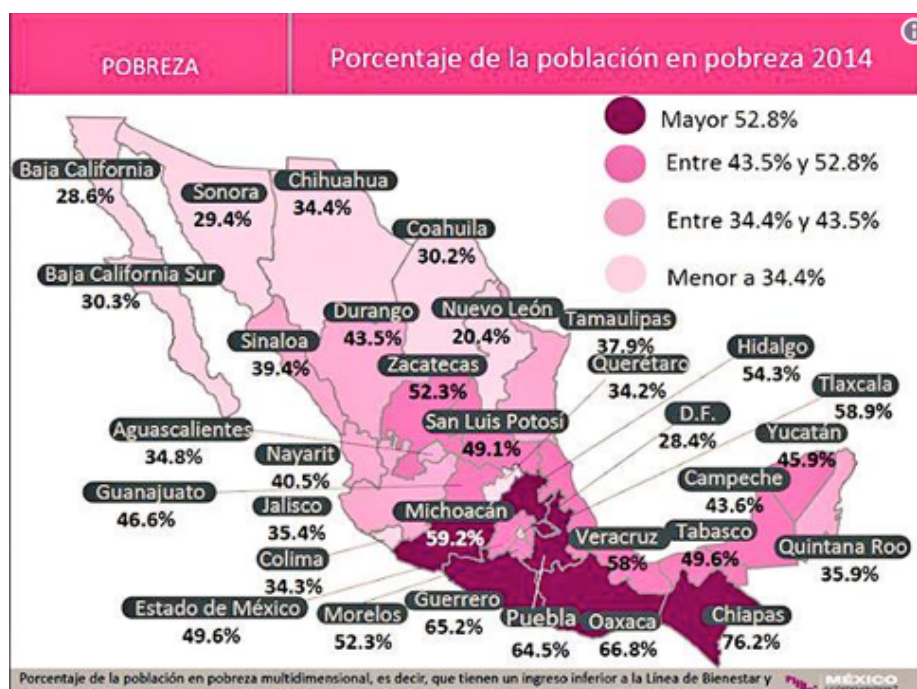


Figure 8: Percentage Living in Poverty By State 2014
Source: Telesur²⁴¹

According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, in Mexico there are about 21.2 million children living in poverty, 4.7 million live in extreme poverty. While one of the campaign promises made by Enrique Peña Nieto was to eradicate poverty, millions of people continue to live in undernourished conditions. Furthermore, funds that are meant to fulfill that campaign promise have been allocated to campaign finds and personal pockets due to corruption²⁴².

AMLO has also spoken out against these injustices and conditions in which Mexican currently live. According to the World Bank, there are 60 million Mexicans who live and poverty, and 23.3 million live in extreme poverty. This makes Mexico one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and one of the most unequal in the world. (38 percent of indigenous peoples live in extreme poverty). Four million people live in houses with dirt floors, 9.7 million people don’t have a sanitation system, 10 million people don’t have access to potable water, 28 million

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

people experience hunger and malnutrition. Additionally, 40 percent of Mexicans 15 year or older lack basic education, and only 29.1 percent of Mexicans have a higher education²⁴³

The issue with poverty and income inequality in Mexico is that people are kept in a poverty trap due to neoliberal reforms that favor foreign investors and multinationals. Mexico has one of the lowest minimum wages in all of Latin America, contending with the minimum wage of Haiti, Nicaragua, and Bolivia. Furthermore, studies have shown that CEOs in Mexico make 121 times more than their workers, the highest gap in wage in Latin America. According to the Latin American Faculty of social sciences, “There has been no in-depth effort to tackle the causes of the poverty that comes from the poor distribution of income, and the concentration of wealth and of capital in general. The approach is to attack the final effects, one of which is wages”²⁴⁴. The Wealth-X consultancy has also shown an increase of billionaires in Mexico. The number has risen from 22 to 27²⁴⁵.

Insecurity and violence in Mexico have also become rampant, making one of the most violent countries in the Western Hemisphere. Violence has become rampant throughout the country with 33,341 recorded murders in 2018. Under the presidency of Peña Nieto, homicides rose by 40 %²⁴⁶. He came to office with his main promise of moving away from militarization tactics used by his predecessor and reduce the escalating violence which began in 2006. More than 120,000 homicides were recorded during the presidency of Felipe Calderon. Peña Nieto sought to radically decrease these numbers but, the opposite occurred. The sexennial of Peña Nieto was characterized by a continuous rise in homicide rates year after year. He left the presidency the year Mexico had the highest homicide rates during Mexico’s Drug on War: 2018. In addition to the homicides recorded, there are about 37,000 people who are still missing since the

²⁴³ López Obrador, Andrés Manuel., and Uhlmann, Natascha. *A New Hope for Mexico : Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump’s Wall* .

