

The Rebirth of PRI & Party Realignment in Mexico: The Import of (Negative) Party Identification, 1996-2006*¹

Abstract:

This paper examines the ongoing political party system realignment in Mexico and the implications that negative party identification holds for electoral outcomes. In particular, the Congressional Elections are used as predictors of the direction of change for the 2012 General Election, in which the President and Senate were up for election. So, we examine the evolution of the post-reform party system through 2009, apply modeling based on individual party identification, party placement, electoral outcome, and state-level office holding to predict electoral results. This was used to project party consolidation and fragmentation for the 2009 Congressional and 2012 General Elections, in which we accurately estimated that PRI would be successful in 2012. For example, a resurgent Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) indicates the potential for a three-party system, yet the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) is riven by two ideologically distinct factions and faced the possibility of collapse. The National Action Party (PAN) struggled to capitalize on its holding of the Presidency, and five other parties seek to carve out electoral space in the evolving political environment. We argue that negative party identification is crucial to understanding electoral outcomes in a multiparty electoral system such as Mexico.

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→ Working Draft

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¹ Data still needs to be updated to include 2009 & 2012 elections.

I. Introduction

Few electoral transitions have been as surprising as the fall of the PRI in Mexico during the 2000 Presidential election. One that may rival this event is the rebirth of PRI in the 2012 Presidential election. The party that many had written off as effectively dead was able to reclaim the Presidency within the span of two election cycles. We develop the argument that *negative* party identification, particularly in a multi-party electoral system such as Mexico's, is a crucial and understudied element in explaining this rapid rebirth.

The PRI, or Institutional Revolutionary Party, had ruled as essentially a single-party dictatorship in Mexico for more than 70 years. Only after economic crisis in the 1980s and electoral reform in the 1990s has Mexico seen the emergence of a competitive electoral system. The system has become so dynamic that after the establishment of an independent electoral commission in 1996 (the IFE) as part of the ongoing electoral reforms, the PRI went from 71 years of one-party hegemonic rule to losing control of the Chamber of Deputies in 1997. This was followed by the loss of the presidential election in 2000 to the National Action Party's (PAN) Vicente Fox. This decline was more recently echoed in the 2006 presidential election where PRI came in a distant *third*, behind candidates from both the right-leaning PAN and the resurgent left, led by the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD).

This rapid change of fortune begs several questions, the most general of which is: What does the future hold for the PRI? Or more precisely, why isn't the PRI destined to play the role of 'third' party, or how was it able to reinvent itself and become resurgent? However, it should be recognized that in asking this question about the PRI specifically, we are really undertaking an examination of the Mexican electoral system as a whole. So our parallel course of inquiry is: what is the likely shape of the emerging 'modern' Mexican electorate? How does the broad electoral landscape interact with party position, favorable and unfavorable attitudes, to shape prospects for electoral success and failure?

From this, we then explore likely scenarios for upcoming elections, because the PRI was facing some significant identity challenges which reflect changes in party identification within the Mexican electorate. Traditionally presenting itself as a party of the left (*i.e.*, "revolutionary"), the PRI has ruled from the right, yet was recently ideologically outflanked by PAN. Further, there appears to be a significant divide between ideological placement of party leaders, or elites, and grass-roots party identifiers. This is further confounded by a relatively high *negative* party identification for the PRI among the electorate as a whole, in no small part as a result of their seven decades of hegemonic-party rule (*cf.*, Estrada 2004). So, what kind of party is the 'reborn' PRI going to be? Is there enough electoral space for the PRI to carve out a new identity and remain successful, or will the PRI be outflanked on both the left and the right, while being torn by intra-party divisions between ideologically distinct factions? One thing does seem to be certain, the PRI is facing an identity crisis that has to be resolved if they are to have any significant ongoing electoral success.

To understand this crisis of identity better, it may prove helpful to briefly revisit the background of the PRI. Founded in 1929, the Institutional Revolutionary Party was a member of the Socialist International, and continued to represent itself as socialist and revolutionary while not, in fact, being so. As the dominant party the PRI tended to be center-left, embracing social democratic and corporatist policies, but it was historically a

broad-based and co-optive party that used political patronage and the disbursement of favors to govern to its advantage. For example, the PRI traditionally ‘handpicked’ state governors as reward for their support at the state level, and as a means of recruiting potential party leaders. This served as a means of building national party support, which was more pragmatic than ideological. This also means that the PRI was a classic “umbrella” party, rather than an ideologically-driven revolutionary party of the true left. PRI became the establishment and governed with an eye on maintaining political power. Corruption and outright electoral fraud in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to the splintering of the party; the PRI ‘left’ wing formed the PRD and the disillusioned right joined with PAN. As a result, the PRI is in many ways a schizophrenic party struggling with its core identity, and is a party lacking a clear (positive) party image.

For example, one of the initial prompts to start this investigation was a party placement graph from the 2000 legislative election. Party positions are taken from the self-placement of party voters, and the bar height corresponds to the total vote won by that party in the corresponding legislative elections. From Almond, *et al.* (2008: 116) we have:

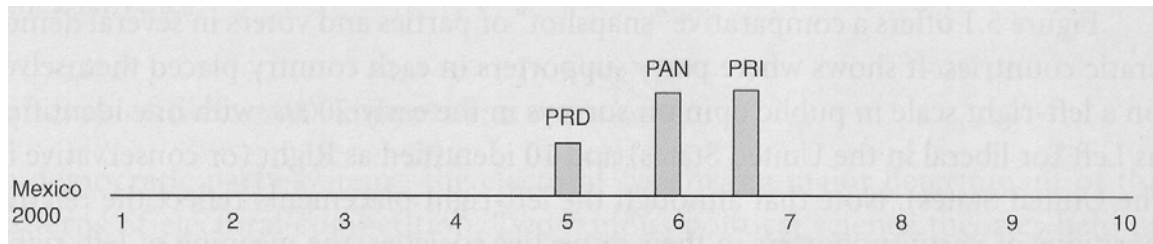


Image 1: Placement of Parties on the Left-Right Scale and Their Voter Support in Election

This is more than a bit peculiar, especially if PRI is supposed to be the party of the left; clearly it has been identified – at least by its own supporters’ self-placement – as a party of the right (within the context of Mexico’s electorate). Furthermore, with the 2003 and 2006 legislative elections it became clear that PRI’s support was eroding, and that there seemed to be a significant realignment of Mexico’s parties underway. Why? Because basic median-voter behavior would indicate that the PRI should have more success if they were truly on the right wing of a 3 party contest, yet this was not happening. The system appeared to be in transition, which is quite exciting for political scientists or fans of unpredictable electoral outcomes (which to be honest, is relatively new in Mexico).

So, prompted by the apparently incongruous self-placement of PRI voters in the 2000 legislative election, coupled with the loss of the presidency in 2000 and the decline in support resulting in a third-place finish in 2006, we suspect that a fundamental restructuring of the Mexican political party landscape is underway. As a means of mapping this change, we seek to measure shifting party alignment as reflected by changes in voter support. From this, we offer a general set of variables to use to predict future elections.

Understanding the decline of the PRI is insightful in this regard, because the challenges faced by the PRI -- as a specific party associated with the institutional past of Mexico -- in many ways mirrors the changes within the emerging modern Mexican party system. What are the main challenges for the PRI and its future success? The challenges are threefold: party image, party identification, and electoral space. First, the party image of the PRI was out of step with its electoral support. Because there was no clear,

unifying PRI 'party image', the electoral support is uncertain because the party cannot guarantee the patronage or favors that allowed it to be an 'umbrella' party in the past. Ideologically, there is a split within the party as regional and generational differences echo this challenge. With regard to party identification (from the voter side of the relationship), the PRI had governed as a 'center-left' party but much of its electoral support in 2000 came from voters that placed themselves on the right. In an open and fair multiparty electoral system, which Mexico seems to be becoming, a center position faces erosion of support from challengers on the wings. With no clear party image and increasingly viable challengers that do have a unified party image, the PRI faces losing its weakly-affiliated party voters (*i.e.*, those who supported the PRI for pragmatic reasons or raw material benefit). The challenge of party identification is also exacerbated by the relatively high *negative* party ID that the PRI has had.

So, these dual challenges of party image (the platform of a party or how it represents itself to the voting public) and party identification (the degree to which a voter positively associates themselves with a given party) combine with regard to the third challenge: political space. Since parties behave strategically when competing for electoral support (*cf.*, Adams & Topcu +), available ideological space directly impacts the electoral success of a given party. For example, if there is more than one party on the left, there is a tendency to split-votes between parties, and not win available seats if there is only one party on the right. Correspondingly, if a party is closely bracketed by competing parties, there is a tendency for voters to vote for the party that is closer to them ideologically. This means that the middle position can be a strategically non-dominant position in a multiparty system. If voters vote for the party that is closest to them ideologically, then there is a tendency for parties to move to the center of the ideological spectrum, as long as there is no party *outside* their ideological position. Given electoral results from 2000 and 2006, we hypothesized that the PRI had become bracketed and faced an urgent need to carve out available electoral space, are at least re-brand the party image in an attempt to limit the negative party identification of the PRI of the past.

