Tlatelolco Massacre: Catalytic Event in Mexico's Democratization or a Realized *Possibility for the Birth of a New World.*

Dale Story
Professor, Political Science
University of Texas at Arlington
story@uta.edu

2012 Annual Meeting of the Southwest Conference of Latin American Studies
Miami, Florida
March 8-10, 2012

Tlatelolco 1968: *a moment of unrealized possibility for the birth of a new world*.
Samuel Steinberg, 2011.

Between October 12 and 27, 1968 Mexico hosted the first Summer Olympics ever staged in a Third World country. The attention of the world was turned toward Mexico that fall. On one side, the government (dominated by the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, or PRI, for the better part of the 20th Century) wanted to utilize the Olympics as a showcase for the development and modernization of Mexico. The government had invested the equivalent of some 8 billion US dollars today in preparation for the Olympics. On the other hand, opponents of the hegemonic party wanted to demonstrate to the world the repression of political and economic systems dominated by an elite and authoritarian regime. The protests, beginning in the summer of 1968, culminated in a large demonstration at the Tlatelolco housing complex in northern Mexico City. The area is also a Metro stop on Line 3 of the Mexico City Metro System—and more popularly known as the Plaza of Three Cultures, where one can experience the three major cultures of Mexico in the same location. Tourists can view visions of pre-Colonial, Colonial, and post-Colonial in the same spot. The plaza includes remains of Aztec temples, the Colonial period Santiago de Tlatelolco Church, and a large housing complex built in 1964 (and the building that once housed the Mexican Foreign Ministry).

On the evening of Wednesday, October 2, 1968, some 10,000 demonstrators gathered in the Plaza to listen to speeches delivered from the balconies of the housing complex. Clearly the government felt that their efforts to publicize a modern and peaceful Mexico were threatened by the continuation of these protests. And that they could no longer tolerate these disruptions some 10 days before the beginning of the Olympic Games. The conclusion of the PRI leaders (President Gustavo Diaz Ordaz and Interior Minister and future President Luis Echeverria) was

that the dissenters must be repressed so as not to tarnish the images presented to the world during the Games. At sunset police and military forces (with armored cars, tanks, and helicopters) surrounded the square and began firing into the crowd. Estimates of the number of protestors killed range from the 40s to the thousands. Thousands more were arrested and some were detained for years.

This paper is an effort to examine the impact of the events before and on October 2, 1968 in terms of their role in the democratization process in Mexico. Granted, the status of Mexico as an authoritarian regime immediately was altered when Vicente Fox of the opposition National Action Party (PAN) was elected President in 2000. How could an event 32 years earlier have impacted the presidential transition and the "official" onset of democracy? First, we need to recognize the evolutionary process at work in the democratization of Mexico.

Democratization as Process

On July 2, 2000, Vicente Fox Quesada was elected President of Mexico for the next six year term (*sexenio*). The obvious significance of this event was that Fox was the first president elected from an opposition party since Francisco I. Madero in 1910. Fox was the candidate of the National Action Party, which some have argued had links in its early years to the Madero movement (Von Sauer, 1974, pp. 15, 45-60). The irony of replicating Francisco Madero's election in the PAN's 2000 victory was further fore-shadowed by the Panista nominee in 1983, Pablo Emilio Madero, who was a nephew of Francisco. Furthermore, Fox was also the first candidate to defeat the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) since the inception of the hegemonic party (some 71 years earlier).

Needless to say, this election was the most significant event in Mexican history since the Revolution of 1910-1920. In the eyes of many, Mexico had made the shift from an authoritarian

regime to a democratic government almost overnight. The human rights organization Freedom House classifies all countries as to whether or not they are electoral democracies. Mexico had always been classified as not being an electoral democracy—until 2000. Freedom House promptly re-classified Mexico as an electoral democracy after the election of Fox as president. In this perspective, the 2000 election was a "perfect storm" that brought democracy finally to Mexico.

Obviously, the history of Mexico's rebirth as a democracy is not as simple as the election of one president. A variety of issues deserve considerably more examination. First, the question of precursors to the 2000 election is critical. While the defeat of the PRI in the presidential contest marked an enormous qualitative shift, other important events preceded the Fox victory and established critical precedents. Essentially, throughout the 20th Century, Mexico could be variously described as a benign authoritarian regime, a hegemonic state, or a one-party political system. Plutarco Calles created as the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) in 1929 in an effort to consolidate and stabilize the central government. From its inception, the PNR was envisioned as a dominant institution—almost an official, government party. In the words of Emilio Portes Gil, party President at that time (Rodriguez Araujo, 1983, pp. 29-30):

The PNR is frankly a government party… The Government has the program of the Revolution; the party has the program of the Revolution and of the Government… The Party will be a sincere collaborator of the administration… This is the mission of the PNR and for this I say that the PNR is a government party.

