



Mexico — Va-PoReg Country Report

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09/27/1821 Start Military Autocracy: On 09/27/1821 the Mexican Empire, an autocratic monarchy, declared its independence from Spain.¹ Porfirio Diaz seized power by means of a coup with the help of his supporters in 1876. He was elected president in 1877. He first stepped down after the end of his mandate in 1880. In 1884, however, he abandoned the principle of non-reelection and took office until 1911.² On 06/26/1910 general elections were held in Mexico. They were supposed to be the first free and fair elections under the rule of Diaz. However, Diaz imprisoned the opposition leader Madero. The latter was very popular, but after the elections, Diaz was controversially declared the winner with 99% of the vote.³ Francisco I. Madero subsequently published the Plan of San Luis Potosi which called for an armed uprising against Diaz. This marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution.⁴ According to LIED executive and legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held until 1909, from 1910 onward executive and legislative elections were held. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not truly present in this timeframe. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

11/09/1911 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy: Madero was elected as president of Mexico.⁵ We code this regime change event as a result of a popular uprising, since Diaz had resigned in May 1911 and went into exile due to the pressure from widespread uprisings, making room for a new government to be elected.⁶ Due to Madero, the freedom of press was guaranteed, and opposition was able to operate. Even though he could have ruled more autocratically, he decided to constrain himself to democratic means. However, the regime was fragile and faced rebellions within the context of the Mexican Revolution.⁷ Multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period (see also LIED), but they were highly exclusive and not competitive (see also LIED). According to Vanhanen (2019) only 0.1 percentage of the population participated in the election.⁸ Concerning political liberties, they were absent according to LIED and ambiguous following V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

02/18/1913 End Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy/Start Military (Personalist) Autocracy: During the Ten Tragic Days, Madero was forced to resign and was later assassinated.⁹ Though a military coup Brigadier General Victoriano Huerta took over power (Womack 1986: 93, Knight 2013: 122, Casey et al. 2020: 11-12) and became president. While according to LIED executive and legislative elections were present in 1913, the elections scheduled for 10/26 were a stunt by Huerta to secure legitimacy. Huerta commanded the Mexican military to vote for him and unsurprisingly won the fraudulent election.¹⁰ Thus, there were neither legitimate executive nor legislative elections in this period. In 1913, LIED identifies political liberties as absent by LIED, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is similarly classified by us as indicating that legislative

constraints on the executive were limited.

07/15/1914 End Military (Personalist) Autocracy/Start No Central Authority: After the revolutionary armies had defeated the Federal Army, Huerta fled the country on this date. The revolutionary armies then continued to fight each other. The period can best be described as a rule of warlords. According to LIED only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. In 1914, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

08/02/1915 End No Central Authority/Start Military Autocracy: On this date, the constitutionalist faction of the military successfully vanquished the forces led by Francisco Villa. Subsequently, the loyalist forces aligned with Carranza regained control of Mexico City, prevailing over various other revolutionary factions and securing dominance over the majority of the nation. By September 1915, the government under Carranza's leadership received recognition from the United States and several other nations. In 1916, Carranza convened the assembly in Queretaro, culminating in the promulgation of the Mexican constitution, thereby formalizing the post-revolutionary regime that endured until 2000 (Braderman 1940: 242, Haggerty 1997, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 78).¹¹ The new constitution was promulgated in February 1917. It asserted universal male suffrage.¹² Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In addition to that, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PLCI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not really present for that period. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

03/11/1917 End Military Autocracy/Start (Male) Electoral Autocracy: On this date, the first general elections after the Mexican Revolution took place. Venustiano Carranza of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party won 97% of the vote and took office for a term until 1920.¹³ No greater irregularities were reported but only male suffrage was accepted.¹⁴ LIED indicates no competitiveness during this time. Moreover, V-Dem's CEI scores not really cleanliness. V-Dem's EF&FI declares ambiguous election conditions. Regarding political liberties, they were absent according to LIED and not really present following V-Dem's PCLI. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. On 05/21/1920 Carranza chose Ignacio Bonillas to succeed him as a president in the 1920 elections.¹⁵ However, Bonillas became a figurehead and Carranza de facto maintained power. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED.

