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Strategic Favoritism: Exploring the American Response to the Mexican Revolution, 1900 – 1920

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*To my mom, my grandma, and Carlos. I never could have done it without your support.
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ABSTRACT

This investigation examines the strategic favoritism displayed by the United States toward six Mexican revolutionaries in the years leading up to and during the Mexican Revolution.¹ Using both primary sources and existent historiographical discussions, I begin by illuminating the fears that many American politicians felt in respect to both revolutionary leaders and immigrants from Mexico—along with the foreign radicalism they were suspected of endorsing. Applying lessons learned through the previous implementation of restrictive immigration policies, United States officials opted for addressing incoming Mexican radicalism by selectively favoring revolutionary factions. While moderate rebels enjoyed uncontroversial press and political support, more extreme revolutionaries were subject to slander and even persecution. I argue that although this approach strove to protect American ideals, these foreign policies merely highlighted the biased manner in which the United States government attempted to protect itself and its citizens.

INTRODUCTION

On November 20th of 1910, eleven months after Henry Lane Wilson became the ambassador to Mexico for the United States, Francisco Madero staged a revolt against President Porfirio Díaz—who had remained in power for over thirty cumulative years. Despite the myriad of global issues that demanded the attention of American policymakers during this time, many could not help but turn their gaze toward the Mexican Revolution. Thus, Wilson was thrust into the epicenter of this violence, relaying information about the emergent situation to the United

¹ See Appendix 1 for a summary of these Mexican revolutionaries.

States and its increasingly paranoid government leaders. Unease exhibited by these lawmakers stemmed largely from the idea that the Revolution could threaten American ideals, an anxiety that reached a boiling point when Mexican border states like Chihuahua and Coahuila joined the rebellion. United States legislators quickly began to pose questions about national security and the potential for intervention: in the case that the Mexican Revolution actually posed a threat to America, should politicians interfere in the issue? After failing to reach a consensus for nearly two years, Wilson sent a letter to Secretary of State William Bryan in April of 1913 stating:

I deem it my duty to say to the Department that...[the Mexican] Government should have the earnest moral support and assistance of ours, for if it does not succeed in sustaining itself, absolute chaos will come and intervention will be inevitable...[for] the restoration of peace and order in this unfortunate country.²

With this letter, United States officials shifted the focus of their question from debating whether they should intervene to strategizing how best to interfere in order to protect American livelihoods. Increases in the number of immigrants crossing the Mexican-American border only added urgency to this situation, reigniting age-old discussions on how foreign migrants could hurt the social, political, and economic health of the United States. Amidst this turmoil brought on by the Revolution, the two decades between 1900 and 1920 became a period of strained diplomacy between Mexico and the United States, an era in which Mexican immigrants were vilified and the revolutionaries that crossed into American soil encountered a strangely diverse set of reactions from United States policymakers attempting to protect their own country. While centrist **revoltosos** such as Venustiano Carranza were met with vast political support, figures with more radical views like Ricardo Flores Magón faced much violence at the hands of American leaders—all while immigrants with no revolutionary ties continued being denigrated.³

² Henry Lane Wilson to William Jennings Bryan, April 9, 1913, in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, With the Address of the President to Congress December 2, 1913*.

³ See Appendix 2 for more information on the term **revoltoso**.

My thesis contextualizes this assortment of perceptions that developed about Mexican revolutionaries in the United States by first outlining the consequences of increased immigration from Mexico across the border during the early twentieth century. In doing so, my work reveals that the Mexican Revolution directly increased fears of radicalism within the country, prompting the American government to establish policies that could successfully curb this new source of anti-democratic ideologies. Over the length of this analysis, it will become apparent that immigration restrictions were not favored by legislators looking to ameliorate this issue, as Mexican laborers had proven economically beneficial to the United States. Instead, American leaders chose to address Mexican radicalism by extending aid only to rebels that had been deemed politically docile, consequently silencing revolutionary leaders they regarded as allies to radicalism and therefore threatening to American values like democracy and capitalism.

Historiographic Discussion

The scholarly contributions of Linda Hall, Don Coerver, and Manuel Gamio provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that drove Mexican immigrants to the United States through a historical lens based on labor dynamics. The research conducted by Hall and Coerver in *Revolution on the Border* underscores the impact sociopolitical turmoil and economic constraints had on Mexico, pointing out that allure from the American labor market combined with the repelling force of revolutionary violence prompted significant migration into the United States.⁴ Hall and Coerver also emphasize the political apprehension shown by lawmakers of the era, highlighting concerns that existed about Mexican “agitator” classes and the consequent

⁴ Linda Hall and Don Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910–1920* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 127.

threat of anti-American acts.⁵ My thesis uses these perspectives to confirm that immigrants from Mexico did not pose a threat to the United States given that a majority of these individuals simply aimed to relocate to the country in order to find stable employment opportunities.

The Mexican Immigrant by Gamio offers a granular view of immigration by chronicling the experiences of over seventy Mexican laborers, illuminating the realities of their new lives in America. These accounts serve to humanize the migrants, presenting them not as abstract threats but as individuals seeking stability amidst challenging circumstances. The detailed narratives provided by Gamio work to counteract the generalized fears present in the work of Hall and Coerver, reinforcing the complexity and diversity of immigrant experiences. Combining analyses from both *Revolution on the Border* and *The Mexican Immigrant*, I argue that Mexican laborers were not a threat to the United States but rather participants in a complex economic and social exchange. Fears of radical immigrants merely overlooked Mexicans' economic contributions and ignored their individual experiences navigating the difficulties of migration. By placing these authors in conversation, their collective analysis supports my claim that far from being a danger to the country, **braceros** were integral to the economy of early 1900s America.⁶

In a similar fashion, the studies conducted by Charles Cumberland, John Britton, and William Raat all illuminate many of the complex interactions that developed between Mexican revolutionaries and the United States, underpinning the idea that American politicians had legitimate concerns regarding the spread of radicalism. In his article, Cumberland positions the United States as a haven for revoltosos escaping persecution from violent counter-revolutionary

⁵ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 124–125.

⁶ See Appendix 2 for more information on the term **bracero**.

forces, thus establishing a foundation for the infiltration of revolutionary ideas.⁷ Similarly, the top-down focus of *Revolution and Ideology* on public figures like William Buckley, Edward Doheny, and Albert Fall—who perceived a threat from Mexican revolutionary leaders—brings attention to this alleged ideological contagion.⁸ *Revoltosos* by Raat further details revolutionary activity across America, offering examples of the tangible presence of foreign radicalism in the United States. In conjunction, these three narratives support my argument that policymakers clearly feared a radical upheaval brought about by Mexican revolutionaries in the country.

Although this unease felt by American legislators was caused by immigration across the Mexican-American border, I turn toward legal histories to help explain why migration policies were not used to address radicalism from Mexico. Scholars like Hall, Coerver, and Raat—along with George Sánchez and Michael Smith—shed light on how previously enacted immigration policies, driven by a fear of global radical ideologies, inadvertently led to adverse economic outcomes. The sociolegal studies conducted by *Revoltosos* and *Revolution on the Border* about the Immigration Acts of 1903 and 1917 both point to a recognition of the unintended economic consequences of restrictive immigration laws, particularly in the agricultural sector where Mexican labor became crucial.⁹ The source authored by Smith further details the resulting labor shortages, outlining the critical role workers from Mexico played within the growing American economy.¹⁰ Using common themes found in their accounts, my thesis connects these arguments about immigration policy to Mexican radicalism and the search for its containment.

⁷ Charles Cumberland, “Mexican Revolutionary Movements from Texas, 1906–1912,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1949): 301.

⁸ John Britton, *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 41.

⁹ William Raat, *Revoltosos: Mexico’s Rebels in the United States, 1903–1923* (College Station: Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University Press, 1981), 6; Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 134.

¹⁰ Michael Smith, “Beyond the Borderlands: Mexican Labor in the Central Plains, 1900–1913,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1981): 244–248.

Sánchez focuses the scope of these legal histories by showing how food shortages became a national issue, while employers like railroads, reliant on the labor of braceros, faced significant operational challenges.¹¹ The national spread of Mexican workers beyond the agricultural fields of the South described by *Becoming Mexican American* intentionally spotlights the widespread economic impact of immigration restrictions, echoing the analysis of previous authors. Taking the conversation one step further, Sánchez also observes the behavioral shifts made by braceros during this time, signaling a profound change in migration patterns.¹² Such adaptations not only spotlight the resilience of the immigrant community, but also the futility of punitive immigration policies in curbing transnational movement. My argument thus bridges historiographical gaps between these failed laws and the concept of Mexican radicalism.

The literature dealing with strategic favoritism revisits many of the previous authors, thus contributing a nuanced exploration of the highly variable treatment Mexican revolutionaries received in the United States, unveiling a story rooted in political pragmatism. This framework of selective support and suppression—articulated by authors Cumberland, Hall, Coerver, and Raat—emphasizes how the American government altered the course of the Mexican Revolution to protect itself from foreign radicalism. With Ricardo Flores Magón and Francisco Madero as case studies, Cumberland brings attention to such contrasting receptions, reinforcing strategic favoritism. Hall and Coerver extend this analysis, illustrating the wavering support for Madero and Venustiano Carranza that developed. Although neither work explicitly describes this tactic as being strategic, my thesis uses these arguments to claim deliberation behind such actions.

¹¹ George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 19.

¹² Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 19.

Studies conducted by Kelly Hernández and Raat about strategic favoritism tend to focus on the persecution of Ricardo Flores Magón, emblematic of a broader strategy to surveil and intimidate elements deemed antagonistic to United States interests. The repeated imprisonments faced by Magón suggest deliberate attempts to mitigate ideologies considered radical or destabilizing to the country. In other words, this series of incarcerations serves as a calculated effort to undermine a revoltoso based solely on their perceived alignment with American sociopolitical and economic interests. Through the lenses of all five authors, it becomes evident that the engagement of the United States with Mexican revolutionaries was not a homogenous policy of support or opposition, but rather a strategy dominated by considerations of ideological compatibility. In conversation with each other and a diverse set of primary sources, these authors allow my thesis to compare the interactions that revolutionary leaders had with America.

Discussion of Source Base and Methodology

The range of primary sources analyzed in this study come from three broad thematic categories: letters between political figures of the era, mass media publications from the United States, and published documents from the American government. Given that primary sources dealing with people known by large audiences do not reveal the thoughts and emotions of the general public, letters alone are not able to inform my thesis on concepts pertaining to social history. This gap in knowledge will be mitigated by the use of secondary sources that approach related events from a more widespread angle. Letters, however, remain crucial to the arguments made by this paper, providing first-person accounts of the consequences of immigration, foreign radicalism, restrictive policies, and the strategic favoritism that developed in the country.

