Changing Dimensions of National Elections in Mexico

James A. McCann

Professor of Political Science, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, and Visiting Scholar (Fall 2010), Russell Sage Foundation, New York, NY
mccannj@purdue.edu


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1. THE GRADUAL EMERGENCE OF COMPETITIVE MULTIPARTY ELECTIONS

In contemporary liberal democracies, representation consists of temporary and limited delegations of authority from a mass public to government officials. Competitive national elections are uniquely suited for establishing the terms of this delegation (Pitkin 1967, 43). In well-fought electoral campaigns, two dynamics take over. First, candidates and parties have an incentive both to renew connections to traditional constituencies and to reach out to fresh supporters wherever they may be found. In the classic phrasing of E. E. Schattschneider (1975), electoral conflict tends to be contagious; partisan competition and outreach help spark an interest in public affairs among citizens. Second, as new actors and constituencies are mobilized into electoral politics, the lines of conflict are liable to change. Campaigns not only expand the scope of democratic engagement, but can frame and reframe the parameters of decision-making at the ballot box. Ultimately, elections in a democracy have the potential to deliver a collective mandate to the incoming administration – e.g., “turn left,” “turn right,” “stay the course,” or simply “do better than the last team.”

The Mexican Constitution of 1917, passed in the final stages of the Revolution and still in force today after being amended many times, provides for legislative elections every three years and an independently elected president who serves a six-year term. The document recognizes a broad array of democratic and socioeconomic freedoms, including the right to assemble peacefully, to petition the national government, to hold property, to travel freely within the country, to live in adequate housing, to receive an education, and most relevant for this chapter, to vote. Legislation passed in 1918 established voter eligibility requirements and allowed organizations with as few as one-hundred members to register as political parties and nominate candidates for office (Levy and Bruhn 2006, 45-46; Levy and Székely 1983, 66). While many observers in western democracies expressed doubts about the social and economic provisions of the Constitution, the emphasis on electoral participation and uninhibited political

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1 I thank Rod Camp, Byung-Jae Lee, and Katsuo Nishikawa for helpful comments.
contestation within an institutional framework where power would be divided across distinct branches of
government fell squarely in the liberal tradition.

Yet for much of the twentieth century, elections in Mexico did not expand the scope of conflict, as E. E. Schattschneider would have it, nor convey governing mandates. Much to the contrary, electoral processes served to limit conflict and restrict political choices, so that an unexpected mandate emerging from political campaigns and partisan competition was all but impossible. This state of affairs came about through strategic decisions on the part of political elites. In the decade following the adoption of the 1917 Constitution, national governing institutions in Mexico continued to be unstable, and political violence was rampant, particularly during elections. Assassins would take the lives of one sitting president (Venustiano Carranza in 1920) and one president-elect (Álvaro Obregón in 1928). Such an atmosphere prompted Plutarco Elías Calles, who had served a full term as president and remained the leading figure in Mexican politics, to create an extra-constitutional partisan organization in 1929 to manage disputes among regional strongmen, military officials, and other powerful actors. The organization that was formed, the National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario, or PNR), proved to be an extremely effective vehicle for pulling together factions that would otherwise be at swords’ point. In 1937, it became the Party of the Mexican Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, PRM) to reflect changes in its core constituency groups, and nine years later took the name for which it is generally known, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Institucional Revolucionario, PRI). In each incarnation, the party had complete control of the government, incorporating new actors and adopting new policy postures as needed to maintain its hegemonic position. Only towards the end of the century did the PRI start to lose its grip on Mexican politics.

Over the many years in which PRI dominance was rarely questioned much less challenged in elections, millions of citizens turned out to vote. It was generally not political competition that attracted these citizens to the polls, since the results could have been predicted with near-perfect accuracy. In the months leading up to an election, local PRI leaders would stage intensive mobilization drives, liberally handing out tokens of appreciation to stimulate involvement (Ames 1970; Cornelius 1975). From the
standpoint of the regime, high levels of turnout resulting in lopsided victories for candidates of the ruling party provided a measure of democratic legitimacy and reinforced the party’s symbolic identification with the ideals of the Mexican Revolution (Bruhn 1997, 39-41; Crespo 2004; Molinar 1986). Magaloni (2006, 7-10) identifies several other more tangible ways in which electoral politics helped sustain one-party rule. Voting results indicated which areas of the country were most loyal – and most deserving of partisan patronage and other rewards – versus those that needed to be watched. Frequent elections combined with a rule against reelection also allowed elites from diverse backgrounds to circulate in and out of politics. This gave ambitious career-minded office-seekers a reason to contribute to the maintenance of the system rather than militate against it from outside. By routinely winning elections, the ruling party could project an aura of invincibility, which further undermined recruitment into minor opposition parties and impeded their coordination.² Barring unforeseen cataclysmic events, it would have appeared at mid-century that the PRI had a sufficient amount of material and symbolic resources to remain in power indefinitely. For decades the party presided over steady economic growth with relatively little social unrest – an accomplishment that few other Latin American nations could claim – and many observers commended the regime for its ideological flexibility and skill in accommodating a wide array of interests.³

The party was not able, however, to deal effectively with urban protestors in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Demonstrators calling for greater participation and political accountability were violently repressed, much to the dismay of the growing middle class (Middlebrook 1986). In an effort to regain its governing legitimacy, the PRI enacted a series of democratic reform measures. Among other things, these reforms expanded electoral opportunities for opposition parties and increased the size of the federal Congress. The voting age was also lowered to eighteen during this period. Such changes had little

² See Greene (2007) for an extensive treatment of how decades of asymmetrical political competition in Mexico affected the organizational development and strategic behavior of opposition parties.

³ In a 1957 essay in the American Political Science Review, for example, L. Vincent Padgett lauded the PRI for providing not only stability and socioeconomic development, but also a measure of political pluralism where there existed “multiple points of access by which citizen and official can meet to adjust differences and reach new understandings” (1008). On the continued resilience of the PRI as it appeared in the mid-1960s, see Ames (1970). Foreshadowing future events, Ames concluded then that “the dominance of the PRI may be threatened by economic recession or insufficient responsive capability, but these developments have certainly not yet occurred” (167).
practical effect on political competition. While support for the PRI in national elections dropped somewhat due to the increasing presence of opposition forces, the ruling party remained firmly in control.

