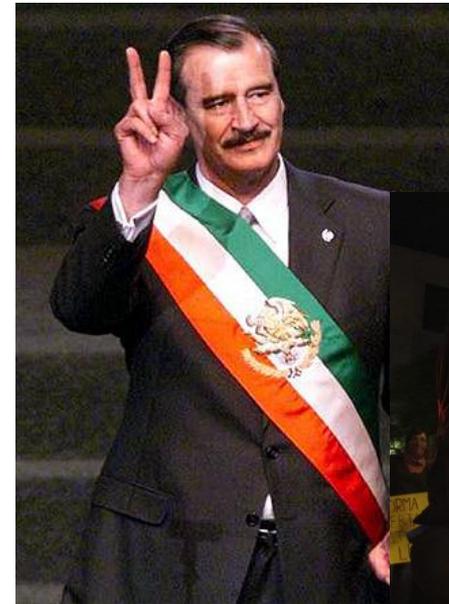


# Democracy in Mexico: one step forward, half step back

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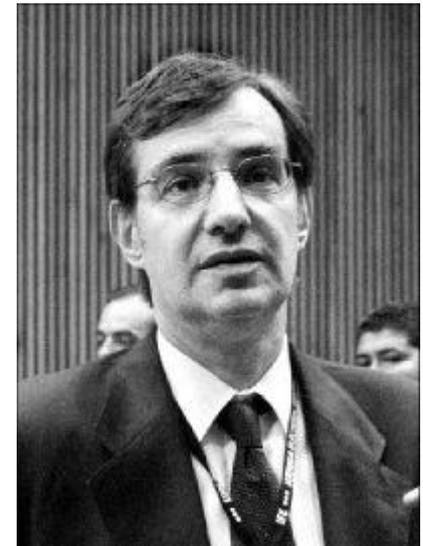


# Mexico's path to democracy

- **1930s-1960s:** Corporatist one-party regime. Legitimacy based on revolutionary legacy, strong economic growth (“Mexican Miracle”), land reform, industrialization, creation of middle class. But system began to crack...
- **1968:** Student mobilizations, Tlatelolco massacre
- **1976:** Economic crisis, devaluation, inflation, rising foreign debt
- **1982:** Debt crisis, default, beginning of “lost decade”
- **1985:** Earthquake, slow gov’t response compared to civil society
- **1988:** Electoral fraud, “system failure” gives victory to Carlos Salinas
- **1989:** Baja California victory for PAN, creation of PRD
- **1990:** Creation of Institute Federal Electoral (IFE)
- **1992:** Creation of Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)
- **1994:** NAFTA, Zapatista uprising, assassinations, “December mistake”, crisis
- **1997:** PRI loses majority in C. Deputies, PRD gains Mexico City
- **2000:** Presidential election victory for Vicente Fox (PAN)

# IFE leads democratic transition

- Before 1990, interior ministry (Gobernación) was in charge of organizing elections.
- Facing severe crisis of legitimacy after 1988 elections, the PRI had no choice but to accept loosening its control over the electoral process: IFE created in 1990.
- Series of reforms in 1993-96 makes IFE fully independent public institution, whose councilors and presidents were citizens, voted through 2/3 majority in the Chamber of Deputies after being nominated by one of the main parties.
- Organizes 1994 election, first one which features a presidential debate.
- Under José Woldenberg, organizes 2000 elections, which give victory to the opposition.
- IFE becomes one of the most respected institutions in Mexico and model for countries in transition



*PRI out of power +  
credible electoral institution +  
multi-party political environment +  
increasingly active civil society +  
economic liberalization =  
**what could possibly go wrong???***

*(a lot...)*

# 1) Fractionalization of power

- Presidency becomes weaker under Fox (constitutionally, presidency is weaker than most other LatAm countries but this was masked by presidentialist rule)
- Vacuum of power taken over by special interest groups, that under PRI rule had been part of the corporatist regime.
- *“It is safe to say that Mexico now resembles a dysfunctional feudal state, one in which a plethora of mini fiefdoms - be it big domestic businesses, public-sector unions, TV networks, or state governments - hunger for an ever-increasing slice of fiscal resources and privileges. The system's dysfunctionality is not necessarily the result of its feudal nature per se, but because the weakness of the presidency in recent years has ensured that the vassals are the true rulers of the realm.” (27/6/2012)*



