

**Changing Campaign Strategies in Mexico:
The Effects of Electoral Reforms on Political Parties**

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The electoral system in Mexico has sustained numerous reforms over the last two decades. As early as 1963, representation was extended to Mexico's small opposition parties and during the 1990s the electoral code has been revised almost yearly. But in 1977, a pivotal electoral reform, the *Ley de Organizaciones Políticas y Procesos Electorales* (LOPPE), introduced a form of proportional representation directly to the electoral system. This study looks at the particular effects of these reforms on the strategies of opposition parties. I argue that the reformed institutions provided new opportunities for the opposition parties, enabling them to develop new and more effective strategies. Thus, the ruling party inadvertently helped the opposition parties to overcome the massive obstacles in their path, such as fraud, campaign financing, and the ruling party's control of patronage. The outcome has been an increase in the levels of competition in the electoral arena, which has reinforced the move to new strategies, and in fact, has forced the ruling party to adopt new strategies as well.

This study is composed of two parts. The first section details briefly the reforms of 1963, 1972, and 1977, and the corresponding increase in representation and vote share secured by the opposition parties. The second section examines closely the change in the political parties themselves. The opportunity to gain elective office transformed the opposition parties from ineffectual pressure groups or co-opted, regime supporters to serious political parties aimed at securing elective office. This is most clearly observed in the way that these parties have changed their behavior during elections. The ruling party has responded to the pressures of competition as well, often combining the new strategies of the opposition with its old machine party tactics. By exploring these changes, I hope to demonstrate how institutional reforms can lead to real and substantive change in the functioning of a political system.

This analysis of campaign strategies in Mexico focuses on the role that the electoral system has in influencing the actions of political parties, especially during elections. It is centered on two basic assumptions. First, politicians are motivated foremost by the desire to win

elective office. (Ames 1987; Fiorina 1977; Geddes 1994; Mayhew 1974) This does not preclude a politician having an ideological or political agenda, a desire to do good for his constituency, or any other goals. However, they are secondary to the goal of winning office, and, in fact, these goals are often best accomplished by winning office. (Geddes 1994: 8) Second, the institutions within which politicians operate affect the types of strategies they use. Institutions constrain behavior by barring a strategy choice, changing the reward of a particular strategy, or introducing new strategy options. The institutions are the rules of the game; and in the case of elections, the electoral system determines the rules of the election game, including what types of campaign strategies will be most effective. In Mexico, the rules have been changed, and the outcome has been a situation where opposition parties can expect to win seats if they can campaign effectively, even despite the serious obstacles that remain in the political system.

As opposition parties have responded to new opportunities, there have been changes in several areas of electoral behavior. First, candidate selection becomes centered on picking a winning candidate rather than satisfying the demands of party activists. (Kalt and Zupan 1993) Second, in districts that approach two-party competition, parties will move to issue-oriented campaigns over ideological diatribes or systemic critiques, and party platforms will merge on the median voter. (Downs 1954) Finally, parties will form coalitions with mass-based groups like social movements, or with other political parties to maximize the vote, rather than pursue the highly fragmented and ideologically divisive strategies used before the reforms. Parties that are more competitive, that is, successful at winning political office, will pursue new campaign strategies more ardently. Less competitive parties will either cease to exist or continue using the older tactics. In areas of greater competition, these changes will be most noticeable and conversely, in areas of little competition, campaigning practices will be relatively unchanged. Investigating the changed strategies will comprise the greater part of this paper, but first, the next section outlines the electoral reforms and their effects on party representation.

Electoral Reforms 1963-1977

Electoral reform in Mexico can best be understood as fulfilling the need of the ruling party to maintain its hegemonic control and the legitimacy of the political system. (Molinar Horcasitas 1996) By the 1990s, the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) had to rely on the support of one of the opposition parties in congress to pass a law, changing the dynamic of reforms. Prior to PRI's loss of two-thirds majority in congress, however, reforms were aimed at whatever the ruling party perceived to be its largest threat. During the 1940s and 1950s, PRI was most concerned with factionalism within its ranks and the potential for defectors and their supporters to endorse the next defector, and eventually to erode its electoral majority. During this period, the electoral law made it prohibitively difficult to form and to register a political party, both by proscribing some leftist parties and maintaining high thresholds for legal registration of political parties.

The result of these developments in the electoral system was the expected drop in factionalism, but also significantly the serious depletion of other opposition parties. By the 1960s, the ruling party found itself facing a crisis of legitimacy. Two of the opposition parties, PPS and PARM, were parastatals, meaning that they maintained separate registration, but received government funding and supported PRI candidates in elections. The third opposition party, PAN, had become a "loyal opposition," in the sense that it participated in the system by acting as vocal critic and yet, it legitimated the authoritarian system by running candidates in elections it was destined to lose. In 1961, these parties held less than four percent of the of 178 seats (elected by plurality elections in single-member districts) in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower legislative house.

The series of electoral reforms that began in 1963 and culminated in 1977 addressed this potential source of degeneration of the political system by increasing the representation of opposition parties in congress. This should not be considered a maneuver by the ruling party to transition to a more democratic system. Rather, the series of reforms were aimed at consolidating

PRI's hold over the system by giving the opposition parties access to political office, making the system seem more inclusive, and thus legitimate, without allowing them substantive power. (Barquin 1986; Middlebrook 1986; Molinar Horcasitas 1996)

The first reform in 1963 introduced the *diputados de partido* seats, which were supplementary seats that would help to approach proportionality of representation in congress. Minority parties were allotted five deputy positions for the first 2.5 percent of the vote and one more position for each additional .5 percent up to a total of twenty deputy positions. If a minor party won any of the plurality seats, these would be included in the total of twenty. Between 1961 and 1964, the opposition was able to increase its representation in congress by 29 seats to a total of 35, almost 17 percent of the legislative seats. The opposition parties maintained this position after the elections of 1967 and 1970. A further reform in 1972 lowered the minimum vote needed to 1.5 percent and raised the total seats possible to 25 deputy positions per party. Opposition parties managed to increase their share of the seats to a total of 51 seats or 21 percent of the legislature in 1973, and to 40 seats or 18 percent of the legislature in 1976. Even so, significant electoral barriers persisted, deterring opposition parties from mounting serious campaigns during elections.

