Mexico Outline

1. A Failing Presidency?
   1. Vicente Fox’s victory in the 2001 presidential election marked a turning point in Mexican politics, he was the first president elected in 70 years who was not a member of the PRI party (Institutional Revolutionary Party).
   2. Amalia Garcia member of the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) she was elected governor of the northern state of Zacatecas.
      1. She is the first female leader of the PRD party
      2. Won due to the female vote.
   3. Poverty, Mexico is in no way as poor as Nigeria.
      1. 10% of all adults are illiterate
      2. 16% of Mexicans love on less than $1 a day.
      3. A large percent of children wont live to be 5 years old.
      4. The gap between the rich and poor has widened since the implementation of market-oriented reforms.
   4. The impact of the U.S.
      1. The Mexican government no longer consults the US for major decisions.
      2. However the US still exerts substantial influence
         1. At least 10 million of them have moved to the US
   5. Fox’s controversial presidency
      1. From 1927 until 2000, the PRI did not lose one presidential election.
         1. They sometimes won the elections fairly, other times they controlled the vote.
         2. PRI able to control Mexico because of their elaborate patron client network
            1. They ran a system best known for their corruption
            2. Many hoped that Fox’s term would mark a new ear however they have been disappointed.
      2. Fox never had the majority in either house of the congress, consequently he had a hard time passing legislation.
         1. Many though he lacked experience
         2. Others thought that he was trying to lay the groundwork for his wife (Martha Sahagun) to run.
2. Thinking about Mexico
   1. The Basics
      1. Not commonly considered to be one of the Newly Industrializing Countries, Mexico’s economy is ranked ahead of Russia’s
         1. Their middle class is similar to those in the US.
         2. Some believe Mexico to be one of the World’s 15 leading industrial powers.
         3. Until the recent oil price drop, their economy had been growing at an average of 6.5% each year until 1980
         4. After 1980 the economy declined until 1994 when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect.
         5. Inflation soared, leading to more poverty
      2. 50% of Mexicans do not have access to fresh drinking water or even toilets.
         1. Only 10% have a telephone or a Television
         2. Unemployment is quite low, this contributes to the high number of immigrants fleeing to the US.
         3. Since NAFTA the amount of poverty grew from 17 to 26 million.
         4. Their economic issues are due to their massive debt.
            1. Mexico barrowed heavily during the 1960s and 1970s on the assumption that is could use oil revenue to pay back the banks and governments, but after the oil crisis of 1979 their debts reached more than $100 billion, by 2004 the debt stood at $159 bullion (almost 17% of their total GNP)
   2. Diversity
      1. Very diverse country, rugged country.
      2. Has multitudes of mountains, deserts, and jungles, only 12% of the land is arable.
      3. Mexico has natural resources: minerals and petroleum.
         1. Mining has paid a key role in the industry
         2. The discovery of resources put Mexico into one of the world’s leading oil and natural gas producers.
      4. Most of the Mexican population are mestizos (part Indian and part white)
   3. Big Brother is Watching
      1. The US never colonized Mexico, however the US exerts more influence on Mexico than any other country does.
      2. They are economically dependant on each other.
      3. 2/3 of Mexican exports are sent up north to America.
      4. Americans are concerned with the growing amount of illegal cocaine and marijuana transported into the states from Mexico.
   4. Key Questions
      1. The only certainty is that the era of PRI political domination seems to be over.
         1. Why did the PRI stay in power for so long?
         2. Given their winning history, how did Fox win?
         3. How much have those reforms addressed Mexico’s poverty?
         4. How have the past few decades affected Mexico-US relationship?
3. The Evolution of Mexican Politics
   1. Political evolution in Mexico has similarities to that of other South American countries, except for the role of the US in Mexico’s economy
   2. The Colonial Era
      1. The Spanish were not very effective colonial administrators and were never able to secure their rule throughout the country.
      2. Late in the 17th century they tried to take a more harsh control of the colonies, thereby antagonizing the growing Mexican born elite.
   3. Independence
      1. The 13 colonies gained their independence because the British were preoccupied in the North and were too busy to send resources to Mexico to hold their power.
      2. The battle for independence because in 1810 when the Creole priest Miguel Hidalgo Castillo first proclaimed Mexican independence and raised an army of more than 100,000 men, yet his forces were obliterated by Guanajuanto, but his forces were never completely defeated.
      3. For more than 100 years Mexico endured crisis after crisis, including their economic crisis. In order to solve their problems they needed help.
      4. Later in 1876, Porfirio Diaz was campaigning for the residency, this marked the longest period of Mexican dictatorship. Diaz however did bring 30 years of political stability to Mexico, due to this stability foreign investment grew, numerous railroads were built.