II. Predicting the Shape of Things to Come

So, how does one go about modeling electoral outcomes in a system that is in transition? Indeed, this is a significant challenge in and of itself. However, as one of the tenets of science is the ability to be predictive, which makes this a worthwhile enterprise and a risk worth taking. Furthermore, the Mexican electoral system has been getting more attention since the establishment of the non-partisan IFE in 1996 and with the ongoing efforts at reform. Academic institutions in Latin America are publishing more research on the status of electoral democracies in the hemisphere, and Mexico is getting more attention from political scientists in the US. For example, *PS* publishes a special issue on the Mexican Presidential elections (*cf.*, Klesner 2007a & 2007b; Moreno 2007; Langston 2007b; Bruhn and Greene 2007; Eisenstadt 2007; Lawson 2007). The IFE is filling an important data gathering gap, too. In addition, with the emergence of Mexico as a modern electoral democracy, attitudinal surveys such as the Latinobarometer and World Values Survey offer insight into the mindset of the Mexican voter. So given the

increased availability of information, combined with an increase in academic attention, we hope to build a multi-layered model for forecasting future elections.

Before discussing the general model, however, it is worth explaining some of the unique elements of Mexico's political system, especially as these directly impact strategic party behavior. Plus, if one is not familiar with the Mexican system, this can give some insight into the workings of party behavior. The most significant sources of differentiation in the Mexican electoral system include: (1) term limits, (2) electoral rules derived from the 1986 Electoral Reform Law which have resulted in a "mixed member" system, (3) an increased importance of state offices and political control, and (4) regional party behavior. These four elements all combine to frame the "logic" of party behavior in the Mexican party system.

First, Mexico has strict term limits for elected officials at the federal level: they are allowed to serve one term. This means that the president can have only one term of six years,² all senatorial seats are up for election every six years (coincidental with the presidential election cycle), and the entirety of the Chamber of Deputies is replaced every three years. Because of the strict one-term limit, there is no such thing as an incumbency advantage in the individual-candidate sense, as is the case in the United States. Instead, to the extent that there is an incumbency advantage (or disadvantage), it accrues to the *party*. This has two impacts for the party system. The role of the party becomes much more important in recruiting and supporting candidates, such that individual candidates tend to be subordinate to party interests and policy positions. Second, state-level office-holding becomes much more important. The state level of government serves as both a training ground for upcoming party members and potential federal candidates, but these offices also can be an interim 'place holder' for candidates coming out of a term at the federal level.

Second, the 1986 Electoral Reform Law and subsequent electoral reform have also drastically changed the logic of party behavior in Mexico. This is also a reason looking at the Mexican system can be fascinating for students of American politics and its first-past-the-post, single-member district electoral system. For example, in Mexico incentives to vote for smaller parties or "second" parties exist in elections for the Senate, Chamber of Deputies, and Presidential contests, which means that there is a systemic tendency to allow smaller parties to have some electoral success. A brief examination of the electoral process for the three institutions will clarify this layered incentive structure (as opposed to a 'winner-take-all' system like that of the US).

There are 32 electoral districts in Mexico (31 states plus the Federal District). Elections for all 128 seats of the Senate (Cámara de Senadores) are held every six years, in the same cycle as the presidential election. Of these 128 seats, 96 are allocated by member district and 32 are by proportional representation (PR).³ Yet the 96 seats allocated by member district do not go exclusively to the winning party. Instead, two for each of the 31 states and two for the Federal District are *elected* under the principle of relative majority (64 seats, or half the Senate); one for each of the 31 states and one for the Federal District are *assigned* under the principle of first minority (32 seats).

² Presidents are also permanently barred from seeking reelection.

³ A bill introducing some elements of electoral reform was introduced by Calderon in 2009; allocation of seats may have changed and it contained a provision allowing for one reelection of Senators. So this may change electoral logic slightly going forward.

Essentially, the party that ‘wins’ gets two seats and the party that comes in second gets one of the three seats being allocated in a given state. The remaining 32 senatorial seats are national “senators-at-large” and are divided via PR among the parties in proportion to their share of the national presidential vote. This creates a double-incentive for smaller parties. First, a party is rewarded with a seat even for coming in second within a given state or district. This creates a potentially achievable goal for smaller parties or regionally concentrated parties that may not be able to win an outright majority in a given state. Secondly, there is a voting incentive for party supporters to vote for a “losing” party at the state level in hopes of getting enough votes nationally to receive a PR-allocated seat.

Similar incentives exist in elections for the 500 seats of the Federal Chamber of Deputies. Terms are 3 years and term limits mandate a complete replacement of elected deputies. 300 of the 500 possible seats are allocated by district voting. The remaining 200 seats are allocated by PR in 5 geographic regions (defined by the IFE depending on population distribution). Again, the proportional representation is based on the parties’ share of the national vote. With 200 seats available for distribution via PR, this means that roughly 1% of the national vote translates into 2 seats in the legislature. Imagine how different US politics would be if 1% of the national vote resulted in 2 seats in Congress! Minor or small national parties that are otherwise seen as “fringe” (*e.g.*, Libertarian, Socialists, Greens, Independence Party) can provide an incentive for their supporters to vote for them without seeming to “waste” their vote. The same is true under the Mexican system: small parties can be successful getting Deputies elected, so it becomes logical for voters to support smaller or regional parties. This contributes to the transitioning electoral dynamic of the Mexican party system. This transition is likely to continue, as the 2006 election saw five parties (or coalitions of parties) put forward candidates for the presidency.⁴ The 2012 election saw four candidates for the presidency, though the majority of electoral support was divided between PRD, PRI, and PAN candidates.⁵

Because of the incentive structure created by the electoral system and importance of state governments, it is not surprising that regional differences impact party behavior and success at the federal level. For example, Klesner (2005) notes that PRI has historically competed with different parties depending on the region under contestation. In the north and west PAN is the PRI’s primary contender, while in the south and east PRD and PRI compete. At the state level, political control is also crucial and reflects these regional trends. In looking at the 2006 Presidential-election results by state, the PRD won the majority of southern Mexico while PAN won the majority of northern Mexico. Notably, PRI did not ‘win’ a single state when looking solely at the Presidential balloting. So, if success at the state level is seen as a predictor and mechanism for future electoral success, by 2006 PRD and PAN appeared to be waxing while PRI was waning. Both contenders have solid regional support from which they can build nationally

⁴ All formally recognized parties and/or party coalitions must put forth a presidential candidate. In 2006 the five parties/coalitions were: PAN, PRD with a coalition of leftist parties under the banner of “Coalition for the Good of All” or *Coalición por el Bien de Todos* (CBT, including the Convergence Party, *Convergencia*, and the Labour Party, *Partido del Trabajo* (PT)), PRI in an alliance with PVEM (Ecologist Green Party of Mexico, *Partido Verde Ecologista de México*), the New Alliance Party (*Partido Nueva Alianza*) (PNA), and the Social Democratic Party (PASC).

⁵ The New Alliance Party (*Partido Nueva Alianza*) ran a candidate in 2012, and received 2.34% of the vote.

competitive campaigns, whereas it appeared the PRI – with its history as a pragmatic ‘catch-all’ party – lacks this solid regional base. Yet as of 2005, PRI held 17 governorships and held municipal presidencies that accounted for 57% of the Mexican population, so there was room to build a foundation for resurgence. This may be precisely because PRI is a true national party, whereas PAN and PRD are seen as regionally concentrated.

A fourth and final area of differentiation in the Mexican system is the role of party alliance or coalition formation and defection. Because all formally recognized parties and/or party coalitions must put forth a presidential candidate, there is incentive for smaller parties to form coalitions, especially if a party is regionally-based and needs a ‘like-minded’ ally to broaden its national electoral appeal. The tendency toward alliance formation is also an outgrowth of the mixed-member system for the Chamber of Deputies. In addition to putting forth a presidential candidate, parties must register candidates in at least 200 of the 300 districts in order to compete in the election and thereby register party lists for the regionally-allocated PR seats. In order to reach this threshold, alliances are often necessary for smaller parties, yet these alliances remain fluid from election to election. For example, the Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (PVEM) had run as an ally of PAN in the 2000 elections and is credited with helping to elect the first non-PRI President, Vicente Fox. Yet this alliance broke down and PVEM ran allied with PRI in the 2006 elections. Similarly the PNA (Partido Nueva Alianza), or aptly named “New Alliance,” was formed in 2005 by an educational trade union that traditionally had supported PRI. Running as an independent party (*i.e.*, unallied, or not part of a coalition) in 2006, the PNA received more than 4% of the national vote and garnered 9 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and one in the Senate. In 2012 the PNA vote share declined to 2.34% of the vote, though had 10 seats in the Chamber and 2 in the Senate.

