

Causes of Political Unrest in Mexican History

The 300 year history of Mexico under Spanish rule was mainly peaceful and prosperous. There were some difficulties, injustice, corruption, and unfair controls on commerce of course, but laws, taxes, and government functions were stable, and social institutions, including the church, schools, courts, hospitals, orphanages, and military operated predictably. Soon after Mexico attempted to form a republican government however, the country spiraled into political chaos from which it has never entirely recovered.

It is difficult for American's, who cherish the idea of democracy, and whose own break from their mother country was such a positive development, to understand the reasons for this. To help explain some of the problems specific to Mexican politics that distinguish it from the American experience, we have provided a list of some of the most important causes of political unrest below. Some of these factors are difficult to understand, but students of history should not allow their positive associations of American democracy and constitutional forms of government to blind them to the difficulties and corruptions of the Republican experience in Mexico.

Before addressing the political factors that tended to lead to anarchy and chaos in 19th century Mexico, a little background about the Declaration of Mexican Independence is in order.

The real breakpoint between the era of Spanish influence and the Modern State of Mexico occurred in 1823, a short time after the official declaration of Independence in 1821. At that time Agustin Iturbide, the national leader most responsible for setting Mexico on a clear path to Independence from Spain was overthrown by a well-organized group of Republican liberals, and sent into exile. Only a year previously, Iturbide had been declared the Emperor of Mexico with much celebration, a clear mandate to govern, and with the backing of the great majority of Mexicans. His overthrow by a group of liberal republicans had very little popular backing and was orchestrated entirely by secret political societies (i.e. Freemasons).

At the time of the coup that overthrew Iturbide, the vast majority of citizens in both Spain and Mexico strongly preferred a Christian monarchy to the rule of liberal republicans. The citizens of Mexico were not indifferent to their manner of government. Most Mexicans strongly and actively opposed liberal government, based on the horrors of the recent Napoleonic wars. So from the first day, the republic government was resisted, not only by a group of privileged royalists, but by the great mass of the people whom it claimed to represent.

In many histories of Mexico, the revolutionaries who overthrew Iturbide are represented as heroic patriots who fought for the rights and liberty of all Mexicans. The truth is nearly the opposite. Iturbide was still popular with the people when he was deposed, and the liberals who took over the government were backed mainly by selected military officers and a vocal minority of representatives—not the general population. The conspirators who overthrew Iturbide and generated the Republican Constitution of 1824 included some admirable intellectuals and honest statesmen, but many others were ruthless soldiers, caudillos, or self-seeking politicians. Virtually all of those involved in the revolution, however, were associated with Freemasonry and participated in secret political societies that operated outside public view.

Many students who attempt to study the Mexican Republic, become confused and frustrated because its history seems to be a series of meaningless wars and revolutions. It is hard to understand the reasons for the chaos or to keep track of the constantly changing characters. The brutality and corruption of the Mexican Republic stands in terrible contrast to the proud spirit of American Independence and democratic self-government. What went wrong? Who is to blame?

There is no one answer to these difficult questions, but the following list explains many of the factors that are responsible for the recurrent political problems of Mexico.

1. **The idea of Mexican Independence from Spain did not gain popular acceptance until the traditional monarchy in Spain was overthrown**, first by Napoleon in 1808, and later by a Liberal coup d'etat in 1820. In other words, neither the ruling elite in Mexico, nor the general public desired to separate themselves from Spain until liberals and revolutionaries took over the Spanish government. Iturbide did not have children and his appointment as emperor was intended by many of those who supported independence as a temporary step to the restoration of a Christian monarchy in Mexico. In other words, Independence was seen by the conservative majority as a means of preserving themselves from the chaos and anti-Catholic abuses of revolutionary Europe; not as an opportunity to attempt democratic reforms. The independence movements led by Hidalgo and Morales (which occurred after Napoleon had overthrown the Spanish Monarchy) failed because there was no widespread support for the republican government they advocated. **When Mexican Independence was finally achieved in 1821 it was accomplished, not by revolutionaries, but by a conservative aristocracy that sought to protect the status quo.**
2. **Jealousy between Spanish born peninsulares and native born creoles in Mexico contributed to the political divisions.** For the two hundred years that Mexico was under the rule of Hapsburg viceroys, local governments in Mexico had a great deal of autonomy and were often administered by creoles. It was not until the 18th century that the Bourbon kings attempted to centralize power by making all important offices in New Spain, including those which benefitted from access to trading monopolies, available only to Spanish born office holders. This policy created a rift between peninsulares and creoles that did not exist under the Hapsburg government. Exclusion from government offices was one of the factors that inspired many upper class creoles to favor a republican form of government, while Spaniards tended to favor monarchy. These conflicts continued after independence was achieved. Creoles and Peninsulares were associated with rival Freemason lodges, and one of the first actions of the creole faction when they did come to power, was to attempt to expel all Spaniards from Mexico, and seize their property. The expulsion of Spaniards caused enormous economic problems and plunged the new republic deep into bankruptcy.
3. **Race relations between whites, mestizos, negroes, and full-blood Indians was complicated in Mexico, and Liberal Republicans sought to inflame racial resentments for political purposes.** In the United States there was limited intermarriage between whites and the indigenous population, while in Mexico, intermarriage was common, and most wealthy creole families had at least some Indian blood. Although there was a complicated arrangement of racial castes, and certain offices or privileges were granted based on racial status, in practice, social status was more related to education, wealth, and degree of Spanish acculturation, than to pure bloodlines. Indians and mestizos who lived in urban areas were often highly acculturated, whereas rural Indians often lived in primitive conditions and spoke no Spanish. These rural Indians were easily manipulated for political purposes, especially by liberal or Marxist anti-Clerical factions who sought to stoke resentments against the Church and the Spanish government.
4. **Freemason lodges and secret political societies played an enormous, but behind-the-scenes role in every major political event in Mexico from Independence to modern times.** Since the time of the republic, virtually all Mexican statesmen, including military leaders, judges, federal administrators, and local office holders were members of Freemason lodges. Instead of dealing and debating politics openly, and submitting to free elections, Mexican political business was organized behind the scenes by anonymous masters serving

