



## Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy

*Julia Preston , Julia Preston*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy

*Julia Preston , Julia Preston*

**Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy** Julia Preston , Julia Preston  
**The Story of Mexico's political rebirth, by two pulitzer prize-winning reporters**

*Opening Mexico* is a narrative history of the citizens' movement which dismantled the kleptocratic one-party state that dominated Mexico in the twentieth century, and replaced it with a lively democracy. Told through the stories of Mexicans who helped make the transformation, the book gives new and gripping behind-the-scenes accounts of major episodes in Mexico's recent politics.

Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party, led by presidents who ruled like Mesoamerican monarchs, came to be called "the perfect dictatorship." But a 1968 massacre of student protesters by government snipers ignited the desire for democratic change in a generation of Mexicans. *Opening Mexico* recounts the democratic revolution that unfolded over the following three decades. It portrays clean-vote crusaders, labor organizers, human rights monitors, investigative journalists, Indian guerrillas, and dissident political leaders, such as President Ernesto Zedillo-Mexico's Gorbachev. It traces the rise of Vicente Fox, who toppled the authoritarian system in a peaceful election in July 2000.

*Opening Mexcio* dramatizes how Mexican politics works in smoke-filled rooms, and profiles many leaders of the country's elite. It is the best book to date about the modern history of the United States' southern neighbor-and is a tale rich in implications for the spread of democracy worldwide.

## Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy Details

Date : Published March 15th 2005 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (first published March 15th 2004)

ISBN : 9780374529642

Author : Julia Preston , Julia Preston

Format : Paperback 608 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Latin American History

 [Download Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy Julia Preston , Julia Preston**

---

## From Reader Review Opening Mexico: The Making of a Democracy for online ebook

### Amanda says

Yes, I now know a lot more about democracy in Mexico than I used to.

---

### Marcelle says

Well written and interesting. Since it covers Mexican political history of the past 100 years, many people and various places are introduced. This probably prevents the book from being very gripping since you can't follow the career and life of any key figures.

---

### Julia says

It's nice to read non-fiction from a journalist and the book focuses on modern Mexican history which is very interesting.

---

### Josiah says

I fear I am too limited in my tastes.

I initially avoided reading this book because it didn't fit with my preference for things that somehow directly influence the world that I live in. History of of American, Western, Europe, Religion and the like.

However, I was quickly drug into the epic human drama by the painful, tragic, but darkly fascinating events of the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968. From then on, as the tale of good and evil, corruption and vice, power and dissent unfolded, I realized the book was teaching me more about the political process and pathway towards positive change than anything I have read before. In much the same way learning a new language teaches you as much about your own language, so too does this book teach about any democratic struggle while ostensibly telling the tale of Mexico's painful evolution toward democracy.

I feel like I understand the whole world just that much better now.

---

### Liam says

"poca politica, mucha adminstracion" (quoting Porfirio Diaz, 45)

"The symbol of this irreverent new politics [post-earthquake] was Superbarrio, a masked figure in a spangled red costume and cape, a hybrid between Superman and a show wrestler." (114)

"The DFS [federal security directorate] had stumbled into the drug business almost by accident. In 1976, after a leftist rebel group kidnapped his sister, President-elect Jose Lopez Portillo had given the DFS the authority to wipe out the insurgents by any means necessary. ... During raids on narcotics warehouses thought to be guerrilla safe houses, they came into contact with drug traffickers, and soon they were protecting them from arrest in exchange for a healthy cut of their profits." (328)

"In time, Mexico's long-suffering people grew outraged. For nearly two decades, pollsters had consistently found the average citizen's main concern to be Mexico's troubled economy; by 1998 'public insecurity' had become the country's number one worry. ... Behind much of the public irritation were abuses associated with the constitutional writ known as the amparo, the procedure by which Mexicans appeal sentences, file habeas corpus petitions, seek injunctions, and contest the constitutionality of laws. Anyone targeted with a criminal investigation could, if sufficiently wealthy to muster the legal fees, file an amparo suit requesting a federal judge to shield him or her from arrest." (387-8)

"Not since Emiliano Zapata had the Mexican Left had a more appealing figure than Subcommandante Marcos. ... Many of his writings were framed as dialogues with a beetle he called Don Durito, Mr. Hardhead." (449)

