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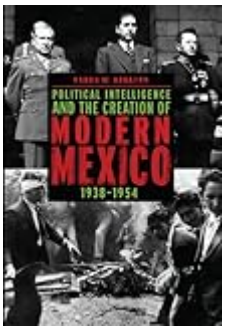

Aaron W. Navarro. *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. xiv + 301 pp. $64.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-271-03705-9.

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Published on H-LatAm (October, 2012)

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Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico offers a historical account of the birth and consolidation of Mexicoâs infamous âofficialâ political party, which managed to win every presidential election from its founding in 1929 to the end of the century when it finally ceded power to the opposition. Employing a host of unused and only recently available archival sources, Aaron W. Navarro reveals how, in the aftermath of a ten-year armed revolution (1910-20), surviving revolutionary leaders managed to bring about a fundamental transformation in the practice of politics by rechanneling violent forms of political speech, subordinating the military to civilian leadership, disciplining official party members, and isolating a series of emergent opposition parties. Although scholars have often located the origins of these efforts in the formation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) in 1929, Navarro convincingly demonstrates that it nevertheless took the party until the early 1950s to consolidate its electoral dominance. Indeed, rather than a forgone conclusion in the years after the revolution, the road to official party hegemony was decades long in the making, often improvised, and largely uncertain.

The book is organized around three chapters dedicated to the presidential elections of 1940, 1946, and 1952, and two thematic chapters that examine the militaryâs role in national politics and the formation of a Mexican intelligence community. After a short introduction, Navarro delves into the contentious political atmosphere surrounding the 1940 presidential election in which the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) nominee Manuel Avila Camacho faced a serious challenge from opposition candidate General Juan Andreu AlmazÃ¡n as well as military man JoaquÃn Amaro. Both opposition figures channeled growing dissatisfaction from a variety of sectors in response to the radical politics of President LÃ¡zaro CÃ¡rdenas. Rather than follow the lead of previous defiant military leaders who had often opted for outright rebellion and had paid dearly, both men sought power through the electoral process, thus marking a significant shift in Mexican political culture. Although both AlmazÃ¡n and Amaro would go on to lose their presidential bids, the possibility that an opposition candidate might displace the official nominee led the PRM to institute a series of reforms to party rules and electoral law that would look to increase party discipline and co-opt disgruntled military leaders, thus preventing such a situation from ever occurring again. As a result, AlmazÃ¡n would become the last opposition candidate to stand a serious chance of wining a presidential election

until the late 1980s.

Chapter 2 reveals how revolutionary leaders removed the armed forces from politics from the 1930s through the early 1950s. Navarro argues that the declining influence of the military may be understood as a result of the aging of revolutionary-era officers, the growing gap in education between a new generation of military and civilian leaders, and the active co-optation of military figures into the stateâs nascent intelligence services. Indicative of this transition, the era of President Miguel AlemÃ¡n (1946-52) witnessed a rapid decline of military officers serving as governors. Due in part to the reforms put in place during the 1940s, during the postwar period Mexico would go on to experience no military governments and no coup attempts by military leaders, making the country a significant outlier in Latin America.

Chapter 3 turns to the 1946 presidential election, which marked the beginning of an era of civilian preeminence in government and politics as both major candidates, Miguel AlemÃ¡n of the PRM and Ezequiel Padilla, came from nonmilitary backgrounds. In the aftermath of this election, the position of civilian leaders was further solidified as AlemÃ¡n filled his administration with a host of university-educated civilians. Finally, to further co-opt and contain the military, he placed the newly established intelligence organization, the DirecciÃ³n Federal de Seguridad (DFS), in the hands of military leaders, thus aligning their interests with those of the party.

Chapter 4 traces the history of the Mexican intelligence services from their origins in 1918 to the present. Based largely on the still under-explored archives of the DirecciÃ³n General de Investigaciones PolÃticas y Sociales (DGIPS), this chapter in particular breaks new ground by providing scholars with a general history of the postrevolutionary intelligence bureaucracy, which details both the changing methods used by agents and their evolving relationship to the official party. In one of the more interesting insights, Navarro demonstrates that the intelligence service came to âoperate as a political police force for the PRI [Partido Revolucionario Institucional] and became one of the crucial tools that party leaders could use to deal with challenges from within and from withoutâ (p. 11).

The last chapter examines the presidential election of 1952 in which the PRIâs capacity to contain electoral and other threats to its power reached maturity. According to Navarro, the loss of opposition candidate Miguel HenrÃquez GuzmÃ¡n marked the definitive end of the *cardenista* revolutionary ideology, the influence of the military in electoral politics, and the power of opposition political parties. In the aftermath of the election, it became clear to both politicians and military leaders, that working within the PRI represented the only option for would-be politicos.

Navarro closes the book by tracing the stateâs subsequent efforts to further limit dissent well beyond the domain of electoral politics. During the late 1950s, intransigent and independent-minded labor leaders were replaced with PRI loyalists who came to be dubbed *charros*, thus closing off one of the remaining avenues for political dissent. And during the mid- to late 1960s student activism intensified, only to be brutally repressed by the state on the eve of the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. With electoral, labor, and student dissent contained, a series of opposition movements moved under ground and gave birth to the Mexican *guerra sucia*, or dirty war. Only with the political crisis in the aftermath of the 1985 earthquake, which devastated Mexico City and unleashed a severe political crisis, did the political rules forged during the middle of the century give way and allow for a democratic opening, which would eventually be consolidated with the 2000 election of opposition candidate Vicente Fox of the Partido AcciÃ³n Nacional (PAN).

Throughout the book, Navarro uses the archives of the DGIPS, Secretariat of Defense, and U.S. military and intelligence to great effect. This book represents a welcome contribution to the historiography of modern Mexico and sets a new standard for scholars of twentieth-century Mexican politics. Finally, it will serve well as an undergraduate text for courses on Latin America and Mexico, and those dealing with themes of revolution, conflict, and authoritarianism.

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Citation: J. Brian Freeman. Review of Navarro, Aaron W., *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. October, 2012.

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