

MEXICO

Maya

Activity: 1987-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- Indigenous mobilization around indigenous issues in Mexico began in earnest in the mid-70s within the framework of the newly emerged peasant's rights movement. In 1975, the National Peasant Confederation (CNC) convoked the First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán. All 56 ethnic groups in the country were present at the congress – the representatives concurred on the importance of indigenous self-determination even while they expressed their willingness “as part of the peasant class” to “unite with workers and the government for access to education, health, work, and freedom” (quoted in Mattiace 1997: 38). We do not code this as the movement's onset, however, because the CNPI was not effectively advocating self-determination as we define it.
- The first evidence for separatist activity among Mayas in Mexico we found is in 1987, when the Indigenous Organization of the Highlands (ORIACH) was founded in Chiapas, where the majority of Mexican Mayans are located. The ORIACH mobilized based on Indian identity and rights; thus we code 1987 as the start date of the movement. The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), which advocates the rights of Mayans and all Indians of southeastern Mexico, emerged from the 1994 Chiapas uprising as a militant organization, but has since favored political forms of mobilization and is currently the most widely recognized pro-indigenous organization in Mexico. In 1996, the EZLN established the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) to represent the interests of the indigenous Maya of Mexico. Both the EZLN and the CNI remained active as of 2020 (Enlace Zapatista 2022).
- Mayan and indigenous causes are also supported in Mexico by numerous smaller organizations, both militant and conventional, including the People's Revolutionary Army (EPR) and the Revolutionary Army of Insurgent People (ERPI). [start date: 1987; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- Claims have been for increased autonomy throughout. According to Jung (2003), the Mexican Mayans demands include bilingual education, the right to local and regional autonomy, and to communal land as the basis of the cultural reproduction of the group. The main organization associated with the Mayan movement, the Zapatistas, began its calls for autonomy in 1994 (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 329). Initially the Zapatistas focused on demanding wealth redistribution, without specifying that they were speaking mainly on behalf of indigenous peoples (Jung 2003: 454-455). However, in August 1994, the Zapatistas began to mobilize in favour of indigenous rights (Jung 2003: 458). Note that although there were calls for greater indigenous autonomy before the Zapatistas began their campaign, the goal of autonomy was pursued only by a small minority of the indigenous movement before 1994 (Mattiace 1997: 44). Also note that while the Zapatistas and other organizations entertain their own, de-facto independent autonomous regions, they do not seek secession but an autonomous status within Mexico (Trejo 2002: 7; Minahan 2002: 1217). Organizations representing indigenous groups other than the Mayans also support the call for autonomy, as evidenced by an April 1996 meeting where indigenous collectives agreed to launch a nation-wide movement for indigenous rights, including

increased autonomy and the preservation of Indian culture (MAR). Meanwhile, the exact contours of autonomy (whether on a regional or rather on a communal basis) are debated (Mattiace 1997: 44). [1987-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The contours of the claimed territory are not fully clear. While the Mayan movement is most active in Chiapas, its claims for autonomy and cultural rights appear to extend to Mayan-inhabited areas not only in Chiapas, but also in other southeastern states, including Yucatan, Campeche, and Tabasco (Minahan, 2002: 1213). We code this territory based on the map in Roth (2015: 440).