Table 1 – Source INEGI

Distribution of Seats in the Chamber of Deputies by Political Party (%)												
	PRI	PAN	PPS	PARM	PDM	PCM-PRD	PST-PFCRN	PRT	PMT	PT	Opp. Total	Opp. Vote
1961	96%	3%	1%	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	4%	
1964	83%	10%	5%	2%	--	--	--	--	--	--	17%	14%
1967	83%	10%	5%	2%	--	--	--	--	--	--	17%	16%
1970	84%	9%	5%	2%	--	--	--	--	--	--	16%	17%
1973	79%	10%	8%	3%	--	--	--	--	--	--	21%	22%
1976	83%	9%	5%	4%	--	--	--	--	--	--	18%	15%
1979	74%	11%	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	--	--	--	26%	26%
1982	73%	12%	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%	--	--	--	27%	31%
1985	72%	10%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1.5%	1.5%	--	28%	32%
1988	52%	20%	7%	6%	--	7%	8%	--	--	--	48%	49%
1991	64%	18%	2%	3%	--	14%	5%	--	--	--	46%	39%
1994	60%	24%	--	--	--	14%	--	--	--	2%	40%	50%

Mexico's political system continued to be dominated by the ruling party and this created several obstacles for opposition parties. First, the reforms did not address the ruling party's complete control of state resources. Second, the reforms offered the opposition representation for its small share of the vote, but they did not make it easier for the opposition parties to win plurality seats. Thus, there continued to be a cap on the opposition's representation, protecting the ruling party's control in the rubber-stamp legislature. Third, important opposition parties remained outside the electoral arena. In addition, it seemed that the electoral system was failing to capture the dominant political trends of the turbulent 1970s. Increasing radicalism was manifested in the support for the unofficial Communist Party in the 1976 election and public demonstrations, from strikes and the violently repressed student demonstrations of 1968 to attacks by guerrilla organizations. The party system also showed signs of decline as the smaller opposition parties were co-opted totally and no longer attempted to oppose the ruling party, while the only true opposition party, PAN, was divided over whether it should participate in the fraudulent electoral process, and refrained from fielding a presidential candidate in 1976. After the election of 1976, it was widely perceived that reform of the electoral system was incomplete.

The failure of the prior reforms to stem the tide of decay of the political system, even while the opposition was being granted more seats in congress, led the government to implement a much more extensive electoral reform in 1977. The reform package included three important parts. First, previously excluded political parties would be allowed to participate for the first time. Second, opposition parties were guaranteed free access to the media and communication systems. And third, a new system to increase the presence of the opposition in congress was introduced that increased plurality seats to 300 and created 100 new seats to be allotted by proportional representation (PR) to minority parties (who won less than 60 plurality seats). The PR seats were elected from closed lists in variable member districts (2-5 members). Thus, voters would vote twice, for the plurality seat and for the PR seat. While the minimum percentage of the

vote needed to win five seats remained at 1.5 percent, the opposition parties together were guaranteed a minimum of 25 percent of the legislature.

Again, the electoral reform was aimed at preserving the dominance of PRI; nevertheless, the reforms, this time more substantial, led to a rise in the opposition's interest in and success at the polls. (Klesner 1988) In effect, the electoral reform lowered the actual cost of campaigning while it increased the opposition's probability of winning office. A win of five or six percent of the vote or about 20 legislative seats could provide a substantial increase in a party's income (most opposition deputies are required to give a substantial proportion of their salary to the party coffers). Also, free access to the media, while less effective because of continued government control of radio and TV, could reduce a major campaign expenditure. The artificial cap was removed from opposition representation, so that the parties could win plurality seats without sacrificing PR seats. And, of course, for some parties, public support could be translated into votes and seats for the first time. These factors changed the utility of the opposition parties for running a serious electoral campaign, in the sense that it would no longer be regarded as a waste of scarce resources.

While the permanent effect of electoral reform on the political system in Mexico has not been swift or completed, the most obvious outcome has been the increasing levels of competition in the electoral arena. The electoral reforms translated this vote share into actual representation in congress. Tables 1 illustrates the changing share of the vote won by the PRI and the opposition. Between 1964 and 1988, the opposition's share of the vote grew from nearly 14 percent to almost 50 percent. In fact, in Mexico City the opposition surpassed 50 percent by 1982, the year of the first presidential election after the electoral reform and the beginning of severe economic crisis.

The impact of electoral reform was augmented by other factors as well. The economy faced a serious decline during the 1980s. Inflation soared to more than 100 percent in 1982 and reached its highest point at 160 percent in 1987. Real wages fell 40 to 50 percent between 1983 and 1988, a greater decline than the U.S. experienced during the Great Depression. (Weintraub

1993: 68) Neo-liberal economic reforms created rifts within the ruling party, cut the patronage positions available and increased economic hardship on the poor. A major earthquake that hit Mexico City in 1985 empowered civil society groups that responded quickly and effectively to the crisis while government services proved ineffectual. These and other factors are credited with a substantial role in the liberalization of Mexico, and they did increase the pressure on the regime to accelerate electoral reform. But it was the reforms made by the regime itself, in a move to increase its support, that introduced enduring change to the political system. The reforms put the opposition in place to take advantage of the public's discontent during this critical period.

The Evolution of Electoral Campaigning in Mexico

The following section will examine closely this transformation of campaign strategies in Mexico. Leaders of opposition parties, increasingly concerned with winning votes during elections, are re-evaluating their ability to win elections based on the expanded resources available for campaigns and the increased chances of winning seats in the federal legislature and in local elections. Clearly, winning votes demands a different electoral style than does publicizing an ideological philosophy. How candidates are selected, the techniques and messages of the campaign, and the allocation of scarce resources are all affected by the changing goals of the campaign. Changes were seen earlier in the opposition, as a response to reforms, while the ruling party has responded later, as it faces increased competition. The final section of this paper investigates how the campaign process has changed for the political parties.

Candidate Selection

Candidate selection is the first step in the campaign process. It can have a major impact on the success of a campaign, but is potentially very divisive for the party. It is a salient point to the party leaders as well; each of the party activists I spoke with emphasized the rationale behind the party's candidate-selection process. Several factors explain the importance of candidate selection. First, because resources are limited, a candidate may be expected to provide a good part of the

financing for his own campaign. One party activist argued that the selection of candidate is the only effective campaign tool for the opposition parties in the face of limited resources. (Interview with Professor Rosalbina Garavito - PRD activist since 1989 - July 6, 1995) For instance, a distinguished candidate brings with him a certain amount of free publicity. Additionally, parties in Mexico, especially the opposition parties, but also the PRI, did not have deep-seated public support; thus, candidates are important to elections, because this is what voters identify with rather than the platform. (Cornelius 1991: 100) It would be hard to overstate how important the selection of candidates is to Mexico's opposition parties, and to PRI more recently.