the interests of secret political societies. Political parties were funded, and key power brokers were bribed by unknown financial interests, and elections, and in many cases political offices were bought and sold. Coup d'etats were arranged and governments were overthrown on command without a shot being fired. Voluntary resignations from political offices were arranged, dependent on the promise of comfortable exiles abroad, and when troublesome leaders were too popular, fatal 'accidents' were carefully arranged. The "Invisible Hand" of Freemasonry has been working in Mexico for generations, and is responsible more than any other factor for the chaos of Mexican politics.

5. **Interference by the United States and American financial interests was a disruptive factor in Mexican politics.** From the time of its founding the leaders of the United States desired to annex Spanish territory, and to open markets to American trade, so at every opportunity, they worked to sever Mexico's ties with Spain and weaken the influence of the Church and Central government. Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first American Ambassador to Mexico, actively intervened in Mexican politics by establishing the American-backed York Rite Masonic lodges, and helping to overthrow Iturbide. At every critical juncture, from Monroe Doctrine to the War of Reform, to the Mexican Revolution, events in Mexico were openly influenced by the United States government, and privately influenced by American banking and business interests. Persistent interference by the United States on behalf of the liberal republican faction of Mexico caused conservatives to seek alliances with European governments and bankers, which led to prolonged conflicts between political rivals, and ever increasing levels of bankruptcy.
6. **The American principle of Freedom of Religion was used as a bludgeon by anti-Clerical leaders to destroy religion entirely in Mexico.** For three centuries Mexico was an explicitly Catholic country whose entire social system was based on the Catholic Church. Its schools, universities, hospitals, missions, community networks and charitable institutions were Catholic, so the entire framework of Mexican civilization suffered from the confiscations and oppressions of hostile anti-Catholic governments. In closing churches and selling off church property, in the name of "Religious Freedom" reformers confiscated the treasuries and endowments of schools and charitable institutions, shut down religious orders, and took over buildings. Protestants were a tiny percentage of the Mexican population, so the only beneficiaries of the Masonic pretense of "Religious Freedom" were atheists and looters. The freedom of the great majority of the population to practice and live their faith and was severely damaged by the secular government's attempt to establish 'Freedom of Religion'.
7. **Typical American understanding of the meaning of political terms such as "republic", "constitution", "election", "liberal", and "conservative", are framed by our historical experience and do not reflect Mexican realities.** The "constitutions" that defined successive Mexican governments were each written under the influence of secret, exclusive, political societies and did not reflect the wishes or best interests of the populace. There was a perceived lack of legitimacy associated with every government that formed, and the Mexican military intervened on a regular basis when favored candidates failed to win a popular vote. In the early years of Mexican independence "conservatives" sought to protect the privileges of the Church and ruling classes, while the "liberals" sought to expropriate property and privileges from existing owners. But even these distinctions lost their meaning over time, as liberals became the new propertied class, so by the time of the Mexican Revolution, the conflict was between "radical" Marxists and "reactionary" liberals.

8. To complicate things farther, **The political principles and alliances espoused by both political parties changed based on circumstances.** For example, parties tended to favor a strong central government when they were in power, but a weak "federal" government when they were out of power. Also, individual politicians frequently changed political allegiances to further their personal interests: Santa Anna was the most notorious example but many politicians switched sides depending on political fortunes. Finally, both political parties were controlled by Freemason lodges, meaning that all aspects of government, from elections, to political appointments, to coup d'etats were organized behind the scenes by unelected secret societies, largely controlled by foreign financial and commercial interests. It also meant that non-Masons (including most sincere Catholics) were excluded from government and military offices, since they were prohibited from joining secret societies. It should also be understood that since the political parties controlled who was allowed on the ballot, "free elections" always involved multiple masonic factions vying for power. **In short, to understand Mexican politics, forget everything you ever learned in an American Civic course.**

A meaningful understanding of Mexican history can only come when one is able to put aside many assumptions Americans are likely to make regarding the inherent virtues of Republican government, freedom of religion, and free trade. All of these are noble ideas that have worked well in the Protestant United States, but Americans are too quick to assume that these ideas should have been easily adopted by a country such as Mexico, that was Catholic and monarchial to its core, and had no history of self-government. When Protestant or irreligious writers try to describe what happened in Mexico, they often take it as a given that a Catholic government is undesirable and oppressive without considering the fact that the vast majority of Mexicans were happy with their religion and preferred Catholic monarchy to Republican government. Most Mexicans desired good government and would have appreciated reforms, but what they got instead was a radical overthrow of their entire civilization, by corrupt, anti-Catholic colluders and caudillos. No wonder this led to 150 years of chaos.