

Mexico: Politics and Warfare (1810-1876)

by John P. Schmal (SHHAR Presentation, May 12, 2018)



The Beginning of the Independence Movements (1808)

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, Mexico was a colony of Spain, a European nation located approximately 5,500 miles (8,850 kilometers) from its Gulf Coast shoreline.

In 1810, the **Spanish Empire** consisted of **13.7 million square kilometers (5.3 million square miles)** and occupied **9.2% of the world's land area**, most of which was in the Americas. Spain had the fifth largest empire in world history.

But In 1808, **French forces under Emperor Napoleon invaded the Iberian peninsula**, leading to a series of events that would eventually result in the death of the Spanish Empire and the independence of Mexico.



The Spanish Empire at its Height

Setting the Stage for Rebellion: France Invades Spain

In 1807, **Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte** lured **King Carlos IV** of Spain and forced him to abdicate his throne. Napoleon then declared that his brother, **Joseph Bonaparte**, would become the new King of Spain and, in March 1808, 100,000 French troops invaded Spain under the pretense of protecting the country's coast line from the British, with whom France was in a state of war.

Emperor Napoleon quickly defeated the Spanish and entered Madrid in triumph. But the 300,000 French troops stationed on Spanish soil were soon faced with a very effective guerilla resistance by the Spanish people. **By 1813, the Spanish people, with the help of British forces, were able to drive the French from the Iberian Peninsula.** In the following year, **King Ferdinand VII**, the son of King Carlos IV, was restored to his throne.



Napoleon Bonaparte



King Carlos IV of Spain

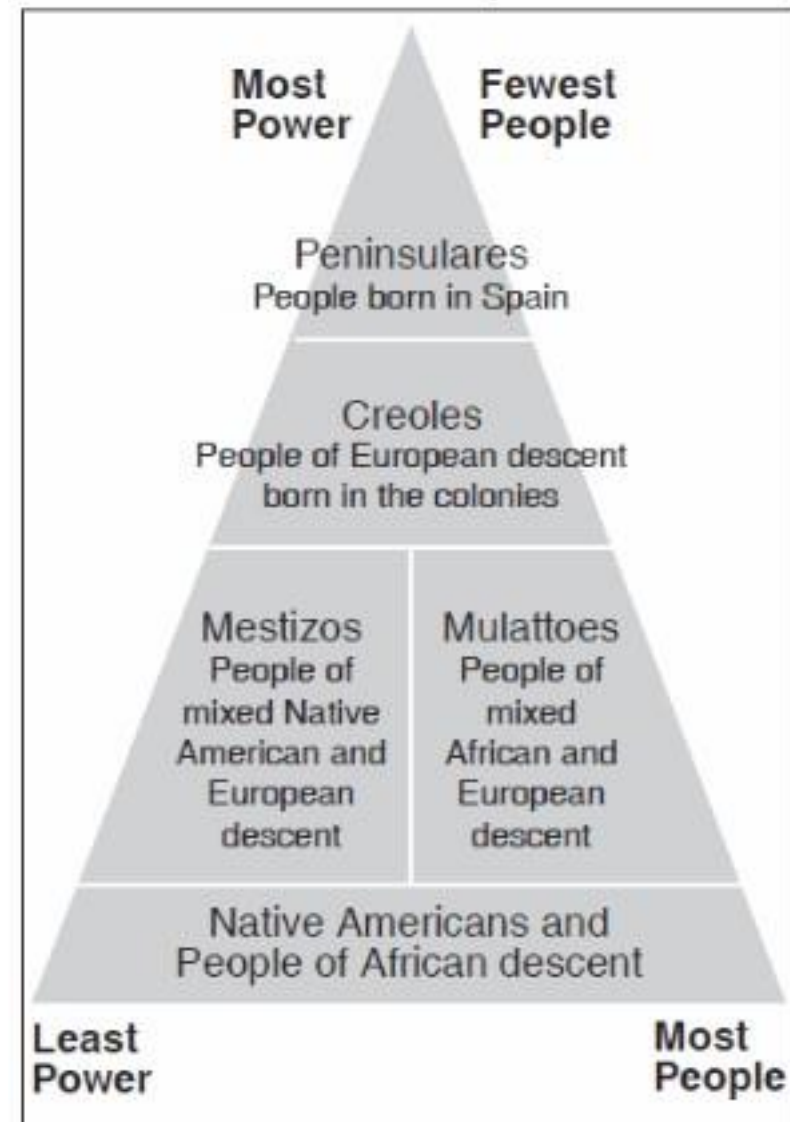
Mexico: A Layered Society with Distinct Social Classes

At the top of the Spanish colonial society in Mexico were the **PENINSULARES**, people born in Spain. Peninsulares filled many of the highest positions in both colonial governments and the Catholic Church hierarchy. They were later referred to by the term pejorative term, **GACHUPINES**.

Next came **CRIOLLOS (CREOLES)**, American-born descendants of Spanish settlers. Creoles owned many of the plantations, ranches, and mines. By the Nineteenth Century, many of the priests were also creoles.

Lower social groups included: **MESTIZOS**, people of Native American and European descent; **MULATTOES**, people of African and European descent; **INDIOS**; and **NEGROS**, many of whom were **ESCLAVOS (SLAVES)**.

Social Structure of the Spanish Colonies



Source: Goldberg and DuPré,
Brief Review in Global History and Geography,
Prentice Hall, 2002 (adapted)