In the early 1980s, the governing competence of the regime was more profoundly called into question in the wake of a crushing international debt repayment crisis. Mexico essentially declared itself bankrupt following a huge decline in the value of its principal export, petroleum – an action that sent shock waves across all of Latin America and the rest of the developing world. Shortly thereafter, a major earthquake measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale struck Mexico City. The PRI’s response to this disaster was as inadequate as its management of the economy; government officials proved unable to distribute relief supplies efficiently and fairly. Community organizations unaffiliated with the major party rose to the challenge of providing much needed aid to earthquake victims, and in so doing demonstrated the existence of authentic “social capital,” an essential component of democratic engagement and electoral politics in the liberal tradition (Klesner 2009; Levy and Bruhn 2006, 70).

With such governing crises as a backdrop, the ruling party was unable to manage and contain political conflict in advance of the 1988 national elections. The presidential contest that year featured two strong challengers to PRI nominee Carlos Salinas: Manuel Clouthier, an adept campaigner from the center-right National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN), a well-established opposition party with roots in the northern part of the country; and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of a deeply-revered president from the 1930s and former PRI governor of the state of Michoacán who broke with the ruling party in 1987 to become the standard-bearer for several small leftist parties. With much of the Mexican public still reeling from the financial crisis of the early 1980s, polls showed that many voters were seriously considering an alternative to the PRI. Even though the major Mexican media were heavily biased in favor of Salinas, the two opposition candidates – particularly Cárdenas – had no trouble drawing crowds at campaign stops. “The impression caused by…seeing a multitude of fifty thousand souls waiting for Cárdenas – patient, convinced, combative – goes beyond my descriptive capacity. Mexico is on the eve of change,” wrote the political scientist and future government minister Jorge Castañeda (quoted in Preston and Dillon 2004, 158-59).
Change did not come in the form of a partisan transition. Amid credible charges of widespread electoral fraud, the ruling party held onto the presidency and both chambers of Congress in 1988. Nor were the basic ideological orientations of the regime changed. In response to the debt crisis in the early 1980s, the PRI adopted a package of neoliberal policies. After the 1988 election, President Salinas reiterated his support for these policies, and not long into his administration, the president called his counterpart in the U.S., George H.W. Bush, to propose a free-trade pact between the United States and Mexico. What did change was the nature of electoral politics in Mexico. The campaign served as an extended and unscripted moment for candidates outside of the PRI to critique the record of the incumbent, cultivate ties to new constituency groups, and present clear alternative choices to the electorate – a watershed event in the spirit of Schattschneider. Upon taking office, President Salinas responded to critics claiming that the election had been stolen by enacting further democratic reforms, the most significant of which over the long-run being the creation of an electoral institute and a set of electoral courts. This served to decouple as never before the administration of elections from party politics (Eisenstadt 2004; Levy and Bruhn 2006, ch. 3).

For their part, the opposition forces from 1988 continued to press their claims long after Salinas was declared president. In May of 1989, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and supporters of his campaign formed the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD). That same year, the PRI conceded defeat to the PAN in the gubernatorial election of Baja California, an unprecedented milestone for an opposition party. In the midterm elections of 1997, the PRI lost control of the Congress, and Cárdenas was elected mayor of Mexico City. The loss of the presidency to Vicente Fox of the PAN in the 2000 elections completed the PRI’s transformation into “just another” political party, albeit the only one with a significant presence in all parts of the country.

The story of Mexican national elections in recent decades is thus one of increasing contestation and public engagement, and the emergence of new patterns of mobilization and voting choices. In the sections below, I expand on these themes. The contours of electoral politics today are not clearly defined; opportunities for the public to participate have expanded, and outcomes are far less predictable than under
the PRI regime. At this moment the scope and dimensions of partisan conflict in 2012 and beyond could not be forecast with any accuracy.

2. CHANGING CONTOURS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba’s groundbreaking *Civic Culture* (1963) provided the first comprehensive, survey-based portrait of how Mexicans viewed elections, representation, and their role as political actors. Interviews for this study took place in 1959, thirty years after the founding of the ruling party and well before the rise of sustained opposition party mobilization. This work consequently offers an ideal baseline from which to evaluate changes in citizen dispositions towards electoral politics. At the time of the *Civic Culture* surveys, the bulk of the Mexican population lived in rural areas, and the literacy rate was estimated to be 65 percent (Taylor and Hudson 1972). Approximately one-third of the *Civic Culture* respondents would have been old enough to remember the revolutionary period.

Almond and Verba considered Mexico in the 1950s to be a democratic system, but one that was quite different in character from the “Atlantic community” democracies. When compared to citizens in the United States and Great Britain, the typical Mexican was found to care relatively little about national elections. To the extent that politics was salient, local considerations were more important.\(^4\) At the same time, Mexican citizens expressed a great deal of pride in the political system, with the main sources of this pride being the Mexican Revolution and the institution of the presidency. In spite of a general lack of political awareness, Mexicans tended to see themselves as competent to make decisions at the ballot box, a belief that the authors attributed to the participatory ideals of the revolutionary period.\(^5\)

\(^4\) To illustrate, only seven percent of the Mexican sample saw the national government as having a great effect on their lives, as opposed to 41 percent of the Americans and 33 percent of the Britons (46). Half of the Mexican respondents were unable to name a major national party leader or ministry, a far greater proportion than in the U.S. and U.K. (58). Craig and Cornelius (1980) note that Almond and Verba’s decision to gather data in communities larger than 10,000 meant excluding over 60 percent of the electorate from the study. Mexicans living in small rural villages would in all likelihood have been even less engaged in national political affairs. Coleman (1972) reports comparably low levels of interest in politics and knowledge of national figures based on surveys administered in Mexico City in the late 1960s.

\(^5\) In their (1972) study of public opinion and participation in the city of Jalapa, the capital of the state of Veracruz, Fagen and Tuohy present similar findings on political efficacy. Seventy percent of the respondents in a large survey
Culture concludes with the expectation that engagement in national politics and electoral processes would deepen as new conduits for involvement were opened in the future (312).