It is for this reason that we believe legislative elections are particularly important predictive indicators for the Mexican political system and subsequent upcoming Presidential elections, even more so than midterm elections in the United States are seen as being predictive. Because of the term limits on candidates, elections require turnover (as opposed to the near-guarantee of reelection for Congressional candidates in the US). Though parties still seek to maintain the incumbency advantage and there are ‘safe’ party seats, the dynamism inherent in the system is considerably higher in Mexico. Second, legislative elections capture a much-needed ‘snapshot’ of the changing political landscape which is important in a mixed-member system with elements of PR: smaller changes in the electorate are reflected in the composition of the legislature. Third, states serve as vibrant incubators for these changes, both within and between parties, so that the waxing and waning of political fortunes may be evident at the state level well before these changes are felt nationally. Finally, the role of regional or small parties is more easily measured in Chamber elections during the off-cycle. In a transitioning system, smaller parties and their accordant ability to ally and defect may well be enough to swing the Presidential election. In this regard, the foundations for a party’s prospects – for both large and small parties alike – are laid during the legislative elections. Thus, we hope to discern some answers to our questions as to the future of the PRI, and the Mexican party system as a whole.

What constitutes our attempt to model the Mexican electoral system and get some predicative ability? Here we hope to tap four different strands of the system or electorate. **First**, there is the need to define and clarify party position or party image for each of the major (and hopefully minor) parties that are registered. What is the party's *relative* political position? **Second**, how do voters identify themselves? In essence we are trying to 'map' the electorate and then measure relative support for each party through actual election results from 1994 through 2006. **Third**, we examine regional party strength and political party lineage, in an attempt to incorporate the state-level political impact as well as capture the role of small or minor parties. **Fourth**, we look at available general attitudinal data from sources such as the World Values Survey and the more frequent Latinobarometer. The idea is that general attitudes and satisfaction levels – or conversely lack of satisfaction – can either reinforce or undermine a party's electoral prospects, reinforcing the incumbency advantage for the ruling party of a satisfied electorate and undermining this advantage if the electorate is unhappy. Taken together, these four strands of the system should be able to provide a general 'map' of the Mexican electorate, and will hopefully allow us some degree of electoral predictability.

Model Element: Party Position

Briefly, there are a number of possible measures of party position. One is the "party manifesto" measure, or work developed the Manifesto Research Group (also known as the Comparative Manifesto Project). The Manifesto Research Group is a longitudinal study that classifies party platforms into schemes that can easily be compared (*cf.*, Kim and Fording 2005, Benoit, Laver, and Mikhaylov 2007; Alonzo and Gomez 2008). Currently, the Party Manifesto Data includes 25 countries separated on a left and right ideological scale. Similarly, Laver and Budge (1993) measure party ideology using 26 categories to develop left-right dimension, using the direct wording of party platforms to characterize them into 13 left and 13 right ideologies. This codes party platforms in order to create a party "manifest", making it easier to understand the differences within each party across countries (See Benoit, Laver, and Mikhaylov 2007; Laver and Budge 1993; Laver and Garry 2000). Researchers have continued to use a category on a left-right scale that have extended the Party Manifesto Data and now contains 54 categories, such as positions on freedom and democracy, the political system, economic policy, social welfare, and quality of life categories (Kim and Fording 2005).

However there are two reasons we have not used the manifesto-measurement approach. First, in a country characterized by the relatively easy emergence of new parties and their destruction, coalitions have emerged that make Mexican political parties fluctuate from year to year. So there is a difficulty in capturing this dynamic feature. Second, and more importantly, we were having difficulty getting recent data on Mexico (since we are focusing on the post-reform 'transitional' period). So this is likely a productive future course of research after the system stabilizes, but it is one that we were unable to adequately utilize for this project.

Instead, one of our key measures of party position relies on surveys of political elites. In particular, this study has used data from the University of Salamanca Parliamentary Elites of Latin America (PELA) Survey. The PELA Survey, conducted under the direction of Manuel Alcantara Saez, asks politicians to place the political parties in Mexico in an ideological spectrum. The data has been collected in five waves

corresponding to the legislative election cycle in Mexico, from 1994-1997, 1997-2000, 2000-2003, 2003-2006, and 2006-2009. So this data covers our time period in question more completely. This survey averages eighty questions with elite party member interviews, drawing a roughly proportional number of a party's members based on their proportion of elected seats in the legislative branch. For example, in the first study conducted PRI had 60% of the seats of the Chamber of Deputies, and 64% of the interviews conducted were from PRI members in the Chamber of Deputies.

Interestingly, the elite interviews provide two slightly different measures of party position. First, party members are asked to place their own party on a left-right ideological spectrum. Thus, we can develop a country-specific ideological map of party placement, based on elite perception. Second, party elites are asked to place *themselves* on the left-right ideological spectrum. So, we also have a backup perceptual measure of relative party coherence: Are the elites out of step with the “mainstream” of their party? In essence, is the ‘party image’ part of the party platform accurately reflected in party elite political positioning? If not, one would expect voters to be more likely to become disenchanted with the ‘reality’ of their party in government, and thereby more likely to defect or not vote.

We hypothesize that the PRI may have been more out of touch with their party mainstream than other parties in Mexico, in part because of their political history as an umbrella party. There is no solid core ideology or readily coherent positive “party image,” so PRI supporters may be more loosely affiliated and more easily co-opted by challengers in a free and fair electoral environment, especially as the PRI is ideologically bracketed by PAN and PRD. Accordingly, in an environment conducive to party fragmentation, coalition formation, and one in which new parties are relatively easy to form, this can combine to spell electoral decline. The results of the PELA Survey give a better feel for the party landscape,.

In tabular form, the data do reflect some significant dynamics in party position from one election cycle to the next:

Table 1: Elite Placement of Own Party⁶

	1994- 1997	1997- 2000	2000- 2003	2003- 2006	2006- 2009	Mean
PRI	5.4	5.42	5.25	5.61	4.96	5.33
PRD	3.27	3	4.18	3.14	2.44	3.21
PAN	6.45	6	6.38	6.94	6.67	6.49
OTHER/			4.67	4.86	4.64	4.73

For example, PRI party elites effectively shift their perception of the party nearly two-thirds of a full point (.65) between the 2003 and 2006 election cycles. This is a significant position shift in a crowded electoral field. Clearly, there is some strategic movement taking place. This becomes a bit clearer if we examine the data in graphic form:

⁶ For specific ‘N’ counts of each party surveyed in each wave, see Appendix 1.

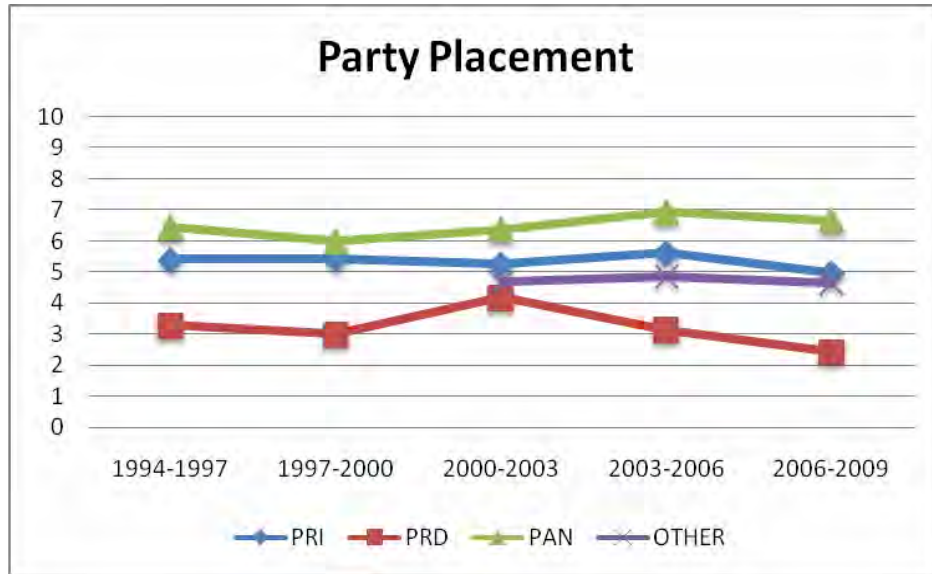


Image 2: The chart (Party Placement) summarizes how the party elites place their own parties in a left-right spectrum on a scale of 0-10, with zero most-left and 10 most-right. Data in response to the question: “Where is your party placed in the left-right spectrum?”

Notably, the relative positions of the various parties have not changed, but some significant results are evident nonetheless. First, the divide between PRI and PAN elites has been slowly widening since the near-overlap leading up to the 2000 election (which resulted in a PAN presidential victory). From 2000 to 2003, the middle ground of the electoral space was quite crowded, with the PRD being uncharacteristically centrist and the field further complicated by the emergence of independent parties. By 2003, PAN has shifted to the right, PRD back to the left, and the PRI seems to be caught in the middle, eventually entering into an alliance with PVEM (one of the ‘other’ parties) that has carried through to 2006. Yet PAN, since 2006, seems to be moderating, further constricting the political space around PRI heading into the 2009 election cycle.