²⁴⁴ Godoy, Emilio. “Inequality in Mexico Is All About Wages”. Inter Pres Service.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ “Murders in Mexico Rise By a Third In 2018 To New Record”. Reuters. Jan 2019.

war began. There continue to be many clandestine graves which have not been sufficiently investigated. In addition, many of those who are kidnapped by corrupt security forces or organized crime come from poor regions of southern Mexico or are migrants from Central American who have little to no access to family members back home. Both the administration of Calderon and Peña Nieto have been criticized for human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, torture, and forced disappearances, including that of the 43 students in Ayotzinapa in 2014²⁴⁷. In 2016, the Open Society Foundation published a report noting that Mexican federal forces and drug cartels during the presidency of Felipe Calderon and Enrique Peña Nieto have perpetrated crimes against humanity on civilians, and the federal government is to blame for impunity, downplaying acts of violence committed by state actors and criminal organizations ²⁴⁸.

Mexico's security apparatus and judicial institutions have failed to provide security as a common good. The social contract in Mexico is broken. According to John Locke, we as humans have come together to and created a social contract in order to create a sovereign, a government that protects our interests and provides security as a public good. Thus a government is ought to provide institutions which protect our security. In Mexico, this contract has been broken. The Mexican government hands failed to create institutions that make us feel secure. Instead, many have taken matters into their own hands. If one has the money to do so, private security firm services are used as a means of protection. In cities like Monterrey, one can drastically see the contrast between the rich and the poor. On one side of the wall are the wealthy and middle-class families living in a gated community, in the other live the poor where the state fails to reach²⁴⁹. If one does not have the economic means, many create vigilante groups, or autodefensas. In autodefensas, community individuals themselves taken on arms and protect the community instead of

²⁴⁷ Lee, Brianna and Renwick, Danielle and Cara, Rocio. "Mexico's Drug War". Council on Foreign Relations. Jan 2019.

²⁴⁸ Undeniable Atrocities: Confronting Crimes Against Humanity in Mexico. Open Society Justice Initiative. 2016.

²⁴⁹ Fisher, Max and Taub Amanda. "'The Social Contract Is Broken': Inequality Becomes Deadly in Mexico". The New York Times. Sep 2017.

relying on corrupt police officials. In many places, especially in rural communities there lacks state presence. In other regions, the state may be there but it fails to act as an institution to protect the people. Overall, one can see the deterioration in people's trust in the government and its ability to provide security and justice.

The Institute for Economic and Peace is a Think Tank that focuses on creating matrices that quantify the economic cost of violence through the analysis of positive peace, that is the absence of violence. For five year now The Institute for Economic and Peace has released its report on the Mexico Peace Index. This report “analyses the dynamics of violence in Mexico and the strengths and weaknesses of the attitudes, institutions and structures, known as Positive Peace” while “estimating the impact of violence on the Mexican economy” and “provides strong quantitative evidence to aid in the development of policies to create a more peaceful society”²⁵⁰.

The following data derives from the finding reported by the Mexico Peace Index 2018 Report. The report has found that there is a feedback loop in Mexico that has trapped the country into a cycle of violence. The relationship between corruption, rule of law, and organized crime have made it difficult to escape this trap. As the report itself state, “ Violence undermines trust, while deteriorations in trust can also contribute to violence”²⁵¹. Because many crimes in Mexico go unpunished, the population loses trust in the government and justice institutions. Knowing that crimes will go unpunished, encourages some to take advantage of and commit crimes and acts of violence. There is also a perceived correlation between crime and corruption. When crime increases, individual perception of corruption also increases, while trust in state institutions decrease. This information is true for both crimes related to organized crime and those that are not related. For example, the data reports that there is a statistical significance between domestic violence and sexual assaults, violent assaults, and robbery. In other words, there is a relationship between

²⁵⁰ Mexico Peace Index 2018. Institute for Economics and Peace. 2018.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

these two variables. As crimes committed by organized crime increase, other types of crimes increase as well. This is because of the mistrust in institutions and the lack of legal justice for victims of crimes²⁵².

According to the report, violence in 2017 has costed the country 4.72 trillion pesos or the equivalent of \$249 US dollars, an increase of 15% from the previous year (Figure 9). This amount is equivalent to 21% of Mexico's GDP. Comparing this to the amount the government spends on social services, this amount was eight times higher than what Mexico spends on healthcare and seven times higher than what it spends on education. If violence in Mexico was to be reduced by 10%, this would equate to almost the amount it costs to pay for the country's public health system. The report also reveals that Mexico only spends 1% of its GDP in its security apparatuses and justice system, in a country infested with violence and organized crime²⁵³.

**The economic impact of violence in 2017,
billion constant 2017 pesos**

Total economic losses including lost opportunity resulting from violence amounted to 4.72 trillion pesos in 2017.

