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Mexican Foreign Relations, 1910-1946

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Summary and Keywords

During the Mexican Revolution and the long period of reconstruction that followed, successive Mexican presidents navigated the stormy seas of international relations. Though forced to manage repeated cases of foreign intervention in its internal affairs, the government actually enjoyed considerable freedom of action during and after the Revolution because of the world historical context. From the First World War to the Second, heightened tensions and mounting international conflicts worldwide diverted the attention of foreign governments and enabled skillful Mexican diplomats to take advantage of world conditions to advance their own agendas for international relations and domestic reform on the international stage as they sought to establish Mexico's place within the international states system, and world history, as the first social revolution of the 20th century.

Keywords: Mexico, revolution, diplomatic recognition, nonintervention, foreign relations

It is only with considerable hindsight that it is possible to reflect upon the history of Mexico's foreign relations from 1910 to 1946 and recognize that, despite the near constant threat of foreign intervention in internal affairs, Mexican governments had sufficient room to maneuver during this period that they were able to achieve considerable success, both in their domestic reform programs and in their pursuit of a vision of international relations that respected less powerful countries' rights to pursue such reforms. One need only think of the tenacity with which the United States attempted to isolate and punish Cuba for its revolutionary audacity after 1959 to understand that the unfolding of the Mexican Revolution was as contingent upon world historical circumstances as it was upon domestic processes and personalities. This tension between the need to react to international meddling and the skillful manipulation of the international context characterized revolutionary diplomacy.

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The activist foreign policies of the revolutionary period had precedent in the Porfirian period (1876–1911) that preceded the Revolution, when the Mexican government engaged in peacekeeping efforts with the United States in Central America in 1906 and 1907. President Porfirio Díaz's goal in this cooperation was to prevent direct U.S. intervention in Central America through multilateral negotiation. As a result, he ultimately challenged the United States over its intervention in Nicaragua and gave refuge to the ousted president, José Santos Zelaya. In doing so, Díaz contributed to the development of the idea that by standing up for the right to freedom from intervention for other Latin American republics, future governments might protect themselves from future U.S. meddling.

Efforts to balance external influences also had considerable precedent during the Porfiriato. One of the distinguishing features of Díaz's foreign policy was his effort to counteract what he and his diplomats clearly perceived to be the dangerously preponderant influence of their neighbors to the north by encouraging British, French, German, and even Japanese investment in the modernization projects that characterized the period. Although U.S. citizens like Colonel William C. Green, the Copper King of Sonora, and business interests such as the House of Guggenheim came to dominate mining and smelting, Díaz and his contemporaries balanced this by currying favor with German military officers, whom they invited to aid in professionalizing the Mexican military, and the British engineer Weetman Pearson, whose successful management of the Mexico City *desague* and the construction of the Tehuantepec railroad caused Díaz to give him privileged access to the oil fields of Veracruz, creating the opportunity for growth of the Mexican Eagle Petroleum Company. In doing so, they took advantage of the atmosphere of imperial competition for access to resources and markets that characterized the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although these foreign investors made it possible for the Porfirian regime to achieve its modernization goals, they did not shoulder an equal share of the burden of addressing the social dislocations that modernization wrought upon the Mexican populace. Rather, foreign industrialists and investors repeatedly asked their home governments to protect their interests over those of the majority of Mexicans. This was most memorably the case in the 1906 strike at the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, when Colonel Green facilitated the invasion of Mexican sovereignty by members of the Arizona Rangers, whom the Governor of Sonora had asked for help in putting down the workers' movement while he waited for the arrival of Díaz's infamous rural police force, the *rurales*.¹ Interventions in internal affairs such as these helped direct the mounting dissatisfaction with the Díaz dictatorship, and such incidents of interference would continue to influence the course of the Revolution in subsequent decades.

Responding to Intervention during the Course of the Revolution, 1910-1929

The exclusion of the masses from the benefits of modernization and the resultant dissatisfaction provided the general domestic context for the outbreak of revolution in 1910. The international context helped to shape the manner in which events would unfold. During the tumultuous 1910s and 1920s, the coming of and fallout from the First World War were paramount among international factors, but conditions on the international border between the United States and Mexico also had a powerful influence. Revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries and their representatives all did their best to take advantage of these conditions to pursue their international and domestic goals.

