

Summary: Government in Mexico

A Struggle for Power

After Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, there was a struggle for control of the government. Army leaders sometimes took over Mexico's government. In some parts of the country, bandits attacked travelers. In other parts, Mexicans fought with Spanish landowners.

In the 1850s, Benito Juárez became president of Mexico and led a movement for reform. In 1857, reformers wrote a new constitution. It gave Mexicans a bill of rights and promised freedom of speech and equality under the law. The constitution also ended slavery and reduced the army's power. After Juárez died in 1872, Mexicans were still concerned about poverty, lack of education, land ownership issues, and political issues.

The Mexican Revolution

At the start of the 20th century, most Mexicans did not own land. Once again, many Mexicans decided to fight for reforms. The Mexican Revolution lasted from 1910 to 1920. Land reformers wanted the government to break up the *haciendas*. Emiliano Zapata led the fight for land reform and farmers' rights. A new constitution in 1917 promised to distribute land more equally among the Mexican people. Between 1920 and 1940, the government divided millions of acres among small farmers and *ejidos*.

Mexico's Government Today

Mexico's official name is Estados Unidos Mexicanos, or the United Mexican States. Mexico is a democracy made up of 31 states. Mexico has three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The government is a federal system in which power is shared between the national and state levels. Voters in each state elect a governor. Each state has its own legislature. Local governments provide public services to towns and villages. Local governments depend on money from the national government.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

hacienda *noun*, a huge farm or ranch that belonged to wealthy landowners

ejido *noun*, a community farm owned by all the villagers together



After You Read

REVIEW What sorts of concerns led Mexicans to fight in the Mexican Revolution? Highlight the sentences that describe the concerns that led to the Mexican Revolution.

REVIEW How did the 1917 constitution respond to concerns about land ownership? Draw a box around the sentence that describes the terms of the 1917 constitution.

REVIEW What is the official name of Mexico? Circle the country's official name.