Are these patterns mirrored in elite members’ self-placement on the ideological spectrum? Here, PRI is somewhat surprising. Elites consistently identify themselves as significantly more “left” than their party. Personal placement averages a position of 4.92, while party position averages 5.33. Both of which are largely “centrist” in context of other parties, but out of step with one another by 4-tenths of a point. Median voter behavior indicates that this gap between party position and elected officials is likely to be more of a problem for a party in the center than for a right or left wing party.

Table2: Elite Personal Ideological Placement

	1994-1997	1997-2000	2000-2003	2003-2006	2006-2009	Mean	Variance from Party
PRI	4.94	5.29	4.71	5.22	4.46	4.92	-.41
PRD	3.65	2.77	3.08	2.82	2.25	2.91	.47
PAN	6.15	5.9	5.88	6.44	6.2	6.11	-.38
OTHER/			4	5.14	4.33	4.49	

This becomes clearer if we, once again, turn to a graphic representation of elite placement. For example, PRD has a “position gap” of (.47), but has no large competitor further to the left to worry about stealing vote support. Similarly, PAN averages a gap of (-.38), yet is not apparently threatened by a major party to the right.

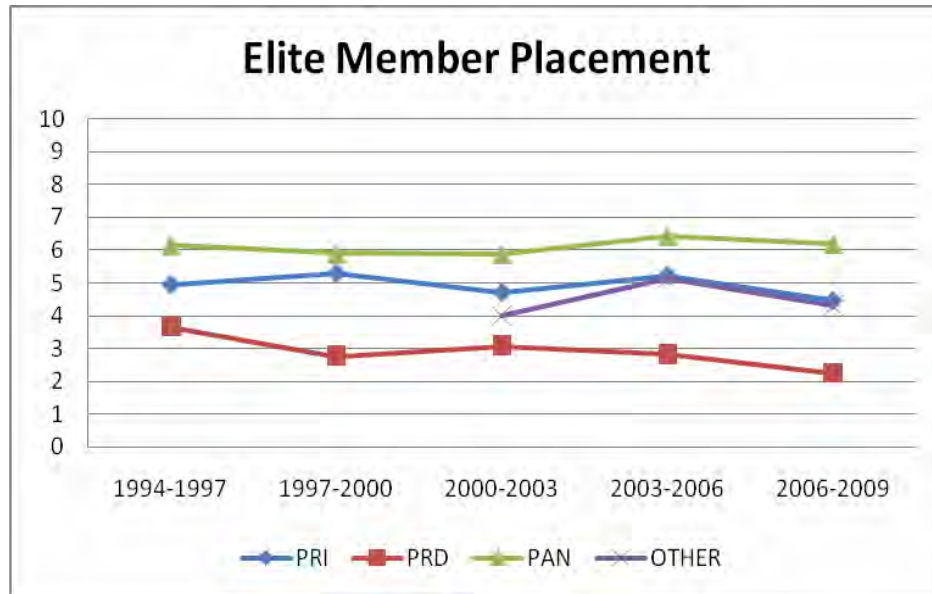


Image 3: The above chart (Elite Member Placement) is the results to the question: “Where does the elite party member place themselves in the ideological spectrum?” Zero is most-left and 10 most-right.

One confounding element is not readily discernible from this party-placement data. PELA Survey data includes a category for “Other” party, which is a bit of a problem for us. Basically, any minor party with representation in the legislature is also included in the survey, but all of the responses are conflated into the one category. This is troubling for studying the Mexican party system because of the presence of several minor parties, on the left, right and in the middle of the ideological spectrum. For example, the Green party (PVEM, or *Partido Verde Ecologista de México*) ran allied with PAN in 2000, yet defected to support PRI in 2003 and 2006. PVEM had 17 Deputies in the Chamber of Deputies. Even unallied independent parties have electoral success, as the New Alliance (PNA, or *Partido Nueva Alianza*) received 4.55% of the vote in 2006. The NA is mainly backed by the national education worker’s union, and is seen as a centrist coalition that emerged in 2005. After 2006, the PNA had 9 Deputies in the legislature. On the left wing, the self-described “new left” party is the Social Democratic Party (PASC, or *Partido Alternativa Socialdemócrata y Campesina*). The PASC received just over 2% of the vote in 2006 and had 4 members in the Chamber of Deputies.

So, party behavior and positioning is likely to be influenced by these minor parties, too. Move too far away from one’s base of support, and there is potential for smaller parties to take away votes. Or alternatively, by offering the potential for alliances, small parties have the ability to play ‘kingmaker’ for coalition rule or coalition formation leading into the general election. While elite interpretations of party position

give us good insight, voter-level data is likely to add some nuance to our understanding of the relationship between party image (at the elite and party level) and voter identification.

Model Element: Voter Position

We hoped that one of our main model elements would consist of a detailed picture of the Mexican electorate, provided by individual level party self-placement. However, this data has proven somewhat elusive. While the World Values survey does ask the question in their surveys, much of the data tends to be center-grouped, as people tend not to identify themselves as extreme or outside the norm. So we turned to available data from the Latinobarometer annual surveys from 1995 to 2002. Again we are constrained by not having ready data on smaller parties, but the Latinobarometer did at least capture information on PVEM, in addition to the three main Mexican parties.

Table 3: Mexican Voters’ Self-Placement and Party Location⁷

Party	PRD	PRI	PAN	PVEM	Median	Total
Median	4.2	5.0	5.3	5.6	4.9	
N	194	218	238	47		565
St. Dev.	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.0		
Confidence Interval	3.9 - 4.6	4.6 - 5.3	5.0 - 5.6	5.0 - 6.2		

What is surprising about this data is the drastic difference when compared to the introductory graph in this paper, voter self-placement from the 2000 general election. All parties have shifted left, but PRI has done so by over a point and a half (6.6 to 5.0). Some of this may be due to difference in measurement or question (*i.e.*, instrument error), but that would presumably impact all parties equally. What else is striking is the emergence of PVEM even further to the right than both PAN and PRI. To the extent that PVEM supporters split from PRI, this could account for some of the extra shift. Nonetheless, if the data are to be believed, voters are shifting ‘left’. As the Latinobarometer analysis mentions, while Latin American voters are highly ideological, they are rather consistent in their (subjective) location on the left-right dimension, though there does tend to be a high level of alienation regarding the party system.

This, in part, accounts for one dynamic of the Mexican party system: parties tend to “rule from the right”. Mexico is a conservative country in general, and once parties are in power they become ‘conservative’. Of course, Mexico has yet in the modern era to elect a genuine “leftist”, so this is another reason to be intrigued as to the possible future of party transition in Mexico. We hope that additional efforts to get a better picture of voter self-identification will prove fruitful, especially one that captures the position of smaller parties. This allows for an actual ‘on the ground’ snapshot of the electorate (as opposed to elite perceptions of it). If elites drift too far from their core party position (and, by inference, their supporting voters’ position), we predicted that voters will seek

⁷ Based on Latinobarometer surveys from 1995 to 2002.

alternatives. To the extent that small parties or new alliances receive electoral support, one may infer a certain level of disconnect or dissatisfaction – perhaps a widening “gap” – between major party elites, the party image, and voter identification. In this way, minor parties are a bit like the canary in the electoral coal-mine.

While not as much research is done with regard to “negative” party identification, there is a growing body of research looking at this aspect of voter behavior. Estrada (2004) nicely summarizes the concept, and we feel this has special application to the Mexican electorate. Why? Because it seems logical that there may be an electoral ‘backlash’ against the PRI precisely because of their seven decades of authoritarian one-party rule. Voters may have been tired of the PRI and hungry for change. Consequently, the election of 2012 would indicate that negative party ID may be fluid, and that there may be a subsequent revisiting of the PRI taking place.

Fortunately, the World Values Survey provides an opportunity for us to tap this measure of political discontent. While not a regularly asked question, the 1996 and 2000 surveys for Mexico did include the query, “Which party would you never vote for?” We use this question to see if our general hypothesis about voter discontent with PRI holds true.

Table 4: Negative Party Identification⁸

	1996	2000	Mean
PRI	41	26	33.5
PAN	10	8	9
PRD	17	21	19
Other	12	14	13
None	20	31	25.5

What we can see, in percentage form, is that fully 40 percent of the electorate in 1996 was overtly predisposed against voting for PRI. It is remarkable in some ways that this negative level of voter identification dropped to *only* 26 percent of the electorate by 2000. Yet compared to PAN’s negative ID average of 9 percent, and even PRD’s (the main party of the “left”) negative level of 19 percent, PRI’s negatives were dire. This is more telling because of PRI’s relative position – as a center-right party competing against major challengers on the left and right. One would generally expect a high negative party ID to be associated with parties furthest from one’s own ideological position, but with the PRI this is not the case.