This expectation about institutional change and mass public response cannot be assessed in a rigorous fashion, since there are no survey archives in Mexico comparable to the long-running American National Election Studies or the British Election Studies. It was not until the 1980s that scientifically sound national surveys of the Mexican public became available to scholars. By then, the nation had become far more urbanized compared to the 1950s, and the literacy rate had risen substantially. The appearance of these polls also coincided with the emergence of divisive political contestation. Analyses of these survey data suggest that in the late-1980s and continuing past the transition to multiparty democracy, the Mexican electorate became more attuned to public affairs and national campaigns. Table 1 gives a brief overview of selected findings from this literature. The first item in this table considers general interest in politics, based on World Values Surveys (1981, 1990), a poll commissioned by the New York Times (1986), Gallup polls (1988, 1991), and the Mexico Panel Studies (2000, 2002, and 2006).

In spring of 1981, only 4 percent of the public expressed great interest in politics; over four out of ten had no interest at all. The percentage of highly interested Mexicans grew by a factor of four at the time of the 1988 electoral eruption. Average levels of interest fell slightly in the early 1990s, but never to what was measured in 1981. Then on the eve of the historic 2000 presidential election, the electorate became more attentive, with only 15 percent expressing no interest in politics. Interest declined slightly in 2002 and remained at this level during the 2006 presidential campaign. This pattern suggests a general stated that they could understand the problems of Jalapa “more-or-less well” or “very well,” a fairly high level of confidence (116). This attitude did not lead, however, to much enthusiasm to follow and take part in politics.


7 On the impact of survey research on Mexican politics, see the essay by Miguel Basáñez and Pablo Paras in this handbook.
upward trend in political engagement over the tumultuous twenty-five year period, with the critical transition points – the presidential elections of 1988 and 2000 – triggering the most interest.\(^8\)

The growing attention to electoral campaigns stands out in greater relief by comparing two items from the *Civic Culture* survey to a poll conducted by the Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in 2009.\(^9\) Over this fifty-year period, the number of citizens who paid no attention to nationwide campaigning dropped from 45 to 13 percent – a striking decline. The electorate also became more accepting of political campaigns in principle, even if they can cause bitterness or fail to provide a sufficient amount of information to the public. Clearly, the Mexican public has become attuned to the ebb and flow of multiparty competition across the country and is more motivated to take part.

**2.1. Public Involvement in Nomination Politics.** As interest in national elections grew from the 1980s to the early-2000s, Mexicans also turned strongly against “top-down” methods for selecting candidates. The traditional procedure that the ruling party used to select its presidential nominee was known as the *dedazo* (finger-tap). Under this most authoritarian of systems for candidate recruitment, an incumbent president nearing the end of his term would pick the PRI standard-bearer for the next round of elections. This decision was taken after consulting with other officials across the different sectors of the party, but the president had the ultimate power to choose. There was no overt public campaigning for the presidential nomination, and no higher authority to which unsuccessful nomination-seekers could appeal (Brandenburg 1964, 146-47; Camp 1984; Castañeda 2000; Edmonds-Poli and Shirk 2009, 77; Grayson 1999). Within the political elite, the *dedazo* method fostered loyalty to the incumbent president and ruling party. Anyone wishing to become the PRI nominee would need to demonstrate his leadership

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\(^8\) Research in the United States and Canada shows that levels of political interest also increased in these two nations from the 1980s to the 1990s, though the trajectory was much less pronounced compared to Mexico. See Inglehart, Nevitte, and Basáñez (1996). On how attention to public affairs in Mexico compares to other established democracies, see also Domínguez and McCann (1996, ch. 2).

\(^9\) I thank Julia Flores of UNAM for sharing these recent data with me prior to their publication in an edited volume on “*The Civic Culture* at 50.”
skills in service to the sitting chief executive.\textsuperscript{10} Nominations for lower-level offices were also historically settled based on the needs of party leaders operating in the proverbial smoke-filled rooms (Wuhs 2006).

Amid the turmoil of the 1980s, however, the \textit{dedazo} proved to be an ineffective mechanism for limiting electoral conflict. In 1986, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and other leftist figures within the PRI formed the “Democratic Current,” an internal pressure group calling for more democratic rules for candidate selection and for a turn away from the neoliberal economic policies of Miguel De la Madrid, the incumbent president. As the 1988 elections approached, these critics found themselves marginalized within the ruling party. At the National Assembly of the PRI in March of 1987, party leaders condemned the Democratic Current movement, but in a move towards greater openness, the national leadership of the PRI publicly interviewed six short-listed candidates for the presidential nomination. Cárdenas was conspicuously absent from the list of invitees. Shortly after Carlos Salinas, one of the six, was designated the PRI nominee, Cárdenas staged his unprecedented insurgent campaign for the presidency.\textsuperscript{11}

As shown in Table 1, on the eve of the historic 1988 presidential election most of the Mexican electorate agreed with the stance of the Democratic Current regarding nomination reforms. Only four percent were content to leave candidate recruitment up to the finger-tap of the president; sixty percent wished to see primary elections to select the PRI nominee.\textsuperscript{12} Such a move would have opened up new lines of political competition and transformed electoral politics in any number of ways. Over time, the desire to democratize candidate selection became even more widespread, as seen in a comparable national

\textsuperscript{10} The Mexican Constitution contains very few restrictions on eligibility to serve as president. The most significant requirement is that the chief executive be Mexican-born. In a comprehensive examination of \textit{presidenciables} (i.e., potentially viable PRI presidential nominees) from the 1930s to the 1980s, Camp (1984) notes that in practice, only married males from the middle class could be seriously considered for the presidential nomination, and since the 1940s, chief executives have been civilians. Contenders from larger and more populous states were more likely to be on the receiving end of the \textit{dedazo}, especially those with a great deal of technical training and connections to well-established political families.

\textsuperscript{11} Bruhn (1997, 67-114) offers a detailed behind-the-scenes account of how the Democratic Current emerged and the reaction of the PRI hierarchy to this challenge.

\textsuperscript{12} This general desire for greater participation in candidate selection did not vary significantly across demographic or socioeconomic groups. Nor were mass-level PRI supporters in 1988 any more likely than opposition supporters to prefer the continued use of the \textit{dedazo}. See Domínguez and McCann (1996) and McCann (2004b).
survey from 2004. In this more recent poll, nearly nine out of ten respondents stated a preference for primary elections, with the vast majority calling for open primaries where all voters could participate. Support for partisan nominating conventions fell significantly, and as in 1988, the number willing to let party leaders make decisions single-handedly remained quite low.