The Origins of Prominent People in 19th Century Mexican History

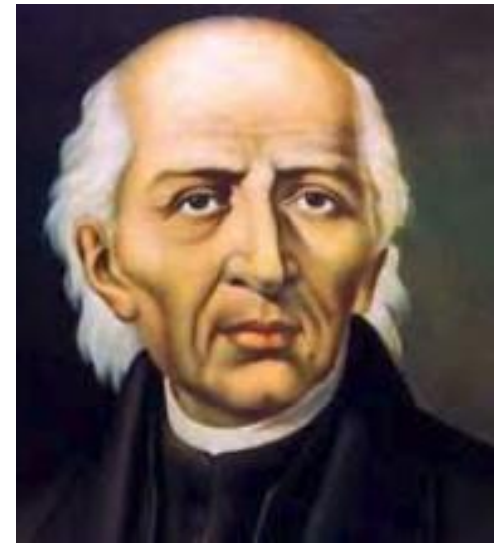
Name	Role	Birthplace / Origins
Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla (1753 – 1811)	Revolutionary (executed)	Pénjamo, Guanajuato / Criollo (Creole)
Father José María Teclo Morelos Pérez y Pavón (1765 – 1815)	Revolutionary (executed)	Valladolid (now Morelia), Michoacán / Afro-Mestizo
Vicente Ramón Guerrero Saldaña (1782 – 1831)	Revolutionary and Politician (executed)	Tixtla, Guerrero / Afro-Mestizo
Agustín Iturbide y Arámburu (1783 – 1824)	General, Politician and Emperor (executed)	Valladolid (now Morelia), Michoacán / Predominantly Criollo (with some Basque and Mestizo)
Antonio López de Santa Anna (1794 – 1876)	General and Politician	Xalapa, Veracruz / Criollo
Juan Banderas (Juan Ignacio Jusacamea) (1795-1832)	Yaqui Revolutionary Leader (executed)	Rahum, Guaymas Municipio, Sonora / Yaqui Indian
Emperor Maximilian (1832 – 1867)	Emperor (executed)	Schönbrunn, Vienna, Austria / Austrian Hapsburg Monarch
Benito Pablo Juárez (1806 – 1872)	Politician and Lawyer	San Pablo Guelatao, Oaxaca / Zapotec Indian
José Porfirio Díaz (1830 – 1915)	General and Politician	Oaxaca, Oaxaca / Castizo (1)
(1) Castizo: The offspring of a European and a mestizo; someone of three quarters European and one quarter Amerindian ancestry.		

The Rebellion Begins (1810-1811)

From 1808 to mid-1810, Madrid had become aware of **several attempted uprisings in the regions now known as Argentina, Bolivia, and Colombia**. The rumblings of discontent in Nueva España (New Spain) and other parts of Latin America would accelerate to new heights in 1810.

On September 16, 1810, **Father Miguel Hidalgo** rang the town's church bells of his Guanajuato parish to call the people to mass. He then gave his famous speech, the **Grito de Dolores, or Cry of Dolores**. Gathering recruits from the countryside, **Hidalgo's peasant army of mestizos and indios** grew to 80,000 men and marched 120 miles (193 km) south to Mexico City.

Although Hidalgo defeated the royal army and gained a great deal of support around the country, his army eventually succumbed to professionally trained royal soldiers with superior weapons. Eventually he was captured, found guilty of treason, and **executed by a firing squad on July 30, 1811**.



Hidalgo's Regions of Support

Morelos Carries on (1811-1815)

In October 1810, **Father José María Morelos** from Michoacán joined Hidalgo's revolt. With the execution of Hidalgo in July 1811, Morelos took up the revolutionary leadership. However, realizing that his untrained volunteers were no match for large numbers of professional Spanish soldiers, Morelos **trained his followers in guerilla warfare, attacking without warning with small effective bands of fighters, capturing small towns and villages.**

From 1811 to 1815, Morelos fought numerous battles in the states of Michoacán, Guerrero, Morelos and Oaxaca. The map on the right shows the insurgency of Morelos in 1813. The green areas were areas in which the royalists occupied the cities, while the rebels controlled the countryside. The areas colored in gold were primarily under the control of Morelos' forces.

Morelos was captured in November 1815 and executed a month later.



The Insurgency of Morelos, 1813

Source: El Museo de las Constituciones, "Línea de Tiempo: Apatzingán." Online: <http://museodelasconstituciones.unam.mx/lineadetiempo1814/>

The Spanish Army and the Revolution (1810-1820)

- The rebellions of Hidalgo and Morelos were **primarily mestizo and peasant revolts**. The early revolutionary leadership threatened the privileged position of the criollo elite in Mexico who did not offer their support in the early years.
- Over time, the Spanish military started **blaming the criollo clergy for legitimizing the rebellion**. The royalist military commanders also began to distrust their own criollo officers (born in Mexico).
- Many of the royalist commanders had held their posts for lengthy periods, during which time they developed business interests and engaged in corrupt practices, which distracted them from their commitment to ending the revolution. Their rigid control of local economies and confiscation of rebel properties caused resentment in the Mexican population.
- By 1820, the Royalists had not been able to achieve total victory. While they had been able to pacify some areas of rebellion, other areas would suddenly erupt in guerilla warfare, thwarting a complete destruction of the revolutionary spirit.

Source: Christon I. Archer, "Politicization of the Army of New Spain during the War of Independence, 1810-1821," in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., "The Evolution of the Mexican Political System" (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1993), pp. 17-43.

The Tide Turns (1820-1821)

- By 1820, the Mexican insurgents still lacked the conventional military power to evict the Spaniards. But **ten years of guerilla warfare, insurgency, corruption, banditry and a reduction in mining production had resulted in a steep reduction in tax income**, gradually eroding the fighting force of the military.
- The **1820 Riego Rebellion in Spain** usurped the power of King Ferdinand VII and brought liberals to power. As a result, the wealthy Creoles in Mexico came to fear that the political changes in Spain would threaten their privileged status in Mexico.
- In February 1821, one of the most successful creole generals, **Agustín Iturbide**, the military officer in charge of suppressing the rebellion in southern Mexico, was campaigning with 2,500 men against the rebel leader, **Vicente Guerrero**. Fearing that the progressive ideas in Spain would come to Mexico, Iturbide joined forces with Guerrero and together they proclaimed the **Plan of Iguala**. On Sept. 27, Iturbide — leading an army of 16,000 soldiers — entered Mexico City and the Royal Government in Mexico collapsed.
- Half a million people died during the Mexican War of Independence.

Source: Christon I. Archer, "Politicization of the Army of New Spain during the War of Independence, 1810-1821," in Jaime E. Rodríguez O., "The Evolution of the Mexican Political System" (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1993), pp. 17-43.

The Three Guarantees

The Flag of the Three Guarantees



The Plan of Iguala was comprised of three key components:

1. There would be equal treatment under the law for both peninsulares and criollos.
2. Catholicism would be the official religion of Mexico.
3. Mexico would be a moderate (constitutional) monarchy.

The Three Guarantees were represented on the Mexican flag. Red represents the union of America and Europe, or the blood of the Criollos and the Peninsulares. The color white represents the purity of the Catholic faith. The color green represents the hope of independence.

The **Treaty of Córdoba** — signed on Aug. 24, 1821 in the State of Veracruz — established Mexican independence from Spain under the provisions of 17 articles based on the Plan of Iguala.

