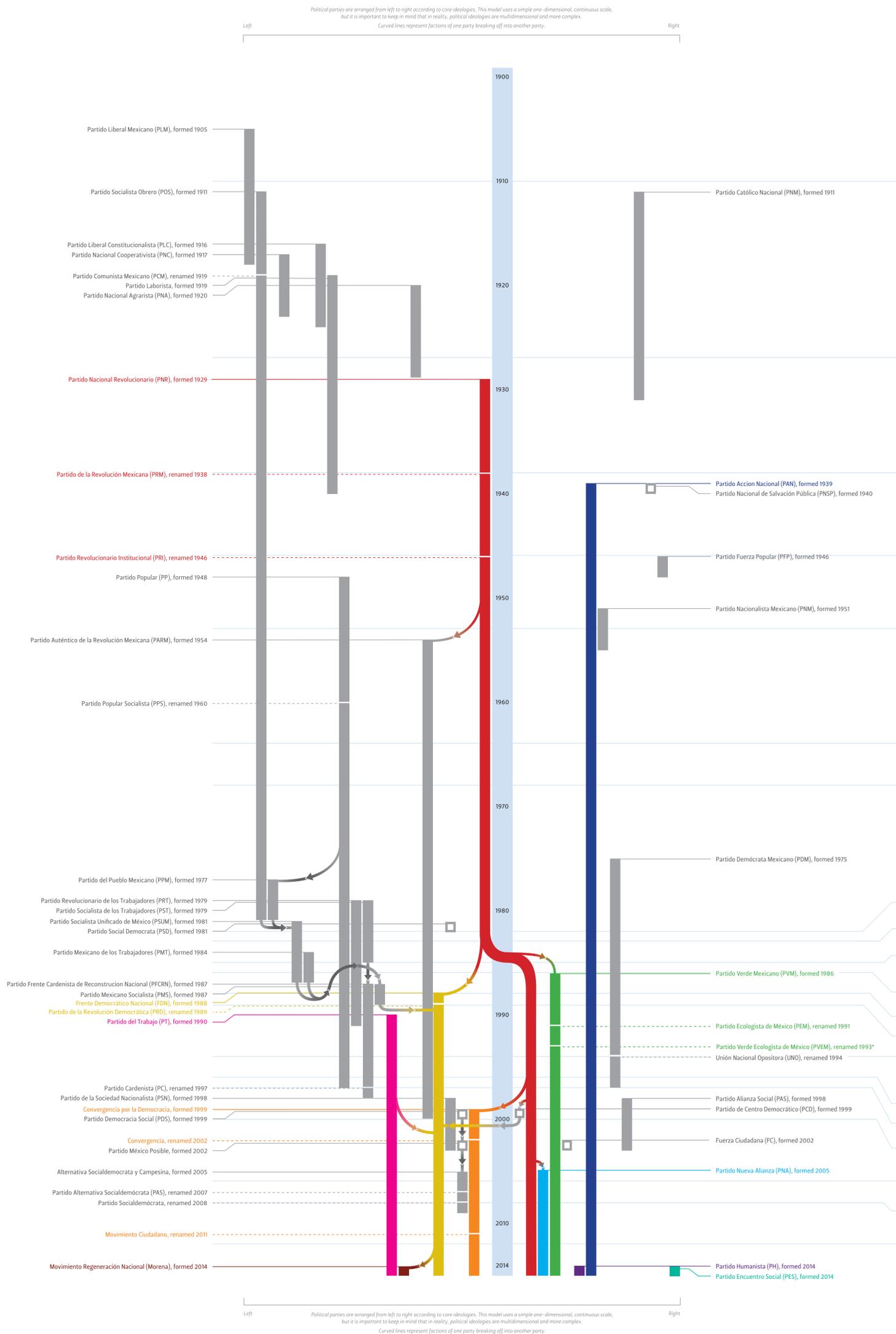


The Evolution of Political Parties in Mexico, 1900–2014



Historical Events

Nov. 20, 1910 — Start of the Mexican Revolution
1910 marks the end of the Porfiriato, the three-decade reign of the authoritarian President Porfirio Díaz. Though the revolution ends in 1921, Mexico sustains conditions of violence and political instability until 1929, when the creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario successfully unites a broad group of political factions under a single, big tent party.

Jan. 1, 1927 — The Cristero War and the Separation of Church and State
The 1917 Constitution, with its statutes significantly limiting the power of the church, sparked anticlerical sentiments and persecution of Catholics. Beginning with skirmishes in 1926 that led to a formal rebellion in 1927, the three-year Cristero War pits Catholic rebels called Cristeros against secular government forces. The separation of church and state remains a key tenet of Mexican democracy, but after the conflict, freedom of worship is no longer suppressed.

March 18, 1938 — President Lázaro Cárdenas Expropriates National Petroleum Resources
The move to nationalize Mexico's oil industry, in conjunction with the anticlerical and socialist policies enforced by Cárdenas and Cárdenas, leads to discontent among conservatives. This growing resentment, principally among businessmen and Catholics, serves as the foundation for the formation of Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) in 1939.

1946 — Passage of the Federal Electoral Law
The Federal Electoral Law institutionalizes political parties and places electoral processes under the oversight of the federal government.

Oct. 7, 1953 — Women Obtain Suffrage in Federal Elections
Despite the success of women's suffrage in the U.S. in 1920, the PRI delayed granting women the right to vote for several decades under the misguided assumption that women would vote differently than men and upset the delicate political balance the PRI had been building since 1929. Ultimately, women also vote for the status quo, and the PRI's fears are unrealized.