INDICATOR	DIRECT	INDIRECT	MULTIPLIER EFFECT	TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VIOLENCE
Homicide	189.5	1,803.80	189.50	2,182.80
Violent Crime	173.1	1,558.80	173.10	1,905.00
Organized Crime	1.9	14.9	1.90	18.70
Fear		79.1	-	79.10
Incarceration		2.2	-	2.20
Firearms	8.3	-	8.30	16.60
Private security	12.5	-	12.50	25.00
Military spending	99.1	-	99.10	198.20
Domestic security spending	44.5	-	44.50	89.00
Justice system spending	102.9	-	102.90	205.80
	631.8	3,458.80	631.80	4,722.40

Figure 9: Economic Impact of Violence 2017.

Source: Institute for Economics & Peace

The Institute for Economics & Peace uses eight pillars that compose a Positive Peace Index. These include a well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, free flow of information, good relations with neighbors, high levels of human capital, acceptance of the rights of others, low levels of

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

corruption, and sound business environment. The report describes that Mexico's three pillars which are the weakest include well-functioning, low levels of corruption, the and free flow of information. In order to create a more peaceful society, these three pillars need to be improved as "efforts to improve some pillars without improving others can have counterproductive consequences"²⁵⁴. For example, 82% of the population distrust information distributed by the government (Figure 9), only 18% of the population trusts Mexico's public security with 60% perceiving it as corrupt, only 13 percent of the population is aware of any action taken by the government to tackle corruption, only 14 percent have knowledge on what action the government has taken to tackle narco-trafficking, and Mexico has the highest impunity rate in the Western Hemisphere. Additionally, Mexico has become of the most dangerous places for journalists, being compared to countries like Iraq and Syria. Just in 2017, 69 media professionals were murdered in Mexico alone, which go unpunished by the justice system. Not only are journalists in a dangerous environment, but they are also threatened by not only criminal organizations but also corrupt government officials²⁵⁵.

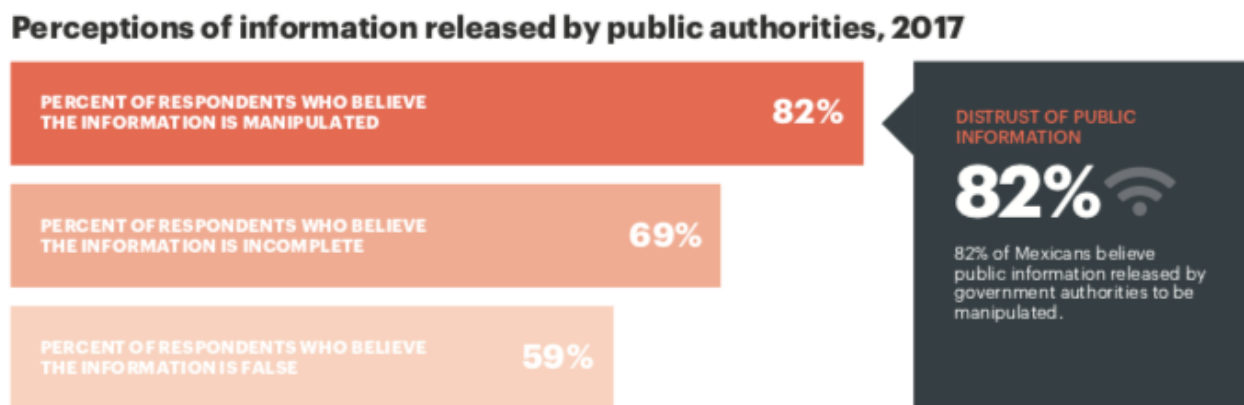


Figure 10: Perception of Information Released by Public Authorities
 Source: Institute for Economics & Peace

²⁵⁴ Ibid

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

Since the War on Drugs began under the administration of Felipe Calderon, the government has relied more and more on the military as its source of law enforcement and to fight off cartels and their leaders. In 2007, more than 30,000 troops were deployed to participate in the War on Drugs. But as the Institute for Economics & Peace reinforces, using the military as a means to alleviate the country from violence, crime, and organized crime has not shown any positive results. This is because unlike policemen, the military is trained for armed conflict. They are not trained to properly gather evidence, conduct investigations, and interview witnesses and suspects. Instead, they have been part of the problem, fueling even more violence throughout the country. By 2017, 107 of the 122 most influential organized crime leaders had been captured by the Mexican government, with pressure from the US of course. The disruption in the leadership of these cartels has led to further competition with one another and thus has resulted in more violence. In addition to this, when cartels are disrupted, there are members who will continue on in criminal activity²⁵⁶. We can conclude that the War on Drugs has been detrimental to Mexico's well-being, creating even more violence in an already torn society.