04/22[&23]/1920 End (Male) Electoral Autocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, Álvaro Obregón, a general in the Mexican Revolution, de la Huerta and Calles, all from the Mexican state of Sonora, launched a coup as a reaction to the Plan of Agua.¹⁶ Carranza died during the insurgencies.¹⁷ Adolfo de la Huerta became interim president.¹⁸ According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

09/05/1920 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Male) Electoral Autocracy: On this date, Obregón won the general elections with a vast majority.¹⁹ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. These elections were considered as not competitive by LIED. Both V-Dem's CEI and V-Dem's EF&FI score no cleanliness and no electoral freedom and fairness. Additionally, political liberties remained absent (LIED) and not really present (V-Dem PCLI). In 1923, Adolfo de la Huerta attempted to launch a coup against Obregón after

Obregón had named Plutarco Elías Calles as his successor. However, the coup ultimately failed, allowing Obregón to maintain his position and further consolidate his authority.²⁰ At that time, women's suffrage had not yet been established in Mexico.²¹ On 07/06/1924, Plutarco Elías Calles was elected as president in an election that cannot be considered as free and fair.²² Calles' presidency can be divided into two phases: populist and repressive anti-clerical. In the latter beginning in 1926 he took aggressive and brutal stances against the church and incited the so called Cristero War. This was an armed conflict with the rebellion against the Calles Regime's anti-clerical laws.²³ In the general elections on 11/17/1929 the National Revolutionary Party, founded in 1928, (renamed Party of the Mexican Revolution in 1938 and finally, Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 1946), made its debut. From then on, the party ruled uninterruptedly for 71 years. But it was also a period of political stability, which was almost unique in Latin America. Presidential elections and parliamentary elections were held regularly, presidents were elected constitutionally and they served out their term (Nohlen 2005). The PRI dominated not only the presidential elections, but also the chamber of congress and local governments. Hence, electoral competition no longer effectively represented the political and social conflicts within Mexican society (Nohlen 2005). The presidential elections in 1940, 1952 and 1988 were marked by massive electoral fraud and were denounced by domestic and international observers.²⁴ Suffrage was given to women in municipal elections in 1947 and national elections in 1953.²⁵ For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited until 1928 and otherwise absent.

07/06/1958 Continuation Electoral Autocracy: On this date, women officially participated in general elections in Mexico for the first time during the presidential elections. This marked an important step toward political equality and the active participation of women in the country's political process. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. However, electoral competitiveness was absent during the entire time (LIED). V-Dem's CEI scores no clean elections until 1982. Since 1983 no real cleanliness is provided. The overall election conditions were not free and fair until 1981 except between 1967 and 1969 and from 1976 to 1978 when they were classified as not really free and fair. Since 1982 not real freedom and fairness is given (V-Dem EF&FI). Additionally, LIED maintained its absent scores regarding the political liberties. V-Dem's PCLI considers them as not really present until 1933. Then the scores switched to ambiguous until 1977. Since 1978, political liberties were somewhat present. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

07/06/1988 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, general elections were held in Mexico. They were the first relatively competitive presidential elections in Mexico since the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) took power in 1929.²⁶ However, the elections were widely considered as fraudulent, with Salinas de Gortari and the PRI resorting to electoral tampering to remain in power.²⁷ From 1990 to 1996, the PRI had gradually transferred control over the electoral machinery to an independent Federal Election Institute (IFE), which guaranteed a more free and fair election in 1997 than in the past (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 42). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections were considered as not competitive according to LIED. V-Dem's CEI scores first not real cleanliness until 1990 and ambiguous cleanliness until 1995. V-Dem's EF&FI declares elections in 1988 and 1989 as ambiguous and somewhat free and fair afterwards. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating an ambiguous status of political liberties. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were

absent.