1964 — Democratization Movement Within the PRI
Carlos Madrazo, president of the PRI's National Executive Committee (CEN), leads a movement to democratize the party. The party rejects his appeal for reforms, and he is forced to resign from office.

Oct. 2, 1968 — Tlatelolco Massacre
After weeks of demonstrations by students and workers' unions, citizens incensed by PRI policies and federal spending before the 1968 Mexico City Summer Olympics gather to speak out against the government in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas. The military soon surrounds the plaza and fires on the protesters, killing an estimated 300 civilians. Though the violence is promptly covered up and goes largely unacknowledged in the national and international media, the Tlatelolco Massacre represents for many the repressive nature of the PRI, further fueling the development of opposition movements.

1982 — President José López Portillo Nationalizes Mexican Banks
Desperate to combat debt, relentless inflation and overdependence on oil revenue, President José López Portillo nationalizes Mexico's banks, a move embraced by the working class but alarming to the private sector. The breakdown of the economy reflects the limitations of PRI rule, creating rifts within the PRI party as opposition parties gain further support.

1983 — Municipal Elections in the States of Chihuahua and Durango
The PAN sweeps mayoral and city council elections across Chihuahua and Durango, becoming a viable alternative to PRI governance in these states. For the first time, the PRI establishment faces the possibility of real electoral competition.

Sept. 19, 1985 — Mexico City Earthquake
A magnitude 8.1 earthquake strikes Mexico City, leading to extreme property damage and loss of life. The following day, another earthquake of similar magnitude strikes nearby the same area of the city. Despite the horrific effects — at least 30,000 people were killed — the government does little to ameliorate the destruction. In an attempt to assert nationalist strength, President de la Madrid first rejects foreign aid and then is ineffective at managing it. With the government largely unable to coordinate relief efforts, grassroots political organizations spearhead efforts to assist those affected by the disaster, further weakening the PRI's reputation.

1988 — Electoral Fraud in Chihuahua Elections
After 1983, the PRI realizes that expecting voter allegiance will no longer guarantee victories. To prevent another series of PAN victories in Chihuahua, the PRI resorts to blatant electoral fraud, which re-establishes PRI majorities in municipal positions. Demonstrations against the fraud and the PRI spread quickly in Northern Mexico.

1988 — Electoral Fraud
The PRI rigs the presidential election in favor of its candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

1989 — First PAN Gubernatorial Victory
Amid growing opposition to the status quo, the PAN wins the governor's race in Baja California, and PRI President Carlos Salinas recognizes the victory.

1994 — NAFTA, the Zapatista Uprising and the Mexican Peso Crisis
NAFTA first comes into effect, resulting in close economic ties and free trade between Mexico, the United States and Canada. Politically, NAFTA is often viewed as a neoliberal initiative, favoring open markets and reducing federal regulation, further marking the PRI's economic shift to the right. In response, a revolutionary leftist group, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, declares war against the government for having lost touch with Mexican citizens, specifically in light of neoliberal, pro-globalization policies like NAFTA.

President Ernesto Zedillo devalues the peso in response to a liquidity crisis brought on by massive government spending by the previous Salinas administration and rapid flight of foreign capital recently invested in the country following NAFTA. Both of these events are responses to growing political instability due to the Zapatista movement.

1995 — Free and Fair Elections
Constitutional reforms guarantee free and fair elections beginning with the June 1997 federal elections and for all elections thereafter.

1997 — PRI Loses Majority in Congress
Elections upset the PRI majority in Congress when opposition parties claim 261 of 500 seats in the lower house.

2000 — PAN Candidate Vicente Fox Elected President
Vicente Fox and his National Action Party become the first political force to disrupt the 71-year PRI domination of the Mexican presidency. This momentous shift in power reflects the potential of Mexican elections and democracy, and Fox's significant margin of victory demonstrates a clear change in citizen mindset and the rejection of PRI policies.

Dec. 11, 2006 — Beginning of the Mexican Drug War
The ongoing conflict among various drug cartels, the Mexican government and civilian vigilantes leads to extreme violence in certain areas of the country. Public opinion of the government begins to sour as President Calderón and the PAN-led Congress are not successful in quelling much of this violence despite hard-handed military and police tactics, and government corruption and collusion with cartelists persists.

2008 — Global Economic Crisis
Mexico's economy takes the biggest blow of any Latin American country when its GDP drops by 6.2 percent in 2009. Responding to the crisis, President Calderón proposes numerous controversial political, social and economic reforms, which include encouraging competition within the telecommunications sector, privatizing some parts of Pemex and raising employment. Despite his attempt to recover the economy, the reforms are difficult to bill due to political gridlock in Congress. In the 2009 midterm elections, the PRI begins to rebound and party members hold more seats than the PAN in the Chamber of Deputies.

Dec. 1, 2012 — The PRI Returns to Power
PRI candidate Enrique Peña Nieto becomes the 57th president of Mexico.

**It is worth noting that the PVEM's platform does not align with typical green party politics seen around the world. Its credibility as a green party has been called into question, and in 2008, the European Greens withdrew its recognition of the party.*

This timeline was created by Mexico Center staff and interns: Dylan McNally, Marcela Benavides, Alex Hoer, Marissa Hall and Tony Payan. Graphic design of the timeline is by Shawn O'Neill.

Please note that the placement of each party along the given ideological spectrum is subjective, based on the authors' own knowledge and interpretation of the Mexican political system.

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