Emperor Iturbide I



The Mexican Empire Flag

With independence, the former Spanish colonies of Nueva España, Nueva Galicia and Nueva Vizcaya became the “**United Mexican States.**” The name Mexico was taken from the capital city of Mexico City, formerly Tenochtitlán, named for the dominant Aztec tribe, the Mexica.

Iturbide was named **President of the Provisional Governing Junta**, which set about the task of finding a member of a European royal family to take the throne of Mexico. He served as president from Sept. 1821 to May 1822. Eventually, thanks to his overwhelming support from the elites and his role in Mexico’s independence, Iturbide was appointed **First Constitutional Emperor of Mexico** on May 19, 1822.

In revising Mexico’s flag, Iturbide maintained the three colors of red, white and green originally represented the three guarantees of the Plan of Iguala, but **resurrected the old Tenochtitlán symbol for Mexico City, an eagle perched on a nopal cactus holding a snake in its beak.** With it he hoped to link the new Mexican Empire with the old Aztec Empire.

The First Federal Republic

The Current Mexican Flag (since 1968)



Iturbide soon met with a great deal of resistance. Most of the independence heroes, many Mexican generals and high-ranking government officials soon joined ranks and signed the **Plan of Casa Mata** on February 1, 1823, which called for the convening of a new Constituent Congress. Eventually, Emperor Agustín I was left isolated with little support outside of Mexico City and a few factions of the Imperial Army.

Iturbide's reign as Emperor lasted less than a year (May 1822 - March 19, 1823) before **General Antonio Santa Anna** and other supporters overthrew Iturbide and forced him to abdicate his throne. He went into exile but returned in July 1824 in a new bid for power, but was arrested and executed.

The First Federal Republic governed Mexico from 1824 to 1835

Political and Economic Instability

- The newly-independent Mexico was in economic despair. Its agricultural, mining and industrial production had fallen dramatically during the war.
- After independence, 15% to 30% of adult Mexican men were unemployed. And many Spanish merchants returned to Spain, taking their expertise with them.
- From 1821 to 1876, Mexico had 75 Presidents. Many of the presidents came to power through military coups.
- From 1821 to 1850, there were at least two dozen rebellions and coups throughout Mexico.
- **General Antonio López de Santa Anna** served as president 11 times between 1833 and 1855. At times, Santa Anna staged revolts; but as President, he also quelled revolts.
- For the next few decades, Mexico would be deeply divided between two groups: **the Liberals** and **the Conservatives**. The Conservatives proposed to use the old Spanish model to govern Mexico, but the Liberals wanted a system similar to the United States. Conservatives and Liberals disagreed over education, work, system of government and the influence of the Catholic Church.

Types of Mexican Governments (1821-1855)

Year	Events
1822-1823	The First Mexican Empire with Agustín de Iturbide as Emperor.
1823-1824	A triumvirate of three generals (Victoria, Bravo & Negrete) takes power.
1824-1835	The First Federal Republic : Guadalupe Victoria became the first president of the Mexican republic in 1824 and served out his entire four-year term. The second president , Vicente Guerrero served only eight months in 1829 and was executed two years later. From this point, General Santa Ana wielded enormous power behind the scene, leading the powerful Mexican army and becoming President in 1833. Slavery was outlawed by a national edit in 1829.
1835-1846	The First Central Republic : As Santa Ana imposes his will, annulling the reforms of the Federal Republic. He establishes a Conservative, centralist and pro-Catholic government. Numerous states revolt, including Zacatecas (1835) Tejas (1835-36), San Luis Potosí (1845), Yucatán (1841), Jalisco (1844), Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas (1839).
1846-1855	The Second Federal Republic begins with a disastrous war against the United States (1846-47) in which Mexico loses half of its territory. Various strongmen reign as president. Santa Anna's last regime is in 1853-55.

Source: Will Fowler, "Mexico In the Age of Proposals, 1821-1853" (1998). Appendix 1.

Types of Mexican Governments (1855-1911)

Year	Events
1855-1861	The Period of Reform: In August 1855, Santa Anna was forced to resign by a group of Mexican political intellectuals. The new Liberal government abolished the special privileges (fueros) of the Church and military and restricted Church holdings of property. In 1858 as head of the Supreme Court, a Zapotec Indian professional from Oaxaca, Benito Juárez , became president of Mexico by the succession mandated by the Constitution of 1857. From 1858-1861, Juárez weathered the War of the Reform, a bloody civil war between Liberals and Conservatives.
1862-1867	The French Occupation: Juárez continued to rule in some parts of the country during this extended occupation in which Emperor Maximilian ruled.
1867-1876	The Restoration Period: After the expulsion of Maximilian and the French, Juárez returned to power in Mexico City in June of 1867. For awhile, both the conservatives and liberals had opposed Maximilian, bringing about a spirit of commonality between the two. President Juárez died in office in 1872.
1876-1911	The Porfiriato: In November 1876, General Porfirio Díaz occupied Mexico City and took the presidency in early 1877. Presidential elections in 1877 gave Díaz the presidency and he served almost continuously to 1911.
Source: Will Fowler, "Mexico In the Age of Proposals, 1821-1853" (1998). Appendix 1.	

Foreign Intervention (1829-1867)

- **Spain (1829):** Spain had refused to recognize the independence of Mexico and plotted to regain its former dominion. A Spanish invasion of Tampico, Tamaulipas in 1829 failed, and in 1836, Spain finally recognized Mexican independence.
- **France: The Pastry War (1838–1839):** To satisfy the claims of French nationals (due to unrest in Mexico), France blockaded Mexican ports and seized the Veracruz fortress in 1838. The war ended in March 1839 with a British-brokered peace.
- **The Mexican-American War (April 1846 - February 1848):** Outnumbered militarily with many of its large cities occupied and with numerous internal divisions, Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, turning over about 900,000 square miles of territory (roughly 55% of Mexico's total territory) to the U.S. for \$15 million. Roughly 75,000 non-indigenous people inhabited the area.
- **The French Intervention (Dec. 1861 – June 1867):** In 1861, France, Britain, and Spain made a joint effort to extract repayment of debts from the Mexican government. However, when the British and the Spanish discovered that France had unilaterally planned to seize Mexico, they withdrew from the coalition. The subsequent French invasion of the Mexican republic created the Second Mexican Empire, a client state of Imperial France.