Given the high rate of foreign investment in Porfirian Mexico and its development paradigm, it is not surprising that foreign governments backed the maintenance of the status quo following Francisco I. Madero's call to arms of November 20, 1910. During the initial revolutionary fervor, consular and diplomatic officials made representations to the Díaz regime on behalf of their citizens and their property rights. This continued to be the primary concern of the administration of William H. Taft, which was most anxious to protect U.S. interests in Mexico—understandable given that it was host to fully one-quarter of all U.S. foreign direct investment.² On the border, U.S. interests were somewhat more ambiguous. Despite general approbation of Díaz's policies and widespread prejudice against Mexican residents of the region, Madero's forces contributed to the economic dynamism of the border, obtaining U.S. arms by securing customs revenues, provisioning troops with the cooperation of local U.S. merchants, and even providing a peculiar form of entertainment as El Paso residents went "revolution watching" from the rooftop of the Hotel El Paso during the Battle of Ciudad Juárez.³ In immediate terms, the Treaty of Ciudad Juárez that led to Díaz's resignation was undeniably influenced by the presence of U.S. troops on the border and the presence of U.S. warships in Mexican ports.⁴ Economic and political refugees from the violence flooded over the border in 1911 and thereafter, contributing to the boomtown atmosphere of many border cities.⁵ Moreover, the familiarity that the leaders of the Revolution in the North had with the United States influenced their foreign relations following Díaz's resignation in May 1911 and Madero's inauguration as president that November.

The representatives of foreign governments watched and waited as Madero struggled to meet the demands of the diverse revolutionary forces that had supported him. Although Madero made the requisite commitments to protect private property, no one was more wary of his ability to do so than U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson.⁶ U.S. consuls throughout the republic reported "little harm" to U.S. interests and all agreed that the U.S. government should not intervene in the internal affairs of the nation, but their calm conflicted with the hyperbolic tone Wilson employed in his diplomatic reports.⁷ The specific role Wilson played in Madero's death is a matter of debate, but the agreement

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whereby Madero was overthrown and General Victoriano Huerta became provisional president is known as the Pact of the Embassy because it was negotiated there with Wilson's support. The view that Wilson orchestrated Madero's overthrow during *Decena Trágica* emerged as early as 1916 when the *New York World's* Robert H. Murray published an exposé of Wilson's role in the affair that would later be expanded into a series of articles for *Harper's Weekly*.⁸ The claim Wilson actually instigated the coup seems to have been an exaggeration, but Huerta and Félix Díaz recognized his obvious disapproval of Madero and his belief that Mexico needed Huerta to protect U.S. business interests. The conspirators took advantage of the opportunity his attitudes provided to overthrow the president. As a result, at least some of the blame for the subsequent assassination of Madero and his vice president, José María Pino Suárez, can be laid at the U.S. ambassador's feet.

After the installation of Huerta in the presidency, U.S. policies and preferences continued to influence his fortunes. Despite Ambassador Wilson's support of Huerta and his de facto control of the country, President Taft declined to grant immediate diplomatic recognition to his regime, unlike his European counterparts, preferring to attempt to extract resolution of several diplomatic issues that had plagued U.S.-Mexican relations in previous decades in return, such as the Chamizal dispute that beset El Paso and Ciudad Juárez.⁹ Had Taft merely acknowledged Huerta's position of preeminence, the course of the Revolution might have been much different. As it was, a few months after the overthrow, the moralizing progressive, President Woodrow Wilson, was able to ignore the advice of Ambassador Wilson, preferring instead to rely upon the observations of special envoys who held his trust but had little to no previous experience in Mexico.¹⁰ These novices tended to reaffirm President Wilson's ideas regarding the United States' obligation to provide Latin Americans with tutelage in matters of democratic governance. Wilson refused to recognize Huerta until such time as legitimate elections were held and withdrew Ambassador Wilson, leaving the embassy in the hands of chargé d'affaires Nelson J. O'Shaughnessy.

President Wilson's opposition to Huerta helped seal the dictator's fate, thereby influencing the course of the Revolution. The dictator's opponents saw in this interference an opportunity, particularly after the U.S. invasion of Veracruz. In order to obtain his desired result of Huerta's removal, when U.S. two seamen stationed off the coast of Tampico on the U.S.S. *Dolphin* were briefly arrested while ashore, Wilson found the excuse he needed in the resulting diplomatic flap.¹¹ Perhaps even more important in providing the immediate pretext for the invasion was the fact that the German-flagged *Ypiranga*, in keeping with the Kaiser's efforts to expand German imperial influence in the Americas and make inroads into "America's backyard," was about to land a shipment of arms for the federal army that would have prolonged Huerta's ability to maintain his position.¹² Germany, Great Britain, and the United States vied for markets in Mexico, and helping to prop up Huerta (against Wilson's obvious wishes) would have increased German influence in Mexico and provided a stronger foothold for business interests in Mexico and Latin America more broadly. Both imperial competition and Wilson's hard-headedness therefore provided the context for his famous Pajama Conference, so called

