

August 15, 2026

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DIRECT DEMOCRACY: PROS & CONS

MEXICO

From a Mexican traditional historical point of view



To begin with:

WHAT IS DIRECT DEMOCRACY?

Direct democracy is a system in which citizens vote directly on laws or public policies, rather than leaving all decisions to elected representatives.

What does that mean in the Mexican context?

Mexico is **not** a direct democracy.

It is constitutionally defined as a representative, democratic, federal republic, although constitutional reforms have gradually incorporated certain direct-democracy mechanisms.



HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Colonial Mexico (1521–1821)

For 300 years Mexico had virtually no democratic participation. Government decisions were made by: the Spanish Crown, viceroys, local elites and the Catholic Church. There was no tradition of popular voting on public policy.



HISTORIC CONTEXT:

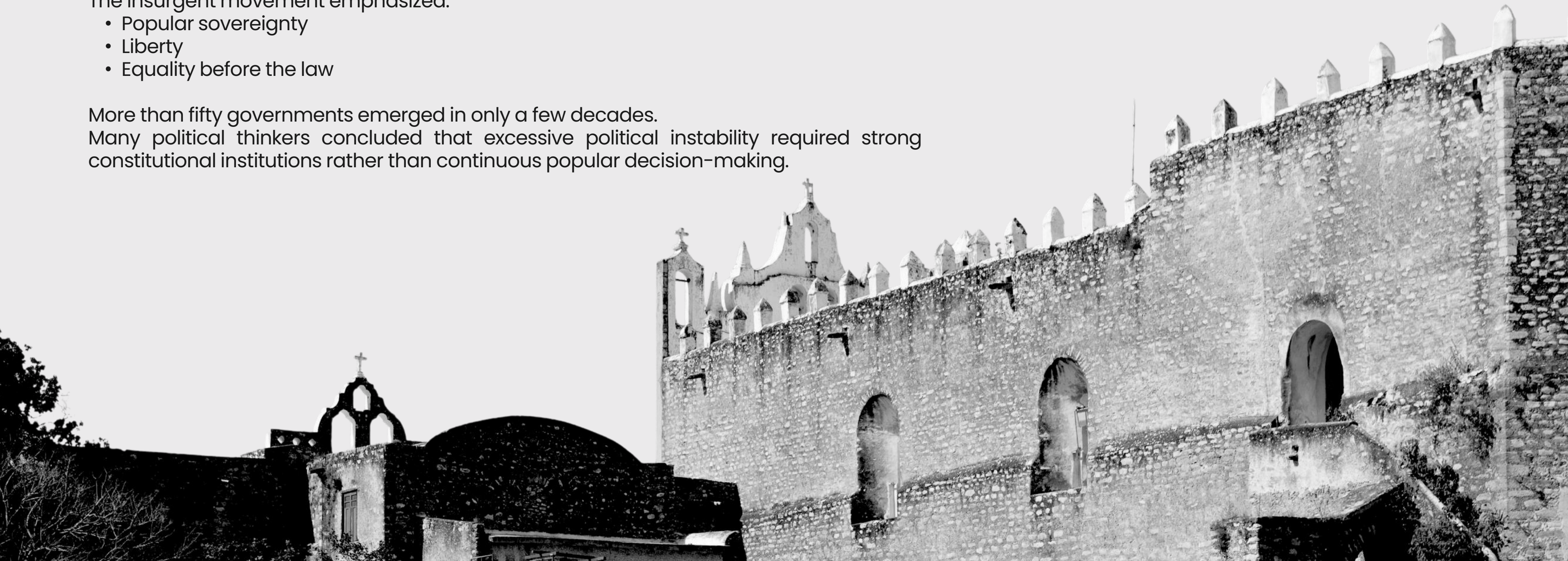
Independence (1810–1821) & Early Republic (1824–1857)

The insurgent movement emphasized:

- Popular sovereignty
- Liberty
- Equality before the law

More than fifty governments emerged in only a few decades.

Many political thinkers concluded that excessive political instability required strong constitutional institutions rather than continuous popular decision-making.



HISTORIC CONTEXT:

**Liberal Reform (1855 –1867), Porfiriato ((1876–1911)
& Mexican Revolution (1910–1917)**

Thinkers like Benito Juárez and Melchor Ocampo favored:

- Representative democracy
- Rule of law
- Constitutional government
- Separation of powers

Although elections existed during the Porfiriato, they were largely controlled.

The Revolution emphasized:

- Effective suffrage
- No reelection
- Popular sovereignty



HISTORIC CONTEXT:

PRI Era (1929–2000) & Contemporary Mexico

Although elections occurred, political competition was limited. This produced criticism that representative democracy alone could become disconnected from citizens.

Recent constitutional reforms introduced:

- citizen initiatives
- popular consultations
- recall elections



ADVANTAGES:

- Greater citizen participation
- Greater Government Accountability
- Expression of Popular Sovereignty
- Correcting Representative Failures
- Greater Legitimacy

However... there's a catch



DISADVANTAGES:

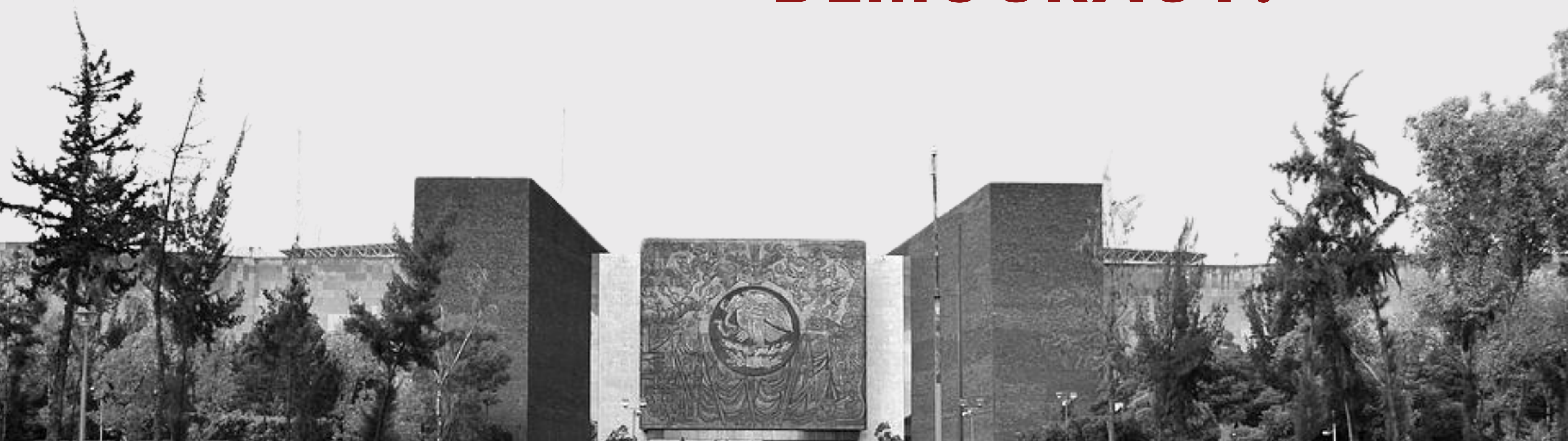
- Populism
- Tyranny of the majority
- Complex issues oversimplified
- Misinformation
- Low participation
- Cost
- Weakening Representative Institutions



WHY TRADITIONAL MEXICAN CONSTITUTIONAL THOUGHT PREFERS REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY?

Constitutional designers believed stability required:

- Separation of powers
- Representative institutions
- Judicial review
- Constitutional limits





**THANK
YOU!**