   4. The Revolution
      1. By the early 1900s Diaz’s rule had sparked some opposition mainly from the peasants on the countryside.
      2. Some groups were headed by Zapata (Ocean’s 13 movie)
      3. Even liberals were beginning to get frustrated with Diaz.
      4. The tensions catalyzed during the 1910 presidential election Madero easily won the nomination of his newly created Anti-Reelectionalist Party however towards the end of the campaign Madero was arrested, and Diaz won of default.
      5. By 1916 Carranza Zapata and Villa were all forming massive armies of Landless peasants, they forced president Wilson to recognize his government, that fall elections held to choose a new constitutional assembly which brought the bloodiest siz years of the countries to an end.
   5. Institutionalizing the Revolution
      1. The new constitution of 1917 has structured political life ever since, sparing Mexico of widespread violence.
      2. Unfortunately many presidential candidates were assassinated before they took office.
      3. Yet by the 1920s the basic principles were set: No president could serve for any longer than their 6 year term.
   6. Cardenas and His Legacy
      1. The US 1929 election hit Mexico extremely hard, provoking new demands for economic reforms. Party leaders urged for there to be a populists leader for the next election
         1. In 1934 Minister of War, Lazaro Cardenas was elected.
            1. He had the ability to reach out the masses.
            2. He blamed Mexico’s problems on capitalism
            3. Brought agrarian reform, distributed land to about 15,000 villages and 25% of the population benefited from his reforms.
            4. He nationalized oil, placing them under the control of the nationalized PEMEX firm.
            5. However he was not a revolutionary
            6. During his presidency he established the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM).
         2. Problems occurred during the second half of his term, the reforms caused some tension in Mexico and there were sparks of another uprising.
         3. As a result Cardenas slowed down his pace, as his term ended he finished his activities in government (unlike China, in Mexico once they leave office, they are DONE)
   7. An Institutional Revolutionary Party
      1. 1940 🡪 Mexico has had 11 presidents.
      2. After the reforming Cardenas, conservative Avila Camacho then Miguel Aleman in 1946.
      3. Aleman’s first priority was economic growth. “trickle down theory” he assumed that if they had a better economy, than it would provide for more money for the people, than they would have better life qualities.
      4. 1958🡪 Next 3 presidents were more liberal: Adolfo Lopez Mateos, Gustavo Diaz Ordaz, and Luis Echeverria.
      5. Echeverria limited spending on food and housing and opted to increase government control.
      6. Mexico experienced turmoil in 1968, under Echeverria two economic problems began to mount in the 1970s.
         1. Growth slowed, dept accumulated, and the pesa had be devalued.
         2. The effects of the post- OPEC slump had begun to wear off due to:
      7. Lopez Portillo was able to improve wages and other reforms which kept costs down. He also improved middle class benefits and increased foreign investment.
         1. Yet his model government collapsed during his final year due to the drop in oil prices.
         2. This caused the government to cut their spending, unfortunately their debts continued to grow.
         3. The government had no choice but to ask for loans from the Monetary Fund.
      8. In 1982 in the midst of the debt crisis the PRI nominated Miguel de la Madrid.
         1. Most candidates of the PRI party were recruited from the military or the interior ministry
         2. But Madrid represented a new kind of candidate dubbed as “tecnicos” due to their knowledge in business or economics.
         3. In the middle of Madrid’s term the PRI party lost dominant control of the electorate as the conservative National Action Party (PAN) grew rapidly.
      9. 1988 🡪 Carlos Salina de Gortari was nominated, however he won only through fraud and deceit.. He endorsed new market-oriented policies.
      10. 1994 🡪 Ernesto Zedillo won his election fairly
          1. He dealt with another economic crisis, which required even more foreign loans.
          2. Due to this his popularity plummeted.
      11. 1997🡪 the PRI only won 48% of the seats during the congressional elections.
      12. 2000🡪 Fox was elected handily.
4. Political Culture
   1. Political Culture in Mexico is hard to understand in two aspects:
      1. Analysis based on individual attitudes about authority and the regime have not yielded useful descriptions of Mexican Culture itself.
      2. Secondly, Political Culture in Mexico has not been as important as those in Britain or the US in determining what is politically acceptable.
      3. The economic and social changes helped to make Mexico more democratic.
      4. Mexico has a strong sense of nationalism.
         1. There is a common language
         2. Mass culture
         3. History from which only a few non-Spanish speaking Indians are excluded.
         4. Share a common religion-unifying force bridging all subcultures.
      5. Mexicans believe the regime to be legitimate.
      6. The revolution of 1910-1917 is a source of pride, revolution is associated with good things.
      7. Mexicans tend to have less respect for either democracy of human rights than people in all major parts of the world except post communist countries.