Sovereignty declarations

- In late 1994, the Zapatistas began to create unilaterally declared autonomous regions and municipalities. The State Council for Indian and Peasant Organizations (CEOIC) and Independent Central of Agricultural Workers and Peasants (CIOAC) declared the creation of seven ethnic regions within Chiapas on October 12, 1994 (Mattiace 1997: 52). [1994: autonomy declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- 1987-1993 is coded as NVIOLSD. [1987-1993: NVIOLSD]
- UCDP/PRIOD code an armed conflict with EZLN in 1994 and another armed conflict involving a group known as EPR (People's Revolutionary Army) in 1996. EPR supports the Mayas (MAR). We do not code the episode as ambiguous even if UCDP/PRIOD notes that they were related to the government: the evidence we found suggests the primary objective of the rebellion was over territory/autonomy. UCDP suggests 4 battle-related deaths in 1995 while MAR's rebellion score is three ("local rebellion"), pointing to sustained violence. Therefore, we code ongoing LVIOLSD throughout 1994-1996.
- There was continued violence in subsequent years and MAR's rebellion score is three ("local rebellion") for 1997-1998 and five ("intermediate guerilla activity") for 1999-2003. An example of such violence was the massacre of 45 people on December 22, 1997 in Acteal; however, that was one-sided violence perpetrated against Mayas by right-wing paramilitaries. UCDP/PRIOD reports 10 and 6 battle-related deaths in 1997 and 1998, respectively, and zero in all subsequent years. We stop coding LVIOLSD in 1996 on that basis.
- MRGI reports multiple episodes of violence in the 2010s involving indigenous people and indigenous rights activists, but these are usually one-sided violence or targeted killings and not violence over self-determination as defined here. Indigenous communities frequently get caught in the crossfire between the illegal armed groups that have surged across Mexico in recent years. [1994-1996: LVIOLSD; 1997-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Mayans developed the highest culture of pre-Columbian America, reaching their apex between 600 and 900 A.D. (Minahan, 2002: 1215). In the 9th and 10th centuries, Toltec invaders from central Mexico overran the Yucatan peninsula (Minahan, 2002: 1215). A federation of three city-states in the late thirteenth century began a long period of stability and prosperity, which crumbled around 1440 when a fierce civil war ended the federation (Minahan, 2002: 1215). The Spanish launched an expedition against the Mayans in 1513-35, and the last Mayan strongholds fell to the Spanish in 1546 (Minahan, 2002: 1216). By 1839 the Central American states had broken away from Spain, including Yucatan. Subsequently indigenous groups lost the right to limited self-government they had enjoyed under colonial rule, and Mexico's long-standing policy of assimilation began (Peña, 2006: 282-283). Mexican troops ended the Yucatan secession in 1843 but failed to reclaim other regions. A rebellion against the cruel European and Mestizo landlords erupted in 1847, which evolved into a brutal civil war, known as the War of the Castes that lasted until 1848. A part of the peninsula remained under Mayan control until 1902. There was another revolt in 1910, and after some initial successes, the Mayans withdrew to the inaccessible areas of the Quintana Roo (Minahan, 2002: 1216). During the revolution and civil war in Mexico from 1914 to 1919, Felipe Carrillo (with active Mayan involvement) effectively separated the region from the weak Mexican state and declared independence on April 3, 1916, as the "Socialist Republic of Yucatan" (Minahan, 2002: 1216). The Mayans again rebelled in 1923, and an alliance of Mayan and Mestizo leaders again declared Yucatan independent from Mexico on July 3, 1924. The rebellion was quickly crushed and Yucatan returned to Mexican control. Yucatan was administratively divided (Minahan, 2002: 1217).
- Starting in 1940, a series of agrarian reforms privatized indigenous lands during the 1940s, subjecting indigenous populations across Mexico to increasing territorial losses and the displacement of entire communities, including Mayans, to isolated and largely infertile areas (MAR).
- We found no concession or restrictions in the ten years leading up to the start date.

Concessions and restrictions

- The Mexican Constitution was redrafted in 1991. The new Constitution recognized that "Mexico is a multicultural nation based originally upon its indigenous peoples", and promised the promotion and development of indigenous culture and an end to assimilationist policies (Peña 2006: 287). However, Peña (2006: 288) and Minority Rights Group International suggest that the constitutional change was largely rhetorical and did not fundamentally improve the position, rights or autonomy of indigenous people. We therefore do not code this as a concession.
- In 1992, the Mexican government signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). According to Minority Rights Group International and MAR, the implementation of NAFTA has exacerbated the privatization and exploitation of indigenous territories, which has eroded the rights of indigenous people across Mexico to communal lands and contributed to their displacement to Mexico's urban centres. NAFTA was ratified by the Mexican Senate in late 1993, which we use as the date for this restriction. [1993: autonomy restriction]
- In direct opposition to the signature and implementation of NAFTA, the National Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN or Zapatistas) staged an armed rebellion in the largely indigenous Chiapas region. The rebellion came to an end in 1996, when the government and the rebels signed the San Andrés Accords. In it, the government pledged to grant indigenous people land rights and autonomy, including control over natural resources, economic rights and the election of their leaders (MAR). However, multiple sources confirm that no steps were taken for the implementation of the agreement (MAR; Minority Rights Group International; López, 1999) and we therefore do not code a concession here in line with the codebook until 2001 when, after years of halting the agreements, the government finally enacted an indigenous rights law based on the San Andrés Accords. According to MAR, the 2001 legislation contained numerous protections of indigenous rights and territorial autonomy, so we code an autonomy concession. It should be noted that although the bill brought some improvements compared to the 1991 constitution, it was

strongly rejected by the EZLN and other indigenous rights groups, who protested its enactment because it failed to meet their central demands and because it revoked many of the concessions agreed upon in 1996 (Hernández, 2002; Peña, 2006: 291). Indeed, the 2001 law went significantly below the 1996 promises, ignoring the agreed terms on indigenous autonomy, the right to territory, access to natural resources, and the election of municipal authorities (Minority Rights Group International). [2001: autonomy concession]