Mass media publications, the second category of primary sources described, have similar limitations stemming from their authorship. Given the biased nature of most magazines and newspapers, even seemingly apolitical publications will have certain partialities that must be accounted for when woven into the claims made in the analysis of my thesis. Thus, passages from companies like *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Regeneración* will serve a limited albeit helpful role in identifying the opinions of those other than American government leaders. In addition, these sources emulate the general reactions that white and Mexican residents of the United States had to immigration, radicalism, and strategic favoritism. Passages from publications such as *Regeneración* outline ideologies held by Mexican revolutionaries, including their opinions on the Revolution and the climate of North American politics in general.

The third category of primary sources, United States government documents, will be especially useful in later parts of this paper—particularly those that focus on the implementation of policies meant to curb increasing radicalism in America. Specific examples include legal archives originating from sessions of Congress active during the first two decades of the twentieth century, such as those from the Immigration Acts of 1903, 1907, and 1917. A special focus will be given to the House of Representatives and the Senate, especially the Senate Subcommittee on Foreign Relations that formed during the 62nd Congress and aimed to measure the extent of the relationship between Bolshevism and the Mexican Revolution. It is important to note that Congress committees are geared toward specific issues, facilitating historical analysis tailored toward diplomacy through an approach focused on United States politicians.

Before proceeding into a more extended analysis of these primary sources, it is worth noting that a great majority of these documents are concerned with the political history of the intersection between American diplomacy and the Mexican Revolution. Therefore, my thesis

will not be able to properly evaluate the role of the everyday American citizen within the topic at hand. Any conclusions made will be wholly limited to the government of the United States rather than those under its rule. Nevertheless, there are many lessons to be gained from this history despite the limitations it has relating to its lack of broader social context. For one, the analysis conducted throughout the course of this paper will provide an in-depth understanding of the background needed to understand specific cultural and social impacts that the United States government had during the early twentieth century, simultaneously preventing any historical amnesia about the truly international scope that the Mexican Revolution grew to have.

Overall, this thesis aims to begin by tracking the reasons behind increased Mexican immigration to the United States, discarding claims made by a number of powerful individuals about their ties to Bolshevism. From here, the consequences of such immigration will lead into a discussion on the United States' decision to avoid using immigration policy as part of their proposition aimed at reducing specifically Mexican radicalism in the country. The second section will thus explore the immigration policies imposed by the executive and legislative branches of the American government for all migrants, giving special consideration to the general outcomes of such laws. Given the need the United States continued to have for Mexican labor during the early twentieth century, the second section of this paper will also address the repercussions that made alternative policies a necessity in the eyes of American lawmakers. The third and final portion of this analysis will focus on the strategic favoritism that was developed by the United States government in response to Mexican revolutionaries, helping evaluate the success of such tactics in curbing the domestic prominence of Mexican anti-capitalist radicalism.

Although the stories of the braceros and the revoltosos that crossed the border may seem to exist in separate spheres, each section of my thesis will demonstrate that both faced suspicion rooted in an exaggerated fear of radicalism and its perceived threat to American ideals. The seemingly separate nature of these two groups also emphasizes the more aggressive measures with which rebels from Mexico were dealt with when compared to the average laborer with no public following or strong connection to the Revolution. Beyond existing as an intriguing historical account, the story of Mexican immigration in the first two decades of the twentieth century brings to light the problematic nature of American foreign policy during this time—an era when beliefs that strayed from the norm were not regarded as equal. In other words, a period in United States history where an ideology could exempt migrants from the rights granted by the Constitution, ironically endangering the founding American ideals of liberty and equality.

I. AN INFLUX OF PEOPLE AND IDEOLOGIES

Amidst a global rise in radical ideologies, the United States found itself entangled in the turmoil brought on by the Mexican Revolution. Though rebels from Mexico sought to advocate for social reform and improvements to the national agricultural industry, their actions reached across international borders, creating anxieties within the American government. Combined with the presence of rebels in the country, increases in Mexican immigration convinced United States politicians that the Revolution had spilled into the country—bringing radicalism with it. The first section of my thesis will outline how American politicians viewed both immigrants and revolutionaries from Mexico as threats using historical documents, media accounts, and the political discourse of the United States during the early twentieth century. Together, these sources

highlight how American officials came to view the Mexican Revolution as a pressing concern with direct implications for the sociopolitical stability and security of their country.

While this discussion underscores that braceros did not endanger the United States, it also recognizes that the actions of certain Mexican rebels in the country did indeed disrupt domestic peace and threaten many blameless civilians. Violent raids—such as those enacted by Pancho Villa—bring attention to the hazards revolutionaries and the Revolution at large caused within American soil. In a similar manner, beliefs embraced by radicals like the Flores Magón brothers also stoked fears among United States policymakers about the proliferation of anti-capitalist and anti-democratic sentiment. Against this political backdrop, American leaders were faced with making a decision on how best to limit the consequences of such Mexican radicalism, balancing the benefits and drawbacks of general immigration policies with other strategies that could target rebels more directly. Despite many unknowns, what remained clear to legislators was that the Mexican Revolution had facilitated the arrival of radicalism to a liberal United States.

The Truth Behind the Defamation of the Mexican Immigrant

As unease about the proletarian ideologies linked to the Bolshevik Revolution continued to grow in the United States, several American public figures began drawing ties between Russia and the Mexican Revolution.¹³ Supported by New Mexico Senator Albert Bacon Fall, oil entrepreneurs William Frank Buckley and Edward Laurence Doheny even claimed Bolshevism had begun infiltrating the United States using Mexican immigrants, who they believed were

¹³ Although the Bolshevik and Mexican Revolutions both occurred in the early twentieth century, Bolshevik revolutionaries aimed to dismantle the Tsardom of Russia and establish a Marxist government, whereas Mexican rebels intended to overthrow Porfirio Díaz and his dictatorship of thirty years while advocating for social justice.

carriers of such radical beliefs.¹⁴ For Buckley and Doheny, loose parallels between the two revolutions were enough to prove that Russian radicals had kindled the social unrest occurring in Mexico. In testimony given to Fall's Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 1920, Buckley argued that property was seen as "a social function" in both Mexico and Russia: rather than viewing land as a matter of individual entitlement, rebels from these nations focused on the public responsibility associated with property ownership.¹⁵ With each additional similarity that was drawn between Bolshevism and the Mexican Revolution, radicalism became a more proximal and therefore more urgent ideological threat for liberal United States leaders.

Newspapers with substantial readership also contributed to the circulation of theories about the Bolshevik Revolution and its influence on Mexico. An article published in December of 1919 by *The New York Times* reveals to readers that Senator Fall had "charged the Mexican Ambassador in Washington and Consuls General in other [American] cities with aiding in the dissemination of anti-American, revolutionary, and Bolshevik propaganda," an account used to further equate the Russian and Mexican revolutions.¹⁶ Beyond significantly misrepresenting the goals of Mexican revolutionaries, this report on Fall's accusations also highlights one of many processes involved in controlling rebel activity in early twentieth century America: legal charges and court proceedings. Headlines donned by other major newspapers such as "Bolshevism Spreads Rapidly in Mexico" in *The Los Angeles Times* only cemented the alleged dependence of the Mexican Revolution on Russia.¹⁷ While it is possible that Mexico may have taken inspiration

¹⁴ "Bonillas Answers Fall: Says Mexicans Have Never Aided Disturbing Elements Here," *The New York Times*, December 5, 1919; "Says Mexicans Aid Reds: H. L. Doheny Declares Government Has Proof of Propaganda Here," *The New York Times*, December 9, 1919; United States Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Investigation of Mexican Affairs: Preliminary Report and Hearings*, Albert Bacon Fall. Senate Resolution 106, Washington, District of Columbia: 1920. Print.

¹⁵ United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Investigation of Mexican Affairs*.

¹⁶ "Fall Resolution Proposes Break," *The New York Times*, December 4, 1919.

¹⁷ "Bolshevism Spreads Rapidly in Mexico," *The Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1920.

from Russian radicals, the extent of these Bolshevik influences was not certain enough to justify the inflammatory articles that overtook American mass media in the 1900s and 1910s.

To the dismay of already worried government legislators, some newspaper articles even framed United States citizens as contributors to the Bolshevism present in Mexico, drawing on extant fears that radicalism had infiltrated America. A 1918 *New York Times* special reads:

RUSSIAN REDS IN MEXICO — Two Representatives of the Soviets who have arrived in Mexico City...purpose to give lectures [there]. They are working with several Socialists who skipped from the United States to avoid the draft.¹⁸

In addition to convincing American lawmakers that socialism had emerged in their country, this and other such articles also gave readers the impression that Mexico's shift toward proletarian thinking was partly led by radicals from the United States. Those most fearful of these anti-capitalist beliefs soon began to vilify not just American socialists, but the thousands of Mexicans crossing the border in an attempt to escape their war-torn country. Despite such fervent apprehension, the origins of the Mexican Revolution lay in demands for agrarian and labor reform—not in a strict preference for socialism over capitalism.¹⁹ Nevertheless, liberal American politicians remained wary of Mexico and its newly adopted revolutionary ideologies.

In fact, even President Woodrow Wilson exhibited some anxiety about incoming foreign radicalism, evident in the position he adopted vis-à-vis the Mexican Revolution and the idea of intervention on the part of the United States. By combining multiple contemporary perspectives with relevant historical documents, *Revolution and Ideology* posits that while Wilson “did not hold...a low opinion of Mexico and its people,” he did believe that the country was in need of diplomatic guidance in order to turn toward democratic capitalism.²⁰ In other words, this

¹⁸ “Russian Reds in Mexico,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 1918.

¹⁹ Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 43.

²⁰ Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 30.

president saw the Mexican population as a homogenous entity capable of adopting American ideals in lieu of its 'mistaken' revolutionary beliefs, not as unsalvageable rebels. The notion of wanting to intervene in the Revolution, however, betrays the caution him and his administration held in regard to this foreign radicalism. Thus, as Mexican immigration continued to increase throughout Wilson's presidency, so too did the apprehension felt by his government.