      8. Mexico is known for male dominance in all areas of life, women play a minor role in Mexican politics.
      9. Women comprise 30% of the workforce
      10. They are demanding more social, economic, and political equality.
      11. Mexican society is known for strong patron client relations known as camarillas. The PRI depends heavily on patron-client networks extending down from the party elite to vote-mobilizing organizations all around the country.
      12. There are 4 distinct Mexican political subcultures
          1. 10% are categorized as non Spanish speaking Indians. Who are not active in politics.
          2. “Subjects” people who are reasonably aware of what the government is doing, bet are not very interested in the system, they tolerate the system.
          3. Then there are people who strongly support the PRI and the system as a whole, some still believe in the revolution.
          4. Last, is a group emerging who is ANTI-PRI, there is growing support for other political parties.
5. Political Participation
   1. There were few legal restrictions on what people could do.
      1. The Mexican constitution grants the basic freedoms of a liberal democracy and universal suffrage for everyone over 18 yrs old.
      2. Yet the regime has definitely suppressed numerous strikes and protests.
      3. Civil Society has noticeably grown during the past few decades.
   2. The PRI and Its Hold on Power
      1. Mexico has sometimes been classified as “semi democratic”
      2. Elections have been fairly competitive
      3. The PRI is not the standard democratic political party, it does not have main goals.
         1. Instead the PRI is an elaborate network of camarillas enrolling 15 million members, There patron and clients are drawn to politics less by the ideological views and more by their desire for power and wealth.
         2. The PRI rarely discusses political issues, their votes are usually bought. In the 2000 election their candidate’s poster said they would receive money for their votes.
      4. Federal Elections Commission (CFE) is responsible for counting and validating election returns, the CFE was “influenced” by the PRI, thus making it very easy for them to manipulate the ballots.
         1. Electoral Fraud became a serious issue.
         2. Since then elections have been conducted more honestly, but the corruption has yet to disappear.
         3. In the 2000 election the PRI lost partly because the previous president did not handpick his successor, the party nominated Labastida.
         4. Labastida had little success with the economy of the rebellion in Chiapas.
      5. The PRI provides benefits
         1. Gave Mexicans usable benefits
         2. More than 2 million families benefited from the land redistribution
         3. Government sponsored health programs
         4. By tying themselves with the poor they were able to reduce the amount and severity of the protest.
   3. Other Parties
      1. The PAN
         1. Until the 1980s there was only one major opposition party the National Action Party (PAN)
         2. Fox is one of the most charismatic leaders.
         3. In 2003 they only won 23% of the congressional vote.
      2. The PRD
         1. Unable to have strength in the 1990s
         2. They nominated Andres Manuel Lopez for the 2006 election.
   4. The People, the PRI, and Civil Society
      1. The PRI works out their internal problems
      2. There are numerous organized groups, one of the new ones since the late 80s is the Women’s Movement
         1. Popular Feminism
            1. Works closely with poor middle class women in both cities and countryside’s.
            2. They protest against abortion, violence, and unequal pay.
6. The Mexican State
   1. The Mexican State has two main objectives
      1. Firstly the way the State operates under the PRI and their changes since Fox, Fox has not brought much change.
      2. Secondly, the material on the Mexican shows that constitutional theory and political reality are often not the same.
         1. The Mexican state has not been like the American
         2. The Constitution is not a sham document.
         3. The system has been turned into a semi-authoritarian state.
   2. Non-reelection and Presidential Domination
      1. Similar to the Soviet Union, the real policy making power is in the hands of a select few.
      2. The principle of non-reelection means that a new president faces inexperienced members of congress and state officeholders.
      3. The Constitution gives the president considerable leverage.
         1. He is allowed to initiate legislation (virtually all bills of importance originate from the executive branch)
         2. He can issue decrees
         3. Transfer funds
         4. For the first year and a half the president organizes his team.
         5. The last two years his attention turns to his successor
            1. It is still unclear who Fox will nominate
            2. Determines who gets the PAN nomination
   3. The Cabinet, the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary
      1. The president can appoint members to positions all over the state
      2. The society is based on the patron client relations (Almost all members in office owe their position to someone higher in the hierarchy)
      3. The Minister of Defense is the most important position
         1. He is responsible for internal security
         2. The administration of elections
         3. Everyone rises up in the ranks due to their personal connections
      4. Fox
         1. Wanted to minimize patron client relations, opted to fill his cabinet with political buffs, but they weren’t part of the PAN, they had difficulty because the majority of the governmental employees are members of the PRI
         2. They have a substantial civil service
      5. Supreme Court
         1. Almost never overrules an important policy under the PRI (because even the Judiciary is subject to presidential control)
         2. Judges are officially appointed for life
         3. They sometimes resign at the end of a six year term, thus allowing the new president to place his members in their spots.