- Until 2002, indigenous groups faced language discrimination in the Mexican judicial system, since proceedings were only carried out in Spanish and the state provided no interpreters for non-Spanish speakers. In December 2002, a law was passed to guarantee that indigenous language speakers would have bilingual interpreters in all judicial processes. According to MAR, this law significantly reduced language barriers in the relationship between the state and non-Spanish-speaking native populations. Note: 95% of all Mayan speakers also speak Spanish (Peña 2006), but this still constitutes an important cultural rights concession. [2002: cultural rights concession]
- In December 2019, the Mexican government organized an indigenous consultation for the *Tren Maya* (Maya Train) infrastructural project, which involves the construction of a train line across indigenous territories in Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo. According to government figures, 92% of 100,000 voters approved the project, which enabled construction work to continue (Rodríguez García, 2019). However, multiple indigenous organizations, NGOs, and even the United Nations, criticized the consultation process, arguing that voters were only informed of the project's benefits but were not given information about the potentially negative social and environmental implications of the train line (Ortíz, 2019). Numerous Maya communities also complained that they had not been included in the consultation process (only 100,000 people voted out of over 3.5 million registered voters) (De Miguel, 2020; Frabes, 2022). The construction is expected to conclude in late 2023, but as of the time of writing the impact on Mayan communities remained unclear, though it should be noted that several indigenous communities have claimed that the construction will lead to the displacement of thousands of families and cause irreversible environmental damage in indigenous territory.

Regional autonomy

- Given de facto independence we code regional autonomy from 1995 onwards (see below). [1995-2020: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- On January 1, 1994, a Zapatista rebel group that was composed largely of Mayan Indians seized the mayor's office in San Cristobal de las Casas, a municipality in Mexico's southern-most state, Chiapas (MAR). Starting in late 1994, de-facto autonomy arrangements were established by means of civil disobedience or violence in the state of Chiapas (Mattiace, 1997: 45). The Zapatistas (EZLN) claimed that there are at least 38 such "autonomous" municipalities, and two "autonomous" regions. The EZLN is strongly supported by Mayans (MAR). Other organizations claim to have established de-facto autonomy in another six regions of Chiapas. While only some of the claimed territories can be considered de-facto independent from Mexico (in particular those in the Highlands, the North, and the East of Chiapas), the territory controlled by indigenous organizations (in particular Mayan) seems substantial (Trejo, 2002: 6-7). The autonomous municipalities continued to operate in 2020 (Mexico News Daily, 2019; Telesur 2018), hence we code de-facto independence from 1995 onwards, following the first of January rule. It has to be noted though that the Zapatistas never declared independence from Mexico, and have emphasized that they seek an autonomous status within Mexico rather than secession (Trejo, 2002: 7). Furthermore, the majority of Mayan indigenous people live outside the de facto independent territories, which makes this code somewhat ambiguous. [1995-2020: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- [1994: establishment of de facto independence]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Maya
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Maya
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	7002000

Power access

- We adopt data from EPR, translating the self-exclusion coding between 1998 and 2016 into a powerless code in line with the codebook. [1987-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We adopt EPR data. [0.007]

Regional concentration

- According to MAR, the Mayans have a regional base. However, less than 50% of Mayans are located in the regional base (see the variable gc7 in phase I-IV and GC7 in phase V). This matches with information from Minahan (2002: 1213). [not regionally concentrated]

Kin

- According to EPR there are kin groups in three adjoining countries (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador). In Guatemala alone, there are several million Mayans. MAR suggests the same. Additional evidence comes from Minahan (2002: 1213), who mentions kin groups in Guatemala, Belize, Western Honduras, and western El Salvador. [ethnic kin in neighboring country]

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Other Indigenous Peoples

Activity: 1973-2020

General notes

- This group refers to 23 different indigenous communities in Mexico, including the Nahuas, Mixes, Otomis, Purepchas, Totonacos, Mazatecos, Mazahua, Tarascos, Huicholes, Coras, Tepehuanes, Cuicatecos, Huaves and Yaquis. They speak a variety of different languages with the Nahuatl language being the most used indigenous language.
- Note: Two indigenous groups are coded separately, the Mayas and the Zapotecs, because there was significant group-specific mobilization. Until the Maya's date of formation in 1987, they can be considered part of this umbrella indigenous group as well. The Zapotecs movement emerged in the same year as this movement (1973).

