

\$15 million in exchange for the lost territory and \$3.25 million in remuneration. The Senate ratified the treaty by a vote of 38 to 14 on March 10, 1848 (National Archives 2003, p. 72).

More so than the Mexican-American War itself, the events that roused the bellicose passions of the American people have been captured in cinematic history. Walt Disney produced a three-episode television series about Davy Crockett that included *Davy Crockett at the Alamo* (1955), a romantic story depicting a group of outnumbered Americans surrounded by a marauding army waiting to pummel them. There also have been more than twenty major motion pictures produced about Crockett's famous execution after or death in battle at the Alamo. In 1960 John Wayne directed and starred as Crockett in *The Alamo*. In 2004 Billy Bob Thornton starred as Crockett in another film titled *The Alamo* alongside Dennis Quaid, who was cast as General Sam Houston. Most of the films on this subject depict a mythologized version of historical events.

Many political theorists point to U.S. imperialism and the insatiable southern drive to further the institution of slavery as the motivations for war with Mexico. Utilizing the writings of the then-congressman Abraham Lincoln, some political scientists assert that Mexican provocations led to the shedding of American blood to be sure but on the Mexican side of the border, thus negating the American claim that Mexico had trespassed on U.S. soil illegally, prompting the U.S. declaration of war. More traditional historians assert that the Mexican leadership believed their nation to be omnipotent because of their enormous success in expelling the Spanish leadership and that, given Britain's inclination to stir up trouble in the region in order to attain California and to retain the Oregon territories, Mexican leaders felt assured of their assistance should their own forces suffer serious setbacks. The British never offered such assistance.

According to the historian Kyle Ward, who examines changes in the content of textbooks on U.S. history, late-twentieth-century American political scientists portrayed the U.S. South in a detestable light, alleging that a plot existed to encompass all of Mexico's territory into their slavocracy (Ward 2006, p. 158). Following this line of logic, many historians believe that President Polk and his cohorts would have seized more territory and imposed a harsher indemnity on Mexico if there had not been such widespread domestic and congressional opposition to his policy of expansion. This is why, according to some, Polk never requested a straightforward yes or no vote on the war (Silverstone 2004, p. 198). In lieu of an up-or-down vote, the president asked for reinforcements and war materials for a war that had already been provoked and

threatened to engulf the U.S. territory if Congress failed to act quickly and decisively.

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## MEXICAN REVOLUTION (1910–1920)

Scholars have long debated whether the Mexican Revolution was a social revolution, a civil war, a nationalist movement, a struggle for unrealized liberal ideals, or a meaningless rebellion. The revolution is quite universally seen as beginning with the 1910 issuance of Francisco Madero's Plan of San Luis Potosí, calling for free elections, but there is no universal agreement on its terminal point. Many of the revolution's demands were codified in a progressive 1917 constitution that for some marks the revolution's culmination. Those who view revolution as military warfare rather than ideology often view the cessation of fighting in 1920 as the endpoint. In either case, many of the promised social reforms were not realized until the 1930s, under the Lázaro Cárdenas government. The entrenchment of a conservative regime in 1940 largely ended revolutionary social policy, though not necessarily its rhetoric. In 1968 the massacre of protesting students at Tlatelolco in Mexico City demonstrated definitively that Mexico had left its revolutionary heritage

behind. The defeat of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000 brought an end to the hegemonic institutional legacy of the early revolutionary leaders. Nonetheless, some contend that Mexico continues to be shaped by various legacies of the 1910 popular uprising against Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship.

### PORFIRIO DÍAZ

General Porfirio Díaz's entrenched dictatorship, the *Porfiriato*, lasted from 1876 to 1911. Díaz rose through the political ranks as a liberal leader, but in contrast to the anticlericalism of most nineteenth-century liberals he developed close relations with the Catholic Church and relied on conservative and wealthy elites to assure his political survival. His feared police forces (the *rurales*) viciously suppressed dissent, but equally significantly Díaz used the mechanisms of a large (and expensive) government bureaucracy to gain popular support. This dual strategy of *pan o palo* (literally, "bread or the club," or "carrot or a stick") successfully eliminated any significant opposition. As Díaz acquired more power, elections increasingly became a farce. The result was one of the longest dictatorships in Latin American history.

### FRANCISCO MADERO

In a 1908 interview with a U.S. journalist, James Creelman, Díaz indicated that Mexico was ready for a multiparty democratic system and that he would welcome opposition in the 1910 elections. Apparently the statement was only meant to improve his image abroad, but local dissidents jumped at the chance to remove Díaz from power. Francisco Madero, a wealthy landowner from the northern state of Coahuila who had studied in the United States and France, emerged as the leading opposition candidate. Hardly a revolutionary, Madero championed a liberal democratic ideology and pushed for open, fair, and transparent elections. Before the June 1910 elections, Díaz arrested and imprisoned Madero. As in previous elections, Díaz rigged the vote and won almost unanimously. The blatant fraud convinced Madero that the dictator could only be removed through armed struggle.

When released from prison after the elections, Madero fled north to Texas where he drafted his Plan of San Luis Potosí. The plan made vague references to agrarian and other social reforms, but mostly focused on political reforms. Most significantly, Madero declared the 1910 elections null and void, proclaimed himself provisional president, and called for free elections. With this plan in place, Madero returned to Mexico to launch a guerrilla war. After Madero's forces won decisive victories in May 1911, Díaz resigned the presidency and sailed for Europe. His reported parting words were, "Madero has unleashed

the tiger; let's see if he can tame it." In 1915 the former dictator died peacefully in Paris at the age of eighty-five, the only significant figure in the Mexican Revolution not to meet a violent death.