The PNR was re-constituted as the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM) in 1938 by Lazaro Cardenas as it established its corporatist base in the interest group system. And in 1946, President Manuel Avila Camacho officially recognized the moderation and "institutionalization"

of the party by changing its name again—to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Essentially, these three reincarnations are the same party. And for the sake of simplicity, this paper will simply refer to the party as the PRI. Beginning with the first presidential election under the new system in 1929 through the Fox ascendancy in 2000, the PRI won every presidency by significant (sometimes overwhelming) margins—as well as the vast majority of federal, congressional seats and even state and local political posts. Table 1 summarizes the presidential vote by party since that first election in 1929. The PRI total vote averaged over 87 percent between 1929 and 1976. No formal opposition party even contested presidential elections prior to 1952. The non-PRI votes in 1946 and 1952 were independent candidates whose movements did not last longer than those particular elections.

Table 1
Presidential Vote, by Party Percentages

	PRI*	PAN	PRD**	other
1929	94	--	--	6
1934	98	--	--	2
1940	94	--	--	6
1946	78	--	--	22
1952	74	8	2	16
1958	90	9	--	1
1964	88	11	1	--
1970	83	14	1	2
1976	87	--	4	9
1982	68	16	11	5
1988	50	17	31	2
1994	49	26	17	8
2000	36	42	17	5
2006	22	36	35	7

* And its successors (National Revolutionary Party and the Party of the Mexican Revolution)
** And its various successors on the left
Source: Story, 1986, p. 52.

With the exception of 1976 (when the PAN, for the first time, failed to field a candidate due to internal divisions), Mexican presidential elections have become steadily more competitive since the 1970 contest between Echeverria of the PRI and the Panista candidate, Efraín González Morfín. While Echeverria's margin of victory was still huge, it had shrunk by some 8 percentage points from the election of Diaz Ordas in 1964.

In a noticeable effort to mollify those who blamed Echeverria as much as Diaz Ordaz for the atrocities of 1968, Echeverria made a very significant shift to the left with numerous populist policies. During his campaign for the presidency, Echeverría even called for a moment of silence in remembrance of the victims of the Tlatelolco massacre. Allegedly, President Díaz Ordaz was so angry that he considered removing Echeverria from his cabinet post. Among his many nationalist and populist policies, Echeverria nationalized the mining and electrical industries; initiated laws restricting foreign investment, patents, and trademarks; redistribute private land in the states of Sinaloa and Sonora when peasants occupied the plots on which they worked; supported the socialist Salvador Allende who was elected President of Chile in 1970; and condemned Zionism while favoring the Palestine Liberation (which led to his conflicts with the well-respected newspaper *Excelsior*). Many suggested that Echeverria was trying to achieve status as a modern version of the popular President in the 1930s, Lazaro Cardenas. Echeverria even envisaged a possible election to the post of UN General Secretary after his term ended. He based these hopes on his identification with nationalism and anti-imperialism in the Third World. Echeverria's efforts at economic and political reform may have been self-serving, but they were also a clear response to overcome his image as a conservative and authoritarian leader, principally due to the Massacre in the Tlatelolco Plaza in 1968.

The margin for the PRI continued to shrink with the election of 1982. And the events prior to and during the election of 1988 critically accelerated the move to a more pluralist and politically competitive Mexico. Essentially, the left-wing of the PRI grew tired of the process of the incumbent president unilaterally choosing their successor (hence the phrases: *dedocracy* and *tapado* both alluding to the concept of the incumbent "tapping" the next president). The leftists clamored for a more open and competitive primary within the party to select the PRI's nominee. However, the Party's establishment responded with a highly cynical effort of having staging breakfast talks for several possible candidates—arguing that they had allowed for open debates. But in the final analysis, President Miguel de la Madrid choose his Budget Secretary, the technocratic Carlos Salinas. The left was outraged, and split from the PRI to form what eventually became the leftist opposition party, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). That party promptly choose the former governor of the state of Michoacan and son of revered President Lazaro Cardenas—Cuauhtemoc Cardenas—as their standard-bearer. The official results showed Echeverria with a mere 50.7% of the vote (lowest by far ever achieved by the PRI) and Cardenas with 31.1%. Still the Cardenistas declared fraud (buttressed by delays in the vote-counting process). Former President de la Madrid even admitted later that the presidential elections of 1988 were rigged. (New York Times, March 24, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/09/world/ex-president-in-mexico-casts-new-light-on-rigged-1988-election.html). Yet, Salinas publicly declared Mexico as a "pluralist state—no longer a one-party state;" and the PAN won the opposition's first elected gubernatorial post when Ernesto Ruffo was victorious in Baja California

The 1994 elections were the first to have international observers, and were considered, at that time, the fairest elections in the century. The vote for the PRI candidate, Ernesto Zedillo, even fell below the 50% of Salinas, but the PRD (Cardenas, again) dropped almost half their vote

(down to 16.6%). In a precursor to 2000, the resurgent PAN became the major opposition party again with 25.2% of the vote for their candidate, Diego Fernandez.