Movement start and end dates

- The "other" indigenous groups have been actively protesting for regional autonomy, which includes: "conservation of natural resources in indigenous regions, opposition to foreign commercial interests in indigenous regions, the demilitarization and removal of paramilitary groups from indigenous regions and promotion of group culture and lifeways" (MAR). Such demands are often articulated in an individual community basis, with examples of small organized movements being the Nahua 'Nahuatl Nation' (Solís, 2017, Nación Náhuatl, n.d.), the Otomi 'Council of the Otomi Nation' (Nahón, 2008; Hernández, 2021), or the Mixe 'CODREMI' (Vázquez and Gómez, 2006; Magaloni et al., 2019).
- According to López Bárcenas (2016: 63), the earliest indigenous movements in Mexico began mobilizing in the 1970s. The first evidence we found of organized mobilization in favour of indigenous autonomy was in 1973, when the *Movimiento Nacional Indígena* (National Indigenous Movement) was created, hence the start date. Other organizations that emerged in later years include the National Union of Indigenist Organizations, the National Federation of Indigenist Youth, the Mexican Association of Indigenous Professionals and Intellectuals, the Independent front of Indigenous Peoples (FIPI) and the National Plural Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA).
- The movement remains ongoing (Chavia, 2011; Velazco Cruz, 2019; Ruíz, 2020). [start date: 1973; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- There are numerous organizations representing the indigenous peoples in Mexico. Overall, the dominant claim is clearly autonomy within Mexico. According to MAR, indigenous demands include "regional autonomy and self-determination for indigenous communities". Minority Rights Group International confirms this and mentions the "creation of pluri-ethnic autonomous regions in areas of significant indigenous population" as an important goal of the indigenous communities. Indigenous groups such as the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), the Independent front of Indigenous Peoples (FIPI) or the National Plural Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA) continued to make demands for autonomy and land rights as of 2020. [1973-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- We could not find a clear definition of the territory to which these claims were tied. We therefore flag this territorial claim as ambiguous and code it based on the group's settlement areas according to the GREG dataset (Weidmann et al., 2010), which offers the best approximation in this case. Note, that until the formation of their own movement, the Maya are considered as part of Mexico's indigenous peoples. Since the movement's start date is the same as the Zapotec's, we exclude Zapotec areas in our coding and only include Maya settlements until 1987, but not thereafter.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- In 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) launched a rebellion against Mexico to fight for greater autonomy, as well as for other social and economic reasons. According to UCDP/PRIO, the majority of EZLN's members were Mayas, which are separately coded. We do not associate the Chiapas uprising with the "other" indigenous groups.
- In mid-2000, a wave of government-sponsored violence took place as paramilitaries loyal to the government as well as federal forces launched incursions into indigenous communities. Deaths from these episodes are not clear (Lexis Nexis) but we do not consider them as violence pertaining to self-determination since there is no indication of retaliation from the side of the indigenous peoples.
- MRGI reports multiple episodes of violence in the 2010s involving indigenous people and indigenous rights activists, but these are usually one-sided violence or targeted killings and not violence over self-determination as defined here. Indigenous communities frequently get caught in the crossfire between the illegal armed groups that have surged across Mexico in recent years.
- We found no other reports of separatist violence, and hence code the entire movement with NVIOLSD. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- For at least 11,000 years, present-day Mexico was inhabited by a sequence of major indigenous civilizations that flourished in the region, culminating with the militarily powerful Aztec empire in the early 15th century. The Aztecs gradually lost their military might when the colonizing expeditions and campaigns led by Hernán Cortés began in 1519, eventually falling in 1521. In the decades that followed, millions of indigenous people were killed or died of diseases previously unknown in the Americas, while the remaining populations were relocated into large, infertile territories where they could be more effectively controlled. The Spanish themselves took possession of the fertile land that had for centuries guaranteed the subsistence and wealth of native American communities (Minority Rights Group International).
- Mexico achieved independence from Spain in 1821, and the establishment of a republic in 1824 was followed by a period of political instability. Stability was regained in 1846 under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, which brought decades of significant economic growth and the consolidation of land ownership in the hands of a small and wealthy elite of European

descendants. Indigenous people worked these lands virtually as slaves while severe poverty ravaged their communities (Minority Rights Group International).

- In the aftermath of a bloody civil war at the beginning of the 20th century, which had a strong element of indigenous rebellion, the Mexican Constitution of 1917 revised land ownership provisions and drafted a labour code. However, in asserting a uniform peasant identity, these reforms failed to recognize indigenous communities, their rights and ethno-linguistic and cultural distinctiveness. Although communal land and collective ownership were recognized under these reforms, these provisions were sanctioned by federal laws (within the *ejido* structure), ignoring indigenous claims and further undermining the territorial autonomy of indigenous communities (Magaloni et al., 2019: 1846).
- Starting in 1940, a series of agrarian reforms privatized indigenous lands during the 1940s, subjecting indigenous populations across Mexico to increasing territorial losses and the displacement of entire communities to isolated and largely infertile areas (MAR).