Once in power, Madero faced pressure from both the Left and Right. He had stirred the passions of agrarian rebels who wanted the return of their communal *ejido* lands. In Morelos, south of Mexico City, Emiliano Zapata confiscated estates and distributed land to peasants. In the north, Francisco (Pancho) Villa also demanded deep social and political changes. Madero, responding to his elite class interests, opposed radical reforms and encouraged his rural supporters to regain their lands through legal and institutional means. Madero insisted that the guerrillas disarm, but they refused. In response, in 1911 Zapata issued his Plan of Ayala, which denounced Madero, called for agrarian reform, and introduced one of the revolution's most noted slogans, *Land and Liberty*.

### VICTORIANO HUERTA

Madero's legalization of labor unions and inability to confine peasant revolts alienated conservatives. U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, favoring political stability and economic development over democracy, threatened to invade to protect U.S. property. With Wilson's tactical approval and the support of Mexican conservatives, in February 1913 General Victoriano Huerta launched a coup against Madero. A ten-day battle (called the *Decena Trágica*) heavily damaged Mexico City and resulted in high civilian casualties, culminating in the overthrow and assassination of the former leader. Huerta's time in office ushered in a period of chaotic and extreme political violence, with the conflict assuming aspects of a civil war rather than an ideologically driven revolutionary struggle. In April 1914 the United States occupied Mexico's principal port of Veracruz, an act that drew widespread condemnation. New weapons, including machine guns, brought an unprecedented level of carnage to the battlefield. Various armies moved across the country drafting people and stealing food along the way. These great migrations broke through Mexico's provincial isolation, creating for the first time a national identity.

Wealthy landowner and former Madero supporter Venustiano Carranza merged the forces of Zapata, Villa, and Alvaro Obregón into a Constitutionalist Army against the new dictator. Together they defeated Huerta and forced him to flee the country. With a common enemy gone, the revolutionaries fought among themselves. Carranza felt threatened by his rival Villa, who proposed much more radical social policies. In October 1914 delegates representing Villa and Zapata met at Aguascalientes to unify their forces and drive Carranza from power. Under the impression that the United States

was supporting his enemy Carranza, Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico. In response, U.S. president Woodrow Wilson sent General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing into Mexico to capture Villa. Pershing’s pursuit was a fiasco and Villa’s popularity increased. Under Obregón’s military leadership, however, Carranza gained the upper hand over Villa and Zapata.

### 1917 MEXICAN CONSTITUTION

Once in power, Carranza convoked a new constitutional convention that debated many key issues of the revolution, including the roles of the church and state, property rights, agrarian reforms, labor reforms, education, foreign investments, subsoil rights, and the political participation of Indians and women. Carranza wanted a conservative document, but delegates drafted a constitution embodying the aspirations of more radical revolutionaries that attacked large landholders, the church, and foreign capitalists. Even though many of its provisions were only slowly, if ever, implemented, it was a surprisingly progressive document that influenced subsequent social reforms in other Latin American countries.

The constitution codified much of the revolution’s nationalist ideology. Article 27 claimed mineral rights for the state. In a reversal of policies under the Díaz regime, it tightly restricted foreign and church ownership of property and returned *ejido* lands to rural communities. In what some view as the high point of the revolution, in 1938 Lázaro Cárdenas used these provisions to nationalize Standard Oil and establish the state oil company *Petróleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX). Article 123 incorporated a labor code that instituted an eight-hour workday, set a minimum salary, abolished company stores and debt peonage, defended the right to organize and strike, outlawed child labor, and provided for generous pregnancy leaves. Article 130 provided for freedom of religion and separation of church and state. Other articles extended the constitution’s liberal anticlericalism, including provisions outlawing religious control over education.

### AFTERMATHS

Carranza assumed power under the new constitution as the first constitutionally elected president since Madero. In 1919 he rid himself of one of his primary enemies by killing Zapata. Carranza had moved significantly to the right by then, and attempted to manipulate the electoral apparatus to maintain himself in power. In response, Obregón, who had by then become more liberal, overthrew Carranza, who was then killed in an ambush. With Carranza gone, Obregón won the 1920 elections and made concessions that largely brought the ten years of fighting to an end. In 1923 Villa, who had retired to a comfortable estate in the northern state of Chihuahua,

was assassinated in an attack that seemed to trace back to old feuds between revolutionary leaders. In the first peaceful transfer of power since the revolution began, Plutarco Elías Calles became president in 1924. His time in office witnessed increased conflict between the government and the Catholic Church hierarchy, leading to the 1926–1929 Cristero rebellion. In 1928 Obregón was once again elected president, but was then assassinated a few months later. Facing endless violence that seemed to be claiming the lives of all the revolutionary leaders, politicians devised a system that would assure their continued hold on power. In 1929 Calles formed the National Revolutionary Party, the forerunner of the PRI that ruled Mexico for the next seventy years. This opened the way for Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), who not only implemented progressive agrarian and social reforms, but also consolidated control over the country.

By the time Cárdenas handed power to his conservative successor Manuel Ávila Camacho, the governing party had developed a corporate state that held more absolute control than had Díaz. Although the government introduced successful reforms in education and health care and created political stability, for many marginalized peoples the revolution had brought few changes. Although women participated massively in a variety of roles in the revolution—most notably as *soldaderas* who accompanied their husbands, providing domestic and other services—they ultimately gained little. Indigenous peasants were still confronted with authoritarian political structures and racial discrimination.

**SEE ALSO** *Civil Wars; Communalism; Coup d’Etat; Guerrilla Warfare; Land Claims; Land Reform; Partido Revolucionario Institucional; Politics, Gender; Socialism; Villa, Francisco (Pancho); Zapata, Emiliano*

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