Estado de Occidente and Indigenous Citizenship

The **State of Occidente** (also known as **Sonora y Sinaloa**) was a Mexican state established in 1824 after independence from Spain. The state consisted of modern Sonora and Sinaloa, and also modern Arizona more or less south of the Gila River (although in much of this area, **the Yaqui, Pima, Apaches and other native inhabitants** did not recognize the authority of the state).

Indigenous People as Citizens

Occidente's State Constitution declared that all inhabitants – including the indigenous people – would become citizens. This was resented by the Yaqui since they now had to pay taxes, which they had been exempt from before. **The Yaquis also considered themselves possessed of sovereignty and territorial rights which were threatened by the state's new constitution.** This led to a new outbreak of war between the Mexicans and the Yaquis. In 1830 Occidente was split into two separate states, Sonora and Sinaloa.

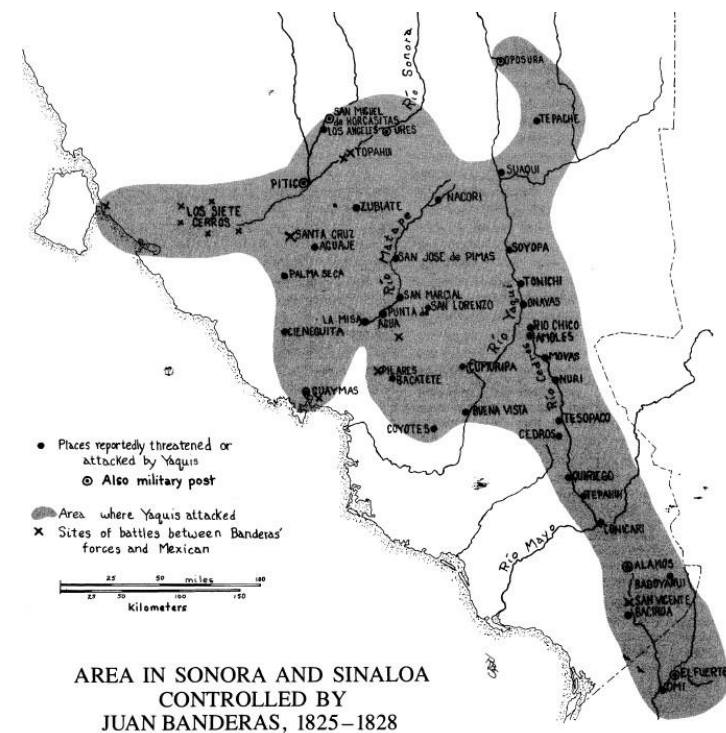


Estado de Occidente

The Yaquis in Rebellion

Since Mexican independence was declared in 1821, the Yaquis – and other Sonora natives – had developed a conception of themselves as independent of any political entities. They believed they were simply following the ideology of the Mexican War of Independence.

In fact, the **Yaquis believed they would be given representation in the Mexican Congress as an independent state and people.** In addition, the **privatization of Yaqui lands** led to numerous disputes and eventually rebellion.



At various points between 1825 and 1832, a Yaqui named **Juan Banderas** created an **indigenous confederation of Yaquis, Mayos, Opatas and Seris.** The map (above left) shows the area that Juan Banderas and the Yaquis controlled at their pinnacle. But, eventually Juan Banderas was captured and executed.

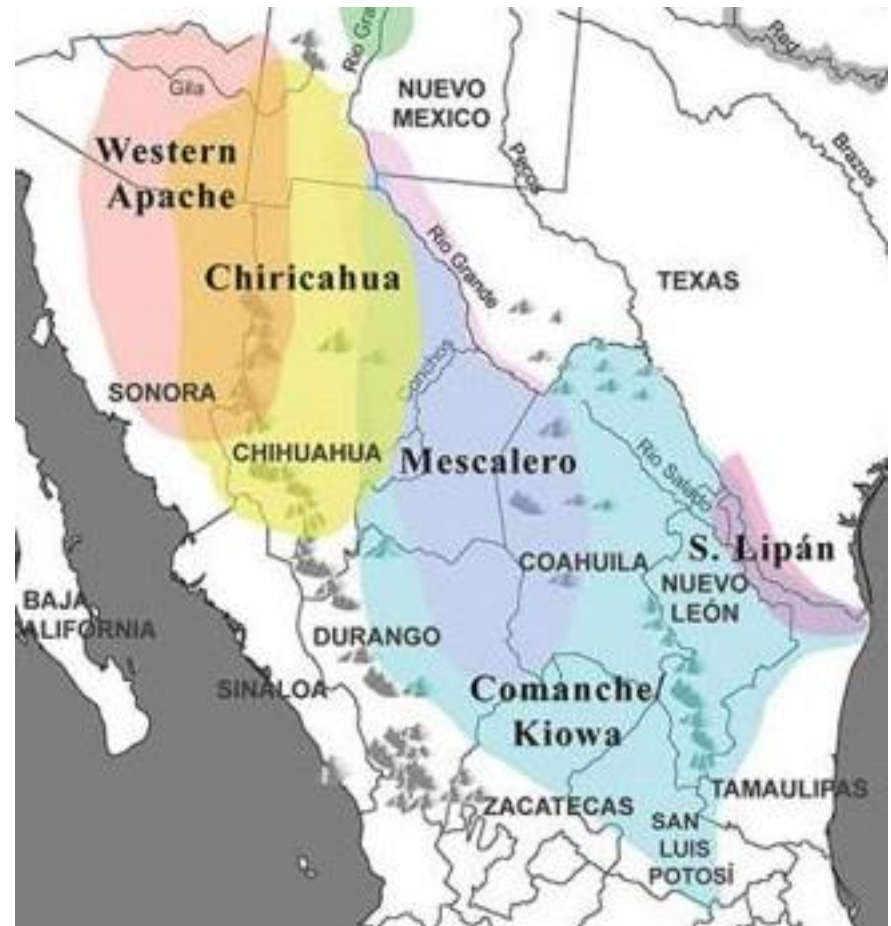
The Mayos and Opatas in Sonora eventually settled down to peaceful ways, but **the Yaquis continued their resistance off and on until 1929.** In fact, according to Dr. Shelley Bowen Hatfield, a government study published in 1905 cited 270 instances of either Yaqui or Mayo warfare between 1529 and 1902, excluding eighty-five years of relative peace between 1740 and 1825.

Source: Edward H. Spicer, "The Yaquis a Cultural History" (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1980), pp. 126-135. The map is from page 133.