Not surprisingly, the election was held against a background of a series of significant events. First, the long-debated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect on January 1, 1994. Discussions had begun when Salinas ushered Mexico into the era of trade liberalization with the entry of Mexico into the free trade-oriented General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, see Story, 1982). Purposefully, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN or the Zapatistas) actually declared on war on the Mexican government on that day. Centered among the indigenous populations of southern Mexico (particularly the state of Chiapas), the Zapatistas focused their opposition on domestic treatment of Indians as second-class citizens, the turn toward neo-liberalism in general, and more specifically the requirement by NAFTA to revoke Article 27, Section VIII of the Mexican Constitution. This Article had been a principal cornerstone for protection of land rights for indigenous people (http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mexico/1917-Constitution.htm).

Finally, the initial PRI candidate for the Presidency, Donald Colosio, was assassinated during a campaign stop in Tijuana in March of 1994. Colosio had worked in the Ministry of Planning and Budgets with Salinas. He had also been elected to both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate; and he served as the campaign manager for Salinas' presidential election. With this varied background, Colosio was perceived by some as being able to bridge the PRI's divisions between the technocratic and *politico* wings. The murder of Colosio was a very volatile event, particularly with alleged implications of several previous and present PRI leaders. Conspiracy theorists even raised accusations against such disparate actors and the Tijuana drug lords, Manual Camacho (a PRI rival), and even President Salinas. To compound the turmoil of

1994, Salinas' brother-in-law, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, president of the PRI was also murdered in September a block from the main thoroughfare in Mexico City, the Paseo de la Reforma. All these events served to weaken the PRI even further, and to prompt the PRI to move further in the direction of political reform.

A series of electoral reforms in the 1990s provided more transparency in elections and more equitable treatment of all parties. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), which had been under the control of the PRI, was reformed to create an unprecedented degree of independence for the organization that exercised oversight for all elections in Mexico. The formula for electing representatives in the Chamber of Deputies became more proportional, such that the various parties were more accurately represented according to their percent of the vote. All parties were granted fairer access to public funding and to the broadcast media (Joseph Klesner, 1997, Kenyon College, *The End of Mexico's One-Party Regime*, http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/PSci/Fac/klesner/apsa97_Table1.htm).

After the death of Colosio, Salinas selected Ernesto Zedillo as the PRI candidate in the 1994 presidential election. Zedillo had been the campaign director for Colosio, and hence was one of the few PRI leaders eligible to run for the presidency. The Mexican Constitution requires that no presidential candidate may hold public office for six months prior to the presidential election. This eliminated the most likely candidates from the current cabinet. But Zedillo had resigned his cabinet post (Education). As noted above, the vote total for Zedillo fell below 50% for the first time. Yet, Zedillo did win the presidency with a plurality of the votes (the PAN was second, almost 25 percentage points). Some analysts credit the faith in the PRI and in Zedillo to stabilize a highly explosive situation. Zedillo was responsible for the greatest of the political and electoral reforms. At least in part as a result of these reforms, the PRI lost their majority in the

Chamber of Deputies for the first time in 1997. The PRI won 239 of the 500 deputies (decrease of 71 deputies) , with the PAN and PRD in a very loose coalition held 246 (with the remaining deputies from very minor parties). Zedillo was forced to govern in the environment of a divided government. Also, Cardenas won the new post of "Head of Government" of the Federal District (essentially Mexico City) in 1997. And both the PAN and the leftist PRD won several gubernatorial and municipal elections between 1995 and 2000. The PRI was clearly becoming more vulnerable.