Corruption in Mexico has been the largest driver of instability in Mexico, especially when looking at government and institutional efficiency. According to the OEDC, the cost of corruption in Mexico is between 5% to 9% of the total GDP²⁵⁷. Looking at statistics provided by Transparency International, Mexico ranks 135 out of 180. This is based on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), in which Transparency International ranks countries from a scale of 0-100. A score of zero is highly corrupt, and a score of 100 is highly clean. In 2018, Transparency International gave Mexico a score of 28, a six-point drop from 2012. Corruption has become endemic in all levels of society. It has become an issue that affects people in their day to day lives. 61% percent of respondents have reported having to pay the police for

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ "OECD Integrity Review of Mexico: Highlights". OECD. 2017.

bribes, 55% to the judiciary, and 27% to receive permits and registration services²⁵⁸. But though corruption has become prevalent in all aspects of society, corruption scandal after corruption scandal by high ranking politicians, including the president himself has created enough resentment amongst the population. People are tired of living in poverty, being bribed to be provided for state services which are meant to be free, and seeing politicians abuse of their power to fill their pockets with money in the expense of the people. Mistrust in public institutions has become a huge issue for the legitimacy of the PRI and became an important issue in the 2018 presidential election. Ultimately, corruption scandals during the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto were the main catalyst for demand for change amongst Mexican citizens.

From governors to the president himself, the administration of Peña Nieto was plagued with corruption scandals and government cover-ups. First, Peña Nieto was one of the Latin American politicians implicated in the Panama Papers scandal. In 2016, documents were leaked from a Panamanian Law Firm which revealed financial information of politicians all over the world placing financial assets in what are called shell corporations. These shell corporations are used to evade tax, and keep financial assets secret. When the documents leaked, it was revealed that Juan Armando Hinojosa, a contractor also close to Peña Nieto, had placed his assets in Panama to hide money acquired through making construction contracts with the Mexican government. Through the close relationship between Hinojosa and the president, he has received more than 80 government contracts and at least \$2.5 in government money²⁵⁹. This scandal is connected to a greater one directly connecting the president and his wife.

In 2014, *Aristegui Noticias* was revealed that Angelica Rivera, Mexican Telenovela actress, and wife of Peña Nieto, bought a \$7 billion dollar home from one of Hinojosa firms.

²⁵⁸ National Results: Mexico. Transparency International.

²⁵⁹ Woody, Christopher. "Leaked documents show the Mexican president's close friend moved \$100 million offshore after a corruption probe". Business Insider. Apr 2016.

Hinojosa began to move his money into offshore companies after the “White House” scandal broke out in Mexico. Soon after Aristegui, the journalist responsible for the leak, released the information, she was fired. This increased tensions to the already animosity towards Peña Nieto, adding to the corruption scandal that use of censorship to quiet down any scandals involved with the president. “While Mexican journalists are frequently targets of physical attack, soft censorship is another more subtle and very significant danger to press freedom... Mexico’s federal and state governments deploy financial power to pressure media outlets and penalize critical reporting”²⁶⁰. Furthermore, the case was investigated and no conflict of interest was found but the report was highly criticized as the judge who took the case was placed by Peña Nieto himself. After the scandal had occurred, Peña Nieto came out saying "I apologize for the White House, I made a mistake. A mistake that affected my family and damaged the institution of the presidency...I felt the irritation of Mexicans in my own skin, and I understand it completely. That's why I am asking for forgiveness with complete humility"²⁶¹.

Multiple governors affiliated with the PRI have also been associated with corruption scandals. In December 2017, Alejandro Gutierrez, high ranking member of the PRI, was found to have withdrawn \$12 million dollars from public funds in Chihuahua²⁶². In addition, former governor of Quintana Roo Roberto Borge (governor from 2010-2016) was extradited from Panama on corruption charges²⁶³. The PRI governor of Veracruz from 2010-2016 Javier Duarte became embedded with corruption scandals in 2018. He was charged with having associations with criminal organizations and money laundering. Peña Nieto once praised Duarte for being one of the governors that would modernize Mexico. However, instead of

²⁶⁰ “Mexico: “Soft” censorship poses significant dangers to press freedom”. Article 19. Mar 2014.

²⁶¹ Tuckman, Jo. “Mexico’s president just apologized for his embarrassing ‘White House’ scandal”. Vice News. Jul 2016.

²⁶² Verza, Maria. “Mexican Government Shields Officials From Corruption Probe”. AP News. Oct 2018.

²⁶³ “Panama Extradites Former Mexican Governor Accused of Corruption”. Reuters. Jan 2018.

modernizing Veracruz, he enriched himself through “dismantled hospitals in Veracruz, unpaid scholarships, pensioners who died because they couldn’t pay for their medicines, the 3,600 disappeared persons because we lived in a state of anarchy”²⁶⁴. Despite the PRI using this case as an example of showing the party’s “progress on corruption”, Duarte notes that “I am still a soldier of the president; I am loyal to him”²⁶⁵. On October 2018, the Mexican government sought to protect government officials from charges of corruption through the supreme court. “existing or imminent” legal actions against “current or prior federal public officials,” either “directly or indirectly (related) to the exercise of their duties”²⁶⁶. In Mexico, one of the greatest issues has been impunity “because in Mexico, the judicial system doesn’t prosecute thieves, it protects them”²⁶⁷.

