

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Mexico

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2007</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>10</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	8	8	0	Democ:	8	8	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		10		Tentative:		No		<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1946-2007: Mexico</p>
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SCODE	MEX	CCODE	070	Date of Report	1 November 2008																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	6	2	4																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		15 August 1994	Begin Date		6 July 1997																				
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1917																								
Executive(s)	President Felipe Calderón (PAN), on 5 September 2006 declared winner of the disputed presidential elections of 2 July 2006 with 35.9% of the vote; inaugurated 1 December 2006																								
Legislature	Bicameral: Chamber of Deputies (500 seats; 300 directly elected, 200 proportionally elected; most recent elections, 2 July 2006) National Action Party (PAN): 206 Party of the Democratic Revolution and allies (PRD): 160 Institutional Revolutionary Party and allies (PRI): 121 Other parties: 13 Chamber of Senators (128 seats; 96 directly elected, 32 proportionally elected; most recent elections, 2 July 2006) PAN: 52 PRI and allies: 38 PRD and allies: 36 Other parties: 2																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was able to maintain one-party rule and control of the presidency in Mexico for over 70 years starting in 1929. However, by the end of the 20th century the PRI's institutional hold on power began to wane. The PRI lost its absolute majority in the lower house for the first time in the 1997 legislative elections and the two main opposition parties, the National Action Party (PAN) and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), became firmly established actors in the increasingly open political process. The July 2000 presidential elections provided more evidence of the PRI's diminishing hold on Mexican politics. Not only did the PRI display considerable internal disagreement by holding, for the first time, primary elections to nominate its candidate for president but lost the presidency, for the first time, to its main rival, the National Action Party. President Vicente Fox Quesada was elected on an anti-corruption platform that demanded "change!" in Mexican politics.

In July 2006 the candidate for the ruling PAN party, Felipe Calderon, won a bitterly-fought election over his left-wing rival, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Losing by less than 1% of the vote, Obrador, a populist former mayor of Mexico City and candidate of the PRD, claimed that Calderon won the July 2006 polls by fraud. While international observers deemed the elections to be free and fair, Obrador challenged the outcome of the polls both in the courts and on the streets. Despite the fact that tens of thousands of pro-Obrador supporters led a six month protest campaign in the streets of Mexico City, the courts eventually confirmed Calderon's victory and he took office on 1 December 2006. Since its inception in the late 1980s, the left wing PRD has been conquering elective offices at all levels of government except the presidency, which remains the most valued prize in Mexican politics. While the political institutions were able to resolve the electoral crisis in 2006, nonetheless, the Mexican political system, like many other political systems in Latin America in recent years, has become increasingly destabilized by populist efforts to overturn the electoral process through street protests.

Executive Constraints: Near Parity (6)

Mexico's constitution provides for a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; however, with the domination of politics by the PRI, the executive's powers have far exceeded those of the other branches. Party hierarchy in Mexico's one-party state, the fact that legislators are elected for short non-renewable terms, and the large and diverse legislature have all made it easier for executive authority to overshadow legislative power. In addition, the president has enjoyed extensive patronage powers as well as constitutional powers to legislate by decree in certain economic areas. However, the PRI's dominance has diminished considerably over the years. With the PRI now sitting as the oppositional party, President Fox will operate under considerable partisan constraints on executive power. However, the PRI seems to be regaining some popular support as legislative elections in 2003 increased the number of PRI (and allied) legislators in the Chamber of Deputies to 223, compared to PAN's 155. The PRI has also made strides in state-level politics with PRI candidates winning numerous gubernatorial elections in 2003 and 2004. Regional governments have continued to show greater autonomy and resistance to central government initiatives. The judiciary is deemed to be generally independent but is occasionally subjected to influences from the executive branch; judicial effectiveness is impeded by the courts' limited resources and work overload.

Political Participation: Political Liberalization: Limited and/or Decreasing Overt Coercion (9)

The PRI, the oldest and largest political party, has historically enjoyed significant electoral advantages in patronage, incumbency, and fund-raising and, subsequently, won every presidential and legislative election between 1929 and 1997. In addition, some of these electoral victories involved credible allegations of fraudulent practices. However, in largely free and fair elections in 1997, the PRI lost its absolute majority in the lower house for the first time. While once virtually unchallenged, since this time the PRI has faced considerable competition from both the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN). Presidential elections in 2000 brought the PAN candidate, Vicente Fox Quesada, to power, signaling the first time the PRI had ever lost the presidency. While the hegemonic position of the PRI has

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

ended, it has not yet been replaced by a fully regulated system of political competition. As demonstrated by the massive political upheaval in the wake of the controversial 2006 presidential election, political competition in Mexico retains a significant factional dimension. Despite the massive challenge that the slim margin of victory in the 2006 presidential election implied, this election was viewed as the best organized and cleanest in modern Mexican history. Irregularities were rectified through established judicial processes and while the losing candidate claimed fraud, international observers, the media and most political actors viewed them as free and fair.

While party competition has become highly regulated in recent years, nonetheless, politically motivated violence continues to plague the southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca. While the peace process in Chiapas between the Government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) remained stalled for many years, in 2005 the Zapatistas announced a plan to renounce armed struggle in favor of institutionalized political action. However, instability in Oaxaca came to a head in October 2006 when Mexican riot police seized control of the city, ending a five-month occupation by striking teachers and leftist activists. The demonstrators, who had turned increasingly violent, had been calling for the resignation of the state governor, who they claimed had rigged past elections and had used excessive force in his effort to end the occupation.