To stem the tide of discontent, in 1999 President Zedillo announced probably the most radical change in the history of the PRI. He declared that he was terminating the process of the *tapado* (the incumbent unilaterally selecting their successor—or at least the PRI nominee). The candidate from the PRI would be elected in a national primary, scheduled for November 7, 1999. Francisco Labastida won the primary. He had served as a governor of Sinaloa as well as a Deputy in the lower house. He had also held three different cabinet posts under Presidents de la Madrid and Zedillo. However, he faced a difficult election in that the PRI had been steadily losing popularity and had been stubborn in its rejection of political and electoral changes. As Wayne Cornelius (2000) has argued: "Demographic trends have finally caught up with the PRI" (Cornelius, Wayne A. "The New Mexico: Fox's Victory will Lead to a Change--and a Disintegrating PRI," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 16). More simply, the PRI had always assumed it would be a permanent party in power, and was not prepared for the electoral challenges facing the formerly hegemonic party in the latter part of the 20th Century (beginning with the reactions to the Tlatelolco Massacre in 1968).

Contrary to the obstacles facing Labastida in the 2000 election, Vicente Fox (candidate of the PAN) enjoyed several advantages. First, he was the leading "anti-PRI" candidate, and

sentiment against the PRI was growing. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas again represented the PRD, but his stature had diminished considerably since 1988. Fox had considerable political experience, as one of the first PAN governors and a former Deputy in the national legislature. He possessed a unique charisma and "cowboy" style (preferring boots and jeans to suits). And his stature was also reflected in his height. At 6"5" he is among the tallest presidents of Mexico. Incumbent President Zedillo accomplished another unprecedented action when he recognized the Fox victory before midnight on election day (Sunday, July 2, 2000). As one contrast, the 1988 election results were delayed a week, leading most commentators to conclude that the PRI was engaged in fraud. The delay became known by the pejorative phrase, *se cayó el sistema*, or "the system crashed."

Student Protests of 1968

The evening of October 3, 1968 was certainly the watershed moment in the student protests in Mexico. But the massacre occurred in the context of other historical trends and was the tragic conclusion of a series of student movements in Mexico. Clearly 1967 and especially 1968 were replete with international movements of protest and opposition to a variety of issues: economic and political repression, perceived unjust wars, and discrimination. In the United States, the 1967 Summer of Love marked a clear escalation of the counter-culture movement and anti-war protests. The first massive demonstration against the War in Vietnam saw 100,000 gather in the National Mall. In 1968 Robert Kennedy coalesced the hopes of the protestors for an end to the war. And his assassination in June both saddened and catalyzed the movement. Opponents to the Vietnam War gathered in the thousands in Chicago in August to protest against the War. The police crackdown ordered by Mayor Richard Daley was later described by a national commission as a "police riot." Protests were even seen inside the Olympics track venue.

U.S. athletes Tommie Smith and Juan Carlos were first and third, respectively, in the 200 meter race. At the medal ceremony (and playing of the *Star Spangled Banner*), Smith and Carlos each raised one hand in the "black power salute." This event was probably the most overtly political statement in modern Olympic history. The other medalist, Australian Peter Norman, also expressed solidarity with Smith and Carlos.

Other protest events percolated across the world in 1968. In the *Prague Spring*, Czechoslovakia's first secretary Alexander Dubček began a period of reform, which gave rise to civil protest, which was crushed by the USSR invasion in August. The University of Madrid was closed for over a month in student protests against the repressive regime of Franco. Protests were held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in the summer of 1968, and students at Belgrade University staged a week-long strike. In what became known as the Prague Spring, Czechoslovakia saw a period of reform lead to outright civil protest, which was repressed by the Soviet invasion in August. The French May protests began with student demands for university reform and escalated into a month long protest, with the labor unions joining the students with a general strike. On March 8, 1968 Poland was rocked students demonstrating for civil rights—only to be repressed with police violence.

South America also saw demonstrations and uprising against the military regimes of the 1960s. On March 28, 1968 the Military Police of Brazil killed a high school at a protest for cheaper meals for low-income students. The response to his death generated one of the first major protests against the military dictatorship. And roughly a year later, students and workers joined in a civil uprising in the interior city of Cordoba, Argentina. Known as the *Cordobazo*, the protestors organized a general strike which was met with severe police repression. This event is often viewed as the major catalyst to the exiting of the military regime in 1973.