The PRI, PAN, and PRD have not been blind to this growing demand for more decentralized and inclusive nomination procedures, though for understandable reasons the parties have approached nomination reforms with caution. On one hand, the adoption of primaries to choose presidential nominees and other candidates running for lower-level offices can serve the parties’ strategic interests. Open competition over candidate selection might reveal or sharpen the contenders’ campaigning skills (Serra 2008). Parties may also benefit from an increase in confidence and legitimacy following a primary election, and those citizens who take part might well become more inclined to support the party during the general election (Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006; McCann 2004a). Moreover, in many contexts, primary elections could be the least damaging method for resolving divisive internal conflicts over the direction of the party (Kemahlioglu, Weitz-Shapiro, and Hirano 2009). On the other hand, moving towards primary elections entails obvious risks for political parties. In an open fight over candidate selection, ideologically unrepresentative factions may dominate the process, or the competition may become so fierce that the base of the party is ruptured beyond repair. Party leaders in nations undergoing democratic transitions might be especially reluctant to allow rank-and-file members or the public in general to select nominees for office (Field and Siavelis 2008).

In Mexican national elections, the *dedazo* method for selecting presidential nominees has gone the way of the dinosaurs. An alternative system for recruiting candidates, however, has not yet been fully

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13 I thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters – the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.N. Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University – for making this survey available.

14 A preference for open primary elections to choose candidates is now as widespread in Mexico as the United States, where party primaries first emerged. In a large national survey of Americans in 2000, the Gallup organization found that 71 percent of the public believed that parties should hold open primaries, as opposed to closed primaries or some other nomination event. These findings are available at the iPOLL Databank at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
institutionalized. During this transitional period in party politics, the three major parties have experimented with various designs to incorporate the public into candidate selection. In 1999, President Ernesto Zedillo of the PRI opted not to hand-pick the party’s presidential nominee. Instead, the PRI conducted a first-ever national open primary that attracted some ten million participants. This was a remarkably polarizing affair, and some analysts have linked divisiveness over candidate selection to the ruling party’s loss of the presidency in the 2000 general election (Edmonds-Poli and Shirk 2009, 110; Estévez and Poiré 2001; but see McCann 2004a). In advance of the 2006 elections, the PRI held another open primary to select its presidential contender, but this was a primary in name only since one of the two main contestants became mired in scandal and had to withdraw. In both 2000 and 2006, the PAN held closed primaries to choose its presidential nominees; in the latter case, these were sequential regional primaries over six-weeks that were comparable to the U.S. model. The PRD had intended to conduct a semi-open presidential primary to choose its standard-bearer for the 2000 election; participation would be limited to party members, but it would be possible to register with the party on the day of the primary election. Such an event proved to be unnecessary once Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas threw his hat into the ring for a third time. His main rival within the PRD, Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, decided to leave the party rather than continue to seek the nomination. Prior to the 2006 elections, a fully open presidential primary was planned but then also cancelled when it became clear that Andrés Manuel López Obrador faced no opposition in securing the PRD nomination.¹⁵

Given this recent history, it appears certain that in future national elections, the PRI, PAN, and PRD will hold – or attempt to hold – presidential primary elections in some fashion to pull the public closer towards party politics, but the scope of participation and rules of contestation will depend on short-term political calculations and the strategic behavior of the candidates themselves.

2.2. The Voto Remoto. Public opinion surveys in the early 2000s suggested that many Mexicans wished not only to extend participatory opportunities during elections back in time to the point of

¹⁵ For in-depth analyses of candidate recruitment in recent presidential elections, see Bruhn (2004), Langston (2009), and Shirk (2009).
candidate selection, but also to expand the formal boundaries of the electorate so that voters living abroad could take part. Illustrative findings from three national polls are presented at the bottom of Table 1. Over a three-year period (2002-2005), the public favored extending absentee voting rights to Mexicans outside of the country by a consistent margin. A majority – but not a large majority – supported the expansion of the franchise, while approximately one out of three disapproved of such a reform.  

Pollsters included items such as these on survey instruments in the 1990s and early 2000s because the topic of expatriate voting rights became salient as the nation moved towards multiparty democracy. According to the most recent estimates, approximately one-tenth of the Mexican-born population now lives abroad, nearly all in the United States. The somewhat mixed feelings Mexicans express about incorporating emigrants into electoral politics undoubtedly stem at least in part from complex normative questions about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a liberal democracy (Fitzgerald 2006; López-Guerra 2005). Is it appropriate for a migrant to have a say in choosing government officials if he or she will not be directly affected by the policies that those elected officials enact? Is it fair to grant voting rights to individuals who do not fulfill the customary duties of citizenship (e.g., payment of local taxes)? The remittances that Mexico receives from migrants are a leading source of capital for the country. Should this justify extending voting rights to Mexicans living abroad?

Public opinion towards expatriate voting also no doubt reflects political maneuvering in both Mexico and the United States in recent decades. During the presidential campaign of 1988, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas campaigned actively north of the border, holding large rallies in Los Angeles and other locations (Smith 2008). One of the platform goals of the PRD at the time of its founding was the inclusion of Mexicans abroad in national civic life. In the 1990s, hostility towards immigrants in various parts of the United States and measures such as California’s Proposition 187, which sought to bar undocumented aliens from receiving state services, prompted government officials in Mexico to

16 On public attitudes towards enfranchising Mexican voters abroad, see also Campos (2004).

17 Mexicans make up over one-third of the current foreign-born population in the United States, the largest immigrant nationality group in this nation by far.
reconsider longstanding policies regarding nationality and absentee voting rights. The Mexican Congress approved a constitutional reform in 1996 to allow Mexican citizens living abroad to be “dual nationals” and participate in Mexican elections. Legislation to implement absentee balloting in time for the 2000 presidential election was blocked, however, by partisan infighting. Congressional representatives affiliated with the PRI were particularly reluctant to establish administrative procedures for expatriate participation, given the widespread belief that voters from abroad would tend to side with an opposition party (Martínez-Saldaña and Pineda 2002; McCann, Cornelius and Leal 2009).

