

Virginia Guedea, "The Process of Mexican Independence," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (Feb., 2000), pp. 116-130.

Thesis:

While we tend to view the process of Mexican independence as primarily a spontaneous militaristic struggle, Virginia Guedea argues instead that the movement towards independence was grounded in political struggles. The development of Juntas polarized independence-minded groups and loyalists in the New World, and the political struggles between and within these groups crippled the movement and ultimately forced Independence to be won with military means.

Supporting Argument 1: The Rise of Juntas

Juntas develop in Spain as regional groups in support of the Crown against the French. In the Americas this concept goes further; *juntas* become autonomous governing bodies that leads to conflicts between the creoles and the established peninsulares leads to a coup de' etat against the Spanish viceroy, polarizing American and European positions.

Supporting Argument 2: "Mal Gobierno"

Father Hidalgo's movement calling for both autonomy AND social reforms of land and working condition included the peasantry in the movement, while the Church also experienced divisions. These autonomous groups lacked a common front and devolved quickly into violence, provoking opposition from their supporters. The well-organized Colonial Government would quickly crush this unorganized movement, and a "Supreme Junta" would later fail as well.

Supporting Argument 3: A True Alternative

The Constitution of Cadiz established a new Supreme National American Congress and introduced governance at 3 levels - local, regional, and imperial. While elections were held and both Indigenous, Peninsular, and Creole populations were given the vote, the new constitutional government is ultimately suspended with the resurgence of a Spanish monarch. Despite the political movements, it would take a military junta to reinstitute the Constitution and gain independence.

Supporting Argument 4: Spanish Responses

Although the initial response by the crown was slow due to occupation with the French, colonial authorities eventually shut down elections and begin to pursue well-known autonomists and discovered conspiracies. Internal divisions also weakened the autonomist movement, and military defeat by the Spanish Crown would eventually collapse the insurgent movement. The return of the Spanish Monarch from French captivity would dissolve the Constitutional government.

Conclusion: While the movement towards autonomy in the Spanish colonies was won by military means, the movement itself was primarily political as it included new groups in the political discourse and was largely an ideological struggle between established Peninsulares who wished to remain with Spain and Creole Autonomists who wished to break away from it.