The Student Movement in 1968 Mexico

On the 22 of July 1968, a football game between two schools ended in a fight. Riot police stopped the disturbance and held a few students within the school's facilities. In repudiation to this police act or repression, a number of academic institutes went on strike, the army responded by going into their campuses; outstanding among the most notable for the force employed during that confrontation, the army utilized a bazooka to destroy a door from the XVII century of the National Preparatory School in San Ildefonso (now a Museum). Some students were killed in the blast. The student movement of 1968 was essentially born in the following four days, culminating in a series of events on Friday, July 26. In further protests against the brutality of the riot police, the National Federation of Technical Students began a march shouting "Riot police are the shame of Mexico." Around 8pm, the riot police were sent to end the march. Students took refuge in Preparatory1 and Preparatory 2 (the National School has 9 campuses in Mexico City)—and also seized almost a dozen buses, some of which were burned. By the end of the evening, reports from the school said five students were killed, 500 were wounded, and another 200 were detained. On August 1, Rector Barros Sierra of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM—the largest university in Mexico, with an enrollment over 300,000 today) led 50,000 students in a widely lauded, peaceful protest against the repressive policies of the government. The National Strike Council (CNH) was organized to coordinate protests against the Diaz Ordaz government. The CNH was a democratic delegation of students from 70 universities and preparatory schools in Mexico. Some two weeks later on August 13, a crowd estimated at upwards of 200,000 massed in the streets to march in protest to the government. And August 27 and 28 marked another major escalation in the conflict between the Diaz Ordaz government and the students.

About 5pm on August 27 a massive march began at the National Museum of Anthropology in Chapultepec Park. The U.S. Embassy estimated the crowd at 100,000, while participants claimed numbers upwards of 600,000. The crowd chanted for democracy and justice and against Diaz Ordaz (comparing him to Hitler). The students remove barriers and disperse into organized groups. Shortly after midnight, the Army enters the camps set up by the protesting students. The conflicts between the students and the military increase, as students commandeer a bus allegedly to crash into a building housing the Banco de Mexico. Army troops remove 70 students from the bus. Some spokespersons for the security forces claim that the students illegally invaded the National Cathedral. The students claim that the clerical leaders at the Cathedral gave them permission to ring the bells.

The demonstrations renewed the morning of August 28. Different groups of students congregate in Mexico City and continue the protests against the police—constantly calling them "Assassins." The Zocalo in Mexico City (Plaza of the Constitution) saw the largest gathering of close to 7000 people. In the early-afternoon, tanks and other armored vehicles enter the Zocalo to disperse the crowd. Shots, Molotov cocktails, stones, bottles, and epithets are traded between the police and the students for yours. Though the Zocalo was vacant by 5pm, students (with some support from the neighborhoods) continue to engage in "street fighting" with the security forces in areas surrounding the Zocalo. The government even ordered helicopters to the area to survey the area for groups of protestors. By the end of the day on August 28, reports of dozens of students injured (some critically) by police shots and beatings are circulated within the media. Some have said that the events over these two days were the motivation for President Diaz Ordaz to conclude that force must be used to control the growing opposition.

Students at UNAM, particularly the leaders of the CNH, continued to organized protests throughout September. Determined to put a stop to the increasing protests, Diaz Ordaz ordered the army to invade and occupy the UNAM campus. Students were beaten and arrested. Two elite units were at the center of the force employed by the government: the Olympic Battalion (created to maintain domestic peace during the Olympics) and the Presidential Guard (directly subordinate to the President). In protest to the campus seizure, Rector Javier Barros Sierra resigned on September 23. Diaz Ordaz was hoping the UNAM takeover would eliminate the base of operations for the students. The government's forces did not leave the UNAM campus until October 1—one day before the massacre at Tlatelolco.

On the same day as the resignation of Barros Sierra, the government also invaded two campuses of the Polytechnic (or IPN, another extremely large academic institution with over 100,000 students enrolled from high school through graduate school). Learning from the occupation of UNAM, the Polytechnic students were prepared to resist the invasion of their school. The students resisted the rifles and bazookas of the military with their own Molotov cocktails. The fight continued for 12 hours, with some publications listing the number of deaths at 15. By the end of September, the government was more determined than ever to put an end to the student protests before the inauguration of the Summer Olympics on October 12.

During the afternoon and evening of October 2, a day after the army left the UNAM campus, thousands of persons gathered at Plaza de las Tres Culturas of Tlatelolco. 15,000 students from various universities had marched through the streets of Mexico City earlier in the day, carrying red carnations to protest the army's occupation of the university campus. By nightfall, 5,000 students and workers, many of them with spouses and children, had congregated for a peaceful protest of speeches outside the Chihuahua apartment building with its 24 floors

joining other apartment buildings in towering over the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco. Many residents would reportedly join the demonstration, along with the assembled students and workers. Two helicopters flew over the plaza, apparently keeping an eye-in-the-sky for the government. Just before 6pm red flares appeared from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations building in the same plaza. About twenty minutes later two more flares appeared from one of the helicopters (some would say this was the signal to the assembled military forces). Estimates of between 5,000 and 10,000 soldiers appeared (possibly one soldier for every demonstrator)—along with several hundred small tanks. Exactly what happened next is not entire clear. The government claims that the troops were fired upon first by student demonstrators in the upper levels of the apartment buildings. The opposition says government agents were staged to fire at the troops as a pretext for the government forces to begin the assault. Others say the government simply began firing indiscriminately at the crowd. The number of dead is even hotly disputed. Figures range from the official government count of 4 and estimates of some numbering 3,000 deaths. The most commonly-cited numbers are that 300-400 died, though only some 40 named individuals can be corroborated as having perished that night. Many more were detained that night and in the weeks following.