Setting aside the perceptions United States officials had about the revolution in Mexico and its international consequences, to what extent did Mexican immigrants endanger American citizens and their democratic ideals? *Bad Mexicans* and *Revolution on the Border* touch upon this topic, explaining that a majority of migrants arrived to the country in search of work, as political upheaval repelled native Mexicans, while employment opportunities in the United States attracted them.²¹ Nevertheless, American policymakers continued to believe these braceros sought to extend the Revolution across the border, disregarding that the purpose of their immigration was to free themselves from war and socioeconomic instability. Indeed, the exodus caused by the Mexican Revolution became so pervasive that even President Venustiano Carranza and his fragmented government fell into complete agreement about the growing need to address labor supply shortages in Mexico—resulting in the passage of a Mexican policy that “prohibited the issuing of passports to...workers attempting to find employment across the border.”²² Though such evidence highlights the unprecedented rate at which Mexican immigrants began entering the United States, it fails to properly capture the motivations and emotions of these braceros.

²¹ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire, and Revolution in the Borderlands* (New York: William Warder Norton and Company, 2022), 85; Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 127.

²² Without passports, workers could not legally enter the United States. Douglas Richmond, “Mexican Immigration and Border Strategy During the Revolution, 1910–1920,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 57, no. 3 (July 1982): 275.

The Mexican Immigrant by Mexican sociologist Manuel Gamio addresses such historiographical limitations, providing in-depth accounts from the lives of over seventy immigrants from Mexico and their experiences as newcomers to America. In one interview conducted for this study, an Indigenous laborer from the state of Guanajuato named Gumersindo Valdés reveals that his reason for leaving Mexico in 1904 had been solely to provide for his family by working as a track foreman in Texas, Arizona, and California.²³ Juan Berzunzolo, a mestizo who had worked for multiple companies in the United States before returning to his family in Guanajuato, also acknowledged that he returned to America only when economic prospects in Mexico took a severe downturn in 1913.²⁴ Combined with other stories similar to those of Valdés and Berzunzolo, these anecdotes cement labor as the root of immigration.

Beyond illustrating that financial insecurity was the most prevalent source of motivation for immigrants, Gamio likewise captures the reluctant attitude with which braceros often relocated to the United States—a reasonable sentiment given their labor in America was a product of necessity rather than choice. During his interview for *The Mexican Immigrant*, Elías Garza recalls getting married in Texas and returning to Michoacán after many years of employment across the American Southwest, forced to leave Mexico again “when the disorders of the Revolution” began.²⁵ With a new family in his home country, it is unlikely Garza would have returned to the United States had mounting economic instability not posed a threat to their livelihoods. Nivardo del Río, another mestizo interviewee, addresses these struggles explicitly when he describes the Mexican Revolution as having been “unbearable” for most citizens.²⁶ In

²³ Manuel Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 141–145.

²⁴ Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant*, 145–149.

²⁵ Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant*, 150.

²⁶ Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant*, 155.

spite of their reluctance, men like Garza and del Río understood the indispensability of leaving financial hardship behind and instead seeking labor across the Mexican-American border.

When examining this diaspora with stories comparable to those of Juan Berzunzolo and Elías Garza, it becomes clear that only some “of Mexico’s labor migrants had any intention of permanently settling” in the United States.²⁷ In the four years between 1915 and 1919, many braceros “returned to Saltillo, Piedras Negras, and Ciudad Juárez” following salary decreases in America.²⁸ As exemplified here, the economic outcomes of Mexican laborers in the United States governed their decision to return home or stay, further emphasizing the monetary incentives behind immigration. Radical Mexican leaders only served to complicate this relationship, having relocated to America during the Revolution in order to escape legal punishment.²⁹ Thus, without knowing the true reach of foreign radicalism, lawmakers faced an intricate question: should proletarian influences be targeted through general policies or on a case-by-case basis?

Before exploring how the United States government found an appropriate solution to this problem, it is important to note that the physical proximity of the Mexican Revolution magnified the threats posed to America by foreign radicalism. Given that the epicenter of the fighting was located less than seven hundred miles from international frontiers, braceros and revolutionaries alike could easily reach and cross the Mexican-American border.³⁰ Without the ability to distinguish one group from the other, every individual who entered the United States had the potential to foment radicalism in the eyes of anxious American leaders. The fact that rebels also began using cities across the country as bases for their revolutionary campaigns only

²⁷ Hernández, *Bad Mexicans*, 86.

²⁸ Richmond, “Mexican Immigration and Border Strategy During the Revolution, 1910–1920,” 276.

²⁹ Throughout the course of the Mexican Revolution, rebels were often persecuted by various counter-revolutionary forces in the country. Cumberland, “Mexican Revolutionary Movements from Texas, 1906–1912,” 301.

³⁰ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 6.

compounded such unease.³¹ Together, these aspects of the Revolution led to a consensus within United States political circles that recognized Mexican radicals could no longer be ignored without causing harm to democracy, capitalism, and other fundamental American values.

American Soil as a Battlefield for the Mexican Revolution

Whether as a refuge or as a source of political support, the United States undeniably played a crucial role in the Mexican Revolution. Starting in the early years of the twentieth century and continuing through the 1910s, rebels from Mexico would often evade violent or relentless counter-revolutionary forces by immigrating to America.³² Without this protection from their enemies, many of these radicals would have been jailed or even assassinated in Mexico, therefore preventing them from continuing their campaigns. Another way in which the United States shaped the eventual outcome of the Revolution was by extending state recognition to a limited number of Mexican leaders. In consequence, only politicians who had received explicit support from the American government could establish diplomatic relations with the United States, increasing both their legitimacy to international audiences and their likelihood for success as figureheads of Mexico. Despite these displays of blatant favoritism, most American involvement in the Revolution was entirely reactionary—and rarely deliberate—in nature.

Raids led by Pancho Villa, a rebel who favored agrarian reform and a nationalist Mexican attitude, were among the most disruptive outbursts of violence United States leaders faced during the Revolution. An *El Paso Herald* article published in August of 1916 reveals that Villa had staged a siege on both Deming and El Paso earlier that March, leading to the presence of troops

³¹ Raat, *Revoltosos*, xii.

³² Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 25.

in New Mexico and Texas.³³ Against the wishes of its government, America had become a target of radical military campaigns, prompting legislators to respond accordingly; though shocking to United States citizens of the era, some politicians “regarded [the entrance of Mexican soldiers into the country] as favorable,” as they were believed to be a key for the suppression of violent revolutionary activity.³⁴ While American lawmakers understood that allowing troops from Mexico to cross international borders would directly involve the United States in the Mexican Revolution, their consideration underscores that national defense outweighed neutrality.

Concerns about the safety of the country also emerged in response to the expansion of foreign radicalism beyond the Mexican-American border. Between 1905 and 1911, the Mexican Liberal Party—led by brothers Enrique, Jesús, and Ricardo Flores Magón—“was intermittently located in San Antonio, Saint Louis, and Los Angeles.”³⁵ Although this revolutionary junta never organized any military attacks against the United States, it nevertheless served as evidence that rebel ideologies in the country were not contained to the South, but had extended into the West Coast and the Midwest. Combined with allegations made against the radical nature of the Revolution similar to those outlined in the previous subsection, American politicians were prompted to devise plans with which to control the rapid spread of Mexican radicalism.

In addition to spreading revolutionary sentiment to regions of the United States outside the South, the Flores Magón brothers and their activism within the Partido Liberal Mexicano gave government leaders much reason to believe that such rebels sought to dismantle the political institutions present in the country. One issue of their newspaper, named *Regeneración*, assures

³³ The raids on Deming and El Paso resulted in the death of ten American and Mexican civilians. “Brave Little Woman Who Dodged Villa Bullets to be Honored on Sunday,” *El Paso Herald*, August 24, 1916.

³⁴ Such opinions were formed in response to President Carranza’s inquiry to the United States about being granted permission to cross the Mexican-American border and apprehend Villa. “General Funston Given Free Hand in Pursuit of Villa Bandits; Carranza Asks to Cross the Line,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, March 11, 1916.

³⁵ Raat, *Revolutosos*, 17.

readers that “what is not achieved with weapons in hand at the moment of struggle will not be achieved afterwards” through any other means.³⁶ Although this article was primarily directed at oppressed members of the working class in Mexico, American politicians recognized the potential these columns had for exacerbating existent radicalism in the United States. Only two weeks after this March 9th issue of *Regeneración*, Ricardo Flores Magón wrote another article outlining the reasons why he considered all systems of government inherently tyrannical, calling for the decentralization of such institutions.³⁷ This anarchic rhetoric escalated worry already felt by government officials, many of whom had felt threatened by the assassination of President William McKinley at the hands of a known domestic anarchist in September of 1901.³⁸

Approximately four years after these articles by the Flores Magón brothers were published, radical violence originating from Mexico reached a tipping point in America. Just a few hours after Villa’s deadly raid on Columbus, New Mexico, *The Evening Herald* distributed an issue with a column titled “Villa Invites Zapata to Join in Making War Upon America,” citing the existence of a letter between the two revolutionaries as evidence for such a claim.³⁹ With this information, even United States leaders who remained supportive of the Mexican Revolution could no longer deny that rebels like Villa were subversive forces to the country. Thus, it becomes entirely unsurprising that the American government responded by stating it would apprehend Villa—whether dead or alive.⁴⁰ In fact, it was this attack on Columbus that resulted in

³⁶ Ricardo Flores Magón, “La Revolución,” *Regeneración*, March 9, 1912.

³⁷ Ricardo Flores Magón, “Muera la Autoridad,” *Regeneración*, March 23, 1912.

³⁸ To an even greater extent than with Bolshevism, American politicians felt threatened by anarchism as a result of both global and domestic sociopolitical trends—a partial explanation of their strong reactions to the Flores Magón brothers. Though the assassination of President William McKinley is only one of many anarchist incidents that occurred in the twentieth century, it is among the most relevant and alarming to United States leaders. For more information on the history of anarchism in the United States refer to the following: William Reichert, *Partisans of Freedom: A Study in American Anarchism* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press), 1976.

³⁹ Refers to Emiliano Zapata. “General Funston Instructed to Get Villa,” *The Evening Herald*, March 10, 1916.

⁴⁰ “General Funston Instructed to Get Villa.”

the launch of the Punitive Expedition, a topic to be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section. Through any means, Mexican radicalism had to be eliminated once and for all.

Prior to dedicating the following segments of my thesis to further analysis of the United States and its response to domestic unrest caused by the Mexican Revolution, it is important to touch upon the support for immigrant revolutionaries that existed within the country. Throughout America, violent and non-violent protests alike were common in regions with strong ethnically Mexican populations, many of which demonstrated support for rebels opposed to figures such as Francisco Madero, Victoriano Huerta, and Venustiano Carranza. While these Mexican-American communities had indeed immigrated to the United States to escape the Revolution, their identity kept them involved in the war—especially for impoverished owners of agricultural land or individuals with family in Mexico. Looking beyond this migrant population, reactions to the Mexican Revolution among non-Hispanic Americans ranged from bitter discontent to reserved admiration and even hopeful support.⁴¹ Far from being homogeneously critical, United States audiences showed immense variation in their feelings toward rebels and their campaigns.