Upon taking office in 2000, President Fox of the PAN signaled that building transnational bridges to Mexican immigrant communities in the United States would be a priority. In visits to the U.S., the president made a point of speaking to expatriate organizations and doing interviews on Spanish-language media. In these sessions, he used terms such as “heroes,” “cultural ambassadors,” and “Mexico’s gift to the world” to describe expatriates. The legislative stalemate over procedures for transnational voting was finally broken in the summer of 2005, just in time for the 2006 presidential election. Surveys of Mexican immigrants in the United States indicated a rather strong desire among Mexicans who possessed a valid voting credential to take part in these elections from the distance. As in Mexico proper, both Felipe Calderón of the PAN and Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the PRD enjoyed high levels of support among expatriates (Marcelli and Cornelius 2005; McCann, Cornelius, and Leal 2009; Suro and Escobar 2006). Analysts predicted that hundreds of thousands of expatriate ballots would be cast. In the end, a vanishingly small number of Mexicans actually took part from abroad. Only 33,131 absentee ballots arrived, much less than one-percent of the Mexican-born adult population that resides in the United States.18

18 In contrast to surveys showing that Mexicans abroad were fairly evenly split between Calderón and López Obrador, the vote count was decisively in favor of Calderón (58 percent versus 34 for López Obrador). No allegations of significant fraud were raised in the case of expatriate balloting. The discrepancy between the official vote count and preferences expressed in surveys instead suggests that transnational supporters of the PAN were more readily mobilized.
The high costs of balloting played a major part in driving down participation. When explaining voting turnout in conventional electoral contexts, political scientists have long conceptualized involvement as a function of costs and benefits. As costs increase, fewer voters take part. Under the 2005 transnational balloting reform, transnational participation was exceedingly expensive. Not only did prospective voters need to possess a valid electoral credential, a document that could be obtained if necessary only by physically returning to Mexico, but absentee ballots had to be solicited by January 15, 2006 – nearly six months in advance of the presidential election. Expatriate voting was limited to postal ballots that had to be sent via international registered mail, another significant impediment to participation. Given all these expenses, it is no wonder that only a select minority took part. As one might expect, expatriate turnout rates were significantly higher in areas of the United States that were more affluent and where immigrants were more highly educated (Leal, Lee, and McCann 2010). Since the 2006 presidential election, migrant organizations in the U.S., the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, IFE) in Mexico, and Mexican lawmakers have continued to explore potential mechanisms for transnational participation in 2012 and beyond.19

2.3. Trends in Voter Participation in National Elections. As multiparty competition emerged in Mexico, the Mexican public grew more attentive to politics and national campaigns. Nearly all Mexicans wished for greater opportunities to participate in candidate selection decisions, and most supported enlarging the boundaries of the electorate to incorporate compatriots living abroad. Have these changing postures led to a marked increase in turnout during general elections? Attention to politics and a principled commitment to democracy are widely recognized determinants of electoral participation across the industrialized democratic nations (Downs 1957; Franklin 1996). Within Mexico, however, turnout rates have remained fairly flat throughout the transitional period. Rising levels of engagement in politics are not associated with a marked increase in general election participation, as seen in Figure 1.

19 One possibility under active consideration is electronic voting. See Romero Flores and Téllez Valdés (2010). For an analysis of expatriate voting procedures and participation across several Latin American cases, see Escobar (2007).
Between 1964 and 1982, the turnout rate averaged 61 percent. Leaving out the somewhat anomalous case of 1988, turnout averaged 63 percent between 1994 and 2006, a relatively small gain when put alongside the changes in public attitudes towards campaigns and elections since the 1950s.  

The absence of a major rise in turnout percentages as the PRI regime gave way to a competitive democratic system could be due in part to a particular form of “measurement error.” In the days of dominant-party rule, PRI officials were free to engage in ballot-stuffing if needed, which would have inflated the official turnout statistics (Klesner and Lawson 2001, 27). If accurate measures of participation rates were available for this period, the increase in turnout in presidential elections following the watershed 1988 campaign and the subsequent creation of the Federal Electoral Institute might be steeper.

Aside from ballot-tampering, changing patterns of mobilization in Mexico – with some trends working to demobilize parts of the electorate and other forces stimulating turnout – could account for the general national-level stability in participation rates. As noted above, turnout in any electoral setting depends not only on a desire to follow and take part in public affairs, but also on a potentially wide array of costs and benefits. In the words of Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995, 15), citizens do not take part because they cannot (i.e., they lack the personal resources to become politically engaged), because they do not want to participate, or because nobody asked. This latter condition draws our attention to the

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20 These percentages are based on the total number of potentially eligible voters (i.e., the voting-age population). For making longitudinal comparisons, this measurement is preferable to the percentage of registered citizens who participated in a given year, since voter registration rates in Mexico have varied a great deal over the last two decades. To illustrate, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA, an intergovernmental organization based in Sweden), approximately 84 percent of the Mexican voting-age population was duly registered in 1994. If turnout is defined as the number of ballots cast divided by the number of registered voters, the rate of participation appears to be extraordinarily high at 79 percent – significantly greater than similarly-calculated figures in 2000 (64 percent) and 2006 (59 percent). This apparent steep decline in involvement from 1994 to 2006 is due in large part to changes in voter registration. By 2000, the registration rate had risen to 94 percent of the electorate, and in 2006, the count of registered voters actually exceeded the size of the voting-age population, a statistical oddity that can occur if records are not updated frequently (International IDEA 2010). When the voting-age population is the baseline for estimating turnout, as in Figure 1, this artifact is removed. (See Alberro 2006 for a fuller discussion of voter participation measurements in Mexico.) We see in this figure that the level of involvement in 1994 remains quite robust when estimated using voting-age population as the baseline, but is not dramatically different from the rate in 2006, 1982, and 1970.
critical role of party organizations in getting out (or not getting out) the vote. During elections in the established democracies, parties inform voters of the stakes of the contest, disseminate information, and reinforce psychological attachments to the organization, among other things, all of which reduce the costs of involvement and raised the perceived rewards of turning out.