Despite the fuzziness of some of the events, Sergio Aguayo reports that some 100 foreign respondents were present to document the horror of the death and destruction committed by government forces against a (generally?) peaceful demonstration. *No government official involved realized there would be so many foreign eyes witnessing—the autocratic regime of Mexico was exposed.*

Empirical Evidence of the Impact of the Tlatelolco Massacre

Whether the data prove a direct relationship but there can be no doubt that the level of political competitiveness within the Mexican system began to increase after 1968. Opposition parties began steadily closing the gap with the PRI. The percentage of the national vote garnered by the PRI after the 1964 presidential election dropped somewhat consistently by at least 5% each *sexenio* until 1994. The exceptions being 1976 when the PAN was unable to field a candidate due to internal conflicts and 1994 when the PRI's vote declined only 1 percent as Zedillo was seen as the best choice to restore some stability. From 1994 to 2000, the PRI support dropped 13 percent, and another 14 percent to an unprecedented total of 22% of the national vote for the PRI in 2006. The pyramid of political power had been reversed by 2006, with the opposition parties on the right (PAN) and the left (PRD) assuming the dominant positions.

The individual presidential elections and *sexenios* also provide some supporting evidence of the aftermath of Tlatelolco, particularly that of Luis Echeverria. As noted, Echeverria was Secretary of the Interior under Diaz Ordaz and thus was responsible for domestic "internal affairs." The preponderance of domestic and international scholars who have examined the evidence have concluded that Echeverria was clearly implicated in the decisions that led to the force used at Tlatelolco in 1968. And more significantly, public opinion seemed to agree. Echeverria was even indicted in the summer of 2006 by a federal judge for the 1968 massacre (and apparently even for the so-called *Corpus Christi Massacre* of 1971). Yet, Echeverria's presidency was marked by a clear effort to cleanse his name and mollify the very leftist elements that were repressed in 1968. From land reform to nationalist policies to his *tercermundista* foreign policy, Echeverria was attempting to assuage the populist forces represented by the student opposition of 1968.

His successor, Jose Lopez Portillo, ended his term on an even more populist note. Though he had done much to please the business sectors early in his term, in 1982 Lopez Portillo nationalized the 49 domestic banks in Mexico—labeling them as *saca-dolares* (loosely, those who hoarded US dollars to invest abroad). Though successor presidents were not always so kind to the nationalist and populist sentiments of many in Mexico, they did initiate incremental reforms that furthered the level of competitiveness in the Mexican political system. The *Reforma Politica* in 1977 provided for the participation and legalization of more political parties. The 1986 changes in the electoral law increased proportional representation of all parties in the legislature. A new electoral code in 1990 enhanced opposition representation in the governing electoral body (the Federal Electoral Institute, or IFE). More reforms in 1993 furthered the transparency of Mexican elections; and 1996 changes increased the degree of competition for seats in the lower Chamber. These series of reforms led Joseph Klesner to conclude that "the government's repression of the student movement of 1968 that shattered the legitimacy of PRI rule and began the process of social pressure and government reaction that has marked Mexico's slow movement toward democracy." (Joseph Klesner, Electoral Reform in Mexico's Hegemonic Party System, http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/PSci/Fac/klesner/Electoral_Reform_in_Mexico.htm)

We can also find noticeable differences in various socio-economic indicators before and after 1968—though not necessarily in expected directions. Inflation actually increased after 1968, while economic growth slowed. These differences are most notable after 1980—obviously corresponding with the "end of the economic miracle" in Mexico. On the other hand, as modernity accelerated in Mexico, the measure of life expectancy has increased while population growth has decreased. (World Bank,