It is no surprise that people across Mexico, people became disenfranchised with the PRI and Enrique Peña Nieto. He received the lowest approval rating in Mexico since the approval index began to be measured, at a minute 12%²⁶⁸. There was large disapproval in the implementation of neoliberal reforms, both in education and energy as shown in chapter 4. Furthermore, increased economic hardships related to Mexico’s low economic growth increased violence all across the country, and corruption scandals have damaged the PRI’s reputation. Under this environment, MORENA and AMLO became very popular alternatives to political parties that have failed to create positive change and have failed to achieve their promises.

AMLO’s Platform

One of AMLO’s main promises in 2018 was to tackle the issue of endemic corruption. As he noted, “honesty is the way out”. AMLO argues that if corruption is eliminated or even highly

²⁶⁴ Agren, David. “Mexico: ‘Worst Governor in History’ Sentenced To Nine Years for Corruption”. The Guardian. Sep 2018.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Verza, Maria. “Mexican Government Shields Officials From Corruption Probe”. AP News. Oct 2018.

²⁶⁷ Dresser, Denise. “Mexico: Why Mexico Fell Apart, and How to Fix It”. Center for Latin American Studies, UC Berkley. 2017.

²⁶⁸ “Aprobación de Peña Nieto Cae a Un 12 Por Ciento, Según Encuesta”. Telesur. Jan 2017.

decreased, Mexico could provide its citizens with the same benefits that countries like Finland and Denmark provide to their people. One way of eliminating corruption is by embedding honesty as a virtue of being Mexican. This will be done by leading by example, by acting transparently as leaders. First, he seeks to Amend Article 108 of the constitution in order to hold politicians and state workers accountable for their actions. He will do this by eliminating a clause that exempts those in power from corruption charges. He has also proposed to decrease the salary of high ranking officials, including that of the presidency, and sell off unnecessary government possessions primarily in national defense. His full plan to fight corruption is as follows:

- A. We will call upon the people to honor and respect honesty as a virtue, since our vision and our values depend on the participation of the Mexican people
- B. We will facilitate public participation in every step of the fight against corruption
- C. We will create streamlined and effective mechanisms to allow citizens to denounce corruption
- D. We will demand- and enforce- universal transparency. We will establish a legal authority to publish the assets and financial interests of the bureaucratic hierarchy, from top to bottom. We must ensure that a prompt process of accountability is established, since transparency means nothing if we cannot act upon that knowledge. All government functionaries must disclose their financial interests, which are to be cross-referenced for accuracy and certified. Any anomalies will be investigated.
- E. Such investigations will be conducted promptly, in contrast to current practice where complaints take years to be investigated
- F. Domestic and foreign firms wishing to bid on public works projects or contracts or to utilize our natural resources, and who have former government functionaries in upper management, must wait for a minimum of ten years after the departure or retirement of said government functionaries before bidding
- G. Public servants and companies involved in the creation of overpriced contracts for public works will be charged under relevant law
- H. Government officials and their families will be barred from associating with foreign or domestic firms for the purpose of conducting private deals at the expense of the state
- I. Nepotism will not be tolerated. Public servants, contractors, suppliers, and leaders who benefit at the treasury's expense will have no place in our government
- J. Corruption, money laundering and conflicts of interest will be charged as serious offenses and be subject to harsh penalties
- K. The constitution will be reformed to create a Federal Judicial Authority that is fully autonomous, with ample power to combat corruption²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ López Obrador, Andrés Manuel., and Uhlmann, Natascha. *A New Hope for Mexico : Saying No to Corruption, Violence, and Trump's Wall* .

On another note, ALMO's blueprint for economic and social revitalization includes the investment in the countryside for food security, to promote rural development and improve the social conditions of those in the countryside, especially agricultural workers. He has continuously criticized NAFTA which has negatively hurt Mexico's agricultural sectors and its farmers by putting them at a disadvantage to American agricultural goods. Because of this, his platform for rural and agricultural development is as follows:

- A. Creation of a comprehensive agricultural development program to give support to small scale agricultural producers who account for 85% of domestic production. This includes the distribution of subsidies.
- B. Promotion of self-sufficiency in rural communities through government investments in agricultural production. Supporting traditional agricultural practices must also be part of the story in order to preserve indigenous traditions.
- C. Implementation of a fixed priced system for agricultural goods for domestic agricultural producers and make the government an actor in buying agricultural products.
- D. Increase investment in high-density agricultural production especially in technology and quality control
- E. Invest in rural infrastructure projects in order to increase agricultural productivity for domestic and international markets. This includes expanding arable land to agriculture and begin reforestation projects.
- F. Give priority to agricultural research
- G. Cooperation for economic growth for all three NAFTA countries²⁷⁰.