Concessions and restrictions

- The Cerro de Oro hydroelectric megaproject (also known as the Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado hydroelectric) began operating in 1988 in Oaxaca, in land inhabited by the Chinanteco group. Its operation diverted a river that provided the community with water, causing the displacement of over 26,000 Chinantecos (Mejía Martínez, 2020). [1988: autonomy restriction]
- The Mexican Constitution was redrafted in 1991. The new Constitution recognized that “Mexico is a multicultural nation based originally upon its indigenous peoples”, and promised the promotion and development of indigenous culture and an end to assimilationist policies (Peña 2006: 287). However, Peña (2006: 288) and Minority Rights Group International suggest that the constitutional change was largely rhetorical and did not fundamentally improve the position, rights or autonomy of indigenous people. We therefore do not code this as a concession.
- In 1992, the Mexican government signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). According to Minority Rights Group International and MAR, the implementation of NAFTA has exacerbated the privatization and exploitation of indigenous territories, which has eroded the rights of indigenous people across Mexico to communal lands and contributed to their displacement to Mexico’s urban centres. NAFTA was ratified by the Mexican Senate in late 1993, which we use as the date for this restriction. [1993: autonomy restriction]
- In direct opposition to the signature and implementation of NAFTA, the National Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN or Zapatistas) staged an armed rebellion in the largely indigenous Chiapas region. The rebellion came to an end in 1996, when the government and the rebels signed the San Andrés Accords. In it, the government pledged to grant indigenous people land rights and autonomy, including control over natural resources, economic rights and the election of their leaders (MAR). However, multiple sources confirm that no steps were taken for the implementation of the agreement (MAR; Minority Rights Group International; López, 1999) and we therefore do not code a concession here in line with the codebook until 2001 when, after years of halting the agreements, the government finally enacted an indigenous rights law based on the San Andrés Accords. According to MAR, the 2001 legislation contained numerous protections of indigenous rights and territorial autonomy, so we code an autonomy concession. It should be noted that although the bill brought some improvements compared to the 1991 constitution, it was strongly rejected by the EZLN and other indigenous rights groups, who protested its enactment because it failed to meet their central demands and because it revoked many of the concessions agreed upon in 1996 (Hernández, 2002; Peña, 2006: 291). Indeed, the 2001 law went significantly below the 1996 promises, ignoring the agreed terms on indigenous autonomy, the right to territory, access to natural resources, and the election of municipal authorities (Minority Rights Group International). [2001: autonomy concession]
- Until 2002, indigenous groups faced language discrimination in the Mexican judicial system, since proceedings were only carried out in Spanish and the state provided no interpreters for non-Spanish speakers (note that many indigenous people in Mexico do not speak Spanish). In December 2002, a law was passed to guarantee that indigenous language speakers would have bilingual interpreters in all judicial processes. According to MAR, this law significantly reduced

language barriers in the relationship between the state and non-Spanish-speaking native populations. [2002: cultural rights concession]

- MRGI reports that from 2012 onwards, tens of thousands of indigenous people across Mexico were forcibly displaced by land encroachment, political violence and territorial disputes. Yet, there is little evidence that state actors were directly implicated in these displacements, which were carried out by illegal armed groups. Hence, we do not code a restriction.
- In 2019, the Mexican government approved plans to develop the *Trans-Isthmus Corridor*, a large-scale infrastructural project aimed at increasing the transportation of merchandise between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Isthmus of Tehantepec. The government claimed that it carried out an indigenous consultation process for the project, receiving 90% approval for the corridor's development (Sipaz, 2020). The project directly affects 80 indigenous municipalities in the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz, most of them inhabited by the Chontal, Huave, Mixe, Zoque, Nahuatl and Popoluca people (Sipaz, 2020). Numerous indigenous communities and organizations suggested that the consultation did not meet international standards as the information provided about the project was "vague and general" and as the process did not include thousands of directly affected individuals (Sipaz, 2020). As of the time of writing the impact on indigenous communities remained unclear, though it should be noted that several indigenous communities claimed that the corridor will cause thousands of indigenous to be displaced and widespread environmental damage in indigenous land.

Regional autonomy

- Although the Mexican constitution recognizes the right for indigenous people to exercise regional autonomy in their territories, sources report that the government has not taken meaningful steps to implement this constitutional provision (López Bárcenas, 2019; Aparicio, 2008; Ruíz, 2020; América Economía, 2020). According to Aparicio (2008: 13), the communities that have gained some degree of autonomy have done so by means of "collective civil disobedience". [no autonomy]

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Other Indigenous Peoples
<i>Scenario</i>	1:n; n:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Other indigenous groups
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	7002000; 7003000/7003000

Power access

- EPR codes two indigenous groups in Mexico: the Mayans and an umbrella "Other Indigenous Groups". According to EPR, both the Maya and the other indigenous groups were discriminated against before 1974 and powerless thereafter because there were some improvements from the

mid-1970s including the recognition of the right to vote for illiterate people. [1973-1974: discriminated; 1975-2020: powerless]