One particularly striking example of this aforementioned variation was the attitudes with which the general public and American lawmakers approached the subject of the Mexican Revolution. For many civilians, the rebellion in Mexico deserved “serious consideration” as a model for addressing social concerns specific to the United States.⁴² In contrast, the majority of politicians regarded the Revolution as nothing but a hazard to the country, giving them no reason

⁴¹ Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 21–22.

⁴² Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 9.

to stray from their decision to eliminate foreign radicalism from America. Historian Charles Cumberland echoes this idea in “Mexican Revolutionary Movements from Texas,” stating:

There was sincere desire on the part of the United States [government] to bring an end to the rebellion, since the spreading movement brought...increased danger to the citizens of the United States on both sides of the [Rio Grande] river.⁴³

With this enthusiasm to see the Revolution to its end, American legislators began developing a plan that would allow them to finally set aside the anxieties instilled in them by Mexican radicals—feelings that had persisted since the chaotic beginning of the twentieth century.

* * *

As evidenced in the preceding paragraphs, unease related to a global rise in radicalism led to the mistaken equation of the Mexican Revolution to Bolshevism. Politicians and mass media outlets alike disseminated such ideas across the country, cementing Mexican rebels and their interactions with the United States and its citizens as national defense concerns. Given these widespread fears, even figures such as President Woodrow Wilson showed reservations against the Revolution and the increased rates of immigration that resulted from it. Nonetheless, studies conducted by sociologists such as Manuel Gamio reveal that Mexican braceros posed little danger to American democracy and capitalism, as their interests lay in searching for employment rather than fomenting rebellion across the border. In light of this considerable distinction between the aims of immigrant workers and revoltosos within the United States, government leaders faced the responsibility of determining how best to deal with Mexican radicalism.

⁴³ Cumberland, “Mexican Revolutionary Movements from Texas, 1906–1912,” 322.

It is important to acknowledge that although these immigrants rarely endangered American livelihoods, United States politicians did indeed see certain revolutionaries as threats to the country. Rebels escaping persecution from counter-revolutionary forces often participated in raids, targeting United States border cities and their inhabitants. Similarly, revolutionaries that faced exile from Mexico frequently developed spheres of political power in cities hundreds of miles away from the border, demonstrating that Mexican radicalism had grown beyond the confines of the American South. Over the course of the years, rebel activity in the United States reached a tipping point, culminating in some of the most aggressive policies enacted by American officials in response to the Revolution. Using this historical background, the following two sections of my thesis will be dedicated to exploring exactly how the United States government developed policies aimed expressly at containing radicalism from Mexico.

II. LESSONS ON AMERICAN IMMIGRATION POLICY

From the turn of the twentieth century to 1917, the United States government found itself grappling with a complex interplay of immigration and national security concerns, leading to the enactment of several restrictive policies for those wishing to enter the country. In specific, this period was marked by intense debate in the political sphere, nevertheless leading to the introduction of laws aimed at curbing the entrance of immigrants that were perceived as potential threats to American society and its values. Despite the apparent consensus on the need for such regulation, however, these policies were born out of a contentious environment where sympathies for the plight of immigrants and fears of radicalism coexisted. The passage of the Immigration

Acts of 1903, 1907, and 1917 thus reflect only the majority of legislative approval, masking the nuanced positions of policymakers who were divided on the issue of immigration policy.

Throughout the course of this section, it will become apparent that the regulations set forth by the three acts analyzed in my thesis—including explicit restrictions, entry taxes, and literacy tests—were emblematic of broader anxieties about foreign radicalism and the maintenance of a homogenous national identity. Opinions of leaders like Woodrow Wilson highlight the discord that existed within all branches of the American government, underscoring the complexity of crafting policies that could balance security concerns with the economic and social realities of the time. The third subsection expands upon this point, bringing attention to the unintended consequences that the United States economy was subjected to as a result of such restrictive immigration policies. To the dismay of the liberal lawmakers responsible for the passage of the three aforementioned acts, industries reliant on immigrant labor began facing serious supply shortages, underscoring the indispensable role immigrants played in the American economic landscape, thereby forcing legislators to create alternative regulatory laws.

Restrictions, Taxes, and Tests: Immigration Policies of the Early 20th Century

The first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the passage of three major pieces of immigration legislation: the Anarchist Exclusion Act, the Expatriation Act, and the Literacy Act. Despite being written in separate years and under three distinct Congresses, these policies all stemmed from the same growing concern American politicians had about the kinds of individuals entering the United States. Although the previous section explores Mexico as one notable source of immigration, it is important to note that the foreign-born population in America

was mostly composed of Germans and Russians.⁴⁴ In light of increasing radicalism within Germany and Russia, President Theodore Roosevelt warned fellow officials that all anarchists were mere criminals who strongly preferred “chaos and confusion to the most beneficent form of social order,” making radicals the “deadly foe” of liberty.⁴⁵ Thus, attempting to preserve domestic freedoms, the United States adopted immigration policy as a deterrent against radicalism.

Although the three acts targeted migration from foreign countries, they did so in unique ways that can be categorized into restriction through exclusion, restriction through taxation, and restriction through educational hurdles. The Anarchist Exclusion Act, formally known as the Immigration Act of 1903, functioned primarily through restriction through exclusion: Sections 2 and 38 of this document forbade people who advocated for the “overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States” and individuals associated “with any organization entertaining and teaching...opposition to all organized government,” while Section 39 prohibited such immigrants from being “made a citizen” of the country.⁴⁶ The Immigration Act of 1907 was nearly identical, using much of the same wording to exclude foreign anarchists and other radicals from American soil.⁴⁷ Having been addressed in two statutes, halting anti-democratic forces from entering the United States was clearly a primary concern among prominent policymakers.

While the pieces of legislation passed in 1903 and 1907 focused on keeping foreign anarchists out of America, the Literacy Act—known as the Immigration Act of 1917—focused on decreasing radicalism through deportation. For this reason, the Literacy Act served as an extension to restriction through exclusion, widening the scope of legislation to include not only

⁴⁴ From 1910 to 1920. United States Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Country of Birth of the Foreign Born Population*, Washington, District of Columbia: 1910; United States Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Country of Birth of the Foreign Born Population*, Washington, District of Columbia: 1920.

⁴⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, “First Annual Message,” (speech, Washington, District of Columbia, 1901).

⁴⁶ 57th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1903*, Washington, District of Columbia: 1903.

⁴⁷ 59th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1907*, Washington, District of Columbia: 1907.

potential immigrants, but those that had *already relocated* to America. Section 18 of this document proclaims that all aliens found guilty of violating the laws set forth by the Immigration Act of 1917 would be “sent back...to the country whence they respectively came” at the expense of the owners of the vessels responsible for bringing them to the United States.⁴⁸ In conjunction with both the Anarchist Exclusion Act and the Expatriation Act, the Literacy Act worked toward eliminating the foreign radicalism that had remained in the country despite the immigration bans that the American government had created almost fourteen years prior to the 1917 laws.

In addition to giving United States leaders the power to deport individuals found guilty of subscribing to anarchism or other similar radical ideals, the Immigration Act of 1917 also adopted the principle of guilt by association. More specifically, Section 28 ruled that any person with evidence of having aided an anarchist would be “deemed guilty of a misdemeanor” and therefore “punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000, or by imprisonment for not more than six months,” or both.⁴⁹ With the rulings outlined in this specific section, citizens and immigrants alike could now be punished not only for endorsing radicalism, but also for being associated with such individuals. Similarly, this same section of the Literacy Act stated that any person found to have assisted an anarchist with entering the country would be “deemed guilty of a felony” and rightfully “punished by a fine of not more than \$5,000, or by imprisonment for not more than five years,” or both.⁵⁰ With this section of the Immigration Act of 1917, liability was no longer a consequence limited to radicals in America—mere affiliation could result in punishment.

Beyond restriction through exclusion, the Expatriation Act and the Literacy Act both employed restriction through taxation, a much subtler tactic for curbing immigration. Within the

⁴⁸ 64th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1917*, Washington, District of Columbia: 1917.

⁴⁹ 64th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1917*.

⁵⁰ 64th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1917*.

first section of the statute, the Immigration Act of 1907 established “a tax of four dollars for every alien” entering the United States.⁵¹ At nearly one hundred and thirty-one dollars when adjusted for current prices, this fee imposed an economic obstacle on all immigrants, many of whom had been led to America as a result of poor financial statuses as outlined in the previous section of this thesis. The Immigration Act of 1917 also employed such taxation, raising the fee from its 1907 levels: at a current price of about one hundred and ninety-four dollars, the Literacy Act demanded “a tax of \$8 for every alien” who sought entrance into the country.⁵² In contrast to the explicit nature of restriction through exclusion, this strategy prevented immigration in a much more covert manner, admitting only non-radical individuals who could spare such expense.

Restriction through educational hurdles, the last of the three categories, was limited to the Immigration Act of 1917—leading to its more familiar acknowledgement as the Literacy Act. As delineated in the document, “all aliens over sixteen years of age” that were “physically capable of reading” either in English or another language were required to undergo a literacy test.⁵³ Those who successfully passed the evaluation would be granted admission into the United States, while those who did not would be turned away. Rather than explicitly banning immigrants or imposing economic disincentives, this facet of the Immigration Act of 1917 imposed yet another hurdle for individuals attempting to leave their home countries. Though seemingly marginal, consequences brought on by literacy tests became quite widespread, as a majority of the American immigrant population was of relatively low socioeconomic status and thus relatively less literate.

Understanding the mechanisms through which the Immigration Acts functioned, how successful were these pieces of legislation at curbing entries into the United States? According to

⁵¹ 59th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1907*.

⁵² 64th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1917*.

⁵³ 64th United States Congress, *Immigration Act of 1917*.

Alabama Representative John Lawson Burnett, a lawmaker that had been heavily involved with the passage of the Literacy Act, an estimated forty percent of Mediterranean immigrants and ninety percent of Mexican immigrants were prevented from entering the country through the Immigration Act of 1917.⁵⁴ Even if rough approximations, these figures reveal the wide reach American immigration policy had in the early twentieth century, therefore underscoring the rampant fears about radicalism that dominated much of the United States government. All together, the three acts embody a fusion of “nativist and anti-radical sentiments” directed not only at Mexican immigrants, but also individuals from Europe and Asia.⁵⁵ American legislators had seemingly found a method with which to eliminate foreign radicalism from the country.