The Apache Rebellion

In 1786, Mexican viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez initiated a system of reservations known as “*Establecimientos de paz*” (*Peace Establishments*). This system taught the Apaches sedentary ways of living and settling within the Spanish Empire. By 1793, there were eight Apache establecimientos (six under presidio protection), in which 2,000 Apaches became acquainted with farming, agriculture and Christianity. This resulted in a dramatic drop in Apache raids on Mexican towns.

But, with Mexican independence, the Mexican Federal government ended the reserves, rations and support. In 1831 and the following years, the Apaches abandoned the presidios and resumed their resistance to the government. **Between 1820 and 1835, Apaches raided throughout Sonora and Chihuahua, and an estimated 5,000 Mexicans on the frontier died at their hands.**



Zones of Interethnic Conflict, Circa 1844:

Map Source: Brian LeLay, “The U.S.-Mexican War: Forgotten Foes.”
Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies, Fall 2010.

Apache and Comanche Warfare

In the early 1830s, both Sonora and Chihuahua were subjected to growing Chiricahua Apache expansion. By the 1850s, the Apaches were conducting frequent raiding parties in Sonora, Chihuahua and Coahuila, while Comanche depredations plagued Coahuila and Nuevo León.

Both Sonora and Chihuahua adopted Apache extermination policies, offering large sums of money for Apache scalps. This policy, however, made the Apaches fight even more desperately.

During 1849-53, Comanche and Apache raids in Coahuila resulted in 191 deaths. An 1848 report blamed Apaches for the depopulation of 26 mines, 30 haciendas and 90 ranches in Sonora.

The Apache leaders, Geronimo and Cochise, led attacks against both the U.S. and Mexico during the 1860s and 1870s, after which the Apache threat to Mexico ended.



The Traditional Chiricahua Apache territory

Sources: Shelley Bowen Hatfield, *Chasing Shadows: Apaches and Yaquis Along the United States-Mexico Border, 1876-1911* (University of New Mexico Press, 1997); William B. Griffen, "Apaches at War and Peace: The Janos Presidio, 1750-1858" (University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Brian LeLay, "The U.S.-Mexican War: Forgotten Foes." *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies*, Fall 2010.

The Yucatán Peninsula

The Maya ethnohistorian, Ralph L. Roys, wrote that at the time of the Spanish arrival in Yucatán in the 1530s, the Peninsula consisted of “**sixteen native states.**” (See the map at the upper right.) The spirit of Mayan independence continued through the centuries even after the end of the colonial period. Yucatán became an independent republic in May 1823, but joined the Mexican federation later that year.

The second Republic of Yucatán began in 1841, with its declaration of independence from the Mexican Federation. It remained independent until 1848. At that time, Yucatán included the modern Mexican states of Yucatán, Campeche and Quintana Roo. (See the map at the lower right.) However, in 1848, the government in Yucatán rejoined Mexico, seeking economic and military assistance with its caste war.

Sources: Ralph L. Roys, "The Political Geography of the Yucatan Maya" (1957); Wikipedia, "Republic of Yucatán." Online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Yucatán.



The Yucatán Caste War (1847-48)

The Caste War began in 1847. Within three months of the beginning of the rebellion, indigenous forces under General Cecilio Chi had conquered roughly four-fifths of the peninsula from Spanish/Mexican rule. Only the walled cities of Campeche and Mérida and portions of the southwest remained under European control.

But, as the Mayan army advanced on Mérida during the spring of 1848, the Mayans suddenly broke off their attack and returned to their fields to plant their corn, in observance of Mayan tradition. The maize planting season had arrived and the Mayans felt a strong responsibility to provide food for their families.

In May 1848, the Yucatan state, reinforced with arms from Mexico, Spain and the U.S., managed to retake the initiative and gradually beat the rebels back into the forests in what is now the State of Quintana Roo. Defeated and demoralized, the surviving leaders created a new movement that was inspired by the apparition of the **“Talking Cross.”** An organization called Chan Santa Cruz (“Little Holy Cross”) took shape. The followers of the Talking Cross became known as the **"Cruzoob"**.

The Yucatán Peninsula: Stalemate

In the 1850s a stalemate developed, with the Yucatecan government in control of the northwest, and the Maya – sometimes known as the **“Mayas Cruzoob”** – in control of the south and east (See the map at the upper right.)

The Maya rebels went through various factional conflicts, but continued their resistance until they finally made peace with the Mexican revolutionary state in the 1920s and 1930s. The Maya insurgents held most of the region of Quintana Roo until the turn of the century. Quintana Roo became a territory in 1902 and a state in 1974.

Today, the Yucatán Peninsula consists of three Mexican states instead of the three that occupied the peninsula at the time of independence. (See the map at the lower right.)



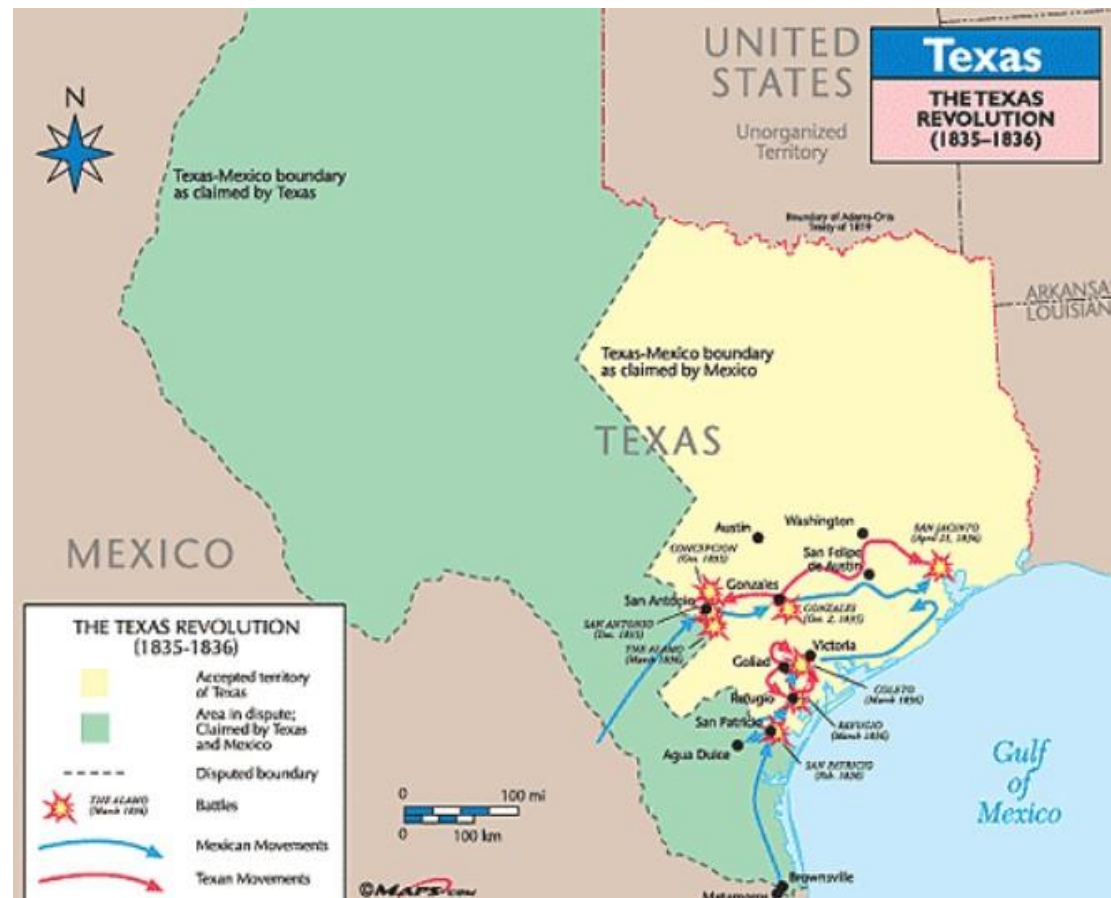
Source: Pinterest, “La Guerra de Castas.”