## 2) PRI transforms into obstructionist opposition

- From 2000 to 2012, PRI remains 1st or 2nd largest party in Chamber of Deputies. PAN never achieved a simple majority during this time.
- Shoots down most PAN attempts at reform... then proposes them in 2013-14 and claims credit for passing them! Ex: fiscal reform (2001), energy reform (2008).
- Constitutional reform impossible given PRI domination of state governments.
- *Can anything get done in Mexico without the PRI sanctioning it?*

	LVI 97-00	LVII 00-03	LVIII 03-06	LX 06-09	LXI 09-12	LXII 12-15
<b>PRI</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>203</b>	106	<b>242</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>PAN</b>	121	207	148	<b>206</b>	142	114
<b>PRD</b>	125	53	97	127	63	104
<b>PVEM / Panal</b>	6	16	17	17 / 9	22 / 8	29 / 10
<b>PT / MC</b>	7	8 / 1	5 / 6	11 / 18	14 / 6	15 / 16
<b>Other</b>	2	7	24	15	3	0
<b>PRI+ %</b>	<b>47.8%</b>	41.6%	<b>40.6%</b>	26.4%	<b>54.4%</b>	<b>50.2%</b>
<b>PAN+ %</b>	24.2%	<b>44.6%</b>	33.0%	<b>41.2%</b>	28.4%	22.8%
<b>PRD+ %</b>	26.4%	12.4%	21.6%	31.2%	16.6%	27.0%

### 3) Breakdown in public security and trust in institutions

- **Crime:**

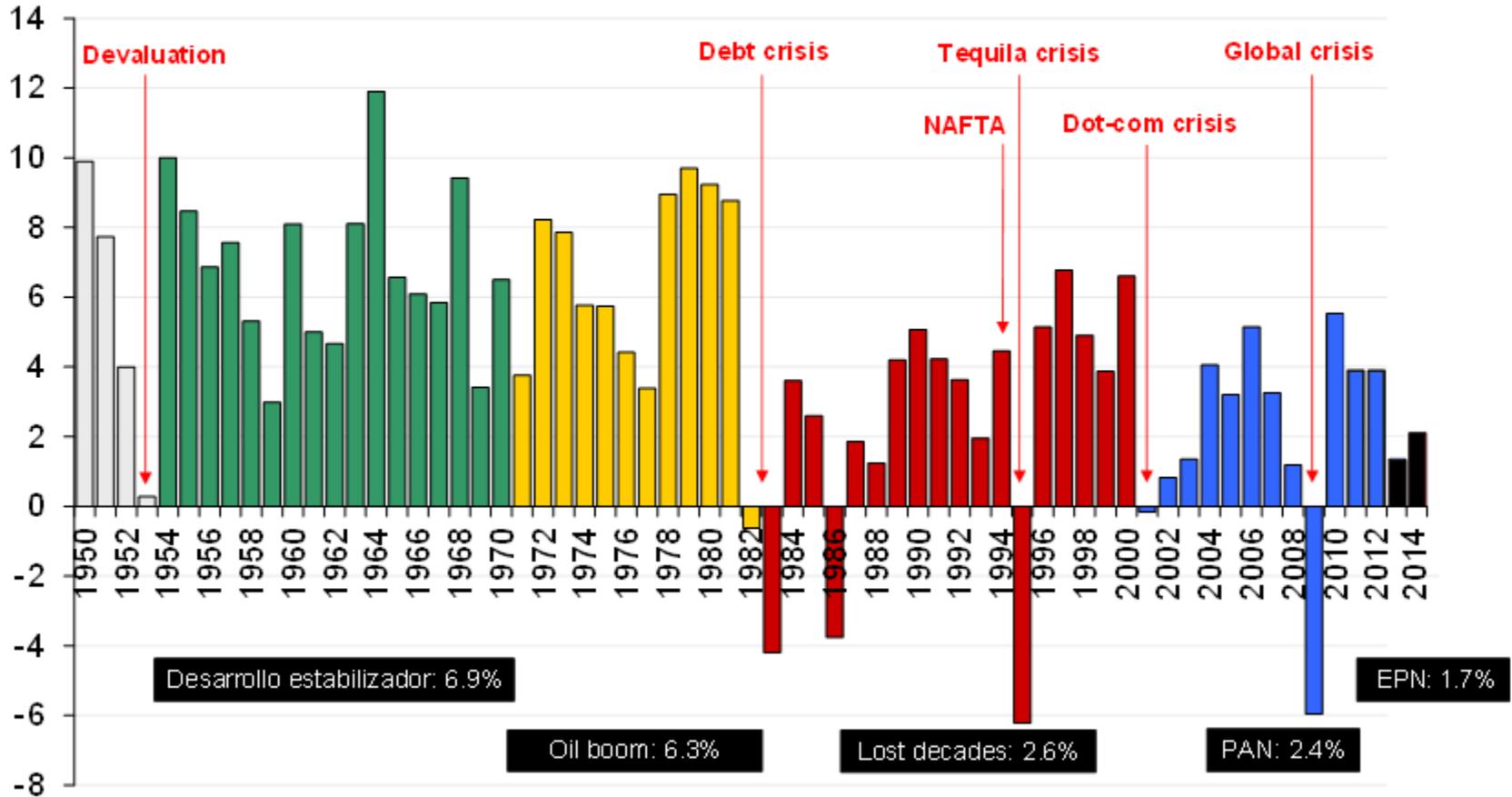
- Mexican drug cartels grow in power during 1990s after capture of major Colombian capos and closure of Caribbean drug trafficking routes.
- Crime wave in Mexico City after 1994/95 crisis. Rise in kidnappings.
- December 2006, Calderón launches all-out drug war. Homicides, kidnappings, and other forms of crime skyrocket.
- No credible national strategy on national security (constant creation and disbandment of police forces: Policía Judicial, AFI, Gendarmería)