Group size

- We draw data from EPR. Between 1973 and 1987, the group size refers to all indigenous groups in Mexico minus the Zapotecs (0.6%), as the latter established their own movement in 1973; and from 1988 onwards to all indigenous groups minus the Zapotecs and the Mayas (0.7%) as the latter have had their own movement since 1987. [1973-1987: 0.143; 1988-2020: 0.136]

Regional concentration

- This group consists of many individual indigenous groups in different parts of Mexico. The criteria for regional concentration are not met (MAR). [not regionally concentrated]

Kin

- One of the largest groups associated with this umbrella indigenous group are the Nahua, and the Nahua-Pipil make up a majority of El Salvador's 600,000-strong indigenous population (Minority Rights Group International). The Mayas, who are listed under this umbrella movement until they developed their own movement in 1987, also have numerically significant in three adjoining countries (Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador). It is possible that other, smaller groups associated with this movement also have numerically significant transborder kin, but this was not checked. [kin in neighboring country]

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Zapotecs

Activity: 1973-2020

General notes

- The Zapotecs are a people indigenous to region that is currently Oaxaca, Mexico. They are also known as the Sapotekos, Be'ena'a, Dii'zh, and Didxaza. Altogether, there are around 600,000 Zapotecs in Mexico, and they speak 54 Zapotecan dialects (Minahan, 2002: 2091). However, many do not speak Spanish and thus face language discrimination in society. Today, the Zapotecs live in the mountainous Tlacolula, Zimatlan, and Etla valleys, where they continue to live according to agricultural lifestyles. Their traditional cultures have been mixed with Spanish and Mexican cultures as well as dictated by their regional geography and local economy (Minahan, 2002: 2092; Cultural Survival, 1987). Therefore, the Zapotecs have abandoned traditional crops and subsistence agriculture for cash crops like coffee. The Zapotecs have also mixed their indigenous religions with Roman Catholicism. The Mexican Zapotecs are spread across several regions of Mexico where they claim rights to indigenous lands used for their agricultural lifestyles. According to Amnesty International, the Zapotecs have "suffered human rights violations in the context of unresolved land conflicts involving indigenous communities, ejidos and powerful private landowners, otherwise known as caciques or "local bosses" (Amnesty International, 1992: 1).

Movement start and end dates

- Protests have arisen between Zapotec organizations such as the Grupo de Trabajo Comun Organizado (TCO) and local landowners over the seizure of land that the Zapotecs consider to be part of their rightful ancestral land. According to the TCO, which protested about the land in La Trinidad Yaveo, the Zapotec ancestral land totaled 57,000 hectares, but land seizures and invasions have whittled this down to 3,600 hectares (Amnesty International, 1992: 2).
- Other Zapotec organizations, such as the Worker-Peasant-Student Coalition of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (COCEI) have lobbied for regional autonomy and the right to self-government, in light of environmental and human rights abuses resulting from oil industry pollution and paramilitary violence on their lands. In 1980, COCEI won municipal elections and became the first leftist opposition group to the governing party PRI. Ristow notes, "Observers of the COCEI's resuscitation of indigenous culture, history, and politics were inspired by this 'Zapotec Renaissance' – the hallmark of the COCEI success" (Ristow, 2008: 43).
- The start date of the movement is coded as 1973 when COCEI was first founded to fight for indigenous rights.
- COCEI remained active as of 2020 and frequently mobilizes in defense of Zapotec self-determination and land rights (McCaughan, 2012; MAR; Ristow, 2008; Rodríguez, 2019; Chaca, 2020). Other, smaller Zapotec self-determination groups including the Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Rights (CODEDI) also remained active as of 2020 (Castillo, 2020) [start date: 1973; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- According to MAR, indigenous demands include "regional autonomy and self-determination for indigenous communities". The same demands are also listed for the Zapotecs. Minority Rights Group International confirms this and mentions the "creation of pluri-ethnic autonomous regions in areas of significant indigenous population" as an important goal of the indigenous communities. Zapotec groups such as the Worker-Peasant-Student Coalition of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (COCEI) and the Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Rights (CODEDI) are