The Politics Behind Immigration Restrictions from 1900 to 1920

Regardless of the fact that the United States Congress passed several immigration policies during the early twentieth century, topics related to international migration were subject to intense debate within the American political climate. Although many politicians remained cautious of radicalism from abroad, a significant number of these government officials were known to be “generally sympathetic” to the plight of immigrants from Mexico.⁵⁶ Therefore, the passage of the three acts alone cannot be interpreted as the collective stance of all United States policymakers on the issue of immigration; rather, their approval signifies only whether a majority of these individuals approved of the specific bills or not. Literacy tests for incoming migrants, for example, had been proposed in Congress since 1897—passing the House on five occasions and

⁵⁴ “Immigration Act of 1917 Bans Asians, Other Non-White People from Entering the United States,” A History of Racial Injustice, Equal Justice Initiative.

⁵⁵ Raat, *Revoltosos*, 6.

⁵⁶ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 130.

the Senate on four, but failing to be written into law until 1917.⁵⁷ Clearly, literacy tests as barriers to immigration had been a subject of intense disagreement for nearly twenty long years.

It is important to note that these disagreements were not limited to the legislative branch of the American government. Even after having passed the House and the Senate, President Woodrow Wilson vetoed the Immigration Act of 1917, a vote that was ultimately overridden by Congress.⁵⁸ Knowing Wilson's stance on Mexican immigration, the reasoning behind his decision to veto the Literacy Act remains unclear, though his vote does highlight the manner in which discourse about this subset of public policy existed in all branches of the American government. In addition, the longevity of these debates also suggests that anxieties toward foreign immigrants were not new to United States leaders—and much less caused solely by migrants crossing the Mexican-American border. On the contrary, these fears included aliens from around the world who appeared to fit into the category of dangerous foreign radicals.

A letter written by Theodore Roosevelt a few days before his death in 1919 underscores the expanse of such worries, speaking in broad terms about the types of individuals that were not welcome in the country. Immigrants who could not live as “an American and nothing but an American,” along with those that saluted a “red flag,” had no room in the United States.⁵⁹ With no specificity in terms of nationality, Roosevelt's letter provides further evidence that migrants from Mexico were only one of several sources of radicalism entering America at the time. Under this same nativist logic, the Immigration Restriction League—a political organization founded by scholars opposed to foreign migration—even went as far claiming that such immigrants did not

⁵⁷ Claudia Goldin, “The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921,” *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy* (January 1994), 228–231.

⁵⁸ Goldin, “The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921,” 228–231.

⁵⁹ Theodore Roosevelt to a General Audience. January 3, 1919.

belong in the United States as a result of their inability to ever become good citizens.⁶⁰ While not an accurate representation of every American lawmaker, these opinions were certainly shared by enough legislators to result in such strict early twentieth century immigration policies.

Lessons Learned from the Drawbacks of Immigration Policy

Although years of political debate eventually made entry fees and literacy tests enforceable by law, such discussions did not prevent the Anarchist Exclusion Act, the Expatriation Act, and the Literacy Act from having vast unintended consequences. Throughout the course of the early twentieth century, many cities in the United States gradually developed large Mexican and Mexican-American populations, drawn to certain states with ample labor in mining or agriculture.⁶¹ Despite not specifically targeting immigrants from Mexico, these policies slowed the entry of the Mexican community, reducing the workforce responsible for the proper function of multiple industries in the United States. Thus, supplies of edible items traditionally farmed or packaged by Mexicans such as “beet, tomato, strawberry, wheat, and corn”—and even meat, as a significant portion of meatpackers were Chicago-based Mexican immigrants—faced serious shortages that fell at levels far below those of demand.⁶² Although immigration policies of the era had successfully prevented migrants from entering the country, these same laws had also negatively impacted the efficiency of the American economy. With this, politicians began to doubt the adequacy of such restrictions as a method for controlling foreign populations.

In spite of their distance from the Mexican border, areas like the Great Plains and the Midwest were especially affected by immigration bans. Railroads being constructed in these

⁶⁰ Goldin, “The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921,” 225.

⁶¹ Ramón Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States,” *Encyclopedia of American History* (July 2019).

⁶² Smith, “Beyond The Borderlands: Mexican Labor In The Central Plains, 1900–1930,” 244–248.

parts of the United States were among the biggest employers of Mexican labor during the early decades of the twentieth century—with irrigation companies following close behind.⁶³ Given that braceros had spread across the entirety of the country, as opposed to remaining close to the South, labor supply shortages quickly became a national issue. In particular, railroad companies were disproportionately affected by immigration bans as a result of their inability to retain white American workers, necessitating the cyclical labor that Mexican braceros had provided.⁶⁴ While citizens of the United States were protected by strict labor regulations, immigrants had been an inexpensive source of labor that could be subjected to longer hours and lower wages. Such companies, however, could no longer continue to profit from the work of foreign laborers.

Some of these aforementioned ramifications on the American economy became so great that revisions to immigration policies were soon enacted. Revisions made to the Immigration Act of 1917, for example, were caused by a labor shortage situation so problematic that:

...The commissioner general of immigration sent a memorandum suggesting that exceptions to the literacy test [and] head tax...provisions of the act should be made in the case of farm laborers...justified by a shortage of labor...⁶⁵

In addition to being aware of the need for foreign workers that was developing within the country, United States government officials also understood the unwillingness white Americans had for filling these vacancies. American-born laborers, in contrast to braceros, did not want to experience the hardships faced within these industries.⁶⁶ Given no other option, policymakers were forced to either find new workers or loosen immigration bans, consequently forcing them to look for alternative solutions to controlling the steady stream of foreign-born individuals.

⁶³ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States.”

⁶⁴ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 19.

⁶⁵ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 134.

⁶⁶ Gutiérrez, “Mexican Immigration to the United States.”

As discussed in the previous section, many braceros often chose to return to Mexico after working in the United States for some years. Thus, a second unintended consequence of the three immigration policies discussed above includes reductions in the number of foreign Mexican workers who decided to return to their home country. Facing increasingly more hurdles in order to enter America year after year, many braceros decided to relocate permanently.⁶⁷ This caused rapid population growth, as many of the immigrants that had cyclically traveled back to Mexico during off-seasons also brought their families with them. Other immigrants simply chose to enter the United States illegally every time they decided to re-enter the country rather than go through the process of obtaining a work permit.⁶⁸ Rather than further regulating immigration, the unintended consequence of these policies was the promotion of increased unregulated entry into the United States—the opposite of what politicians of the time wanted if their aim was to curb foreign radicalism. Evidently, the solution to this problem lay beyond immigration bans.

* * *

Framed by a blend of protective nationalism and economic pragmatism, early twentieth century immigration policies in the United States reveal a complex tableau of political and social dynamics. This era, characterized by the introduction of stringent legislative measures aimed at regulating the influx of foreign migrants, was a critical point in American history, reflecting its struggle with balancing security, economic growth, and disparate political opinions. The debates and policies surrounding immigration during this period served as more than simple legislative

⁶⁷ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 19.

⁶⁸ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 19.

successes: they were both the manifestation of deeper anxieties about radicalism, national security, and the integrity of the economic system of the United States. Even so, the unintended consequences of such policies—labor shortages, economic disruptions, and the permanent settlement of Mexican migrants—underscore the intricacies of politics and their relationship to social and economic tendencies found within the country during the time of the Revolution.

In addition to this, the unintended consequences caused by early twentieth century immigration policies underscore critical oversights in their formulations: the essential role of foreign laborers in America and its economy. Industries reliant on the labor of these individuals thus faced significant challenges, leading to shortages in both manual labor and food supply—in turn prompting the re-evaluation of such restrictions. Moreover, the permanent settlement of foreign migrants, who may have otherwise engaged in circular migration, furthers the argument that restrictive immigration policies existed as a double-edged sword, protecting United States national security and destabilizing the American economy. For this reason, it can be said that the Immigration Acts of 1903, 1907, and 1917—all born out of fear of foreign radicalism—not only shaped the immediate landscape of American society, but also laid the groundwork for how leaders within the United States government would grow to mitigate Mexican radicalism.

III. STRATEGIC FAVORITISM AS THE OPTIMAL POLICY

This section culminates the nuanced dynamics of the Mexican Revolution and its repercussions across the Mexican-American border, focusing on the interactions between key revolutionary figures and the strategic responses of the United States government. Through a close examination of the lives and political activities of Ricardo Flores Magón, Francisco

Madero, Pascual Orozco, Pancho Villa, Victoriano Huerta, and Venustiano Carranza, the work conducted in this section unveils the varied strategies employed by the United States in order to navigate the challenges posed by Mexican radicalism and revolutionary ideologies during the early twentieth century. The narrative begins with Ricardo Flores Magón, a figure emblematic of the struggle for labor rights and social reform, whose anarchist leanings led to significant tension with both Mexican and American authorities. By shedding light on the initiative the United States government adopted in an attempt to suppress Magón, my exploration showcases the pattern of surveillance, intimidation, and legal battles that characterized strategic favoritism.

This section also explores Francisco Madero and his more moderate ideologies as a *revoltoso*, demonstrating how his opposition to Porfirio Díaz and his subsequent presidency were received with a mix of skepticism and support by America, highlighting a nuanced approach to dealing with Mexican revolutionaries based on their political beliefs. The analysis further extends to Pascual Orozco, whose shifting allegiances and political actions illustrate the complexities of revolutionary politics and its impact on the United States, particularly in terms of social activism and radicalism along the Mexican-American border. Through a comprehensive exploration of the treatment received by such figures—also including Villa, Huerta, and Carranza—this last section argues for an understanding of United States reactions as **strategic favoritism**, influenced by a combination of anxieties about foreign radicalism and political pragmatism. In all, this approach underscores the intricate balance American lawmakers sought between suppressing radicalism and maintaining diplomatic and economic stability in the face of revolutionary upheaval.

The Outlaw and the Innocents: Flores Magón, Madero, and Orozco

Of the Mexican revolutionaries active in the United States during the first two decades of the twentieth century, Ricardo Flores Magón from the Partido Liberal Mexicano was one of the most prominent. In the early years of his political activism in Mexico, Flores Magón established himself as an anarchist and social reformist—especially inclined toward the rights of the laboring class. Building on discussion from previous sections, this revolutionary was also a highly prominent public figure, having founded *Regeneración*, an anarchist newspaper, in 1900—a publication that was banned by the Mexican courts, prompting his exile to the United States. In 1906, after the escape of Flores Magón to Los Angeles, American legislators began showing allegiance to the Mexican government by incarcerating immigrants associated with the PLM. A year later, despite adopting an incognito identity, Flores Magón was captured and subjected to several years in prison, which marked the first of many arrests he would face. Upon this first sentence in Arizona, he returned to Los Angeles and continued to publish articles for *Regeneración*, prompting further legal action taken against this particular revolutionary.