Traditionally, all the parties selected candidates based on an internal logic of promoting party unity and rewarding party loyalty. Officially, PRI followed set guidelines to select candidates that reflected the centralization and hierarchy in the party. An official convocation would be published in local, national and party newspapers inviting any PRI members to declare candidacy for a position. However, the leadership controlled the nomination process, usually by approving pre candidates before they were proposed at party conventions. (Anderson and Cockroft 1969: 374) Each of the sectors of the party, labor, rural and popular, were guaranteed a percentage of the candidacies. Local candidates were typically selected by the national or state party headquarters, usually a federal congressman or governor. When local leaders did insist on a candidate, the decision had to be approved by higher-level party leaders. (Schmitt 1969: 97; Cornelius 1991: 26) the participation of the party membership was limited to rubber-stamp like approval at the official meetings. "Conventions, supposedly representing the rank-and-file, then simply ratif[ied] the selections of leaders." (Schmitt 1969: 97)

The PRI operated as a political machine; candidacies were handed out as patronage positions to party members who had been valuable in their service to party leaders, either at a local or national level, or by union leaders. The candidate often was a close friend or business associate of the PRI leader, perhaps with little experience in the party. "The absence of popular input into this candidate selection process has often led to municipal presidents who were intensely disliked by their

constituents, and who embarrassed the PRI by their inept handling of local problems.” (Cornelius 1991: 26) This situation persisted as long as the party was not concerned with picking candidates popular inside or outside PRI, because winning the election was assured in most districts. Outside of the cities, few alternative organizations existed, and the PRI activists might be the only local notables. Frequently, PRI ran unopposed in local elections, due either to restrictive party registration laws or lack of opposition party organization. The presidential candidate was always selected by the incumbent president, usually from his closest advisors in the cabinet. All the most recent candidates had served as the economic minister and had no electoral background.

Similarly, the opposition parties picked candidates to satisfy the interests of party members because they had little chance of winning an election. In reaction to the centralized and hidden selection process used by PRI, opposition parties focused on internal democracy. In the cell structure of PPS, delegates of each cell were sent to a convention that selected from pre candidates. These had been nominated by fellow party activists based on their ideological dedication and militancy. To become a candidate in PAN, pre candidates had to garner 60 percent of the vote in secret-ballot primaries at party conventions. Even at the national level, candidate selection recognized long-time party activism. In both parties, local candidates tended to be one of the few leaders of the party, mainly because they had skills such as public speaking, time to devote to campaigning and some appeal to party members. (Schmitt 1969: 98) When it mattered, the logic of winning elections did not escape party leadership; even before the reforms, well-known candidates were placed in the most competitive districts. Additionally, central PAN leadership would assign symbolic candidates from the urban areas on ballots in the provinces, where the party had not yet extended, as a way to broaden its name recognition.

The selection of the presidential candidate within the opposition parties reveals their incentives more directly. PPS (Partido Popular Socialista) and PARM (Partido de la Revolucion Auténtica) chose to support PRI's presidential candidate. They were guaranteed a winner without

actually campaigning for that candidate, and so resources could be spent elsewhere. Also, PPS and PARM were concerned primarily with the furthering of anti-imperialist, nationalist political and economic policies. As long as a faction within the PRI continued to promote these interests, these parties could give their support to the PRI presidential candidate, hoping to bolster that faction within PRI. Moreover, opposition leaders that lent support to PRI occasionally were rewarded with a PRI candidacy as part of a co-optation strategy that worked to the benefit of both.

Conversely, PAN's (Partido de Acción Nacional) presidential candidates, like the unregistered PCM (Partido Comunista Mexicano), were selected from the intellectual and ideological leaders of the parties. PAN saw its role as that of a confrontational, anti-system party, because its leaders sought a fundamental change in the political system toward a stronger private economy and protection for individual liberties and religion. In fact, the party was strongly divided over whether to run candidates at all. At least until the 1980s, there was no open support for the party's platform within PRI. The presidential candidates for PAN and PCM, usually dogmatic and idealistic, were not selected because they could win an election, but rather because they would be most successful at publicizing the ideology of the party.

All the parties in Mexico that have tried to address the newly competitive environment have tinkered with the candidate selection process so as to find electable candidates. It is a tricky process, however, because political parties must navigate the conflicting goals of rewarding party service, picking a candidate that is popular with party activists, and selecting a candidate that is attractive to the voting public. (Kalt and Zupan 1993) And, more recently, parties are under pressure to use a process that looks democratic to outsiders but does not lead to party fragmentation or defections. The final effect of competition on candidate selection is that these external factors -- selecting a winner, and appearing democratic -- are beginning to outweigh the internal factors. There are three areas of change in the selection of candidates for elections. First, political parties (especially PRI) are changing the formal rules of candidate selection. Second, political parties maybe bypassing the formal rules to find a more desirable candidate. Third, political parties are opening up the candidate

selection process to non-party members. In all these cases, the changes are helping the parties to win elections, but they are also threatening party unity. PAN, for instance, emphasized “running candidates who exemplify strong party commitment, [but] PAN now concentrates on selecting individuals who are electable. Electability, not party commitment, is the driving criterion.” (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 55) And, within the ruling party it “appear[s] that the PRI is emphasizing technical competence ... and young locally popular candidates.” (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 64) Meanwhile, parties that have not succeeded in the newly competitive climate, such as PPS, have not adjusted the candidate selection process. In the case of PPS, the party continues to select candidates based on party militancy, following strict democratic centralism.

Most parties, though, have made changes to the formal process of selecting candidates to address the dual demands of finding a winning candidate and bringing democracy to the party. PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática - a combination of the parties from the left and defectors from PRI) has tried to implement democratic procedures, mainly through the use of open nominating conventions and secret primaries, for the selection of its candidates. The party is under more pressure to appear democratic, because of accusations that its practices are just the same as the PRI’s. Also, the party must balance the interests of the various factions that came together in the first place. But the results have not been altogether successful, nor have they helped to strengthen party unity. There is serious competition between the different factions; especially sought are the positions at the top of the proportional representation lists, positions that are guaranteed seats which require no campaigning. Moreover, accusations of PRI like tactics are not without some truth. In Durango, an area of strong PRD support, a recent primary was marred by fraud in the counting of ballots. (Financial Times: April 10, 1999) Despite setbacks, PRD continues to work toward internal democracy, out of the conviction that it is best for the party and country, but also because it is important in elections for the party to appear democratic.