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because the conference call during which he discussed the *Ypiranga's* imminent arrival with the Secretaries of State and the Navy occurred in the early hours of the morning before he had even dressed. Wilson decided to invade Veracruz on April 21, 1914, causing the loss of nineteen U.S. and 126 Mexican lives. Much to Wilson's surprise, the revolutionary factions that opposed Huerta did not welcome this invasion of Mexican sovereignty. When Argentina, Brazil, and Chile—the ABC powers—offered to mediate the dispute at Niagara Falls, Canada, both Huerta and the Constitutionals cleverly refused the suggestion that the mediation involve a discussion of the internal battle for supremacy taking place within Mexico, and insisted that the only question at issue was the U.S. occupation of the Mexican port city.¹³ With the mediators' hands tied and the dogs of war looming on the horizon in Europe, the diverse Mexican opponents of the occupation secured the eventual withdrawal of the U.S. forces and the concomitant collapse of the Huerta regime. Given that Venustiano Carranza's forces were the only rebels within striking distance of Veracruz, the First Chief happily filled the power vacuum left by the United States.

Carranza played his hand skillfully, and Wilson's next invasion of Mexican sovereignty provided Carranza with the opportunity to finally vanquish the revolutionary rivals he had broken with at the Convention of Aguascalientes and secure his position as president. Despite the initial popularity of Francisco "Pancho" Villa in the United States, something he cultivated by shaping the U.S. newspaper and film coverage of the Revolution, President Wilson soon came to believe that Carranza represented the best hope for democratic stability in Mexico and "the least of all evils for American interests."¹⁴ In retribution for Wilson's diplomatic recognition of Carranza, Villa descended into a rampage that resulted in the attack on Columbus, New Mexico.¹⁵ Villa had hoped that the attack would precipitate further U.S. intervention, enabling him to benefit in much the same way that Carranza had done from the occupation of Veracruz. Although Wilson did authorize the foolhardy Pershing Punitive Expedition to cross into Mexican territory and apprehend the general, Carranza once again benefited from the interference. Carranza's troops succeeded in defeating Pershing's at the Battle of Carrizal in June 1916. Thereafter, the wandering U.S. forces never captured Villa, but they strengthened Mexicans' nationalist resolve. This nationalist sentiment propelled the confidence and radicalism that is evident in the Constitution of 1917, which laid out the reform program that subsequent revolutionary governments would follow.¹⁶ It also contributed to the context surrounding a most daring suggestion on the part of Germany.

In the Zimmerman telegram, the German Foreign Minister outlined a plan that would have meant the return of the territory Mexico had lost to the United States in 1848 in exchange for an alliance with Germany and Japan.¹⁷ The audacious plan, which is best known as one of the events precipitating U.S. entry into the First World War, also demonstrates that Carranza, who did not immediately reject the proposal before it came to public attention through the efforts of British cypher clerks, was perfectly willing to manipulate the Great Powers in his efforts to obtain advantages for Mexico.¹⁸ Evidence that Carranza seriously entertained the suggestion, and even desired to instigate an ethnic rebellion in the United States, as in the Plan de San Diego, suggests that he was a

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shrewd adversary.¹⁹ Even more troubling to the United States, however, was the economic nationalism embodied in the Constitution of 1917, which returned subsoil rights to the nation and affirmed the government's right to impose constraints on private property. And yet, by the end of the war, Mexico remained unscathed despite the shock of the Zimmerman affair and the Constitution's radicalism. The only punishment meted out was that Mexico was not invited to join the League of Nations, an organization whose mandate it fundamentally opposed because the League Pact explicitly recognized the Monroe Doctrine.²⁰

The Monroe Doctrine was the perennial thorn in the side of Mexican presidents. Because of the League's recognition of Latin America as a sphere of U.S. influence, Mexico followed an independent foreign policy in Latin America known as the Carranza doctrine, pursuing stronger relations with the rest of the region and respect for Latin American countries' economic and territorial sovereignty, positions that continued to influence Mexico's foreign policy after Carranza's assassination in 1920.²¹ Álvaro Obregón provided support to Venezuelan revolutionaries and, following Díaz's example from the decade prior to the Revolution, attempted to reassert Mexico's sphere of influence in Central America, all while contending with his own difficulties in obtaining U.S. recognition.²² Obregón too used the question of recognition to his maximum advantage, negotiating the Bucareli Agreement of 1923, in which he succeeded in obtaining U.S. agreement to Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917, which gave the Mexican government control over the subsoil rights of the nation in exchange for agreement that these laws would not be applied retroactively to U.S. companies. By compromising on the issue of retroactivity, Obregón achieved his greater objectives and was finally recognized by the United States.²³ Recognition enabled him to put down the revolt of Adolfo de la Huerta with U.S. arms and assistance, finally consolidating the revolutionary regime.