In pre-transition Mexico, the PRI did all this during elections and much more. Through its corporatist networks, the ruling party could distribute all manner of material benefits in exchange for support.\textsuperscript{21} The targets of this clientelistic mobilization tended to be the poor and less educated living in more rural areas of the country. For decades, these activities were effective in turning out the vote. They also inverted the usual relationship between socioeconomic resources and participation that is observed in other political systems. In most electoral contexts around the world, the more highly educated and more affluent are more likely to turn out. Citizens living in cities are also often more apt to participate compared to those in rural areas. Under the PRI, however, there tended to be no relationship or a negative relationship between socioeconomic status and voting.\textsuperscript{22}

The mobilization effects of the PRI during this period not only flipped or attenuated conventional relationships between resources and participation, but also lessened the relationship between political interest and involvement. Mexicans who genuinely supported the ruling party based on its governing record and symbolic connection to revolutionary ideals would have had every reason to take part in elections. On the other hand, those who followed politics closely but favored an opposition party would have been less inclined to participate. Why turn out for a party that would have had little to no chance of

\textsuperscript{21} Cornelius (2004, 48) notes that local caciques affiliated with the PRI would distribute everything from small household appliances to land titles and public sector jobs.

\textsuperscript{22} In survey research conducted in Mexico City well before the democratic transition, for example, Cornelius (1975, 94) calculated a statistically insignificant correlation of -.05 between turning out in elections and one’s level of education. In this study, occupational status was also negatively correlated with voting, but there was a modest positive relationship between how well off the respondent’s family was and participation. Davis (1983) provides comparable survey findings regarding turnout and SES based on a sample of Mexican workers. Statistical analyses at the level of districts or states also show only a modest or no relationship between standard measures of socioeconomic development and turnout rates in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s; see, e.g., Ames (1970), Klesner and Lawson (2001), and Lawson and Klesner (2004).
winning? Opposition mobilization during elections was further impeded by the fact that the PRI was not above rigging an election outcome if it could not win honestly.\textsuperscript{23}

With the move in the 1990s towards a secret ballot and nonpartisan oversight of electoral management, Mexicans of all political leanings could be more confident that votes would be duly counted. The sustained multiparty competition following the 1988 campaign and the eventual fall of the PRI-regime dramatically changed the “cost-benefit” calculation underlying participation. After losing control of many state and local offices, the federal Congress, and the presidency, the PRI could no longer offer the kind of benefits it had at its disposal in earlier generations. The adoption of neoliberal economic reforms beginning in the 1980s and continuing to this day further limited state patronage opportunities.

Research on voter participation in the 2000 presidential election and beyond suggests that turnout now tends to be shaped by factors that should be quite familiar to students of electoral politics worldwide, such as:

- Socioeconomic and demographic variables that allow Mexicans to bear the typical “costs” of political participation (e.g., education level, age, gender, and household affluence).

- Connections to religious organizations and other community groups; such “social capital” readily spills over into participation during elections.\textsuperscript{24}

- Attention to campaigns and exposure to the mass media.

- The intensity of personal identification with the PAN, PRI, or PRD.

- Describing oneself in ideological terms (i.e., self-placement on the “left” or “right”).

- Having a positive impression of one or more of the major candidates running for office.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} On the impact of perceived electoral fraud on voting turnout, see Coleman (1972), Domínguez and McCann (1996), McCann and Domínguez (1998), and Simpser (2008). Widespread doubts about the integrity of electoral processes may well have contributed to the exceptionally low turnout in 1988. Klesner (1997, 27) further suggests that when the PRI had difficulty mobilizing supporters that year, government officials engaged in \textit{post facto} discarding of opposition votes to retain its margin of victory. This would also help explain why the official tally of participation was so low. For a broad overview of perceptions of political corruption in Latin America and the impact of these perceptions on democratic legitimacy, see Seligson (2005).

\textsuperscript{24} On the role of the Catholic Church in fostering a deeper appreciation for democracy and electoral politics in the years leading up to the 2000 transition, see Camp (1997, ch. 3). Some bishops, for example, declared that a failure to vote without reasonable cause was a sin, since it would be an “injury against the common good” (61). Moreover, Church officials condemned as sinful any attempt on the part of political leaders to intimidate voters or create a climate of fear during elections.
These mobilizing forces have to a large extent taken the place of older mechanisms of corporatist inclusion. This makes electioneering potentially more competitive and less corrupt. Yet biases in turnout stemming from socioeconomic status, access to political information, and other factors raise concerns about the representativeness and fairness of electoral outcomes – the same kinds of concerns that political scientists have raised for decades in the established liberal democracies.

Many authors also note that in spite of the sweeping institutional changes that have taken place in Mexico, various legacies of an authoritarian past may continue to influence decisions over whether to turn out or not in national elections. Given the history of fraudulent vote counts, attitudes regarding the trustworthiness of political authorities appear to loom large in models of participation, seemingly larger than in comparable studies in established western democracies (Buendía and Somuano 2003; Levin and Alvarez 2009; Moreno 2009; Nishikawa 2010). Klesner (2009) further notes that peasants in Mexico vote more frequently than would be expected based on their socioeconomic profile, which might be an indication that the corporatist mechanisms of rural mobilization from yesteryear have not completely faded.

More generally, a number of recent studies have examined whether massive federal welfare and educational programs created in the 1990s and early 2000s stimulate turnout in a way that follows in the footsteps of old-fashioned mobilization in the pre-transition era. Many recipients of federal assistance may sense an implicit, familiar bargain: to keep the aid coming, one should turn out on behalf of the benefactors. Much further research is needed on the factors that foster participation in Mexican national

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26 See also Poiré (2001).

27 See, e.g., De la O (2006), Díaz-Cayeros, Estévez, and Magaloni (2009), Green (2005), and Holzner (2009).
elections, and the extent to which Mexico’s unique historical circumstances and institutional structures make the “costs and benefits” of voting in this case exceptional compared to other democracies.

3. CHANGING ELEMENTS OF ELECTORAL CHOICES

The presidential election of 2006 offered markedly different choices to the Mexican electorate. The two front-runners, Calderón and López Obrador, carried the imprimatur of parties that had become increasingly polarized over economic and social issues. The candidates themselves differed markedly in their style of campaigning, but both were seen as comparably effective leaders. On the eve of the election, many Mexicans believed that the nation’s economy was improving, and that their own personal financial situation was getting better, but the majority perceived a holding pattern. One out of six believed that times were getting worse (Moreno 2009, 248).