still actively demanding autonomy and land rights, hence the claim for autonomy is coded until 2020. [1973-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- We were unable to find a precise definition of the territory to which the Zapotecs' claims are tied. The best information we could find is a statement by the Grupo de Trabajo Comun Organizado (TCO), which holds that "of the 57,000 hectares originally belonging to the community - documented in the ancestral land tenancy titles - after numerous land invasions, only 3,600 hectares remain" (Amnesty International, 1992). However, it is unclear whether the group still claims the entire territory once held by Zapotecs or whether claims are limited to areas that currently belong to them. We therefore flag this claim as ambiguous and code it based on the group's ethnic settlement area as indicated by the GREG dataset (Weidmann et al., 2010), which offers the best available approximation in this case. This area also matches a description of the Zapotec homeland territory found in Minahan (2002: 2091).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- In 1911 and 1931, Zapotecs rose in rebellion against the state but were crushed. Subsequent protests resulting from land disputes have been reported – notably, in 1983, COCEI led mass protests after it was impeached and removed from office by the Mexican government. MAR codes a rebellion score of three in 1980-1984, possibly in relation to the 1983 protests. However, the MAR coding notes do not point to any violence and we found no evidence for significant violence in Lexis Nexis, either.
- There were several episodes of violence involving Zapotecs in the 2010s including the killing of five COCEI members in 2016 over land disputes (Regeneración, 2016). However, we found no evidence that the 25-deaths threshold is met and the violence also appears one-sided, i.e., we found no indication that the violence committed against indigenous people was reciprocated. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- According to Minahan (2016: 473), the Zapotecs were an advanced civilization that flourished between the 6th and 15th centuries. The Zapotecs initially surrendered to Spanish conquerors without a fight in the early 16th century, but the ensuing subjugation led to a large-scale Zapotec rebellion in 1531. Zapotecs were then prosecuted and their socio-political structure dismantled. A series of epidemics between the late 16th century and the 19th century decimated the population,

and the remaining Zapotecs withdrew to isolated territories in south-central Mexico, where they were never fully colonized (Minahan, 2016: 474).

- MAR reports two Zapotec pro-autonomy rebellions in 1911 and 1931, both of which were crushed by the Mexican government.
- A series agrarian reforms privatized indigenous lands during the 1940s, subjecting indigenous populations across Mexico, including Zapotecs, to territorial losses and the displacement of entire communities to isolated and largely infertile areas (MAR). As a result, thousands of Zapotecs migrated until the 1970s, with most migrants settling in urban centres in Mexico but a significant number emigrating to the United States (Minahan, 2016: 474).
- Between 1960 and 1973, the construction of the Benito Juárez dam and the project for the Salina Cruz oil refinery brought investment and development to Oaxaca. Land prices rose during this period and indigenous land was privatized, causing the loss of ancestral land for Zapotecs (MAR). Since this was a gradual process, we code an autonomy restriction in 1965. [1965: autonomy restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- In 1974, the Mexican government seized ancestral Zapotec land around the town of Alvaro Obregon for privatization, causing the displacement of a number of Zapotec communities. After sustained COCEI mobilization protesting the takeover of these indigenous territories, the government awarded the Zapotecs 1,000 hectares of land, giving the displaced Zapotecs a chance to return (Campbell, 1993). [1974: autonomy restriction] [1974: autonomy concession]
- The Mexican Constitution was redrafted in 1991. The new Constitution recognized that “Mexico is a multicultural nation based originally upon its indigenous peoples”, and promised the promotion and development of indigenous culture and an end to assimilationist policies (Peña 2006: 287). However, Peña (2006: 288) and Minority Rights Group International suggest that the constitutional change was largely rhetorical and did not fundamentally improve the position, rights or autonomy of indigenous people. We therefore do not code this as a concession.
- In 1992, the Mexican government signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). According to Minority Rights Group International and MAR, the implementation of NAFTA has exacerbated the privatization and exploitation of indigenous territories, which has eroded the rights of indigenous people across Mexico to communal lands and contributed to their displacement to Mexico’s urban centres. NAFTA was ratified by the Mexican Senate in late 1993, which we use as the date for this restriction. [1993: autonomy restriction]
- In 1995, the Constitution of Oaxaca was reformed to recognize *usos y costumbres* (traditions and customs), “a complex and unique mixture of traditional practices where local authorities are selected in assembly elections according to indigenous practices instead of regular multiparty elections” (Magaloni et al., 2019: 1846). We code the recognition of this right to political self-determination as an autonomy concession for Zapotecs. [1995: autonomy concession]
- In direct opposition to the signature and implementation of NAFTA, the National Zapatista Liberation Army (EZLN or Zapatistas) staged an armed rebellion in the largely indigenous Chiapas region. The rebellion came to an end in 1996, when the government and the rebels signed the San Andrés Accords. In it, the government pledged to grant indigenous people land rights and autonomy, including control over natural resources, economic rights and the election of their leaders (MAR). However, multiple sources confirm that no steps were taken for the implementation of the agreement (MAR; Minority Rights Group International; López, 1999) and we therefore do not code a concession here in line with the codebook until 2001 when, after years of halting the agreements, the government finally enacted an indigenous rights law based on the San Andrés Accords. According to MAR, the 2001 legislation contained numerous protections of indigenous rights and territorial autonomy, so we code an autonomy concession. It should be noted that although the bill brought some improvements compared to the 1991 constitution, it was strongly rejected by the EZLN and other indigenous rights groups, who protested its enactment because it failed to meet their central demands and because it revoked many of the concessions agreed upon in 1996 (Hernández, 2002; Peña, 2006: 291). Indeed, the 2001 law went significantly below the 1996 promises, ignoring the agreed terms on indigenous autonomy, the

right to territory, access to natural resources, and the election of municipal authorities (Minority Rights Group International). [2001: autonomy concession]