The United States and Tlatelolco

In some parallels to the military coups of the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, evidence has been discovered regarding U.S. complicity in all of these cases of repression of populist movements by an authoritarian state/military coalition. Much of this information is contained in Sergio Aguayo's book and the National Security Archives at George Washington University. The linkages between the U.S. government and the repression against the left in Mexico almost exclusively focus on the work of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The largest U.S. CIA contingent in Latin America at the time was in Mexico. The head of the CIA in Mexico, Winston Scott, was a good friend of Diaz Ordaz and several other Mexican presidents. In 1958 Scott initiated operation LITEMPO to promote the careers of potential Latin American collaborators, including Mexican Presidents Lopez Mateos, Diaz Ordaz, and Echeverria. Regarding the 1968 events at Tlatelolco, Scott assisted in the Mexican government's cover-up, insisting that the violence was instigated by the students and that only 8 students had been killed, while 6 soldiers lost their lives. The CIA had also been assisting the Diaz Ordaz government with daily intelligence reports regarding the activities of various leftist groups in Mexico. In his book on the CIA in Mexico and Winston Scott, Jefferson Morley emphasizes the coordination between the Mexican government's "story" and CIA reports, in terms of various events in Mexico (particularly Tlatelolco). *Our Man in Mexico: Winston Scott and the Hidden History of the CIA.* The agency is described as a "stenographer" for right-wing allies of the U.S. in Mexico.

U.S. foreign policy at the time in Mexico does parallel the general Cold War stance in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. In her book Dictatorships and Double Standards, Jeanne Kirkpatrick (U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under President Reagan) argues that a democratic U.S. should embrace dictatorships (such as the military governments in Argentina,

Brazil, and Chile, as well as the authoritarian regime in Mexico) so long as they stood with the U.S. in fighting communism.

The Fox Administration and Tlatelolco Investigations

The one-party regimes of the PRI never initiated any investigations, much less charges, regarding the Tlatelolco Massacres. However, when Vicente Fox acceded to power, he appointed a special prosecutor (Ignacio Carrillo Prieto) to investigate past acts of repression, crimes against humanity, and genocide. On July, 2004, Carrillo delivered 14 volumes of papers detailing the evidence of repression; and Carrillo requested the arrest of Echeverria in connection with the Corpus Christi Massacre. However, the federal judge denied the request on the basis of a 30-year statute of limitations. But Carrillo persisted. In July, 2005 he announced a new indictment—still including Echeverria but now focusing on the Tlatelolco Massacre. The prosecution's investigation cleared the military on the grounds of the Plaza that day, it did find the government (Diaz Ordaz who died in 1979, Echeverria, and other officials) guilty of posting snipers in surrounding buildings and ordering them to fire into the crowd—sparking the retaliatory violence of the military against the students. In a positive turn for Carrillo, the Supreme Court ruled that the 30-year Statute of Limitations had not expired (saying it started in 1976, when Echeverria left office). But he was still stymied when a lower court ruled that Carrillo lacked sufficient evidence of actual genocide.

Carrillo had hired a group of some 27 researchers to investigate the Mexican "Dirty War" (Tlatelolco, Corpus Christ, and other events of repression). Carrillo and President Fox received the report in December of 2005, but wanted changes. Fearing censorship, the researches their report, which appeared shortly on the web site of the National Security Archive at George Washington University.

(http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB209/index.htm#informe). Carrillo felt the report actually laid too much blame with the military and ignored some of the excesses of the students—and especially did not focus sufficiently on the civilian orders from above. The Special Prosecutor finally released the report in November of 2006—accusing the state of "crimes against humanity" under Presidents Diaz Ordaz, Echeverria, and Lopez Portillo—citing massacres, disappearances, torture, and genocide directed against the state's ideological perceived "enemies."

On June 30, 2006 (two days before the election of Felipe Calderon of the PAN as the next President), an appellate judge issued a warrant for the house arrest of Echeverria based on charges of genocide for the Tlatelolco Massacre. The judge ruled that evidence of genocide was sufficient for the charges and that the statute of limitations had not run out. But in the midst of the turmoil of a hotly contested presidential election (Calderon was declared the winner by less than one percent over the PRD candidate Lopez Obrador), another federal judge exonerated Echeverria, saying that the 30 year statute of limitations did apply. In March 2009, in the final ruling in the case, Echeverria was cleared of all charges and released from house arrest. [See Ronald Ecker, 2009, The Tlatelolco Massacre in Mexico, http://www.ronaldecker.com/massacre.htm]

The "Cultural" Impact of Tlatelolco

While the political implications of the Tlatelolco are certainly the primary issue here, the significance of those events is enhanced by appreciating its broad impact on society more generally in Mexico—particularly in terms of the culture of literature and the arts. Tlatelolco demonstrated the nexus between politics and the arts. Two renowned Mexican authors (and diplomats) best represent the influence of Tlatelolco on literature: Octavio Paz and Carlos

Fuentes. Paz was a writer, poet, and the winner of the 1990 Nobel Prize in Literature. He once wrote: "There can be no society without poetry, but society can never be realized as poetry, it is never poetic. Sometimes the two terms seek to break apart. They cannot." [Paz, Octavio. *"Signs in Rotation" (1967),* ***The Bow and the Lyre****, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), p. 249*] In 1968 Paz resigned from the diplomatic corps in protest over the government's actions at Tlatelolco. Octavio Paz on the events of 1968: "The deep meaning of the student movement without forgetting its immediate and contingent reasons or objectives—consists in having opposed the implacable specter of the future with the spontaneous reality of the now." [Octavio Paz, "The Other Mexico," in *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, trans. Lysander Kemp et al. (Jackson, TN: Grove Press, 1985), 213–326, quotation on 225.]