⁸ Data from the 1996 and 2000 waves of the World Values Survey for Mexico.

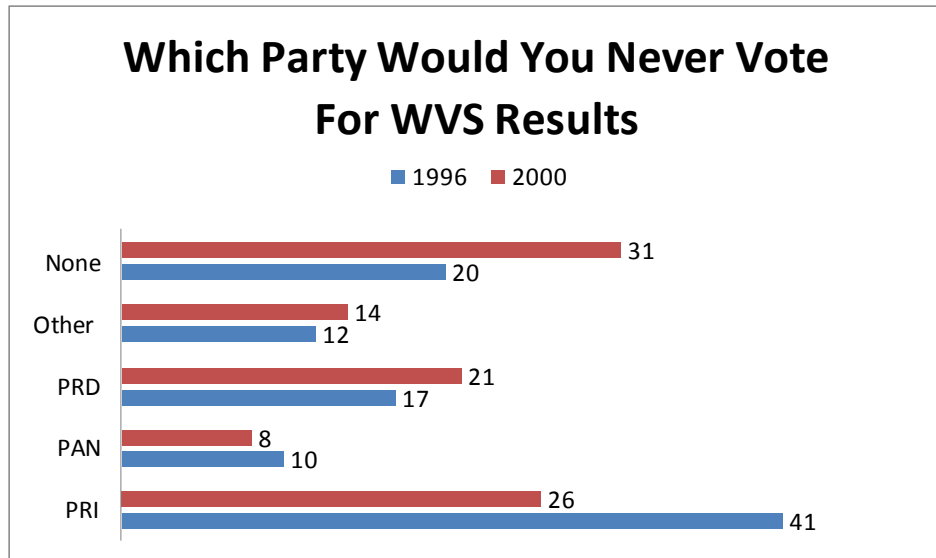


Image 4: Negative Party Identification in Mexico.

We have been approaching our discussion of the Mexican electorate with the tacit assumption that a traditional median-voter behavior of the electorate should apply. The underlying assumption is that the electorate displays the characteristics of a “normal” distribution. Is this the case? If not, then very different electoral strategies become dominant for parties to pursue (as opposed to trying to carve out space around a center-grouped electorate).

We do have reason to believe that a fairly normal, though right-of-center, distribution is present. Data from the WVS can be used to give a decent overview of the shape of the electorate. Using a 10-point range, with 1 being “left” and 10 being “right”, respondents were asked to place themselves on the political scale. A quick glance at the totaled responses from 1990, 1996, and 2000 surveys displays this:⁹

⁹ Better graphic representation is forthcoming.

Self-positioning on political scale

BASE=5430 Weight [with split ups]	TOTAL		Mexico [1990]		Mexico [1996]		Mexico [2000]	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Left	305	5,6	54	3,5	152	6,4	99	6,4
2	130	2,4	33	2,2	76	3,2	21	1,4
3	220	4,0	79	5,2	105	4,4	36	2,3
4	197	3,6	87	5,7	101	4,3	9	0,6
5	1217	22,4	416	27,2	570	24,1	231	15,0
6	542	10,0	166	10,8	268	11,3	108	7,0
7	455	8,4	129	8,4	245	10,4	81	5,3
8	474	8,7	130	8,5	264	11,2	80	5,2
9	180	3,3	47	3,1	64	2,7	69	4,5
Right	526	9,7	80	5,2	158	6,7	288	18,8
Don't know	1083	20,0	209	13,7	361	15,3	513	33,4
No answer	101	1,9	101	6,6	0	0,0	0	0,0
Total	5430	(100%)	1531	(100%)	2364	(100%)	1535	(100%)
Base	4246		1221		2003		1022	
Mean	5,94		5,69		5,72		6,65	
Standard Deviation	2,478		2,140		2,364		2,902	

Image 5: Voter Self Positioning. Data from the 1990, 1996 and 2000 waves of the World Values Survey for Mexico.

What does at first make the data look wing-shaped is more a residual effect from the question than the presence of true extremes on the far-left and far-right. Specifically, people that did not answer with a specific position between 1 and 10 (e.g., “3” or “6”), but rather just gave a general response such as “left” or “right”, are coded as 1 and 10 respectively. This has the impact of taking respondents from the center of the spectrum and making the distribution look flatter than it really is and the electorate look polarized when it is not. Additionally, if we note the significant percentage of the “don’t know” category, we have stronger reason to believe the electorate is normally-shaped and center-grouped, thus giving us a reasonable expectation that median-voter behavior should apply (albeit with the added strategic considerations that emerge in a multiparty system). Furthermore, Bruhn and Greene (2007) echo the finding of an unpolarized electorate, while noting that the political elite is significantly more ideological than -- and somewhat out of step with -- the party electorate.

Taken altogether, these various elements of voter identification give us reason to believe that median voter behavior should function in Mexico and may be at play in the decline of the PRI. Mexican voters’ self-placement and party location has a median of 4.9 on a 10-point scale, reflecting a significant center-seeking tendency. This is reinforced by noting the range of party placement ranging from 4.2 (PRD) to 5.6 (PVEM). Further, the electorate does appear to be reasonably normally distributed. And finally, it seems likely that the very high negative party identification held by the PRI is pushing otherwise centrist voters toward ideological alternatives, such as the closely positioned PAN, emergent independent parties (such as the splinter-PRI party, the New

Alliance). Mexican voters are able to shop for political alternatives, and the PRI brand has lost much of its luster.

*Model Element: Actual Voter Support*¹⁰

So would voter disenchantment with PRI be reflected in electoral behavior? If so, what form would it take?

A. **Voter** Support/Voter ID for Each Party – **Election Results**

As mentioned, Vicente Fox's victory over PRI in the 2000 presidential election marked the end of a single party dominance in Mexico which lasted over seven decades. Using the results from the Mexican federal elections from 1994 to 2000, PRI's downfall can be traced as it loses more and more votes each consecutive election (see Chamber of Deputies and Presidential election graphs).

The matter at hand is a realignment of voters from PRI to PAN and, to a lesser extent, PRD. In 1994 and 1997, PRI secured 48.58% and 39.11% of the votes, respectively, in the Chamber of Deputies. However, in 2000, PAN not only overcame PRI in total allocated votes for the Presidency, but also in the Chamber of Deputies with 38.24% of the vote to PRI's 36.93%. Louis Estrada suggests that not only is there a partisan realignment in place, but a de-alignment as well from PRI to 'pure' Independents (29). In terms of predicting voting behavior, Estrada reveals that in Mexico, party identification and vote intention do not always correspond. In the United States, party identification is the single biggest predictor of vote intention. However in Mexico respondents often confuse party identification with vote intention. In fact, Estrada (2004) finds that party identification is different and more stable than vote choice.

Viewing election results alone, the percentages from year to year vary. As stated earlier, PRI's numbers continue to decline even up to the 2006 federal elections where both the Senate and Presidential elections declined 10.04% and 13.85%, respectively, from the previous elections. There was little sign of this trend ceasing, as the numbers appeared to point to PRI's dilapidation. However, as a party on the 'outside' of the political instability in Mexico, was PRI poised for a comeback? Indeed, what we see is that overall negative opinions of PRI declined, while voters' negative party identification with PRD increased (because of legal challenges following the close 2006 Presidential election) and PAN's negative identification increased (because of poor economic performance and narco-security issues). [See Appendix 2: Chamber of Deputies Election Results, 1994-2006; Appendix 3: Presidential Election Results, 1994 – 2006].

Model Element: Regional & Party Cleavages

i. Split w/in PAN & PRI

Joseph Klesner conjectures that Fox's victory, and PRI's defeat, was not due to socioeconomic conditions, but rather, an internal cleavage in the one-party regime.

¹⁰ Section in development – will be updating newer election results

Klesner notes that “the Mexican electorate is now divided into three parts: an urban, educated, relatively wealthy, and more Catholic Mexico of the north and the center-west supporting the PAN; a poorer, less-educated, more rural Mexico voting for the PRI, especially outside of the huge Mexico City metropolis; and a poorer and more rural Mexico of the south, along with the Mexico City area, sustaining the PRD” (118).

Part of the reason why PRI was not able to regain the presidency in the 2006 elections is because of the growing regional support for PAN and for PRD throughout Mexico. As the way things are going now, PAN has solid support within northern Mexico; PRD has solid support within southern Mexico. As for central Mexico, the states are either PAN, in the south-central region, or PRD, in the north-central region. However, upon looking at state elections, and more specifically, to see which party holds the governorship, PRI still maintains 17 out of 32 possible positions (31 states and Mexico City). And out of these 17 governorships, PRI is not concentrated in one area; in other words, PRI holds governorships throughout all of Mexico, with PRD and PAN only recently holding the governorships in some states. Thus, although the national elections have changed the political landscape of Mexico, PRI still has a significant presence at the state level.