Online: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/2f/c3/9e/2fc39e97d9fcca6aa2938ab7e0c6cda9.jpg>

Texas Independence

In 1822, the Mexican government granted Stephen Austin and a group of settlers, known as the **Old Three Hundred**, the right to settle along the Brazos River. Mexico had neither the manpower nor the funds to protect settlers from the frequent Comanche raids and it hoped that getting more settlers into the area could control the raids.

To circumvent Mexico's law prohibiting slavery, Many of the Texas settlers converted their slaves into indentured servants "for life." By 1836 there were 5,000 African-Americans slaves in Texas.



From 1835 to April 1836, General Santa Anna attempted to suppress a rebellion by Texas settlers. Although initially successful, General Santa Anna's army was defeated at the Battle of San Jacinto (April 21, 1836). Captured by the forces of General Sam Houston, Santa Anna recognized Texas independence in May 1836. Meanwhile, in Mexico City, a new government declared that Santa Anna was no longer president and that the treaty he had made with Texas was null and void.

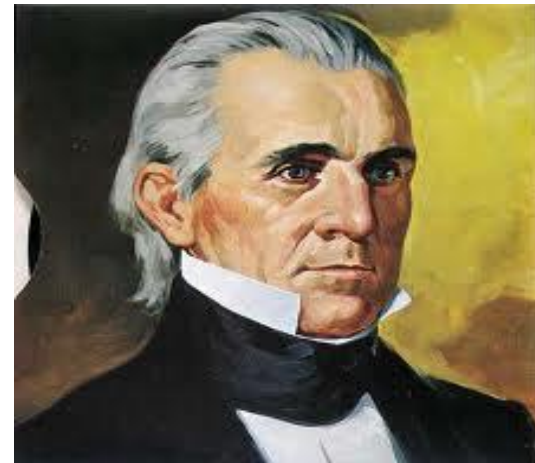
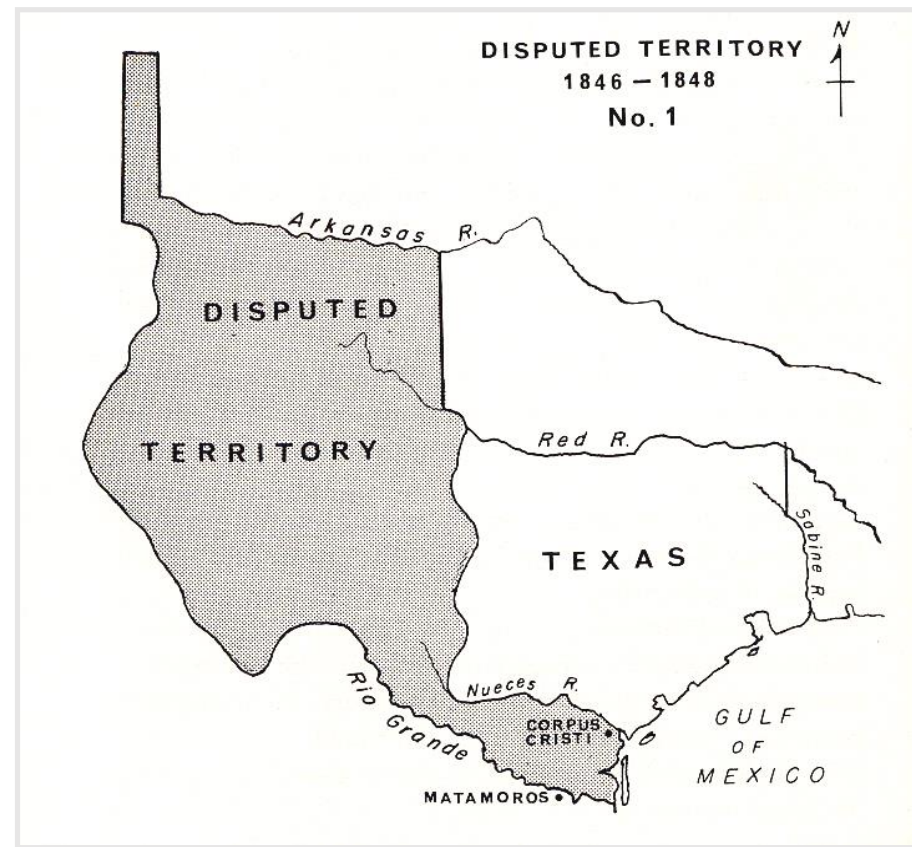
The Mexican-American War

For nearly a decade, Texas existed as an independent republic, but in 1845, the young republic joined the United States as the 28th state.

When James K. Polk became the President of the U.S. in 1845, he had his eyes on California, New Mexico and the rest of what is today the U.S. Southwest. When his offer to purchase those lands was rejected by Mexico, he instigated a fight by moving troops into a disputed zone between the Rio Grande and Nueces River that both countries had previously recognized as part of the Mexican state of Coahuila.