Meanwhile, PRI has responded to the challenges of competition in its candidate selection process, too. As early as 1987 the party introduced *consultas de base*, which were essentially

primaries to select local candidates. In 1990, Salinas expanded this practice by proposing a new set of changes to democratize the process of local and state candidate selection. The pre-candidates must show support of 10-20 percent of the voting population or 25-30 percent of the “directive committees” of PRI affiliated organizations. (Cornelius 1991: 27) But, introducing a more democratic process has also allowed for a more divisive process as the old party machinery is threatened by younger candidates without allegiance to the party bosses. Initially, primaries were used where party factionalism was not an issue; that is, where the winning candidate was likely to be supported by the party bosses. For instance, primaries were used mainly in smaller towns, rather than important cities. (Cornelius 1991: 27) In 1991 “the PRI chose all its senatorial candidates and all but 22 of its candidates for majority election to congress as “unity candidates,” meaning that only one pre-candidate registered for election by convention.” (Bruhn 1990: 299) On the other hand, in Baja California Sur, PRI held a primary that was open to the whole public, not just party members, in an effort to find a popular candidate. (Barraza 1991: 431)

More recently, support for primaries is increasing. Proponents argue that the primaries “force candidates to strengthen bonds with voters.” (Los Angeles Times: May 24, 1998) In Chihuahua 1998, a PRI primary picked popular candidate, Patricio Martínez, over the party machine choice, and he won back the state from the opposition. (Los Angeles Times: April 1998) Moreover, PRI has been under pressure to find a place for these popular candidates, or risk driving them into the arms of the competition. In 1998, the winning gubernatorial candidate (PRD) in Zacatecas, defected from the ruling party when he was “denied the nomination by the party’s kingmakers” despite his popularity. (Los Angeles Times: May 25, 1998) The emphasis on finding a winning candidate is taking this source of party power away from the local bosses.

An additional change in the formal rules of the ruling party has been the repeated cut in the amount of candidacies that are reserved for the labor and rural sectors of the party. Their share has dropped from a combined 40 percent in 1985 to 30 percent in 1991, while increasing the amount allotted to the popular sector. (Reyes del Campillo 1994: 70) These positions have been given to

local party organizers who are active within the co-opted popular movements of PRI's popular sector. Again, the changes are a way to find more popular candidates who are more likely to win in a competitive election.

The ruling party has faced a lot of pressure to open up its highly secretive presidential nomination process. In the 1988 election, President De la Madrid tried to introduce a minute change, announcing to the public the pre candidates – ostensibly to give each candidate a chance to disclose his political agenda and garner party support, but more likely to so that other party elites could discreetly pass on their opinion to the president. Also, it has not been acceptable traditionally for candidates in Mexico to look like they want the job or to campaign, until they are officially selected. (Cornelius 1991: 37) In 1994, President Salinas created a selection committee, a “national council” of 150 important PRI members. This was largely cosmetic; Salinas picked the members who would support his choice, and 150 out of a party that dominates the whole country is a very small fraction of representation. (Cornelius 1991: 38) After Colosio was assassinated, Salinas quickly replaced him with Zedillo. President Zedillo has indicated firmly that he will open the selection process. The most recent news is that PRI is considering a national primary to select a presidential candidate. (Los Angeles Times: March 2, 1999)

In addition to the move by some parties to adopt new rules for the selection of candidates, parties are bypassing the formal process when it does not result in the optimal candidate. PAN already had a democratic process to choose candidates in place before the reforms. But, while the party has continued to tout internal democracy as one of its most important features, the party leadership occasionally has sidestepped local primary outcomes and imposed its own favorite candidate. Recently in Baja California, for instance, the state committee opted for a local candidate, because he had won a difficult election in Tijuana, even though he came in third at the nominating convention. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 57)

Another significant trend has been a new policy for all the parties of opening up candidacies to non-members, both as a way to attract electable candidates and, in the case of the opposition, to fill

the heavy demand of appointed and elective posts with the surprising victories. Although party candidacy traditionally was set aside for party members only, since 1988, PPS and PRD have welcomed locally popular social movement leaders to be candidates for them. In 1991, the PRD and PRI ran a combined 75 candidates in the Federal District who were leaders of popular movements. (Gomez Tagle and Valdes 1993: 123) The popularity of these candidates has been essential for the success of the opposition parties. For the PRD, intellectuals from the left have brought their notoriety to the party, and overall PRD has been the most successful at forging lasting relationships with local popular movements, and running leaders of these groups as candidates. These candidates bring organization and resources to the resource poor party. Most importantly, the PRD has benefited from repeated defections from the ruling party. Some of its most successful candidates - Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in Mexico City, López Obrador in Tabasco, Monreal in Zacatecas – have brought not only their personal popularity but also their own network from the ruling party – to the new party.

PAN also makes appeals to local activists or popular intellectuals to stand as candidates, although they are less likely to ask non-PAN members. In Mexico City's 1st district, the PAN candidate for the Assembly (and subsequent winner), Luis Garcia, had 20 years of political activism experience and asserted that he was nominated for candidacy because of his participation in the 1988 citywide referendum. (Interview with Luis Garcia August 17, 1994) Additionally, PAN finds itself challenged to recruit enough candidates for all the elected and appointed jobs it must fill; for instance, the party in Baja California grew from 500 to 4,500 members within three years when PAN won the governorship there. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 62) In such cases, the party has turned to non-members to fill candidacies, although these non-members are more likely to fill non-elected positions. Rodriguez and Ward also note that these non-activists are more likely to fill executive rather than legislative posts. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 55)

Meanwhile, PRI draws from a relatively new source for popular candidates, PRONOSOL, the anti-poverty, public works program. Six senators and 70 congressmen that were elected in 1991 (19 percent of senators and 24 percent of congressmen for PRI) came from positions as regional

administrators of the program. (Bruhn 1993: 300) In Baja California where PRI is the opposition often, the party tries also trying to attract candidates with party credentials, but also name recognition in the community. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 63) So even the extensive PRI network may not always provide a suitable candidate, forcing the party to look outside.