---

### **Czarny Pies says**

"Opening Mexico" has bumpy stretches in the first hundred pages where the author attempts to provide a historical context for movement to democratize Mexico which the author feels began in the 1960s. Once the narrative arrives at the 1968 student riots that preceded the summer Olympics the book dramatically improves. It improves even more in the 1990s the period during which the author was resident in Mexico. "Opening Mexico" is a book that gets steadily better as it goes along. Do not get discouraged. "Opening Mexico" is perfectly suited to someone like myself who has according to the tabulation in my Goodreads database read the grand total of six books on Mexican history over a fifty year period. It provides the details behind all the stories about Mexico that have made headlines in the Anglo Saxon world since 1960 in a format that can be understood by someone with no background knowledge on the country. "Opening Mexico" clearly merits four stars. It may indeed merit five but I do not know enough about the topic to be absolutely sure that it merits the top rating.

---

### **Calley says**

Excellent historical accounting of the political development of Mexico in the 20th century, along with the major events and personalities that gradually built a more democratic system. Fascinating and an easy read.

---

### **John Brooke says**

Essential reading for anyone interested in exploring Mexico, or considering resideing there. Clear, consise rational about the political and economic realities of the last 100 years of Mexico'a trurbulent history. Recommended hightly.

---

## Harry Brake says

Wow. I have been accumulating and adding to my list of texts based on Mexico, this is DEFINITELY one of the best, most comprehensive, and thorough look at explaining SO MUCH. From the student protest and massacre, to the 1985 earthquake, to looking at Presidents from the very beginning up to Fox, to mounds of coverups and corruption, to the climb of becoming a democratic world representation, to the PAN, the PRI, and PRD, and that is just the BEGINNING - this is a GREAT work from two American correspondents, Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon.

The perspective is dead one, brilliant and insightful while laying the groundwork for cultural reflections. Winning the Pulitzer Prize for this was no surprise, and this is an ESSENTIAL addition to any collection on Mexico. A true prize and although it took me a forever period to work through this, worth every single minute!

---

## Steve Van Slyke says

A great book that takes the reader from the early days of the autocratic PRI to beginnings of true democracy beginning with the election of Vicente Fox of the PAN party.

---

## Liz says

I really loved this book. It's a pretty technical and in-depth look at the various forces that led to the PRI being ousted from its 72-year reign in Mexico in the 2000 elections. It shows a lot of different angles and discusses how different social, political, economic, and cultural factors came together to demand change and lead to a peaceful transfer of power.

But it was most interesting because I lived in Mexico from 1993-2000, and was in the capital of Guanajuato state when Vicente Fox (the governor of Guanajuato) won the election. I remember bits and pieces of this happening from my teenage years, but it's so nice to know the full story of why things happened the way they did. Furthermore, since I attended a private school, I was acquainted with several of the influential families in the PRI, and so it was almost trippy to hear about people's parents and grandparents and how they figured in to the dynamic.

This book is also interesting because it was published in 2004 - four years into Vicente Fox's regime, and two years before Felipe Calderon took office and really cracked down on the drug cartels and organized crime within Mexico, which spurred a bloodbath that continues to this day. The book has such a hopeful tone for the prospect of peace and democracy and the gradual decrease of crime and increase of economic stability, and while some of that is happening, it is definitely interesting to read with the benefit of hindsight.

Overall, a very well-written and in-depth detailing of a fascinating period in North American history.

---

## Dee says

Quality historical text.

## Polly Callahan says

need to finish

---

## Honza Prchal says

Lord Acton gave the greatest insult ever to journalists and historians when he wrote to them (not to rulers) that "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely." While journalists and historians have removed the focus from themselves (as people who buy ink by the gallon are wont to do, with aphorisms), it still fits. The authors are journalists playing historians.

The book jacket reads that Julia Preston and Samuel Dillon are "Pultizer Prize winning reporters for THE NEW YORK TIMES". That sums it up nicely. I grew up reading that paper and was sick of it in under a decade, well before high school, and am old enough to have more bad memories of the reporting (outside of the science and art pages) than good ones.