Add paragraphs:

- ii. Role of States (and state level gov’t, party systems) in Mexico’s system b/c of term limits → PRI control here = promise for gains
- iii. Electoral results (PR system & resultant seats) – use regional map (info on small parties & impact at regional level – vote splitting, voter choice, etc)

Model Element: WVS Data & General Attitudinal Shifts¹¹

Recent variability within the Mexican political electoral structure is a result of both democratic reforms and growing dissatisfaction among the Mexican voting populace with the institutional power(s). Shifting political and social values within the Mexican people is an ongoing process, which manifests itself at national elections. National elections serve as a mirror, reflective of the sentiments of the voting populace at their respective times. Once we have documented the relationship between sentiment and political power, we will use this information to illustrate how PRI has lost share in Mexico’s political system, and examine what these trends may implicate for its future.

In order to understand what factors are affecting the shift in Mexico’s political power structure, we examine the relationship between data of past surveys and election results. By establishing how measured values of national political and cultural sentiment translate into shifting political power in past elections, via the ballot box, current levels of sentiment should provide us with a reliable expectation of what results may look like in upcoming elections in the immediate future. In order to accomplish this task we must first find a credible survey from which to secure data of past and current public sentiment. For this we have looked to the World Values Survey, which maintains a multi-temporal approach which is perfect for our analysis. The WVS’s incorporation of subjects varying

¹¹ See Appendix 4: Electorate Shape

in age and geographic location within Mexico also assures us that when the survey data was married with past election results, our findings will be sufficiently applicable to the nation as a whole.

Once we established the WVS as our primary source for public sentiment, we then were faced with the task of narrowing our focus to a few key indicators which would be reliable representations of the survey. Several Key questions were obvious choices for inclusion, including questions asking which political party would be the participant's first choice, and which party, if any, did they feel strong loyalty for. The next questions which we chose to focus on were; whether or not government or people should take more responsibility in issues facing Mexico, and how favorably they viewed democracy as a government style. We choose to limit our observations to the 1996, 2000, and 2005 surveys as they represent data collected from both the time of the initial shift in Mexican political power among its parties in the early 90s and also coincide with key Chamber of Deputy elections in 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003, and 2006.

While observing the question of the importance of democracy to the Mexican's surveyed, there are obvious trends which correspond with PRI's decreased role in the government. In the 1996 survey, negative ratings of democracy as the institutional political system rated at 22.8% of the surveyed populations, compared to a negative cumulative value of 13.9% in the 2000 survey conducted just four years later. When the same question was posed in 2005, the responses (though rated on a one to ten scale with one being not important and ten being absolutely important) the population showed an increasing identification with democracy, with a mean value of 8.6. The next step of our analysis includes comparing the Mexican populace's positive association with democracy with PRI's standing both as evidenced by the survey, and by the outcomes of the Chamber of Deputies (CoD) elections held throughout this time period.

In 1996, 27% of the surveyed group stated that if an election were to be held, their first political party choice would be the PRI. This figure was down from as much as 40% in 1990, but rebounded up to 45% when surveyed in 2000. By 2005, once again only 27% of those polled would select PRI as their first choice in an election. While the question of which party the participant would never vote was only posed in 1996 and 2000, the findings although limited, are relevant to this discussion. In 1996, fully 41% of those surveyed stated that they would never vote for PRI, while that proportion fell to 26% in 2000. In 2005, the respondents were asked which party, if any, they most identified with, and only 11% most identified with PRI.

The positive party identification numbers shadow the Chamber of Deputy election results with the exception of the increase in 2000, which, when PRI precipitous decline in power was reduced briefly, but did not disappear, parallels PRI's drop in negative party identification. The 1997 CoD elections saw PRI only receive 39% of the vote, down from 48.5% in the 1994 CoD election. As stated earlier, 2000 saw some relief in the rate of decline for the PRI with numbers at 37%, but this reprieve was short-lived as by the 2003 CoD elections, PRI only garnered 23% of the votes cast. With PRI's poor showing in 2003, its improvement to 28% in the 2006 CoD elections cannot be viewed as any drastic resurgence on PRI's part.

The remaining two questions which we examined also provide some insight into how shifting values are leading to the demise of the PRI. When asked in 1996 whether the government or people should take more responsibility for issues facing the country

(respondents were asked to give a number between one and ten with one signifying the government and one people) 8.6% selected number one, or “people”, while 18% selected ten and “the government” as needing to take more charge, with the remaining slightly skewing towards greater government responsibility. By the time of the 2000 survey, the center positions seem to have lost support, with 22% selecting one and advocating for people increase responsibility and 34% selecting ten and stating the government increase its actions. The 2005 survey showed that sentiments have for the most part remained level with results from 2000, showing 19% support for increased responsibility for people and 27% for government. This question serves as a perfect example of the problems that PRI is facing; PRI as a centrist party, is in effect being consumed by the left and right parties as the people of Mexico subscribe to more polarized views. The pattern shown in the survey results correspond with election result patterns through 2006.

Given the current economic climate, declining ‘negative’ numbers for PRI (i.e., increasing positives or fewer people being firmly opposed to voting PRI), combined with their status as a non-incumbent party in a time of instability, we predicted that the PRI was well-positioned to gain seats in the 2009 Chamber of Deputies midterm election, especially if the electorate becomes more moderate, or less-polarized. Simply, if the PRI is not the preferred choice, it is a less-bad one. Similarly, this outsider status worked to PRI’s advantage in the 2012 Presidential election. The PRD bore the stigma of being too far to the left, and poor electoral losers, while PAN paid the price for incumbency during a time of economic insecurity and perceived poor governance. In this environment, PRI as a centrist party gained the benefit of negative attitudes ‘pushing’ the electorate away from both of the wings.

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Appendix 1: PELA Survey Respondents: In all waves the Elites interviewed by party are roughly proportional to the percentage of party members elected in the country's legislature.

