

officials favoring their party. That practice radically tilted the election from the outset. At the local level, an election was still a no-holds-barred contest among factions who tried to cast as many ballots as possible—per person—while preventing the other side from doing the same. The countryside, where great landowners controlled the votes and the fighting power of many clients, was the managed election's natural habitat. As long as the great export boom lasted, most neocolonial governments had the landowners' solid support, delivering reliable electoral majorities. The judges and local authorities who administered the process also influenced the final tally. They kept the voter registration rolls and could disqualify their opponent's clients ("I'm sorry, sir, your name just isn't on the list") while allowing even dubious votes for the "right" candidate.

Everybody knew about the fraud. Opposition newspapers and representatives frequently denounced it. But many Latin American electoral systems had been subtly modified to facilitate "management" from above, so it was very hard to thwart. Mostly, people just endured the fraud and learned to live with it, coming to see managed elections as the normal way of the world.

After 1880, authoritarian governments preserved republican forms but actually functioned as dictatorships or oligarchies. Oligarchies (from Greek, meaning "rule by a few") represented a narrow ruling class. Within oligarchies, elections served to measure the strength of client networks. Even when ballots were not freely cast or fairly counted, they still showed who controlled what, and where—information that helped negotiate oligarchic power sharing. Dictatorships, on the other hand, centered on one all-powerful individual. Dictators might hold elections purely for the aura of legitimacy or to impress their foreign associates. Take landowner support and a good show of institutional legitimacy, add lucrative customs revenues and a dash of modern military technology, and neocolonial govern-

ments needed nothing else to rule—except, of course, for good relations with Europe or the United States or both.

This basic power structure facilitated a half century of economic transformation that benefited a quarter of the population at the expense of everybody else. Oligarchies and dictatorships provided *stability*, the virtue always most desired by foreign investors. That was the virtue that a former US secretary of state had in mind when, in a moment of diplomatic ardor, he called Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz "one of the greatest men to be held up for the hero worship of mankind."

The rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911), called the Porfiriato, was the very epitome of neocolonial dictatorships in Latin America. Díaz kept up constitutional appearances, but only his candidates ever won elections. He also had a circle of technocratic advisors steeped in the positivist "science" of government—the Científicos, they were called. As the value of Mexico's import/export trade expanded by roughly ten times during the Porfiriato, Díaz used the new revenues to strengthen the Mexican state. He curbed regional caudillos by crushing them or buying them off. He created public jobs for middle-class townspeople by vastly enlarging the bureaucracy. Díaz offered just two alternatives: *pan o palo*, meaning roughly "carrot or stick." For example, he subsidized the press to keep it friendly, then jailed journalists who spoke against him. Mexico acquired a national rail system and graceful, monument-lined avenues in its capital city. But as Mexico approached the centennial of Hidalgo's 1810 uprising, the Mexico City police had orders to hustle indigenous people away from downtown, so that the foreign visitors would not get "the wrong impression" of Mexico.

Interestingly, Díaz himself was part Mixtec. He was a man of the strongly indigenous south, an authentic war hero who rose in the ranks during the struggle against the French, whom he famously defeated on Cinco de Mayo (5 May 1862), a red-letter date in Mexican history. But, as with Benito Juárez, Díaz's

indigenous roots added to his popular image as a national leader without making him, in any way, a defender of indigenous identities.

In the countryside, Díaz founded the famous *rurales* (mounted national police) to secure an environment for investor confidence. He also oversaw a massive sale of public lands, most of which went to speculators and others who already had large properties. Almost all the land remaining to indigenous villagers now passed into the hands of surveying companies. Díaz welcomed foreign investment in Mexican land, and foreigners soon owned about a quarter of it, as well as the silver and oil underneath. Oil gushed from newly opened wells on Mexico's gulf coast. Champagne gushed, too, as glasses were raised to toast the exemplary president of neocolonial Mexico with effusive praise in a variety of foreign accents. Still, Díaz knew that outside influence was a mixed blessing. "Poor Mexico," he quipped, "so far from God, so close to the United States."

Except for the champagne and managed elections, government in neocolonial Brazil was a very different affair. It was highly decentralized, exemplifying the possibilities of oligarchic—as opposed to dictatorial—rule. With the emperor gone, how could far-flung landowning families control Brazil's vast territory? The first Brazilian Republic (1889–1936) was a federation of twenty states with a weak central government. Its first principle, contrasting markedly with the Porfiriato, was local autonomy for each landowning oligarchy. Cattle ranchers, coffee and sugar planters, cacao and rubber barons from one end of Brazil to the other managed local elections to their liking. Various regional oligarchies negotiated control of each Brazilian state. Importantly, the new federal structure let each state keep its own export revenues. In effect, the country's state governors together determined who would be president. The two most powerful states were the current leading coffee producers, São Paulo and Minas Gerais, and they traded the presidency back and forth between them.

Because the São Paulo and Minas Gerais oligarchies wanted autonomy above all—and already had it—their federal presidents did very little. The republicans opened Brazil for business, so to speak, and then stood out of the way. One initiative of Brazilian neocolonial government is an exception proving the rule. In 1906, the Brazilian federal government began to buy and stockpile excess coffee, millions of tons of it, to prevent overproduction from lowering the price. In so doing, the coffee planters who controlled the central government used meager federal resources to bolster privileged interests. Huge stockpiles of coffee were burned when the system finally came crashing down.

Meanwhile, northeastern Brazil provided several examples of angry resistance to liberal Progress. In 1874–75, peasants rioted in marketplaces to defy the imposition of metric weights and measures that they were sure would cheat them. The excited crowds then burned the official records and archives that lawyers used to evict families without legal title to land. In the 1890s, bandits with Robin Hood reputations, backlanders of the arid sertão, became popular heroes and the subjects of ballads in northeastern Brazil. This dirt-poor region of Brazil also had a tradition of wandering holy men who fixed broken-down churches, revived traditional religious ardor, and occasionally gained fame as miracle workers. Between 1893 and 1897, thousands of fervent believers gathered around one Antônio the Counselor, who preached against modern materialism and the "godless republic." With astonishing speed, Canudos, the Counselor's backland base in the Bahian sertão, became the second largest agglomeration of people in the state, surpassed only by the state capital. Horrified by the specter of a fanatical prophet—the opposite of Progress—the Brazilian federal government launched one military expedition after another against the Counselor's "holy city" of Canudos, annihilating it along with most of its inhabitants, at least ten thousand of them. Here, according to *The Backlands* (1902), the famous chronicle of the event by a military engineer and brilliant writer, Euclides