- Until 2002, Zapotecs faced language discrimination in the Mexican judicial system, since proceedings were only carried out in Spanish and the state provided no interpreters for non-Spanish speakers (note that many Zapotecs do not speak Spanish). In December 2002, a law was passed to guarantee that indigenous language speakers would have bilingual interpreters in all judicial processes. According to MAR, this law significantly reduced language barriers in the relationship between the state and non-Spanish-speaking Zapotecs. [2002: cultural rights concession]
- According to MRGI, in 2017 the United Nations “drew particular attention to the situation of indigenous land and environmental activists in the context of extractive, energy and infrastructure megaprojects, calling them ‘one of the most criminalized groups of defenders, facing most court proceedings and arbitrary detentions in Mexico’ and expressing dismay at ‘the number of on-going conflicts that are the direct consequences of the lack or misuse of consultations processes with indigenous communities’”. A particularly significant example has been the San José mining project, which initiated silver exploitation in 2011 in Zapotec territory in the Valles Centrales region of Oaxaca. Since then, Zapotec communities have reported water pollution as a result of the project and a substantial increase in diseases and deaths, which have in turn also led forced displacement (Recamier and Moreno, 2021; Aristegui, 2022). We code a restriction in 2011, the year the San José mining project began operating. [2011: autonomy restriction]
- In 2019, the Mexican government approved plans to develop the *Trans-Isthmus Corridor*, a large-scale infrastructural project aimed at increasing the transportation of merchandise between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Isthmus of Tehantepec. The government claimed that it carried out an indigenous consultation process for the project, receiving 90% approval for the corridor’s development (Sipaz, 2020). The project directly affects a large amount of Zapotec communities in Oaxaca. (Sipaz, 2020). Numerous indigenous communities and organizations suggested that the consultation did not meet international standards as the information provided about the project was “vague and general” and as the process did not include thousands of directly affected individuals (Sipaz, 2020). As of the time of writing the impact on indigenous communities remained unclear, though it should be noted that several indigenous communities claimed that the corridor will cause thousands of indigenous to be displaced and widespread environmental damage in indigenous land.

Regional autonomy

- Although the Mexican constitution recognizes the right for indigenous people to exercise regional autonomy in their territories, sources report that the government has not taken meaningful steps to implement this constitutional provision (López Bárcenas, 2019; Aparicio, 2008; Ruíz, 2020; América Economía, 2020). According to Aparicio (2008: 13), the communities that have gained some degree of autonomy have done so by means of “collective civil disobedience”. Valdivia (2013: 191) confirms that Zapotec communities “cannot fully exercise their self-determination or autonomy”. [no autonomy]

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Zapotecs
<i>Scenario</i>	n:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Other indigenous groups
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	7003000

Power access

- EPR codes two indigenous groups in Mexico: the Mayas and an umbrella “Other Indigenous Groups”. Therefore, the Zapotecs form part of EPR’s “Other Indigenous Groups”. According to EPR, the other indigenous groups (including the Zapotecs) were discriminated against in 1973-74 and powerless thereafter because there were some improvements from the mid-1970s including the recognition of the right to vote for illiterate people. [1973-1974: discriminated; 1975-2020: powerless]

Group size

- According to Minahan (2002: 2091), there were ca 605,000 Zapotecs in Mexico in 2002. This compares to a total country population of 102 mio according to the World Bank. [0.006]

Regional concentration

- According to Serrano (2002: 74), Zapotecs are largely concentrated in the eastern and southern districts of Oaxaca, where four basic regional settlements exist: the *istmeños*, who live in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec; the *serranos*, who inhabit the northern mountains of the Sierra Norte; the southern Zapotecs, who live in the mountains of the Sierra Madre del Sur; and the Central Valley Zapotecs, who live in and around the Valley of Oaxaca. He also notes the presence of Zapotec communities in neighbouring states, such as Veracruz and Chiapas, as well as a significant number in Mexico City and the United States, although he does not offer concrete figures of Zapotec settlements outside Oaxaca. MAR codes spatial concentration but notes that the Zapotecs do not have a single, spatially contiguous regional base. A number of sources (Acosta, 2007; Shmal, 2006; Inegi, 2020) confirm that Zapotecs make up just over 30% of the total population of Oaxaca, and therefore do not fulfill our criteria for regional concentration. [no regional concentration]

Kin

- We found no evidence for transborder ethnic kin with a population of >100k. [no kin]

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