At the same time, the electoral conquests have made it easier for opposition parties to attract good candidates from civil society. Social leaders who dismissed political parties as ineffective and election campaigns as a waste of resources have joined PRD and PAN as organizers and candidates. Many of the PRD leaders had long histories as social activists (peaceful and violent), but had stayed out of party politics because of its seeming futility (Interviews with Rosalbina Garavito July 6, 1995 and Gerardo Fernandez July 5, 1995) PAN has benefited from the participation of business entrepreneurs in the party as organizers and activists. Like the social activists, these business leaders were attracted to the opposition parties when they saw that they could win. The participation of these activists has brought new resources to the parties, such as established networks, extensive experience and new leadership strategies. Because the resources of the opposition parties still are limited compared to those of PRI, the ability of the candidates to run effective campaigns is crucial to their success. (Bruhn 1993: 305-306)

The result of all these changes is not surprising. Longtime party members in both the opposition and PRI are resistant to change. Many of the party leaders of the opposition have been committed to political activism for years and are not anxious to hand over the rewards to new members, or even non-party candidates, even while they may be better for the long-term performance of the party. In Mexicali, for instance, some who were expecting to be appointed to positions after party victories were not, leading to tensions. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 58) For PRD, the granting of candidacies has been one of the most divisive issues within the party. Contrary to the hopes of party leaders, the currents within PRD have become more disciplined, more stringent in their ideological divisions, and more protective of their interests, especially in the distribution of positions of rank within the party. (Interview with Gerardo Fernandez July 5, 1995)

PAN suffered through its most divisive period in the 1970s, but the schism over electoral competition versus systemic opposition is not entirely healed. At times, the party has sacrificed participating in an election because it could not garner 60 percent of the votes for a candidate. In Mexico City (1994), PAN primaries chose mostly Alvaristas (those following the aggressively competitive line of party leader Alvarez) and a few Foristas (the non-electoral group in the party), mirroring the split in the party. In the 1st district in 1994, PAN elected an Alvarista for its assembly candidate and a Forista for the Chamber of Deputies. (Interview with Luis Garcia August 17, 1994) The party seems to have found a balance between its competing forces because the possibility of winning has made ideological division a costly practice.

The dilemma is clear. If a party opts for a popular candidate within the party, one that will keep the party unified and pull all the machinery into motion, it may alienate the general voters. If, however, the party selects a candidate that will be popular to voters at large, it risks losing party support. In 1989, Salinas handpicked PRI gubernatorial candidate Margarita Ortega, a virtual unknown in the party who was committed to reforming state government. Her campaign slogan “With Clean Hands” and reformist platform “drove a wedge” between the new PRI members and the old party bosses. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994: 38) And, as a result, PRI lost the election to PAN.

As this push to find a more electable candidate continues, the effects on the electoral arena will be a more competitive environment. It remains to be seen whether this push for more popular, more skilled candidates will lead to the other effects of democracy, namely better government performance. (Coppedge 1993)

Campaign Messages

Political messages are crucial to a campaign because they are the selling point of the party. The type of message changes, though, as competition becomes a factor in the election. Opposition candidates, without the resources to buy votes as PRI has, focus instead on concrete issues that speak to voters about their own lives. In order to attract a wider audience, dogmatic ideology that once dominated the opposition platforms is replaced by a broader, more inclusive message. Finally, as

competition increases, the various platforms of all the competitive parties have begun to resemble one another in order to maximize the vote. Thus, following Downs's conceptualization of two-party competition, the parties merge on the median voter, probably because competition at the district level is usually split between two parties. (Downs 1957)

Prior to the period of increased competition in Mexico's elections, campaign literature used by political parties was not aimed at winning voters. "[I]t would appear that the opposition parties in Mexico, with their need to cut into the massive majorities of the official party, would stress specific problems, seemingly neglected by the government. ...they did not. ...the present psychology of Mexican political leaders is to stress party ideological differences and moral superiority whether real or imagined." (Schmitt 1969: 96) Traditional campaign literature in Mexico was highly ideological and abstract, divorced from the worries of everyday life. The parties published a limited number of lengthy and detailed platforms for each campaign, more for consumption by the already converted than by the public at large, which summarized the general ideology of the party: anti-imperialism, human dignity, class struggle.

Even on the campaign trail, this failure to focus on specific issues continued. Speeches aimed at local groups at campaign rallies barely mentioned local events, except perhaps a labor dispute or some example of gross electoral fraud. Propaganda aimed at the general public came in the form of simple leaflets, usually one or two pages with a picture of the candidate or party logo (sometimes not even the correct party logo) and a message such as "Protest and Vote!" or "For Change!" from the opposition or "For the Revolution!" from PRI. The opposition messages were communicated in a few ways: a rare interview in the media, usually not in a major publication, speeches, pamphlets, party journals and painted signs, usually just of the party logo. Of course, PRI propaganda dominated all the media and their resources far outweighed any attempt the opposition could make to compete on this level.

The new electoral climate has dramatically transformed the types of messages used by the opposition parties. Most noticeably, the platforms of the newly competitive parties have lost their

doctrinaire edge; all the parties talk about political reforms, stability and democratic checks on power. PRI, PRD and PAN proposed similar plans of free trade and a liberalized economy with concern for workers and impoverished Mexicans. Competition has encouraged the parties to act like catch-all parties with platforms that are becoming more alike, not exclusive, ideological parties.

An example of this is the treatment of economic issues by the various parties. Initially, the parties had very separate statements about economic issues. PAN, following its traditional line, called for less involvement by the government in the economy. The left parties, joined by the populist defectors from PRI, platformed on a return to nationalist policies of the past, including government responsibility for job creation and control of major industries. PRI continued to push its contradictory platform of economic liberalization couched in the terminology of populist and revolutionary rhetoric. During the 1980s, the parties all began to move toward a more centrist position, with the populists backing some economic reforms, PAN supporting the government's responsibility to create jobs and provide a social safety net. By the late 1990s, the competitive political parties find themselves with virtually identical platforms regarding economic reforms, free-trade, the national banks, poverty relief and other economic issues. As on the other critical political issues, the parties have lined up ideologically with the median voter.

The parties' platforms have also become less general and separated from day-to-day life. In 1994, opposition candidates focused on issues that have salience for voters in a neighborhood. In several districts in Mexico City, the opposition candidates campaigned on specific issues, especially the lack of police patrols in the neighborhood, controls on rezoning of residential properties for commercial property, the lack of housing in a particular area, as well as critiquing the poor record of PRI representatives in the district. Political parties varied their platform to fit state and local issues. (Barraza 1991: 438) Pamphlets included a long list of the candidate's accomplishments and his or her stance on issues in the community (district or state -- depending on the election) and nationally. Finally, the opposition takes credit in its campaigns for new policies or reforms and points to

accomplishments in areas where it governs. Both of these messages are only possible now that the parties have won elections, had an opportunity to govern and introduce policies in congress.

The ruling party also began to use these more concrete campaign issues in more competitive areas. In general, the more competition a district experienced, the more interesting and concrete the campaign issues. (Based on my own observations) In areas where PRI was sure to win, little in the way of literature was distributed by that party. More frequent were PRI logo lunch pails, T-shirts, aprons and jackets handed out at big parties with live bands and plenty to eat and drink. In these areas, opposition party hand-outs resembled traditional party materials: a single page with candidate and party logo. (A memorable example included anti-PRI leaflets in Tlaxcala charging the party with masonic and devilish practices) Finally, while the opposition can boast its own accomplishments as it has gained experience in government, so too can PRI point out failings of opposition governments.