Research on decision-making at the ballot box in that July 2 election highlights these various considerations. Mexicans who were pessimistic about the progress of the economy were somewhat more inclined to back López Obrador, an understandable move given that the incumbent president and Felipe Calderón were from the same party. Issue preferences and ideological leanings also played a part in voting choices, though the Mexican public is not nearly as divided on most policies as political elites. Voters who were confident that the North American Free Trade Agreement brought benefits to Mexico, for example, were more likely to support Calderón, while those who were more concerned about poverty in the country leaned towards López Obrador. Personal impressions of the presidential candidates were quite relevant as well. As with citizens in many other democracies, Mexicans vote for those leaders whom they like, trust, and admire. Moreover, identifying with one of the three major parties (i.e., labeling oneself panista, priista, or perredista) overlapped to a considerable degree with voting choices in 2006. These factors by no means constitute an exhaustive list of forces that shaped the vote, but they are recurring themes in the academic literature on this election.28

28 See Moreno (2009) and the works in the following edited volumes: Beltrán (2009); Benton (2009); Domínguez, Lawson, and Moreno (2009); Klesner (2007).
One element of choice that is absent from models of electoral behavior in 2006 is what has been termed the “regime” cleavage. This is a significant departure from earlier elections. In studies of voting choices from the 1980s to the 2000 presidential contest, the PRI was the central frame of reference for citizens. Would an opposition party be as capable as the PRI in managing the economy and massive state bureaucracy? Would there be a great deal of social unrest if the PRI were to lose power? Is the ruling party’s hold on power secure, or is it slipping? Surveys conducted over this period showed that Mexicans varied in responses to such questions. That many citizens would have questioned the regime’s competence and viability is not hard to comprehend. The policymaking crises of the early 1980s, followed later by the devastating collapse of the peso in the mid-1990s undercut the party’s claim that it was uniquely suited to govern Mexico. Judgments regarding the PRI and the trajectory of the regime formed the principal line dividing the electorate, shaping outcomes in both presidential and midterm congressional elections (Domínguez and McCann 1996; Greene 2007; Magaloni 2006; Paolino 2005).

If the PRI had not been the dominant party possessing a multitude of what Greene (2007) terms “hyper-incumbency advantages,” national elections in the 1980s and 90s would have been excellent opportunities for partisan transition via retrospective voting (Fiorina 1981). However, even in these tough times, the ability of the PRI to distribute patronage tied many voters to the party. The ruling party also had tight connections to all the major media (Greene 2007; Lawson 2002). The typical Mexican would therefore have been much less knowledgeable about the PAN, PRD, and other opposition parties. The fact that only a tiny sliver of the population would have been able to recall a time when the PRI was not in power further impeded opposition mobilization. Risk-averse Mexicans in the 1980s and 90s might reasonably have decided that an incumbent party that had been in power for generations was preferable to any of the opposition forces, especially given that the PRI could point to many policymaking successes over its long history (Cinta 1999; Greene 2007; Magaloni 2006; Morgenstern and Zechmeister 2001).^29

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^29 Magaloni (2006) posits that younger Mexicans were more apt to abandon the PRI during the transition to multiparty democracy because in their lifetimes, the ruling party’s record in government would have been far more mixed than for older Mexicans.
Since the PRI historically occupied an amorphous centrist position along the ideological continuum running from the Keynsian-statist left to the *laizzez faire* right, opposition parties were forced to compete with it from one side of the spectrum or the other. This impeded the emergence of a unified partisan bloc against the PRI (Greene 2007). The kinds of candidates, leaders, and activists who were drawn into the PRD and PAN tended to be motivated by strong commitments to policy agendas. Not only was it difficult for such actors to collaborate with members of another opposition party, but over time the recruitment of policy-minded elites into these blocs made each party less attractive to the general public. Most Mexicans in the 1980s and 90s did not interpret politics in strongly ideological terms (Domínguez and McCann 2006, ch. 3). In this period, voters who were skeptical of neoliberal reforms were to an extent drawn towards Cárdenas and the PRD, while the PAN tended to attract citizens who favored such policies. The effects of these attitudes, however, were dwarfed by the impact of beliefs about the PRI and the regime. Simulations of voting choice probabilities in 1988 and 1991 demonstrate that ideological leanings meant little to voters who thought the PRI remained competent and strong.

As the 2000 elections approached, Vicente Fox positioned himself effectively as a relatively non-ideological agent of change. Indeed, the electoral coalition he formed was christened “Alliance for Change.” Fox accomplished this by running a highly personalized, American-style national campaign well before seeking the nomination of the PAN (Shirk 2005). Rather than run on issues per se, Fox stressed his leadership credentials. This proved to be an effective sales pitch (Poiré and Magaloni 2004). Fox portrayed himself as a safe, less controversial alternative to the PRI, making the election primarily about “regime change.” The PAN nominee would have been an approachable alternative for many voters by virtue of the fact that by the time of the 2000 elections, the regime was already well along the path of change. In the late 1990s, approximately half of the population lived in municipalities governed by one of the opposition parties (Eisenstadt 2004), and the ruling party had lost control of the national legislative
branch. Compared to the 1980s, a president from outside of the PRI would have been much easier at this juncture for risk-averse Mexicans to contemplate.\(^3^0\)

In future presidential contests, the many elements of choice that surfaced in 2006 – retrospective appraisals of the economy, issue stances and ideologies, candidate trait perceptions, and partisanship – will almost certainly continue to be relevant. The meaning and weighting of these different factors in the citizen’s voting calculus will likely depend, however, on the personal attributes of the nominees and the strategic decisions of parties and groups. In research on electoral behavior in the established western democracies, it is common to differentiate between long-term determinants of the vote (i.e., variables that are in place well before campaigns begin and tend to exert consistent causal effects on choices year after year) versus short-term determinants that are relevant in a particular political environment.\(^3^1\) In Mexico, where the norms of contestation and parameters of debate are more dynamic, it may take many cycles of multiparty competition before such clear-cut distinctions might be made.

4. **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I have suggested that the dimensions of electoral politics in Mexico have expanded in many directions with the emergence of competitive multiparty democracy. Attempts to incorporate the public in the selection of candidates have lengthened campaigns by many months. In the last presidential election, for example, the official start of the campaign was to have been January 18, 2006. Yet through much of 2005, news of candidate nominations and political infighting related to the elections filled the airwaves. The Federal Electoral Institute imposed a “Christmas truce” in campaigning beginning on December 11, 2005, the day before the Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, continuing until

\(^{3^0}\) Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who sought the presidency for a third time in 2000, was unshakably linked to the PRD and its leftist platform. It would not have been possible for him to run the type of non-ideological, personality-centered campaign that Fox did.