As Plutarco Elías Calles assumed the presidency in 1924, Mexico had remarkably resisted the antirevolutionary forces of the international states system and survived with its revolutionary principles relatively intact. Confident in this position, Calles took advantage of the opening this created to begin to implement some of the tenets of the Revolution in a more radical manner, including his international support for revolution in Central America. He provided support to the Liberals in the Nicaraguan Civil War of 1926-1927, going so far as to send arms to aid their cause. Calles also pushed his domestic reform program forward in ways that had multiple international repercussions. The attempted separation of church and state that precipitated the Cristero Rebellion led to the break in relations with the Vatican and tensions with Catholics within the United States and the Catholic countries of Latin America.²⁴ Calles also antagonized the United States, and its especially unfriendly Ambassador James R. Sheffield, by passing the petroleum law of 1925, which authorized the government to implement Article 27 of the Constitution and forced foreign oil companies to convert their private properties to government concessions.²⁵ Relations finally improved following the arrival of a new U.S. ambassador, Dwight W. Morrow.

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Ambassador Morrow's considerable diplomatic skill, along with his enthusiasm for all "things Mexican" helped him to resolve the oil issue.²⁶ In 1928 Calles amended the petroleum law and obtained agreement on the concept of "positive acts," by which the oil companies had to give up lands upon which they had not made improvements before 1917. Morrow was also able to broker an end to the Cristiada before completing his posting. During the Maximato (so called because of the influence *jefe máximo* Calles continued to hold over the direction of the government), his successor, President Emilio Portes Gil, fulfilled Calles's internationalism by providing support and asylum to Augusto César Sandino.²⁷ He also broke relations with the U.S.S.R., suggesting to the rest of the hemisphere that Mexico represented an equally valid example of revolution.²⁸

This helped set the stage for a new era. Successive Mexican presidents had managed the constant intervention in the internal affairs of the nation, whether in the interests of foreign citizens and their property, imperial competition for resources, or sheer arrogance. In doing so, international accommodation of Mexican revolutionary nationalism slowly emerged. As Robert Freeman Smith has argued, before this time in international relations, protection of private property was considered the duty of a national government. But by 1930, in the face the world economic crisis of the Great Depression and mounting economic nationalism in Mexico and beyond, industrialized nations grudgingly and haltingly began to accept limits.²⁹ By taking advantage of world conditions and manipulating foreign intervention to its own advantage whenever possible, the Mexican Revolution had helped bring about this new era.

Managing Interference in Revolutionary Reconstruction, 1930-1946

The period of revolutionary reconstruction occurred while significant changes to the world stage were underway. Beginning with the Great Depression and ending with the conclusion of the Second World War, world events loomed large over the period, shaping the context in which the Mexican government sought to advance its interests. Mexico continued to defend the hard-won limits it had helped to establish in international relations, and in its own foreign affairs, as the country took on a larger role in international diplomacy. Once again, border relations and Mexico's neighbor to the north brought numerous challenges, from the deportation of over a million people of Mexican origin from the United States to continued efforts to protect Mexican sovereignty from U.S. encroachment. Successive Mexican governments continued to balance these challenges successfully and effect dramatic changes in Mexican society.

By managing to consolidate the revolutionary regime at home through the 1929 creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR)—the party that would control the presidency for the next seventy years and continue to dominate politics into the next millennium—Mexico was able to play a larger role on the international stage as a