Wave 1 1994-1997

Total interviewed: 123

Those interviewed by party:	PRI	64
	PRD	23
	PAN	35
	Other	1

Wave 2 1997-2000

Total interviewed: 126

Those interviewed by party:	PRI	60
	PRD	31
	PAN	31
	Other	4

Wave 3 2000-2003

Total interviewed: 124

Those interviewed by party:	PRI	57
	PRD	22
	PAN	38
	Other	7

Wave 4 2003-2006

Total interviewed: 124

Those interviewed by party:	PRI	57
	PRD	22
	PAN	38
	Other	7

Wave 5 2006-2009

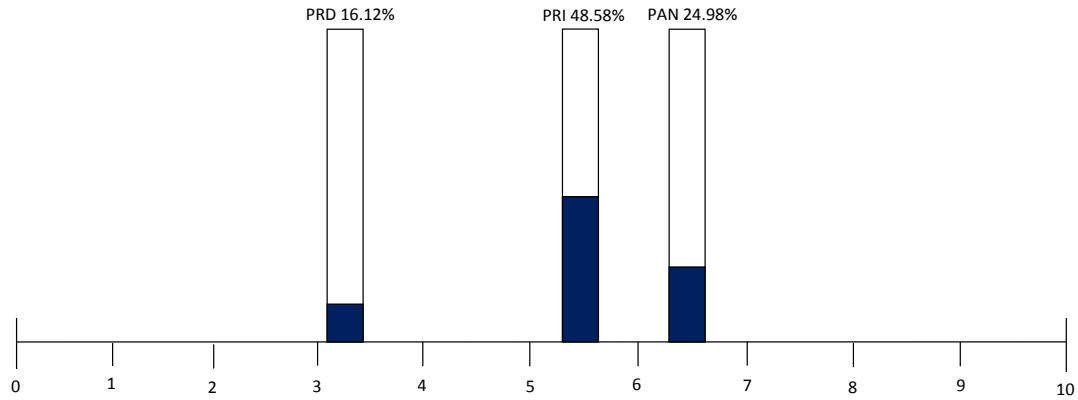
Total interviewed: 128

Those interviewed by party:	PRI	28
	PRD	53
	PAN	32
	Other	15

Appendix 2: Chamber of Deputies: Election Results, 1994-2006

1994

1994 Chamber of Deputies



ID Placement

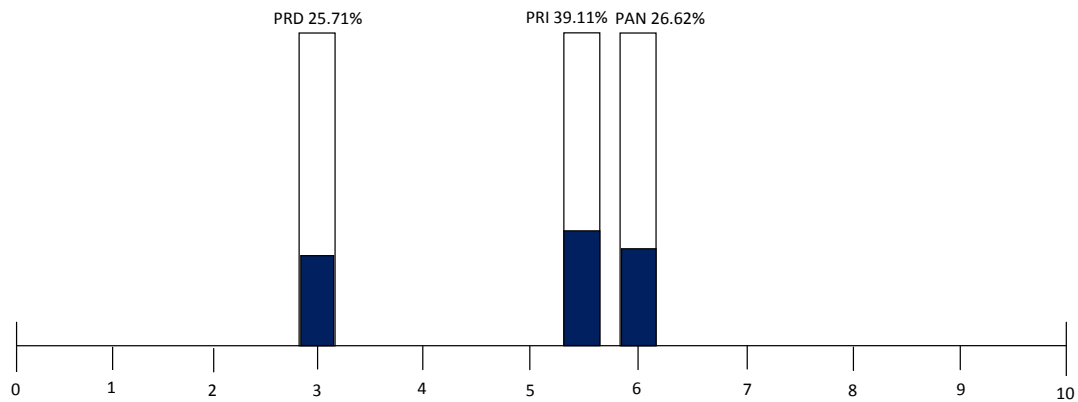
PRI	5.4
PRD	3.27
PAN	6.45

Total Votes

PRI	16,851,082
PRD	5,590,391
PAN	8,664,384

1997

1997 Chamber of Deputies



ID Placement

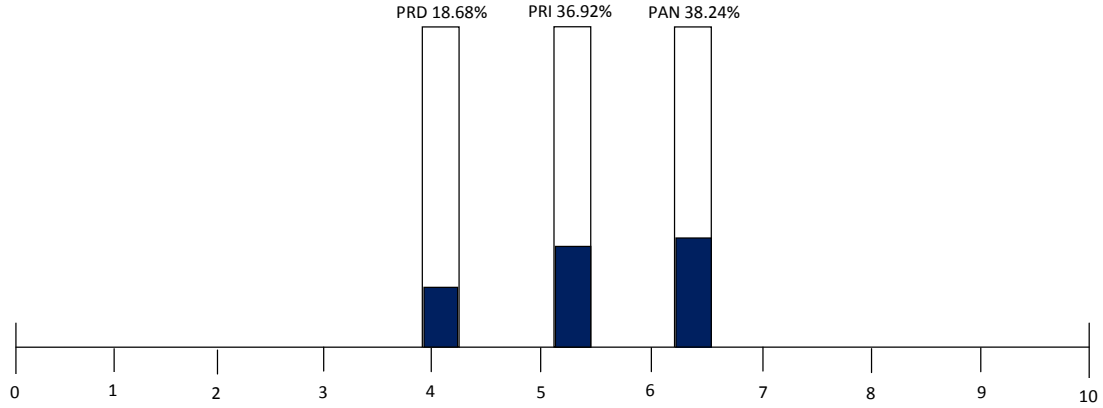
PRI	5.42
PRD	3
PAN	6

Total Votes

PRI	11,311,963
PRD	7,436,466
PAN	7,696,197

2000

2000 Chamber of Deputies



ID Placement

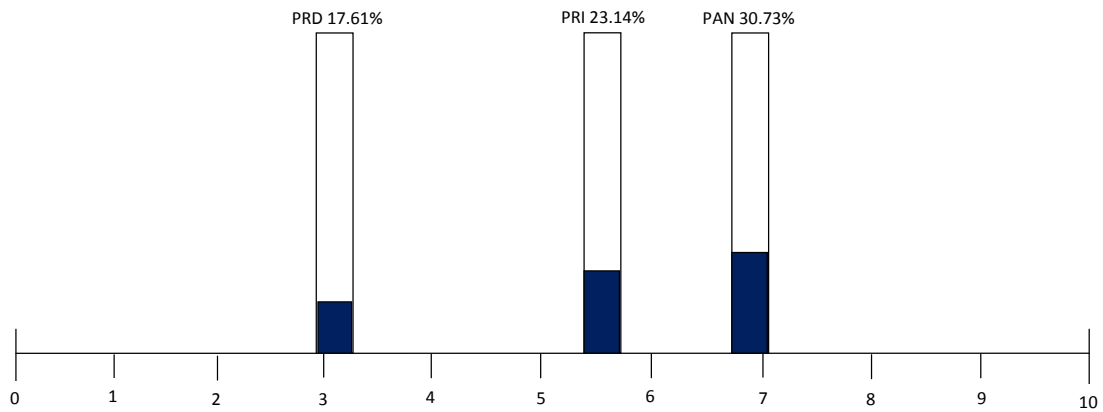
PRI	5.25
PRD	4.18
PAN	6.38

Total Votes

PRI	13,722,188
PRD	6,942,844
PAN	14,212,032

2003

2003 Chamber of Deputies



ID Placement