The propaganda used by the political parties almost universally has improved due to better resources and greater incentive to attract all types of voters. Most interesting is the new inclusive message shared by all the major political parties, as opposed to ideological or pro-revolution rhetoric, and the focus on concrete and local issues rather than general critiques of the regime. Opposition parties could not compete with PRI using traditional campaign tactics -- promises of economic reward for the vote -- so they have focused on specific policy issues that had salience for the voters (crime, police corruption, access to public services, democracy). Likewise, competition has forced PRI to adapt its campaign message to meet the demands of the voters

Campaign Tactics

Prior to the reforms, political parties, even the ruling party, had little incentive to run serious campaigns. PRI knew it would win while the opposition parties knew they had little chance of succeeding. As such, campaigning was simply a waste of resources. As the reforms have changed the incentives regarding campaigning, parties have responded by adapting their strategies in several ways. First, the parties are actually running campaigns and these campaigns are much more extensive than before the reforms, and become more lavish productions yearly. Second, some parties have

attempted to form coalitions to maximize their vote. Third, political parties have turned increasingly to other social groups to form coalitions or share candidates to find more supporters.

Prior to the electoral reforms, PAN was the only opposition party that took elections seriously enough to mount campaigns. Campaigning, it was argued, was a way to show the fraudulence of the system. And despite the cost to the party and its inability to win almost any election, PAN took campaigning seriously. These campaigns were the only time that its message was publicized to most parts of the country. Thus, for PAN, the campaigns were proselytizing events, aimed at finding new converts and airing their critique of the system. PAN fielded candidates in many elections, especially at the national level, and in local elections where it had strong support. In other areas, PAN sent symbolic candidates to represent the party. As the party saw itself as the only systemic opposition party and worked hard to maintain its independence – a line promoted by the leadership. As such, it rejected public finance to which it was entitled. Like the other opposition parties, PAN activists were subject to intimidation by authorities and ruling party supporters. (Interview with Ana Teresa Aranda - PAN activist in Puebla – June 23, 1995)

PARM and PPS were legal parties also, but pursued a different strategy. Realizing they had no chance to win an election, they chose to lend support to sympathetic groups, the leftists (PPS) and nationalists (PPS and PARM), within PRI. As such, they too supported the regime in exchange for financial support and better representation. For instance, the party convention of the PPS would create an agenda and then enter into discussions with PRI over acceptance of the terms in exchange for electoral support. (Interview with Professor Humberto Pliego - PPS activist and leader for 38 years - July 3, 1995) Both parties chose to support the PRI's presidential candidate for many years, as long as party leaders thought it was their best strategy to pursue their political agenda. They also developed platforms and participated in national elections for senate and federal deputy positions in increasing numbers during the years, though often running token candidates outside their few strongholds. Campaigns were limited to small meetings of workers or students, depending on the local structure of the party and, like the PAN, were a forum for airing their ideology. Supporting the

PRI was not without its rewards; PPS has received more federal deputies and even a senate position while PARM has frequently received more seats than their percentages of the vote would allow. (Story 1986: 68) This pressure group strategy was effective while its goals were complementary with the rhetoric of the center left in PRI.

For the illegal parties of the left, campaigning was not a choice. Activities had to be more clandestine than mass based, due to the continuing repression of leftist groups well into the 1970s. Moreover, these unofficial parties possessed neither the public support nor the financial resources to organize a true campaign. After 1968, many radical groups took their organizational efforts underground, even to the point of anti-system violence. In some cases, party leaders were co-opted by the national government, receiving benefits for their union from the government in exchange for support. (Hellman 1983: 150-157) The PCM focused its resources on grass-roots organization of workers, peasants and students. Although the PCM and other parties would develop detailed campaign platforms, they rarely ran campaigns. The party's candidate would make speeches, party newsletters would report on the platform, students and workers would hold a few rallies, but no extensive campaign was conducted. (Schmitt 1969) Moreover, the party made a committed decision not to spend money on campaigning like the ruling party. (Interview with Jorge Mendez Spinola - PRD, formally of PCM - June 24, 1995)

The 1977 reform had a tremendous impact on all the parties. One of the most important effects was just the new emphasis the competitive parties have put on campaigning. For the newly legalized parties, like PCM, the reform strengthened the electoral current within the party. These parties strengthened their ties with popular groups and began a more open relationship with the public, especially now that they were better protected from harassment by the ruling party or police. (Interview with Jorge Mendez Spinoza) The reforms affected the balance of powers within PAN as well. The reforms brought the most confrontational faction within the party to the foreground. The struggle ascendance the *Alvarisats*, who promote electoral victory above other party goals, over the *Foristas*, who favor the traditional role of the party as regime critic, remote from the dirtiness of

politics, is the result of the new competitive role of the party. Since the early 1980s, the PAN has focused on extending its reach to every district and every small town. In the mid 1980s, the party began accepting state funds to support its campaign efforts. For some members, this is the natural direction of the party.

Compare these cases with PPS, an opposition party that has remained non-competitive. The reforms have affected the former satellite parties because their special relationship with the PRI is all but destroyed. PPS competes with the more legitimate parties of the left while its support is no longer valuable to the PRI. In 1982, de la Madrid approached the wary PPS to solicit its support, the usual procedure between these parties. After much debate, the agenda was reduced to 12 issues and the support of PPS was secured. By the end of de la Madrid's sexenio, however, almost every promise on the list was unfulfilled. The leaders of PPS felt betrayed by the PRI leadership and undermined in the eyes of the rank-and-file. When Cardenas, Munoz Ledo and others broke off from the PRI, the leaders of PPS saw the leftists within PRI as seriously weakened and decided that their new best strategy to promote their political agenda would be to support the Cardenas coalition. PPS performed well in the elections of 1988, in fact, the best it had ever achieved in elections. This encouraged the party to run its own candidate, rather than lose its independence to the new Cardenista party. Without the charismatic candidate, however, the party lost its registration in 1994.