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defender of countries' rights to pursue independent foreign and economic policies. In its economic policy, Mexico was at the forefront of Latin American countries in the employment of counter-cyclical policies in its reaction to the stock market crash of 1929 and the resultant loss of investment capital in Latin America and export markets abroad.³⁰ Under the leadership first of Alberto J. Pani (1932-1933) and then decisively under Eduardo Suárez, who was Secretary of Hacienda from 1935-1946, the Mexican government forged a course that led them to champion the founding of an inter-American development bank and reject colonial preferences in their pursuit of economic development.³¹ In the Pan American Union and other multilateral institutions, such as the League of Nations and its various technical commissions, Mexican representatives took on larger roles throughout the period.³² Mexico officially joined the League in 1931 after securing agreement that doing so did not imply acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine, and soon took an active role in the resolution of the Chaco War and the Leticia Crisis, quickly occupying a place on the League Council.³³ Mexico became one of the most vocal defenders of nonintervention, a principle that gained increased importance as fascist European powers began to expand. At the League in the lead-up to the Second World War, Mexican diplomats vigorously defended the League Pact, and in doing sometimes appeared to be the only defenders of the victims of fascist aggression. Although the depth of their support may have been questionable in some cases, such as that of Ethiopia, in the case of Spain, Mexican delegates to the League defended the principle even after their allies, the Spanish Republicans themselves, had abandoned hope of enforcing the Pact.³⁴ These vast and varied international experiences prepared Mexico to adopt an even larger role in the postwar period, at Bretton Woods and in the newly created United Nations.

Foreign Minister Genaro Estrada had articulated Mexico's foreign policy in the Estrada Doctrine of 1930, stating that Mexico would refrain from using recognition as a diplomatic tool to pronounce upon governments. While recognizing that the difficulty in obtaining recognition had had important consequences for Mexico in previous decades, this policy also left the door open for future leftist revolutions in the hemisphere. During the Cárdenas era, Mexican representatives tried to convince progressive reformers throughout the region that the Mexican Revolution represented a viable model to follow in addressing the challenges that beset the hemisphere. The pursuit of closer relations with Latin America became known as *La Política del Buen Amigo*, or Good Friend Policy, in an obvious play upon the name of the Roosevelt administration's policy for the region. Governmental and nongovernmental representatives who took part in everything from friendly football matches to the unveiling of statues contributed to Latin Americans' understanding of the Revolution as a leftist, secular, nationalist, and popular movement in favor of the country's development. Although popular culture such as Mexican music and films about the Revolution contributed to this understanding, the government also shaped Latin American reception of these unofficial measures. In 1940, the Cárdenas government sent the Mexican navy destroyer the *Durango* to Latin American ports of call from Valparaíso to Panama in one such effort. With motorcyclists, polo players, folkloric dancers and musicians, army cadets, tennis stars, and journalists all aboard, the goodwill

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mission, which numbered over four hundred individuals, was the epitome of the government's popular promotional style. Because these over-the-top methods were also backed up with technical missions, educational exchanges, and other support, the Good Friend Policy was able to build upon the successes of the Díaz regime in Central America and the Carranza Doctrine's emphasis on Latin America to extend Mexican influence to receptive audiences throughout the hemisphere.

Mexico's international policy clearly also played well to domestic audiences in this period. By defending the principle of nonintervention on the international stage, the Mexican government defended its own right to exist and to pursue reform policies of its own choosing without fear of foreign intervention, particularly from the United States. The expropriation of U.S.-owned rural land provided an important testing ground, as successive Mexican governments sought to exercise this right by careful diplomatic maneuvering.³⁵ The agrarian reform provided the basis for the social transformation of the countryside, and although U.S.-owned land comprised only 10 percent of the land expropriated in the agrarian reform, it provoked nationalist support within Mexico and created great interest in the rest of the hemisphere. The reactions of the industrialized nations were observed with careful attention.³⁶ The limits the United States had placed upon its own actions in the Americas were articulated in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, and Mexico's expropriations were perceived to be a test of the depths of FDR's commitment not to intervene. Remarkably, the Good Neighbor Policy withstood the test.³⁷

Individual personalities once again played a significant role in helping Mexico to achieve this freedom from intervention. U.S. Ambassador Josephus Daniels was a somewhat unlikely champion of the Mexican reform because of the role he had played as Secretary of the Navy in the Invasion of Veracruz, but by the time he was appointed ambassador in 1933, the newspaper editor from North Carolina came to admire the goals of the agrarian reform, even recognizing its potential applicability to the U.S. South.³⁸ As president, Lázaro Cárdenas encouraged Daniels's thinking regarding "Mexico's New Deal" (inspired by their mutual acquaintance with William Cameron Townsend), creating in him a firm ally in his desire to fulfill the goals of the Revolution.