For the energy sector, he seeks to decrease and or eliminate corruption in state-owned enterprises (PEMEX and Federal Electricity Commission), invest in the development of new oil refineries that will make us energy independent and create new local jobs, and operate the energy sector at its full capacity. Furthermore, for economic growth and job creation, he places an emphasis in the infrastructure sector to build roads, schools, hospital, urban housing development, draining systems, through public-private partnerships. He promotes small and medium scale businesses through inexpensive credit and decreasing bureaucratic costs, Mexico's tourism sector and duty-free zones near the border, promises to increase the purchasing power by increasing

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

salaries of the common Mexican, support and invest in the youth through education and job search programs, and promises to develop Mexico's telecommunications system and provide free internet in public spaces such as hospitals, plazas, and schools²⁷¹.

In his proposal for state well-being, he proposes the re-development of the welfare state, a state that provides basic goods and services to make sure that all Mexicans live a decent standard of living. He suggests to eradicate hunger and amending the constitution to ensure the right to food, recognizes the support for worker's rights while promoting sustainable works, promotes sustainability by protecting the environment and natural resources, guarantee the right of the most vulnerable and marginalized: women, children, the youth, the disabled, the elderly, migrants, and the LGBT+ community, guarantee the right to an education and the access to healthcare for everyone, seeks to create a pension retirement system for the elderly, recognize the autonomy of indigenous peoples and their communities in order to preserve their culture and traditions, seeks to guarantee adequate housing for all especially for those who live in poverty, proposes to create a Secretariat of Culture to preserve and advance the arts, science, culture, and sports²⁷².

Finally, when it comes to the insecurity of the country, AMLO has repetitively stated that the lack of government involvement to protect basic human rights, to make sure people feel safe, to promote economic growth for all, and to provide alternatives to illegality has created the current violent situation Mexico faces. The youth are the most vulnerable to falling into illegal activities because of the lack of jobs and education created by the neoliberal state. It is no surprise that without opportunities and without government help, the youth only have two options to make a living: migration to the United States or organized crime predominantly through drug cartels²⁷³.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

The 2018 Election

According to Mexico's National Electoral Institute, the 2018 election was the "biggest election in Mexican history"²⁷⁴. A record high of 88 million Mexicans registered to vote at the federal, state, and local elections, including voting for the presidency and 18,299 federal, state, and local political positions. Positions were filled for Mexico's entire congress (500 deputies and 128 senators), 9 governorships, 972 state congressmen and women elected, and many more in local elections in 30 of the 32 states (majors, municipal legal officers, and council members)²⁷⁵.

During this election, a total of 9 political parties participated by grouping themselves in coalitions. First, the PRD, AMLO's old political party, aligned itself with the PAN and the *Movimiento Ciudadano* (MC), Citizens Movement, under the coalition named *Por Mexico al Frente*, Forward for Mexico and represented by Ricardo Anaya. The second coalition was between the PRI, the *Partido Verde*, and Nueva Alianza, the New Alliance Party. Jose Antonio Meade ran under this coalition. Finally, AMLO's party MORENA aligned itself with *Partido Tabajador* (PT), and the socially conservative party *Encuentro Social*, the Social Encounter Party to create *Juntos Haremos Historia*, Together We Will Make History. Under Mexico's electoral reforms of 2014, independent candidates are now allowed to run for president under no political party affiliation. Because of this, Jaime Rodriguez ran as an independent. Therefore four candidates in 2018 ran for the presidency of the United Mexican States: Ricardo Anaya, Jose Antonio Meade, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, and Jaime Rodriguez.

Because Mexico runs on a multiparty political system, the candidate is elected to the presidency with a simple plurality of the popular vote, in other words, the candidate that receives

²⁷⁴ "Mexico Elections: Why Are They Important?". Al Jazeera. Mar 2018.

²⁷⁵ Gomez Ramirez, Enrique. "Mexico 2018: Elections That Will Make History". European Parliamentary Research Service. Jun 20.

the most votes wins the election. One of the legacies of the Mexican Revolution was the establishment of term limits. Mexican presidents serve on a one six-year term, and the possibility for reelection is forbidden. The race officially began in April, and the election day on July 1st. When election polls began to predict results in January 2018, all polls showed AMLO way ahead of every other candidate by at least 10 percent. AMLO constantly lead the polls until election day²⁷⁶. Furthermore, Oraculus Poll of Polls predicted in June that AMLO had a 94% chance of becoming president, El Pais predicted with a 92% chance, and GP Polls with a 99% chance²⁷⁷.