- **Corruption:**

- Corruption remains pervasive in all its forms: bribery, embezzlement, rent seeking, nepotism, cronyism. Added to this is abuse of power and human rights violations (particularly after drug war begins)
- Economic liberalization did not close doors to corruption; it opened others.
- Media & civil society exposes scandals but little is done about it (Bribiesca, videoescándalos, Casa Blanca)
- Some advances but incomplete due to federalism: IFAI (2003), Judicial reform (2008)
- Discretionary use of the law: Elba in jail but Deschamps not?

# 4) Economic growth has been disappointing

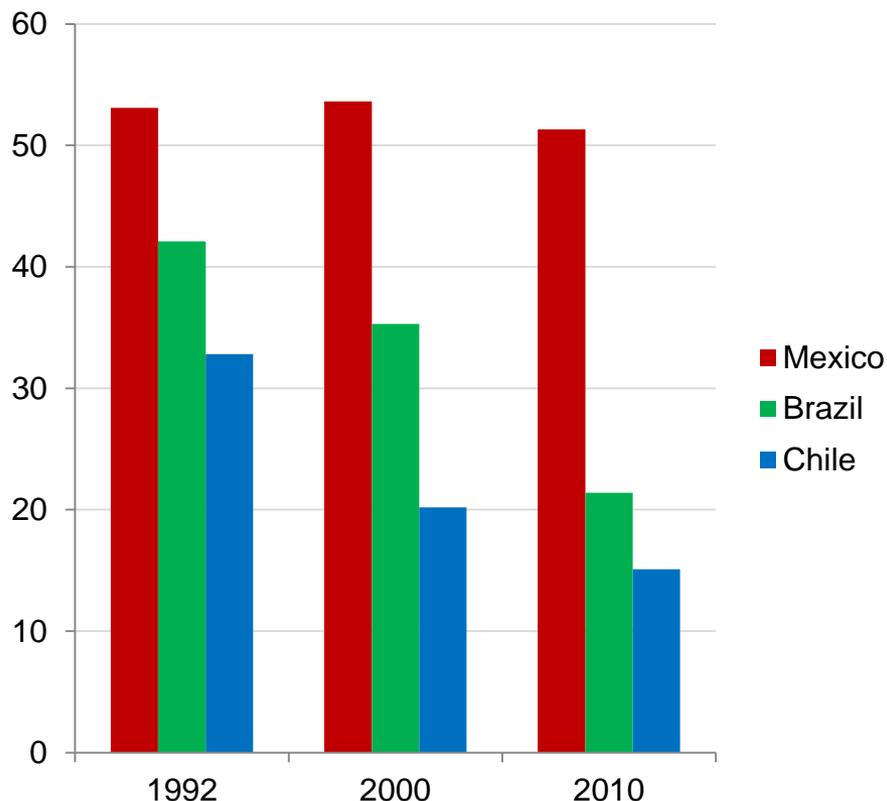
## Real GDP growth since 1950



Sources: World Bank, Angus Maddison

# No major advances in combating poverty and inequality

Poverty rate (% national poverty line)