07/06/1997 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Electoral Democracy: The dominant party, the PRI, lost its absolute congressional majority in the 1997 congressional elections following several decades of gradual political liberalization and institutional reform (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 42). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. V-Dem's CEI scores clean elections since 1996. V-Dem's EF&FI declares somewhat free and fair election conditions except for the first two years of the democratic transition they were ambiguous. In addition to that LIED's outcomes are still absent and V-Dem's PCLI still indicate a somewhat presence of political liberties. As per Polity5's classification, the executive experienced moderate limitations on authority, placing it in the second intermediate category. On 07/02/2000, competitive presidential elections were won by the opposition (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 78) for the first time since 1929. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The elections were not competitive until 1999. For the remaining time electoral competitiveness was present (LIED). From 1997 to 1999 somewhat cleanliness was achieved. Since 2000 the country scored clean elections (V-Dem CEI). V-Dem's EF&FI declares freedom and fairness for the election except from 1997 to 1999 somewhat freedom and fairness is stated. However, political liberties are still not achieved according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as somewhat present until 1999. From 2000 to 2012 and from 2018 to 2019 full political liberties are achieved. The remaining years, V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties were somewhat present. In 1997 and 1998, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks. Since 1999, based on Polity5's evaluation, the executive's power was limited to a degree between substantial constraints and parity with other institutions, fitting Intermediate Category 3. On 12/11/2006, Operation Michoacán commenced, marking the inception of an ongoing collaborative effort between the Mexican federal police and the military aimed at combating organized crime within Mexico.²⁸ This operation marked the onset of a gradual escalation in the war on drugs, as evidenced by a near doubling of casualty figures between 2006 and 2011.²⁹ Both the 2012 and 2015 elections were generally regarded as free and fair, although complaints persisted. The main allegations in 2012 revolved around purported instances of vote buying and collusion between the PRI and the prominent broadcaster Televisa, sparking a notable anti-PRI student movement. At the state level, allegations of misusing public resources to favor specific gubernatorial candidates were common. The 2013 political reform expanded the INE's authority to oversee state elections, and the agency was widely seen as competently managing the voting process in the 2015 midterms and 2016 state races. Nonetheless, political analysts criticized the INE for its reluctance to adequately penalize campaign violations. Numerous irregularities were reported in the 2016 elections, including carousel voting and ballot destruction, with the highest number of reports originating from Veracruz State.³⁰ The general election on 06/02/2024, was historically significant as it featured mostly female presidential contenders and was marked by high political violence. Claudia Sheinbaum, representing the ruling MORENA coalition, won the presidency in a decisive landslide, becoming Mexico's first female president. Through subsequent political defections, her coalition secured a supermajority in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, heavily consolidating the government's power.³¹ However, according to LIED electoral competitiveness is present for the entire time. V-Dem's CEI declares somewhat cleanliness for the entire time except for 2020. Moreover, the overall election conditions were somewhat free and fair from 2006 to 2008 and from 2012 to 2014. For the remaining years freedom and fairness are achieved (V-Dem's EF&FI). Despite the presence of regular and competitive elections, a nominally independent judiciary, and constitutionally safeguarded civil liberties, the persistent conflict between state forces and cartels significantly impairs the effective functioning of these institutions. The judiciary is plagued by corruption and unpredictability and journalists and politicians face a high risk of physical harm. The judicial elections on 06/01/2025, were the first in history to elect all federal judges by popular vote, a process stemming from the controversial „Plan C“ reform in 2024. Despite historically low turnout (13%) and widespread criticism that the election undermined judicial independence, the ruling

MORENA party won a dominant share of seats across the federal judiciary.³² Furthermore, human rights groups report about a myriad of human rights abuses by the Mexican military and organized crime (Freedom House, 2016: 453).³³ Freedom House classifies Mexico for the majority of this period as partly free. Based on Polity5's evaluation, during this period, the executive's power was limited to a degree between substantial constraints and parity with other institutions, fitting Intermediate Category 3. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate between 1995-1999 and 2021-2023 and otherwise robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited between 1995-1996 and 2022-2023, moderate between 1997-1999, 2015-2016 and 2018-2021 and otherwise robust.

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Casar 2002, Greene 2007, Langston/Morgenstern 2009, Weldon 1997, Domínguez 2002)

Notes

¹ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porfirio_D%C3%ADaz

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porfirio_D%C3%ADaz

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1910_Mexican_general_election

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Revolution

⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_I._Madero#Madero_presidency_\(November_1911_%E2%80%93_February_1913\);](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_I._Madero#Madero_presidency_(November_1911_%E2%80%93_February_1913);)
<https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/mexico/election1911.html>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Revolution

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Revolution

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Tragic_Days

¹⁰ <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mexican-revolution-and-the-united-states/huerta-as-president.html>

¹¹ <http://tinyurl.com/93n8z44>

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Revolution

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1917_Mexican_general_election

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venustiano_Carranza
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Mexico#Women%E2%80%99s_suffrage

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%81varo_Obreg%C3%B3n#President_of_Mexico,_1920%E2%80%931924

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%81varo_Obreg%C3%B3n

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_Revolution

¹⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Adolfo-de-la-Huerta>

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920_Mexican_general_election

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolfo_de_la_Huerta

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Mexico#Calles_presidency,_1924%E2%80%931928

²³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Mexico#Cristero_War_\(1926%E2%80%931929\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Mexico#Cristero_War_(1926%E2%80%931929))

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutional_Revolutionary_Party

²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutional_Revolutionary_Party

²⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/3t5qcbn>

²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1988_Mexican_general_election

²⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Michoac%C3%A1n#Background

²⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_drug_war#Escalation_\(2008%E2%80%932012\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_drug_war#Escalation_(2008%E2%80%932012))

³⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mexico/freedom-world/2017>

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Mexican_general_election

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Mexican_judicial_elections

³³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mexico/freedom-world/2023>

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