As threats posed by radicalism grew in the United States, government leaders were tasked with keeping tabs on Magón and his men, leading to persistent intimidation and even occasional harassment, culminating when “an armed man broke into the *Regeneración* office and attempted to stab Ricardo Flores Magón in the back.”⁶⁹ Rather than dealing with the radicalism he and the PLM junta had brought to America diplomatically, the United States government opted for much more subversive tactics. Such constant persecution eventually led to the closing down of the Los Angeles *Regeneración* location, which moved to Saint Louis and endured the same fate at the hands of Colonel William Greene and his lawyer Norton Chase—both of whom opposed

⁶⁹ Hernández, *Bad Mexicans*, 183.

radicalism staunchly.⁷⁰ With this piece of evidence, it becomes clear that the tactics used to censor Magón were much more oppressive than was necessary. Nevertheless, given the extremism this revolutionary portrayed through his anarchism, it is understandable that officials felt the need to have stricter policies against him than with other rebels of the Revolution.

In particular, it is interesting to see the precise ways in which the American judicial branch and law enforcement collaborated to apprehend Ricardo Flores Magón, successfully ending his revolutionary activity. In a letter written by Magón to President Roosevelt in 1908, the radicalist explains that “the aim of the prosecution was to get [them] to Mexico, where [they] would be killed because [they] were opposed to the tyranny of President Díaz” and his treatment of Mexican laborers.⁷¹ Assuming that American leaders were aware of how this series of events would play out, these politicians essentially attempted to sentence Flores Magón to death. During another one of his imprisonments, Magón explains that his bail was deliberately set at \$5,000, a sum “designed to keep [him] in jail” until his case went to trial.⁷² At every step of his movement through the American justice system, Magón was limited via legal or violent tactics.

Distress at the hands of the law was extended over the course of many years for Ricardo Flores Magón as he experienced a series of imprisonments across the United States. These jails and prisons included various facilities in Saint Louis, Los Angeles, Arizona, McNeil Island, and Fort Leavenworth—where he eventually perished.⁷³ With the understanding that Magón could not continue to influence the minds of American citizens or people of Mexican descent if imprisoned, frequent arrests were a definite way of limiting his public presence. In records by the

⁷⁰ Raat, *Revoltosos*, 119.

⁷¹ Ricardo Flores Magón to Theodore Roosevelt, May 28, 1908.

⁷² Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magón, Letter to a General Audience, March 7, 1916.

⁷³ Raat, *Revoltosos*, 20.

Department of Justice and United States Supreme Court, a page states that the death of Flores Magón “marked the end of most of the Department of Justice’s concern” with the ongoing Mexican revolutionary activities.⁷⁴ Perhaps it was the staunchness of his views that made it so that the United States had to resort to such extreme measures. In any case, the way in which Magón was dealt with was far more extreme when compared to other radicalists, spread over the course of twenty years—a time period longer than the course of the Mexican Revolution.

Another revolutionary that American politicians attempted to censor is Francisco Indalecio Madero, though to a less violent extent than the way in which Flores Magón was dealt with. In contrast to Magón, Madero was a businessman with no opposition to capitalism or democracy, but simply an opposition to the dictatorial rule of Porfirio Díaz. After being elected for the eighth time in what Madero claimed was a rigged election, the revoltoso challenged Díaz and escaped to the United States to avoid persecution by supporters of the president. During his time in America, Madero conducted a series of revolutionary campaigns in several Southwestern states that drew on existent fears of radicalism among United States politicians. Though he eventually gained control of the Mexican presidency in 1911, farmers and other workers in the agricultural sector that had so ardently fought with Madero against the Porfiriato quickly realized the extent of his reform was only sociopolitical: land reform would once again go ignored under this new leader of Mexico. Despite being much more liberal in comparison to Díaz, it is undeniable that Madero was a moderate politician—a characteristic Americans liked.

According to *Revolution on the Border*, the distinct way in which Madero was treated by the American government may stem from the support extended to this revolutionary by United

⁷⁴ United States Supreme Court, *Selected Department of Justice and U.S. Supreme Court Records Concerning Mexican Revolutionary Activities in the United States, 1906–1922*, Washington, District of Columbia: 1911.

States citizens.⁷⁵ Understanding that Americans could criticize and push back against certain government actions, officials were forced to address his presence in the country through more conciliatory and diplomatic means. In a letter written by Attorney General George Wickersham to Secretary of State Philander Knox, the former states that arrest orders had been issued for Madero—though authorities were being careful to obtain conclusive “evidence which the Mexican Government may have tending to show violation of the neutrality laws in [the] country by Madero.”⁷⁶ Rather than coming up with loose accusations like authorities had previously done for Magón, this case was handled with considerably more deliberation—a measure likely put in place to prevent criticism from supporters of Madero among United States citizens.

Knox’s response to the letter written to him by Wickersham continues to highlight the discrepancies in the way Mexican revolutionaries were treated throughout the 1910s by American policymakers. In specific, Knox underscores that those involved in the arrest of Madero did not feel as though they possessed the “grounds” for the arrest or detention of the rebel.⁷⁷ While the completion of Magón’s arrests had been conducted with no little legal plausibility, the same could not be said for those of Madero—due process was much more prevalent here. Despite the attention to detail given to this attempt at controlling this revolutionary, individuals like Mexican Ambassador Francisco León de la Barra still wished to see Madero incarcerated.⁷⁸ Although many American politicians felt the need to arrest him in order to quell revolutionary fervor in the United States, laws were strictly abided and no false

⁷⁵ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 19.

⁷⁶ George Wickersham. Letter to Philander Knox, 30 November 1910.

⁷⁷ Philander Knox to George Wickersham, December 2, 1910.

⁷⁸ Francisco León de la Barra to Philander Knox, January 19, 1911.

accusations were made against Madero. While politicians could not prevent Americans from showing support for a Mexican rebel, they could avoid harsh criticisms of their actions.

Newspaper articles are another great source for understanding the attitude the United States government had for Francisco Madero and his revolutionary campaigns on Southwestern American soil. In an article titled “Mexico Rejoices with U.S.” in *The Washington Times*, the author explains that the newly elected President Madero and the American Ambassador had attended a July 4th celebration in Mexico City—a symbol of increased “international understanding” according to President William Howard Taft.⁷⁹ Now that Madero had gained the presidency of Mexico, the revolutionary activities he had carried out in the United States could be overlooked. Further sources such as “‘Hands Off,’ Taft Rule on Mexico” in *The New York Tribune* demonstrate that Taft’s cabinet had agreed to adopt a policy of non-intervention for Madero’s rule, an implicit acceptance of his relatively moderate policies.⁸⁰ What had begun as justified attempts to arrest the radical had ended up in presidential support for the new Mexican president—a privilege only a limited amount of revolutionaries could hope to ever have.

Even more interesting than the relationship between Flores Magón and Madero was that of Pascual Orozco and the latter, who was treated in a vastly different manner despite having shown much support for Madero. Only a few months into the Revolution, however, Orozco began to exhibit opposition to the president—particularly as a result of his moderate social policies. Years later, after both Madero and his successor Huerta had been removed from the presidency, Orozco traveled to the United States to campaign against President Carranza during the mid-1910s, a political figure that had at that point received extensive support from American

⁷⁹ “Mexico Rejoices with the U.S.,” *The Washington Post*, July 5, 1912.

⁸⁰ “Hands Off, Taft Rule on Mexico,” *The New York Tribune*, February 16, 1913.

officials due to his perceived ability to put a definitive end of the Mexican Revolution. Thus, it is important to note that Orozco was not new to the United States, and had previously traveled to the country in the days before the successful coup against Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz.

More specifically, when Madero publicly declared himself in opposition to Díaz alongside his own supporters, Orozco was able to find shelter within the United States against followers of the unpopular Mexican dictator.⁸¹ During his time in the United States, Orozco was not only a threat to American livelihoods as a result of his status as a revolutionary, but was also responsible for intertwining the politics of the United States in those of the Revolution. This was especially evident in the political revolts related to the Revolution abroad that occurred on American soil as a direct result of influences exerted by Orozco in Southern states such as Texas.⁸² In other words, the campaigns led by this rebel had begun to increase the prevalence of social activism and thus radicalism along the Mexican-American border. Strangely, the treatment Orozco received as a result of his campaigns was far removed from the injustices that the United States government subjected on Magón, a point worth examining further in this section.

For the most part, media outlets seemed to show support for the ideas Orozco had through favorable portrayals of his campaigns both in America and across the border. “The Man Madero Fears: Gen. Orozco Not Rightly Judged by Outsiders” in *The Los Angeles Times* even goes as far as saying that the revolutionary would “succeed in his plans” of stimulating crops and feeding starving children in Mexico.⁸³ Though significant numbers of residents of Mexican background inhabited Los Angeles during this time, the idea of an American outlet portraying a revolutionary in this way is worth noting. Nevertheless, Orozco’s actions were not without

⁸¹ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 25.

⁸² Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 46.

⁸³ “The Man Madero Fears: Gen. Orozco Not Rightly Judged by Outsiders,” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1915.

political backlash; in a letter from Philander Knox to Attorney General William Stead, Knox urges his recipient to consider detaining Orozco in Texas.⁸⁴ Though this revolutionary's actions prompted some degree of government response, the plans to censor General Orozco were much more bureaucratic and diplomatic than those made for Magón—a clear show of favoritism.

Additional newspaper articles continue to build upon this, describing the comparatively gentle manner in which Orozco was dealt with during the era of the Mexican Revolution. A headline from *The New York Times* reading “Huerta to Attack Zapata: Pascual Orozco... Guarded Closely Instead of Being Killed” goes on to describe the role of Orozco in the Revolution in a passive manner, avoiding negative characterizations used for other such revolutionaries.⁸⁵ Rather than using inflammatory rhetoric and playing into stereotypes frequently used to describe Mexican rebels, *The New York Times* wholly avoided using such words. In a similar manner, a piece in *The Washington Post* describes the death of Orozco as a ‘slaying,’ a word more apt for a war hero than the rebel he was to American politicians.⁸⁶ Such characterizations are especially shocking considering the fact that Orozco had been killed in an armed dispute with innocent American civilians—which would have been the perfect opportunity for news outlets and politicians alike to portray him as a violent revolutionary rather than a fallen hero.