These efforts paid dividends when it came to the oil expropriation of 1938. Rather than a premeditated nationalist plot, as it was portrayed by its detractors at the time, the oil conflict emerged in direct response to the foreign oil companies' intransigence in dealing with the Mexican oil workers' union. President Cárdenas's support for organized labor caused unions to become increasingly bold in their demands, leading to the unprecedented number of strikes that precipitated the break between Cárdenas and his erstwhile mentor, former President Calles. The oil companies, including Weetman Pearson's *El Águila*, which was by then owned by Royal Dutch Shell, and Eduard L. Doheny's Mexican Petroleum and Huasteca oil companies, which were controlled by Standard Oil of New Jersey, refused to be bound by arbitration that found in favor of the oil companies, and rejected the Mexican Supreme Court's ruling that the arbitration award should stand.³⁹ Facing the companies' refusal to be bound by Mexican law,

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Cárdenas ordered the expropriation in defense of national sovereignty, and in order to warn foreign capital that neither foreign governments nor the business interests of foreign citizens would be allowed to interfere in Mexico's internal affairs. Other branches of the U.S. government were not as understanding—the Department of the Treasury canceled its purchases of Mexican silver, sending the economy into a tailspin—but Daniels's view, supported by Roosevelt and Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, held sway. The expropriation became the most important test of Mexican diplomatic skill for the Cárdenas government and its representatives. Lacking a sympathetic representative in Mexico, the British government pushed Cárdenas too hard on behalf of its oil interests, leading to the withdrawal of Mexico's Ambassador to Great Britain.

Although the gathering clouds of war on the European horizon convinced the Cárdenas government that the democratic powers would eventually need Mexican oil, they had to weather the storm until such time as that became the case. Mexican representatives pursued oil contracts in Latin America and secured important barter agreements in Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy. Although these proved moot once transatlantic shipping became an impossibility after the outbreak of war, the agreements did help until the government of Manuel Ávila Camacho was finally able to determine settlement of the foreign oil companies' claims and negotiate an end to the oil dispute.⁴⁰ The significance of this achievement cannot be overemphasized. Many governments of different stripes the world over before and since have not been able to manage the nationalization of their resources with such aplomb, and it speaks to the confluence of world historical events and the degree of professionalization of the Mexican diplomatic corps that the fledgling national oil company Pemex was able to survive what, in other circumstances, might have been the cruel winds of international capital.

The reluctance to intervene on behalf of the U.S. government did not, however, quell the activities of those who, through the experience of decades of interference in Mexico's internal affairs, had learned to expect such intervention. The rebellion of Saturnino Cedillo in San Luis Potosí was influenced by this dynamic, as many supporters within Mexico and abroad expected the United States to either overtly or covertly support Cedillo in retaliation for the oil expropriation, but in keeping with the Good Neighbor Policy, Roosevelt held true to his word. Moreover, other industrialized countries temporarily held themselves to the same standard. Contrary to expectations, German support for Juan Andrew Almazán did not materialize in the 1940 election, and Ávila Camacho became president despite widespread conservative opposition.

Beneath the surface of elite politics and high diplomacy, however, the mundane lives of many Mexicans began to change due to international trends that also affected the Mexican government's larger efforts to transform society. The agrarian reform plan was dealt a significant blow by the arrival of more than a million deportees from the United States. In addition to migrants who were summarily "returned" to Mexico, many U.S. citizens of Mexican origin who were scapegoated in the United States during the Great Depression were encouraged to "self-deport." Young people who had grown up in the United States speaking English were suddenly forced to adapt to life in a foreign country,

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albeit one their ancestors had called home.⁴¹ Aside from the social dislocations this caused, it also disrupted the Mexican government's land redistribution, because suddenly an additional million inhabitants needed the means with which to support themselves. Colonization schemes were only partially successful, and these caused considerable resentment among the Mexican population they joined.

Many of those who had migrated to Mexico in the 1930s returned to the United States when the opportunity presented itself in the form of labor cooperation during the Second World War. The *bracero* program ostensibly began as a means of filling vacant farm labor positions as U.S. workers moved into either the armed services or war-related employment after the United States joined the Allies in World War II. In reality, Mexican workers joined a large variety of industries, and many enthusiastic Mexicans also joined the U.S. forces in order to help defeat the Axis before Mexico's own contingent of airmen, Squadron 201, joined the show. Veterans and braceros returned to the United States and Mexico, increasing the ties that bound the two countries in the postwar era.⁴²