In addition to the plain fact of opposition parties running more campaigns, the techniques of campaigning, for all the parties, have changed dramatically. The opposition parties continue to focus on PRI corruption and its failure to remedy economic crisis. And the PRD and PAN use the media to focus attention on the fraudulent elections even while participating in them. But these strategies are accompanied by a new positive strategies. Opposition parties focus on their popular candidates, for a positive message, and to distinguish themselves from other opposition parties. For instance, PAN in 1998 capitalized on Ruffo's individual popularity in the so-called "Ruffomania" campaign. Campaign strategists are also aiming campaigns at the particular voters they hope to attract. "For example, the PAN broadcast modern music at its rallies, in part to attract young voters." (Rodriguez

and Ward 1994: 39) PRI also has been forced to respond to the tactics of the opposition by using modern campaign surveys and statistical analyses to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the opposition. Several authors have documented the move by PRI to focus its electoral efforts in 1991 and 1994 where Cardenas was the strongest in 1988. And, whereas before PRI emphasized getting out the vote in order to maximize their support, especially when facing high abstention abstention. Now the party uses a “block by block” strategy to find PRI supporters in particular, and focuses more on unions and affiliates who will support. (Cornelius 1995: 64)

The most important strategic move on the part of opposition parties has been the move to build coalitions – so much so that it was prohibited for several years by the ruling party. Following the reforms, discussions began almost immediately among the left parties to create an electoral alliance. As early as 1982, the PST, PCM and PRT began running joint candidates in elections. In each election, the parties had to weigh the loss of independence against the better possibility of winning. Coalition building is attractive because the parties can pool their limited resources and cover more districts. The long process to unification, however, has been slow and arduous. First the PSUM (Partido Socialista Unificado de Mexico) and then the PMS (Partido Mexicano Socialista) replaced the PCM on the ballot, but in each election their percentage of the vote declined. In 1988, it was the defection of Cárdenas from PRI that provided the winning ticket behind which the left parties could unite. “Until 1988, the Mexican left had been badly split into two currents, mostly devoid of followers: small groups of activists outside the PRI who were sporadically heroic and every now and then supported by mass movements; and those inside the PRI, the latter’s number and influence being by definition unfathomable. The Cardenas schism merged the two groupings. The mass constituency became electoral...” (Castañeda 1993: 156) Moreover, PRI has used this strategy too, supporting candidates of satellite parties PPS, PFCRN where they are competitive, so as to be part of the opposition. (Rodriguez and Ward 1994)

Building such coalitions, even in the case of PRD, has not been without challenges. PRD benefits greatly on electoral basis from PRI defectors, especially where this has brought much of the networking and organizing of the ruling party. But at the same time: “Where Cardenas has followers known locally for their honesty and perceived to be extensions of his own reputation..., his party performs well electorally. On the contrary, where his regional representatives are PRI clones or renegades who split off from the ruling party and took with them its traditional vices and not quite saintly customs, the PRD fares poorly.” (Castañeda 1993: 360) And yet, on the contrary, even where they are PRI defectors who are not totally virtuous, they have fared well electorally. In Michoacan, a PRD stronghold (mainly because this is Cárdenas’s home state) recent scandal broke involving vote-fixing in PRD primaries (Financial Times: April 10, 1999).

A final, and important, strategy being used by all the political parties is the move to join in coalitions with social movements. First, parties can to draw from the mass base and use the network of the movement to extend their reach. Second, opposition parties benefit from the experienced leadership recruited from social movements. The Cárdenas coalition, for instance, drew support from the groups that responded to the 1985, the student movement in Mexico City of 1986, local level religious groups in Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Jalisco, and other areas. (Tamayo 1990: 124) The religious groups remain active in local elections, monitoring human rights and denouncing fraud. (Castañeda 1993: 212) PAN also has sacrificed its independence to build relationships in some areas with powerful businessmen who finance campaigns and run as candidates. Even PPS, in the few enclaves where it has remained locally competitive, has been successful in forming coalitions with local social movements or dissident unions and fielding candidates. This has declined somewhat in the 1990s for PPS, especially as the local social movements have seen it in their interest to forge unions with more successful parties, even the ruling party. This was not a new strategy for PRI; it

had benefitted over the years from leadership recruited from social movements, as part of its policy of co-optation. (Pérez Arce 1990: 107) More recently, it has drawn strong leadership and popular candidates from the social movements incorporated through the PRONOSOL program.

Some social movements had rejected both PRI and opposition parties, for fear of being co-opted, because of clientelist practices, and demands became subdued when included in broad electoral issues. But as the opposition becomes a more viable alternative and PRI policies become less in line with their own, these leaders will be attracted to opposition parties, bringing with them “huge support and prestige among broad sectors of the population.” (Pérez Arce 1990: 107) In earlier elections – 1976-1982 – various social movements had supported a candidate, without actually creating coalition – and without actually proposing their own candidates for office. (Tamayo 1990: 125, 136) However, the 1985 election was a turning point for several reasons. The movement leaders hoped to legitimize their groups and demands while some examples of successful electoral participation now existed. (Tamayo 1990: 126, 130) In February of 1985 the National Revolutionary Coordinating Committee (umbrella for social movements) issued a call to all “progressive, democratic parties”

“In these places there are strong and experienced popular organizations that have consolidated over more than ten years of promoting a revolutionary social movement. They can contest for a voting majority if the conditions exist to facilitate their electoral participation. The best help [popular organizations] can receive is from registered parties in coalition with the name and banner of the regional organizations: Our concrete proposal is that we should henceforth act more frequently in regional coalitions, adopting in each case the name and banner of local organizations.” (CRN, 2/20/85)

This was followed by an agreement between PSUM, PMT, PRT and the organizations in the CRN to work to join forces regional electoral competition. After this signing, the number of coalition candidates between social movements and opposition parties increased in dramatically. (Tamayo 1990: 127) This culminated, of course, in the front of parties and social movemetns that backed Cárdenas.

Just as building coalitions between parties has not been without obstacles, so too has building lasting relationships between social movements and parties. Part of the problem is that social movements are, by their nature, focuses on limited, short-term interests, providing goods to members. As such, they may switch parties, or turn to PRI, as the CDP in Durango did in state elections between 1986 and 1989. For social movements, electoral participation has also been hard, weakening organization and reducing consensus within the groups.

In all these cases, the electoral reforms impacted significantly the strategies chosen by the parties. Opposition parties chose to run serious campaigns for candidates in state and national elections. Some parties chose to run in coalitions, to pool resources and bases of support or to join with social groups. Opposition from within the ruling party has seized the opportunity to defect and join the opposition parties, especially when their career has stunted within PRI. Just as reforms have led to better candidates and a focus on more concrete issues, these changes have made campaigns a more educative experience for voters and candidates alike, hopefully leading to a more responsive government.