\(^{3^1}\) This is the basis of the classic “Michigan Model” of voting choices in the United States (Campbell et al. 1960). In the U.S. context, party identification is typically viewed as the key long-term determinant of the vote. In Mexico, studies have found that partisanship is not as stable, and its meaning and effects can vary based on campaign-specific factors (see, e.g., Guardado Rodríguez 2009; McCann and Lawson 2003).
January 18. Not surprisingly, such a truce was impossible to enforce. As in other nations, efforts to democratize candidate selection in Mexico have contributed to the blurring of the line separating periods of “governance” from moments of “electoral campaigning.” In future national elections, the major parties will likely seek to involve hundreds of thousands if not millions of citizens in nominations. Much additional research is needed on the theoretical and practical implications of this mobilization. Does open conflict over candidate selection weaken a political party or undermine its policymaking platform? Or can mass participation in nomination politics be a source for party renewal and legitimacy?

When the position of the PRI started to slip and multiparty competition grew in intensity, the timeline of electoral politics also became longer due to post-electoral challenges of the results, occurrences that would have been unthinkable in the heyday of the ruling party (Eisenstadt 2004). In the early years of the protracted democratic transition, opposition parties would often engage in bargaining and protests following an election, with the aim of persuading the PRI to accept a loss. The PAN, which was perceived as the “loyal opposition party” in contrast to the PRD, was far more successful in this game. Years later in the waning days of the PRI-regime, disputes over the conduct of campaigns or concerns about balloting irregularities were increasingly aired in newly-created electoral courts, rather than resolved behind the scenes. The final stages of the 2006 presidential campaign show the extent to which judicial oversight has become an integral part of electoral politics (and post-election politics) in Mexico. After coming in second by a razor-thin margin in the official vote count, Andrés Manuel López Obrador and supporters in the PRD continued to campaign for the presidency, charging that the outcome was fraudulent. For two months, electoral authorities reviewed the count. Some irregularities were ultimately uncovered, but these were deemed insufficient to warrant overturning the outcome of the election.32 Although López Obrador lost in court, he was successful in reinforcing feelings of alienation and distrust on the part of many Mexicans, particularly those on the left who could remember the serious electoral fraud that was committed in 1988 (Schedler 2007).

32 This was the consensus among international election observers as well.
The Mexican government responded to critics by enacting a large set of reforms in 2007 that are designed to level the playing field in future national elections. Among other things, these reforms grant political parties free airtime during campaigns, limit presidential communication and activities during the election, and require greater transparency in partisan fundraising. Electoral authorities will also monitor campaign advertising and speeches, punishing candidates and parties that “denigrate” or “slander” opponents. It remains to be seen whether such regulations will have their intended effect of enriching political discourse during campaigns. Many academic commentators have expressed doubts about these reforms, especially the attempt to prohibit negative campaigning. In 2012 and beyond, it will be important for political scientists to monitor the content of campaign communication. Will these new rules change the way candidates and parties reach out to the public? Will citizens become better informed and more active? Or will the reforms end up impeding mobilization into politics, as some critics predict?

The boundaries of national elections have also become wider in a formal sense through efforts to include Mexican voters living outside of the country. If more effective procedures were devised to incorporate the large percentage of emigrants who express interest in participating from the distance, the number of ballots cast in presidential elections could grow by hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Little research in political science has been done on the implications of such an expansion of the franchise. When choosing candidates for president, would expatriate voters base their decisions on issues or considerations that are distinct from the concerns of typical citizens in Mexico? This is certainly possible, given the very different living arrangements of Mexicans living abroad, and the fact that for legal and logistical reasons, candidates and parties cannot engage in transnational campaigning. If the political choices of expatriates did in fact differ from those of the conventional electorate, what would be the implications for representation and accountability?

Finally, in a less formal sense, we should recognize that the scope of electoral politics today is wider compared to the *Civic Culture* era. Substantially greater numbers of Mexican citizens follow national campaigns, and the public is by and large committed to the principle of mass democratic

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33 See, e.g., Castañeda and Morales (2008) and Serra (2009).
inclusion. The transition away from dominant-party governance has opened up new potential lines of choice for voters. It will be vitally important in future national elections for scholars to continue assessing the factors that shape participation and voting decisions, and the ways in which campaigns can affect these actions. Are citizens at the ballot box seeking to reward leaders for past success, punish them for failure, point policymakers in new directions, reaffirm an attachment to a political party or group, or send some other signal? As in every other democracy, the candidates who are successful in these contests are sure to claim a particular mandate for governance. Academic researchers are uniquely suited – and, indeed, ethically obligated – to examine and clarify such claims.

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Table 1. Public Dispositions towards National Campaigns and Electoral Processes (%)

Rising Levels of Political Engagement

*General level of interest in politics [Ns range between 974 and 3,053]*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great (4)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some (3)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little (2)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>None (1)</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.16</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.26</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.22</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.12</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.41</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.32</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“*What about the campaigning that goes on at the time of a national election? Do you pay much attention to what goes on, just a little or none at all?*” [Percentage who pay no attention]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>campaigns</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“*Some people feel that campaigning is needed so the public can judge candidates and issues. Others say it causes so much bitterness and is so unreliable that we’d be better off without it. What do you think? Is it needed, or would we be better off without it?*” [N = 1,007 in 1959 and 2,252 in 2009]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>campaigns</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better off</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depends / not</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Growing Desire for Primary Elections to Select Candidates

“*How should the PRI choose its presidential nominee?*” [N = 2,960]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1988</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary elections</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Conventions</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Prerogative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“*How would you like the political parties to select their candidates?*” [N=1,372]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open primary elections</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed primary elections</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party conventions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party leaders make selections</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Continued

Support for Transnational Electoral Participation

*Are you in favor or opposed to allowing Mexicans who currently live abroad to vote in federal elections in Mexico? [Ns =960]*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov 2002</th>
<th>Aug 2004</th>
<th>Feb 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approve</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disapprove</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Voter Turnout, 1964 to 2006 (%)

Note: These percentages were calculated by dividing the official turnout count by the voting-age population. Source: International IDEA (2010).