The Mexican government had warned the U.S. that the annexation of Texas would lead to war.

Map Source: UTEP, "A Line in the Sand: Indigenous Peoples and the Emergence of the US-Mexico Border, 1840s-1860s."



James K.
Polk, The 11th
U.S. President

Campaigns of the Mexican American War (1846-48)



Map Source: UTEP, "A Line in the Sand: Indigenous Peoples and the Emergence of the US-Mexico Border, 1840s-1860s."

The Mexican-American War

On April 25, 1846, Mexican cavalry attacked a group of U.S. soldiers in the disputed zone under the command of General Zachary Taylor, killing about a dozen. President Polk complained that “American blood” had been shed “upon American soil,” and on May 13, 1846 Congress declared war, despite opposition from some northern lawmakers. No official declaration of war ever came from Mexico.

Immediately, U.S. forces moved south. Mexico turned to General Santa Anna, the charismatic strongman who had been living in exile in Cuba. Santa Anna had convinced Polk that, if allowed to return to Mexico, he would end the war on terms favorable to the United States. But when he arrived, he immediately double-crossed Polk by taking control of the Mexican army and leading it into battle. At the Battle of Buena Vista in February 1847, Santa Anna suffered heavy casualties and was forced to withdraw. Despite the loss, he assumed the Mexican presidency the following month.

U.S. troops led by Gen. Winfield Scott marched from the Port of Veracruz to Mexico City. In September 1847, Scott successfully laid siege to Mexico City’s Chapultepec Castle. During that clash, a group of young military school cadets defended the military academy. They carried on fighting bravely until they were all killed, and are still commemorated today as the “**Niños Héroes.**”

In 1848, Santa Anna was forced to sign **the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**, selling for \$15 million dollars more than half of the Mexican territory. As a result, Santa Anna became very unpopular and lost power. Eventually he was forced into exile.

The Liberals vs. the Conservatives

As stated earlier, the dispute between the Conservatives and Liberals would dominate Mexican politics for the next few decades. Characteristics of both ideologies are listed below:

Characteristics of the Conservatives

- Creation of a strong central state (political centralism).
- Impulse to economic protectionism.
- Support for agricultural growth, but without transforming the agrarian structure owned by the Church.
- Creation of a modern industrial sector, incorporating capital and advanced technology (especially English).
- Government intervention to promote economic growth.

Characteristics of the Liberals

- Construction of a federal Republic
- Promoting free trade with other countries.
- Reform of the clerical and communal agrarian structure, to develop private property and the internal market.
- Development of political and economic conditions that allow the formation of capitalism.
- Individual impulse to agro-export activities.

War of the Reform (1858-1861)

In 1858, Benito Juárez, a Zapotec Indian lawyer from Oaxaca, became President. Juárez was a well-known liberal and his actions led to a three-year war between the Conservatives and the Liberals, **The War of the Reform**. The Liberals lacked military experience and lost most of the early battles, but the tide turned when Conservatives twice failed to take the liberal stronghold of Veracruz. The government of U.S. President James Buchanan recognized the Juárez regime in April 1859.



The Conservatives were decisively defeated in early 1861 and, in March of that year, the Juárez was elected President. After the liberal victory was achieved, Juarez promulgated Reform Laws, establishing nationalization of ecclesiastical properties without compensation, as well as suppression of religious orders.

Foreign Intervention (1861)

Three years of civil war had severely damaged Mexico's infrastructure and crippled its economy. By 1861, Benito Juárez decided that Mexico was too poor to pay back its debts. Therefore, Juárez and the Mexican Congress decided to suspend the payment of foreign debt to Spain, England and France for two years. The debt owed the U.S. was not suspended due to its support of Juárez and his government.

In October 1861, Spain, England and France sent a joint army to Mexico to get payment on the debt. The joint foreign forces took control of the eastern coastal region of Mexico, including Veracruz. After some negotiations, Spain and England decided to leave, but France decided to stay. The timing was perfect, because the United States was in the middle of its own Civil War, so it could not protest the French intrusion.

Some Conservative factions in Mexico were trying to install a European-style monarchy and found France to be their new ally in this goal.

France, ruled by **Napoleon III (Napoleon Bonaparte's nephew)**, wanted to expand its empire to the Americas and establish a monarchy favorable to France in Mexico, Central and South America. Napoleon III also wanted a monopoly on raw materials from the Americas

The French troops landed in Veracruz between December 1861 and January 1862 and continued on to the capital.



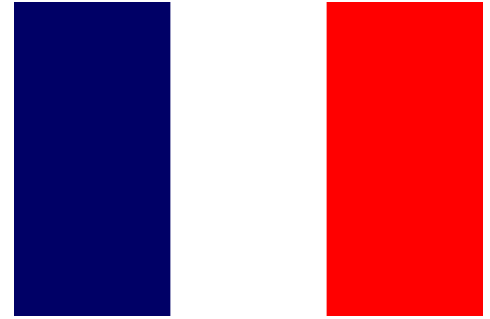
Napoleon III of France

The French in Mexico

The French troops encountered relatively little effective resistance to their occupation. One notable exception was the defeat they suffered on May 5, 1862 (***Cinco de Mayo***) at the city of Puebla. But this was only a temporary set back. Soon, the French troops captured Mexico City and set up a government of conservative elements of Mexican society. This government then chose to make Mexico an empire and to invite an Austrian Habsburg, **Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph**, to be the emperor.

In June of 1864 Maximilian and his wife Carlotta – a Belgian princess – arrived in Mexico City to rule the French-imposed empire. Although chosen by conservative elements in Mexico City, Maximilian was something of a liberal. So his support for liberal measures soon alienated the conservative elements of Mexico.

Eventually, political necessities in France forced the withdrawal of French troops and the end of the Civil War in the U.S. brought American supplies and support. In May of 1867 Maximilian surrendered and was executed in June of that year.

