Structure of Governance:
Mexico
Overview

• Current constitution adopted in 1917
  • Very similar to United States constitution

• Reliant on Camarillas system
  • Patron-Client system in which “patrons” gain support through the trade of favors and obligations
    • Still important but diminishing due to more fair elections and complicated urban centers

• Traditionally a state-corporatists state
  • Centralized authoritarian power that allows outside input
  • Classified as a middle developed state

• Universal suffrage for all over 18
Major Political Parties

- PRI: small town or rural, less educated, older, poorer
- PAN: north, middle-class professional or business, urban, better educated, religious
- PRD: younger, politically active, from central states, some education, small town or urban, some middle class/older supporters
Elections in Mexico

• Direct election for President, Senate (6yrs), and Chamber of Deputies (3yrs)
• Elections monitored by Federal Electoral Institute (CFE)
  • Independence allows elections to be more free and fair
  • Elections prior to 1990 still viewed as highly corrupt
• Relatively high voter turnout
  • Highly influenced by Patron-Client system
• Senate (Upper House)
  • Three for each state (96) then 32 selected nationally in proportion to vote
  • Only allowed one consecutive term
• Deputies (Lower House)
  • 300 elected from states, then 200 selected nationally in proportion to vote
Executive Branch

- Constitution establishes separation of powers but President is the *de facto* holder of power in Mexico
- Presidents are elected for a single six year term called a sexeño
  - Not eligible for reelection so presidents will often suggest their successor (*el dedazo*)
- Prior to 2000 the President had almost dictatoresque powers
  - Challenges to the authority of the PRI have actually increased the legitimacy of laws passed since then
Judicial Branch

- Operates at a federal level, but almost never goes against important or controversial topics or actions
  - Only independent in theory
    - Supreme court justices appointed by President and are subject to control by the President’s party
    - Vincente Fox attempted to secure more autonomy for judiciary branch
  - Has the power of judicial review
  - Purpose of judicial branch mostly to protect freedoms
The Legislative Branch

• Bicameral legislature divided between Senate and Chamber of Deputies
  • Senators seen as more prestigious
• During times of PRI the legislative branch was a rubber stamp supporter of president
  • Since 2000 the legislature has been much more divided
  • Division has lowered efficiency, but raised legitimacy
Political Issues: Political Participation

• Long standing acceptance and response to public disapproval and protest
  • Ex. Zapatista Uprising of 1994

• Government fairly responsive to popular protests
  • Often involving protest leaders in making changes
Political Issues: The Economy

• Income inequality
  • Very large wealth gap in Mexico
    • 51% live in poverty
  • Large sections of economy tied to oil

• The Mexican Miracle
  • 1940 -1960 rapid economic growth (6%) and industrial growth (9%)
  • Benefitted from Green Revolution
    • Wheat and corn yields increased to support population
  • Followed by debt crisis in 1980s (Debt accounted for 70% of GNP)

• Economy tightly connected to the US
  • 2008 economic disaster in Mexico connected to US recession

• Mexican Economy influenced by Supranational Organizations
  • WTO, IMF, NAFTA, World Bank
Political Issues: Society

• Catholic Church has remained fairly influential in culture
  • Political restrictions slowly removed
• Media not as influential as in highly developed countries
• Social Divisions
  • Indigenous struggle for increased rights and recognition
  • Feminist movements starting in 1970s have lessened gender inequalities
• Mexicans highly nationalistic
Political Issues: The Drug Trade

• Mexico has been large in the drug trade due to their proximity to the US
  • Cartels bribe politicians, police forces, and military officials

• Competition between cartels has led to widespread fighting across the country
  • Mexican citizens sometimes caught in fighting
  • Has led in increased military spending to combat cartels
Political Issues: The Military

• Effective civilian leadership of the military has prevented military coups
• Military primarily involved in fighting drug trade and putting down protests/revolutions