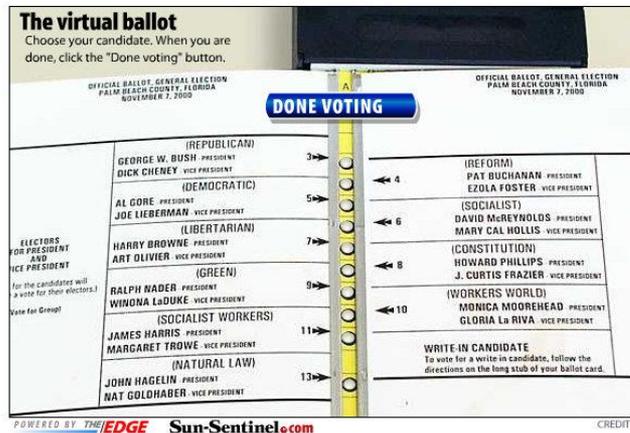
Source: World Bank (closest previous year if not available)

***“Mexico is the country of inequality. Nowhere does there exist such a fearful difference in the distribution of fortune, civilization, cultivation of the soil, and population. ...The capital and several other cities have scientific establishments, which will bear a comparison with those of Europe. The architecture of the public and private edifices, the elegance of the furniture, the equipages, the luxury and dress of the women, the tone of society, all announce a refinement to which the nakedness, ignorance, and vulgarity of the lower people form the most striking contrast.”***

# Over-reaction or is the cynicism justified?

## • USA 2000 elections

- Bush beats Gore in Florida by 537 votes (0.01%).
- Gore calls for manual recount.
- Florida Supreme Court orders recount of 70,000 votes.
- SCOTUS votes 7-2 against recount. Gore concedes, no major protests or disturbances.



## • Mexico 2006 elections

- Calderón beats AMLO by 243,934 votes (0.58%)
- AMLO calls for nationwide manual recount (“voto por voto, casilla por casilla!”)
- TEPJF calls for recount of 11,839 boxes (9.2%)
- AMLO calls for civil disobedience: plantón in Paseo de la Reforma lasts three months.
- AMLO never concedes.



# “Partidocracia” in action: IFE/INE not immune

- Ideal point estimation of IFE councillor voting 1996-2006. Colors represent party sponsorship: Green (PRI), Blue (PAN), Yellow (PRD), Red (Other). Only two divergences out of 18! (Estevez, Magar & Rosas 2009)



# Why so little faith in democracy?

- Ordinary Mexicans see their political leaders as dishonest, incompetent, corrupt, whose main allegiance is towards their parties and the special interests they serve rather than their constituents. *But this is nothing new!*
- Opposition to *plurinominales*. 40% of legislators are not voted for.
- Allegations of fraud in 2006 and 2012 elections soured faith in electoral democracy. Reputation of electoral institutions affected.
- No major political party is seen as alternative to status quo. Perceptions:
  - *PRI: Represents all the vices of the system. Retains authoritarian tendencies*
  - *PAN: Part of the same system (“PRIAN”). Represents elite and foreign interests.*
  - *PRD: Corroded by tribalism (“Chuchocracia”) and currently falling part.*
  - *Morena: Anti-status quo rhetoric too radical (AMLO: “danger to Mexico”)*
  - *PVEM: No comment needed...*
- Political-electoral reform allows independent candidates, but history not favorable.
- Civil society is larger, more organized, and more active but poor outcomes. Compare #YoSoy132, #YaMeCansé with Tea Party.
- No pressure from abroad (US is NAFTA partner and criticism is muted).
- Economic performance mediocre but no structural crisis like 1982, 1994.

# New PRI: setback to democracy?

- Almost on all characteristics of democracy, Mexico is going back, not forward
- **Electoral democracy:**
  - Vote buying remains rampant (2012 elections, digital TVs).
  - 2015 INE crisis: less than one year after created! New institutions do not solve.
  - problems of old ones when these are systemic to the political system.
- **Liberal democracy:**
  - Corruption: unprecedented at such high level (not since JLP).
  - Media freedom: Too little independence by big media. Aristegui. Peñabots.
  - Personal security: Homicides still high, increase in kidnapping & extortion.
  - Human rights: still widespread abuses (Tlatlaya).
- **Social democracy:**
  - Low paid and insecure employment; middle-class at risk of falling back.
  - No move towards universal social security (despite being proposed).
  - Ineffective redistribution policies (no impact on inequality).
  - Poor educational outcomes.