Villa, Huerta, and Carranza in the Later Years of the Revolution

As opposition to Madero grew in the early 1910s, certain political figures rose to power as radical counter-revolutionary forces. Among these was Pancho Villa, who launched an attack on Columbus, New Mexico in 1916 and resulted in the Pershing Expedition through Northern

⁸⁴ Philander Knox to William Stead, October 2, 1912.

⁸⁵ “Huerta to Attack Zapata,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 1913.

⁸⁶ “Pascual Orozco Slain: Mexican General is Killed by Posse in Texas,” *The Washington Post*, September 1, 1915.

Mexico, which forced the revolutionary into hiding in his home country.⁸⁷ Before examining his relationship to the United States, it is important to note that like Orozco, Villa was at first a supporter of Madero. For many of the same reasons, his support disappeared—a revolutionary fervor that was extended to Huerta upon his own rise to power. Eventually, Villa’s desire for thorough sociopolitical reform turned him against President Carranza, creating hatred towards the United States for extending diplomatic support to such a moderate president that could not fulfill the needs of the working class Villa represented, further radicalizing his beliefs.

Given that the extent of Villista activity in the United States was definitively greater than that of his revolutionary counterparts, the response he faced on the part of the American government was understandably militaristic and physically aggressive beyond that of any other Mexican revolutionary. In addition to forcing Villa to go into hiding in his native country, this expedition also resulted in the capture and even killing of many of his men.⁸⁸ Without any doubts, this particular rebel was subject to the most violent counter-revolutionary tactics exhibited by American leaders. Regardless of the equal aggression with which Villa treated the United States, it is still worth noting the difference in the tactics being employed for different individuals within the Mexican Revolution, even if such violence was merely a retaliation.

Many different aspects of the Pershing Expedition—the name given to the campaign led by the United States that attempted to capture Villa after his attack on Columbus—are also worth observing through a more revisionist lens, looking more closely at the relationships that had formed across the Mexican-American border. For one, the Pershing Expedition was conducted

⁸⁷ John Pershing, “What the Punitive Expedition has Accomplished,” *John J. Pershing Papers* (Washington, District of Columbia: Library of Congress).

⁸⁸ Pershing, “What the Punitive Expedition has Accomplished.”

against the wishes of Venustiano Carranza, the president of Mexico during this time.⁸⁹ This means that despite the support that the United States had offered this particular leader of the country, its need to address the problem of radicalism in America far outweighed this international alliance. Facing pushback from Mexican citizens and politicians alike, the two countries were able to come to an agreement that removed American troops from across the border in exchange for the safety of United States border cities—a part of the promise that was not upheld by Carranza.⁹⁰ Regardless, the Pershing Expedition embodies the worries of the United States during this time—including the safety of its citizens and the fact that the country had been pulled into the Mexican Revolution despite its lack of desire for involvement.

Not unlike many of the other revolutionaries, the sentiments of American politicians towards these individuals are clear through newspapers and other similar forms of media. In *The San Francisco Chronicle's* “American Troops Drive Pancho Villa into a Trap,” the author describes the revolutionary as an outlaw and a bandit.⁹¹ Rather than using words like those used to describe Orozco or Madero, these words reflect the fact that United States politicians regarded Villa as little else other than a violent criminal with no real desire to inspire positive change. A piece in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* describes the wounds he endured during the Pershing Expedition and his experience hiding in a cave for five weeks as American and Mexican opposition alike searched for him.⁹² So strong was the hatred the United States government felt for the radicalism Villa had brought into America—and the attacks it had led to—that politicians were willing to invest money into launching a military campaign abroad to solve the issue.

⁸⁹ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 65.

⁹⁰ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 70.

⁹¹ “American Troops Drive Pancho Villa into a Trap,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, March 20, 1916.

⁹² “How I Escaped From Pershing, By Pancho Villa,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 12, 1920.

Much like Magón, a revolutionary that faced imprisonment in the United States was Victoriano Huerta, the president of Mexico before Venustiano Carranza. After President Madero was forcibly removed from office, like Orozco, Huerta was able to find shelter from the counter-revolutionary forces organized by Maderistas in the United States—an action that was unappealing to American politicians.⁹³ Eventually, however, Huerta became the interim president of Mexico, creating much opposition to his own rule over the country. Such negative feelings toward his presidency extended to American politicians, evidenced by President Wilson and his refusal to recognize such an election, as described in *The Washington Post* and its article “Break With Huerta.”⁹⁴ Given the support the government had shown to Madero upon his rise to power in Mexico, the lack of support towards Huerta becomes noteworthy, a phenomenon that can be explained by the fact that leaders working for the American government had ideologies contrary to those of Huerta. In other words, the values of the United States simply did not align with those preached by the revolutionary, making American support for Huerta rare and short-lived.

One of the most interesting ways in which the United States showed much dismay for Huerta was through the lack of support it gave to his cause. Wilson had blocked arm shipments to Huerta in order to prevent him from continuing his campaign, a tactic that contrasted from those employed for other revolutionaries.⁹⁵ That said, it is important to note the subtle similarities that bring all these tactics together, the biggest of which was to ultimately make the rebels less successful in their campaigns against the Mexican political status quo—a strategy that would reduce the number of supporters they could employ in the United States. In all, Wilson desired to put an end to the regime of Victoriano Huerta, as it would quell much of the sentiment that he

⁹³ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 25.

⁹⁴ “Break With Huerta,” *The Washington Post*, October 15, 1913.

⁹⁵ Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 27.

had stirred within American soil upon his arrival.⁹⁶ While Madero had gained support from the United States after becoming president, the opposite was true of Victoriano Huerta.

An interesting similarity between the two revolutionaries comes down to the fact that both Magón and Huerta were imprisoned within United States territory, which is something that not all radicals experienced. *The Los Angeles Times* published an article that informed audiences that Huerta had been jailed in El Paso, Texas due to conspiracy charges.⁹⁷ Thus, it was conspiracy charges that both tainted the reputation of Huerta to American audiences and prevented him from continuing his campaigns. While he was eventually released, Huerta was given a \$30,000 bail in order to be released from house arrest, a number that was impossible to pay for someone of his economic status.⁹⁸ The high bail was a deliberate act made to ensure that Huerta was not at liberty to continue his mission in the United States or abroad and thus able to bring such thoughts into America. Combined with Magon's comparable experience, this situation makes it evident that arrests and bails were just one of the many techniques employed in the strategic favoritism shown by the United States toward prevalent Mexican revolutionaries of the time.

The last revolutionary that can be compared and contrasted to the circumstances of Magón, Madero, Villa, Orozco, and Huerta is Mexican president Venustiano Carranza. At the start of the Revolution, his alliances lay with Madero and lasted until his assassination in 1913—and arguably after Madero's death, considering Carranza played a direct part in the opposition that formed against Huerta. Eventually, he became the first president of the new Mexican republic, closing the chapter opened by Madero after his accusation of the legitimacy of

⁹⁶ Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 55.

⁹⁷ "Jail Huerta in El Paso on Conspiracy Charges," *The Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1915.

⁹⁸ "Gen. Huerta Dies at Home in Texas," *Special to the New York Times*, January 14, 1916.

the Porfiriato. Like Madero, Carranza was also given the opportunity to create diplomatic ties with the American government, further cementing the validity of his role as president.

Nonetheless, tensions arose between Carranza and some political leaders from the United States, as some of the relationships formed by this revolutionary were not strictly capitalist and democratic. Despite claims by many of communist ties on the part of Carranza, there was no aggressive movement against him by the United States government.⁹⁹ Rather than treating him like Magón or Villa, the majority of American politicians were in favor of Carranza's control of Mexico, though the United States did plan some form of intervention according to an article titled "Wilson to Ignore Carranza Note" in a special to *The New York Times*.¹⁰⁰ Though support was being extended to this particular revolutionary, there was still major disagreement between American values and the actions of the incumbent Mexican president. In other words, it seemed like the United States was being forced to strategically choose favorites from an array of rebels—regardless of the fact that all of these individuals posed threats to American values.

It is important to note that the recognition of Carranza's presidency was given by politicians with much power within the United States government. "Carranza Now Rules" in *The Washington Post* issue reveals that Secretary of State Robert Lansing himself had recognized the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Mexican and American governments.¹⁰¹ It appears the United States government had finally encountered a revolutionary force that it could establish ties with, even if disagreements about the radical nature of the Mexican Revolution continued. Another issue by the same newspaper two years later explains that Carranza had been given full recognition as President Wilson sought to re-establish all Mexican-American

⁹⁹ Britton, *Revolution and Ideology*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ "Wilson to Ignore Carranza Note," *The New York Times*, August 13, 1915.

¹⁰¹ "Carranza Now Rules," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1915.

relations.¹⁰² At this point, the presidency of the United States had fallen into agreement with a politician from Mexico after nearly twenty years of revolt in both America and abroad.

That is not to say that these newly established relations were not without tension, as many discrepancies still existed between the two governments. As described by a column in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Carranza's rule was turning out to be quite turbulent in nature.¹⁰³ This further underscores the idea that regardless of the fact that relations had been resumed between the two, some tensions continued to pervade such diplomacy. Despite claiming that Carranza's humble 'rancher' roots had allowed him to successfully understand the needs of an agrarian population, this same article points out the fact that many of the other revolutionaries described above were opposed to Carranza, such as Zapata, Villa, and Orozco.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps one of the reasons that American politicians were hesitant about extending support to Carranza was because he was proving unable to put an end to the Mexican Revolution and thus continued conflicts at the Mexican-American border, showing that favoritism could only go so far in advancing the interests of the United States. Such strategic favoritism, however, had accomplished its job; fears of Mexican radicalism were on a decline as other international issues occupied Americans.

* * *

In synthesizing the complex narratives of Mexican revolutionaries and the multifaceted responses of the United States, this examination illuminates the turbulence of the early twentieth century. Through the lens of six individual revolutionaries—including the infamous Flores

¹⁰² "Carranza is Given Full Recognition," *The Washington Post*, September 12, 1917.

¹⁰³ "Carranza Rule Turbulent One," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, May 22, 1920.

¹⁰⁴ "Carranza Rule Turbulent One," *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Magón, Madero, Orozco, Villa, Huerta, and Carranza—the thesis intricately dissects the interplay of ideological conflict, political pragmatism, and the pursuit of stability that defined American engagement with the Mexican Revolution. The story of Flores Magón, underscored by relentless persecution, highlights a strategy sharply inclined towards stifling perceived threats of radicalism. Contrasting sharply with this approach, Francisco Madero’s relatively diplomatic treatment reflects a nuanced response to revolutionaries whose ideologies and objectives appeared less antagonistic to American interests. This differentiation in treatment underscores a broader theme of strategic favoritism, where responses were tailored to each revoltoso.