All four presidential candidates ran on similar platforms though with various methods: alleviating poverty and inequality, confronting Mexico's violence and insecurity, and reducing corruption. What distinguishes AMLO from the other three candidates is his ability to associate the candidates (Ricardo Anaya and Jose Antonio Meade) and their respective political parties with their implementation of neoliberal policies that lead to the creation of the problems that were prominent during the 2018 election. By doing this, he discredited the candidates through political party association and thus being able to use his long history of political activism and social work to demonstrate his commitment to radical change. This technique worked, and as will be seen, MORENA overwhelmingly achieved at all levels of the election.

AMLO won the election with 53% of the votes, a difference of 30.5% with Ricardo Anaya who places second with only 22.5% of votes²⁷⁸. No other president since 1988 had received more than 50% of the votes cast in a presidential election²⁷⁹. As seen in Figure 11, AMLO won the election in every single state, except in Guanajuato, Anaya's own state.

²⁷⁶ Zissis, Carin. "Poll Tracker: Mexico's 2018 Presidential Election". Americas Society Council of the Americas. Jun 2018.

²⁷⁷ Gomez Ramirez, Enrique. "Mexico 2018: Elections That Will Make History".

²⁷⁸ "Mexican Election Results". Bloomberg. Jul 2018.

²⁷⁹ Zissis, Carin and Gonzales Elisabeth. "5 Charts: AMLO's Wave Washes over Mexico". Americas Society Council of the Americas. Jul 2018.



Figure 11: Winning Candidate in Each State
Source: ASCOA²⁸⁰

Furthermore, in Congress, MORENA and its coalition received the absolute majority in both Chamber of Deputies and Senate²⁸¹. In the Senate, *Juntos Haremos Historia* received 54% of the seats (69/128). In the Chamber of Deputies, AMLO and his coalition received 62% of the seats (308/500)²⁸². Moreover, Out of the nine states with governorship races, MORENA won four²⁸³. This gives MORENA, AMLO, and his coalition unprecedented power in both legislative and executive branches.

Conclusion: Neoliberal Grievances and the Rise of AMLO

The main argument proposed by this thesis is that neoliberal grievances building up within the three decades of the formation of the neoliberal state has created demands for political change in Mexico. It is not that neoliberalism leads to political change, rather it is a correlation between the two. Neoliberal policies create grievances and hardships that derive from long-term structural

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ “Mexican Election Results”. Bloomberg.

²⁸² “The Parties”. 2018 Mexican Elections. The Wilson Center Mexico Institute.

²⁸³ Zissis, Carin and Gonzales Elisabeth. “5 Charts: AMLO's Wave Washes over Mexico”.

reforms which lead to demand for political change. Over the last couple of chapters, the relationship between neoliberal policies and the current issues that rampant throughout Mexico (inequality, organized crime, and violence corruption and impunity, lack of opportunities) have been analyzed to undertested the want of political change within Mexican society.

Citizen discontent with neoliberalism is the main factor behind the success of AMLO's discourse. AMLO's political narrative connecting the past and present has been successful. First, relating neoliberalism and issues prominent in the country has been successful in gaining large political support, especially for those who have been most marginalized by these policies. Second, AMLO has associated the PRI and PAN to the failure of neoliberal policies and blames the two political parties in creating Mexico's depraved environment. Third, AMLO has delegitimized the PRI and PAN, Mexico's most important parties, by making the connection between neoliberal policies implemented by the PRI and PAN to the dictatorship, of Porfirio Diaz, neoporfirismo, who in similar fashion to the neoliberal technocrats placed the desires of foreigners and Mexico's elite before the needs of the population. AMLO disassociated himself with this political regime and instead offers a peaceful but radical transformation which, will dissolve Mexico's illnesses associated with the country's old political regime. AMLO also promises to create a more egalitarian and peaceful society that will place the needs of the people before the needs of the elite.

This thesis tries to best summarize the history of Mexico from the Diaz dictatorship as annotated by multiple historians. Under the Diaz dictatorship thousands of peasants were forced from their lands and placed to work for foreigners of hacenderos. Mexico became a haven for foreign investment, enrichment, and resource deprivation. Only a very small elite benefited from this form of development. The Mexican Revolution was fought for the creating of a more egalitarian society. Thousands of people died just to demand basic rights and needs that were taken

away by Diaz and his predecessors. For a period of time, there was hope for justice. The 1917 constitution produced many promises amounts those sovereignty over our own natural resources, land distribution, free education, social and labor rights. Under Cardenas, thousands of acres were given to poor peasant communities and sovereignty over our resources was met with the nationalization of the petroleum industry. ISI allowed Mexico to industrialize and generate economic growth at an average of 6 percent. Mexico for the first time began to have access to modernity's while providing for decent jobs and state services. Though it created growth, this system was not perfect. It was only great if Mexico's political regime was unquestioned. It was as many called it, a Perfect Dictatorship. Eventually, inflation and interest rates caught up with Mexico's development and neoliberal technocrats would transform Mexico's developmental model into one dictated by the neoliberal state. For three decades Mexico experienced slow economic growth but nonetheless, the elite overwhelmingly benefited. Privatization became another source of corruption for the elite. A very small elite became millionaires and the majority of the population lacked state services, employment, and access to basic goods. This environment created a paradise for organized crime and an informal economy. Intertwining with corruption, organized crime, and impunity, Mexico has become of the most insecure countries in the world.