Coninuing Obstacles

The most limiting factor for political parties, besides actual legal barriers to participation, has been the lack of financial resources and the ruling party's continuing control of the media. New sources of finance have made the cost of campaigning less of a barrier. And at the same time, electoral victories have encouraged private donations, especially from the business community. However, overcoming the financial inequality in the system remains the most important obstacle for opposition parties. Additionally, new laws to open up access to the media and a wave of independent newspapers have not broken the tight hold of PRI Mexico's most popular media.

Before the 1980s, political parties had extremely limited sources of finance. The constitution, recognizing political parties as public interest organizations, provides for public funding of the

parties. Until the 1980s, however, PAN refused to accept the money, to protect its independence. This also was in line with the highly ideological, non-electoral current that dominated the party until the 1980s. The satellite parties, PPS and PARM, accepted the money, but also supported PRI candidates. Because other parties were not legally registered, they were barred from receiving state money. Other sources of party support came from party membership dues, raffles and other fund-raising events, and private donations from private citizens, affiliated unions or popular groups and business groups. All the opposition parties mandated that some percentage of the salary of any party members in elected posts must be donated to the party. Since these parties very rarely won elections, this did not amount to much. The lack of resources affected every aspect of the political campaign. Opposition party candidates had to provide most of the funding themselves, including propaganda, transportation and the cost of any meetings. Compare this to the PRI, which controlled all the resources of state, any patronage positions to reward campaign workers and financial contributors, and the media.

Because it is so crucial to PRI's control of the system, this is the area where the least amount of change has occurred for the opposition parties. While certain factors have altered, minutely, the balance of finances, it is not enough to create an even playing field. One study claimed that PRI spent in one day what the opposition would spend in a year - \$800 million - 80 percent of which came from the national treasury. (Mexico Journal: April 4, 1988: 9) The opposition, since it has won a larger percentage of the vote, receives more state finances. This did not help PRD after 1988, though, since it used the PMS registry (3.6 percent of the vote -- the smallest amount given to any party) when it became an official party. In the 1991 elections, the PRD had so little money that it decided not to distribute funding to individual candidates, but rather conducted a national, centralized campaign with the money. The public funds did contribute, however, to the decision by PPS not to join with the other parties in the formation of PRD. PPS won almost 12 percent of the vote in 1988, a huge financial increase for the party. The expansion in the amount of seats held by the opposition means that more legislators are sending in regular checks to party headquarters. For the small opposition

parties with limited membership, this has been a particular boon. PAN also made an important decision in the mid 1980s to accept public finance, reflecting the ascendance of the more aggressive wing of the party, led by party president Luis Alvarez.

PRI continues to dominate the other parties in terms of resources. Between 1992 and 1994, PRI received 64.2 percent of the public moneys distributed to political parties. (Garcia Rocha 1993: 14) The government is spending less, due to economic crisis and reforms, leading to fewer patronage positions available to PRI. But what does exist is still primarily in that party's control. As the opposition continues to win in state elections, PRI's control over patronage is further reduced. Recent elections have been marred by PRI's gross misuse of state treasury funds for the campaigns of PRI candidates. For instance, in the elections in the state of Mexico and Tabasco, PRI governors were accused of misusing the state's funds to pay for PRI's campaigns. In Tabasco, opposition party members even turned up incriminating receipts. It is wondered though, whether the PRI governor's enemies within or outside of PRI brought the receipts to public attention.

Controversy has surrounded the poverty-relief program, PRONOSOL, as well. While some call it an outright populist strategy to buy votes, others point to the popularity and success of the program in some regions. In a study of PRONOSOL spending patterns during Salinas's term, Molinar and Weldon concluded that while spending was highest in poor areas, within poor areas more money was spent where Cardenas had been successful and where state elections approached. (Molinar and Weldon 1994: 176-177)

Another point about campaign finance is that as reforms that limit fraud and reduce the ability to use state resources take affect, PRI has resorted to spending much more on campaigns – to insure victory. In 1992 gubernatorial elections in Michoacan, one study showed that PRI spent \$80 per vote while PRD (the main opposition) spent \$2.30 per vote. (Craig and Cornelius 1995: 255) On the other hand, it is a significant change that there are even records now that report expenditures.

Another area where the ruling party continues to dominate is in its control of the media, especially T.V. and radio. The special TV broadcasts allotted to opposition parties are late at night or

at inopportune times. (Craig and Cornelius 1995: 255) Much of the access guaranteed to the opposition is in newspapers, the medium least used by Mexicans. Additionally, newspapers coverage is confusing because the government buys *gacetillas*- its own stories to publish in papers. For instance: “In hotly contested elections, the ruling PRI will typically buy a *gacetilla* for the space normally reserved for a newspaper’s lead story. The headline over the *gacetilla* might say something like “PRI Wins in Landslide!” (Oster 1990: 191) Thus, if it was not quite a landslide, or if there were reports of fraud, such accounts do not make the cover story. This is in addition to government advertising which makes up 75 percent of papers revenue in some cases, and government control of newsprint paper. (Oster 1990: Chapter 13)

The financial inequality that characterizes the Mexican parties is in the initial stage of change. New rules to control campaign spending have been introduced by all the parties. This also is an area where PRI’s intransigence will be most difficult to overcome. This is especially true as long as PRI’s finances cannot be clearly accounted for separately from state finances.

Conclusion

In this study, I argue that Mexico is experiencing a profound and unanticipated transformation. Repeated revisions to Mexico's electoral institutions were spearheaded by the ruling party attempting to restore its own legitimacy. Instead the reforms altered the political strategies of the opposition parties by making it easier to win congressional seats and by allotting new resources to the opposition parties. Opposition parties and, later, the ruling party, have changed many aspects of the campaign process including: developing ways to find a more popular candidate, creating a campaign message that will attract the maximum number of voters, and entering into coalitions with other parties and other types of social groups. The opposition, building on these new tactics, has carved out a new electoral space. PRI’s enduring control over the state’s resources, its ability to manipulate and intimidate voters, especially outside of the urban centers, and simply its

long history of more or less effective governance all contribute to the continued slow pace of change. Despite this control, Mexico's electoral reforms have had the surprising effect of not only shoring up the opposition, as the ruling party hoped, but of actually transferring political power to new social groups.

The case of Mexico is especially interesting because it demonstrates that reforms to the institutions of government, in this instance the electoral institutions, can have a profound effect on the political system and realize permanent political change. While it is possible, even probable some would argue, that the regime could rescind many of the reforms that have led to change, and that this would affect the options available to political parties, this would not reverse easily the process of political change. The unintended consequences of those reforms, new political strategies, political party development, and popular expectations about electoral campaigns, are established and have taken on a life of their own. For the regime to reverse this process in motion would take measures more draconian than Mexico's ruling party has yet shown itself capable.

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