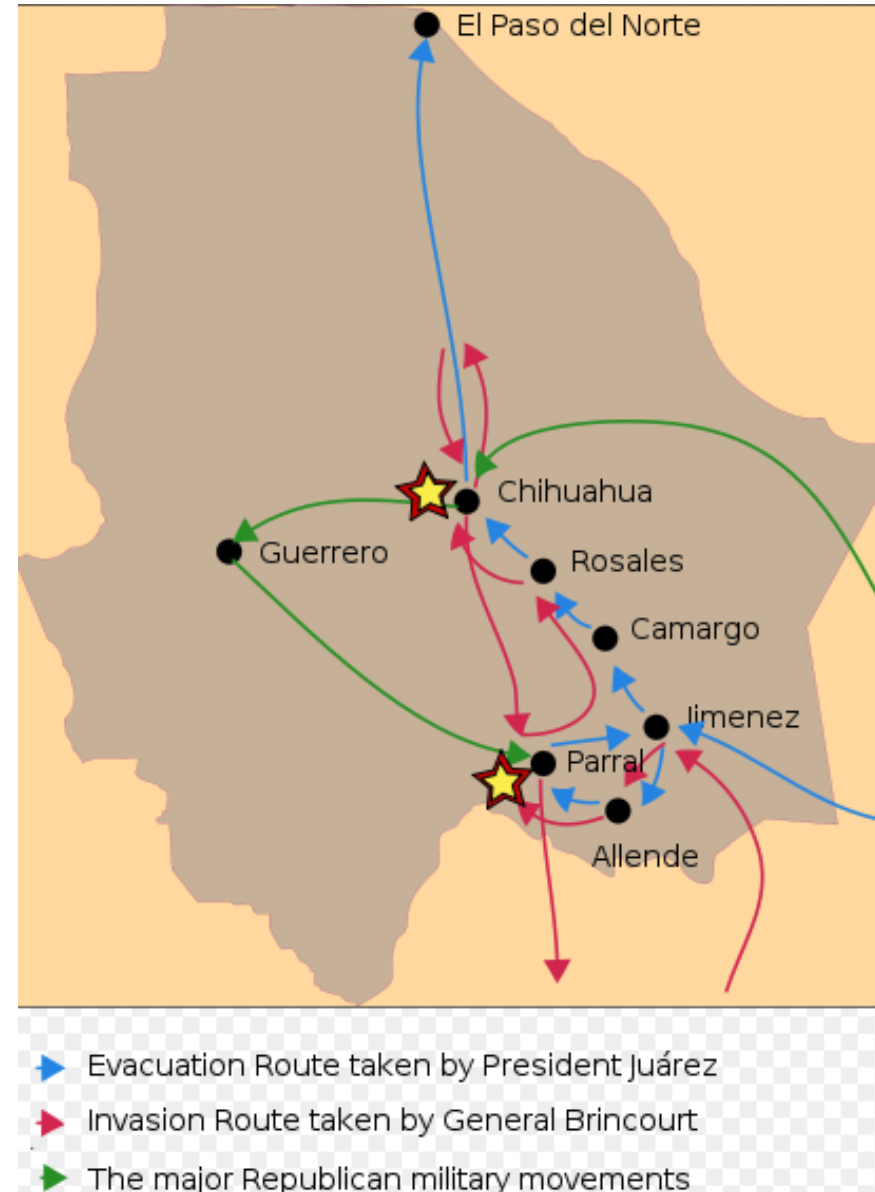


Emperor Maximilian

The Flight of Benito Juárez (1862-1867)

After the Mexican army was routed by the French invaders, the **Benito Juárez Administration** was forced to abandon Mexico City and made its way up to Saltillo, Coahuila. However, by September 1864, French advances forced President Juárez to relocate once again to Chihuahua. Finding enormous support from the people of Chihuahua, **Juárez declared the City of Chihuahua to be the temporary capital of Mexico in October 1864.**

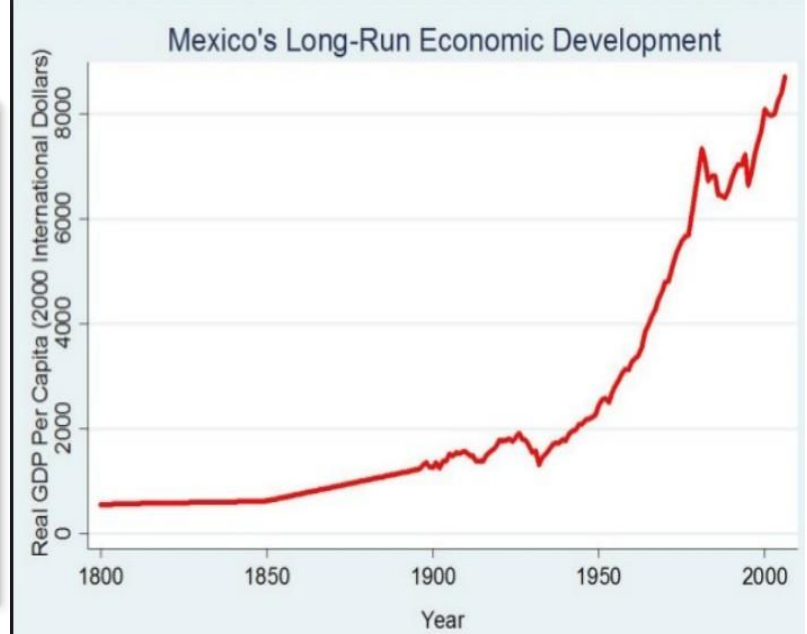
French General Agustín Enrique Brincourt advanced into Chihuahua in July 1865 and took control of the capital during the next month. By then, **Juárez had moved his government to El Paso del Norte (now Ciudad Juárez).** In spite of their military strength, the French — fearing an altercation with the U.S. if they moved farther north — left the State of Chihuahua on October 29, 1865. Benito Juárez returned to Mexico City in June of 1867 and later that year was elected president. He died in office in 1872.



Source: Wikipedia, "Chihuahua (State)."

The Porfiriato and the Economy

General Porfirio Díaz took power in 1876 and remained in power for the next 35 years. Mexico's economy — which had remained stagnant for three decades following independence — began to grow. Mexico was opened to foreign investment and, to a lesser extent, foreign workers. Foreign capital helped to build a nationwide railway network.



During this long tenure, Díaz concentrated on building up a political machine and putting down rebellions. He gave government jobs to mestizos and secured the support of the Creole class by leaving their land holdings alone. Likewise he gained the support of the Church by leaving Church properties untouched (in contrast to Juárez).

While Díaz' economic policy encouraged foreign investment, he was highly protectionist in trade policy. In the political sphere Díaz was a tyrant. He was a centrist and he virtually destroyed the political structures at the state level.

Díaz was forced to resign the presidency on May 25, 1911 and went into exile in France. However, the Revolution that ravaged Mexico from 1910 to 1920 wreaked havoc on Mexico's economy once again.