As well as finally resolving the oil conflict as expected, cooperation between the United States and Mexico during the war firmly tied the two countries' economies together. Ever watchful of its sovereignty, the Mexican government still had to protect itself from U.S. calls for bases in Baja California, which Lázaro Cárdenas as Secretary of War refused, but this stance was possible because of the full economic cooperation Mexico provided. Although the shift toward a developmentalist (rather than a solely redistributionist) model of the economy had already begun during the Cárdenas era, under Ávila Camacho this transition became complete, as the wartime president called on the Mexican populace to unite behind *la patria* and support the war effort.⁴³ Ávila Camacho skillfully used Mexico's wartime assistance to wrest every benefit he could for nascent Mexican industries from the United States. In quid-pro-quo fashion, Mexico took a leadership role in helping to ensure Latin American support for the United States during the war, benefiting significantly from the privileged position this conferred on Mexico. Although anti-U.S. nationalism would once again become a useful political tool for subsequent Mexican presidents in the years that followed, this period of economic cooperation made the two countries' economies almost inseparable, not that the middle-class Mexicans who shopped at Sears, Roebuck & Company or worked at Ford Motor Company had a problem with that. Just as in the Porfiriato, foreign business interests came to have a dominant influence over politics and society. Although revolutionary governments had carefully defended Mexico's sovereignty from intervention in order to safeguard the reform process under way, in the end, and despite the overhaul of the ruling classes in Mexico City, the country once again embarked upon a period of modernization that would provide uneven benefits for the country.

Discussion of the Literature

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The literature on Mexican foreign relations, reflecting the realities of Mexico's geographic position, has generally been dominated by studies of U.S.-Mexican relations. Nevertheless, in recent decades these works have employed an increasing variety of perspectives, from business history to cultural relations. Moreover, a significant group of authors has begun to examine in greater depth Mexico's relations with the rest of the world. These two tendencies have enriched the literature considerably, making it an exciting and dynamic area of study.

Given the long history of U.S. interference in Mexican internal affairs, a number of "myths, misdeeds, and misunderstandings" dominated early works on the relations between the neighboring countries, just as they had influenced the course of these relations.⁴⁴ Standard works of Mexican diplomatic history emphasized the overwhelming presence of U.S. investments in the Porfirian period, particularly in the North, as is best seen in the work of John Mason Hart.⁴⁵ The meddling of rogue U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, whose orchestration of the so-called Pact of the Embassy led to the deaths of Francisco Madero and Pino Suárez, the trivial nature of the Mexican affront that led to the U.S. invasion of Veracruz in 1914, and the subsequent role of U.S. decisions to withhold or grant diplomatic recognition in the unfolding of the Revolution and revolutionary reconstruction also received significant attention. Given the obvious interference of successive U.S. administrations, the growth of Mexican nationalism was seen by these authors as a natural outcome. As a result, the efforts of Mexican governments to limit the involvement of U.S. government representatives, businesses, and cultural products were generally celebrated in the literature as triumphs of nationalist self-determination, with the oil expropriation of 1938 serving as the most iconic example, in the work of Lorenzo Meyer and others.⁴⁶ Reality was of course more complex and several authors, including Alan Knight, have shown how these relations were more multifaceted, and rather than being dominated by nationalist fervor, played to a number of domestic and international constituencies.⁴⁷ It is perhaps because of this tendency to celebrate the anti-U.S. attitudes and actions of postrevolutionary leaders that studies of the World War II period, during which the Mexican and U.S. governments cooperated extensively, generally began by emphasizing the Mexican refusal to allow U.S. bases on Mexican soil, rather than the subtle ways in which cooperation influenced everything from Mexican accounting practices to civil aviation, as is seen in the works of Stephen Niblo and Hal Jones.⁴⁸ Julio Moreno shows how fascination with and admiration of U.S. business practices led the U.S. firm Sears, Roebuck & Company to gain a significant foothold in the Mexican market.⁴⁹ Dina Berger argues that in pursuit of national development, the Mexican government fostered the tourism industry, catering primarily to U.S. pleasure seekers.⁵⁰ Likewise, Rick López shows that in a complex interplay of U.S. aesthetic preferences and Mexican rural development, artisanal craft production became part of the canon of national popular culture.⁵¹ By adding layers to our understanding of Mexico's relationship with the United States during the revolutionary period, these works have given greater context to the traditional diplomatic narrative,

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contributing to a less triumphalist approach that does not unquestioningly celebrate the revolutionary state.