Pascual Orozco’s experience further complicates the narrative, illustrating how revolutionary activities could evoke varied responses based on their impact on American soil and the political dynamics of the time. Meanwhile, the aggressive military campaign against Pancho Villa epitomizes the lengths to which the United States would go in countering direct actions deemed harmful to its security and interests. My thesis concludes that American engagement with Mexican revolutionary figures was far from homogenized; rather, it was a complex mosaic of strategies driven by the dual imperatives of curbing radicalism and safeguarding economic and sociopolitical interests. This nuanced approach, ranging from outright military intervention to diplomatic accommodation, reveals the intricate balance the United States sought to maintain amid the chaos of the Mexican Revolution. Ultimately, the experiences of these revolutionaries give insight into the challenges and contradictions of navigating international politics.

CONCLUSION

The Mexican Revolution of the early twentieth century catalyzed a complex relationship between Mexico and the United States, marked by immigration, restrictive policies, and blatant shows of strategic favoritism towards certain revolutionary factions. This thesis examines how American policymakers navigated the increase of Mexican immigrants and the presence of revolutionary leaders on United States soil, shedding light on the discriminatory nature of strategic favoritism based on an American-centric ideological alignment. Throughout the first two decades of the 1900s, Mexican immigration to the United States surged, driven by economic hardship and political upheaval in Mexico. This wave of migration prompted fears of radicalism among American politicians, leading to efforts aimed at curbing Mexican influence and ideology within the country. Simultaneously, various Mexican revolutionary leaders sought refuge in the United States, further complicating diplomatic relations between the two nations. American officials soon began to strategically favor certain factions, especially those aligned with capitalist and democratic principles, while discriminating against others perceived as threats.

The concept of strategic favoritism, as explored in this thesis, refers to the selective support or suppression of revolutionary factions based on their perceived alignment with American interests. This strategic approach aimed to mitigate the spread of anti-capitalist sentiment and maintain stability along the Mexican-American border. However, beneath the facade of diplomatic maneuvering lay a deeper form of discrimination—discrimination based on belief. American policymakers favored revolutionaries whose ideologies aligned with capitalism and democracy, while marginalizing those with alternative visions for Mexico. This discriminatory treatment extended to Mexican immigrants as well, as policies aimed at curbing

radicalism disproportionately targeted individuals perceived as ideological threats. By examining the interplay between Mexican immigration, revolutionary movements, and American policy, my thesis reveals the discrimination embedded in strategic favoritism during this time.

The first section of this thesis provides historical context for the Mexican Revolution and its impact on Mexican-American relations, highlighting the emergence of fears about Mexican immigration and radicalism in the United States, in turn setting the stage for examining the responses of American policymakers. The second section delves into American policies aimed at global immigration into United States soil, exploring how policymakers navigated concerns about radicalism while attempting to control them with immigration policy. The final section evaluates how various discriminatory practices, such as political persecution and selective support for revolutionaries, were enacted by American authorities given the economic setbacks unleashed by immigration policies in the twentieth century. It emphasizes how these practices targeted individuals based on their beliefs, ultimately undermining American ideals of liberty and equality. Together, these contribute to the argument that strategic favoritism, the policy that the American government chose against Mexican radicalism, was inherently discriminatory.

Policymakers favored moderate revolutionaries who aligned with American values of democracy and capitalism, while sidelining or even actively opposing more radical figures. This discriminatory approach is evident in policies such as the selective recognition of Mexican presidents and diplomatic alliances based on ideological compatibility. Overall, strategic favoritism dictated the entire narrative by shaping American policies towards Mexican immigrants and revolutionaries. In addition, this policy of strategic favoritism underscores the complexities of American interventionism during the Mexican Revolution, revealing how policymakers navigated competing interests of economic prosperity, political stability, and

ideological alignment. Moreover, it highlights the discriminatory nature of American foreign policy responses, wherein individuals were judged and treated based on their perceived beliefs rather than objective criteria. Such an examination of strategic favoritism provides insight into the broader themes of discrimination, inequality, and the clash of ideologies within the historical context of Mexican-American relations that spanned the entirety of the twentieth century.

The aforementioned implications of strategic favoritism—namely discrimination based on race or class, social inequality, and ideological clashes—reverberate beyond their historical context; the discriminatory treatment of Mexican immigrants and revolutionary leaders based on perceived beliefs rather than objective criteria highlights systemic biases within American foreign policy. By favoring certain individuals over others, policymakers perpetuated unequal treatment and reinforced prejudices against marginalized groups—especially that of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, who already had a long history of oppression in the country. In addition, the selective support for moderate revolutionaries that aligned with American values underscores the complex dynamics of interventionism and diplomacy. While liberal legislators prioritized stability and economic interests, their actions also reflected ideological biases and strategic calculations. This raises questions about the ethical implications of foreign interventions and the extent to which national interests should dictate international relations.

Furthermore, the impact of strategic favoritism on Mexican-American relations extends to diplomatic tensions and historical memory. The legacy of discriminatory policies and unequal treatment continues to shape perceptions and attitudes between the two countries, influencing diplomatic negotiations and bilateral cooperation. Recognizing the historical injustices stemming from strategic favoritism is essential for fostering reconciliation and addressing persistent

inequalities in contemporary Mexican-American relations. Additionally, the examination of strategic favoritism underscores the complexities of navigating competing interests and ideologies in international relations. By interrogating the motives behind American policies during the Mexican Revolution, scholars and policymakers can glean insights into the challenges of balancing economic, political, and ideological considerations in foreign affairs. This understanding is crucial for crafting more equitable and inclusive approaches to current diplomacy and interventionism. By confronting these historical injustices and interrogating the underlying motives behind foreign policy, society can work towards building more equitable diplomatic frameworks that respect the rights and dignity of international citizens.

Potential counterarguments to the thesis regarding strategic favoritism during the Mexican Revolution may center on the pragmatic necessity of prioritizing stability and national interests in foreign policy decision-making. Critics may argue that American politicians were justified in supporting moderate revolutionaries who aligned with democratic and capitalist values, as this approach aimed to safeguard national security and stability. Moreover, some may contend that the discriminatory treatment of Mexican immigrants and revolutionary leaders was a reflection of prevailing societal attitudes and geopolitical realities rather than intentionally discriminatory bias. They may argue that government officials were merely responding to perceived threats to American security and economic interests rather than actively engaging in discriminatory practices. Furthermore, critics may assert that the selective support for certain revolutionary factions was a pragmatic strategy to advance American interests in a complex and volatile political landscape, further arguing that policymakers had to navigate competing interests and ideologies—and that strategic favoritism was a necessary tool for such objectives.

Additionally, critics may question the extent to which American policies during the Mexican Revolution directly contributed to discrimination and inequality in Mexican-American relations. They may argue that historical injustices cannot be solely attributed to American interventionism, and that other socio-political factors shaped the dynamics between the two countries. However, while acknowledging these counterarguments, it is essential to recognize the detrimental consequences of strategic favoritism in perpetuating discrimination and inequality in the United States. By critically examining the motives behind American policies and their impact on marginalized groups, we can better understand the complexities of international relations and work towards building more just and equitable diplomatic frameworks in the future.

In conclusion, the study of strategic favoritism during the Mexican Revolution reveals not only the complexities of international relations but also the enduring legacy of discrimination and international power dynamics. By examining how American leaders selectively supported certain revolutionary factions based on ideology, rather than democratic principles, this research exposes underlying biases and inequalities that continue to shape diplomatic relations and migration policies. As we reflect on the lessons learned from this historical inquiry, it is imperative to recognize the importance of promoting equity, justice, and inclusivity in global affairs. By confronting the legacies of discrimination and interventionism, we can strive to build a more just and equitable world where all nations and peoples are treated with humanity and respect.

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APPENDICES

1. Key Figures of the Mexican Revolution

Figure	Ideology	Years Active in America
Ricardo Flores Magón	A noted intellectual and journalist, Flores Magón was an early precursor to the Mexican Revolution and a significant advocate for political and social reform. His writings and activism were foundational to the anarchist movement in Mexico, and he was instrumental in influencing labor movements in both Mexico and the United States.	1900 – 1922*
Francisco Indalecio Madero	Regarded as the father of the Mexican Revolution. Madero was a wealthy landowner and politician who challenged the long-standing dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. He authored the Plan de San Luis Potosí, which called for a coup against Díaz and democratic reforms. Madero was elected president in 1911 after Díaz was ousted but was eventually overthrown and assassinated in 1913 during a coup led by Victoriano Huerta.	1909 – 1913*
Pascual Orozco	Initially a supporter of Madero, Orozco became disillusioned and led a rebellion against Madero in 1912. He later supported Victoriano Huerta but ultimately fled to America,	1910 – 1915*

	where he was involved in various military engagements before being killed in Texas.	
Francisco (Pancho) Villa	Born Doroteo Arango, he became one of the most prominent Mexican Revolutionary generals. Known for his charisma and military prowess, Villa was a key figure in the northern part of Mexico. He is famous for his attacks across the Mexican-American border and his involvement in various battles, including the Battle of Columbus.	Roughly 1910 – 1920
Victoriano Huerta	A military general who became president of Mexico after betraying and overthrowing Francisco Madero in 1913. His rule was marked by attempts to establish a strong authoritarian government, but he was forced to resign in 1914 due to pressures from revolutionary forces and diplomatic isolation from United States politicians.	1913 – 1914
Venustiano Carranza	One of the leaders of the revolution who ultimately succeeded in becoming president of Mexico from 1917 to 1920. He was responsible for drafting the Mexican Constitution of 1917, which included significant social reforms, especially in land and labor. Carranza was assassinated after losing power in a coup	1910 – 1920*

	led by one of his former generals, Alvaro Obregón.	
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* Indicates the assassination of a revolutionary and thus the end of their rebel activity.

2. *Glossary of Terms*

- **bracero** – Mexican laborers who were given permission to work in the United States with temporary contracts under the government-sponsored Bracero Program. Although this initiative was not implemented until 1942, I use this expression retroactively to describe immigrants from Mexico who were employed in America between 1900 and 1920.
- **Porfiriato** – Period of Mexican history from 1876 to 1911, dominated by President Porfirio Díaz, whose rule is characterized by economic and authoritarian control.
- **revoltoso** – Term used in the context of the Mexican Revolution, referring to individuals participating in revolutionary activities, often with a connotation of disruptive behavior.