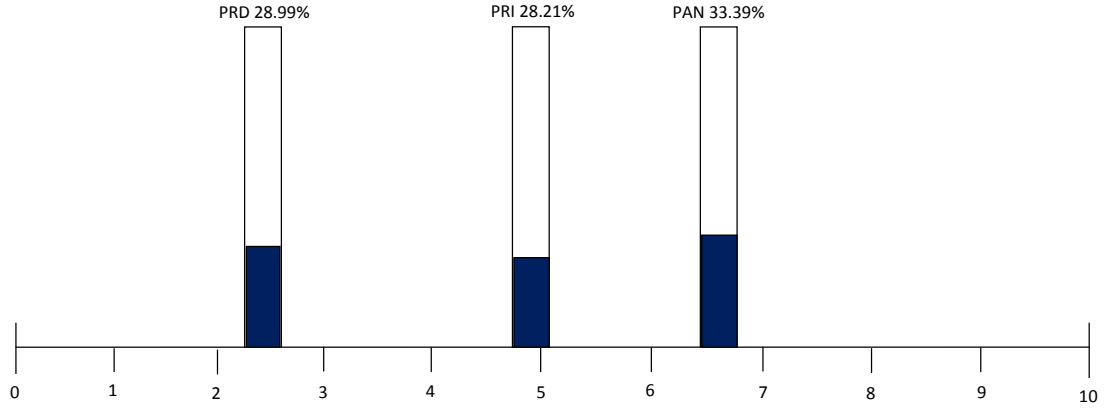
PRI	5.61
PRD	3.14
PAN	6.94

Total Votes

PRI	6,166,358
PRD	4,694,365
PAN	8,189,699

2006

2006 Chamber of Deputies



ID Placement

PRI 4.96
PRD 2.44
PAN 6.67

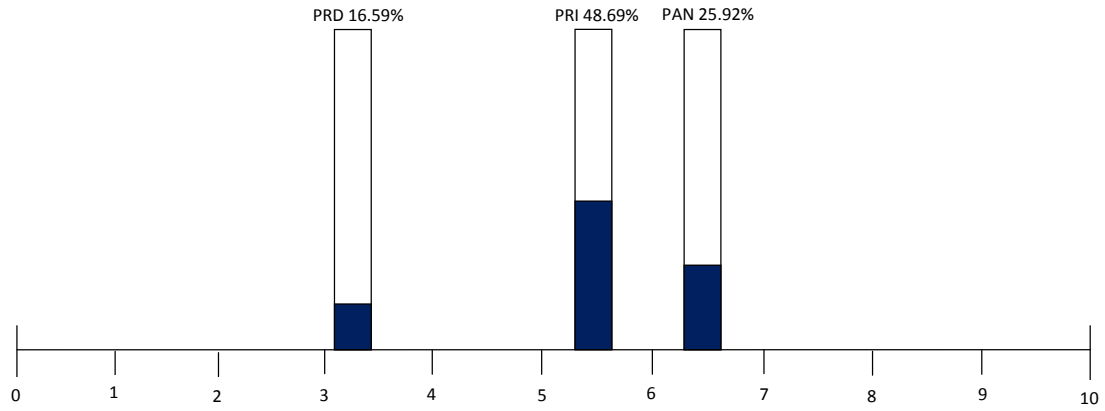
Total Votes

PRI 11,619,679
PRD 11,941,842
PAN 13,753,633

Appendix 3: Presidential Election Results, 1994 – 2006

1994

1994 President

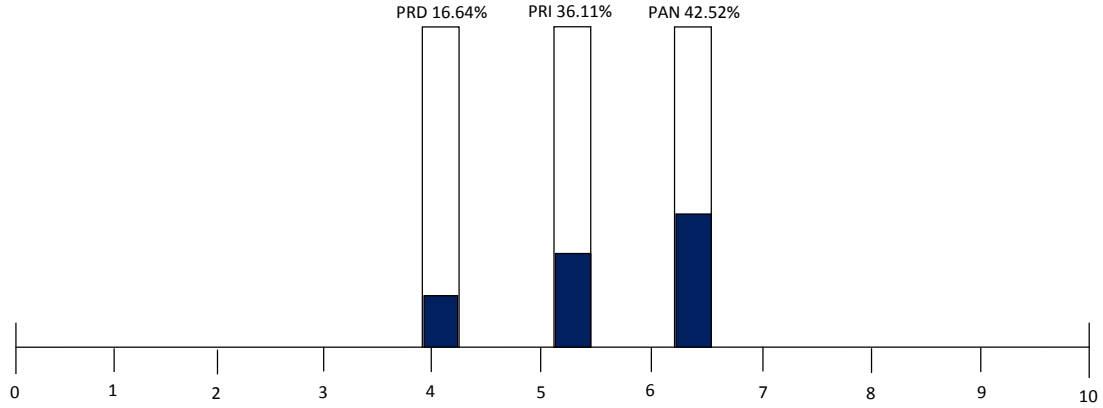


ID Placement	
PRI	5.4
PRD	3.27
PAN	6.45

Total Votes	
PRI	17,181,651
PRD	5,852,134
PAN	9,146,841

2000

2000 President



ID Placement

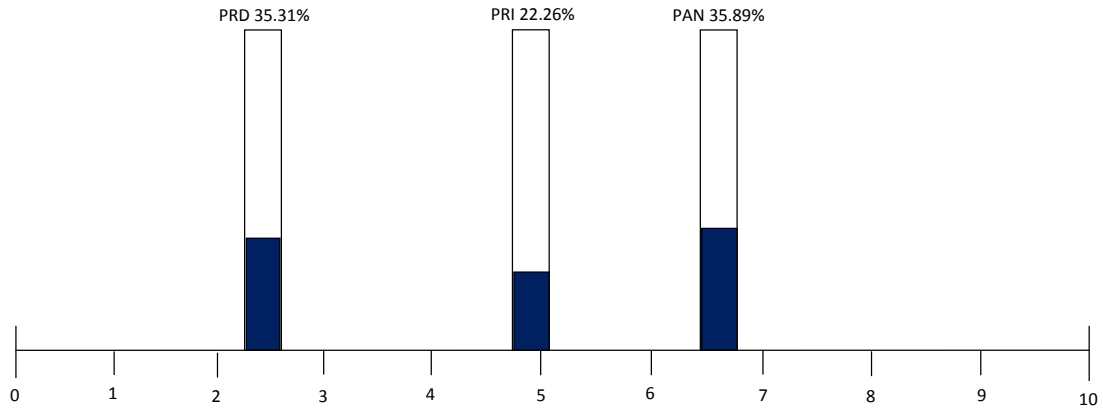
PRI 5.25
PRD 4.18
PAN 6.38

Total Votes

PRI 13,579,718
PRD 6,256,780
PAN 15,989,636

2006

2006 President



ID Placement

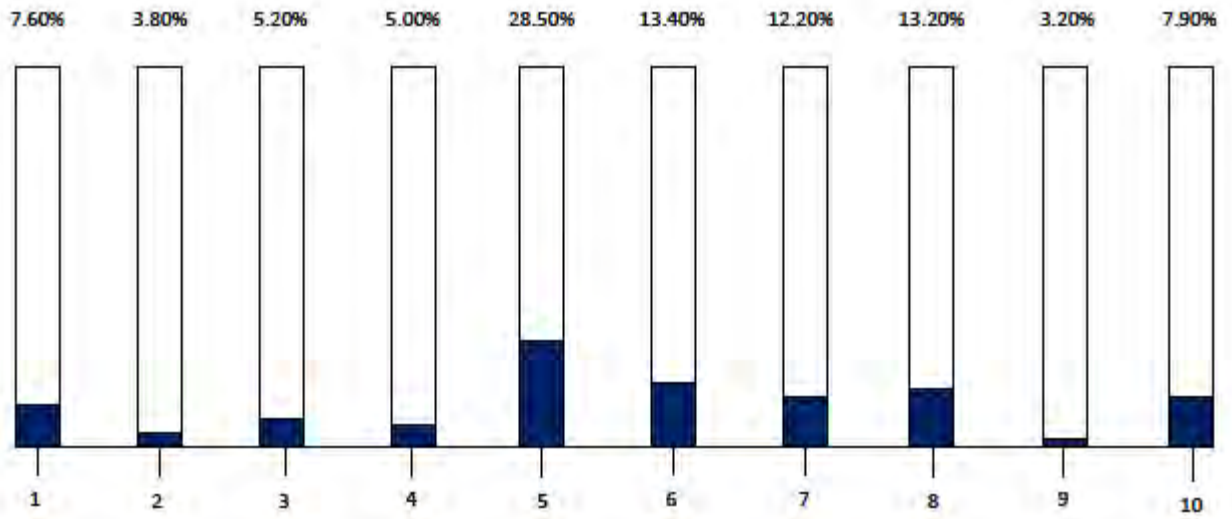
PRI 4.96
PRD 2.44
PAN 6.67

Total Votes

PRI 9,301,441
PRD 14,756,350
PAN 15,000,284

Appendix 4: Mexican Electorate Shape¹²

1996 Self-Positioning

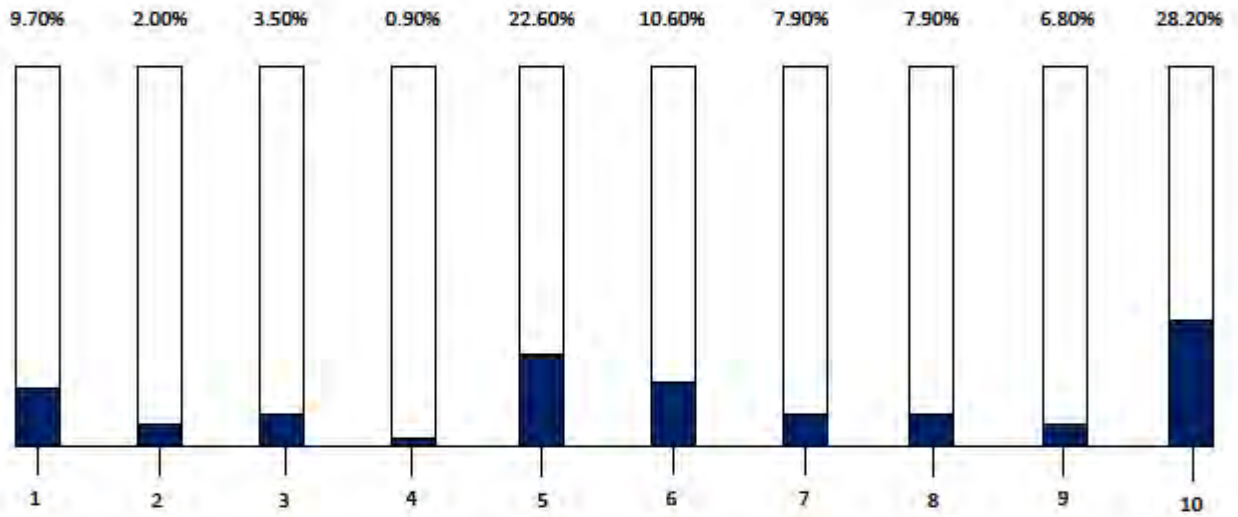


Base: 2,003

Mean: 5.7

¹² Data from World Values Surveys, 1996, 2000, 2005.

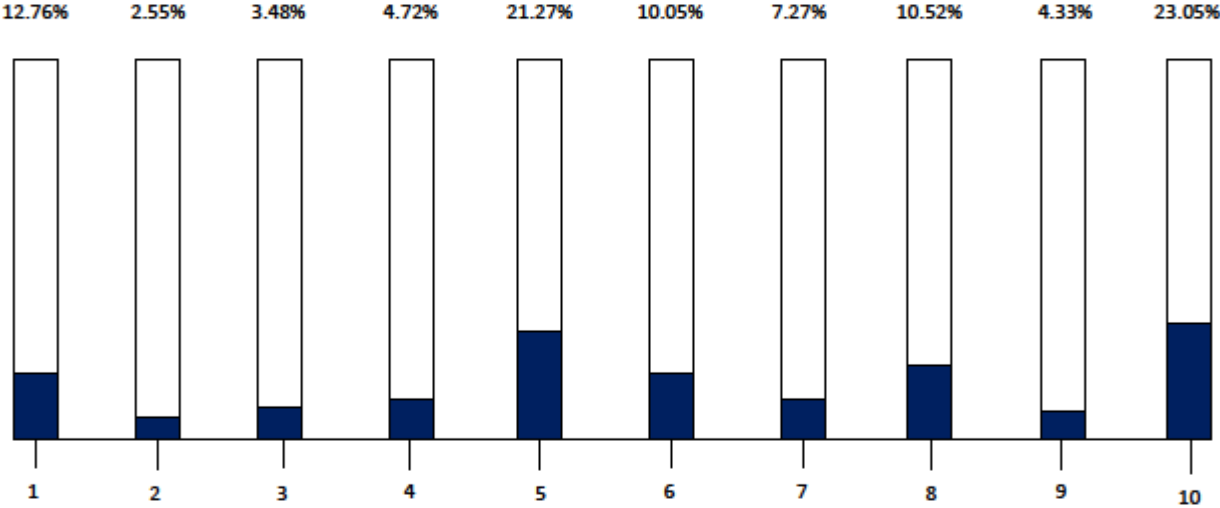
2000 Self-Positioning



Base: 1,022

Mean: 6.7

2005 Self-Positioning



Base: 1,293
Mean: 6.18