At the same time, and beginning most notably with the pathbreaking work of Friedrich Katz, authors have attempted to put Mexican-U.S. relations into broader international perspective, bringing additional clarity to our understanding of Mexican foreign relations and the place of the first social revolution of the 20th century in world history.⁵² Although the narrative of Mexico's relations with Great Britain and Spain were established quite early—with Great Britain playing the villain in the telling of Lorenzo Meyer, necessitating the withdrawal of the Mexican Ambassador to London in retaliation for their chauvinistic response to the oil expropriation, and with Mexico playing the hero in the work of Patricia Fagen and others, as the Cárdenas government altruistically provided material support to the beleaguered Spanish Republic during the Civil War—these stark narratives have given way to more complex investigations into the international dimensions of the Revolution.⁵³ Employing multicountry archival methods, and drawing on the British, German, and Japanese historiography that lay bare the international context of imperial competition has, in the work of Friedrich Schuler for example, provided new meaning to U.S. efforts to prevent German arms from landing to provision the reactionary dictatorship of Victoriano Huerta, and the serious consideration Venustiano Carranza gave to the scheme outlined in the infamous Zimmerman telegram whereby Mexico would regain the territory lost to the United States in the 19th century by allying with Germany and Japan in the event of war with the United States.⁵⁴ By putting Mexican diplomacy into this broader context, and in keeping with trends in Latin American diplomatic history more generally, Mexico appears less of a victim and more of an independent actor, taking advantage of Great Power politics to advance its own interests. Talented diplomats represented Mexico on the world stage from the halls of the League of Nations in Geneva to the literary salons of Paris, and authors pursuing this avenue of study, such as Fabián Herrera and Dafne Cruz Porchini, have done much to underline the skill of Mexican governments, demonstrating the pragmatism and professionalism with which they undertook their representation of Mexican interests.⁵⁵ This has also been shown to be true within the hemisphere, as Mexican governments balanced their own agenda with the complexities of a Pan-American system dominated by the United States. From the asylum provided to the architect of Indo-America, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, who founded the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) in Mexico City in 1924, to the well-known support the Mexican government provided to Augusto César Sandino as he fought the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua, Jürgen Buchenau and others have shown that successive Mexican governments provided real and rhetorical support to revolutionary causes throughout this period.⁵⁶ Either because of its ambitions as a middle power in Central America, or its role as an intellectual lighthouse in Latin American politics, the Revolution and Mexican revolutionary governments played a significant role as a progressive force in the hemisphere. This too has made it more difficult for scholars to approach the part that the Mexican state played in rallying support for the U.S. line following its entrance into the Second World War, the experience of which helped to lay

the foundation for Mexican-U.S. cooperation in intelligence gathering during the Cold War, despite Mexico's purported position as a bastion of revolutionary democracy.

Primary Sources

The Acervo Histórico Diplomático of the Mexican Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), located at Tlatelolco in Mexico City, is the essential repository for sources on Mexican diplomatic history. In addition to Berta Ulloa's descriptive guide *Revolución Mexicana, 1910-1920*,⁵⁷ the archive has made a number of electronic catalogs and databases available online at <https://acervo.sre.gob.mx/index.php/catalogos-electronicos>. Some of these documents have been published in Isidro Fabela's *Historia diplomática de la Revolución Mexicana*, but researchers should expect to consult the archive in person.⁵⁸ Second to the SRE in importance is the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN). In particular, the Ramo Presidentes includes documentation related to each president's term, from Álvaro Obregón forward. Historians are also increasingly beginning to make use of the records of other government ministries, such as the Secretaría de Educación Pública, now also housed at the AGN, for insight into topics related to international educational exchanges and cultural missions. The personal papers of several presidents are also available, including the Archivo Particular Lázaro Cárdenas, which is on microfilm at the AGN. The Fideicomiso Archivos Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca, in Roma Norte, Mexico City, is unparalleled. A wealth of revolutionary memoirs also complements these archival sources, from those of Minister of Hacienda Eduardo Suárez to those of diplomats and their wives, such as Paul von Hintze and Edith O'Shaughnessy.⁵⁹

In the international arena, the most extensive source is certainly the U.S. Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, the 812 decimal series, which is available for the periods 1910-1929 and 1930-1939 via microfilm. Also useful is the 712 series, the Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations between Mexico and Other States, the Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations between the United States and Mexico, and the Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Mexico 1940-1944, as well as the U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Mexico, 1919-1941. The records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other U.S. departments must be consulted in person at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD. Less abundant but even more easily accessed is the digitized collection of the Confidential Print series, issued by the U.K. Foreign and Colonial Offices, http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk/CP_LatinAmerica#, which includes the FO 420/1-294 (Central and South America, 1833-1941) file class from the U.K. National Archives at Kew. The records of the League of Nations in Geneva contain a wealth of documentation related to Mexican participation in multilateral fora in the interwar years. In addition to diplomatic sources in other European archives, such as the Political archive of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, and the Archivo General del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación in Madrid, the national archives

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and ministries of foreign affairs in Latin American countries also contain a wealth of relatively untapped research resources.

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