Comparing AMLO's political narrative to the actual history and reality that many have and are facing in Mexico, one can begin to understand why this discourse has been so popular. In a sense, this narrative has been about a long and continuous history of subjugation, exploitation, and marginalization committed by Mexico's elite upon the most vulnerable of society. The elite in Mexico has always used their political power to enrich themselves with the resources of the people. Today, because of corruption, impunity is prevalent in all levels of government, which, has

allowed violence and organized crime to thrive in a society where there is no justice. It is a country of twos, of the elite and of those left behind.

By the time AMLO ran for office in 2018, Mexico's situation had worsened as never seen before. Under the administration of Enrique Peña Nieto, violence was at an all-time high, inequality and poverty have risen, and corruption scandals severely hurt the legitimacy of the PRI. Grievances and anger amongst the population was at its peak and discontent with the political establishment was rampant in all sectors of society. No longer could these two political parties alter or swing the election in their favor through electoral fraud and media manipulation. AMLO became the alternative to the corrupt political system the PRI and PAN developed. Andrés Manuel López Obrador has promised through his discourse the peaceful and radical transformation of Mexican society by rejecting the country's old political regime, rejecting neoliberalism, and returning to the roots and traditions of the Mexican Revolution.

Epilogue

This thesis was in part written to understand the origins of Mexico's endemic problems. My family migrated to the United States a response to Mexico's growing violence, economic hardships, and lack of access to opportunities to live a decent life. My family back home is victim of these endemic issues. My uncle received death threats from drug cartels and died as a consequence of it; no action was taken by government officials. My mother's cousin was burned alive due to being involved in organized crime; no one was held accountable. Just last month I received the news that my grandmother had been a victim of crime. A gun was placed in her head by two individuals, hands and feet were tied, and left inside a locked room; police officials didn't take the matter seriously. Mexico has become a country in where state institutions fail to protect its own citizens, instead, using corruption as a means to enrich themselves. It has become a country where morality does not exist anymore, in where it becomes normalized to assault a seventy-year old-woman, murder women for the bare fact of being born a female, treat workers as just another tool for means of production, dislocate people from their land, and marginalize already marginalized communities.

There is a lot of hope and pressure placed in AMLO to solve Mexico's problems. People are tired in living in a country in where the state only acts where there is money, in where justice only becomes available for the rich, in where anyone can get away with anything because the so-called justice system does not serve justice, where people lack basic opportunities and thus become corrupt by the opportunities organized organizations have to offer. AMLO made a promise to transforms Mexican society in a peaceful but radical matter. Unlike other presidents, he seeks to do this by focusing on the roots of Mexico's vices of neoliberalism, inequality, and impunity in the Mexican government.

It seems Mexico's political system is in crisis. Since the Mexican Revolution in 1910, only two political parties have held power in Mexico, and the three main political parties (PRI, PAN, PRD), have been delegitimized in 2018. All three political parties lost political support in the election. To begin with, the PRI and the PAN created the environment that led to the issues Mexico faces today. The PRD on the other hands has abandoned its leftist origins, has embraced neoliberal reforms and right-wing politics by aligning itself with the PAN. As of 2018, the only political party that which, is entitled to that legitimacy is MORENA, a political party that was just formed four years ago. Now, AMLO and his political coalition have unprecedented political power. For AMLO this means being able to pass legislation and amend the constitution with no problem. This is great if political power is used to tackle root causes and is used to implement policies benefiting the people. But this may also mean mismanaging that power. According to Enrique Krauze, Mexican democracy is in danger, and there is a likelihood of the return to "the country of a single man"²⁸⁴. Though this analysis on Mexican democracy may be overexaggerated, with AMLO in power things can change for good, or for bad.

There is still much ambiguity for the future of Mexico under AMLO as president. As in the case of neoliberalism, he promised to reject it due to being the cause of Mexico's issues. Globalization and its effects in Mexican society was part of the conversation in the 2018 election with AMLO implying some return to Mexico's old developmental system. Many politicians around the world, including Donald Trump, have become critical of globalization and its effects on national sovereignty. But can Mexico afford to reject globalization in a continuous globalized world? Despite the ambiguity in AMLO's power and intention, there is much hope from all levels of society in seeing positive change for once. Mexicans want to see a more egalitarian society with

²⁸⁴ Krause, Enrique. "The End of Mexican Democracy?". The New York Times. Mar 2018.

more opportunities and inequality for all. In that sense, the ideals rooted in the Mexican Revolution are still present within the people of Mexico, and for the first time, AMLO provides hope for that long-awaited transformation.

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