   4. Congress and the Legislative Process
      1. The constitution established a bicameral legislature roughly parallel to the American System
      2. Members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected for 3 year terms
      3. Members of the Senate are elected for 6 years (elections are staggered)
      4. Congress acts as a rubber stamp for legislation
         1. Seeing as they only serve for one term it is impossible for them to develop expertise
         2. The PRI members of Congress were subservient to the president, who selected all the nominees
   5. The Federal System
      1. Mexico is a federal system officially. 31 states🡪 each state has a governor🡪 each municipality has a mayor and a municipal court
         1. These states have little power because the PRI is dominant
         2. The opposition controls 15%
         3. The president can remove governors or mayors from office
   6. The Military
      1. The PRI has curbed the political power of the Military, the military frequently intervenes in Mexican politics
         1. The original PRI politicians were formerly generals.
         2. There is now some concern about the military though not with any threat of a coup, they are known to be corrupt
   7. Corporatism and Corruption
      1. Mexican politicians have never stressed individualism or the need to give people access to the decision making process, instead they emphasize a group mentality
      2. The government “legitimizes” organized interest groups
      3. Corruption
         1. Recent presidents have tried to cut down on corruption
         2. In the past half century elites have took about $90 billion from their foreign bank accounts and investments, thus furthering Mexico’s debt
         3. There is an unwritten rule that no member of the top elite can be indicted.
7. Public Policy
   1. Debt and Development
      1. Decrease in oil prices has been detrimental to economy
      2. The Government has done little to stop the decline
      3. Early Success
         1. The Government saw public ownership as providing it with more leverage over the economy.
         2. Taxes were kept low, Tariffs were kept high
      4. The Crisis
         1. The economic boom began to slow during the 1970’s
         2. The mismanagement of key industries became a problem. PEMEX for example employed three or four tomes the number of workers it needed.
         3. There was massive population growth
         4. In 1987 Mexico was a leader in the world debt crisis
         5. The government assumed that the oil decline in the 80s would be temporary so they did not lower their prices, however by 1982 the economy was on the verge of a collapse.
      5. Reform
         1. Crisis lead to two shifts:
            1. The election of Miguel de la Madrid
            2. And his governments agreement to debt reduction plans demanded by the country’s public and private creditors.
         2. Madrid began negotiations about debt repayment with the IMF, the world bank, northern governments and private banks.
            1. The US insisted that Mexico open their economy to more foreign investment.
            2. This did help the economy
            3. Foreign investors are attracted to Mexico due to their low minimum wages

There has been a 50% decline in wages

40% of the workforce is unemployed

40% of the population suffers from some form of malnutrition

* 1. US-Mexico Relations
     1. Ever since 1821 the US has been very influential in Mexico, they affect the way the Mexican people live
        1. Mexican Foreign policy involves far more that its relations with the US.
        2. But Mexico does not influence the US to the same degree
        3. Recent relations have been fairly peaceful
     2. With the consolidation of the PRI regime, the US has withstood direct intervention in Mexican affairs.
     3. Mexico frequently criticizes US policies.
     4. There are 4 key themes in Mexican Foreign Policy
        1. Mexican Rhetoric under the PRI was nationalistic.
        2. In the Estrada Doctrine of 1930, Mexico committed itself to opening and maintaining diplomatic and other relations with all countries.
        3. From a US perspective Mexico has pursued a somewhat left-wing foreign policy.
        4. There is a strong undercurrent of wariness regarding the US both in Mexican public opinion and in its foreign policy.
     5. Immigration
        1. Top issue between the two countries.
        2. Became a serious problem after WWII
        3. There have been four major crackdowns from the US: 1947, 1954, 1964, and 1986
        4. Despite efforts to minimize immigration there continues to be a steady flow of immigrants coming to the US.
        5. Mexicans believe that the US does not note the benefits they receive from immigration
     6. Drugs
        1. US has a serious drug problem due to Mexico
        2. US tried to cut supply and blamed Mexico
        3. There is now a considerable cooperation between policymakers and enforcement

1. Feedback
   1. There is some ambiguity regarding democracy in Mexico
      1. Mexican TV stations Radio and Newspapers are independent from the Government
      2. The PRI had a virtual monopoly over the sale of newsprint
      3. The Government occasionally clamps down on the press
2. Conclusion
   1. The most important theme is the erosion of national sovereignty
   2. Erosion of real national sovereignty is occurring everywhere
   3. The Mexican Governments are less and less master of their destiny
   4. Globalization is inevitable and irreversible.