Carlos Fuentes was a prolific and one of the most respected living novelists in Latin America. His best-known work, The Death of Artemio Cruz, has been lauded as a major contribution to contemporary Latin American literature. He entered politics in 1965 as a diplomat, serving in London, Paris, and other capitals. He denounced the government's repression in 1968 and was exiled to Paris. He was even considered *persona non grata* in the United States. Yet, in an act of attrition by Echeverria for the President's role in the Massacre, Fuentes was appointed Mexico's Ambassador to France from 1974 to 1977. He actually resigned this post in 1977 in protest of former President Diaz Ordaz becoming Ambassador to Spain.

The lesser-known Paco Ignacio Taibo II is another Mexican author, intellectual, and a direct participant in the 1968 protests. While not as famous as Paz and Fuentes, Taibo is a prolific and award-winning writer. His biography of Che Guevara has sold over 500,000 copies; and his uniqueness as an author and activist have created a cult following. His book *68* (2004) is a moving story of the movement and repression of student protestors in 1968, particularly at the

Tlatelolco Massacre. A militant and veteran of the 1968 student movement in Mexico, his book *68* (2004), inspired by the events of that year and direct personal experience, tells the story of the movement including the Tlatelolco massacre of student protesters in Mexico City by government troops. In his 1991 memoir, he writes:

> *But then there are days when I see myself and don't recognize myself. Bad times, when the night prolongs a rainy day, when sleep won't come, and I wrestle vainly with the computer keyboard. I realize then that we seem doomed to be ghosts of '68. Well, what's so bad about that? I ask myself: better to be Draculas of resistance than PRI-ist monsters of Frankenstein. And then the keys produce graceless sparks, weak flares, memories that are sometimes painful but most of the time raise a slight smile; and I long for that old spirit of laughter; I mourn, growing fearful of the dark, for an intensity now lost, for that feeling of immortality, for that other me of that never-ending year*. [Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *'68,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1991; repr., 2004), 113]

A final note on the influence of Tlatelolco on the arts is the movie production of *Rojo amanecer* (*Red Dawn*) in 1989. This production was a low-budget and once-banned fictionalized reenactment of the massacre. Producer Jorge Fons' representation of the Massacre provides moving images, as it occurs entirely within the Chihuahua building during the night of October 2. It essentially documents the story of October 2 from the perspective of a fictionalized middle-class family living in the apartment complex. (Steinberg, 2011).

Conclusion

Was the election of Vincente Fox in 2000 a direct result of the events in the Plaza of Three Cultures in 1968? Obviously not. While there is no "smoking gun" linking Tlatelolco to the election of the first opposition President in almost a century, considerable circumstantial and corroborating evidence exists that demonstrate that Tlatelolco was a pivotal event in the slow process of democratization culminating in 2000. Rather than direct causes, we often speak of catalytic events. The Nicaraguan Revolution is an excellent example of such critical phenomena:

- The assassination of newspaper owner Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, undoubtedly by allies of Somoza;
- the seizure of the National Assembly in an essentially non-violent act in which the Sandinistas were treated as heroes; and
- the murder of an ABC news reporter by Somoza's National Guard—caught on video.

Not unlike Tlatelolco, one cannot demonstrate a direct linkage between these events and the success of the Sandinistas. However, they are viewed by many as significant (if not necessary) factors in the eventual ousting of Somoza.

The process of democratization in Mexico had similar catalyzing occurences:

- the earthquake of 1985, which prompted the exponential increase of community organization and participation;
- the split from the PRI of its left-wing in 1988, giving rise to the lowest support for the PRI to-date;
- NAFTA going to effect in 1994 (the argument that economic liberalization promotes political liberalization);
- the "declaration of war" by the Zapatistas on the same day as the onset of NAFTA; and even:
- the assassination of Colosio in that same year.

However, this paper has attempted to demonstrate the centrality of the Tlatelolco Massacre to all of these events—including its significance of being the first monumental exposure of the PRI and its one-party regime. To return to Steinberg's quote opening this paper: Tlatelolco was actually a realized *possibility for the birth of a new world.*