They suck up to power while focusing on the scurrilous in discussing candidates they always assumed would be out of power and display consistent disappointment and good will towards nasty progressive radicals. Therefore, in the first chapter, Vincente Fox is a bumbling overconfident amiable dunce henpecked by his mother, linked romantically to a catty weepy employee of his, and is transphobic, while his PRI predecessor Ernesto Zedillo is a heroic natural leader untouched by corruption (there's an arguable case to be made for all of that, even, controversially, the last, but when presented so slavishly ...), and Cuauhtémoc Cardenas of the Party of Democratic Revolution is not a caudillo in waiting eager for blood but merely "disappointing" in his grim gracelessness and lack of commitment to democracy and rights (when he is compared to Castro, it is to criticize his choice of the moment in fashion, not to highlight the Totonec horror his regime might bring) and somehow "inspiring" and more responsible for Fox's victory than Fox, despite finishing third in the race with a mere 17 percent of the vote.

While the 1985 earthquake gets equal billing with the 1968 suppression of Marxist student revolts, the authors harp on the Marxists as inspirational even as ad hoc groups of private citizens and private economy firms and Catholic divines defying bans on going out in public in their official capacities were the ones who broke the seeming monopoly of the Party of Institutional Revolution (or PRI) on coordinated social action. Add to that the occasional glaring error - for example, on the first page of chapter two that Fox's election was the first peaceful transition of power between politicians from different parties not since the PRI took over to become the world's longest-ruling party, but in all of Mexican history (that's untrue several different ways, from when Santa Anna let a vice-president representing different interests rule to some of the earliest post Peace of Iguala transitions, to the Bourbon succession to the Hapsburgs) - and this is what non-fans of the New York Times would expect.

The book is relatively well-researched, and the authors do know all that was considered fit to know about the country, so I do not give it a one. But if you are familiar with literature or films about foreign service officers fleeing some nation in turmoil exclaiming something about "no one" being able to see it all coming ... well, those sorts of characters are the authors. Self-confidence should be earned, or at least entertaining.

---

## Alejandro Hernández says

If you want the behind the scenes look at recent Mexican history, you have found your book. Essential reading for anyone who grew up in 90s Mexico and remembers all the craziness of 94, all the way to the

2000s.

---

### **Chloe says**

i read this before i went abroad to mexico, which was an incredibly good decision. not many people in my program knew much about mexican history, so i felt really smart and culturally capable (for like 2 seconds).

if you ever plan on spending significant time in mexico, this is a great review of the last century.

---

### **Bob says**

The Political process in Mexico of moving from a sham democracy, where the PRI held all high political offices from the President to governors of all states for 70 years, to opening up Mexico to representative democracy and the painful details of that process. What it has been like between early 20th century under a benevolent dictator to democratic elections Mexico style. I have yet to finish the book as of mid April'08

---

### **Larissa says**

Wide-ranging survey of Mexico from the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre to Vicente Fox's historic victory in the 2000 presidential election. Both of the authors are reporters for the New York Times, and the book is an engaging and breezy overview of recent events. The central emphasis is on the gradual democratization of Mexican politics and civil society, with occasional detours for particularly outrageous episodes of corruption and scandal. This is a useful reference for modern Mexican history, which celebrates the achievements of activists and reformers even as it acknowledges the immense difficulties of creating and maintaining a national democracy.

---

### **Frances says**

Very readable and entertaining history of Mexico in the 20th century.

---

### **David Gross says**

Opening Mexico does a great job of giving a one-book overview of the enormous changes in the Mexican political system in the last fifty years or so and how they came about. Mexico transformed from an impregnable, one-party, totalitarian state that controlled nearly every aspect of public life into a thriving, multi-party republic in a process that was difficult but relatively (though certainly not entirely) bloodless. It is fascinating to read about the combination of grassroots struggle and top-down glasnost-like reform that brought this off.

It's surprising to me how little of this story has become part of the political dialog in the United States — compared to things like the fall of the Berlin Wall, Yeltsin standing on a tank, the Tienanmien massacre,

glasnost & perestroika, how many aspects of this Mexican revolution have become commonplace parts of the discussion here?

---